

20240517_Phyllis Reynolds Oral History_transcription for Narrator's Review

Summary:

Dave Hedberg interviewed Phyllis Reynolds at her home in Portland Oregon, May 17, 2024

In this interview, Phyllis Reynolds discusses her role in starting the Portland Heritage Tree program and her work writing the book *Trees of Greater Portland*. Also discusses her work with the Urban Forestry Commission, Hoyt Arboretum, Portland Japanese Garden, and the history of urban forestry in Portland. She also discusses memories of Portland in the 1940s, and her return to the city in the 1970s. This Oral history was conducted by Dave Hedberg and was partially funded by Portland Parks & Recreation's Urban Forestry Division.

Narrator: Phyllis Reynolds

Interviewer: Dave Hedberg

Transcript Auditor: Ana Bane

Additional Audit: Becky Schriber

<p>Phyllis Reynolds 00:11 On Northwest... oh, what's the name of the street anyway? It's right at the corner of 25th and Westover, and it's huge. Then there's one down on Burnside. That is huge.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 00:43 Right, cool. That is all working. Great. All right. Well, thank you. So just as I start, I'm with Phyllis Reynolds. It's two o'clock Thursday the 16th 2024. And I'm doing an oral history with Phyllis. Could you just give me your, your birth date?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 01:14 6-25-29.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 01:16 All right. And where were you born?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 01:20 Portland.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 01:21 You're born in Portland and</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 01:23 down in? Where St. Vincent's used to be.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 01:28 All right. And so you, you were telling me earlier that you grew up in North Portland?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 01:37 I did. Well, I grew up in Alameda until I was five. Then I moved to North Portland. And I lived there until I was thirteen then I moved to Arlington Heights.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 01:53 Okay. And when you were a kid, you had a bicycle, you were saying?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 01:59 Yeah, I got a bike when I was six, because I went to Beach School, which was something like four blocks away. And I had to get there and get back and on foot took a long time. So my parents gave me a bike for Christmas. And I rode all over the place all over the north side. I used to go and have religious arguments with the priests at University of Portland.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 02:37</p>	<p>Start of interview</p> <p>Reynolds' early childhood memory of riding her bike around North Portland</p>
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What kind of what kind of arguments would you have?

Phyllis Reynolds 02:40

Oh, I yeah, I was an atheist. And so it was mostly about God. And and I guess the Catholic Church or I'm not sure, but that you know, they were nice and it was good chatting with a priest now and then.

Dave Hedberg 03:02

So you were in a Catholic school?

Phyllis Reynolds 03:04

No.

Dave Hedberg 03:05

Okay. Okay.

Phyllis Reynolds 03:06

Beach is a public school.

Dave Hedberg 03:08

Oh, that's right. Okay. Yes, the Beach School. There's a big oak tree across the street.

Phyllis Reynolds 03:13

Yes, yes. Yes.

Dave Hedberg 03:17

Okay.

Phyllis Reynolds 03:17

That I made a heritage tree.

Dave Hedberg 03:20

Yeah. Okay, great. Okay. So, you know, early years growing up in Portland, did you, so you went to high school here also?

Phyllis Reynolds 03:32

Yeah, I went to I went one semester to Jefferson. And then I went to Catlin School. Not there was no Gable attached to it. Catlin school. And I graduated Catlin. But I did go one year to Lincoln in the middle of it.

Dave Hedberg 03:59

So you you moved around quite a bit then between high schools.

Phyllis Reynolds 04:02

Yeah, well, Jefferson, because we lived in North Portland. And I could ride my bike to Jefferson. And then yeah, it was hard to get to Catlin until we moved to Arlington Heights. At which point I could walk because it was over on Westover. And I could walk or take a bus. Mm

Dave Hedberg 04:31

hmm. So you graduated from high school at Catlin?

Phyllis Reynolds 04:35

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 04:35

Okay. And then, where did you go to college?

Phyllis Reynolds 04:39

I went one year to Mills College in Oakland. And then I had a 10 year hiatus from college and then started back as a sophomore at the University of Minnesota because we had moved. I got married and we moved to Minneapolis, my husband was a physician who went there for his internship and residency, etc. So we moved to Minneapolis. And I started back as a sophomore, and then finished getting my PhD seven years later.

Dave Hedberg 05:26

And where was that at?

Phyllis Reynolds 05:27

At University of Minnesota

Dave Hedberg 05:29

At Univeristy of Minnesota. And what was your PhD in?

Phyllis Reynolds 05:33

Clinical Psychology.

Dave Hedberg 05:36

Right.

Big oak tree across from Beach School where Reynolds attended elementary, and later she made the oak into a heritage tree

Reynolds' high schools: Jefferson, Catlin (Gable), and Lincoln

PhD in Clinical Psychology from U of Minnesota

Phyllis Reynolds 05:37

So I was a shrink, once.

Dave Hedberg 05:41

So at that time were there a lot of women in that field?

Phyllis Reynolds 05:46

Yeah, there were, there. In my class, there were it was about half women, actually. And yeah.

Dave Hedberg 06:01

And when you had your practice was that in Portland, you came back to Portland to have a practice?

Phyllis Reynolds 06:07

Well no, I was there. And so I was out was a shrink at the Student Health Service at the university. And my husband was on the faculty. Well, we were both on the faculty actually at the University of Minnesota at the medical school, and then we came back here in 1977. And John got, there was only one job in the whole country that was open that he would he could get, and he got it. And so we were able to move back to Portland because John's family was from Portland. My family was in Portland, and it was good to get back before they all croaked.

Dave Hedberg 07:03

What was his job that brought him back here?

Phyllis Reynolds 07:06

He was head of the infant intensive care unit at OHSU.

Dave Hedberg 07:11

Wow. That's an important, important. And I bet an intense job.

Phyllis Reynolds 07:18

Yeah. Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 07:22

Okay, so that that's kind of brought you back to Portland. Yeah, it was in 77 you said.

Phyllis Reynolds 07:30

Yes.

Dave Hedberg 07:30

Okay.

Phyllis Reynolds 07:31

Yes.

Dave Hedberg 07:31

Interesting. What, I'm kind of curious what, in that time period before you were in Portland, did you have an interest in trees?

Phyllis Reynolds 07:43

No, not really. I had, I've always had an interest in wildflowers and you know, ID-ing wildflowers, etc. But never much about trees I was aware of— we had a beautiful American elm at our house in Minneapolis. And I knew what kind of what trees were. But I know I didn't go around identifying trees at all, as I did flowers.

Dave Hedberg 08:03

So what was it that sparked your interest in trees? And your work and trees here in Portland?

Phyllis Reynolds 08:28

The Corbett oak on Corbett that was threatened. It was a big, well, it is, it's still a heritage tree, I think. And it was threatened to be cut. They threatened to cut it down and develop the lot. And I was in the gardening club then and head of conservation. And they contacted me. What can I do, along with the pile of people that were contacted. And so I went looked at it and got in touch with Robbie Robinson, who was the, kind of like the city arborist, he planted a great number of the trees in Portland Parks, and along the streets. And he also was highly involved with the beginning of the Japanese garden. And he gave me a list of trees that he had seen around the city that he thought were important trees, for whatever reason. And so I took that list and with a friend of mine who was also in the garden club. She she and I had gone to high school together. We drove around to look at these trees. And we discovered that many of them weren't there and anymore. They had been removed. So we thought, that's terrible. And I said, her name was Elizabeth Diamond. I said, let's write a book about important trees in Portland. And maybe if they were in a book, they would be saved. So that's what we did we, and we got to, we got

Move back to
Portland in 1977

Reynolds' early
interest in
wildflowers

The Corbett Oak
that sparked
Reynolds'
interest in trees

Deciding to write
a book about
trees in Portland
with friend
Elizabeth "Fitz"

through the arboretum, I met a guy named Stan Lindstrom, who was absolutely knowledgeable about trees, he knew everything. And he helped us go around and identify trees. And I remember we went to Sauvie's Island and identified the trees there and so forth. Anyway, he was a big help. And so we worked on the book, planned the book and everything. And I had more time than – her nickname was Fitz. I had more time than Fitz did to do things. So I did go around and photographed them all, and measured them all. DBH [Diameter at Breast Height] and then we planned pretty walks in the back and we planned the book. And then Fitz died, suddenly of a heart attack, which left me writing the book, I had to write it. And we, we got a publisher, Timber Press, because I used to babysit the owner of it, Bob Conklin. And I kind of twisted his arm saying, Bob, we want to write this book about trees in Portland. So he agreed. And that's how we got our first publisher. And I wrote the book, and it was printed, I remember in China. And that was that, you know, came out in 1993. And then 20 years later, I decided a new book should be written. So I did. I went to all the trees in the old book, to find some of them not there, of course, and included some new trees, took new photographs, took new measurements, and so forth. So that was the birth of the second or second edition actually of Trees of Greater Portland. And by that time, I knew more about trees than I did when I started. I had a steep learning curve.

Dave Hedberg 13:32

Wow. I'm curious about so you said you were involved in the Portland Garden Club. When did you get involved with Portland Garden Club?

Phyllis Reynolds 13:44

Fitz and I both joined at the same time in 1980. And I'm still a member, I've written, it'll be 100 years old in August. And so we wrote a history of which I wrote, I'm a co author of the history of the garden club. And it's, as I say I'm still a member I don't drive anymore. I had to stop that last June and or July. And so we don't go there anymore. And anyway, I am active as far as being a co author of the history book, which is right there, I'm pointing at it. And so that's

Dave Hedberg 14:47

yeah, it's an important institution in Portland.

Phyllis Reynolds 14:51

Well, yeah, it is. As they go, I think it is. It has some clout and, and nationally it's part of the Garden Club of America. So it has national clout. And it's pretty good. It's changed a lot since I first joined. It's the membership has, the number of members hasn't changed, but the composition of the members seems to have changed in the it's not totally focused on horticulture anymore. And one thing was partly my fault, I started a group called Digits, which dealt with photography, photographing plants, and so forth. And that's still going strong. Anyway, it's people change. And so the Garden Club has changed. Since I joined.

Dave Hedberg 16:06

is that what what are some of those changes? Is it a difference in style? or

Phyllis Reynolds 16:12

No, no, they're just more varied. Now they have a book club and in the photography group.

Dave Hedberg 16:19

I see.

Phyllis Reynolds 16:19

And they're no longer completely focused on horticulture the way they used to be. It in the beginning in 1924, when it started, it was total horticulture. And they had flowers. They did have flower shows, but the flowers had to come from your garden, ect. Now it is quite different. And it's become urbanized and so forth.

Dave Hedberg 16:57

I see I see.

Phyllis Reynolds 16:58

But it's it's a good institution. It does good things. I was thinking just earlier today about the time that Portland decided to have street trees in pots. So all over downtown Portland were pots full of trees. And we knew that that wouldn't work. I mean, you can't grow a tree in a pot especially in hot hot downtown Portland. And I don't think they lasted more than a couple of years and they had to be all removed.

Dave Hedberg 17:55

Diamond and guidance from Robbie Robinson and Stan Lindstrom

Joining the Portland Garden Club in 1980

How the Garden Club has changed since she joined

Portland's failed attempt to grow street trees in pots in downtown

who whose idea was it to put

Phyllis Reynolds 17:58

some some dumb person in Portland in the in the government? I don't know.

Dave Hedberg 18:05

Do you remember what year that was?

Phyllis Reynolds 18:11

Let's see about 19... I think it was in the 1980s or early 1990s.

Dave Hedberg 18:22

Okay

Phyllis Reynolds 18:25

They you know they had these shallow kind of shallow big pots down the street. And it just was stupid.

Dave Hedberg 18:37

Some I'm curious you mentioned Robbie Robinson and early tree planting efforts. What are your memories of you know how the city has approached tree tree planting as a government entity. How have you seen that begin and change?

Phyllis Reynolds 18:57

Ah, I think they were very lucky to have had Robbie because he knew about a lot about trees. And he planted an awful lot of trees in Columbia Park some in Peninsula Park I mean he, and other parks in the city, Sellwood Park. He knew about trees and he was very handy. I knew the arborist, the city arborist before, well, I've known two or three of them. The first one. I don't think-- he was a nice guy, but I don't think he knew too much about trees because he cut down some trees that he shouldn't have, in my opinion. But

Dave Hedberg 19:58

Do you remember who that was?

Phyllis Reynolds 20:07

Oh gosh, what was his name?

Dave Hedberg 20:09

Was that Alex Wynstra?

Phyllis Reynolds 20:11

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 20:12

Okay.

Phyllis Reynolds 20:13

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 20:16

Yeah.

Phyllis Reynolds 20:18

And then the guy that followed Alex was a nice guy. He had been associated with the Portland with the Portland nursery. Now I can't even remember his it was a Mc-something. Can't remember his name either.

Dave Hedberg 20:40

I've heard I've heard his name, but it's also escaping me too.

Phyllis Reynolds 20:45

But he was a nice guy. I'm not sure how much he knew about trees. But he was pretty good about running the commission and making decisions. And the present city arborist is a friend of mine, Jenn Cairo. She comes here for lunch. Every so often rides her bike from where she lives in North Portland up here. To have lunch.

Dave Hedberg 21:25

Well that's good. That's yeah, that's that's quite a bike ride.

Phyllis Reynolds 21:28

Yeah, yeah.

Dave Hedberg 21:31

That's good to hear. So you, you discuss some of your perspective on trees with her?

Phyllis Reynolds 21:39

Oh, yeah, we talk a lot. We have some tree talk, shop talk while she's here. And I talked to her a

Reynolds' thoughts on previous city arborists Robbie Robinson, Alex Winster, and others

Reynolds' friend Jenn Cairo, current city forester, whose

lot about the Overlook oak. And unfortunately, her hands seemed to be pretty much tied. She can't make other people... seem to be able to make decisions over her. So that she's a little bit tied down, I think, in ways that never used to be that way. But now they're new parts of the city government that seem to have had inroads.

Dave Hedberg 22:36

How was it? You know, I'm curious, like in those early days. Going back to the story of the Corbett oak.

Phyllis Reynolds 22:45

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 22:47

You know, how, what was... What's your impression of, you know, the city's role in saving the Corbett oak?

Phyllis Reynolds 23:01

I... my impression is, and this is only because I can't really I didn't have any direct contact with the city. But I think the city was kind of giving up. It took a huge number of people to organize and fight it. And if it hadn't been for a few important people making a lot of noise, I think the city would have said, Oh, cut it down. You know, I don't think I don't think the city's ever been great about saving trees, really. Although they did allow the commission to be formed [Urban Forestry Commission], and so forth. But yeah, I don't. That's all I know, because I didn't have any contact with the City back then.

Dave Hedberg 24:04

Were you involved with some of the neighbors and folks in that neighborhood in saving the tree?

Phyllis Reynolds 24:11

I was not. Jane Glazer who was the who started the heritage tree committee was. She was involved with the neighbors and involved with the fight about it. I just was there looking at it and thinking, Oh, that's too bad. You know, I wasn't highly involved with saving that tree in any way. I was called, because I was head of the Conservation Committee at the Garden Club. And it was probably Jane who called me. I don't know.

Dave Hedberg 24:53

Do you remember reading about it in the papers?

Phyllis Reynolds 24:56

Yeah yeah, I remember being there a lot and so forth. And certainly remember measuring it. Oh, and then some group wanted to plant the understory. And so I gave them a long list of what plants grow in an oak savanna. And I don't know what happened to that. I don't think it was replanted. I don't know.

Dave Hedberg 25:30

It's, I was just there recently, unfortunately. It's just a bunch of ivy right now.

Phyllis Reynolds 25:37

Yeah. Yeah. I'm sure we're, but it should be. It would be relatively easy to get some group involved with replanting that to make it like an oak savanna.

Dave Hedberg 25:54

I think so. That's a great. It's a it's on my radar. I'd love to see that happen.

Phyllis Reynolds 26:00

Yeah. Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 26:05

You mentioned Jane Glazer. Yeah. I just wonder like, if you could tell me a little about how you got involved with her and how you got involved with the heritage tree committee?

Phyllis Reynolds 26:16

Oh well, when Fitz and I were driving around looking for trees to put into our book, we drove down Main Street. And we were standing there looking at trees, and Jane came out of her house. And so we met Jane. And we said, we're going to write a book about trees. She said, Oh, well, I'm, I am too. And I said, Oh, really? So. I don't know how she went about organizing the heritage tree committee. But I know she did. And I was on it. The committee from the beginning. And she never wrote a book about trees. She was a poet. And she published a couple of poetry books. But she never knew much about trees at all. And it was kind of bad because some of the trees that got on the heritage list early were things that she put on, because friends of hers

hands seemed to be tied in city government

The effort to organize around saving the Corbett Oak, led by Jane Glazer, founder of the Heritage Tree Committee

Reynolds and Fitz meeting Jane Glazer while looking at trees outside her house.

wanted them on. And they never should have been. But they were there. I'm not going to tell you which ones.

Dave Hedberg 27:41

We'll be, we will be nice to those trees.

Phyllis Reynolds 27:44

Yeah, well, and I think they're probably still on the list. I don't know.

Dave Hedberg 27:48

Interesting. What was it? So what were those early meetings like? Did you meet at a city office?

Phyllis Reynolds 27:57

No, no, no, we met at Jane's house. And someone from the city would come with a car or a truck, and not a truck, a van. And then we'd hop into the car and go around and look at trees that people had proposed. And back in those days, it was our belief that to make heritage trees important, we should, they should be nominated by citizens who would then care about them. And so we didn't go around finding trees at all. They got nominated readily. We go look and make a decision. And with a few exceptions, Jane made her own decision. And let's see, Kevin [Hillary] was on the committee. Another friend of mine was Susan Landauer, she was on the committee. But we would measure the tree and take photographs of it and so on and so forth. And then talk about the trees that we looked at and make decisions about them. And then Jane would go before the city with photographs, proposing that such and such trees be made heritage trees, and of course the city didn't know anything. I mean, the city government didn't know anything about trees. So they readily said yes, to every tree that was proposed, which is fine. And then I did that when I became head of the committee, but that's what we did. Hop into the van and drive around and look at trees.

Dave Hedberg 30:01

How would you, would you vote on whether to accept it or?

Phyllis Reynolds 30:05

Yeah, we as a group as a committee, we would vote. And then Jane would take that list to the city.

Dave Hedberg 30:21

Interesting. Okay.

Phyllis Reynolds 30:22

With photographs and same thing I did I'd go there and present the trees and

Dave Hedberg 30:32

do you have any recollection or kind of sense of how the program itself got started? Like, how did the city write it into existence?

Phyllis Reynolds 30:46

I think it was Jane's push. She— I think she started it. And I don't know whose throat she throttled to down the city did get it to happen. But it was Jane that got it started. And I have no idea how she did it. Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 31:11

I've always been curious because you know, those early, like, 10 trees were listed as City Landmarks at first.

Phyllis Reynolds 31:21

Yeah, well, yeah. The the Elm down at the libr-or by the lib-. By the YWCA? And the plane tree up a block away and so forth. Yeah, they were. They were and I have no idea how they got to be that way. I have no idea.

Dave Hedberg 31:30

Yeah. I've asked people on the Landmarks Commission and

Phyllis Reynolds 31:52

no one

Dave Hedberg 31:52

they're up, you know, one kind of no one remembers, no one knows. No documents that tell us how....

Phyllis Reynolds 31:56

No, no.

Dave Hedberg 31:58

Early Heritage
Tree meetings at
Jane's house,
driving to visit
nominated trees

Getting citizen
nominations

How the
committee
proposed trees to
the city

Mystery of the
ten trees listed as
city landmarks

But that's rather unique. I think that Portland has, you know, landmarked its trees. And I've always thought, well, there must have been a connection. But what that connection is there, we've been able to figure

Phyllis Reynolds 32:10
out, well, the Elm was, who planted it, and how it got here. And all that stuff made it pretty important. And the owners of it, the original owners, and it was all of it. So someone in the city must have been aware, been made aware of that. But yeah, I don't know.

Dave Hedberg 32:38
Okay. Yeah, that makes sense. So when were you the chair of the Heritage Tree Committee? Do you remember?

Phyllis Reynolds 32:46
Yeah I started in 1993. And I think it was six years later. No, I didn't start 1993. Well, it was six years after it was started in 1993.

Dave Hedberg 33:14
93 is when it began, I think.

Phyllis Reynolds 33:15
And I started on the committee in 93. And I think I went six years. So it must have been 69 that I was became the head of it. Okay. Jane retired. Okay.

Dave Hedberg 33:30
So Jane retired and you became chair in 1999. And what did, had anything changed in the program in that six years?

Phyllis Reynolds 33:40
No, I instigated the putting all the photographs and measurements and everything into a book. Which I gave you early copies of which I think was important and PGE, was it PGE? Yeah, they printed it. Gratis.

Dave Hedberg 34:14
Is that something you kind of remember beginning under your tenure?

Phyllis Reynolds 34:18
Yeah. I started that.

Dave Hedberg 34:19
With PGE Okay.

Phyllis Reynolds 34:20
Oh, not the PGE because the head of the commission was a PGE employee. Okay. So he said, we'll do it, which is nice. Yeah. Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 34:37
Yeah they trim a lot of trees.

Phyllis Reynolds 34:39
Yes they do. Yes, they do. And, you know, he was a nice guy. Really nice guy, knowledgeable guy. He gave us all copies of a book about Uh, caring for trees— identified trees. I still have the book somewhere and so forth.

Dave Hedberg 35:07
Do you remember his name?

Phyllis Reynolds 35:08
I'm trying to think.

Dave Hedberg 35:09
Okay.

Phyllis Reynolds 35:12
Not off the top of my head, but I could

Dave Hedberg 35:14
David Johnson.

Phyllis Reynolds 35:15
Yeah. Dave

Dave Hedberg 35:16
Okay. Okay.

Phyllis Reynolds 35:18
Yeah. And he looked, we used to meet in the Lovejoy room at City Hall. And there's a picture

Reynolds takes over for Jane as head of Committee in 1999

Reynolds initiated putting together a book (of all the heritage trees?) with photos and measurements, printed for free by PGE

Working with David Johnson, head of urban forestry

<p>Lovejoy. And he looked exactly like Lovejoy. He would sit under the picture, and it was just really funny. But he was a nice guy.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 35:39 Who were some of the other committee members back then in 1999. When you were a chair, you remember?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 35:45 Well, yeah, Kevin. Continued. Susan Landauer was still on it. And Jill Strots, I think was on it for a while. And who else? No, I can't remember. Okay.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 36:29 I'm trying to remember there's a there's a member who, who passed away a couple of years ago, who was a landscape architect. And his name is escaping me right now.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 36:41 It wasn't he. Okay. Because we didn't have one on the</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 36:46 John Warner.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 36:48 Oh John. John was, I knew John quite well. He died a couple of years ago?</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 36:55 Uh huh.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 36:56 Oh, too bad. No, he was never on that committee, but he was on the commission. And yeah, no, he was, he wasn't.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 37:10 Okay. He told me a story and tell me if this rings a bell. But he told me about there's some Caucasian wingnuts on Knott Street in Irvington. And he told me there's a story that they came from the Shah of Iran, and that they had been detained in a cargo plane when the Shah had been visiting Portland for a medical treatment or something. Do you remember hearing that story?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 37:39 He told me that too. Yeah.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 37:42 You heard it from John.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 37:44 Yeah, well you have to believe he and he told me about the trees that are still alive on Burnside, those whatever they are down there. between the river and Broadway. They are planted in practically no soil. And they survive all this time. Because he was he was involved with there being either selected or planted or something anyway. Yeah. He was a nice guy used to meet and have beer every so often. With him and the guy who's a city arborist whose name neither of us can remember. Mc-something.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 38:39 Okay. Yeah, yeah As soon as I get home, I'll</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 38:43 Yeah, yeah.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 38:45 I'll remember but, okay. So John was a commissioner at that time.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 38:51 Yeah.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 38:52 All right. And so in those early days, when you were a chair, the chair, you take the nominations to city council. Did City Council ever decline a tree?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 39:08 No.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 39:09 They accepted every one?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 39:10 No, they didn't know one tree from another. You know, they knew that. No, they didn't. So no,</p>	<p>commission, on the book</p> <p>Other members of the committee including Kevin Hillary, Susan Landauer, Jill Strots, and John Warner</p> <p>Story from John Warner about Caucasian wingnut trees from the Shah of Iran</p> <p>City council would accept every tree nomination</p>
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they voted. They just said yes to everything.

Dave Hedberg 39:20

And would all, would the with the trees back then get a metal plaque put on them?

Phyllis Reynolds 39:24

Yes, the plaques are made at the Arboretum. And that used to make all the plaques for the arboretum trees. And yeah, a metal plaque would be put on them. And I've got pictures somewhere of metal plaques being put on trees. But yeah.

Dave Hedberg 39:56

How do people know that they could nominate a tree and this program was around?

Phyllis Reynolds 40:01

I don't know, I don't know how that got out. But they did. I mean, they will call this, you know, it caught on. So that there were plenty of nominations from the, well, I don't know from the get go, but by the time I was head of the thing there were. Like Mrs. Benson with that, the Overlook Oak. She knew about it. I don't know how she knew about it, but she did. Well, maybe people would call the city and say I want to save this tree. And the city would say, you do this and that. I suspect that was the way it happened.

Dave Hedberg 40:53

I've always been curious, because I've occasionally found, you know, a newspaper article here, here or there that would mention a, you know, an interesting tree, but not regularly. So I was

Phyllis Reynolds 41:05

yeah,

Dave Hedberg 41:06

was it as you know, a city beat reporter that just happened to be covering Council and heard about this program and ran a story. Always been curious about that.

Phyllis Reynolds 41:16

No, and there there are... What are they down... (phone alarm goes off)

Dave Hedberg 41:34

It's okay.

Phyllis Reynolds 41:36

Well, do you mind if I get it?

Dave Hedberg 41:39

No no, I can stop for a second. [recording pauses for a few min]

Phyllis Reynolds 41:49

Okay, sorry about that.

Dave Hedberg 41:50

No no it's alright, it's alright. I'll just press record again. And I'll start this one again. Okay, great. Where were we?

Phyllis Reynolds 42:03

Where were we? Yeah, I was.

Dave Hedberg 42:06

Yeah, I've just, oh, we're talking about how people learned about the heritage tree program.

Phyllis Reynolds 42:13

Oh, yeah. Yeah, I think they did call. And it's something that gets around, you know, and people get adamant about saving trees. If they're into that kind of thing. They don't want trees cut down. And they'll do anything to try to save a tree, including calling the city and I don't know what the city says now. But I know then the city would say, Well, you have to appear before the Commission, the Urban Forestry Commission, and so forth. And then there was a form that they filled out, and the city must have had the form to hand out to people somehow, because we would get things fit, you know, filled out on forms.

Dave Hedberg 43:19

Interesting.

Phyllis Reynolds 43:21

Well, we always had enough to do. You know, we weren't just sitting there twiddling our thumbs waiting for people to nominate trees people did.

Dave Hedberg 43:34

And about how many nominations would you get, compared to what you would accept?

How word spread about the Heritage Tree Program

[recording pauses for a few min]

People who called the city were referred to the Urban Forestry Commission to filled out a form

Phyllis Reynolds 43:42

Oh. That's a good question. I think probably it was about if we got 10 nominations per month, we would maybe accept five. And then I composed a form letter that was sent to the people saying your tree was accepted or not. No, we cannot accept your tree. I think that was what I did for the following reasons and so forth.

Dave Hedberg 44:30

Interesting, yeah, that's it's a similar trend these days, although I think we get a lot more.

Phyllis Reynolds 44:40

Oh,

Dave Hedberg 44:41

pretty low quality nominations, because people just want to save a tree.

Phyllis Reynolds 44:45

Right.

Dave Hedberg 44:46

And, you know, frankly, they don't have the space to grow to be the tree that it needs to be or so those are those are those things that happen

Phyllis Reynolds 44:53

Yeah, I know that... There were people, some people who wanted to save a tree, and there were other people who didn't. And that happened. There was one case, I can't remember what kind of a tree but it never got. We wanted to make it a heritage tree. And someone either part of the owner or something or other didn't. So it never got to be. So and it was it was a an unusual tree. I can't remember what it was. But there's not one on the list yet of what whatever it was.

Dave Hedberg 45:42

That brings up a an important question I have for you. How did the committee treat trees that were on public spaces versus on private property in those early days?

Phyllis Reynolds 45:56

Well, that's a good question. Because private property. This is one thing I had with Jane Glazer, she would say, Oh, yes, that's a nice tree back at that house. And she would want to make a heritage tree. And I would say, No, it has to be a tree that's visible from the street for people to see it, the public to see it, the people can't go behind the house to see a tree. So we argued about that all the time, because Jane wanted to make willy nilly any tree that was growing a heritage tree and public property? Well, the rule that I especially set up and tried to keep to was, it had to be totally visible from the street, from public land, to, for people to see it as a heritage tree. And then the reason I quit the commission was that the city ombudsman made a decision that everyone in the neighborhood had to sign the permission to make it a heritage tree, because the roots went everywhere in the neighborhood. And he didn't consult me about making this decision. He just made it. And that made me furious that we didn't have a dialogue about this beforehand. And because I've been I might have said, Okay, up to a certain extent. But you know, when you're including the whole neighborhood in a decision about a tree, it's way too involved. Anyway, I quit, I just walked out. And I don't know, I knew the ombudsman's parents quite well. And they were very apologetic that I would not like them because of this and I said no, no, no problem. It was Kate and Jack Mills. And so I don't know what what's the rule now?

Dave Hedberg 48:43

Well, it's interesting, because I've I've never seen that in the code. So I'm glad you brought that up. Because I'd never heard about this whole neighborhood.

Phyllis Reynolds 48:54

It probably never got in because I was so pissed. That you know, it probably never gotten into a code.

Dave Hedberg 49:04

Yeah. So currently, you know, they have there's a requirement that the property owner signs a the nomination. And they're required, it says in the code that it's supposed to be put on

Phyllis Reynolds 49:25

deed

Dave Hedberg 49:25

the deed

Phyllis Reynolds 49:26

They generally accepted half of the nominations they received, ~10 per month

Debate over trees on public vs. private land

Reynolds instated that heritage trees must be totally visible from the street/public space

She quit the commission after the ombudsman established a requirement for neighborhood-wide consensus when making a Heritage Tree

yes.

Dave Hedberg 49:28

And do so do you remember when that?

Phyllis Reynolds 49:30

No, it was after my time.

Dave Hedberg 49:32

Okay. And

Phyllis Reynolds 49:34

we tried to get that because we could see how important that was? Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 49:42

Yeah

Phyllis Reynolds 49:43

see if it, it for the Overlook oak. If it'd been put in the deed it would have made a huge difference.

Dave Hedberg 49:51

right. Yeah, that's that this is where I started seeing the issue creeping back.

Phyllis Reynolds 50:00

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 50:01

And I can read, you know, the old code from the very beginning, you know, said that, you know, what does it all heirs and assigns would have to, you know have to take this designation. But it's, it's nothing more than that. Yep. So do you would have private property owners sign something?

Phyllis Reynolds 50:24

Yes, they would sign an agreement. But that was it.

Dave Hedberg 50:27

That was it.

Phyllis Reynolds 50:28

And that would go to the city attorney for review. What did he have to review about it? Anyway, he was, he was part of the, he was there when we were making the decision to put it before the city put these trees. So yeah,

Dave Hedberg 50:54

it's very much like that today. When it goes to the Urban Forestry Commission. I think the city attorney sits in on those meetings.

Phyllis Reynolds 51:02

Yeah, yeah.

Dave Hedberg 51:03

Yeah. Interesting. I mean, this is the it's the legalese. But when people are looking to work around a tree, it always, that's how they getcha.

Phyllis Reynolds 51:14

Yeah. Well, in this root thing, I think it's important because it's like the roots of the Overlook oak, the ones that go out where they're going to build, not the first houses, but the second houses will be affected. Because those are the important roots, the end roots, the little rootlets that do all the drinking and eating. They're many, many, many feet away, many yards away, and they'll be dug up. And that will kill the tree slowly.

Dave Hedberg 52:02

So that's really, that's quite interesting. Also, curious, following up on this visibility from the public, right away. Was that something that ever was kind of formalized? Or was that just kind of like an understanding for the community?

Phyllis Reynolds 52:18

No, as long as I was on the committee, it was an understanding that we had to be able to stand there on the street and see at least a great portion of the top of the tree. There's one couple of trees that were in someone's backyard, but you could see them well enough. So that it was okay. I can't remember which trees those were.

Dave Hedberg 53:01

So as you know, since you've since you've been back in Portland since the 70s. You know, Portland has gone through a lot of development and redevelopment re redevelopment Have you seen, You know, has concern for trees and development always been there? You know, since

The issue of housing developments killing roots many yards away from the tree

your time back here in the 70s?

Phyllis Reynolds 53:29

Oh, yeah. Well, there are two groups, there's the developers, and then the rest of us. And the developers don't give a hoot about trees. And would love to cut them down to put more whatever they're developing on the land. And then there are the neighbors who really love the trees and want to save them. And I, you know, I see this as a two group thing. And then well, no three groups, then there are people who don't give a hoot about trees, one way or the other. It doesn't even cross their mind. But there are an awful lot of people in Portland who are very involved about trees and saving them and get very excited if they're threatened.

Dave Hedberg 54:43

Do you remember? Or were you involved with Friends of Trees from its beginning?

Phyllis Reynolds 54:51

I remember when it started. Yes. And because it started in 1993

Dave Hedberg 54:57

Right

Phyllis Reynolds 54:58

at the same time This whole thing started and I knew the guy who started it and I remember Fitz and I decided that we wouldn't have anything to do with Friends of Trees, not it was just too much to write a book about trees and do that too because their mission was quite different. Their mission was to put in more trees along the street well though I guess on private property too but and some of the many of the trees that they put in were not particularly good trees and or the wherever they got them and so forth. So I've never had much to do with friends of trees over the years

Dave Hedberg 56:08

you know, I've always been. [Recording stopped, batteries being replaced] Okay, that is better. Back recording Start. Okay. Great, thank you. Sorry about that.

Phyllis Reynolds 58:27

No problem.

Dave Hedberg 58:28

Technology.

Phyllis Reynolds 58:31

Yeah, sucks.

Dave Hedberg 58:35

So, one of the.... I'm also curious about in those days, the, you know, the 90s and early 2000s what you remember about the city's role and parks' role in tree planting? At that time, do you remember anything about that?

Phyllis Reynolds 58:56

Well, I remember when the city came up with a street tree list of different size parking areas and what could be put in them. And that was, I think that was good that they could hand out the list. Look, you have a parking strip of two feet. You can't put in anything but this and this and this, because people might try to put in Oregon White oak and two feet or something or other. And I would, I remember certainly being out at their office. A lot, and I don't, I think urban forestry has always has been kind of the, the poor child of the family. I think they get a short trip all the time. And then when other groups come in, like, I can't even remember, what one now, what city group really started taking over. And the guy who took over would tell us about planting trees. You know, trees should go in and and we'd say no, they're not good trees or something or other. But he thought he knew everything about trees, and he didn't. And it was very hard to get him to. Well, we couldn't get him. I mean, he was adamant that we had to do it his way. And we tried to get street trees paid for by the city. You know, the the care of them. And the sweeping up the leaves and everything and that didn't work. I came up with the thing about taxing people per linear foot of street access for, for that purpose for street trees, that didn't work and so forth. But it's just, I think, too bad that the city owns the space, but the people own the trees and have to pay for their complete care. That just doesn't seem right to me.

Dave Hedberg 1:01:54

It doesn't, right,

Phyllis Reynolds 1:01:55

Three groups in Reynolds' mind: developers who want to cut down trees, neighbors who want to save trees, and people who don't care at all

Why Reynolds was not involved with the Friends of Trees

The city's role in tree planting and care in the 90s-2000s

The city's list of street trees

While on the committee, she tried unsuccessfully to convince the city to pay for tree

or else paying to have the leaves picked up.

Dave Hedberg 1:02:00

Do you remember what? Like, why wouldn't? Why did you get opposition for that? It seems like a very logical thing to you know, assess the amount of right of way or street space, and then you that's what you're taxed on, you get why do people not want to do that?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:02:17

In the city?

Dave Hedberg 1:02:18

Yeah

Phyllis Reynolds 1:02:19

I don't know. Because we had meetings I, I led these meetings, and we met, we as people on the Urban Forestry Commission. And because it was really my idea. And we tried to push it. And I don't know, it didn't go anywhere. And whoever the next person was to listen to it said no, or something like that. And so didn't get off the ground. I was looking through some of my old files, and saw what we had written and so forth. And it just didn't fly.

Dave Hedberg 1:03:09

It's how most large cities deal with it. And it's interesting that Portland doesn't follow.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:03:16

Right.

Dave Hedberg 1:03:17

You know, how most other cities do it.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:03:19

Right.

Dave Hedberg 1:03:19

It's a very odd arrangement.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:03:21

Yes.

Dave Hedberg 1:03:24

Well, I'm interested, when did you become involved with the Urban Forestry Commission? You remember?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:03:32

1993? Oh, wait a minute. That was I was on the committee. The Urban Forestry Commission? I think I was on about 1995 or ninety six, something like that. Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:03:54

And what, what were some of the activities of the commission back then that you were that you remember?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:04:02

Well, we always if people wanted to cut down a tree and the city said no, they could have they could come to the meeting and get us to say yes or no about it. Because I remember my neighbor across the street wanted to cut down a tree and had to go before the commission. So we had that. What else did we have? We would people would come and talk to us about certain city trees or certain plantings or something, right? Yeah. And this is all very hazy right now.

Dave Hedberg 1:04:57

That's alright.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:04:58

But we did we We met and in the Lovejoy room and sat there and what else did we do?

Dave Hedberg 1:05:16

Do you remember? Were you ever involved with Bill Naito?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:05:21

Ah, I knew Bill. Well, his brother Sam was a neighbor of mine. And they live right up here, a block . And actually, his Bill's son lives right down here now. But no, I was never involved with Bill. Jane Glazer was because one of the Heritage trees was a tree that Bill Naito liked a little cherry tree downtown. And I don't know if it still is there or what. But that's what Jane would do, on her own, make these heritage trees without going through the committee. And

Dave Hedberg 1:06:18

I know he, you know, he was an interesting person because he was, you know, involved in

maintenance on
the city's land

Urban Forestry
Commission
appeals and
removals
subcommittee

<p>development, but was also very passionate about, you know, tree preservation.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:06:31 Yeah.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:06:31 Rare developers that had an interest in both.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:06:35 Yeah.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:06:37 I know and that he was an urban forestry Commissioner. So I know, you know, folks, a lot of people worked with him.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:06:48 Yeah. No he, and I got one of the Bill Naito awards one year, made out of a hunk of Oregon, white oak. They had they had cut it down near the river, Willamette Park. And it's the heaviest thing. I mean, it's that thick, and it's huge. Anyway.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:07:15 also curious about were you involved with the Japanese garden?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:07:21 Yeah, I was. I was on the board and head of the garden committee for quite some time. And I have very mixed feelings about the Japanese garden. Now, all right, I did have, I always had, but in the early days when it was planted, and, and Robbie was part of it, and it was fun. And it was been, I made a complete Plant List of the garden that can be sold at the gate. And I've often wondered what happened to that. Anyway, why do you ask?</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:08:15 Oh, just interested because, you know, it seems like you've had quite a bit of involvement in various parts of the city and I think as an institution, I had heard you know that you had been involved at one point so I'm curious how you got involved.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:08:32 And I had, let's see. It was started by the father of a friend of mine. The garden was, Philip Inglehart really started it, and his, I still have lunch with his daughter in law. Anyway, I remember before the Japanese Garden was there when it was a zoo. And how horrible that zoo was. It was so bad. And I lived right down on Arlington Heights so that you could really almost hear the lion's roar. And and then I remember when they moved it up here and I'm totally against zoos. So I wish we could do Portland could do what Vancouver BC did. They kept all the animals until they died. And then when all the animals died That was the end of the zoo. Instead of having a whole herd of elephants on concrete floors it's interesting because I lived so close to the zoo, and I've never been in it.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:10:22 Interesting. Yeah.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:10:26 I wrote a history of the Arboretum.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:10:30 That was one of my next questions was, how you got involved with the Arboretum?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:10:35 Oh, cause I lived, I when I lived on Arlington Heights, I lived within 1000 feet of it. And I live here, not much more than 1000 feet from it. And it's there. When I was in high school, I used to walk down to the end of my street and walk up a path. I mean, it was right there at the end of my street. Yeah. And so that was in the 1940s. And so I do a lot of walking in there and a lot of getting a specimen for my biology class in there and so forth. And ride horses. We used to ride horses in there.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:11:27 Where would you get a horse? I'm curious.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:11:29 down at Sylvan used to have a riding Academy. And so we'd get a horse and come up the hill, there were no houses over here. And it was just bridle paths and we come up to Fairview and walk down Fairview to the arboretum and go into the arboretum, much to their chagrin, because it was not a place for horses. It was not a place for -- Ernie Fisher, who was head of the</p>	<p>Remembering Bill and Sam Naito</p> <p>Reynolds' involvement with the Japanese Garden as head of garden committee</p> <p>Reynolds' hatred for the zoo near Arlington Heights where the Japanese Garden would be</p> <p>Walking down her street and a path into the</p>
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<p>arboretum way back then, hated horses and motorcycles. And apparently a lot of people in motorcycles would go whizzing through the Arboretum. Anyway. But</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:12:29 so what was the Arboretum like back then in the in the 40s?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:12:34 It was. Well, it there weren't all the paths. There were some paths. Ernie did put in a lot of paths. And roads. Course there wasn't Fisher Lane back then, because that was named after he died. I mean, that was he kind of put it in but didn't get named until after he died. But it, it was, I'm trying to remember, all I remember is there were trees and I can't remember how tall they were. It was planted in the 1930s with exotic specimens, and the first curator there, put in an awful lot of trees. He did an amazing job. And this was in the Depression.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:13:43 Right.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:13:43 And he also developed the West Hills Golf Course, which was part it was part of the arboretum essentially. And I played golf on that golf course.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:13:58 Really?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:13:59 I used to walk up with my mother's clubs, walk up to the golf course and play yeah.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:14:07 Interesting.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:14:08 Yeah.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:14:09 I mean, I had read about the idea of the arboretum back in the, you know, the Olmstead Plan and Miche and whatnot. But you know, it's interesting to me that it took until the 30s before it finally got started.</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:14:25 Well, it was 1928 when it really was born when it was approved by the city to be at Arboretum. And so and the first curator started in 1930, 30, 32 or something. Anyway, it was see I wrote the history and I can't remember what what exact year it was.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:14:55 That's right. happens to me too. Do you think that time in your youth in the Arboretum, do you think that influenced some of your interest in in trees?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:15:10 No, no, no, no, I really don't, I don't. I, when we lived in Portland before we moved to Minneapolis Well, when I lived in North Portland, we had a marvelous piece of property right overlooking the river. And we had three cherry trees and, and a peach tree. And no, I was certainly aware of those trees but for their fruit, not as being trees, not as being exotic trees. And so I really was not into identifying, being interested in, exceedingly interested in trees until 1993. Well, it was no it was for them since the book came out in 1993. So it was in the, 1989 I think that we started the book. Yeah.</p> <p>Dave Hedberg 1:16:34 Yeah. Interesting. Yeah. Well, I'd like to ask you just a couple more questions about interesting trees or interesting tree stories of the Heritage trees that you've been involved with...what is your what's your favorite heritage tree?</p> <p>Phyllis Reynolds 1:16:59 Oh, my favorite is the Elm down on by the YWCA because she's been there so long, and she came around South America to get here and she thrives and a friend of mine has an offspring from that tree that I dug up when no one was looking Susan Landauer who was on my committee that she lives in North Portland I have no idea because I don't see Susan anymore at all. I have no idea about that tree but that's my favorite heritage tree I think and I love the story about the the London plane tree a block away that the doors are getting given several of them and then when they wanted to sell the land to this gas station they made the gas station attendant agree to save one of the trees and that's why that one is there but and then you know</p>	<p>Arboretum in the 40s</p> <p>Riding horses from an academy at Sylvan up Fairview into the arboretum</p> <p>The arboretum in the 40s - much less paths</p> <p>Playing golf at the West Hills Golf Course part of the arboretum</p> <p>The cherry and peach trees on their property in North Portland</p>
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my other favorites of course are not, well they're some that are heritage trees but I love our native trees. Big Leaf Maples, the Pacific dogwood, I'd love them and I don't know if there are any dogwoods left

Dave Hedberg 1:18:57

there's still a there's a couple on our on the list

Phyllis Reynolds 1:19:00

are there

Dave Hedberg 1:19:01

and we actually that's one of the committee's always out now looking for. You know more to add.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:19:09

Yeah,

Dave Hedberg 1:19:10

but you know, they've got those.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:19:11

Yeah,

Dave Hedberg 1:19:12

they're they're kind of hard

Phyllis Reynolds 1:19:13

Yeah

Dave Hedberg 1:19:14

to find old specimens these days.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:19:16

Yeah. Right. So you go you guys do a lot of looking for trees.

Dave Hedberg 1:19:24

These days. I feel like a lot of what we do is Yeah, filling in and trying to think about what Heritage trees can be... What a heritage tree looks like in East Portland. It's you know, they because they've been planted later....

Phyllis Reynolds 1:19:45

yeah,

Dave Hedberg 1:19:45

they aren't. You can't really look at them the same as you can on on this side.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:19:50

Well, the the apple down there on in Sellwood? I mean that's been there forever and so forth. And East well yeah, East Portland was populated certainly. And I know Arlington Heights doesn't have one single great tree. Well, it's got some good trees but nothing spectacular at all. And it was developed way back in in the mid 1920s. And so on.

Dave Hedberg 1:20:38

Were you involved with any of the trees at the Dosch estates over off Dosch Road?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:20:45

No, I know they exist, obviously. But no, no.

Dave Hedberg 1:20:51

Maybe that was after your.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:20:52

Yeah. I never knew anyone named Dosch. Actually. I was certainly aware of the Dosches, but I didn't know any Dosch

Dave Hedberg 1:21:01

There's a man named Jim Driscoll. He's the grandson of

Phyllis Reynolds 1:21:06

now his name is familiar.

Dave Hedberg 1:21:09

He has there's a big there's an old apple up there.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:21:11

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:21:13

And

Phyllis Reynolds 1:21:14

Her favorite heritage tree, the Elm at the YWCA

Story about the London Plane Tree saved by a gas station attendant

Limited heritage tree possibilities in East Portland

yeah,
Dave Hedberg 1:21:14
a whole there was a collection. His grandfather was a collector of trees.
Phyllis Reynolds 1:21:20
Yeah.
Dave Hedberg 1:21:22
Yeah. And there's a fair, you know, there's a fair number of those that stories that we encounter.
Phyllis Reynolds 1:21:29
Yeah.
Dave Hedberg 1:21:30
Just because of Oregon. Oregon's history.
Phyllis Reynolds 1:21:33
Yeah.
Dave Hedberg 1:21:38
Curious about what about the you know, some of the exotics that have been brought in like the dawn redwoods?
Phyllis Reynolds 1:21:47
Well, they certainly are prolific. I mean, Robbie used to take cuttings, and grow them all the time. And I let him use the greenhouse at the garden club to propagate some of these cuttings of they're so easy to grow, to propagate. And I the, one of the Heritage trees over in North Portland, the owner that was a friend of mine, she was she was Ruth Hanson, who was the first landscape designer for Timberline Lodge. And she started the American Rhododendron society. And she was given one of the seeds that came from China and planted it and it's still that's what's there.
Dave Hedberg 1:22:52
So yeah, it's in North Portland its by like a dentist office now
Phyllis Reynolds 1:22:56
it's it's off of Lombard.
Dave Hedberg 1:22:58
Lombard, yeah okay. Huh I know, Ruth Hanson.
Phyllis Reynolds 1:23:02
Yeah.
Dave Hedberg 1:23:03
I need to look her up. Timberline Lodge. That's great. Thank you.
Phyllis Reynolds 1:23:08
She was quite something she was in the Garden Club. She knew rhododendrons all over the I mean to identify. Anytime I had one that I had, like the heritage, there were heritage trees that were rhododendrons in and I asked her what they were I didn't know. She did.
Dave Hedberg 1:23:35
Fascinating. Yeah. What was a... Do you remember when that heritage shrub or heritage tree Rhododendron was brought in?
Phyllis Reynolds 1:23:47
Made a heritage tree? No, I don't. But no, I don't remember it was sometime during my tenure, but don't know.
Dave Hedberg 1:23:58
I'm always curious about that. When you have a large shrub that becomes bigger than some small trees like,
Phyllis Reynolds 1:24:08
Well, yeah,
Dave Hedberg 1:24:09
How do you think about that.
Phyllis Reynolds 1:24:10
Well a Rhododendron
Dave Hedberg 1:24:11
Shrub versus tree
Phyllis Reynolds 1:24:13
can be a tree. I mean it really in China. It can be trees. I've got some trees out here that are 30

The Dosch Family and Jim Driscoll

Robbie Robinson propagating Dawn Redwood cuttings in the Garden Club greenhouse

Ruth Hanson, landscape designer for Timberline Lodge and member of Garden Club, and rhododendrons

feet tall. That's in my mind a tree. Not a large shrub and I know when they were planted I know when the ones out here were planted and who planted them. Dr. Goodman, the credit dentist planted them but I don't know why. I think someone proposed that. And I think we had arguments about it. And we decided, well, it's awful big. And it's got more than one trunk, but so do some trees. Like the the big Oregon, white oak across from Beach school has two definite trunks do it, et cetera. So anyway, we went with it

Dave Hedberg 1:25:36

what about trying to think of some other funny storied trees? Oh, the monkey puzzles?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:25:42

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:25:44

Do you remember? I've always been curious, like, who brought that story? You know, the monkey puzzles to the committee. Do you remember? How they how they came to Portland?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:25:58

Yeah, they were. They were part of the South American exhibit at the nineteen- five World's Fair, the Lewis and Clark fair. And they were in little pots. And they were handed out. And so the the two big ones over in Laurelhurst. Both came from pots that were handed out in 1905. And I gave a talk about heritage trees at the Holiday Park Retirement Home. And I was talking about with slides. And I showed the monkey puzzle one. And I said and this was it is in Laurelhurst Park and someone in the audience said "that's my tree!" And she was she was there. She had lived I mean, that. Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:26:57

So she had lived she lived at the house. Yes. And had she gotten the tree?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:27:03

No, not 19 Five but her it. But someone before her?

Dave Hedberg 1:27:10

Yeah.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:27:11

had planted it. Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:27:13

Interesting. Yeah. They're I think when I ask just the general public, that's probably the one story that average person on the street has heard. So I've always been curious. Like, how that came? You know how that story got out? And how it was shared? Have You ever Have you ever seen like a picture or anything of that? Expo booth?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:27:40

No. Never have.

Dave Hedberg 1:27:41

I've been trying to find one.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:27:43

No, I don't think you, Well, maybe you can. Photographs of the whole exposition are kind of hard to come by.

Dave Hedberg 1:27:56

Yeah, they're hard to come by. And I've seen postcards.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:27:59

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:28:00

I've never been able to find the

Phyllis Reynolds 1:28:02

Yeah,

Dave Hedberg 1:28:03

I sure would like to be able to find that. If it exists, maybe it doesn't

Phyllis Reynolds 1:28:09

Fitz, my the person that I wrote the book with, she was a historian. She was on the Oregon history. She was on the board of the Oregon Historical Society. And she knew a lot. I think she was probably the one that came up with that.

Dave Hedberg 1:28:36

The "Monkey
Puzzles" at the
1905 World's Fair

Reynolds gave a
talk in a
retirement home
and a resident
recognized her
old monkey
puzzle tree in
Laurelhurst Park

Yeah. Okay.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:28:37

story, because I didn't.

Dave Hedberg 1:28:40

There's there's quite a bit because there's quite a bit of history in your book and that so that that's interesting. That makes a lot of sense. So

Phyllis Reynolds 1:28:47

well, it's stuff that either she told me or I did know, but I didn't know that.

Dave Hedberg 1:28:53

Yeah. Interesting. What about your work? You were on the state heritage tree committee for a little while.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:29:04

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:29:06

Well, what are some of your memories of that program?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:29:11

Well, one of my big memories is of the Oregon white oak near Newberg, with a known planting date of the acorn, because I could measure it and we were the ones who approved it to be a heritage tree. And it's the same size as this Overlook oak. So that's why say how old this Overlook oak is here, because they're both in open spaces and are both doing the same thing, et cetera. In a way that was fun, but going around. I do remember going around and looking at trees, some. But it came to be too big of a chore to drive to Salem for the meetings. And that's why I quit. But I knew Maynard [Drawson]. I did know Maynard. He was so big on finding giants that he could make a special, you know, get special recognition for having found the biggest tree of something or other.

Dave Hedberg 1:30:35

Would he go out?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:30:37

Yeah, he went out

Dave Hedberg 1:30:38

out of the woods and look for them?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:30:40

Yeah. And he was a barber.

Dave Hedberg 1:30:47

Yeah, I've heard that he was an old navy barber.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:30:51

Yeah, in Salem.

Dave Hedberg 1:30:53

Had an interest in big old trees.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:30:55

Yeah. And he introduced me to the guy who the two of us decided a tree here in Portland would be a... it was a plum of some kind. The biggest plum in the country or something or other. And we did, and I can't remember the guy's name. He was from Southern Oregon. But I met him through Maynard. And then that tree got cut down. Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:31:35

Are there particular trees, you know, following that trend? That you particularly miss? Important trees in Portland history that we let get cut down? Are there any that stick out in your mind?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:31:54

Good question. Well, no, I there must be some but I'm trying to try. And the Overlook oak is comes close to being cut down. And it certainly is still on my mind quite a bit. But I don't know. There was some tree in Laurelhurst that got cut down that shouldn't have been. And I can't even remember what species it was. It was on the north side of the park on private land. And people would who Oh, yes. The, the fir, the grand fir. Off of in North West Portland. It was on the side of the hill, that this guy who owned the property, cut it down one weekend and said, Oh, I don't know how that got cut down. It was a heritage tree. And, oh, I don't know, someone must have come into cut it down. Well, the whole place was fenced, and the only way to get in there was

Fitz "came up with" the story of the monkey puzzles.

Reynolds' work on the state heritage tree committee

Maynard Drawson finding giant trees

through his house. That to me is I missed that more than anything. Really. Because I use I could see it from South Portland. I could see it from all over. And I can't figure out why cut it down.

Dave Hedberg 1:33:57

Yeah. I had heard that. He was also on vacation during that.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:34:04

He that's what he said

Dave Hedberg 1:34:06

he gave himself an alibi.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:34:08

Sure. But he paid some professionals to come in and cut it down. Is what he did.

Dave Hedberg 1:34:13

Yeah. It stinks.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:34:17

Yeah. Because a friend of mine lived in that house when I was in high school, so I've been there in that house a long time. And I was aware of the tree a long time and it was it's kind of rare in Portland

Dave Hedberg 1:34:43

Are there any other particular trees in Portland that you feel strong affinity to toward strong

Phyllis Reynolds 1:34:52

what?

Dave Hedberg 1:34:54

Just a strong affinity or have reverence toward

Phyllis Reynolds 1:35:08

Hmm. Trying to think I, when you ask it that way, my mind goes blank. I'm sure there are.

Dave Hedberg 1:35:21

Yeah.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:35:21

But and I'm sure if I sat and thought about it, I come up with some,

Dave Hedberg 1:35:26

you know, you had mentioned you'd mentioned the Burrell elm.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:35:30

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:35:31

The London plane tree.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:35:33

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:35:36

I mean, there's so many. There's so many trees that have interesting stories behind them. And your book does a great job of covering that in those individual stories. But I've just always been curious, you know, in the process of writing your book, how did you find these trees? Did you just go out and start walking?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:35:58

Yeah. Yeah. Well, I people would tell me, I mean, some arborists would tell me their tree, there's a tree you should look at. And then I would cruise I would drive around the city cruising and nearly killing myself in the process. Looking at trees driving. But it was people telling me and then Robbie's list. And there are a lot of trees I missed. I mean, I can still go into neighborhoods and think, Oh, my God, I wasn't in this neighborhood. I missed these trees, huge trees. But also Stan, my my friend, Stan, who knew trees up and down. He did. He was he was an odd guy, he knew an awful lot about trees, but awful little about lots of things. But anyway, he would love to go out cruising and looking at trees all the time. So he would tell me about trees. So that's how... that's how we found... and Fitz, had her family. And anyway, she she couldn't do as much as I could about the book. But She certainly did a lot of the planning.

Dave Hedberg 1:37:47

Well Portland, you know, has a it's a well respected heritage tree program. You know, in large part to the work you've done to pave that solid foundation.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:38:01

A heritage Grand Fir in NW Portland that was cut down

Reynolds had known the Grand Fir since high school

How Reynolds found the trees for her book, cruising around to look at trees

Well, I can remember talking or writing to someone from Seattle, who was just starting a heritage tree program. And she asked me about this and that and the other thing. And I remember being in Carmel, California, and they have something similar to a heritage tree program there. But it's not the same. I know. I don't know how legal things are there. But you can you can certainly walk around the town and trees are identified as unusual, etc. And I know certainly other cities have them and but I think was something that kind of got started in in the latter part of last century.

Dave Hedberg 1:38:59

Do you have any words of wisdom or advice to people that would be starting their own heritage tree program in their city in the future?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:39:12

Ah. Be sure to be have everything in writing and have an attorney involved if you're going to write rules and so forth, but yeah, I'm not, I do think that to a certain extent, the idea that we as the first part, first group of heritage tree folks, where the more other people nominate the trees, the more evolved they are with their ultimate care and safety. If trees are just nominated by a committee and picked, I think people may tend to care less. Because they didn't they weren't involved. You know about one tree? I don't know. But I think the more you get if someone is starting to heritage tree program, the more you get your citizens to be involved by nominating trees. The more helping, you know, it'll thrive, the community will thrive better. I think.

Dave Hedberg 1:40:55

Yeah, I agree with you. I think citizen involvement is really important. And in some ways, I've kind of gathered that from the story of this program and the story of the Urban Forestry Commission. You know, we've had citizens involved in this process to

Phyllis Reynolds 1:41:12

Yeah,

Dave Hedberg 1:41:13

seems to be very important.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:41:14

Yeah. Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:41:18

Excellent

Phyllis Reynolds 1:41:20

But I think I have seen over the years, people become more involved about trees. I mean, people, my friends, you know, it used to be no one gave much of a hoot about a tree. But I think they do now. And I think they they get upset if something's going to be cut, etc. I have a

Dave Hedberg 1:41:48

What do you think that is?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:41:52

Well, I think the whole the whole world is so moved up with what Homo sapiens does so badly. That people are becoming well, people are becoming upset, you know, the planets going, and then not the planet, but what's on it is going because of Homosapiens, et cetera. And I think more and more people are aware of this. I do I take French online Duolingo thing. And since I, my eyesight is so bad, I can't I can't read very well, anymore. So all I do is I, they they say a sentence in French. And I repeat it, well I have to understand the sentence to repeat it in French. So but an awful lot of it, they have to say is about the loss of things, the loss of trees, the loss of they're big on polar bears, but the loss of animals, etc. in 30 years, there's one sentence that I have to read, "in 30 years the whole planet will be a desert" and so forth. You know, I people people are getting some people are getting upset.

Dave Hedberg 1:43:38

Yep. And we can we can see it.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:43:40

Yeah.

Dave Hedberg 1:43:45

Well, is there any other thoughts or comments you'd like to make about Portland the history of Portland's heritage tree program and your work on it?

Phyllis Reynolds 1:43:58

Not that I can think of right now, but I'm no, I think I think you've done a good job in covering the

Heritage Tree programs in other cities

Reynolds' advice for those hoping to start a heritage tree program in their city - citizen involvement

Reynolds' impression that people care more about trees these days with the consequences of man-made global warming

whole subject.

Dave Hedberg 1:44:12

The ins and outs.

Phyllis Reynolds 1:44:13

Yeah,

Dave Hedberg 1:44:13

wonderful. Well, I'll stop the recorder.

[End of Interview]