

SAVING PARADISE

KIRIE PEDERSEN

Americans, Broesamle says, often confuse bigness with greatness. Instead, examine the quality of values proclaimed. To claim, as most developers do, that "it's good for the community to build" can result in a tipping point after which a community begins to fail. The trees are cut. The ground is excavated. The water resources are tapped or despoiled.



For a real treat . . . and you know you deserve one . . . watch and listen to Joni Mitchell singing [Big Yellow Taxi](#).

RAISED BY ARTIST PARENTS IN THE verdant Pacific Northwest, I cherished the forests and sea. I also took them for granted. As I came of age in the sixties, more important to me were murders of civil rights activists, a president, and countless innocents in Southeast Asia. Former classmates returned broken from a war during which my country carpet-bombed wilderness and the humans within it. In my home state of Washington, the eastern side famous for peach, apple, cherry, and pear orchards, migrant farmworkers were exposed to noxious chemicals and lacked medical care; their children lived in shacks, often unable to attend school.

By the eighties, the war in Southeast Asia was over, though the brokenness of many who survived lingers still. By then, the United Farmworkers of America, founded by Dolores Huerta, Helen Fabela, and Cesar Chavez in 1962, achieved at least some of its goals to improve the rights and working conditions of migrant workers. I had just moved to Lynnwood, a densely populated suburb north of Seattle. Always on the prowl for wild places, I discovered a rough trail meandering down a ravine lined by broadleaf maple and Douglas fir. After crossing a railroad track, the trail ended on the Puget Sound shoreline, though

the beach itself was littered with shattered glass and discarded beer cans.

After I scrambled back up the path toward home, I noticed a poster stapled to a telephone pole. The land I'd just explored, I learned, was called Meadowdale. One of the few spots of wilderness remaining in the area, the 108-acre property surrounded the creek I'd followed to the trashed beach. Years earlier, the state had designated the site for a potential park, but unless officials took action soon, Snohomish County would lose the offered funds.

When I arrived at the public meeting to discuss the project, the auditorium was almost empty. A park developer had already been selected. "Your input will guide the Park Committee toward how the final park should look," he told the eight or nine people scattered throughout the room. In that bedroom community in which a new development or box store seemed to spring up every week, I'd already explored several existing parks. One particularly appalled me. The quarter mile of beachfront was paved, yellow lines painted so that cars could park side by side facing the water.

"A monument to the great American automobile," a local resident, Margee Starr, told me as she described what was once a wild and beautiful spot. As evidenced by fast food



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containers and cigarette butts tossed onto the pavement, visitors didn't even bother to exit their cars. Other parks were similarly denuded of trees, sporting concrete paths around artificially mounded curves.

Two people walked to the microphone at the front of the room. "We've always been able to leave our curtains open at night," one complained. His property adjoined the site, and he wasn't happy about the proposed park.

"All the trees on that property should be removed," a woman asserted. "Rapists hide behind trees." The members of the Park Committee and the park designer perched on their chairs, expressions blank, mouths smiling. One glanced at the clock on the back wall.

"Anyone else?" the chairperson asked.

The last thing on earth I wanted was to walk to the front of that room, but if I didn't say something, I would forever lose my chance. "I propose preservation of Meadowdale as a wilderness," I murmured into the microphone, voice thin and shaking. "A walking-only park where children can learn about the environment."

Afterward, I wrote the committee a letter to paint a word picture of my fantasy. The paths would be cleaned up and then topped with cedar chips. The shattered glass and abandoned cans would be removed from the beach, and an underpass created beneath the railroad tracks so visitors could move safely from park to shore. A ranger would patrol the trails on horseback to be sure everyone was safe, and he or she would live on-site in a house designed using traditional Northwest architecture. Vehicle access would be provided only for the disabled, as well as ambulances or fire fighters, and local school children could study and create art based on a surviving wild space.

As for everyone else, I wrote, let them get

out of their cars and walk. A small parking lot and picnic tables should be provided at the far top corner of the park. To reach the beach and lower picnic area required a one-mile hike, the second mile back up the steep hill. By the time walkers returned to their cars, they would have enjoyed a workout through broadleaf maple studded with the soft cascades of deer fern that use bark as a nursery.

I arrived a few minutes late to the final public hearing at which the new park plan was to be unveiled, and I walked in to hear my proposal being read verbatim to the crowd. In several months of hearings, it seemed to be the only positive response the committee had received. They welcomed the suggestions, the committee chairperson said.

Construction began within the month. The paths were widened and topped with cedar chips to absorb Washington's considerable moisture. The house for the live-in ranger, though without a horse, was built at the bottom of the ravine looking out toward the sea to the Olympic Mountains. Rough-hewn logs formed the residence, as well as the picnic shelters and restroom that dotted a nearby meadow. Intensive development in the area had long ago ruined the creek for spawning salmon, and plans included restoration so fish could again swim upstream against the downward currents that resist them. (Even after years of devastation, freshwater fish and salmon eventually did return, although due to changes in beach conditions, people cannot currently access the beach through the culvert.)

Two years later, yearning for deeper wilderness, I returned to the communal property where I was born. Directly behind me is the Olympic National Park, "the largest uninterrupted coniferous forest in the Lower 48 and the longest stretch of wilderness beach

on the West Coast," according to *The Seattle Times*. The park is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve. My land faces onto the nation's largest inland natural saltwater fjord, Hood Canal, which stretches more than fifty miles, much of it along the base of the Olympic range.

Adjoining our property, also on the waterfront, a settler's cottage was tucked into a forty-acre parcel of Douglas fir, broadleaf maple, cedar, and madrona. I'd often visited the siblings who owned it, but the sisters had died, and their elder brother was ailing. The property was on the market. The old man believed the developer who came to his home and said he wanted to buy the land so his children would have a place to play. Once he held title, the purchaser filed his proposal with the county. He proposed slicing the acreage into eight lots, constructing luxury homes, and building a dock for seaplanes to land.

Once again, I became a reluctant advocate for the shoreline and forest. During my attempt to purchase the parcel as a retreat center, supported by the late Venerable Master Hsuan Hua of Gold Mountain Monastery, the Master sent a feng sui expert from mainland China along with his interpreter. We walked through the forests I'd explored since my first steps, the monks' orange robes bright as bark on the madrona. The monk said the land was the final "tongue of the dragon," laid down by glaciers millennia before, and that this was sacred indeed, as were some of the massive trees that remained.

"Those trees are teachers," the translator explained. I knew from interviewing local old-timers and from William W. Elmendorf's *Structure of Twana Culture* (Washington University, 1960) that the local S'Klallam and

Skokomish made seasonal camps in the area. An area pioneer, Ray Lindeke, told me that when he was young, the original people still placed the dead near the spot the monk called

Each time yet another proposal threatened the surrounding wilderness, I learned how one citizen can gather with others to alter the trajectory of what seems impending doom.

dragon's tongue. According to historians for the Port Gamble S'Klallam, "oral traditions regarding spiritual entities [are] associated with [this] landscape."

To mitigate the proposal eventually meant going to court, but the results were a series of wedge-shaped lots, each facing the water and maintaining most of the trees and understory. The back of the property is jointly owned by the eight property owners, and remains uncut, thus thriving as a habitat for bald eagles and myriad other species. The proposal for a dock was abandoned. When more egregious proposals for logging and development came along on yet another adjoining property, two of the original buyers even thanked me. "Now we see what you meant," one said. Each time yet another proposal threatened the surrounding wilderness, I learned how one citizen can gather with others to alter the trajectory of what seems impending doom.

My early letters challenging these

proposals offered carefully researched lists of birds, amphibians, trees, shrubs, shoreline algal communities, and other significant environmental features that occurred on the proposed logging site and/or development. I earnestly offered these lists convinced nobody would want to eradicate such beauty. As I continued my apprenticeship with wildlife biologists and environmental attorneys kind enough to offer endless hours of tutoring, only gradually did I learn the perseverance required of would-be citizen-activists.

I also learned that community-based activism brings people together from diverse walks of life. Although public hearings can be odious, with developers and county officials too often condescending to the often-awkward public, attending the potlucks, walks, research, and planning sessions creates friendships and a sense of community. I became friends with some residents of the shorefront community that now occupies the old man's land.

"Thank you," the most recent homeowner there recently said when we ran into each other on a trail. "I'm going to write a song about how you stood up to the loggers."

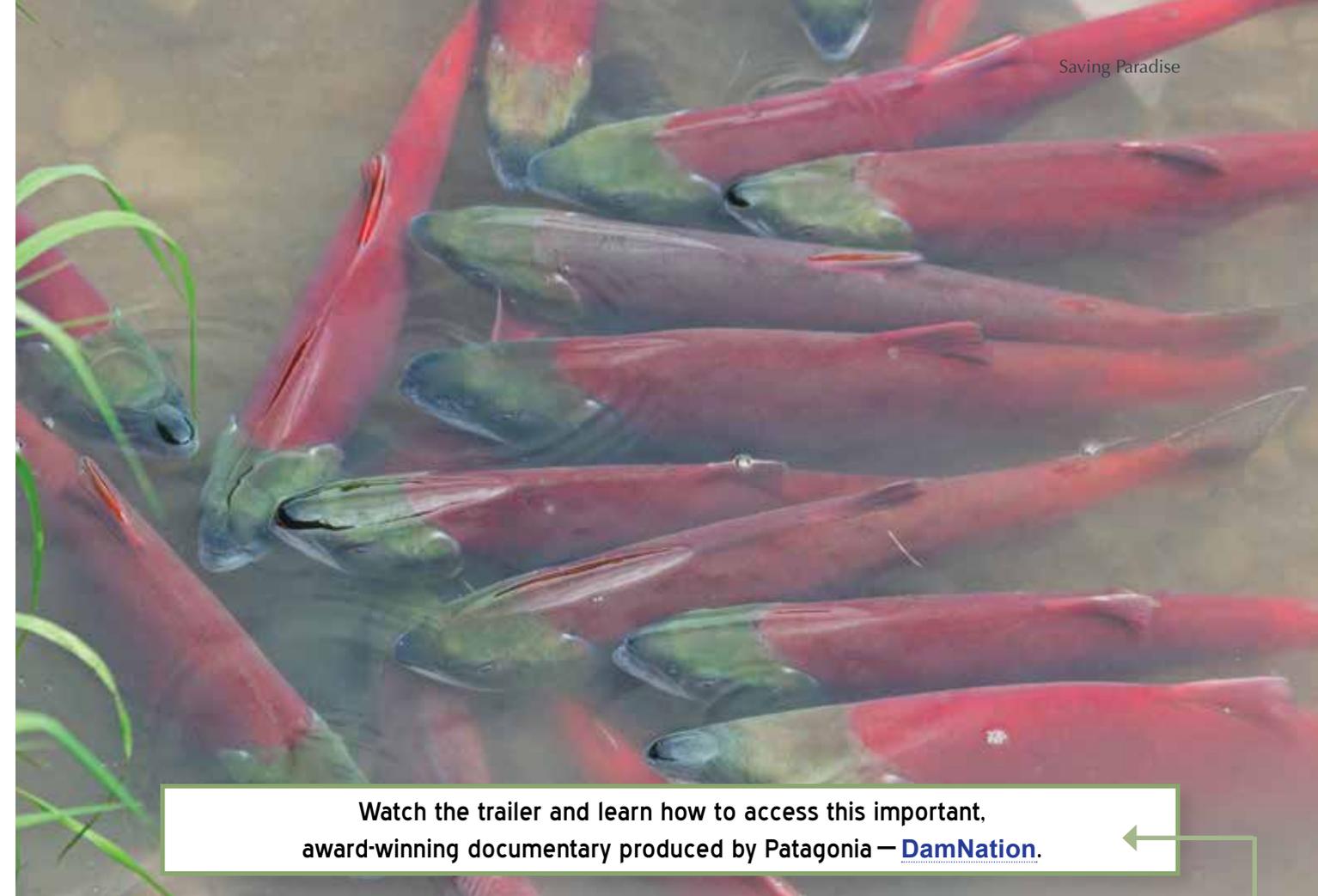
"Nimbyism," a developer once accused me. "Not in My Back Yard." For at least an hour, I was chastened. Was he suggesting, as I once believed, that I should address only war and hunger and mistreatment in distant lands? Or was it just a way to shut me up? And yet, I reasoned, had I not started in my own backyard, eight forests would now be cut, the oyster and clam and mussel shoreline habitats below silted with run-off. Once destroyed, the creatures who live in an ecosystem, no matter how small, are gone. Habitat only supports so many creatures, says Bruce Brown, author of [Mountain in the Clouds: A Search for the](#)

[Wild Salmon](#) (University of Washington Press, 1995). "The creatures that live in an area that's destroyed can't just move to a new subdivision and eat at MacDonald's," Brown says.

In addition, development tends to be incremental. When one mass of tract housing with its roads and box stores succeeds, another arrives, breaking up animal and bird migration paths. Eventually, I learned that the patronizing attitude toward the common citizen, along with the accusation "You're a NIMBY," is a common pejorative that's part of the developers' toolkit.

An example is my birthplace of Port Townsend. For decades, citizens struggled to protect the historic and scenic downtown and Victorian uptown, mostly successfully, but surrounding areas that lead into Port Townsend were sacrificed to random development and paved-over pastures. Port Townsend fared better than nearby Sequim, however. The Sequim Valley was once characterized by a bucolic business area of locally-owned shops fronted on one side by rolling fields stretching to the sea and on the other reaching upward into the Olympic Range. Little by little at first, and then in huge gobs, the rich farmland and empty spaces were replaced with subdivisions, some so randomly arranged as to seem the cruel trick of greedy children. Then came the box stores covering acres of previously green fields and quiet country roads. To serve the increased population and transport goods, tourists seeking the far reaches of Washington's spectacular coastline must pass through miles of often failing businesses, locally-owned enterprises forced out by the box stores.

In contrast, just a ferry ride and short drive from Sequim and Port Townsend sits a village that dared refuse box stores and tract



Watch the trailer and learn how to access this important, award-winning documentary produced by Patagonia — [DamNation](#).

housing. La Conner, an artist colony located in Washington's Skagit Valley, protected its small-business nature with well-maintained Victorian-style homes perched on a bluff above Swinomish Slough. Farmland, some studded with tulips in spring, reach like orderly and gracious paintings behind. This spirit of preservation resulted in La Conner's designation on state and national historic registries.

Just across the historic Rainbow Bridge from La Conner's tiny downtown, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Council (SITC) formed a department of environmental protection of its own in 2013. Kukutali Preserve, located on the reservation, is the first tribal park in United States history to be co-owned and jointly managed by a tribe and a state agency, the Washington

State Parks and Recreation Commission. The Preserve includes eighty-three acres spanning three islands, with over two miles of shoreline, and is open to the public.

In my own backyard, sadly, I cannot report such triumphs. On the positive side of the ledger, thanks in part to Bruce Brown's *Mountain in the Clouds*, two dams on the Elwha River in the Olympic National Park were recently demolished, an inspiration chronicled in the documentary [DamNation](#). Wild salmon are returning, celebrated by the original people who thrived there and wept when their sacred territories were destroyed. However, just a few miles away, on the fragile banks of Hood Canal, a Canadian developer proposes a golf course and resort. Despite a decade of protest

from tribal groups and citizens, the permitting process is in its final stages; if approved, the only remedy is through the courts.

Overhead, in part of the Olympic National Park once identified as one of the quietest places in the continental United States, Boeing EA-18G Growler jets practice electronic warfare exercises. The jets fly out of the Naval Air Station on nearby Whidbey Island, where residents report illness as the result of noise levels as high as 130 decibels.

For my case study of how to save a paradise, then, I find myself in the unlikely region of southern California, truly the quintessential monument to the great American automobile. Odd, perhaps, that a village a ninety-minute drive northwest of Los Angeles and fifteen miles inland from Ventura, should exemplify how citizens, many of them artists, stood up to the behemoths of money, power, and growth.

On the Olympic Peninsula, logging is the go-to industry, with slope after slope denuded; around Ojai the “crops” to be mined are gravel, phosphate, uranium, and oil. In a state characterized by ever-spreading concrete, Ojai is heralded as a beacon of small-town charm, surrounded by rolling hills, ranches, and protected wilderness that stretches for thousands of acres. Yet the natural beauty that characterizes the Olympic Peninsula of Washington and the Ojai Valley of Southern California also render them vulnerable for their wealth of natural resources, prey for the picking.

The first time I navigated the steep curves of the Dennison Grade into the three-by-ten mile Ojai Valley from Highway 150, I thought I’d landed in a Norman Rockwell painting. The Ojai Valley hosts about 7,500 residents, and the commercial part of the village at its core,

with small shops and stores, spans just a few blocks. Formed by transverse ranges running east and west, the iconic Topatopa mountains form Ojai’s apex.

The original people, the Chumash, thrived in the valley for thousands of years, subsisting on rich natural resources and creating art and music in well-established villages. In 1837, settler Fernando Tico was given a Spanish land grant, and he cleared much of the area for cattle and crops. It wasn’t long before travelers from the east discovered the Valley’s moderate climate and miraculously clear air, hot in the summer but with occasional wafts of ocean breezes. The hot springs sacred to the original people became meccas and resorts for stage coaches filled with tourists. Some stayed on, homesteading or purchasing large tracts of land.

In 1908, a glass magnate from Ohio, Edward Libbey, fell in love with the area and eventually proposed the plan for the town’s commercial blocks more or less as they exist today. When 360 acres of oak- and sycamore-forested land near his home were scheduled for clearcutting to feed the voracious steam engines of the time, Libbey purchased it all with the idea of preserving the trees for a residential community. Called the Arbolada, or “treed place,” this neighborhood too remains more or less as Libbey envisioned it, with narrow curving roads and spectacular gardens beneath the oaks.

What I first noticed about Ojai, though, were tiny children riding toy-like bicycles in the streets with their parents. Almost everyone, it seemed, of all ages and shapes, was out walking, or what Californians call “hiking,” either on the roads or on myriad trails that lead directly up the hillsides from town. Whether exploring the trails, riding a bicycle down the former railroad grade to the Pacific, or strolling

the commercial area, I was struck that most people of all ages made eye contact and said “Hello.” Raised in what I learned only recently is called the Northwest chill, where fellow hikers or city walkers tend to avoid eye contact or greeting, I was stunned. Were these people for real?

I quickly learned that in Ojai, if I expressed any kind of negative comment, such as the one I just made there, I received a curious reaction.

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The person paused. His or her expression was neither smile nor frown. And then my lapse was passed over, as if I’d never said a word. I was left to face my own stew of negative thoughts and judgments. Over four years of visits, where life-long residents invited me into their homes and lives, I learned that although debate occurs, beyond a certain level of intensity, argument is considered bad form. A public hearing I attended, where members of the Planning Commission actually listened to each speaker with complete courtesy, was unlike most I’ve experienced since that first hearing decades ago about Meadowdale Park.

Though one might argue that a sunny attitude is a simple result of endless balmy

weather, I suspect the gentle approach might be a trickle effect from the many spiritual centers, open and free to the public, that appear on almost every hillside and all sides of town. Most famous of Ojai’s spiritual luminaries was Jiddu Krishnamurti, a handsome fellow followed by thousands, including celebrities, who flocked to Ojai to sit beneath the oaks and hear his lectures. Ojai’s other gorgeous and public sacred spaces include meditation halls and gardens, a university, a nunnery, Buddhist monasteries, and active community churches of every denomination. Traditional spiritual practices, including those of the few remaining Chumash, combine with the newer age to continue Ojai’s lure for those on spiritual quests. Ojai is home to every kind of artist, with painters’ easels atop the hiking trail overlooking the town; music, film, poetry and playwright’s festivals; art walks and galleries; and a fully renovated community theater featuring talented musicians and actors.

My inaugural advocacy for Meadowdale Beach Park taught me that a positive focus can bring about change. In Ojai, I met a retired historian and author who appears never to seep negatives, but instead to seek solutions. [John Broesamle](#) earned his Ph.D. from Columbia University, taught history at California State University, Northridge, for thirty-two years, and wrote *Reform and Reaction in Twentieth Century Politics* (Greenwood Press, 1990), among other works. In 1987, he and his wife, Kathy, purchased a home in Ojai, and Broesamle continued teaching in Northridge until 2000, making for a long commute. Finally, he said, “I could no longer stay away.”

Weary of academic infighting, though, Broesamle had no intention to involve himself in local issues. However, as he learned of threats

to their newfound paradise, Broesamle came to believe “we have an obligation to protect this place simply by living here.” When he looked at the calamities overcome by previous Spartans, as he calls them, he realized that unless those earlier residents faced down the foe, he would never have chosen Ojai as a place to live.

“Kathy and I owe the world to Ojai,” Broesamle says now. “The sunny and open community made us better people; we had to try to live up to Ojai and to the unique setting that drew us here.”

In 2009, John and Kathy Broesamle donated some of their own savings to help found a non-profit, the Ojai Valley Defense Fund (OVDF), with the goal of raising a million dollars. The fund is held in reserve so that when superhighways, subdivisions, box stores, mines, or other projects threaten “the well-being of all, a great majority or at the least, a substantial plurality of the people of the greater Ojai Valley,” there’s money to fund the fight. In modern America, as I learned early on in my own struggles to protect forests and shorelines, protection often means going to court. As Broesamle explains, and I have observed, this is because developers and governing bodies, theoretically bound by county and state codes, find ways to circumvent the hearings and permitting process and even to collude with logging or mining companies and developers. The lure of increased tax revenues and vague promises of jobs looms larger than the inchoate value of trees, unpolluted water, birds, and other creatures one can’t even see. As has happened throughout the world, profit, tax revenues, and promises of jobs become the rationale for stripping and paving the wildernesses that remain.

One of the first major threats to Ojai arrived in the sixties. California’s transportation system,

or Caltrans, proposed building freeways through the Ojai Valley’s heart. Local citizens, the Ojai City Council, and the press defeated this plan. Next came a proposal for 10,000 homes housing 25,000-35,000 residents to be constructed on the Lake Casitas watershed,

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which provides drinking water for much of the Valley. Again, locals formed opposition groups, eventually appealing directly to Congress. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation created Teague Memorial Watershed, banning development on 3,500 acres around the lake and into the Santa Inez wilderness.

In the seventies, open-pit phosphate and uranium mining were proposed in the nearby Los Padres National Forest. The uranium mining would have been within the Teague Memorial Watershed, just above Lake Casitas. Had this been successful, tractor-trailers would have roared daily through residential areas of the Ojai Valley. Almost two thousand people attended a single public hearing to oppose the phosphate mining and again petitioned Congress; in both cases, citizens prevailed.

Today, driving west along Highway 33 near Ojai, visitors pass between a wildlife habitat, open to the public, and a large open field tufted with lemony mustard. These were proposed sites for a “big box” shopping center, along

with houses and condominiums. After a battle of almost a decade, the developer threatened to sue.

“Things got gory,” Broesamle says. Eventually, through the non-profit Ojai Valley Land Conservancy (OVLC), citizens raised more than a million dollars to purchase the fifty-eight acres. OVLC then restored the wetland by removing noxious and invasive non-native plants and encouraging growth of native species, an effort that continues to this day. Within one year, hundreds of migrating birds discovered the tiny oasis. Citizens of all ages flock there too, to walk or sit surrounded by wild creatures. The project became a restoration model for southern California.

In the nineties, development interest turned to high-end housing. A dozen large homes were to sit on eighty-acre parcels. The project would have closed off public access to 1,600 acres of open space along the Los Padres National Forest. Once again, following prolonged legal challenges and negotiations, OVLC purchased this parcel using state grants and citizen contributions of almost four million dollars. The hundreds who walk, bike, and ride horses in today’s Ventura River Preserve are beneficiaries of these now-invisible struggles.

Subsequent proposals successfully stopped by citizens included a supraregional landfill and several gravel extraction projects, each requiring hundreds of tractor-trailer trips daily; wildcat oil drilling on private land in what is called Upper Ojai, a mostly undeveloped area dotted with large ranches, orchards, and farms; expansion of a refinery at the Valley’s mouth; an airport; a subdivision of a vast and gorgeous ranch into one- to two-acre lots; and construction of a motorcycle test track.

What does it take to preserve the quality of life in a community and its surrounding wilderness? First, someone within that community has to decide it’s worth saving. According to Broesamle, Ojai benefits from its cultural tradition of civic service and spiritual and artistic quest. As Broesamle himself realized, newcomers and tourists alike need to understand that the pristine quality results from almost a century of local effort. Newcomers “need to absorb civic commitment into their values,” Broesamle explains.

As with anything important, a key element is persistence. “Wear the bastards down,” Broesamle says with a smile. After my first charmed experience, where I was the only citizen to present a proposal, every later action seemed a hopeless cause. I needed to work and tend to my family; the developers had all the money, time, and power. Standing up to bullies, I learned, does not bring applause. Once, I emerged from a hearing at the local elementary school to find my tires flattened.

“Somebody doesn’t like you,” a grinning bystander observed. Another time, I drove into my driveway late at night to find uprooted trees and shrubs blocking my way. My mother received a death threat on her answering machine. Her crime? A neighbor was shooting pregnant harbor seals, a protected species, which they hauled out on his raft, and my mother called the Fish and Wildlife department.

“We’ll just shoot them seals,” the message said, “and then we’ll shoot you.” My mother, a local schoolteacher, laughed. She’d heard worse.

In the Ojai Valley, each successful outcome arrived in the eleventh hour. A common problem when environmental threats appear is that “people often don’t get it.” Broesamle says, “They don’t really believe these proposals

will result in anything bad.” People need jobs, and recessions cause a deadening effect. It’s hard to show up for yet another public hearing when one can barely get out of bed to get the kids to school. Once at the hearing, it’s scarier still to walk to the front of a room and read a statement. For citizens unused to public speaking and the lingo of legislation and law, it takes little to pin people timidly to their seats.

“He says it’s a green development,” one local said of the developer for the proposed golf resort near where I live. He hunched down into his seat, shaking his head when I urged him to read his statement. “That’s good enough for me.”

When projects are proposed, Broesamle says it’s important to look at scale. The first rule should be: “Do no harm.” Is what’s being proposed self-sustaining, or will it instead drain resources from the overall community? Although most developers claim to provide revenue and jobs, it’s important to examine proposals in terms of increased fire danger, emergency medical calls, crime, noise, light, water and air pollution, and wear and tear on local roads, as well as run-off from chemicals into local waterways. For both the proposed golf resort near where I live in Washington and in the Ojai Valley, water itself is a scarce resource. Here, the proposed resort development could cause drawdown or saltwater intrusion into previously-existing wells; in the fine print of the developer’s proposal, the burden of proof is on the owner of the small local wells. Environmental impact statements presented by developers and their “experts” can require hundreds of hours to pick through and analyze.

On the other hand, residents don’t have to know every detail or scientific fact before standing up to a proposed project. Citizens have the right to counter any proposal based

on spiritual, quality of life, or environmental issues important to them. And, Broesamle adds, not only do they have the right, but they need to do it, or that quality of life may vanish.

Americans, Broesamle says, often confuse bigness with greatness. Instead, examine the quality of values proclaimed. To claim, as most developers do, that “it’s good for the community to build,” can result in a tipping point after which a community begins to fail. The trees are cut. The ground is excavated. The water resources are tapped or despoiled. Classic urban sprawl is happening everywhere, resulting in the paving over of America and depredation of natural resources. Sadly, urbanization is also striking what were once remote rural areas as well.

Like John Broesamle, I was a reluctant activist. But in my own backyard, and then by visiting a place that had been repeatedly saved, I learned that untrained citizen-activists can prevail. In Ojai, I savor the parks and trails and open spaces that now belong to the public and the creatures that live there in perpetuity. In the Olympic wilderness, I can walk through forests my neighbors and I helped preserve.

“Wear the bastards down,” Broesamle says again with his gentle smile. “Sue them if you have to. But always be polite and respectful, even when the disagreement is fevered.” One tree, one acre, one pond at a time, citizens can bring about change that serves future generations and the planet itself in perpetuity.

Along the shoreline of Hood Canal and at the foot of the Olympic Mountains, revered by the original people, my own neighborhood may not be so lucky. As I write, a newly constituted Planning Commission and the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe have urged the Board of County Commissioners to reexamine the proposed



golf resort; approval remains in limbo. Just thirty-six miles away, Port Townsend fares better. Perhaps it’s easier to protect a village when natural features, the Transverse Range around Ojai and the Salish Sea surrounding Port Townsend, create natural enclosures.

Ironically, perhaps, two Port Townsend protectors migrated north from the Ojai area, one to create the eponymous village store called Aldrich’s, and the other, Michelle Sandoval, to serve as mayor, city council member, and restorer of part of Port Townsend’s historic downtown. To make matters even more synchronistic, Sandoval’s father was active in forming the United Farmworker’s Union in the fertile agricultural plains below Ojai. My original heroes, Delores Huerta, Helen Fabela, and Cesar Chavez, are like Michelle Sandoval in Port Townsend

and John Broesamle in Ojai and legions more who dare to stand up to the cannibalization of peoples, villages, waterways, and wilderness. Bruce Brown says that what encourages him today is “sustained indignation;” he’s akin to the migrating salmon who return to dammed rivers to bash their heads against the concrete and die. By initiating discussion about the dams on the Elwha in the Olympic National Park, Brown helped inspire the movement to remove more dams that strangle the nation’s rivers. Inspired by the Elwha neighbor to the north, Ojai now plans the long-awaited demolition of the Matilija dam so that wild steelhead can once again reproduce. And a new generation of activists, inspired by the elders, is likewise taking to the streets, trails, and camps. May we all be inspired to continue to swim upstream. ❖