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8-12-2010

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

Crystal Benson

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Woolery, Alex, "Interview with Crystal Benson, 2010 (audio)" (2010). Sustainability History Project.
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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">• 14 years• Moved here one year after mother did from San Francisco
:53	What drew you to Mechanical Engineering?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Was good at math and science in high school• Liked product design and prototyping• Spent 4 years at PCC and another 2 at PSU
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">• Wasn't a straight route to being a sust consultant• Job market was not good• Got job through friend as an intern in design
3:33	Question about LEED?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Like's building and engineering• Has passion for sustainability
4:00	How does your current work relate to your M.E. studies?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very little• Schooling didn't prepare well for job but learned how to think analytically and to problem solve - believes that it's a strength.• Learned to deal with people.
5:08	How do you personally define sustainability?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotes sustainability but believes that what her company is doing now isn't very sustainable
5:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mentions that she believes in the "seven generation theory"
6:20	How has your work shaped or changed your understanding of sustainability?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• She is exposed to different ways of thinking by meeting new people• Sees what sustainability means to others

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

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