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8-12-2010

## Interview with Crystal Benson, Green Building Services, 2010 (audio)

Crystal Benson

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# PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

## INTERVIEW INDEX

INTERVIEWEE: \_Crystal Benson\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_Alex Woolery\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_08/12/2010\_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview: \_Green Building Services\_\_\_\_\_

Research Assistant: \_\_Blake Estep\_\_\_\_\_

Interview Series: SUSTAINING NORTHWEST LANDSCAPES & COMMUNITIES

Recording Equipment: DIGITAL RECORDER (WINDOWS MEDIA AUDIO FILE) WITH AN  
EXTERNAL, OMNIDIRECTIONAL MICROPHONE

Time	Notes
:17	How long have you lived in Portland? What Brought you to Portland?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 14 years</li><li>• Moved here one year after mother did from San Francisco</li></ul>
:53	What drew you to Mechanical Engineering?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Was good at math and science in high school</li><li>• Liked product design and prototyping</li><li>• Spent 4 years at PCC and another 2 at PSU</li></ul>
1:45	How did you get involved in your work as a sust consultant and energy auditor at Green Building Services?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wasn't a straight route to being a sust consultant</li><li>• Job market was not good</li><li>• Got job through friend as an intern in design</li></ul>
3:33	Question about LEED?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Like's building and engineering</li><li>• Has passion for sustainability</li></ul>
4:00	How does your current work relate to your M.E. studies?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very little</li><li>• Schooling didn't prepare well for job but learned how to think analytically and to problem solve - believes that it's a strength.</li><li>• Learned to deal with people.</li></ul>
5:08	How do you personally define sustainability?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promotes sustainability but believes that what her company is doing now isn't very sustainable</li></ul>
5:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mentions that she believes in the "seven generation theory"</li></ul>
6:20	How has your work shaped or changed your understanding of sustainability?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• She is exposed to different ways of thinking by meeting new people</li><li>• Sees what sustainability means to others</li></ul>

7:22	How do you assess or gauge progress toward sustainability?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses LEED standards</li> <li>• Recently visited Kansas city and compared to Portland, Portland is living in a bubble and has a lot more green options</li> <li>• But believes that a lot of those options are green washing tactics</li> </ul>
8:??	Follow-up question about green washing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has more consensus when it comes to green washing and marketing</li> </ul>
9:37	What do you think about some of the existing assessment measures, such as LEED?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most familiar with LEED</li> <li>• Likes working with existing buildings</li> <li>• Codes are being updated with LEED values and is pushing industry forward</li> <li>• Thinks that people find loopholes in rules</li> <li>• Is glad that LEED is there</li> <li>• Does LEED assessments a lot</li> </ul>
13:31	What role does embodied energy play in building assessments, if any?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embodied energy isn't incorporated with she does</li> <li>• Not much incentives to do embodied energy</li> </ul>
15:08	How much of a role do you think embodied energy should play?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New construction arenas should play huge role</li> <li>• Doesn't believe in tearing down and rebuilding</li> <li>• Thinks embodied energy should play larger role but doesn't know exactly what that role should be</li> </ul>
16:05	Are there any other engineering concepts that should be implemented?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEP should be brought in earlier in design process, thinks this would help with many concepts later on in the process</li> </ul>
17:30	Please describe what a typical day as a sust consultant is like.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lot of the time is spent helping people</li> <li>• This morning talked with 60 people on the phone about a 40 building project</li> <li>• Consulting in mass, tasking, and trainings (but doesn't do a lot of trainings)</li> </ul>
19:42	Who are the trainees? (follow up question)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architects and engineers, mixed bag of trainees</li> </ul>
20:50	What are some persistent challenges in your work?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On personal challenge is wanting to know what is really sustainability and what is not</li> <li>• Struggles with helping all groups find ownership in building</li> <li>• Tries to invigorate people into process and keep them engaged</li> </ul>
22:00	Do you run up against codes that prohibit what you would like to do?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One problem that came up once was trying to use rain water for sewage use</li> </ul>
23:40	What was your role in the Oregon Sustainability Center?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hosted a charrette</li> <li>• Was part of the water charrette and played a small role in energy charrette</li> </ul>
24:50	What is a charrette?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorming session with everyone involved with the building where they are all heard as equals</li> <li>• Look at every possible design ideas</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinks there should be a charrette at the end of the building process to show how all features are to be used</li> </ul>
28:37	How close have we come as a society to sustainable building practices?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't think we've come near far enough</li> <li>• Made good steps but thinks there's still a long way to go</li> </ul>
31:15	What do you think might get more architects and firms to embrace sustainability?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asked this question to architects in the office</li> <li>• Sustainability should be incorporated early on in school</li> </ul>
32:19	Where do you see your work as a sustainability taking you next?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to be a Moores and Owners rep</li> <li>• Would like to work in a university system</li> <li>• Would feel more satisfied if she had a career where she can act sustainable in her day to day life</li> </ul>
33:49	End of questions, anything you would like to add?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brings up "natural step" and the 4 system conditions</li> <li>• Idea that as we are consuming we toxify where we live and it effects the society</li> <li>• 7 generation sustainability</li> </ul>