

Chris Bratt

Complete Tributes



Diana Coogle

Loss

When Chris Bratt died
Applegate forests lost
a staunch defender.
Applegate gatherings lost
A fine folk musician.
The *Applegater* lost
a huge supporter
and the board
its longest-serving member
and “Behind the Green Door” columnist.
The Grayback Salon lost
a reader whose unique perspective
connected the poems with carpentry
(his lifelong craft)
and raised memories of a
San Francisco childhood
with socialist-minded parents.
Joan lost
a wonderful husband.
And I lost
a friend I loved.



Richard Goodnough

From the moment I heard of the passing of Chris Bratt, a song he loved came to mind: “When I am gone,” by Phil Ochs. This song contains phrases like *I won't know the right from the wrong and you won't find me singin' on this song when I am gone, so I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here.* Chris had a very strong sense of right and wrong and loved to sing about workers' rights, other cultures, harmony in the world, and many kinds of love.

Won't be asked do my share when I'm gone, so I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here. Doing his share was what he tried doing every day, whether in his work, with his family, or in his community.

Can't be singing louder than the guns when I'm gone, so I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here. Peace on a national level or a community level was something that

was very close to his heart. His bumper stickers read, “I am already against the next war” and “Think globally, act locally.” During the time of the civil rights movement, he left paying work at home and went to Mississippi to help rebuild a burnt-out church.

Can't add my name into the fight when I'm gone, so I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here. When it came to the environment, Chris was like a bulldog on a pants leg. He believed that our national forests are a treasure belonging to all Americans and need to be protected at all cost. Our forests should not be allowed to be ravaged by a few just for temporary financial gains. He also fought for clean air and water, hoping to save the planet from irreversible damage.

Chris affiliated himself with many groups in order to further this work. He was a charter member of groups like National Coalition Against Pesticides, Applegate Citizens Opposed to Toxic Spray, Thompson Creek Residents for Ecological Education, Headwaters, Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council, *Applegater* Newsmagazine, Applegate Neighborhood Network, Geos Institute. He served as an officer or board member for many of these groups.

Another fight that he was very passionate about was workers' rights. During the times of farmworker rights struggles, he again left paying work to help build a community center for the farmworkers of the Central Valley in California.

All the pleasures of love will not be mine when I'm gone...so I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here. And love he did. He loved his family, his friends, his country, this

planet we all call home, and his beautiful home on Thompson Creek.

Chris Bratt will be missed by many. The most important lesson he taught me is that to pay it forward is the finest way to pay it back. I will miss singing, working, traveling, playing, drinking wine, and arguing with him. I know that he worked hard to “do it while he was here.”



Tonya Graham

Executive Director, Geos Institute

Chris was one of the first people I met when I arrived at Headwaters' office in the basement of the Ashland Armory in the summer of 1991. I had volunteered to hang posters for events, and Chris was serving on the board. In spite of the difficult and often combative nature of the work, Chris was consistently positive and kind. His warm welcome made me feel immediately at home and necessary to the movement, even though my contribution was minor in comparison to the work others were doing.

Over the years, as I was hired on staff and we navigated the trials and tribulations of a grassroots organization, Chris was a steady presence—always



willing to do what was necessary and right and always with an eye toward protecting his beloved forests.

I recall meeting him at daybreak for many years in the parking lot of Lithia Park in Ashland as we set up the Fourth of July burrito booth and he took his position next to Jim Ince and Chris Fowler stirring the beans. I've also watched him fully in his element holding elected officials' and agencies' feet to the fire over destructive forest policies. And I've seen him warmly greet a wide range of fellow activists at the forest conference. It seemed that Chris knew everyone and everyone loved him.

Chris served on the board of Headwaters and then Geos Institute for three decades, during which time he could always be counted on to bring a refreshing perspective to challenging deliberations. As Headwaters morphed into the Geos Institute and we shifted our focus, Chris showed a flexibility and willingness to take risks that were critical to our being able to step with confidence into that new territory as an organization. He also led the effort that resulted in Geos Institute buying its building in 2012, which set us on a path to greater financial sustainability. He was unfailingly generous on all fronts.

Chris always seemed to know when I needed a word of encouragement or a hug. When faced with something new that I wasn't sure I could handle, Chris was always sure I could. He inspired courage and called forward the best selves of those around him. I am a better person for having known him all these years.

Many in the movement are speaking about Chris as a fierce warrior for the forests. That's true. Chris had a way of parking himself in front of someone until

they found their moral compass, and he could be more than assertive when the moment called for it. In addition, Chris showed me and many others how to be both the fierce warrior and the caring fellow human being—the person deeply connected to the land and to their community.

When I walk into my office each day, I have the privilege of walking past the cabinets and shelves Chris built for us as he helped ensure that

we had a home that would sustain the organization. He built those cabinets with love like he did everything else in his life. And those hands are not only on all of our past accomplishments but also on our future ones because of the seeds he sowed in so many of us during his time walking this beautiful earth.



Barbara Holiday

Editor, *Applegater* Newsmagazine

I loved and admired Chris Bratt. For his passion, his intelligence, his integrity, his sense of humor, his long list of talents (singing, playing guitar, writing poetry). He was my fellow San Franciscan, Sagittarian, and red wine lover. He always selected the best wines at Grocery Outlet and never failed to alert me about a new find or give me a bottle to sample.

Chris was extremely supportive of the *Applegater*. It was Chris's idea to publish our book, *From the Heart of the Applegate*. It was also his idea to publish *Stories on the Land*, which we will do soon.

I miss him, his positive outlook, and his ever-present smile.



Chuck Levin, Headwaters attorney

By 1986 when I joined Headwaters, Chris was already instrumental in the rise of the grassroots environmental movement in Oregon, lending countless hours as a volunteer board member and early president. He set the tone and provided leadership and credibility, speaking truth to power, challenging BLM forest management decisions, and developing a grassroots infrastructure network.

A vigorous debater, Chris also listened to others' viewpoints intently and thoughtfully, earning respect by all for his deliberate and considered, rather than dogmatic, responses and positions.

As Headwaters' attorney during those early years, I spent a great deal of time with Chris strategizing and conferencing, networking, driving to federal court in Eugene and Portland, and exploring BLM timber sale sites on the ground. He engaged people with his warmth, laughter, positivity, humility, and sheer humanity, both in and out of the office. He seemed to take active interest in all things artistic and political and had a vast knowledge and curiosity about many subjects. Southern Oregon was lucky to have him.



J.D. Rogers

I knew Chris Bratt for over two and a half decades. He was a man of strong opinions and actions. While we were involved in many organizations, most interactions with him were in connection with the *Applegater*.

From the start of the *Applegater* 25 years ago, Chris stood as one of its strongest defenders and supporters. For the 19 years that I was the editor of the paper, he was the person I could turn to if there was an issue that I needed to bounce ideas off of or if I just needed a helping hand. He was always there when needed.

Chris had a great sense of humor and a wonderful smile; he loved to sing and play his guitar at get-togethers. I will truly miss him as a friend, neighbor, and community activist.



Jack Shipley

Remembering a long-time friend, avid environmentalist, and community activist.

Chris Bratt and I came together some 30-plus years ago in the mid-1980s when we were both on the board of directors of Headwaters, an Ashland-based environmental organization. Headwaters was at the apex of the "jobs versus owls" conflict that had raged among environmentalists, the timber industry, and the federal land-management agencies over the previous decade.

Chris was the chair of the Headwaters board and represented TREE (Thompson Creek Residents for Ecological Education). I was vice chair on the board and represented NAWPA (the North Applegate Watershed Protection Association). Chris, who

was a highly skilled carpenter from California, was an outspoken and successful advocate to stop aerial application of chemicals on forestlands managed by BLM and USFS in southwest Oregon.

Chris and I joined logger Jim Neal, to create the Applegate Partnership, a collaborative, grassroots response to the constant conflict and litigation that swirled around our communities between the tree huggers and the tree cutters.

In 1992 we created the Applegate Partnership, with board members from community environmental organizations, loggers, scientists, the Sierra Club, and the BLM. Our first board included Jan Perttu, geologist and our first organizational administrator; Connie Young, Josephine County Soil and Water Conservation District and Farm Bureau; Chris Bratt, Thompson Creek Residents For Ecological Education (TREE); Dwayne Cross, owner and partner in Croman Corp. (helicopter logger in White City); Jack Shipley, North Applegate Watershed Protection Association (NAWPA), Brett KenCairn, Rogue Institute for Economy and Ecology (RIEE); Phyllis Hughes, Sierra Club; Su Rolle, US Forest Service Applegate district ranger; and John Lloyd, an attorney from the Department of Justice (DOJ) informed Chris and me that the Applegate Partnership was in violation of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The DOJ said we were unduly influencing the federal government. When our agency representatives transitioned from board to advisory positions, the FACA issue went away.

Chris and I spent many hours together seeking solutions to the “sticky wicket” environmental issues in our valley. Chris’s strong-willed and outspoken approach challenged us all. At one of our early board meetings, when Dwayne Cross was absent, Chris exhibited his integrity by resisting board action on an issue without having the timber representative at the table.

Chris and I didn’t agree on every issue. In fact, on one occasion we had to seek assistance from an outside facilitator to settle our differences. Even though we didn’t always agree, we remained



the best of friends. I will miss Chris’s strong environmental convictions and his caring nature. Our community is diminished by his absence.

Thank you, Chris, for all your efforts to preserve and maintain the unique and very special ecosystems within the Applegate watershed, specifically, and the Klamath Siskiyou region, in general.

Paul Tipton

It is very difficult to fit so large a life into a few words. To know Chris Bratt (also known as “Chrissy” and “Tobalito”) you need to have experienced his loving, though uncompromising presence. His beliefs were based solidly on facts and grounded in his commitment to make the world a better place for all, eschewing governmental and political “mumbo jumbo.” Working together as co-chairs of Applegate Citizens Opposed to Toxic Sprays in the early 1980s, inspired by the imminent threat of helicopter spraying of herbicides on BLM land near homes and the Applegate School (and Chris’s mother Beb’s admonishment that “you should do something about that”), we appealed clear-cut timber sales that were being justified by the falsehood that the use of herbicides would somehow miraculously allow regeneration of trees within five years. Those appeals were only the beginning, but they led to a ban on herbicide use on federal lands in the West and helped create a movement toward better forestry practices and agency accountability.

Chris’s involvement in forestry and environmental issues dominated the last 40 years of his life, though he was no slacker in championing just causes in his earlier years. Part of his legacy lies in successful organizations like Geos Institute (formerly Headwaters), and the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, where he served in many board positions and which will carry his work forward for the benefit of future generations.

A master woodworker, he also leaves a legacy of beautiful homes, remodels, additions, and creative projects where his fine work will be obvious for many years to come.

This man was generous, joyful, loving, encouraging, prone to sing you a song or give you a kiss and a hug. He was father, brother, mentor, and friend to me and many others. His love will continue to permeate the Earth. He liked to sing, “When I’m on my journey, don’t you weep after me.” That will be difficult to hold to.

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Greeley Wells

As I contemplate this loss of Christopher Bratt, I am moved by and awakened to who he was. I had no reason, I guess, to think of this when he was still here. Somehow this missing is bringing him into focus for me.

Oh Chris, my elder, my example, my prototype of how to be and how to do. Thank you for being in my life. You led such a wonderful life, full of family and community, craft and good deeds, poetry and meaningful commitments. Your kindness and heart, your intelligence and creativity, that pool of light you showed around you are a wonderful example for us all to bathe in. I am so grateful for your being in my life in such a wholesome way.

Jona (his wife), you are always there, too, at his side, always joyful and supportive. And you, too, are so creative and full of life, for family and poetry and joy with community and friendship. The pair of you make a model for us all. I’m so glad you are still in our lives. And as it’s hard to imagine this world without Christopher, I’m so glad you are still in it, helping to shine his and your own lights.