

Land & Legacy Spotlight | Joyce Stevens

Now in her 90s, Joyce Stevens has been close to the land and nature ever since her childhood in

Anchorage, Alaska. “We’d go out our door and there’d be gorgeous blueberries in the summer. It would be -10 degrees in winter but we’d see pink and blue northern lights hanging in the night sky. It was magic.”

Wanting to have a positive impact on humanity, she studied architecture at the University of Washington. After graduating she took a position with the Air Force in Fairbanks, Alaska.

When she was ready to leave Alaska, Joyce took a trip through California. She’d heard about Carmel’s moderate climate from friends. After showing her architectural drawings to the Chief Engineer at Fort Ord she was hired on the spot!

Joyce joined the Sierra Club and led hikes for 30 years. After hearing Earl Moser, a retired oil executive, describe “driving over the Salinas River into Monterey, and seeing the entire bay curving around with the green forest up above like a diamond tiara,” she realized she wasn’t paying enough attention to protecting her adopted hometown landscape. “I’d driven that same stretch of road and had never seen it the way Earl described.” She decided to learn more about local lands and help conserve the environment.

When the Monterey Dunes Coalition formed, Joyce remembered what Earl said and shared her vision. “We’re starting at the Salinas River and saving that whole piece of coastline.” Their hard work saved 13 miles of dunes, including what would become Big Sur Land Trust’s Martin Dunes Preserve, and inspired the creation of the Monterey Bay State Seashore preventing that stretch from being filled with hotels.

Later, Joyce became a trustee – and eventually president – of Big Sur Land Trust’s Board, helping with the acquisition of Mitteldorf Preserve. She also helped start the Fort Ord Parklands Group, Monterey Pine Forest Watch, and Hatton Canyon Coalition.

In a full circle moment, Joyce led Monterey Pine Forest Watch efforts to preserve rare Monterey pine forest in the “tiara” over Monterey Bay that Earl Moser described! At the urging of the Pine Forest Watch, the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District acquired 850 acres adjacent to Jacks Peak Park, creating the world’s largest stand of protected Monterey pine forest. In late 2020, to honor Joyce, this new open space was named the Joyce Stevens Monterey Pine Preserve.

Ever humble, Joyce sums up her legacy of working hard for the lands she loves by focusing on young conservationists, “Stay close to nature. You’ll be motivated to follow your heart and do what’s right.”