

Anton Vetterlein, Conservation Champion

by Carolyn Myers Lindberg

It takes an architect or landscape designer to really appreciate the meaning of and connection to place. That's what I've learned from talking to people like Anton Vetterlein, a residential designer who lives in the Homestead neighborhood next to Terwilliger Parkway. He purchased his home in 1994, and while



he thought about downsizing 5 years ago, he ultimately found that his connection to the place was too deep to leave. He loves the fact that while he's right next to this beautiful undeveloped natural area, he's also only about 10 minutes from downtown Portland. Within steps of his front door is a trail through the woods leading to Terwilliger Boulevard and reaching all the way up to Council Crest.

As an architect, Vetterlein has always been interested in land use and planning issues and started working with the Homestead Neighborhood Association some 22 years ago as Land Use Chair and President. That morphed into his current work as President of Friends of Terwilliger (FOT), which works to protect the parkway from a variety of impacts, such as excessive traffic, speeding, and further development. Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) is on the parkway, which employs thousands of people, many of whom drive through the area to get to work. Vetterlein says it falls to the neighborhood association and the Friends group to try to manage that. OHSU went through a big planning process in 2000 called the Marquam Hill Plan, which led to the tram and South Waterfront development. During that process, Vetterlein says OHSU wanted to increase parking on the hill which would have meant a lot more traffic, so both neighborhood groups had to be involved to try to protect the area from human impact.

Vetterlein is sensitive to the historic value of Terwilliger Parkway, which was designed and established by the Olmsted brothers some 100 years ago. He says FOT wants to raise the identity of the area so that people know about the natural resource, its history, amazing views and recreational opportunities for walkers, hikers and bikers.

The other part of Vetterlein's connect to the area is the restoration work, getting rid of the invasive species like ivy and clematis. He says neighbor Robin Vesey (also one of our Conservation Champions!) has been the driving force in FOT restoration work. Vetterlein says homeowners in his area have pretty large lots that drop down to what most refer to as Terwilliger Creek, and it takes a lot of work to maintain the hillside. He says neighbors were grateful for the assistance of Jen Seamans, at the SW Watershed Resource Center, who helped them get a grant to restore much of the ravine leading to the creek.

Vetterlein takes part in some of the work parties and pulls ivy and other invasive species near his home. He's been particularly interested in restoring the ravine, a quarter of a mile of land around Terwilliger Creek because he saw it as a definable area where restoration could be contained. He took on the challenge and was successful in restoring the entire area. Neighbors were so pleased they dubbed it "Anton's Horseshoe," and the name stuck. He tends to focus his efforts on the ravine now because it's close to home and along the lines of the philosophy, "think globally, act locally," it's something

manageable that he can accomplish. Global problems seem so hard and unwieldy, he says, but if you do a little bit of something every day, you can have an impact. Plus, it is immediately gratifying. Vetterlein works from home and sometimes when he gets sleepy or antsy in the afternoon, he can just go outside and work in the woods.

While he's most proud of restoring Anton's Horseshoe, he also points to how successful FOT has been in working with the City of Portland and OHSU to protect the parkway. It's not always easy to be persistent, he adds, but you have to be, otherwise human impact chips away at the beauty and serenity of being in the woods.

Another achievement was the Terwilliger Parkway Centennial celebration in 2012, which included a series of events organized by FOT. Because they were persistent, he says, Portland Parks & Recreation helped provide funds for the celebration and worked to trim and thin tree stands to improve views from Terwilliger. FOT also worked with Parks & Recreation to design, fund and build the Terwilliger Parkway gateway sign at the north entrance to the area. Next up, he says, is another gateway sign at the south end (at Burlingame) and a third sign at Capitol Highway where it crosses Terwilliger Boulevard.

Vetterlein says another focus for the future is installing interpretive signs that would provide historic information and trail maps that connect Terwilliger Parkway to other parks and natural areas. The last component, he says, is the restoration and expansion of the original light fixtures along the parkway, which were designed by the Olmstead brothers. The neighborhood would like to install additional lights further up the trail and restore the existing lights with globes that have a historic look and feel.

This "sense of place" is something that drives Vetterlein. Whether it's a building or an environment, he's interested in building and maintaining the connection to space. Vetterlein grew up in SW Portland not far from Tryon Creek Park and he says he used to run around and explore the natural area, nettles and all. He remembers thinking that he wanted to live in or next to a forest when he grew up. Working in the forest gives him a feeling of well-being. He says, "It's so beautiful-it's like being in the Columbia Gorge, but just right out my door...five minutes away."

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