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Title: ENDPAPER From a kitchen table to a 645-acre park

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SUMMARY: Greenspace Three decades ago, a stay-at-home mom led an effort to protect Tryon Creek

Thirty-five years ago, a stay-at-home mom led a drive to create a 645-acre park we know today as Tryon Creek State Natural Area. It ranks as a major achievement of citizen participation. Lucille Beck, who turned 80 this month, remains active with Friends of Tryon Creek.

Here's how she remembers the park's creation.

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"I live on a street that dead-ends into the canyon. My husband always talked about it being a park someday. I was a mother and a homemaker. In 1969, a neighbor, G.H. Oberteuffer, and I were urging Multnomah County to do something about this. They did buy 45 acres.

"(Commissioner) David Eccles was really the only one interested from the county. He asked for public support to get a larger park. We got a little steering committee together, with Jane Siddall, a self-trained biologist, and I as partners directing this. . . . We were a do-gooder group. We did maps and prepared a brochure, and assembled a board of directors and became a nonprofit, Friends of Tryon Creek, to work on a regional park.

"In January (1970), we learned about a development plan for 200 acres optioned by a Portland real estate broker to a man in Seattle. That was a low blow. . . . Nobody in Portland would have taken an option because they would have known there was a park plan.

"In March, we decided we had to go to the community and get their support. We had a fund drive that started on the first Earth Day. People canvassed streets in Lake Oswego, Dunthorpe, Lewis & Clark and Boones Ferry. All the schools did projects. The whole world was prepared to do something. . . . We raised \$27,000 in three weeks, with 1,400 donors. Our gimmick was a trail certificate. Every \$10 bought one foot of trail.

"We bought a piece of property along Boones Ferry in July. We also had an option for a piece on Terwilliger. We had met with the man from Seattle, who told us the highest and best use of the canyon would be a park, 'but you don't have the money.' That was true. We tried to make an offer on the property, but the owner wanted quite a bit more.

"In October, hearings began on the development plan. We went to see Mr. Glenn Jackson (chairman of the state transportation commission, which also managed Oregon's state park system). We had talked to him in the spring. When we went back, he said the whole thing ought to be a state park because it was still intact, it was where people lived, and we had great public support. We had been told earlier they didn't do state parks in cities.

"(Jackson) did it in a week. It was incredible. He didn't even go to the county. The county wasn't happy it was done so quickly without consulting them. Glenn Jackson had the vision to do this, and he had the money. He also could get federal funds. Unfortunately, it couldn't happen today. There is too much bureaucracy.

"The development didn't go away, and hearings continued. It was all very political. Gov. Tom McCall and a whole lot of other people wrote letters to the Planning Commission requesting the whole park.

"In the end, the developer had to back off.

"I'm still on the board of the Friends. They can't quite get rid of me. I'm still interested in getting any little land we can acquire on the edges of the park.

"I was fortunate to have this come on my plate. Not everybody has an opportunity to do something like this. We worked hard, but we were very lucky, too."

ILLUSTRATION: BENJAMIN BRINK/ The Oregonian -- Lucille Beck - "We were a do-gooder group"

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Section: Metro Southwest Neighbors: Lake Oswego

Page: 16

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