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One woman's response to the urgent question of our times -
A "wind-sculpted wilderness?" - or the harsh grey outlines of a nuclear power plant?

What can one person do to save the environment? If her name is Kathleen Goddard Jones the answer is plenty, according to *Defender of the Dunes - The Kathleen Goddard Jones Story*, a new book about the gutsy little environmentalist by Virginia Cornell. Cornell, who wrote the perennially popular *Doc Susie: The True Story of a Country Physician in the Colorado Rockies*, has found another admirable heroine.

A veteran of two marriages and numerous love affairs, when Kathy finally fell in love at first sight it was with 18 miles of sand dunes along California's Central Coast. She never dreamed that protecting them from threats ranging from an atomic power plant to dune buggies would consume the next 30 years of her life.

It all started with a picnic. When her 16-year-old adopted daughter asked for a birthday party at Pismo Beach, Kathy — a Sierra Club stalwart — wandered off for a hike along the beach. The dunes ". . . shone in full splendor, was if eager to impress their future protector," writes Cornell. From that day on, Kathy was obsessed.

But enchantment quickly changed to activism when she learned that mighty PG&E had purchased 1200 acres right in their center with the intent of building an atomic power plant.

Kathleen was accustomed to thinking in terms of saving the redwoods. She quickly discovered just how long the odds were against her. The supervisors of San Luis Obispo County and most of its citizens thought the power plant would bring jobs and tax money to the schools. They saw little promise in the graceful dunes, which were zoned for heavy industry. Duncan Jackson, her wealthy husband, had no interest in environmental activism.

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Cheerfully acknowledging the difficulties, Kathleen's plans of attack included educating the county's citizens *and* consorting with the enemy. When she met Ken Diercks, PG&E's point man for dealing with local governments and opposition, she decided he would work *with* her rather than against her. Their mutual admiration culminated in an agreement that produced a site for the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, the last major electrical generating facility to be built in California.

But the campaign would be long and personally devastating. In the course of the next few years she would lose her marriage, her closeness with her five adopted children, various jobs and the friendship of many of her hiking companions in the Sierra Club. In fact, her efforts resulted in a major split in the national Sierra Club - an ominous portent of the polarization which followed.

Just when she thought the dunes were secure in the hands of the California State Parks system she learned, to her dismay, that the area was designated to become the state's first motor vehicle park. She was forced to turn her attention to corraling the destructive dune buggies, whose wheels threatened rare and endangered native plants.

Dedicated to saving nature's wonders for future generations, Kathleen Goddard Jones' obsession was the driving force in securing the dunes from destruction. At age 94, she has lived to see her work completed.