

Sierra Club Oral History Project

SIERRA CLUB REMINISCENCES II

Harold C. Bradley	Furthering the Sierra Club Tradition
C. Nelson Hackett	Lasting Impressions of the Early Sierra Club
Philip S. Bernays	Founding the Southern California Chapter
Harold E. Crowe	Sierra Club Physician, Baron, and President
Glen Dawson	Pioneer Rock Climber and Ski Mountaineer

Interviews Conducted By
Judy Snyder
Jo Harding
Richard Searle

Sierra Club
History Committee

1975

SERIES PREFACE -- SIERRA CLUB REMINISCENCES

Sierra Club Reminiscences is a series of Sierra Club oral history interviews with club leaders and longtime members whose activities in the club span the past eighty years. It includes the interviews with seven men who served the club as president during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. It preserves the recollections of mountaineers and rock climbers in the Sierra Nevada and beyond, and it records the tales of early mountain outings as far back as 1909.

All of these interviews make apparent the roots of the Sierra Club in first-hand, often pioneering, experiences in the mountains of California. In addition, they demonstrate how an abiding love for these mountains led many of these individuals to engage in national campaigns to preserve park and wilderness areas. Thus, they validate the Sierra Club motto, "to explore, enjoy, and preserve." At the same time, this series sets the stage for interviews of the following generations of Club leaders who rose to prominence in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

Ann Lage, Cochair
Sierra Club History Committee

Harold C. Bradley

FURTHERING THE SIERRA CLUB TRADITION

An Interview Conducted by
Judy Snyder

Sierra Club
History Committee
San Francisco, California

1975

Sierra Club

San Francisco, California

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PREFACE

When I first met Harold C. Bradley, he had recently returned to his family home in Berkeley after forty-two years of service at the University of Wisconsin Medical School. At the time of his retirement in 1948, his excellence in the field of physiological chemistry was recognized by his receipt of the second faculty Emeritus Award given by the university. And even in far away Wisconsin he had participated in the long, unsuccessful campaign (from 1906 to 1913) to save the Hetch Hetchy Canyon from being dammed to furnish water for San Francisco.

Once back in California, Harold became a member and later chairman of the club's conservation committee (then the only conservation committee). Many meetings were held in the spacious, hospitable Bradley home, and through those evenings and days came the development of ideas which are with us still. Harold himself first conceived of the clean-up campaigns which later became the service trips of the club. He was extremely active in the effort to keep the dams of the Upper Colorado River Project out of Dinosaur National Monument, a campaign which, more than any other conservation battle, changed the character of the Sierra Club from the outdoor California-oriented group it was once to the influential national conservation institution it has grown to be today.

Following the tradition of leadership established by his father Cornelius, who was among the founders of the Sierra Club in 1892, Harold became a member of the board of directors in 1951 and served for ten years. He was the president of the club from 1957 to 1959. He filled this office with great distinction. He presided at board meetings with dignity and kindness, giving each speaker opportunity to present fully his viewpoint. When he retired from the board he was forthwith elected an Honorary Vice President, an honor which he held from 1961 until his election as Honorary President in December, 1974. In May, 1966, he was given the John Muir Conservation Award, the highest the club can extend to anyone.

Harold became a patron member of the Sierra Club for his generosity in giving a hut in the mountains west of Lake Tahoe to the club, to be used as a refuge for those who continue his love for cross-country skiing. He was also one of the far-sighted donors who helped buy the Soda Springs property at Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite National Park for the Sierra Club in 1912. This property has been enjoyed by many thousands of club members, and just recently has been transferred to the National Park Service.

Harold Bradley is a man of many qualities: scientist, teacher, scholar, conservationist and a gentleman in the full sense of the word. He brings honor to the Sierra Club itself as he receives our ultimate tribute, recognition as our Honorary President.

Edgar Weyburn
March, 1975

INTRODUCTION

The Sierra Club History Committee asked me to interview Dr. Harold C. Bradley, ninety-six year old Honorary President of the Sierra Club. Dr. Bradley's recollections of the Sierra Club go back to its earliest days. His father, Cornelius Bradley, was a founding member of the club and a friend of John Muir. Carrying on in the family tradition, Dr. Bradley has been an active outdoorsman and ski mountaineer, as well as a conservationist and Sierra Club director and president.

The interview was conducted on July 6, July 13, and July 20, 1972, in Dr. and Mrs. Bradley's home. The Bradleys live in the gracious family home built by his father near the university campus in Berkeley, California. Mrs. Ruth Bradley has become somewhat of an historian on the Bradley family, so she sat in on the interviews and contributed greatly to the conversations. She did not wish to be typed into the transcript, so her information has been incorporated into Dr. Bradley's conversations. The tape recordings of this interview are available at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Judy Snyder
Sierra Club History Committee
March, 1975

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EDUCATION IN THE SIERRA CLUB TRADITION

Cornelius Bradley, Charter Member

Judy Snyder: Today is July 6, 1972 and I am talking with Dr. and Mrs. Harold C. Bradley. In this interview we plan to talk about Dr. Bradley's family background. Can you tell me about your father and mother--where they were born and a little about their background?

Harold Bradley: I don't know anything about my mother's background except that she was born and raised as a farmer's child up in Greensboro, Vermont. I don't remember anything more about her life except that she carried milk cans to the point where she thought at least that it had bent her back.

Snyder: How about your father, Cornelius Bradley?

Bradley: Well, he was born and raised in Bangkok and came to this country when he was about twenty. He went to school in Oberlin, and there he met my mother. They were classmates.

Snyder: Did he ever return to Bangkok?

Bradley: Yes, several times. On one of the trips back he deciphered a monument that carried a story on it which apparently the Siamese weren't able to translate. He spent nearly a year there on that project and came back with a great translation of it. He was an expert in several Oriental languages and also taught physics in the Oakland High School. He was vice principal of Oakland High School.

Snyder: Was your sister born in Bangkok?

Bradley: Yes. I was born in November, 1878, in Oakland, California. She was six years older than I, and for the first

eight or nine years of my life she managed to plaster me almost every time she could; then one time I got really sore and hauled off and smacked her hard. After that we were very good friends.

Snyder: When your father returned from Bangkok, where did he settle down?

Bradley: In Fountain, Colorado, for one year to regain his health. In 1875 he came to Oakland and the job of vice principal of Oakland High School. He taught there until 1882 when he came to the University of California, Berkeley, as a professor of English.

Snyder: Was he ever a professor of any of those Oriental languages that he spoke?

Bradley: No, they had asked him to teach Greek for a while since he was fluent in that language, as well as Latin and Hebrew. But he stayed with English.

Snyder: When did Cornelius become interested in mountains and hiking?

Bradley: I don't know if I can put a date on that, but when I was six years old my mother, father, sister, and I camped in Calaveras Grove. My father was talking with some other men, one of whom had a gun. I took it and played with it till I dropped it into the ashes of the campfire, and they realized it wasn't a good idea for a small kid to be playing with a gun.

Snyder: Can you tell me anything about the group of men who formed the Sierra Club?

Bradley: Yes, my father was one of the charter members of this group, and I think the name Sierra Club started there right at that time. Many of them were professors at the University of California, Berkeley, and at Stanford, as well as lawyers and so on. Many of them used to go on trips together. For example, in 1883, there was a group of them that went up to Mt. Shasta and spent several weeks up there climbing on the mountain. And nearly every year they would go to Tahoe or around Truckee. It was this group of friends, including Warren Olney, who was a charter member; and William Keith,

who was an artist; they were personal family friends.

They seemed to know Muir in some way, but we don't have any record of just how they knew Muir. In 1878, in Yosemite, Cornelius wrote that he had read so much about Yosemite that he had to see it for himself. He may have known Muir at that time. The first time he mentions Muir in his diaries is in 1887, but he evidently knew him before that time. It was in 1878 that Cornelius first went to Yosemite. I thought he used a very nice phrase--he said that tourists came and tried to do the Valley by stage in two or three days; but he found that, while cavalry were useful in some situations, foot soldiers such as he were better in others, such as really seeing the Valley and the surrounding areas.

Recollections of John Muir

Snyder: What are your recollections of John Muir?

Bradley: Well, my first recollections of him were in this home. Several times he spent the nights here. He would come in from Martinez where he lived. One story he told us was about a trip to Alaska when he was out on a glacier with a dog, Stickeen, trying to get back to camp and away from an approaching storm. To get back across the glacier he had to cut a path across a sliver of ice with a small belt ax. Stickeen was afraid to follow but eventually did, and then the dog went crazy with happiness--jumping and running around and jumping on Muir. While telling the story he was striding around the living room--jumping up and down on the furniture to demonstrate what took place on the glacier. He really took part in his stories.

Snyder: When the Sierra Club was formed, did Cornelius have the office of editor of the Sierra Club Bulletin?

Bradley: I think so. Maybe John Senger as secretary was in

charge of the first publications, but it was from 1895 to 1898 that Cornelius was first listed as editor of the Bulletin. He became a director in 1895.

Snyder: Anything else about Muir or Cornelius?

Bradley: In 1910, I took father to Martinez to see Muir. I drove him in a crazy little Ford of the day, and they chatted for quite awhile. Muir's home was the original Strentzel Ranch. He married into the Strentzel family. Anyway father and Muir discussed the Hetch Hetchy situation. San Francisco was going to have Hetch Hetchy as its reservoir. I had camped several times there and was very fond of it and the surrounding mountains and canyons. We were incensed about the situation. It's a little smaller than Yosemite, but to my mind it was more beautiful. I remember Muir saying, "Ballinger isn't so bad as you think he is."

Snyder: How about your own family?

Bradley: My first wife, Josephine Crane, was a completely deaf girl. We had one girl who died at the age of seven, and we also had seven sons.

Snyder: Do they have a love of the outdoors that you and your father had?

Bradley: They weren't tied in with Sierra Club doings very much since we were in Madison, Wisconsin, while they were growing up. But they were interested in canoeing, which we did in the north woods and Canada. We brought them into the Sierra on trips when they were six or seven years old.

There's one trip I remember with my eldest son, Charlie, when we decided to ski from the east side of the Sierra to the west side in 1935. We would end up in Yosemite Valley. We drove to Reno and took the stage coach south till we got to Lee Vining. We skied across Tioga Pass and down into Yosemite. It took five or six days to do this. When we got into the Valley it was dark, and a car stopped, and it turned out to be Ansel Adams. That was the start of a warm friendship with him. It was a good trip.

Snyder: It takes a lot of energy to do all these trips with your

sons and also trips alone.

Bradley: I must have inherited that energy from my father. In his diary he had recorded hiking as much as thirty-three miles in one day. And most of this hiking would be cross-country since there weren't many trails then. When Cornelius was up-tight with classes or felt ill, he believed that to get into the mountains and hike would cure almost any illness that he had, and it would. He would go into them in a low state, and after hiking around in them for several weeks he would return very much refreshed. He felt the mountains brought comfort and solace, and troubles would fade away. The first time he took me to Yosemite was in 1893, and we hiked around. He said that it was his last trip, but then in 1896, 1897, and 1898 he was hiking with Sierra Club members who were mapping the mountains in Center Basin; they named a peak on the edge or rim of the Basin, Mount Bradley, after Cornelius.

Scholar and "Rugged Outdoorsman"

Snyder: We want to talk about Dr. Bradley's education--his years at Yale and then at Madison, Wisconsin. So to begin with Dr. Bradley, can you tell me why you chose Yale, what it was like, and what you studied there?

Bradley: I chose Yale because I was offered Yale. I knew Professor Clapp, who was a professor of Greek, and he suggested that the California-Yale Club would like to have me go to Yale and do my graduate work there. So of course I gladly agreed to do that. My first impressions were quite boyish. I admired and went around looking at the fashions--very wide pants and wide hip coverage going down to a point and then the little blue caps. It was my first time east.

My area of study was physiological chemistry. Yale was a complex place. There is the Yale Academic, and then there is the Sheffield Scientific School. They are both Yale, but the Yale Academic is the original Yale nucleus. I spent one

year there working in the chemistry laboratory at which Professor Gooch was the head--a pompous gentleman, whiskers, long coat and so on. He used to come around every afternoon in his frock coat; he never taught me anything except he gave me a book in French which I was told to read and be able to report on some months later. This was on the artificial diamond. This was when diamonds were made for the first time artificially.

Sheffield Scientific School had a different outfit of teachers, and among them was Lafayette B. Mendel to whom I went and stayed with during my stay at Yale. I got my PhD three years later. The thesis was on the subject of my discovery of zinc in the sea snail that lived there in the Sound.

Aside from studying, one of the things I discovered while at Yale was ice skating. So I skated quite a bit while at Yale. One time I went through the ice and was able to pull myself out safely. Later when I moved to Madison, my house was across Lake Mendota from the university; when the lake was frozen over, I would ice skate to my classes, or if there was snow on the ice, I would ski over the lake to school. I did this for years and years. One of my colleagues writing a book on the university referred to me as the "epitome of the outdoorsman." I was known around the university as the rugged outdoorsman.

Snyder: After you graduated from Yale, did you teach there for one year?

Bradley: Yes, after I got my degree. My first teaching experience was terrible. I had a group of students who seemed to be swept up from the gutters of New York. And it was all day every day, and I was very tired at the end of the year. I luckily was called just in the nick of time to go to Wisconsin. I was the professor of physiological chemistry at the University of Wisconsin Medical School at Madison. I stayed there till I retired [1906-1948].

Snyder: Can you tell me about any of your highpoints or interesting adventures while there?

Bradley: Well, we of course were a very small group when I first went there because the Medical School was only started the year before I arrived.

Snyder: How about your teaching career while there?

Bradley: I taught for only part of the year, and the other half of the academic year I was free to work in the laboratory. This worked until the place grew so large. One interesting thing was that in this period a man in the country was kicked by a horse and badly injured. I was able to obtain his secretion of fluids, and I was able to study it. The analysis of the various enzymes gave me a chance to publish a number of articles on that subject.

Snyder: To get into a different area, how did you learn to ski?

Bradley: My first winter at Madison I went to a little town south of Madison to see a ski jump. This was the first time that I had seen any skiers. It was an incredible experience to watch those men come skiing down the tower and launch themselves out into the air and then land on the landing hill. I was very interested in this sport, and when I got back to Madison I determined to learn to ski. But I couldn't find any place to buy skis so I bought a pair in St. Paul and taught myself to ski.

Conservation: a Second Career

Snyder: When did you retire?

Bradley: In 1948, and I returned to Berkeley. I felt that since I had retired I would become involved in something other than bio-chemistry. I felt it was good to change my major activity. Here I was close to the Sierra, and hiking and skiing had been my hobbies, so I determined to give them my full attention. There was a group of people who were committed to making dams on every lake, stream, and canyon in the Sierra, and I felt it was best to leave those lakes and streams just as they were. This was artificial change and artificial destruction in the canyons and streams that are beautiful in themselves and should be left as they are.

A lot of these people did not seem to have any respect for the mountains in regard to leaving their trash lying around. So I went around and got a lot of pictures of the debris left in camps--tin cans and old bedding--and showed these pictures to various groups to show them how the mountains were being spoiled by the groups using them. They are a hard group to stop but the national parks people became excited about it, and they have stopped it to a great extent.

My theory was to burn these cans and smash them and then find a big talus slide full of sharp boulders and put the debris there after it was burned. In a hundred years it would have rotted away entirely and disappeared. Nowadays the idea is to pack the debris out of the Sierra completely. So I was involved in keeping the back country as beautiful as it used to be. It was a Sierra Club activity and led me into more Sierra Club activities.

ENJOYING AND PRESERVING THE SIERRA NEVADA

Winter Trips in The Sierra

Snyder: Today we are going to cover Dr. Bradley's life as it pertains to Sierra Club activities. To begin with, I'd like you to talk about some of your trips in the Sierra. I know that we have already talked about some of them, but I would like to go over them again briefly. I believe that the first trip you told me about was in 1924.

Bradley: Yes, that was the time that I skied across the Sierra alone. I had come out to visit my father here and brought my skis; that gave me a chance to go as far back as Truckee in crossing the range. I went over Echo Summit, down to Lake Tahoe, and on down the Truckee River to Truckee, where I caught the train back to Madison.

Snyder: Was that the trip when you found tracks around your camp?

Bradley: Yes, those were mountain lion tracks, but they stayed well away from my camping spot. The mountain lion would have to be very hungry to interfere with a human.

Snyder: Were you ever nervous about being alone in the mountains?

Bradley: No.

Snyder: Actually, this wasn't your first time in the Sierra. You had gone many times with your father before this.

Bradley: Yes, but not in winter. That was my first winter trip.

Snyder: Any other trips you'd like to talk about?

Bradley: In 1935 I skied across the Sierra with my son Charlie.

We were encircled by a tremendous fog cloud as we left Lake Tenaya to go over the top. We could only see a few yards ahead of us. So one of us stayed at the last tree while the other circled around until he found the next tree with a blaze on it. Luckily the blazes were just above snow level. We went down Snow Creek into Tenaya Canyon.

Snyder: Were there any trips you took with the Sierra Club?

Bradley: No trips. I was with some Sierra Club members when they were in Soda Springs building Parsons Lodge. I was there with Joe Evans and Will Colby. We spent several days there.

Snyder: Any other trips you'd like to talk about?

Bradley: The most interesting trip of all was when two of my boys and I spent a winter in Tuolumne Meadows. We went in early February, 1947, and came out when the big warm clouds were coming, and we knew that winter was over. There was about eight feet of snow. The river was hidden, and we were the only ones there. It was a lot of fun to ski around Tuolumne Meadows.

Snyder: How did you pack in enough food for the amount of time that you were up there?

Bradley: We stocked the cabin the summer before. We chopped cords and cords of wood and stored away supplies.

Snyder: What was the total length of time that you spent living in the mountains that winter?

Bradley: We arrived in early February and came out in late March. The thunderheads were beginning to gather so we decided it was time to go.

Dams in The Parks

Snyder: I'd like to talk about some of the issues that Sierra Club was involved in. What do you remember of the Hetch Hetchy controversy?

Bradley: Well, John Muir was extremely fond of Hetch Hetchy. It broke his heart when he lost the battle. It was a choice place and a hideous thing to spoil it like they did.

Snyder: You were still at Madison while this was going on. Did you try to fight the Hetch Hetchy battle while you were there?

Bradley: Yes, I make some slides of the Hetch Hetchy area and spoke to any group that would listen to me. One time I went up to Eau Clair to speak to a group. Since there was no hall available, we assembled in the park. The screen was a bed sheet--we tied its corners to branches of a tree close by. During the show it billowed back and forth in the wind. The projector used a piece of chalk heated white hot by an acetylene torch. It made quite a noise. To be heard over the hissing and sputtering source of light was a challenge in itself. Altogether it was a nightmare experience, and I was rather depressed when I returned to Madison.

Snyder: Were you involved in the Dinosaur Dam controversy?

Bradley: My son Steve was a kyack man and had taken some movies of that area, and I showed the movies to as many groups as possible to try and arouse interest in the dam project.

Snyder: I know the clean camps campaign was very important to you.

Bradley: Yes, it evolved while I was chairman of the Sierra Club Conservation Committee. I took quite a few pictures of camps--the mess they had been in--and showed them to the Sierra Club. They were good pictures and showed what campers did to beautiful mountain country.

Snyder: I think your campaign had good results because today

people are much more aware of leaving a clean camp. Would you like to talk about the problem of roads in the parks?

Roads in The Parks

Bradley: The Tioga Road in Yosemite is a good example of irrational, nearsighted planning. The country to the west of Lake Tenaya has beautiful, smooth granite. The glaciers had planed it, and much of it was still beautifully smooth. Very little disintegration had occurred. Well, they blasted this road up through that granite and piled rocks up on the lower side, and now when you drive down there you can't see anything. The old road used to go down where the ridge of granite ended, and you had the forest and rocks and boulders.

Snyder: You had solutions for the road before they blasted, didn't you?

Bradley: Well, yes, I had some solutions. The greatest angle that they would have had to face in going up the old trail was around seven degrees, which is nothing for a modern car. There was absolutely no reason for them to build that road right up that perfectly beautiful massive granite ridge, which had been scoured and polished by glaciers and left that way, and that still was that way. Divided one-way roads would be better than that one big fast road in several places. That way you could enjoy the scenery and not destroy the features.

Ansel Adams and I really fought against the Tioga Road. Ansel had a battle with them over a big boulder which was down near Tenaya Lake. He wanted them to make a road on either side, and instead they blasted right through this huge, beautiful boulder and made the road very straight.

Snyder: It seems like once again you were a forerunner in your ideas because now the parks are trying to slow traffic down and keep traffic to a minimum in the parks.

Bradley: Yes, and they've made many one-way roads. But there's still a lot of room for improvement.

Snyder: Another one of your interests was in combatting the people who wanted to build small dams in the Sierra?

Bradley: Yes, I would attend their meetings and speak out. They were always cordial to me, although my views were not very popular with them. Once again I talked to as many groups as would listen to me to try and arouse people's interest. The club eventually passed a resolution against these small dams in wild areas. All this happened just before I was president of Sierra Club.

Sierra Club Presidency

Snyder: You were president of Sierra Club from 1957 to 1959. What was it like being president?

Bradley: Well, we would meet every week to discuss all the problems that would come up. Even though I was president everyone was accustomed to arguing, so my voice didn't seem to carry anymore weight than it did before I was president. Any president's family life revolves around the club; you plan vacations and get-togethers always around the club schedule. Everything you do is in connection with some club problem. It was very worth while, but it was by no means a free life for those two years. Until recently the president of Sierra Club bore all his own expenses--the telephone, travel, and so on. They say a man couldn't afford to be president for over two years.

Snyder: Do you agree with the Sierra Club of today - the direction it's going in?

Bradley: Of course the Sierra Club is bound to change as it grows. Before we were involved in conservation issues and not so much in ecology. But it was being handled more by the head men of the club. The chapters were not doing very

much, nor were they being asked to do very much. I started getting conservation committees in different chapters when I was chairman of the club's Conservation Committee, because even then the club was beginning to grow so big that it was harder for the top people to handle all the problems themselves. Now they are going more and more for ecology.

Snyder: Thank you so much for your information. I have really enjoyed talking with you and Mrs. Bradley.

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C. Nelson Hackett

LASTING IMPRESSIONS OF THE EARLY SIERRA CLUB

An Interview Conducted by
Jo Harding

Sierra Club
History Committee
San Francisco, California

1975

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PREFACE

To read the one article found in the Sierra Club Bulletin, written by Nelson Hackett, is to meet a man of literary ability, humor, and one with the deep feeling for the mountains that the true Sierran has. "Via Deer Creek" in the 1917 Annual, is a delightfully written account of his sojourn with Walter Huber from Big Arroyo to Bearpaw Meadow and back by way of Triple Divide and Kern-Kaweah Canyon to Junction Meadows. As we follow their footsteps, we know that we are in the companionship of a "man of parts", and that two men of quality were on that mountain trip.

For several years Mr. Hackett was on the Editorial Board of the Bulletin, and served as editor in 1923 and 1924. A number of perceptive and lively book reviews bear his initials, but the only other literary contribution is "Lines to William E. Colby on completing his 25th outing with the Sierra Club." It is an imaginative tribute to one of our greats by one well equipped to pay that tribute. We can regret that he did not write more for the Sierra Club.

Nelson Hackett has always been interested in and involved with young people, especially students from the University of California. He has taken many young men on trips to Yucatan and other such interesting places, where without his generosity they would not have been able to go. A graduate of the University and faithful alumnus, a devoted churchman, helpful and generous to everyone he knows, and loyal to his old friends, he is an erudite, warmhearted human being, with a pleasing sense of humor, and loved by all who know him.

Harriet T. Parsons
March, 1975

INTRODUCTION

When Margaret Jory Tracy of Livermore, California, whose parents were longtime friends of C. Nelson Hackett, learned that the Sierra Club History Committee had asked me to interview him, she said, "Oh! You'll enjoy it; it was always lots of fun when Mr. Hackett came to our home in Berkeley." With this expectation I met with Mr. Hackett at his Piedmont, California, home.

Mr. Hackett, tall, straight, and handsomely dressed, greeted me at the door and graciously invited me in. He spoke with enthusiasm of his experiences with the Sierra Club. Indeed, the interview was fun, and the range and depth of Mr. Hackett's interest was stimulating.

Born in Napa, California, in 1888, C. Nelson Hackett joined the Sierra Club in 1906-07. His participation on club outings brought him a wide acquaintance with the leaders of the early club, including John Muir and William Colby. His recollections in this interview and his letters from the 1908 High Trip, which are reproduced in the appendix, give a vivid picture of the early Sierra Club.

The interview was recorded on March 8, 1972. Mr. Hackett has reviewed the transcript, making only minor changes and adding two further reminiscences of John Muir.

Josephine Harding
Sierra Club History Committee
March, 1975

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A YOUTH IN THE SIERRA, 1908-1911

Joining the Sierra Club

Jo Harding: When did you join the Sierra Club?

Nelson Hackett: I joined the Sierra Club when I was in Oakland High School, and I am not sure of the year--probably 1906 or 1907. The reason I joined was because two of the teachers there--neither of whom was my teacher, but we all knew each other very well--a Miss Reddington and Miss Shoemaker--belonged to the Sierra Club. They used to tell us about it. They induced Albert Rowe and myself to go on an outing to the Kern River.

So we just went for fun--it was not ecology or anything of that sort. It was just a good vacation for a month that was very inexpensive, and we thought would be a great lot of fun--and it was. It was one of the great experiences of my life, of course.

Harding: This was with the Sierra Club?

Hackett: With the Sierra Club--a month long. We always went for a month. Of course, in those days there was almost no one going into the mountains, except the Sierra Club in the summertime, for any length of time.

Harding: How did you get there?

Hackett: Well, you went by train to Porterville, and then from there by stage for a way, it seems to me. Then we started to walk. I guess it was Lower Kern Lake that was our first stop.

Impressions of John Muir

Hackett: I remember very well going along by Lower Kern Lake with Albert Rowe, and John Muir came along on an old white nag. He had on a black felt hat and dark business suit, which was all he ever wore in the mountains. He was riding this horse. He had a white beard and was quite a dignified old gentleman, quite thin and wiry.

He said, "Where are you going?" And we said, "Why, we are just hiking in to camp." And he said, "'Hiking' is a vile word. You are going right past one of the finest views in the Sierra. Now stop and look at it. Now as you are looking down, there is that beautiful lake, and the moraine is where the glacier stopped and dropped all those rocks that you see there, and the lake formed behind it."

And he said, "You know, when the pilgrims were going from England to the Holy Land, the French would ask them 'Where are you going?' and they did not speak French very well, but they would say 'Sante Terre' (Holy Land). That is where we get our word 'saunter'. And you should saunter through the Sierra, because this is a holy land, if ever there was one."

I remember that so vividly, and then I remember him speaking at the campfire. He told about the starting of the Sierra after they were heaved up from the ocean depths. The snow would fall and, he said, each little crystal of snow was like an individual flower--the beautiful little flowers that you could hardly see except under a microscope. And they would fall and fall, and finally the snow would harden, and there would be a very substantial lot of ice after a number of years had gone by.

Finally, the great ice mass would begin to move, and that was how these canyons were cut out. Then after that, of course, it was ages and ages before the glaciers receded and left these beautiful little lakes. Then the meadows formed, and then the grass, and then the beautiful little wildflowers. Everything tended in nature from the most primeval to a higher and higher beauty.

He spoke with the same eloquence that he wrote. It was just beautiful--never any notes, and just answering questions. That would lead him into some wonderful discourse on wildflowers or mosses. Oh, he always wished he had had time to study mosses, because they were so various and so beautiful. But he had never had time to study much about mosses. But he knew a great deal about botany and about trees.

Harding: How interesting! I like the word "sauntering". I saw that in Europe they call it a "walking tour".

Hackett: Yes, I remember when I came home an old librarian said, "Nelson, I understand you've been on a pedestrian expedition." Well, we all went into guffaws of laughter, and she did not know what we were laughing at. A "pedestrian expedition" seemed so ridiculous for the Sierra laughter.

A Visit to Hetch Hetchy Valley, 1909

Harding: You mentioned three high trips. Where did you go?

Hackett: Two of them were in the Kern, and the other was Tuolumne Meadows. We went into Yosemite and camped a day or two, or three. Then we went up into Little Yosemite and into Tuolumne Meadows and climbed Mount Lyell, which was the only glacier we ever saw on our trips. It was on the top of Lyell--or near the top. Then we went down into Owens Lake, down Bloody Canyon.

I imagine that was named Bloody Canyon on account of the very rough rocks where the horses would get cut as they went up and down that canyon. I think there was a longer route that led down to Owens Lake at that time; I don't know. But in those days we went down that canyon.

We camped down there a few nights, and then went back down into Tuolumne Canyon, Pate Valley and into Hetch Hetchy where we camped. I remember that in a rather small

area we killed eleven rattlesnakes before we made our camp. I killed one. But it was beautiful. There were rattlesnakes; of course, there were rattlesnakes in Yosemite at that time, too.

But Hetch Hetchy was so lovely and John Muir was so anxious to preserve it, because he said the day would come when Yosemite would be filled with people, and they would need this for the overflow. And that it was unnecessary for San Francisco to talk of damming it. It would just ruin it.

Of course, the city promised that they would build a road all the way around the dam, right into the rock, and that it would make a wonderful trip to drive around that whole lake and back again. Of course that was an impossible thing; they never could have done it. It would have cost billions of dollars to do it. The city never intended to do it; but it helped persuade Congress to allow the city to have the dam. We were very much excited about that, and John Muir had us writing to our congressmen and to our senators and that sort of thing. But it was a lost cause.

Portraying The Hightrippers

Harding: How many times did you see John Muir?

Hackett: Oh, every day on that first trip. He was along one trip to the Kern and one trip to the Yosemite and Tuolumne Meadows. He was with us every night at the campfire, enjoying the fun. We had a lot of stunts and talks. There were a lot of intellectual people; there were nearly all intellectual people. They were a queer lot--many of them laughter.

I notice in one of my letters I said the women were funny looking people. Well, we were not accustomed in those days to see women in short skirts, you know. They wore these little short denim or corduroy (or something like that) skirts that came just to their knees, or a little above their

knees, and then their mountain boots with hobnails in them.

They were dressed exceedingly simply and plainly, and there was no chance for makeup or anything, as far as I could see. People did not wear much of it in those days anyway. Many of them were school teachers and old maids; people that we thought were terribly old--most of them. And I suppose some of them were up to thirty-five or so.

They were interesting people. Ordinary people, common people would never care about anything of that kind. They would not think of going. It would be the unusual person that would go. And usually, I think they were all or nearly all university people--professors or graduates or high school teachers or high school students. There were four or five who were about to enter college that were along with us. I don't think there were any younger than that.

Harding: Mr. Hackett, would you read from the letter that you wrote to your family, dated Friday, July 10, 1908, "Junction of Kern and Big Arroyo" ?*

Hackett: "I had my bed right on the river bank...On either side--canyon walls...Do not know the names of all the men, but that is quite unnecessary. Everyone talks and walks and eats with whoever comes along, just as though we had known each other always. The dunnage bags from the lower camp didn't arrive until this morning, so I haven't had an opportunity to write."

Here it is: "I had a long talk with Mr. Muir this afternoon--or rather he did all the talking, about a thousand mile walk he took through the South the year after the Rebellion; also how he first became interested in botany." And then I say, "The campfire is ready. Goodbye, Nelson." So that is all I have about that talk. I wish I had written more about it.

Harding: Perhaps I should get some of your background here too. Where were you born and when?

*Mr. Hackett's letters from the 1908 Sierra Club Outing are reproduced in the appendix to this interview.

Hackett: I was born in the City of Napa, November 27, 1888. So I am now eighty-three. We came to Oakland when I was four years old. I went to grammar and high school in Oakland, and then to the University of California, and after that to Harvard Law School. Then I was in the office of Garret McInerny for two years and then in the Army. After the Army I was invited to go into the Bank of California, as they were starting a trust department. I remained there for the rest of my active life, until I retired when I was sixty-five years old, which was nineteen years ago.

Harding: You were vice president?

Hackett: I was vice president and senior trust officer.

Harding: Where were your parents born?

Hackett: My parents were both born in California; my grandparents were all pioneers--1849 and a little later.

Harding: Did you ever go camping as a child?

Hackett: I went camping with my parents. That is, we used to go to Lake Tahoe. They never really camped; they always rented a house of some kind. But I would sleep out in a tent, with some of the younger people in the family, cousins and others, and friends.

Harding: How did you happen to go into law as a profession?

Hackett: Oh, I suppose because I thought it was easier than going to work. I don't know why I did. I never regretted it, but I never wanted to practice law after I had gone to law school. I was very much happier in the bank. I loved being in a bank. I liked the people coming in and out, all classes, the rich and the poor, the old and the young. A bank was the place for my type of person.

Harding: What other things did you do in the Sierra Club?

Hackett: Well, not very much. I always attended the annual dinners. We thought that was a great deal of fun. I was always very friendly with Mr. Colby. I used to go often to his office and see him there and in his home.

Mrs. Colby was very hospitable when in Berkeley. But she hated the Sierra Club outings, and she used to talk about it all the time--what a sacrifice she was making to be there. But she would work like a Trojan in the commissary. She was there when the meals were being served; she would help serve things and was just a wonderful person, and a very bright woman.

She herself was a lawyer, I think, and had fine sons. At home she was very much happier and liked to entertain. She liked society and that sort of thing, which Mr. Colby didn't like at all although he was always glad to have people at his home in the evenings. He liked that sort of thing very much.

We adored Mr. Colby on the outings. He was the leader. He would stand up in the evenings and read off what we were going to do the next day. He would say, "The walk tomorrow is only fifteen miles." We all felt certain it was at least thirty if he said it was only fifteen.

Commissary and Campfires on the Trail

Harding: How was the food carried?

Hackett: The food was carried by pack train. Miserable stuff! There were some dried foods they had at the time--like dried apples and things of that kind--dried beef, chipped beef. But we had no fresh meat. We had one dessert that we called "paperhanger's delight", which was a horrible mixture of I don't know what. I guess it had a little canned milk in it, but there wasn't much good canned milk in those days. We really lost about twenty pounds on a trip in the summer time. We had fish, of course--trout.

That first summer we were very busy taking the golden trout in milk cans which were brought in (I think) by the Fish and Game Commission. We caught these golden trout and put them in milk cans and then planted them in other

streams which flowed into the Kern. That was the first time that golden trout were transported to other places. They got their color from the volcanic soil of that creek--Volcano Creek. They were named after Theodore Roosevelt: rooseveltii.

Harding: Was there a commissary crew?

Hackett: Oh yes! There was a Chinaman by the name of Charlie Tuck. Tuck cooked the meals. He would become very much exasperated when the meals were ready if everybody didn't come at once. Of course, the kids were often doing something or other and would be slow getting down to meals. Usually we were so hungry we were the first ones in line. Then we all helped serve things. They would be put along a log, all the different dishes, such as we had. We carried our own mess kits on our belts.

We carried our lunches in bandanna handkerchiefs. We gathered those at night--raisins, hardtack, maybe a little chipped beef, maybe a piece of cheese. That would be the extent of our lunches. Those were carried on your belt in a bandanna.

Harding: Did you move every day?

Hackett: Oh no. We would make a base camp and camp there. The pack train would come in and bring mail from home and a certain amount of food so that in the camps we felt we were quite luxurious. But then we would go on these side trips. On the side trips the food was very meager--just what we could carry in addition to our blankets.

Of course, some of the older people never went on any of the side trips. I don't think Mr. Muir ever went on any side trips then. I don't know how old he was. His beard was long and white; his hair was white. He might not have been over sixty-five or seventy, but he seemed to me like a very old man.

Harding: Are any part of the trips particularly memorable?

Hackett: Mr. Muir's talks, of course, would stand out above everything. And then some of the fun we had getting up little plays. The music of Senor de Grassi was very lovely.

He brought his violin, and he used to stand away from the campfire and play it. He had a beautiful tone and was a very accomplished musician. That was his calling, of course. I remember that very distinctly. And Mr. Colby, of course, and his humor, and his wonderful way of mollifying everybody and keeping us all happy. And we were. As I remember it, we were happy all of the time, except when some accident might occur.

Harding: What sort of thing was that?

Hackett: Oh well, there were some, but very little, very little. There was usually a doctor or two along, or a nurse, or somebody who understood things of that kind. I don't remember ever having any trouble myself, except that we nearly all had blisters at one time or another.

ASPECTS OF SIERRA CLUB INVOLVEMENT

Protection and Pollution of the Sierra

Harding: In the effort to save Hetch Hetchy, what sort of things did you do?

Hackett: All that I remember doing was writing letters. But anyone who knew the history of Mr. Muir, newspapers would show, I suppose, he appeared before various committees in Congress. I don't know whether he went back there, or Mr. Colby, or anyone. But I imagine they did.

Harding: Do you remember Mayor Phelan in San Francisco, who was quite instrumental in working to get Hetch Hetchy?

Hackett: I presume so, and Mayor Rolph, undoubtedly, and all the supervisors. Oh, they were to have fine, fresh, pure water such as could never be obtained anywhere else. Although in Oakland I think we have just as good water as San Francisco. Ours comes from the Mokelumne River, of course. It must have been when I was in college.

Harding: Did John Muir spearhead this?

Hackett: Oh, yes; oh, yes! And I was surprised when the Sierra Club, a few years ago, tried to have their dues exempted from the income tax. Because I always felt that we were organized for a political purpose very largely--not only to explore and render enjoyable the Sierra, but to see that the Sierra was protected. I felt that it was always a political thing and should be.

I didn't realize that the Sierra Club was probably going to contribute to the pollution and ruination of the Sierra. But I suppose we were; I suppose we did contribute to it.

I'd say that on our trips we were very careful never to throw anything into a stream. When we left our camps we were cautioned to police up everything and to see that it was burned on the campfire and then to see that the campfire was put out. There was a committee that followed up to see that water was thrown on all the campfires. Sometimes we had five or six campfires going, and those were all put out. Then a committee was appointed that followed up when everybody had gone on to see that nothing was left behind. If anything was left it was called to the attention of the person who had left it.

So we were very careful in those days not to do any more harm to the Sierra than possible. At the same time we were the pioneers who have led all these other packtrains to go in. While I haven't been lately to look over the situation I'm sure it's not as fresh and lovely as it was then. Certainly, Yosemite isn't as lovely as it was.

In speaking of conservation, I might add that Mr. Muir was apprehensive that campers might endanger the lovely little flowers in the meadows. And we were well aware of the difference between the unpolluted air of the High Country and the pollution below. A long account of our summer, written in doggerel and read at our last campfire, ended with the lines: "So now we are on our way/ To the dirty towns by the dirty bay."

Mr. Muir said when he first took trips to the Central Valley, the Sierra were so plain in the clear air you felt you could reach out and almost touch them. Then came placer mining and the plow. The valley was one field of wildflowers in spring.

Harding: I was sorry when they put this highspeed highway through to Tuolumne Meadows.

Hackett: Exactly, exactly. I'm sorry they ever allowed campers in Yosemite. I think the hotels should have been at El Portal, and people should have walked in from there, or they might have had a few automobiles or buses carrying those that weren't able to walk. Of course, I love to go there and stay at the Ahwahnee. It's very comfortable, very lovely. But I think it was better when I first went, when there was only the Hotel Sentinel and you went in by a horse-drawn stage.

Harding: What route did you take to get to Yosemite?

Hackett: El Portal, and up the river. Not the Big Oak Flat: I haven't taken that until recent years.

Outstanding Members of the Early Sierra Club

Harding: Are there any other things that you would like to talk about in relation to your experiences in the mountains?

Hackett: Well, there were some wonderful men before my time in the Sierra Club, or at least in the Sierra. Like Walter Starr and Little Joe Le Conte, and I presume his father, but I never knew his father or uncle. They were great men to the early graduates of the University of California, great teachers.

Little Joe Le Conte--they called him Little Joe because he was a man of small stature--did a great deal, and he was a very bright, wonderful man. He and Starr and others of that type were splendid men who had enough means to be able to take rather long vacations in the Sierra, so that I knew them later. When I went, people like Mr. Parsons and Marion Parsons were fine, fine, interested people, and the Colbys, and many others.

Of course, when I went I was quite young, and it was the fun that appealed to me--the climbing of the Kaweahs and Mt. Williamson, although I never got to the top of Mt. Williamson. A storm prevented us from getting to the top. Twice we climbed Mt. Whitney. That was an easy but a tedious climb.

And then coming down to Bishop and taking the old Southern Pacific engine train number two, I think it was, which brought us back to Fresno where we had a big dinner at the hotel and oh, such fun, riding on those trains. When the trip was over, then we were all exchanging addresses, and

having a great time, and swearing we'd write to each other every day laughter.

Harding: How many people would go in these groups?

Hackett: I think there were close to a hundred, maybe even more than a hundred. People used to say, "Oh, I'd hate to go with a crowd like that to Yosemite or any place of that kind." But in the Sierra Nevada when you are strung out along the trail, why you sometimes wouldn't see but a few people all day long. It might be that the two or three that you were walking with would be the only ones you'd see all day until you'd get into camp, and then you'd be very glad to see a number of people around the campfire. We could all crowd around one campfire very easily.

I wonder, to whom are you going for interviews like this?

Harding: The history committee sent letters to fifty-seven of the oldest members whose addresses they have.

Hackett: Walter Huber is not alive. Walter Huber would have been wonderful. He and I took side trips together. He was a splendid man. He was later president of the American Society of Civil Engineers. He was a distinguished engineer. He was quite young at that time. He's gone. Dr. Albert Rowe, whom I travelled with on this trip, he died a year ago last November; he was a distinguished allergist.

Now Edith Clapp Snook, Mrs. Cedric Snook, lives out at Rossmoor. She was Professor Clapp's daughter and was just my age and went on those trips with Esther Merrill. Esther Merrill Faye, she was a professor's daughter and lives on Mendocino Avenue in Berkeley. She was a very bright person. She and Edith, I think, were both Phi Beta Kappa and have much better memory than I have. They ought to remember a great deal. I think you ought to try to see them.

Harding: One person I know they are going to interview is Mrs. William Badè.

Hackett: Is she still alive? Oh yes, they were an interesting couple. He was a fascinating man. He was a professor of theology or Sanskrit at one of the seminaries. He was

considered a very learned man in reference to scriptural things--I don't know if it was Hebrew or what. I know he knew Hebrew because I've heard him recite some of the psalms in Hebrew. Of course, he was very much interested in conservation and that sort of thing. He was older than I. And it was on a club outing that I first met Francis Farquhar.*

The teachers I knew, Miss Reddington and Miss Schumaker, they're both gone. Miss Reddington's son called me up the other night from New York, where he's a broker and doing very well. She was an old maid schoolteacher. At least we thought she was an old maid. I refer in my letter to the old maids--"We joined the old maids." Well, I suppose they were in their twenties, maybe twenty-eight or so.

It was on this trip that Miss Reddington met Sidney Carlton, who was a bachelor. We thought he was old too, but they couldn't have been thirty. They fell in love, I think on the second trip that I took, and after they were married they had one child and I was asked to be godfather.

A Personal View of Religion and Society

Hackett: I said, "Well, I'm an Episcopalian and you're Unitarians. You don't baptize children, do you?" "Oh yes, Unitarians baptize." "Well," I said, "I never knew that." "Yes, we want you to come and be the godfather." So I went to their apartment down by the lake. Her father was president of the old Central Pacific railroad and was retired a long time. So this Unitarian minister baptized the child, and I was supposed to be the godfather.

*Interview with Francis Farquhar conducted by Ann and Ray Lage, Sierra Club History Committee, on October 16, 1971 and January 29, 1972.

Anyway, a few years ago this godchild and his family were living in Portola Valley, and they invited me to come down and spend the weekend. I said, "Oh, I'll come down and have dinner and come back." "No, I must come and spend the weekend."

Well, I just dreaded going. I thought, oh dear, they have these two little babies they've adopted, and I imagine they are rather poor people. Probably I'll be very uncomfortable. I'll have to sleep in the room with those kids or something. I went down and they had the most beautiful place. I had a fine guest room with my own private bath and everything. He'd made all this money in stocks and bonds and I didn't realize it. [Laughter.]

So I said to him, "Do you still go to the Unitarian Church?" "Why no," he said. "I'm senior warden in your church here in Portola Valley." He had become an Episcopalian while I, really, was becoming a Unitarian. [Laughter.] Well, I'm not. I still belong to the Episcopal Church and continue to help support it, but I think along Unitarian lines more than I do Episcopalian.

I still go to church but I must say they're changing all the prayer book of the Episcopal Church. And I said, "Yes, you change all the words, it's time you were changing some of the doctrine. I think that to require a child of sixteen years old to swear that he believes every word of the creed is dreadful." "Oh well," said Bishop Meyers. "You must take the creed as symbolism. It's symbolic. You don't have to believe it as you would a pronouncement of a historian."

Well, I think that's going pretty far. I don't know. When you get a creed to the place where people talk about it as a symbol, I think you might as well do without it. And I don't see why not. About things that happened 2,000 years ago, if one person believes everything as it's written down in the New Testament, why that's fine with me. If somebody doesn't, why that's fine too. I think each person should decide on his own belief without being made to swear that you think the church should be conducted only by elders or by bishops or ~~not~~ by bishops.

Harding: As I get older I'm awfully glad there are churches trying to teach people a better way to live.

Hackett: Oh yes, I am too. You know young people don't have much society any more, and the church can give them that, anyway. Now when I was in college, the fraternities and the sororities all had dances from time to time. There was a freshman dance, a sophomore hop, a junior prom, a senior ball. We had all kinds of committees of both men and women who met together, and those committees would sometimes have a little dinner or party or lunch or something. There was a lot of social life in groups.

Now, a fellow calls up a girl, they go to the movies, then they go get a hotdog or something. They know a few too intimately, and the others they don't know intimately enough. I think it's kind of pathetic.

Harding: I've just had two daughters go through college, and it's quite different now than when I was there.

Hackett: Yes, maybe it's all right. We were a little too strict, I think, maybe. I don't know.

Further Musings on John Muir

Harding: You were telling me about John Muir wishing he had company in the mountains.

Hackett: Yes. He went out on these trips and he had to spend quite a bit of time sketching. Nobody wanted to go with him, naturally, because it would be too monotonous for anybody living in such an austere way as he did, with just a little flour and tea and sleeping anywhere and just building a little campfire. He'd be out for a long time. He was making these sketches for his theory in regard to the formation of Yosemite Valley and the other yosemites of the Sierra.

Harding: You mentioned Mr. Muir's comments on dress in the Sierra.

Hackett: Yes, he used to say our colors should be subdued.

Bright shirts and sweaters frightened the animals and birds, he wondered. Perhaps they did. But his quiet humility, his reverence for the age and beauty and solemnity of the mountains, would have made him feel, I'm sure, that any gaudy dress was vain and out of place.

Harding: I often wondered about Mrs. Muir. Do you know if she ever got to the mountains?

Hackett: I have no idea. I know nothing of his family.

Editing the Sierra Club Bulletin

Harding: You were Bulletin editor in 1923 and 1924.

Hackett: I was? [Laughter.]

Harding: Mr. Farquhar told me this. Perhaps it was just for two issues?

Hackett: I thought it was only one, I'm not sure, maybe two.

Harding: Was it difficult to gather material for it?

Hackett: Oh, no, no, it was quite easy.

Harding: Did members send articles in?

Hackett: Oh, I think so. They were virtually all by members of the club. The Bulletin was always beautifully printed and had lovely illustrations, the best that were possible at that time. Of course now, I suppose, we have Ansel Adams and people like that--although I guess he was taking photographs a long time ago--but the reproduction of photographs has improved since those days. But they were very good, and the printing was always beautifully done--nice paper and a dignified publication.

Harding: Do you remember much about the flavor of the club at

the time you were Bulletin editor and a director? Was mountaineering the main interest at that time?

Hackett: The people who were in the club were interested, of course, in exploring the Sierra because there were so many peaks that had never been climbed. Very few people had gone into the Sierra extensively or for any length of time, so that it was like going to a new country. Those who went also went for the fun of it all. We had such a good time together around our campfires. I don't know of anything in my life that has been more delightful than those Sierra Club outings.

I wasn't able to continue them for personal reasons. I didn't have long enough vacations, and I had illness in my family so that I wasn't able to continue after those three outings. But many members went on for years until they were middle aged and had a wonderful time. I was often included in their parties at home so that I was in touch with them for quite a long time.

I mentioned people in the class of 1912 [at the University of California], and one of the chief, of course, was Horace Albright, who was director of national parks. I just received a book about him by Donald Swain, and I'm going to read that with interest.

Harding: That sounds interesting. Wilderness Defender is the title.

Division over Hetch Hetchy

Harding: I'd like to go back to the Hetch Hetchy dam controversy briefly. The records give the impression that there was some division within the Sierra Club itself over the Hetch Hetchy issue, that some members favored San Francisco putting the dam in.

Hackett: Oh, I think that is true; I think they did. I think some

felt that the valley was remote from the main Yosemite Valley, that the Yosemite Valley was sufficient for all future time, that Hetch Hetchy would never be needed. It was not as beautiful as the Yosemite, of course. It didn't have waterfalls as beautiful as Yosemite Valley. They thought that if it was filled with water that was all right. It would serve a great purpose for San Francisco. I have no doubt that many of them were quite sincere in that feeling.

Harding: I was very surprised to see, looking through a Sierra Club Bulletin, a name in the list of honorary vice presidents, Gifford Pinchot, the United States Chief Forester. He was listed as an honorary vice president from 1905 to 1912.

Hackett: Of course he was one of the great early conservationists, and that was the reason he was made an honorary vice president.

Harding: Later I thought it came out that he very strongly favored San Francisco's position.

Hackett: That might have been. There was good reason for people not being too enthusiastic about Hetch Hetchy at the time. They didn't realize as Muir did the great use that was going to be made of the Sierra Nevada by the people of California. They had no idea our population would ever reach its present level.

Harding: By the general public was John Muir considered an idealistic nature lover? Did he antagonize some people?

Hackett: I don't remember that he antagonized anyone. Of course he may have antagonized those who were in favor of San Francisco obtaining Hetch Hetchy, but I don't see how anyone could have felt any personal feeling against him. He was such a kindly, pleasant, delightful man.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SIERRA CLUB AND CONSERVATION TODAY

Changes in the Sierra Club

Harding: I'd like to come back to the present, now. How do you feel about the club developing from sort of a mountaineering club mainly in the Bay Area to a nation-wide conservation group that is politically active on the national level, with publishing companies and lawsuits...?

Hackett: Well, I'm certainly in favor of organizations that try to bring about more conservation of our natural resources. I have no objection to a nation-wide club or organization of that kind. As far as the Sierra Club is concerned, I was very much disappointed when they branched out politically to undertake things which seem to me to be remote and things about which I couldn't personally know. Yet I would be asked to contribute to the political opposition to certain dams and certain things that were going on in other parts of the country.

I felt we should stay by the Sierra Nevada, that that was enough to occupy any organization of that kind. Of course that wasn't done, and they have branched out; whether it was for the good or not I'm sure I don't know. I'm not in close enough touch with things of that kind.

As for their publications, they have been very beautiful, very fine, but I'm not sure that they were authorized at all times by the general membership. I don't know. That controversy is something I have no part in.

Harding: One of our committee members is Dr. Roderick Nash, of the University of California, Santa Barbara. He said that historians are interested in changes in attitude toward wilderness. He was interested in when the attitude began to expand in the Sierra Club from enjoying to preserving the mountains. You touched on this last week. Do you think there was a change?

Hackett: Yes, I suppose so. Of course, when you go back to the Hetch Hetchy matter, that was preserving the mountains and that was at quite an early time. But I would say that a majority of the people who belonged to the club were perhaps more interested in enjoying the mountains than they were in preserving them.

Of course, with most of the mountains there seemed to be no danger of anything ever happening to them. It wasn't necessary to advocate any legislation or anything. It never occurred to us that there would be anything, aside from an individual thing like Hetch Hetchy or some other invasion of the mountains that the Sierra Club was opposed to. But in general the mountains stood there, and they seemed to be impregnable.

Nature and Religion, Literature, and Politics

Harding: I have some questions here made up for our group, and they were for Mr. Hypothetical. So some may not apply to your experience or you may not care to answer some of them and we could skip them. Do you have any opinions on current conservation issues, such as San Francisco Bay fill or Alaska?

Hackett: I belong to quite a number of things of that kind--the organizations for saving the bay and keeping Tahoe blue. That sort of thing I'm interested in, but I don't take any active part in them. I contribute a small amount to various organizations of that kind.

Harding: Are there any men that you feel have been outstanding conservation leaders in the past?

Hackett: Well, I think all the directors of the National Parks have been pretty active in that regard. Certainly the people in the Sierra Club.

Harding: Have you had any personal contact with or particular views concerning current Sierra Club leaders?

Hackett: No, I haven't. And when I vote I have to vote on somebody else's advice.

Harding: What other clubs, social or civic or professional do you belong to?

Hackett: What other clubs? Well, I belong to the automobile club Laughter, the Pacific Union Club, Bohemian Club, and of course I belong to the Bar Association. And I belong to the Library Associates at Davis and to the Friends of the Bancroft Library in Berkeley. Oh, I suppose there are twenty things of that kind that I belong to.

Harding: Then here is a section. Rationale for Love of Nature. It says, "Do you wish to discuss your religious inclinations?" You did some last week. It says, "Do you feel wilderness has religious significance?"

Hackett: I would think so. I think almost, well, of course it would have significance, just as astronomy would have, or botony, or anthropology. I think they all would have some bearing on a person's attitude towards nature, the universe, why it is as it is.

Harding: Do you have any favorite authors or poets in particular. Favorite types of poetry or prose?

Hackett: Oh, yes, I like all the old poets. I'm not fond of the new poets, except Frost maybe, but, oh, yes, I am very fond of poetry. I read a great deal of poetry. I have nearly all the major poets in my library from Homer on down. I'm very devoted to poetry, very fond of poetry.

Harding: Favorite authors?

Hackett: Well, there again I go back to Dickens, Thackeray, and George Elliot and Jane Austin. I like the old writers, the classical writers, very much--Greek writers and the Romans. I like Cicero very much. I've always had a great fondness for literature. In fact when I was about to retire I said to Professor Leon Richardson, "Should I take your course for people about to retire?" He said, "Why, of course not, Nelson, you know how to read."

Reading is a great thing when you have the time, but you

have to be born with that instinct I think. I see so many college graduates who do not read, and who do not want to read. They have been compelled to, of course, while they were studying in college and had to pass examinations but with college over they are through. It is very unfortunate but I don't see how it can be changed. In other words we belong to an elite laughter.

Harding: The last item they have here is politics. Are you willing to divulge your political affiliations?

Hackett: Well, no, I don't think I am willing to divulge it laughter. I'm registered as a Democrat and have been right along, but it doesn't do me any good in Piedmont especially. People say, "Oh well, you know how Hackett is; he says those things but he doesn't believe them." But I do. I've always sort of been for the underdog. But right now I don't have the faintest enthusiasm for any candidate, Republican or Democratic.

That's kind of sad because in the past I can remember being very enthusiastic about Woodrow Wilson and making speeches on the street corners down in Oakland in favor of him. I was always interested in somebody being elected, but now it just seems to me they are all scrambling for the office. I don't know. I'm not very enthusiastic. That's the cynicism of old age. My friend Carmen Starr used to say, "Nelson, age owes it to youth not to disclose the cynicism that comes from experience."

Harding: Was this Starr related to Walter Starr?

Hackett: His wife.

Preserving Nature, Parks, and the Past

Harding: Have your conservation sentiments influenced your political stances over the years?

Hackett: Well, they would influence it. I don't know if at the moment they do. I don't know who are the people that are more in favor of conservation than others. I am not sure about the state parks, for instance. Now we have all these new lakes, Lake Berryessa, places like that. People are taking their boats behind their automobiles and going up there. They say the place is more or less of a mess, but the money that they have from the state parks is being devoted largely to providing for this recreation.

Of course they need the money for that purpose, because with people going there you have got to provide facilities for them to keep the places decent. Yet, I don't know that it tends to preserve so much as to destroy nature. Even the Sierra Club has contributed somewhat to that sort of thing.

Harding: A recent article mentioned the water coming down the east side of the Sierra now. They find it is somewhat polluted from the campers--from all the "saunterers" in the mountains.

Hackett: Yes, of course.

Harding: I wish we could do more to save the coast line of California, but it seems as though there aren't many men in the California legislature that are really interested.

Hackett: I don't know about that. I'd like to talk to Glenn Seaborg and some of these scientists. It does seem to me that when you have to heat a great deal of water in these atomic plants, it must cause some loss of life in the sea, but whether that's sufficiently important I don't know.

Harding: I was thinking particularly of just getting the coast so it is not in private ownership but so it is accessible to people, a great deal of people.

Hackett: Well, I'm not so enthusiastic about that. People litter up things. I don't know, you have a public beach, and sometimes I think it would be nice to go to a place that owns some seashore--just some private place that was beautifully kept and cared for. Anyone who really wanted to enjoy it could get in but...Of course we have got to have more public beaches and things, I suppose. Southern California has so many.

Harding: You mentioned being active in local issues in Piedmont Park, a few local conservation issues?

Hackett: Well, I've contributed some to local things here. We haven't got much. I wish we had more. We've got that little Piedmont park. We ought to have a big open plaza somewhere or other. Every town in Italy has. In Spain, beautiful extensive plazas, lovely parks everywhere. In London, the biggest city in the world, every little way there is a park, beautiful parks. Go into some of those big buildings down in the city of London, and you walk through and there is a lovely little square right in the center of the building with flowers and everything.

I think we have been terribly remiss in our lack of training, allowing billboards in all these towns and all these neon signs. Western towns are a horror downtown, all along the highways. There is nothing beautiful about them, or attractive. The residential parts are often quite nice, but the downtown sections are inexcusable it seems to me. I think they are awful. In Piedmont they have restricted the downtown part just to a few stores, a couple of gas stations, a bank and a grocery store. That's all right. I wouldn't mind if they had a few more, but there ought not to be too many.

I gave my old ranch house to the State of California park department. I told them when I was a child that the old pioneers in Yolo County had built these brick homes. There would be one about every three miles, and they were quite lovely places. Most of them had a dining room and sitting room on one side and double parlors on the other side, and six or seven bedrooms and one bath. They were very nice and I thought some one of them should be preserved. I said I would give my grandfather's home but I thought that some one of these homes ought to be kept. I wasn't particular which one it should be, but I suggested that they make some sort of survey.

Well, they came back and said that they would be very happy to take my place provided I give them some ground around it. I said, "Well, I'll give them ten acres." "Well," they said, "that would be very nice." Then I didn't hear from them for a long time until they came back and said, "Could they have twenty acres?" Then Mr. Moss said, "Well, they are proposing now to have no state park of less

than 100 acres." So I said, "I will give you twenty acres outright, and I'll give you eighty acres subject to my life's interest because I have to have something to live on."

So they said that was fine. So they accepted it. The Chamber of Commerce gave me a luncheon in town, and all my friends gathered out at the house. Mr. Moss came over with the people from the state parks. He made a speech, and they took moving pictures, and I was on TV in the Sacramento area, not down here.

I thought they were going to go right ahead and fix up the old place. They were going to have the 4H people take care of a few cows, sheep, and chickens so school children could be brought in to see what an old-fashion farm was like. They were going to restore the blacksmith's shop and the old buggy barn, and they were going to get buggies and old harnesses and things to display. We were all quite enthused about it. Professor Romani (Professor at Davis) and the historical society took a great interest, and a number of people did, but three years have gone by and not one thing has been done. They haven't any money. They simply haven't any money.

There are a lot of things like that that ought to be done, like the old Woodland Opera House. They tried to restore that. That belonged to the Hershey girls, and they had it, and it has been closed for the last 50 years. They wouldn't sell it, they wouldn't rent it, they wouldn't do anything with it. Well, now they are gone and the Historical Society is buying it. They have put up \$7,000 and they have another \$10,000 or so to go, but I guess they'll raise the money. That's very nice. It is a charming old place, and it could be fixed up, could be used as a theatre. It would be very nice for Woodland to have that. And there are two or three homes in the town of Woodland that are just as interesting as they can be. They are very, very old, and they ought to have those.

Now why can't a town devote a little money to things of that sort? They do in New England, and they do in Old England. There are these new societies, these new historical societies that are taking an interest and there are new conservation societies. There is a new national society with wealthy women throughout the country that serve on the board of trustees. There is another board of trustees of women that takes care of one or two of the places down on the

James River, but that was all done by private people who were interested in preserving those particular houses. But the country should be interested, shouldn't it?

But how are you going to do it? There are so many taxes and they are so high. Taxes are fearfully high. Most of the money from taxes is wasted, I guess. I don't know. Unless people have a surplus above their cost of living they won't do these things. That is the trouble with our taxes so high now. Most people don't have much of a surplus. They have got to save something for old age, for their children, and things of that kind, so it is rather difficult. But still there is a beginning, all is not lost.

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LETTERS TO MY PARENTS
JULY 1908 OUTING OF THE SIERRA CLUB TO
THE KERN RIVER CANON
C. NELSON HACKETT

November 1973
The original letters are in
the Sierra Club Collection,
Bancroft Library
University of California

NOTES AND ITINERARY OF 1908 OUTING

The party numbered about 150 persons including assistants. The Club President, John Muir, was with the party during the entire Outing.

The young man referred to as Albert in the letters was Albert Rowe, a high school classmate of Nelson Hackett's, who later became a medical doctor.

Nelson Hackett later graduated from the University of California, Harvard Law School, and eventually became Vice President and head of the Trust Department of Bank of California. He still resides in the Bay Area.

* * * * *

The Kern Canon was entered by way of Porterville, Springville (Daunt P.O.) and Nelson's.

A one-week camp was established between Kern River and Lower Kern Lake.

A two-day side-trip was made to the volcanic region and Natural Bridge in the vicinity of Golden Trout Creek. July 6-7

The party then moved 10 miles up the canon to the junction of the Kern River and Big Arroyo and main camp was established.

Side-trip to Moraine Lake and South, or Red, Kaweah Peak was made by a party of 46. July 11-13

Side-trip to Mt. Whitney via Junction Meadow and Crabtree Meadow. July 14-18

The party returned via Mineral King and Redwood Meadow to the Giant Forest, the main party traveling via Coyote Creek and Farewell Gap. Stages were taken from Giant Forest.

--from reports by Marian Randall Parsons, and the Outing Committee (Wm. E. Colby, J. N. LeConte, E. Y. Parsons), in the 1909 Sierra Club Bulletin.

Dear Mama & Papa:--

On the lawn at Springville after an excellent breakfast we arrived in Porterville at 4 o'clock. Had sandw--and coff-- then on the stage thither. In delightful company expect a rather dusty ride this morning it is now 8 o'clock and we have come 18 miles.

Nelson

Write soon

Postcard, postmarked DAUNT _____ June 30, 190_

Lower Kern Lake, July 5, 1908

Dear Folks:--

This is a fine restful Sunday morning and Albert and I have just come from church in Pine Tree Chapel and are sitting on top of a shady hill writing letters home and enjoying the prospect of the lake, Tower Rock and Kern Dome. Friday we went fishing in the morning quite a way down stream but got nothing. It is very rugged along the river bank and we spent most of the time scrambling over the rocks. In the afternoon we went in swimming. The lake is shallow and very, very warm some even go in after supper. The night we got here a young woman and a little boy of about twelve failed to show up. All the rest were in camp by four o'clock and Albert and I had gotten in before noon. About seven they sent out a couple of men on horses, built some fires on the rocks etc. The men came back with them about ten o'clock. They had taken a branch trail-- at last found themselves lost and went back to the original camp which they did not reach till six o'clock then had to walk into this camp some eleven miles. They were alright the next day however. To those unfamiliar with the trails it is easy to get off. We always stay near some of the committee. Mr. Colby goes like lightening and Mr. Parsons is very fat and very slow so there is no need of not finding someone to suit your pace. Of course when half a dozen are ahead you can't miss the trail for the tracks they make. I sort of imagined that the 120 people would all walk along in a row but they are so scattered that you are hardly ever in sight of more than half a dozen or so. When one arrives in camp the first thing is to select a camping place and then get your dunnage bag. We have a fine place near a big sugar pine and among small alder trees. There are a lot of young fellows around us and after one wakes up there isn't much sleeping for the rest. You can hear Charlie Tuck beating his big dish pan and shouting "hully up, everybody!" Then all rush to the long bench behind which the servers stand, grab knife and fork and spoon and plate and when the last

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is full you sit down under a tree and eat and eat and eat. At supper time it is necessary to stand in line and after they have cleared their plates of the first helping they get back in line and go around again. You can't imagine how good everything tastes. Last night we had soup, trout, cold ham, peas, beans, bread and butter, gelatine pudding and (for the 4th) chocolate cake. We have had hot biscuits and corn-bread; and hot-cakes every morning right off the stove and the limit is thirty each. The women do all the serving and the men make up by fishing and packing dunnage bags and building the camp fire. Yesterday being the Fourth of July we celebrated not because the day was of any special importance to us but because we knew it was to the outside world for John Muir says every day is the Fourth of July in the Sierras. The kids had a lot of fire-crackers and the noise began at five o'clock. After breakfast Albert and I took our fishing poles and went up to the big Kern Lake. Miss Redington and Sue Shoe came later with three men and lunch for the crowd. We didn't catch anything but I killed a rattlesnake. Mr. Colby killed two in the women's camp. So I keep my bedding hung high on a tree during the day. Neither of us have caught a fish since we have been here but have only been out twice. Some of the men who go out all day come home with between thirty and forty on the string so we have enough to eat and that's all I care about anyway.

We ate out lunch and the rest went on to the mineral spring while Albert and Lena R--and I composed a Declaration of Independence. Just as we had finished a packer came along the trail with a bag of mail all the way from Mineral King, so we rushed back to camp and were all disappointed. After the elaborate supper mentioned above, a huge camp-fire was built of great logs and the "Exercises of the Day" began. There were songs and recitations and parodies and banjo and mandolin pieces. Mr. Rodman (a fine man here with his boy, a Los Angeles Lawyer, and a cousin of Woodland Rodman) delivered the oration which was awfully funny and Prof. Morgan

of the U.C. who was master of ceremonies read our Declaration of Independence in stentorian tones and provoked much laughter and applause. We didn't get to bed until eleven and were up this morning at seven--which is the latest yet. Never slept better in my life--neither woke, dreamed, or turned over all night. Albert said he forgot where he was when he first woke up. Tomorrow we start out with fifteen pounds (on horses) for a trip to the cinder cones, the Natural bridge, Tower Rock and Golden Trout creek. Will be gone about three days and will return to the next main camp instead of coming back here again. I think the next permanent camp is for two weeks. The trout in Golden creek are the only ones of their kind in the world and are said to be the most beautiful. Their coloring is in some way derived from the lava bed of the stream which is red.

We have met a lot of fine people. There are some awfully nice boys here from Lick and Belmont and Los Angeles High. Also some U.C.s but no Stanford--its so that all the yells and songs are of Berkeley. Prof. Price and Prof. Morgan are here, a number of Lawyers. Burpee from Oakland and Mr. Rennie once manager of the Stanford ranches and Mr. Hyle were with us yesterday.

John Muir, however, is best of all and is always willing to tell you whatever you ask. This morning he explained the formations in Yosemite and told why so different from this--also an account of--a controversy between him and Le. Conte on the little glaciers in Tuolumne. But he says he despises controversy and there is room enough for everybody's opinions without making a fuss about it.

I hope you will send me some papers. We seem so shut off from absolutely everything whenever we think about it, but you may be sure that isn't often; and we all have the arrogance to believe that we could easily dispense with everything and everybody if the Sierra Club remained--we may feel differently about it in a month however.

We start home the 28th I think so maybe I will stay a

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few days in Giant Forest.

I am just fine and enjoy ever one of these quickly fleeing days.

With love to all
Nelson.

Junction of Kern & Big Arroya.
Friday, July 10, 1908

Dear Mama:--

I received your letter when I reached camp day before yesterday. We left the main camp at Lower Kern Lake on Monday morning at about six o'clock and walked to the lower end of some meadows on Golden Trout Creek ascending to an elevation of 8,000 feet. We stopped a while at the Natural Bridge and stayed an hour or so for lunch a little farther on. We were the first ones into camp, as we went with Mr. Allen who had charge of this side-trip party; some of the others would have arrived much sooner if they had not gone beyond the camping place. The first night everyone went to bed pretty early. On Tuesday we climbed a crater near Ground Hog meadow It was very interesting but the lava cinders were sharp and hard on shoes. Albert and I then walked on to the Tunnel--an attempt many years ago to turn Golden Trout Creek into a fork of the Kern for irrigation purposes. I went swimming in the icy little stream while Albert waded we then ate our lunch, met the "old maids" a little later, and returned to the temporary camp. That night we had a bon-fire on the rocks and told stories and sang songs till about half past ten--very, very late up here. The next morning Albert and Miss Redington and I started out at 7:15 came back down to the Kern, crossed the log-ford and then followed the trail up the Kern to the present camp at the Big Arroya. We did the thirteen miles by 10:15 and were the first of the side-trip party to arrive. Then went in bathing and loafed around the rest of the day. Yesterday we hardly went a hundred yards from the camp and slept nearly all day--except when eating. On the side trip the meals were pretty meager but here we have lots. This is one of the grandest places imaginable. I have my bed right on the river bank in the shade of a big aspen tree where I now am writing. The water roars over the rocks in broad stair-steps and the mountains tower up sheer and rugged on either side of the canon. The resemblance to Yosemite is most

2.

striking. It is very warm as we are quite far south. Have only seen a few little patches of snow high up on the mountains. This part of the Sierras is not so picturesque as Independence or Glen Alpine but it is far more rugged. It looks as tho' we might have a thunder storm to-day. The sky is full of great white clouds.

Last night we had a big camp fire with songs and monologues. One of the funniest things was a charade on the name Colby. the first syllable was acted out by an explosion in a coal mine. ropes we thrown over behind a piece of canvass and the victims pulled up and carried away among the shrieks of women. The whole word was acted by a representation of one of our camp fires. Mr. Rodman acted the part of Mr. Colby and one of the men dressed in a corduroy skirt was Colby's wife. Mr. Colby makes the announcements every night and calls out the articles lost and found etc. Mr. Rodman burlesqued him splendidly with any number of jokes on local themes. Among the articles lost was a Merry Widow lost in trying to get through the canon near Kern Lake. There is a deaf and dumb man here and he gave us a dumb show of his experiences--getting up in the morning, eating, fishing, falling off a log into the river--catching an immense trout, losing it, etc. This morning we have all been having our shoes repaired--new hob-nails, etc. All the original nails have dropped out of my shoes. Tomorrow quite a large group are going on a side trip to one of the Kaweahs and to Moraine lake. Albert and I are going too. It will be a three day trip. The day after we return we will start for Junction meadows on another side trip up Mt. Whitney. There is a young fellow named Darling who did some stunts at what he calls "mind reading last night. He was blindfolded and led away from the fire. While gone an object was hid. He was then led back, and grasping someone's hand found the article and returned it to its owner. He also took a pipe from Mr. Allen's mouth and placed it in Mr. Ratcliffs--also found a cup, filled it with water and poured it on the fire. Prof. Morgan thinks it a highly developed

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sense of reflex muscular action. Dr. Price of U.C. has his bed near ours. Prof. Louderback has given some instructive talks on the volcanoes and lava flows. There are some fine men and boys on the trip but I can't say much for the women. Know the names of very few of them and not all the names of the men. But that is quite unnecessary. Everyone talks and walks and eats with whoever comes along just as though he had know them always. The dunnage bags from the lower camp didn't arrive until this morning--so I haven't had an opportunity to write altho' the mail went out last Wednesday. We had fifteen pounds apiece on the side trip the rest we had to leave and have been without it until this morning. Got along just as well. Brought entirely too much and feel like throwing half of it in the river. My coat & sweater were both unnecessary also my blanket and wool comforter. No one hardly has over six or ten pounds of bedding.

Everything about these camps is very sanitary. Nothing is thrown into the river and the committee stays behind after all have left to clear up any papers or refuse. We have good things to eat--canned fruits, fresh meat, butter, fish--all we want. You say there may be another surprise. I hope it will be either new plaster in your room, oak floors, or a porch over Mary's room. Pat is such a little demon I'll have to bring him a live rattlesnake. I haven't seen any since the one I killed. There are three or four young fellows who will enter college with me next term who are here. Albert has the finest bed bed in every camp--ferns and boughs and pine needles stacked high. I sleep just as well on the ground as though it were a feather bed. I think the Sierra Club is the best ever. Everybody is so well and healthy--no old cranks. The only case of illness was a toothache on the part of one of the Japs.

Albert has just gone to take a bath and I guess I will follow suite.

With much love

Nelson.

Write soon. It takes a letter a week to get here.

Big Arroya, Monday, July 13, '08

Dear Mama and Papa:--

When I came into camp yesterday I found your two letters of the 5th and 7th. So I will answer them together. We get the mail whenever anyone comes in from Mineral King which is very irregular. I was glad to hear of the advent of the filly and am anxious to know what it looks like. Your order not to go on any tramps arrived too late for I have been on all that have been made. Saturday quite a number of us started for one of the Kaweah Peaks. We arrived at Moraine lake a little after ten o'clock. There was a gentle fall of rain most of the way, so we built a big camp-fire when we arrived at the lake and sat about it until the rain stopped, then ate our lunch and soon afterward started for the night's camp. We had several showers during the afternoon and had to lean up against a tree until they were over. There was considerable thunder. All the high peaks were lost in cloud, and the mist over the green forests made everthing exceptionally beautiful. We went to a little lake which we named Morgan in honor of its discoverer but concluded there wasn't sufficient shelter, so walked back again to some pretty little meadows on the edge of which we made our camp fires. The horses brought our beds and Albert and I selected a dry place under the trees beside some fallen logs.

After a hearty supper and a half hour or so around the camp fire we all turned in. The rain continued during the night with an occasional flash of lightening. The soft patter of the rain drops thro' the branches failed to penetrate my oiled-silk so I slept allright. Albert however didn't sleep much--because he was accostomed to too soft a bed of firs at the main camp, I told him. We were rudely awakened to breakfast at half past three. Cold and sleepy everyone gathered around the fire to lace up his boots. We then packed our dunnage bags--each one being allowed 15 lbs. and the horses carried the outfit back down to Moraine lake

to await our return. At 4:45--a little before dawn, we formed in line--some forty of us. I was number ten. Mr. Parsons selected the worst possible way to climb the mountain, taking the north-east spur. We were soon scrambling over the rocks and before long our carefully numbered line was broken up. No one in the party had ever been up before. The rocks were loose and the descent on both sides of the ridge exceedingly precipitous. Nevertheless at 10:35 I was on the summit. I was the fifth to arrive. In the five I was with, were two girls and we were considerably ahead of the rest. Our priority was probably due to the fact that we had chosen our way a little better for Albert and a few others did not arrive for nearly an hour. We ate our lunch on the summit at an altitude of 13,500 ft. The view was magnificent, taking in Whitney, Langley, Williamson, Saw-tooth range, some dozen lakes, the Big Arroya, the San Joaquin Valley and on beyond rising here and there above the clouds, the blue summits of the Coast Range. Some of the party noticed the altitude and Albert had quite a bad headache but I never felt so well and exhilarated in my life. After lunch we started back by the western spur--a comparatively easy and direct way. There had arrived some fifteen people at the top when we left so we don't know whether the others got there or not. Will find out to-night.

We came back to Moraine lake where Al and I went in swimming for a few minutes. Then we came on down to this main camp. All but about five remained at the Lake for the night. I am glad I didn't because I got my mail and had apple-pie and wild-strawberry short-cake for dinner. I suppose the rest will arrive sometime this morning. Moraine lake is a beautiful spot surrounded with Forests and with a sky line made of the most jagged peaks I have ever seen. I really didn't suppose it was possible for mountains to be so jagged. Upper Funston Meadow--on the plateau near Moraine Lake is the prettiest, greenest one imaginable.

Miss Robinson offered me her blankets at the main-camp so

I didn't have to carry my sleeping bag down from the lake last night. The pack-train will bring it today. We feel pretty stiff today--but will soon be rested. We have delightfully warm weather all the time. We walk twelve miles tomorrow to Junction Meadows. From camp there we go to Mt. Whitney. It will be a several days trip. From there we come back here again and then out by Mineral King to the Giant Forest on the 27th or 28th. There will be a knap-sack trip by Alta Meadows. But Albert and I think we would rather stay with the Commisary altho' it is a little longer journey. Only 2 1/2 pds. can be carried on a knap-sack trip for each day. Mr. Parsons says he finds that boys under 21 need a good deal more. As that is right in line with my theory, I think I'll stay with the pack train. I heard yesterday evening that Chas. & Sydney Elston were camped a short distance from here. I viscolized my boots this morning. Yesterday's trip was pretty hard on them. They are a little ripped at the heal and quite scuffed but they will last this trip splendidly. It is said to be rather unusual for boots to last more than one year on these trips, but I think mine will. We have stocked two lakes with trout. I have only caught one so far. That one went with the fish that were placed in Moraine lake. Don't like to fish anyway--sorry I brought my tackle, for some of the professionals catch enough for everyone everday. A funny little fellow called Mr. Chetwood--who is continually interrupting the camp-fire speeches with the silliest questions, wandered off from the party on our last trip and had to sleep supperless and blanketless between two fires Saturday night. Be sure and write to me often if only a few lines. Remember me to Mary and congratulate Pat for me. What will you call the colt?

With love. Nelson

Your corn and tomatoes don't appeal to me at all bacon and beans, etc. are all I ask for or want so long as I get all I want of them. I wonder how you'll ever find enough for me to eat when I get home!

Saturday, July 18, 1908

Kern Cañon, near Big Arroya

Dear Folks:--

We started for Junction Meadows last Tuesday--to-day is Saturday--and arrived at that most northerly point of our itinerary along in the afternoon having stopped some time for lunch. On the way up, those who had brought their outfits found excellent fishing. I saw Mr. Caihil pull thirty trout out of one pool. About eight of us found a pleasant grove and there had our lunch. We made tea and baked trout in wet papers--simply delicious! That night the pack train was late because some of the mules had gone off. Part of them arrived with the provisions and so we had supper at 9 o'clock. No dunnage bags, so we prepared to sleep around the fires. About eight were built. Albert chose a fine fire where everyone wanted to be quiet and try to sleep, but that was too stale for me--so I chose the one where nearly everyone was sitting with their backs to four logs and talking and having a good time so as to be good and tired for the 17 mile walk next day. We didn't succeed however, for we heard the jingle of bells a little after midnight and our sleeping bags had arrived! We quickly crawled in and slept soundly. We went on to Crabtree Meadows next day--an elevation of 11,000 ft. and very cold. We are only allowed 15 lbs. of stuff on the sidetrips where it is always high and cold so my wool comforter is of little use to me, save as a mattress when in the main camp. The next morning we turned out in the cold star-light at 3:30 and started at 4:30 for Mt. Whitney. The climb is easy but tedious and the rocks are hard on the feet. I arrived at the top at nine o'clock. We ate lunch, made some chocolate sherbet, enjoyed the view for a couple of hours and then returned. We could see the desert, and Owen's Lake, eleven thousand feet below us. Also range on range of jagged, glaciated mountains. That night we slept again at Crabtree and then about a score of us came down here by a new short cut into the canyon saving 13 miles. We came along without

2.

stopping and got here at half past twelve in time to do justice to the hot lunch here as well as to the ones we carried with us. The main party camped at Junction Meadows last night again and will not be in until sometime this afternoon probably. We had to carry our blankets down for last night. Altogether we certainly had a fine trip and this morning, after a good nights' sleep I feel like starting out again, but we will stay here now for three days enjoying the luxuries of life in the main camp. There will then be two parties to Redwood Meadows. One up the Big Arroya and the other up Coyote. We have seen the Arroya and most of the country that way so will not take the knap-sack trip, but will go with the pack-train by way of Mineral King, which is said to be a more beautiful region, only it is more familiar--but not to me however. So I will go that way and Albert will do whatever I do he says. We'll have a whole day at Giant Forest and two nights. I may stay a day or two longer but probably not. We have to send 15 lbs of baggage on ahead but will have the rest with us each night.

This morning Mrs. Colby called me into the tent and gave me some real cow-made milk which someone had brought her from a dairy at some distance. This morning I washed nearly all my belongings. I got the papers last night Hurrah! for Bryan! Also a letter from Florence--long and newsy. Expect mail again today.

I will probably not have an opportunity of sending out another letter--this one goes tomorrow. I am feeling^o so well but don't think I have gained any--probably lost some. Prepare to feed an elephant however--I don't care what it is but plenty plenty plenty. Good-bye.

With love,

Nelson

Saturday the 18th

July 18, 1908

Kern Canon
Saturday Evening.

Letter No. 2. Read the other first.

Dear Mama & Papa:--

I wrote to you this afternoon or rather morning, but the mail has just come in with two letters from home and I am so glad to hear about the little bay colt that I thought I would write to you again. I hope Norma has a good time. I wish she could be there when I am home. Was so sorry to hear of Mrs. Brownells' illness and hope she will soon be well. I haven't got a facsimile of the Declaration nor even the original. I wrote a poem called "The Ballad of the Hungry Hiker" and stuffed it in my pocket. Went to take out my map and Albert picked it up and ran off with it to Miss Shoemaker who gave it to Dr. Morgan. The first I knew about it was when I heard a voice at the camp-fire beginning: There was once a Hungry Hiker in the days of naughty-eight, whose one distinctive feature was the awful way he ate. The doggerel wasn't in a very finished condition and some of the feet were a little lame--I felt awful cheap. Everyone wanted to know the author and Morgan said "By the author of the Declaration of Independence."

We have just had a big supper with chocolate pudding. I stood behind the counter and served as I often do--it is a fine way to get acquainted and have a few words with everybody in camp. Miss Shoe--had a party this aft on a big box of Haas' best. Of course we were there. There is always half an hour between dinner and camp-fire. The fairest time of day. Usually sit down on the river bank and watch the fish jump. Tonight we are to have a big camp-fire--everyone home from the side trips. We are all a big happy family. I had a long talk with Mr. Muir this aft--or rather he did all the talking--about a thousand mile walk he took thro' the South the year after the Rebellion. Also how he first became interested in Botany. Camp-fire ready. Good-bye Nelson.

July 23, Thursday.

Mineral King.

Dear Pop:--

We are now well on our way home--and have been indeed since we left the summit of Mt. Whitney. We have had a rather hard tramp today. Got on the wrong trail with a doz. others and went 2 or three miles out of the way so that we have walked about 17 miles besides climbing up Farewell Gap. Yesterday we walked 12 miles and climbed 3,000 ft. But tomorrow we only go seven or eight miles and the next day to Giant Forest. I haven't rec'd any letters on the last two mails but am very grateful for the papers I got here this aft. This is a cold windy ravine with ice every morning they say. We have a little individual camp fire tonight and I am writing on the back of my folding lantern--an excellent desk as you will see. The copy of "Life" has been going the rounds. Yesterday we got the papers yesterday about Miss Barnet's death. The Chronicle was fairly accurate but the Tribune and others were made up of mere conjectures. There are lots of things to tell about--the Minstrel Show in which Al and I were end - men - etc but I will tell you all when I arrive. We are to have dinner in Fresno Monday. Will be home very early Tuesday be sure to have cantelopes or grapefruit for breakfast--am crazy for fresh fruit.

Good-bye,

With much love

Nelson.

Philip S. Bernays and the Sierra Club

FOUNDING THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

An Interview Conducted by
Richard Searle

Sierra Club
History Committee
San Francisco, California

1975

Sierra Club

San Francisco, California

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PREFACE

It is a privilege to honor and pay tribute to our tenth president in a preface to his biographical interview.

Our knowledge of him, the American wilderness, the Sierra Club, and the history and operation of the National Park Service came suddenly and late in life as a result of an invitation to be camp doctor on a trip to the North Rim through the Kaibab Forest. We found him equipped with a large Packard touring car of the era of large wheels and high road clearance, which would permit driving over the open desert without the benefit of roads. To the back was attached a large box which held sleeping bags, food, stove and utensils.

He taught us to sleep on the ground. We learned the virtue of hip hole and shoulder hole in the sand. By evening campfires he taught us why the primrose blooms at dusk, why the White Tailed Squirrel lives in the Kaibab Forest, how the battle progressed for the establishment of the Kings Canyon National Park as he completed his term as Sierra Club president in 1933. He even taught me to be a Sierra Club member so that I might become the twentieth president.

But more importantly, he taught Ann Crowe to become chairman of the Morley Committee--a position she held for thirty two years, spreading knowledge of the club's purpose and activities to many other countries before the club had ever had an outing abroad. Her children still write from all over the world about the high point in their stay in America--a Sierra Club outing.

Phil's enthusiasm was so contagious that we did not miss an outing until after 1956, when I found I had to ride a horse to get to the top of Carroll Creek. This was found to be more painful than walking, although when my horse ran away, doing a circular trip around a large meadow at full gallop to quietly join his friends of the pack train, high trippers complimented me on my horsemanship, not knowing I had never been aboard a horse before.

Phil Bernays should have taught me to ride a horse as well as a Packard. With this one exception his presidency was a great step forward in the exploration, enjoyment and preservation of the wilderness.

Harold Crowe
March, 1975

INTRODUCTION

One of the leading southern California figures in Sierra Club history is Philip S. Bernays, a member of the club for seventy years. Phil served as a member of the Sierra Club Board of Directors from 1919 to 1953, as vice president from 1928 to 1931 and 1946 to 1948, and as club president from 1931 to 1933. He is perhaps best remembered, however, as a founding member and active participant and leader of the Sierra Club's first local chapter. It is on his role in establishing and guiding the Angeles Chapter for a period of over half a century that this interview focuses.

My wife, Jean Searle, and I interviewed Phil Bernays on May 30, 1968, at the Bernays home in Laguna Hills, California. The tape recording was later turned over to the Sierra Club History Committee for inclusion in its oral history project. The final section of the interview was a discussion of Mr. Bernays' photographs of Muir Lodge, chapter local walks, and club outings. As Mr. Bernays has since donated much of his photography collection, along with a recorded description of the photos, to the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, this portion of the transcription has not been included here. In other respects, this transcription accurately reflects our 1968 conversation.

Richard Searle
Sierra Club History Committee
March, 1975

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ESTABLISHING THE SIERRA CLUB'S FIRST LOCAL CHAPTER

Launching a Lifetime Interest

Richard Searle: I'd like to ask Phil to start off and mention a few things about his experiences. Phil, one thing has intrigued me; how did you first hear about the Sierra Club?

Phil Bernays: It was purely accidental, Dick. I was boarding a streetcar on Telegraph Avenue in Oakland, heading for Berkeley. We went one block, when the car stopped and who got on but an acquaintance of my father, unknown to me, who turned out to be the mayor of Oakland and a charter member of the Sierra Club, Warren Olney I.

Searle: What year was this?

Bernays: 1905

Searle: And did you join the club shortly after that?

Bernays: I joined the club in June that same year. When the mayor sat down along side us and said, "Phil, you're a young man. You'd like to know something about the club that I'm very much interested in, of which John Muir was one of our founders. I'm going to give you an application blank, and I'm trusting that you will fill it out and soon become a member." I took the blank and pocketed it and did something about it a little later. For a number of years I was strictly a dues-paying member and nothing else.

The Sierra Club was an unknown quantity until I went to southern California, following the fire and earthquake of 1906 --a year after the application had been filled out and I had joined. A few years following that, while walking along the street in Los Angeles, I accosted a former Oaklander whom I

recognized, William Patrick Boland, a fellow Irishman who had been a member of the club and had taken outings from the very first one under William E. Colby and had gone on each one ever after. He invited me to his home because we were both Sierra Club members, and I accepted.

It was in the summertime and spread on his bed were all of the enticing equipment of the high trip. He explained that he took his younger brother along for his brother's health, as well as his own. The following year, his brother had passed on, and I substituted on the high trip with Bill.

Searle: Where did you go on that first high trip?

Bernays: We went into the South Fork of the Kings River Canyon. There was no road approaching it at that time. We had to go from Big Meadow over along the trail and through Horse Corral and drop down into the canyon. It took us a full day from Horse Corral to get into the camp and settled. And that was my introduction to the Sierra Club high trips.

Searle: Did you go on many trips after that?

Bernays: I went on two weeks--half of several trips--and on two full high trips in the future. But, getting back to the chapter, I was so enthused by my experience on the high trip that I said to Bill Boland, "What do you say, Bill, that we form a chapter? I see by the bylaws here that it's permitted but has never been carried out." He said, "Well, Phil, take it up with me when we get home, and we may be able to do something about it."

Searle: This was in 1906 now, wasn't it?

Bernays: This was in 1910. The outing was in 1910. I had been a member five years before that. We had moved to Los Angeles per force. San Francisco was ruined, we thought, with a very doubtful future after the fire.

Forming the Southern California Chapter

Searle: Well, how did it develop from there? There were two of you as far as thinking about forming a chapter. Were there many other members in southern California at that time?

Bernays: That was the point. There were a number of members, none of whom had met the other, and consequently, it required a little introductory work. Finally, largely because of the fact that both Bill and myself wanted to meet more of them, we went to the office of Judge Clair Tappaan and asked him what to do about it.

He said, "Well, boys, I don't believe you realize that there was a previous attempt at forming a chapter, but it fizzled out." And we said, "How come?" "Well," he said, "they didn't put on their mountain clothes. They dressed all up and went to a banquet at Levy's--Al Levy's--and that was, of course, the swank thing to do, but they hardly recognized each other in those clothes." And he said, "It resulted in having what they thought was going to be a successful chapter."

A local walk was planned, but it happened to turn out to be a climb of the highest mountain in southern California, Mount San Gorgonio, or Greyback, and it also happened on the hottest day of the year. The result was, and I am quoting Tappaan, "Only the leader showed up." And thereby ended the movement for forming a chapter.

Searle: This must have been some years before, I guess.

Bernays: This was several years before. And he said, "Well, boys, all I can say is, I wish you luck." He said, "The man that has the files with all the names of people who live in southern California and are now paying dues to the Sierra Club, and who don't know each other--practically hardly do," he said, "You go over and see that gentleman. He is in a nearby office building." So, we went over to this attorney, Willoughby Rodman, and obtained the files. A card was sent out inviting those members to come to this meeting, and we assured them that this time we would not attempt to climb Mount San Gorgonio.

We gathered about seventy-five people. They came from as far away as San Diego and seemed very enthusiastic, especially those who had experienced a high trip. That meeting, by the way, was held in the same block as the present headquarters of the chapter only at the other end of it, at the east end of the same block, on West Sixth St. in downtown Los Angeles, in a two-story frame building. We were on the second floor, and I had a friend who had let us have the permission to use his rooms. So, at that meeting, we got fifty signatures that first night.

Searle: How many members were there total in the area?

Bernays: There were about seventy-five members that showed up and fifty of them were ready to sign up right away, and that was the requisite number. We sent our credentials to San Francisco, and before long we were a chapter. There being no other chapters in southern California, we took the all-inclusive name of Southern California Chapter of the Sierra Club, and thereby formed the first one in the entire club. You know how many there are since?

Searle: That's right, we have about 9,000 going on 10,000 members, and there are five chapters, I believe.

Bernays: Incidentally, at the time we formed the chapter, there were not over 3,000 members in the Sierra Club--the entire club.

Searle: And most of these were in the San Francisco Bay Area, I suppose?

Bernays: There were no other chapters. Most of the members were around the San Francisco Bay Area--that's correct. The interests of the club were confined strictly to California.

Searle: Did you receive any encouragement from the people in San Francisco or from John Muir as far as forming the chapter?

Bernays: No, they had anything but encouragement. They felt that perhaps we were infringing a bit on their prerogatives. I can't help but say that, having lived in the Bay Area as a boy and moving away from it only per force by the earthquake and fire, that there was a feeling of jealousy that pervaded even in those days; although they looked upon Los Angeles

as just a town--which it was at that time. I believe their views are somewhat different since then.

Searle: I think we're a little bit more cosmopolitan, but I was incidentally born and raised in Oakland, and I think I had somewhat of a similar impression there. Well, you've mentioned some of the organizers of the chapter. Were there others who were quite active right after they had the petition signed? And who were the first officers, and so forth? Do you have any of that?

Bernays: They asked me to become the first chairman of the executive committee, but I was inclined to prefer to stay a little bit in the background and consequently turned down the offer. I am not clear in my mind just who was the first chairman, but I know we had a very active group and immediately got busy to carry out some of the objectives of the club.

One of the first contacts I made was by correspondence with John Muir. I went over to Pasadena one day and called upon Muir's friend, the bookseller, Mr. Vroman. And I said to him, "We have a chapter, as you probably know, being a member, over in Los Angeles. I would like very much to buy a set of John Muir and have them sent up to Martinez for autographing."

He said, "Well, Phil, I think with that idea in mind, let me say it'll be my great pleasure to present you with a set of the books. I recommend that we send them off immediately, because I understand Mr. Muir is not in too good health, and it ought to be done without delay." The result was a full set of the autographed books now resting comfortably--almost too comfortably because they should have more access by members--in the library of the present day Angeles Chapter.

Financing and Building Muir Lodge

Bernays: One of the early activities that we performed--which I think was a great boon to the club, especially to our local

chapter--was the idea formed in the mind of one of our members, I can't recall which one. And that was that we build a lodge. During this second year of our formation, of the chapter, we undertook to raise the funds for such a purpose.

I went up personally with some friends into the big Santa Anita. It seems the government was just opening up an arrangement whereby an individual or a group of people could pay rental and obtain a lease for properties on the Santa Anita Creek. I took two adjoining sites in my name and soon after turned them over to the name of the Sierra Club. As an organization, they were given a little lower rate. There was the site for a lodge.

However, we had a long ways to go before we could build the lodge because we didn't have a penny to start with. Then a brilliant idea struck somebody in the crowd, and we all fell in line--namely, we will do what some other organizations have done in Los Angeles and Hollywood. We will take a certain evening at El Capitan Theater, buy out the tickets for the entire house.

It was a courageous undertaking because it represented a big investment; and it worked by getting everybody interested, because in those days we could get activity per force, in numbers. The result was--the night of the show we had raised between \$800 and \$900 as a nucleus for the fund. This was all to be incorporated in a lodge fund. No name had been obtained for the lodge.

That night we had Judge Tappaan appear on the stage and give some explanatory remarks to the audience, many of whom were not club members. In fact, it was a very good publicity stunt, although we hadn't intended it to be, because many people joined from that audience--joined our club.

Searle: Did you advertise in the newspapers, or get the Los Angeles Times to give some publicity?

Bernays: We did. In fact, we organized local walks. And the way we got word to our members--we took a certain heading under classified ads on a certain day, namely a Friday preceding the weekend, and they would look in that section and find out the objective of the local walk for the following weekend.

Searle: You mean you put your schedule in the newspaper?

Bernays: We put the schedule in the classified ads of the Times, and everybody, we thought, took the Times. If they didn't they got a copy. And the first local walk was in Bailey Canyon which is all built up now in back of Sierra Madre. It was a ladylike walk of about, I think, a mile and a half. And one of the gentleman--whom we celebrated the ninetieth birthday of just this last fall--named Hiram Bailey remembered that he went on that first walk, and he thought that the canyon was named after him.

Jean Searle: How many people did you have on that first walk?

Bernays: I didn't attend it; I was too busy working out a schedule for the next weekend, but Bailey told me the other night that there were about twelve people showed up for that first walk, which wasn't too bad because I think most of them knew that there was nothing to be seen on the walk. It was only a very gingerly, easy walk for the beginners [laughter].

From that, however, we grew, and we had many and many a local walk schedule, many of which I personally scouted and wrote up and then went on as a leader or one of the members in the following months to come. We had often gone to Seeley Flats over Washington's birthday while there was still snow there, and it was one of the delightful objectives that we undertook to make in the early days of the walks.

Searle: Where is Seeley Flats?

Bernays: Seeley Flats is up on the Rim of the World, out towards Big Bear. And I suppose it's no longer called Seeley Flats. It's probably all built up with homes now.

Mrs. Searle: Did you schedule trips every week?

Bernays: We scheduled trips ever week, yes.

Searle: Did you also have activities which went beyond the local hills? Did you ever go to the Sierra or take boat trips or anything of that nature?

Bernays: Of course in those days people believed in walking, and they benefited thereby. Most of our trips were in the days

when you had to take a streetcar for the start of the trip and then go from there on foot. But it was surprising how well attended they were. It's hard now to realize that we didn't have automobiles to give us a lift, but we didn't for quite a number of years.

Getting back to Muir Lodge, we had wonderful cooperation in the building of the lodge, and we'd raised almost enough money to pay for it. The only person that we hired was one carpenter. The rest of the work was done all by volunteers, mostly during their summer vacation or on weekends. It was a pretty fair hike to get to the lodge, so that some of us were not too fresh when we arrived to start our work. Nevertheless we knuckled down to it, and the lodge became a reality.

Then, what to do about a tree? We needed a tree for dedication before we sent out the announcements. We wanted a redwood, a Sequoia, and that is almost fantastic the way we found it. I started out with two other members. One of them had lived in Alhambra, and he said, "I know a nursery that's about to go out of business. Let's go there and see if we can find what we want." Very fortunately, the man had the right hunch because, sure enough, the owner whom we encountered pointed out that there was one tree that he could let us have. If we would accept it as a gift, he would let us have it gratis. Of course, since we were very careful in our spending, why we accepted gratefully.

Then, what to do about the name for the lodge? Somebody said, "Well, Phil, what do you suggest?" I said, "I have only one thought in mind, and that is to name it after the president of the club, but we can't do that without his permission." So I wrote a letter. The reply came: "Dear Mr. Bernays: Enclosed please find \$50 to help defray the final expenses on Muir Lodge." And signed by John Muir.

I kept that letter for a number of years, and I don't know now just what did become of it. But we were very happy to dedicate it the John Muir Lodge. I can truthfully say that it was the gathering point for many, many a social weekend. Those that were not equal to walking were given a lift by burro or horse or even a mule to get up there.

Searle: How far was it?

Bernays: It was about an eight mile hike from the end of the

streetcar line in Sierra Madre. One of the amusing things that happened later, that might be worth recounting, a Mr. and Mrs. Chantry ran the concession for renting animals to go up to the Santa Anita Canyon. They were stationed not too far from the end of the car line in Sierra Madre.

One time we got to their little way station, and I said to Mrs. Chantry, who seemed to be a little bit disturbed, "What's the trouble?" "Well," she said, "This man that just left here has not paid his full bill." I said, "What did he owe?" "Well, he owed \$5.05. I just will not be insulted for 5¢." Laughter.

Searle: I was wondering what year you started the lodge and what year you finished building it and dedicated it.

Bernays: We started the lodge in 1912, and it was finished for dedication by October of 1913. I have a series of photographs that show the progress that was made and the use that it was put to, that I can display.

Mrs. Searle: Do you have any idea what the total cost of the lodge was?

Bernays: I really don't, no. I never kept track of that. I was mainly interested in getting it finished. But, speaking of the cost, I think it might be interesting to know that we were shy a few hundred dollars in the final payment. And one of the building committee, of which the architect, Mr. Lester Moore, was the chairman, made the interesting suggestion that we rent our spaces for depositing possessions--that is, our lockers.

We said, "What will we ask for them?" Well, we needed so much money; if we divided up from the number of lockers we had, if we charged them \$20, and gave them a twenty year lease on them, why that would pay the bill. The interesting part of the story is that we collected sufficiently to pay the remaining debt on the lodge, and in 1933, just twenty years after the dedication, a storm came up and continued for about four days, and the lodge was swept down by a flood.

Searle: Now this was in 1933?

Bernays: Yes, 1933. It was exactly twenty years after 1913, when we had rented a twenty year lease...Laughter. We didn't

have to pay back a penny.

The lodge was a beautiful building, as anybody who was there will recall, and anyone who looks at the present photographs will remember. It was the meeting place for a great many people, who exchanged experiences mainly on the high trip or the local walks. And it probably inspired a good many people toward matrimony laughter.

Expansion of a Hiker's Club

Searle: By the way, this brings up a question--What was the attitude of the average Los Angeles resident toward the Sierra Club members. Was there anything unusual? Did they think of them as strong, healthy mountain climbers, or did they think of them as a social organization? Was there any feeling?

Bernays: No. As I remarked in my talk at the Diamond Jubilee last December 9, I recall definitely that we were known as a hiker's club, and one who probably was more interested in exploiting our own future than in conservation.

Searle: This was by whose opinion, now--do you mean in Los Angeles?

Bernays: That was the general public; their attitude toward the Sierra Club at first was that, oh well, they're just more or less selfish, interested in self-preservation more than they are in anything else. Of course, that whole view changed.

The conservation problems, although they were not uppermost in our minds at the inception of the club, soon became that way when one of our first chapter problems was facing us. That was the saving or the conserving as a wilderness of portions of Mount San Gorgonio. As history will record, there was a great movement among the skiers to have it a recreation area and thereby knock out any idea of wilderness.

Searle: When did that come up, roughly?

Bernays: Well, I don't have the date in mind exactly, but I think the annals of the club would tell you that.

Searle: I think it was the early thirties, or something like that.

Bernays: It was early, yes. Now, you may be interested to know that after we had been in existence about five years, there were people who began to tell us that it was a long ways to go to meetings in Los Angeles. Therefore, would we consider forming a chapter in Riverside? So we got our heads together and we said, "Why we would be glad to, but have you got the requisite fifty in line?" And they thought they had.

So I consulted with Emerson Holt and Doris Roland of Riverside, two of the charter members of that chapter, and after conferring with San Francisco, we learned that it would be quite feasible to form a second chapter. So one night, or early afternoon rather, I joined with Bill Boland and D.R. Brothers and Stanley Jones, among others, and we went over to Riverside. The chapter was formed that same evening, known as the Riverside Chapter.

Then the question came up--could we rightfully consider our chapter the Southern California Chapter? In San Francisco they thought no, that it was too inclusive in its definition. That was the reason for changing it to the Angeles Chapter.

Searle: I see. This was, I guess, about 1934 or 1937, something like that?

Bernays: It was in the thirties [1932]. Well, the third chapter to form in southern California, as you probably know, was the San Diego Chapter [1948]. But meanwhile, San Francisco had come into the picture, and the Bay Region had formed their own chapter [1924]. I frankly think it was spurred on by our activities down here. They really became the second chapter. And because those that lived in the Bay Region were a larger number than we had here, why they became the largest chapter, and the second one to be formed. Therefore, Riverside was the third, and I don't recall whether San Diego was fourth or not.

Searle: I think there was another one up in the Bay Area that had been formed in between.

Visit of John Muir, 1914

Searle: I was wondering one other thing--did John Muir ever visit the chapter here?

Bernays: I'm glad you asked that question. We extended him invitation after invitation, but he was aging, and he invariably turned us down. We finally noticed in the newspaper --the Los Angeles paper--that he was visiting his daughter, one of his two daughters, in Hollywood. I extended him a cordial invitation to meet those soon to depart for the high trip at the Western Avenue entrance of Griffith Park, at a certain hour on a certain day in June.

That was in 1914, the last year of his life. I got no reply. I thought nothing further of it, and I was very much disappointed that I heard nothing, because I would like to have notified our members and had a goodly showing at the campfire.

Well, that time arrived. We were just about to light the fire, when a messenger came from a small car seen in the far distance; he announced that there was an elderly man who had gotten out of this car and had asked if the Sierra Club were meeting, and could he meet Phil Bernays? Well, of course, it was John Muir. And had we known, we would have had at least three or four times the crowd that we did have.

Muir had returned about a month or so previously from his South American hikes--tours that he took along the Amazon. He plunged right into minute description of that country. The main thing I can recall of that talk is that he told us about these wonderful trees that spread their branches out and then took root from the extended ends of the branches on the ground; and that the one tree along the Amazon that would be large enough, commodious enough, to take care of a whole Sierra Club party [laughter].

We tried to get him--at least I did--to tell us a little of the objectives of the group that were going on the outing only two weeks hence. But he was so Scotch, which accounted for his not answering my letter, but merely putting in an

appearance, that we heard nothing at all about what we'd asked for.

Muir was really a very wonderful person, modest and unassuming, quiet-spoken. He talked in a monotone, in a long uninterrupted series of sentences. He was undoubtedly a better magazine writer in articles on conservation, and a beaver for work, than he was a speaker. His heart was certainly in the right place, and he felt so proud to be invited, he said, as president of the Sierra Club. This turned out to be his last public appearance.

Searle: I'm glad you mentioned that. I also wondered what kind of a lecturer or speaker he was. I notice you have some notes there. Did you have some other thoughts that you noted down?

Pioneers in The Southern California Chapter

Bernays: I could tell you some of the prominent people that the formation of our chapter attracted--the names of them.

Searle: I would be interested--the first organizers, the first officers.

Bernays: One of our first organizers was the mayor of Pasadena, the Honorable Joseph Wadsworth. And Mr. W.A. Francis, the superintendent of Los Angeles schools, after whom the Polytechnic High School has taken its name. They were both joiners of the chapter. And then we had a member of the faculty of the Los Angeles Normal School, which is no longer in existence, but was succeeded by UCLA, Everett Shepherdson. Then our architect, who gave us all of his services for Muir Lodge, for designing and supervision of it entirely gratis, Lester Moore.

We had a future club president--the only woman to ever be so honored--Aurelia Harwood, who lived in Upland. And it was considered quite a privilege if she invited you to her

home. Her aging father survived her, incidentally. When later on in the chapter's history, the Aurelia Harwood Memorial Lodge was built, the father was too decrepit to be able to attend in person. Then we had Weldon Heald, who was a conservation writer, and who died only about a year ago, a very good personal friend of mine and a man whom I renewed acquaintance with only last March, a year ago, at his home in Tucson, Arizona.

Searle: What year did Weldon become active in the chapter?
Do you remember?

Bernays: I don't recall the exact year, but it was prior to his moving to Arizona from Altadena, where he lived in California. The year must have been around in the 1920's.

We had attorneys Willoughby Rodman, George W. McDill and Ralph Arthur Chase, who took an active part. And, speaking of McDill, after I had shared office space and a desk in my Third Street shop with the Sierra Club for about two and a half years, we found that we needed funds to pay rent for an office, and we got those funds through the efforts of Tappaan, then a director of the club, who got the board of directors to refund a portion of our dues.

The Chapter Office

Searle: Oh, this was interesting. Now, when was their office founded? Was it about 1911? Is that when the office in southern California was established?

Bernays: Well, it was established in . . . It was really at George McDill's law office where we first paid any rental, although it had been in my own art shop for two and a half years, and the rental I pocketed.

Searle: I would like to ask a few questions about the chapter office, and then I would like to go back to some of the other names, too. Am I correct if I understand you that the

club paid the rental, if there was any rental, initially?

Bernays: At first, they paid only a refund on the dues. And then they opened up a little bit more and allotted us a certain stipulated monthly rental for offices. Then we relieved McDill, because we could see that it was more or less of a burden to a private enterprise, and we relieved him by opening up offices at the corner of Eighth and Figueroa Streets, on the sixth floor of a building that was then anything but accessible. So, in due course, we decided after a little investigation on the present offices. I don't recall the exact year, but I know they've been in the auditorium building at the corner of Fifth and Olive, since about 1935.

Searle: I think that's right. I remember Irene Charnock mentioning something about moving there at that time. I already mentioned something about having parties and such to raise money to pay for the rent on the office. Do you remember anything of that, or any campaigns to get money to support the chapter office? Was there anything of that nature?

Bernays: I don't recall that. It seems to me that the head office of our club in San Francisco gave practically all of it. We purposely avoided any extra dues for belonging to a chapter. We felt that if you were a member of the Sierra Club you were entitled to all the privileges. And so we opposed that; and by dint of our support--which was very loyal and very dependable--by Judge Tappaan on the Board, we managed to get our requests taken care of.

Searle: I've sort of diverted your attention a little bit. You had some other names of people who were active that you were mentioning.

Bernays: Yes, I think so. Ernest Dawson joined a few years after the chapter was formed, and he proved to be a very staunch supporter of club objectives. Ernest was a quiet-spoken person--a hard worker--and a very devoted conservationist. I recall that he brought up his family the same way.

Glen* and Muir were both entrusted to my wife and myself to take them on the start of a high trip. We recall with pleasure watching with a great deal of interest the advancement that both the boys made after the loss of the father.

Searle: The Dawson's have a bookshop now, don't they?

Bernays: Oh yes. They have had a bookshop right from time immemorial. Ernest Dawson, except politically, was an ideal person laughter. Others among the first fifty to organize the newly founded chapter were Caroline Tracy, Chester Versteeg, Alice Bates, Jerome Kellogg, Mary Frances Kellogg, E. Stanley Jones, and Clifford Youngquist.

*Interview with Glen Dawson conducted by Richard Searle, Sierra Club History Committee, September, 1972.

CONTROVERSIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF A SIERRA CLUB CAREER

Crises Surmounted

Bernays: Now don't feel for a minute that the club's chapter got along without any disturbances at all. It sounds as though everything had run very smooth but there are always some people who want to be against something. Sure enough a young chap named Cook brewed something that never materialized, but we had quite a bit of trouble with him. He had in mind that now that we were a going organization as a chapter that we should break away from the main club and become independent, as southern California.

Searle: When was this approximately?

Bernays: It was in the twenties. I know that because of other dates that followed. But by getting the support again of Judge Tappaan and Willoughby Rodman, and of course Boland came to my rescue, why we managed to meet with this group and assure them that the majority of the members were against such a move.

I furthermore remarked to them, who was going to take over the onus of the hard work, the book work, the detail, the organization work that the directors of the club had to undertake? If we formed a separate chapter, or rather a separate club, we would have all of that to do, and we would have to have our own headquarters and therefore require a raising of funds and so forth. Nobody down here seemed to be in that mood.

Searle: I see. What advantage did Mr. Cook believe we would have by separate clubs?

Bernays: It was merely identity and feelings of jealousy on his part to think that we were working so hard, as he put it, and then all of our efforts were going toward helping the Bay Region. I said that the club was formed way back in 1893, and it had founders with the highest ideals--men, most of whom had passed on by that time, whose efforts we were proud now to continue to carry out.

Searle: Was there any reason for Mr. Cook's concern? I suppose it was four hundred miles to San Francisco, and I suppose there was some degree of communication problem.

Bernays: I think the feeling just showed up in a very definite way when we started to recognize it. When we took some of the new trails that we had made as members down here-- we were helping out the Forest Service to a certain degree --we organized trail building. Low and behold to our great shock we found that some one of Cook's followers had posted a sign to the effect that "This trail is being built by the Sierra Club of Southern California." That opened our eyes to the fact that he was jumping the gun and needed a little bit of suppression.

Searle: Did it ever come to anything more than discussion as far as proposal or was there actually any sort of a motion?

Bernays: It was rather short lived as we look upon time but at the time it was quite annoying to the staunch leaders down here.

Searle: I don't like to dwell on controversy necessarily, but it is a part of our history. I was wondering if there were some other times in the chapter when we had our problems so to speak?

Bernays: We had our problems, yes. One time we had, as we called him, a traitor to our cause. He was an artist-- Leland Curtis--and he brought up the fact that we were a group down here interested entirely for pleasure, a social group, and that we were not carrying out the objectives of the club, which was mainly conservation. He went so far as to enlist the support and cooperation of two of the directors who lived in various parts of California, and he presented his case. He himself had been made a director that term, and so he presented the case at the meeting. It was supported by some of the Bay Region directors.

We at that time had Weldon Heald as a director, and we had Stanley Jones, and I was on the Board. We rose immediately and were counted. We made such a presentation and were so greatly shocked at the move, which was to eliminate the chapter from the club. We were to be choked right off there with no warning. It was such an unfair move that we

just stuttered at first. Finally when we caught our breath we fought the opponents to a stand still, and we won out. That was one of the crises of our chapter that we faced and surmounted.

Searle: Do you remember when that was approximately?

Bernays: I can't tell you the year. You just have to look at the annals to find out when Weldon Heald, who took a major part, was a director; he was a fighter if there ever was one. Some of us were so stunned by the move that we couldn't say anything for a minute or two. Weldon F. Heald, Director, 1945-46, 1947-49.

Searle: I will talk to Stan Jones on this too, and maybe he will be able to tell me a little bit more. This does bring a question up. How many of those that you mentioned, the people who were here earlier in the game so to speak, are still available to speak to and see? I know Stan Jones is still with us. Weldon Heald passed away last year. Of the others that you mentioned are any of those people still alive?

Bernays: Well, yes. Hiram Bailey is hanging on at ninety-one years of age. He had a birthday right before or just after Christmas. They had a birthday party for him up in Hollywood. There aren't very many of those survivors I am sorry to say.

I haven't mentioned Mr. Boland, who was my staunch supporter in the real formation work of the club, until his interest turned to family raising and working more on his law practice. He had to give up more activity. He has died but his widow still survives him over at Balboa. Also Chester Versteeg.

Searle: Oh, that name is familiar. There is a Versteeg Peak or something.

Bernays: There is a Versteeg Peak. I didn't mention but Mrs. Versteeg has survived and has married again. But getting back to Versteeg himself. He was a very strong advocate of naming, of nomenclature. He would take a weekend off and go about a thousand miles in his auto; before he had gotten home he would climb a peak that hadn't been named yet, and then propose a name to the committee Laughter.

That happened to be one of his interesting characteristics.

Searle: He didn't start the peak bagging game, did he?

Bernays: No.

Searle: I forget who it was. It was someone else.

Further Highlights of Chapter History

Searle: This does bring up another question. Today we have classifications for climbing. We have difficulties for trail types. Did they ever have those sorts of things in 1920?

Bernays: No. We weren't worried about those things. We were just concerned with what we thought were essentials. I don't believe that we have mentioned that later on after 1933 a few years followed, and we were a chapter without a lodge down here. A happy thought occurred to some that maybe we could build a lodge up near Baldy and that was carried out by dint of hard work.

We didn't go through the process of raising money by buying all of a theater capacity as we did under Muir Lodge raising funds, but we got the funds through private subscriptions and went ahead with Harwood Lodge. Miss Harwood, a local member, whom I have mentioned and the first woman president of the club had died, and they named the lodge as a memorial to her. We had hoped that her brother would be willing to subscribe a substantial sum, but we were a little bit disappointed in that hope.

Peter Van Oosting, who survives, was one of the hardest workers in connection with Harwood Lodge. We had, of course, a number of the old timers from Muir Lodge still interested, Cliff Youngquist among them, who took an active part; he still is alive and active in the club. He became a director and in charge of the base camps for several years. He was the means of raising a goodly sum of money for the

outing committee before he retired about five years ago.

Louise Bernays: Phil, how about mentioning the name of the man who knew all the trails and went out and brought the stragglers in?

Bernays: Oh, yes, Norman Clyde. Norman Clyde was a resident of the Owens Valley, and he had been a teacher out at Independence in a school and got into some difficulty there.

Searle: I heard he had shot a gun in the air when the students got rowdy.

Bernays: I was going to leave that hint without making it but since you mentioned it, he did get discharged, as well as the gun laughter. Then he pursued his first love, which was to climb mountains and rescue anyone who was lost or in distress.

Mrs. Bernays: He found the body of the boy who was lost in the mountains.

Bernays: That was Pete Starr. His father, Walter Starr, is now honorary president of the club; and he, the father, published these memoirs in the form of a detailed book showing the trails of the High Sierra. The young man had met his death on the Palisades Glacier and dropped off, and Norman Clyde rescued his body later.

But it was remarkable that he, a college student, only nineteen years old, had traversed thousands of miles. All of his summer vacations were devoted, from the time he was twelve years old until he died seven years later, to pursuing the mountain trails. The Starr's Guide to the Trails of the Sierra is one of the finest publications that our club puts out today. Walter A. Starr, Jr., 1903-1933.

Searle: I've enjoyed it myself. Another thing too, we mentioned the Harwood Lodge and the Muir Lodge. I guess there was the Baldy Ski Hut and the Keller Ski Hut also. Do you recall anything about how they came to be?

Bernays: No. I only know they were brought about largely through Glen Dawson, who was by that time an aggressive young man and very much interested in such things as skiing.

Searle: Our library in the chapter office, was that founded about the same time that the office was founded?

Bernays: There was no library at all until we got into our present quarters. Then I was able to supply certain mountaineering books that I had and fortunately contacted a gentleman who was then in his aging years, living in the Hotel Green in Pasadena and a member of the club, whose name I can't recall. He had a very valuable set of books on mountaineering, and he called me on the phone one day and said, "I wish you would come by someday. I want to show you some things."

So, I went over there, and he had about two dozen very rare volumes on mountaineering and on the heights throughout the world. I wrote to the main club library and gave them the titles. Since I thought he wanted them to go to the entire club I gave them the privilege of selecting those among the collection for their library first. There was still about half a dozen or more that went to the Angeles Chapter Library.

Searle: From there the library has grown gradually in time. I was wondering do you recall anything about the Southern Sierran? How old is that newspaper now? Who started it? I have a feeling maybe it was a little bit later on, in the late thirties, but I am not sure.

Bernays: I know this. Charlotte Mauk, who just this past week was elected an honorary vice president of the club, having just retired from the board, was the one who named the paper The Southern Sierran.

Searle: Now did Charlotte live down here for a period of time?

Bernays: No. It was an open contest. I don't recall the trophy, if there was one, for a name, but somebody suggested that we make it a contest, and then we would get the best names. There were all sorts of wild names suggested, but this Southern Sierran hit the committee; it happened to be promoted by Charlotte Mauk of Berkeley.

Searle: Oh, very good. I think we like the name very much. I was looking to see if there were some other highlights in chapter history or did you have any other notes there?

Bernays: Well I had a good many highlights but some of them have gone out laughter.

The Friday Night Dinners

Searle: Well, what about organization? Have we had any changes in our chapter organization? Have we always had an executive committee of nine members?

Bernays: We've had an executive committee from the very start. We have always met on Friday nights and usually in a cafeteria downtown center.

Searle: It used to be Booze Brothers?

Bernays: It was Booze Brothers for a long time, but the name Booze Brothers was objected to by some of the directors. Also one of the methods of passing upon a prospective member was objected to by the board of directors. They didn't like our ruling that the prospective would have to attend one of these cafeteria dinners and be passed upon in a rather undignified atmosphere.

Searle: I see. This is rather interesting when you bring up the matter of membership. This thought by the board must have occurred way back in 1920 or something like that because you were saying they had the Friday evening dinners from the beginning. I know we have had a time, back six or eight years ago when we had the so-called loyalty oath problems. Then also at one time didn't we have a membership committee in southern California here, in the Angeles Chapter, that reviewed applicants for membership in the club?

Bernays: Yes, we went through that stage. There was a board of censors and so forth. At first they required more sponsors than they do today. Today they only require one sponsor, but in those days they had to have three. Then it was reduced to two and so forth. We've gone through a good many stages before we arrived at the present status of the

organization. We have seen some ups and some downs, just as goes on in our country today.

In the thirty-four years I have served as a member of the board it just seemed as though I had reached a point at the last where I wanted a younger man to take over. I felt that I had served my purpose and had kept the chapter in the club as a unit, because there was that feeling down here, among a very restricted minority to be sure, but it was there, and we **had** to stifle that and overcome it. So I said, "I will not submit my name for reelection next year." A little paper came out, "Bernays Resigns from the Board" Laughter.

Searle: I see. You were a director from 1919 to 1953, I believe.

Bernays: Thirty-four years. A lifetime for some people. Then they nominated and elected in my stead a man who was two years older than I Laughter, and who lived only a year as a board member. He had been superintendent of three of the national parks and had ended up as director of the parks on the Pacific Coast.

Searle: I am trying to think of who that was.

Bernays: Frank Kittredge, a wonderful man. As Yosemite's superintendent he was one who fought to keep hard liquor out of the Park. That was going against the tendency of the day, so he was not too popular by the majority in Yosemite. However, he did a very fine job as superintendent of about four parks before he died. Frank Kittredge was a fine, outstanding Sierra Club member.

A Personal Contribution To Conservation

Mrs. Bernays: It would be a good thing to tell the story of the Redwood a la Jessie.

Bernays: The incident that Louise suggests I tell was probably the one outstanding bit of conservation that I personally

engaged in.

Searle: Well, I would like to hear about it.

Bernays: I received one afternoon a communication that was undoubtedly important from the number of stamps on the face of it. It was a special delivery document. I opened it, thinking that perhaps I had been arrested or something, only to find it was a communication from the director of the parks on the Pacific Coast, Frank Kittredge.

In substance it was this: "I have just received word from the director of all the parks in the country in Washington to the effect that he is interested in carrying out the purchase by the United States Government of Redwood Mountain. It is essential that we act immediately. There are five members that own Redwood Mountain. They do not belong to the Sierra Club, and they inherited it by virtue of the passing of both fathers of the two families. Four of them have signed this document that I am enclosing, which would authorize the government to make the purchase at the stipulated sum named below.

"I know the parties, all of them, but so far have succeeded in getting only four names. The fifth one is required, and the time is limited to one day after you receive this document. I know that you are friendly with the two women, one of whom is in our favor and is willing to sign, but the other one is adamant so I am entrusting this very important duty to you. You will have to act immediately." Signed, your friend, Frank M. Kittredge.

Mrs. Bernays: There was a time limit on it because the Government wasn't going to spend any more money on conservation at all on account of the war.

Searle: This was 1941, I see.

Bernays: It was just the outset of the war and the park director had heard from the secretary of war that no more money could be spent for anything except war purposes, and he intended to abide by that. So I went to work.

The first thing I did was to look in the yellow pages. I found the name of a notary public, to my great joy one who

lived on the same street as the address where I was to call and get the approval. It was only about three blocks above but on the same street, which was strictly a coincidence but it encouraged me.

I phoned this gentleman and I said to him, "I know I have a job for you. I'm almost sure I'll be there but I can't tell what time. I am going to take a chance that the two sisters will be home, and I want you to leave your light on as I might be there as late as eleven o'clock. My objective is to get you to okay their signature to a document that is so important the government insists on it being signed. What your fee is is secondary to the importance of it. So, will you leave your light on?" I had never seen this man's residence but I could tell from the location that it was in a residence. So I went to work. I went over with my wife, and I was received rather coolly by the younger sister who was really the one whose signature I had to get.

Searle: Now this was in Los Angeles?

Bernays: In Altadena. I got there about eight o'clock, and May Hull, the older sister, greeted us and asked us to come in and make ourselves at home. But Jessie Wheeler, the younger one whose name was still needed on the document, went over to where the piano was in another room and started fingering on that for awhile.

Finally I had evidently let her know something of what was in the air, for she then avoided me by looking through the telephone list of her friends and calling everyone that she knew until my wife said to me, "She is not interested. Although this means everything to her, the last chance before the war breaks out and it is either a future or none for her and her sister, she is so definitely opposed to what you have come for and so rude, let's go." I said, "Nothing doing. I am over here for a purpose. I have this to accomplish."

I stayed with it, and at eleven o'clock I went out into the hall; she was still phoning people although she was running low on names [laughter]. I said to her, "We are now about to leave but we are not going to leave without taking you first to have your signature okayed and witnessed by a notary public. I want you to accept because it means all your future."

I pointed out over her protest all that it meant to her. I could foresee trips which she never felt she could afford to take because they were so much in debt. They were so much in arrears that for five or six years the government had looked the other way in their non-payment of taxes on this acreage. It was very valuable but only for park purposes because the redwoods were inaccessible. The road was on a windy, twisty mountain approach. The purpose of the purchase had been to make lumber of it by the fathers, who had both passed on. The father of these two sisters and the father of the two brothers and a sister living in Michigan had both passed on.

So we almost had to pull Jessie Wheeler off the piano stool and bring her out to the car. We drove up and got the signatures after a hair pulling contest between the two sisters ~~daughter~~. I got it in the mail that night. It if had been twenty-four hours later it would have failed to come about. Today Redwood Mountain is a part of the Sequoia Kings Canyon National Parks system.

Searle: Is it near Garfield Grove or is it near Balch Park, in that area?

Bernays: No, it is near what they call the King's Highway that runs from Sequoia over to General Grant Park. As you approach General Grant off to the left is Redwood Mountain, an isolated peak, and it has over one hundred and seventy-five redwoods on that one mountain.

Searle: Was Harold Ickes the secretary of interior at that time?

Bernays: Harold Ickes was the man. I have to correct myself. I said the man in charge of the national parks, but he was really Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes. And it turned out, according to Frank Kittredge, that this had been an urge on the part of Ickes, before he retired from office to do something outstanding towards saving the Sequoia.

Searle: Now I understand Harold Ickes was quite active in the formation of Sequoia, or at least Kings Canyon National Park.

Bernays: He had a peculiar interest in that section. I do know he was very much interested in getting this over, and we just

did get it over the hair line.

Mrs. Bernays: The sisters have been around the world. They have spent all this money travelling, and they are really very well set up now. They were in debt before this. They owed money and taxes.

Searle: It really transformed their status in life then.

Mrs. Bernays: This one woman who was so adamant, if you knew her, you would know why it was a wonder he ever got a signature out of her.

A Look into ~~the~~ Past and the Future

Searle: Has the chapter changed through the years in terms of the way the people think? It does seem to me that we have always been interested in conservation after a short period at the beginning.

Bernays: I think the chapter has changed for the better. I'm not so sure about the growth being for the better as much as I am for the objectives. They have recognized the conservation feature much better than they did at its inception. Frankly, I am afraid that most of those that joined, perhaps including myself, were more interested in meeting people and the social end of it, to a degree, than they were in the objectives of conservation.

But over a period of time it has grown to see the real meaning of the club and has supported its tenets faithfully. The growth, of course, is phenomenal. We have more members in the chapter now by many than in the entire club when I was president in 1930-31.

Searle: This is always amazing to me too. I know that we are working on ways of organizing to make the club still have those things to offer which are of value to members even though the club is growing. The first group in the chapter

was the Pasadena group, wasn't it?

Bernays: The Pasadena group was one of the...I think it was the first. Yes. Stanley Jones did a noble job of chairing that.

Searle: Has he been chairman since the inception?

Bernays: No, but he has been for the last six years, five or six years. That you would have to get from Stanley.

Searle: How did the groups come to be formed in the chapter? Why did the Pasadena group form?

Bernays: That was largely due to the inaccessible features of Los Angeles, large, sprawling city that it is. Certain people said, "Well, we want to take part in the club activities but we don't want to go down to Hill Street in the center of town, so can you arrange anything and have groups? In fact I don't even think they asked our permission; they made themselves into groups, and then they applied. Then the west Los Angeles group and the Long Beach group and all the rest of the groups were formed later.

Searle: Then we had the Ski Mountaineers; they were a separate club weren't they?

Bernays: No, they were an inner group. The Ski Mountaineers were affiliated with the chapter, and yet they were very independent of the chapter. There was a time when the Ski Mountaineers were a little bit stand-offish. They published, for instance, their own mouthpiece, which they called the Mugelnoos. I don't think that is still published, is it?

Searle: Yes, as a matter of fact it is. I think that the Ski Mountaineers are pretty much in the fold now. In fact we have managed to integrate these people [Taughter].

Mrs. Searle: We just saw the anniversary of the publication.

Searle: It's the oldest publication or newsletter within the chapter. I think the Mugelnoos was started before the Southern Sierran. What is this photograph here?

Bernays: This is the one taken by William P. Boland, and a copy given me, of breakfast in the Kings River Canyon with old

Charlie Tuck, the first cook that was employed by the club outings and the only Chinaman, according to Mr. Colby, who ever would go into the mountains and stay without fear. The Chinese, or at least the early Chinese, had that feeling that there was something about the canyons that was detrimental to their futures. But Old Charlie Tuck was willing to do it and they would have kept him on forever except that he hit the bottle as well as the trail laughter.

Mrs. Searle: He had an assistant too.

Bernays: Yes. They are both shown in there. See the size of the stove. Two great big chimney pipes and a heavy stove.

Searle: How did they carry those things? Did they have a big pack mule?

Bernays: Oh, they went to enormous difficulties without any purpose. In the first outing Colby told how they had no restrictions, no limitations. The result was that people wanted to bring mattresses. They were afraid they wouldn't be comfortable at night on the ground laughter. And some of them undertook to bring cots and every fool thing that they could. They had a terrible time trying to get everything transported.

They had nothing but wagons and horses in those days for transportation so it was really a treat to hear Colby tell of the first outing in 1901. My friend, William P. Boland, could recite it almost as well as Colby but he would only do it privately. Colby would do it before the campfires, and he was always asked for a repeat performance because he told them so entertainingly. He was a splendid man and devoted to the cause. Incidentally, he was a little apprehensive when he died about what was going to happen to the club.

Searle: Do you have any thoughts on what you see in the club's future, and what would you like it to be? We've talked about the past so much.

Bernays: Well, I would love to know exactly what the club's future is. I'm a bit apprehensive that we have grown a little too rapidly and far too large. The intention of the founders, of course, has been bypassed when we spread to the east coast and the northwest and so forth with chapters galore. Our founders thought of the High Sierra and the need for

preserving them and California in particular.

Not that I am opposed to growth because I like growth where it is followed by consistent development. But when you grow too rapidly that's another matter. For instance we have to my notion so many chapters that the work has become almost overpowering for those that have to handle it from the San Francisco office. Not only the staff, but the volunteers that work as directors, find themselves almost surfeited if not fully swamped by the duties. It gives them so little time for privacy at home--especially is that true of the president.

This is the first time in the club's history that I know of where a president has had an occasion to openly complain in a mild manner that he doesn't know how he can carry on with the added and continuously increased number of requirements. That to my notion is one of the things that makes me a bit concerned.

Recently an audit was shown that our finances have become a bit precarious. Our publication program is the most remarkable series of books that any organization could put out or ever have put out, almost overly ambitious, but due to their quality and perfection command such a high price that the average club member finds it difficult to subscribe. That has brought us into a heavy debt, and unless relief by way of voluntary subscriptions is offered the club I am really disturbed.

I think of course that sometimes people that have added a few years to their record add a great deal too much to their apprehension, and that is probably my case. But I like to think of the club as a going organization, keeping its head above financial waters and progressing along the lines of its inception, namely conservation of our natural resources. John Muir, whom I had the great pleasure of meeting on a few occasions, in person as well as in correspondence, was of course our great incentive and the greatest advocate of conservation, and our first president as long as he lived.

So with that background I feel you can probably understand why I am a little bit perturbed, just as others, Colby included, that I could mention, were before their passing. It is with that feeling that we will weather the storm but it is entirely impossible

to foresee just how we are going to do it.

Searle: Am I correct then, that you feel that book publishing has become a major aspect of the club, major to the extent that conservation may not receive the attention...?

Bernays: No, I don't think so. I think that we have given a great deal of time and attention to conservation, but the book program, although it has produced remarkable results in increasing our membership, has also been done on such a high scale that the expense of it has disturbed the equilibrium of the activity of the club. I believe in quality, that's true, but for some reason or another the whole program has almost gotten out of hand, as I see it.

Searle: Well, Phil, I certainly hope as you do that in the next few years these problems will be resolved to a better club, better than we have today. I guess we can look back in the past and say we have had problems before and people of the club have solved them.

Bernays: We've surmounted a good many problems and I'm sure we will. I'm really an optimist although I might sound a bit pessimistic laughter.

Searle: All right. Well, thank you very much Phil. It has really been a pleasure speaking with you.

Bernays: It has been a great pleasure to carry out your suggestion, and I hope that if there is anything in the future that I can do to further the cause, don't hesitate to call on me.

Searle: I will certainly remember that. Thank you.

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Harold E. Crowe

SIERRA CLUB PHYSICIAN, BARON, AND PRESIDENT

An Interview Conducted by
Richard Searle

Sierra Club
History Committee
San Francisco, California

1975

Sierra Club

San Francisco, California

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PREFACE

It came about during the early summer of the Great Depression, 1930. Two more passengers would fill the quota needed for a month's motor camping excursion from Los Angeles through the Indian Country of Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. Recently, I had made the acquaintance of a most delightful couple who had spent some time in the Orient and should prove most interesting. Enrolled were Dr. Harold and Ann Crowe.

Our two autos packed, maps consulted, and we were off with what proved to be a memorable journey, the more so because of the Crowes' presence and the congenial group. My partner, Fred Everson, and I arranged a campfire most every night and gladly supplied the enquiring Harold with answers pertaining to the Sierra Club--its accomplishments conservationwise and the benefits to be derived from experiencing the thrills of taking a High Trip--until, before the trip ended, we had a couple of converts!

Both Harold and his devoted wife Ann have shown a lifetime of unselfish devotion towards the betterment of their fellowman. Dr. Harold, as a bone specialist, has ventured into pioneer fields with remarkable success. In my day, the Sierra Club contained a great many personalities but fewer of stronger or more likeable qualities than Harold Crowe. Of a kindly nature, he possessed a subtle humor and manifested a generosity rarely equalled. As a storyteller he had few equals. He created a character of a lovable adolescent of uncertain upbringing whom he called Margie. Cries of "We want Margie" were heard nightly 'round the campfire, and Harold was always there with a response.

Harold's wife Ann has exemplified the true meaning of the word "service" to the Sierra Club. She has been chairman of the Morley Fund for thirty years. The Morley Fund's objective has been to provide money to enable underprivileged youths to participate in Sierra Club outings. Our club owes them both a considerable debt of gratitude. I take pride in my part in introducing them to the club while enjoying the Indian country in the 1930s.

Philip S. Bernays
March, 1975

INTRODUCTION

The following interview is with Dr. Harold Crowe, a member of the Sierra Club since 1933. Harold is a life member of the club. He has participated in Sierra Club High Trips and Base Camp Trips, and was a member of the board of directors from 1943 to 1946 and from 1949 to 1959. He was vice president from 1949 to 1951 and from 1953 to 1954. He served as club president from 1951 through 1953. Harold knew old time members such as William Colby, Norman Clyde, Walter Starr, Phil Bernays, and Francis Farquhar.

This interview occurred on February 17, 1973, at Dr. Crowe's office in Los Angeles, California. The final twenty minutes of the interview involved a discussion of Dr. Crowe's photographs relating to the Sierra Club. This portion of the tape was not transcribed, but the entire tape is available at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Crowe has reviewed the transcript for accuracy and added a few lines of elaboration. Otherwise, no substantial changes have been made.

Richard Searle
Sierra Club History Committee
March, 1975

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MEDICINE AND THE OUTDOOR LIFE

Enlistment in Armed Forces, World War I

Richard Searle: Harold, it is a pleasure to be able to speak with you and talk about your experiences in the Sierra Club and other activities. I would like to start by asking you about your background. Perhaps you could give us some biographical information about yourself.

Harold Crowe: I was born in San Gabriel, California, the son of a Canadian immigrant from Nova Scotia, and a farm girl from Illinois. I started to go to medical school at Stanford, and I ran away from Stanford in my senior year to join up for the First World War. I was in the army, and I was in hospital work. I was in Paris, absent without leave, on Armistice Day, the day Paris really went wild. That was the real Armistice Day. Anyway, I returned to the United States after the war. The war had caused my father to go broke.

Mr. Herbert Hoover had millions of dollars by mistake. He conducted the relief of the Belgian people, and in doing that he gave them your donation--you gave 25¢ worth of flour and they got 25¢ worth of flour--but he charged them for transportation. But he never lost a transport. He thought he would lose some to the German submarines. He never lost, and he came out with about \$33,000,000 profit that didn't belong to him.

Searle: You mean he came out with \$33,000,000 more than he started with?

Crowe: Yes. What he started with was the donation of the American public to the Belgian people. The Belgians had had everything carried away; every milk-giving animal, including mares, was driven out of their country. In spite of their

troubles, the Belgians carried on a daily newspaper that the Germans were never able to stop. And one copy of this paper was on the desk of the German commanding officer in Brussels every day laughter.

Brussels and Peking: the Medical Trip

Searle: How did you manage to get out of this AWOL situation?

Crowe: Well, the war was over and nobody paid much attention laughter. I returned to the medical school in Brussels. This was because for some reason no one could understand, the little boy from southern California got off on the dock at Cherbourg and started to talk to people. My father learned late in his life that there were a group of Huguenots who were religious refugees who ran away from France and some of them landed in Ireland. Their name was de la Croix, and the Irishmen could not say this so they called them Crowes. This is where the Crowe came from. And this is how I got to be so glib in French.

So we then went through school and became a doctor of medicine at the University of Brussels. When we arrived home the New York State Board of Examiners did not think that I should be licensed because I had studied the anatomy of the foot before the hand! I had gone to see them about having a foreign degree which only says that you went to school and that you passed the examination with great distinction--no grades or hours. But anyway, they let me just visit Albany and go away without a license. So my next move was to go to the headquarters of the Rockefeller Foundation in New York, where Mr. Rockefeller sent me for residence and general surgery in the Rockefeller Hospital in Peking, China. There we had two years of good training, where I meet Ann Crowe who is a New Jersey girl. Her family came to the United States in 1692 and brought the first piano to America. And then she married this little first generation immigrant laughter.

Searle: When you were in Peking did you ever see acupuncture?

Crowe: Acupuncture for us was a patient coming into the hospital with infected needle holes . We thought it was some form of witch doctoring, even though it was a thousand years old. We just ignored it. There was never any real interest in it in America by scientific men until the occasion of Mr. Nixon's visit to Peking , when they began to talk about its use in surgery for anesthesia. I attended a big conference at Stanford on this subject. The speaker was a Britisher who was a graduate of Cambridge and McGill; then he had been to Hong Kong and learned enough to talk to people and studied acupuncture. He practiced acupuncture in London for many years but had never seen it produce an anesthetic; he thought because he had not been back to Hong Kong for eight years.

Introduction To The Outdoors And The Sierra Club

To get back to what I was saying. I discovered that I had married a girl who liked to get to the top of mountains. And I was not an athlete; in fact, my childhood was messed up emotionally because I was not an athlete. My life was spent in an office. And when my young wife came back to America with me, where I entered Orthopedic Hospital for three more years of resident training in my speciality in the care of crippled people, I was taken by Phil Bernays into the outdoors. He was recommended to me as someone to show me the outdoors. He had a big car with big wheels so it could go over rough terrain, and he had it fixed up with a kitchen on the back shelf, and he took us to the north rim of the Grand Canyon, camping out, sleeping on the ground.

Well, we were used to this kind of thing because in Peking you could go out to the western hills and could rent a tiny Chinese temple for 50¢ a weekend. You would put your sleeping bags out in the courtyard, under the white-trunked pine trees, which only survive now in the temple forests. North China has been turned into a desert by man's

depredation of the forest, and the water there now flows under the ground. You have to dig a hole and then ladle it out. They use their human hands to lift it out to irrigate the rice paddies. They use bamboo baskets to lift the water out in a constant stream. One thing of interest was this forest, which had been beautiful, of white-barked pines which grew nowhere else. People were hungry, they had no jobs. They had only a little cloth around their middle as clothing and the weather was very cold--no food, no clothes, so the trees disappeared.

Searle: About what year was it that you camped with Phil Bernays?

Crowe: 1930. Well, Dr. and Mrs. Crowe were so enthused about this that we immediately joined the Sierra Club and went immediately from an office chair to a hiking trip. From then on our holidays were High Trips until we got old enough that we had to go on Base Camp Trips. And year after year we would meet Norman Clyde. He would show up with his knapsack, which carried an unbelievable amount of materials, and he would dump the knapsack on the ground. He always carried a gun so that he could go attack the wolverine if it showed up. He felt that this was the one dangerous thing. He did not kill anything else, except he did fish.

Searle: Did you participate in any of the chapter affairs other than hiking?

Crowe: Well, I came back from one of those High Trips and sat right down in my office to work, where I worked seven days a week, as I still do. I think it is interesting, from the point of view of the change in American life, that this conscientious little boy thought that if you were a physician it was a way to help people, not a way to make money. And for forty years he worked at the Orthopedic Hospital taking care of the children of the poor, for no pay. No one else ever did that; even the chief of staff, finally, was put on a stipend [laughter]. That was outside of my practice, which was very small, because I felt that if you were going to take care of someone, you had to get to know him, and I did not just look at his sore toe!

Doctoring On The High Trips

So, when I went on my first High Trip, I almost immediately turned out to be the camp doctor. I took care of the blisters and fractures and such. I put my symbol on the tree, as in the picture, to let them know where the doctor would be ~~laughter~~.

My life membership was a gift from the Sierra Club. This was because of a trip into Milestone. On this trip it was so cold that the water splashing along the streams would freeze on the blades of grass. These people were cold so they just walked hard as they could to keep warm over Forester Pass at 13,200 feet. Then we got up to the camp, and it was freezing cold. One man went up to do some fishing on a stream, and when he came back he lay down and started to die. He was one of three who died. And here was this little bone surgeon ~~laughter~~ there with these people dying from failure of the left heart. They got congestive heart failure and they drowned. They actually drowned from lack of air.

We carried one man, who was about as big as two of me-- everybody else went on to the next move of the camp--about a hundred and eighty pound man. Five of us carried him on a homemade stretcher, for miles, trying to get him into low enough country where we could get him to breathe in the thicker air. Somebody traveled for hours to a mine to get air for the man. Near the mines they had tubes of oxygen with carbon dioxide in them. Carbon dioxide is a stimulant for breathing. So for crushed miners in mine accidents it was valuable, but for this man it was useless.

We got the man over the pass to a lower elevation and he came to and talked to us and climbed off of the stretcher, against the advice of his doctor, and just lay down and died. He should not have got up.

Climb To Leadership

Searle: Was your first responsibility in the club when you became a member of the board of directors?

Crowe: I thought it was ridiculous that many of the people in the club would document each and every detail of their climbs-- where they put their pitons and such. I was always a very serious person when I talked in public. But I thought this relating of each detail was rather funny. So I told someone that I would give a lecture on the subject. So one night at the campfire, without any real preparation, I talked about mountaineering. I got up and gave them a lecture that was ultimately published in the Sierra Club Bulletin, where it was not nearly so funny. It was about Baron Van Hagen von Kronpring, who was one of the greatest climbers of all time. People just rolled on the ground; they howled. The next morning Ted Althausen and his wife were walking along, and he was giving her a verbatim description of this baron.

Searle: Was this baron a real person?

Crowe: No, entirely made up [laughter]. So as the years went by the baron got called upon to give a lecture on mountaineering each year. He finally wound up carrying a tremendous big pack with a large dish pan, a rope, a Billy can named for Bill Colby, and one arm in a sling and a splint on his leg. He was photographed by everybody!

Searle: When was this?

Crowe: Some time after the forties. All of this was written up in the Bulletin.

Then I was on the board of directors, for no reason except that I had found out that people would laugh, so I started talking at the campfires about Margie. Margie was a hussie who would walk on the trail all day and make up stories that were gossipy about the people on the trip. And she would get up and talk at the campfire about what Margie saw and heard. No one ever saw Margie. This person talking was a person who was Margie's best friend, and she had a manner of speaking which was to say, "I met Margie the other day

and she was going down the street with one of her husbands, and I said to Margie, 'What is the matter with that guy, he is all bent over?' She said, 'Oh, I know, he has his vest buttoned to his pants!'" This is what Margie sounded like. And at those altitudes it was funny--people roared.

And on no basis of any kind, except Margie and the baron, I became a member of the Board of Directors of the Sierra Club! [Laughter.] When I was running for director I would go to the local chapter on invitation in the evening, and I would campaign for my opponent, who I thought was a better man for the job, and that was the extent of my political activities.

THE POLITICS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dinosaur National Monument And Mineral King

When I was president there were only two things of any importance that I recall. One was this battle over Dinosaur National Monument. I went on the river trip, and I went because I was told that even the president of the club could sit in a boat and float down the river. I was told that anybody could do this.

Searle: This was the Yampa or the Green?

Crowe: The Green [laughter], the wilder one. So they got me in this boat and handed me an oar, which should be called a sweep because it is so long and heavy, and here I was! And that for me was a great adventure, and I enjoyed it immensely; it made me understand people who want to keep the wild rivers. Dave Brower was also on this trip, because this was at the height of his campaign to save Dinosaur National Monument. Martin Litton was with us. His occupation now is running boat trips down the Grand Canyon, and this was the beginning of his river interest--taking this trip down Green River.

Martin Litton has a very loud voice against any wavering on our part to give up anything for any purpose other than wilderness.

Searle: Certainly you must have had some differences of opinion; he sounds like a strong, unwavering individual.

Crowe: As president, I have always felt that if I gave my word that it was a contract, and we would adhere to it. When Mr. Disney was going to buy Mineral King for his development, I insisted that we had surveyed the entire length of the Sierra trying to find a ski area on the west slope, and Alex Hildebrand and I had agreed that Mineral King might be developed for skiing. It would be between Los Angeles and San Francisco, so it would be useful to both cities. Since

the land belonged to the U.S. Forest Service, we were not invading a park. We said that we felt the Sierra Club should approve a ski development in that place. Then we got to the point where nothing had been done for years and years by the Forest Service.

Searle: This would have been in 1951 and 1953?

Crowe: Yes, when I was president we surveyed the west face trying to find a place where there could be skiing.

Searle: Was David Brower involved in this survey?

Crowe: No, as I recollect he took no part in it.

Searle: Was Martin Litton involved?

Crowe: No. It was Hildebrand and Harold Crowe. We studied the possibilities along that west face and decided on Mineral King, which was Forest Service land. Then, when it actually came to being let by contract to Disney, Martin Litton just went through the roof with the idea of our approving such a development in an untamed natural area. I had said to the Forest Service, I insisted, that the area was suitable for skiing, during my presidency. This was the kind of disagreement we got into.

Introducing Director Wirth To The National Parks

In my presidency there was only one other thing of importance, and that was that there was appointed a Director of the National Park Service who was a landscape architect and who had never seen a national park; he had never gotten closer to a national park than the Ahwahnee Hotel. Harold Crowe was at this time the president of the Sierra Club. Eivind Scoyen, who was then superintendent of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, decided that this new director who was about to be named back in Washington should go and see what a park was. He had never seen one. He had been a landscape

architect in charge of the beauties of Washington, D.C.--the tree-lined avenues, Rock Creek Park. He was moving from that to director of the National Park Service. Here is the picture of the man--Conrad Wirth.

So Eivind Scoyen loaded us on to horses, and in nine days we rode a hundred and fifty miles through Sequoia Laughter. And we went over bridges such as this. Here stood the president of the club surveying the beauty of this canyon, which drops down a tremendous depth.

As we got down there, we rode through a tremendous rain-storm, and lightning struck the crown of a tremendous tree. Here was the crown up there burning. So Eivind Scoyen climbs off his horse--we were in the bottom of this canyon now, so steep that there was no way out--and he got out there and borrowed my Sierra Club cup to hammer out the cinders and flaming pieces of wood that fell out onto the ground.

Searle: This picture says: "Harold Crowe, 1948, inspection tour with director of the National Park Service."

Crowe: So we then found that the future director of the National Park Service was in trouble. He did not know much about riding horses, so that he and I at the end of the day could scarcely get off our horses, we were so stiff. I was able to teach him how to make a bed on the ground, how to stay warm. I was able to help him sleep with his pain and so on Laughter. So we became very good friends.

The other event of interest was the fact that I found a lost chromium plated Sierra Club cup which I could present to the future director of the National Park Service at campfire. It ornamented his desk in Washington until the change of directors.

Searle: Then you did have very good rapport?

Crowe: Oh, yes. Because he was a man of good intentions always. Connie Wirth was his name. And he was doing everything he could to help the Park Service. This was just about the time that Dave Brower got to the point where he was out to tell the world what was wrong about the wilderness. The Park Service got so that they could hardly even talk to him, and when he would show up in Washington they would turn their backs.

I kept insisting to Dave and the board of directors of the club--if you are going to work with somebody who is keeping care of the parks you must be able to talk to him. You can't work with someone you can't speak to. Consequently, here was another area where Dave...When he published my picture in the Bulletin he showed just a picture of my back with no name [Laughter].

Searle: Didn't the publications series begin about this time--starting with Ansel Adams's This is the American Earth? Was Dave heading the publication's program at that time?

Crowe: He got the idea of making what they called Exhibit Format Books, these big beautiful books. He did start the publication of these books, which probably did more for public awareness of the wilderness than anything that has ever been done. So I always have supported Dave at the same time that I opposed him [Laughter], because he is the great conservationist of my time, still working at it.

Norman Clyde

Well, then, when I was up there with Conrad Wirth, and the director of the western office of the Park Service, Eivind Scoyen, who should walk into the camp and settle down to eat? [Laughter].

Searle: Norman Clyde. He is like the abominable snowman.

Crowe: Of course, the wonderful thing about Norman Clyde was the fact that he--before he died--was so familiar with all the great peaks of the Sierra that when some climber of known ability would go up a mountain and disappear Norman would go up and dump his knapsack out on the ground and pick out his binoculars. He would lie down with his head on a rock and study the face of the mountain where the man went up, and he would study the character of the climbing surface, and he would pick out the place where a climber of this kind would fall off. Then he would go up there and find the

corpse laughter.

This was a service that Norman Clyde rendered to society, because people were very anxious to find their sons. But there is no money in that. The article just published on the death of Norman Clyde in the Southern Sierran pointed out that no one ever knew where he got money to live on after he was thrown out of the school service in Bishop.

Searle: Where do you think that he got the money?

Crowe: I have no idea. The man did not have anything, and he drove a 1923 Chevrolet for years. In it was stuffed all his possessions--blankets and various kinds of trash. During the cold weather he would go and stay at somebody's resort. That gave him a house and some food; I don't think he ever got paid. There were some cottages and a dining room at the Palisades; that is where he spent a great many winters.

Searle: Glacier Lodge, I guess, is the name of it there.

Crowe: But how he survived I don't think any of us will ever know.

David Brower's Appointment as Executive Director

Searle: During your period as an officer, I believe, they appointed the first executive director, Dave Brower. How did that come about? Did you plan to expand the organization or change the structure? Was Dave just a natural choice?

Crowe: The idea was a group of fourteen people who were interested in the mountains, and chiefly interested in going into the mountains to visit them, who started the Sierra Club. Will Colby sort of ran this thing for years. He and Dick Leonard, as far as I am concerned, very largely conducted this thing.

It was like any organization. As it grows, you do not

realize that you reach a point that anyone who has an occupation full time can't afford to try to manage the organization.

Searle: What did you mean by "conducted this thing"?

Crowe: Well, they were the volunteer officers over and over. Dick Leonard, for instance, in his garage at home keeps all sorts of ropes and ice axes and skiing equipment and takes people out on the mountains behind Berkeley and teaches them how to hang on to a rock. And it never occurred to any of them that you were supposed to make money on this. Well, then, in my time, when I was a practicing physician trying to direct an outfit of 7,000 people, it became absurd.

So we hired an executive director, who was Dave Brower and who was a great conservationist. And Dave would get so carried away with his enthusiasm that he would just go out and do things before he asked the directors, who would then find themselves faced with a bill that we could not afford to pay. This is what ultimately led to the downfall of Dave Brower. He was called on the carpet by the board of directors; they would tell him his mistake, and he would be very contrite and promise he would never do it again. And the last time I was involved in such a session, he promised he would never do anything like this again, and then he rushed right out and went to London and opened a London office and hired two second-hand car salesmen to run it [laughter].

Searle: Were these problems right from the start?

Crowe: No. As his publications program got so big and his books became well known all over the United States, the Sierra Club became known everywhere because of Dave's books. These were beautiful books, and there is no question anywhere of the value of what Dave did.

The Growth of The Club

Searle: Another aspect is the Sierra Club going national. It was

my impression that this was a conscious decision. Was this the result of Dave's efforts? What do you know about it?

Crowe: The thing that happened was that actually it got to the point where even the Angeles Chapter was too big to meet. So we have a Long Beach branch in San Pedro and West Los Angeles and others. In the same way, the membership, as it moved around the country in this motorized era would move into areas where there was no Sierra Club, and they would write in and want to know if they couldn't start a chapter. The chapters just started to get approval and grew and grew until now it is national and, I believe, international. We have one chapter in Canada.

Searle: What I was wondering was whether there was a decision at some time to actively promote growth or whether it just happened?

Crowe: It happened because we became so well known and our members moved to other places.

Searle: What do you think of the club today? Do you have any other comments on the differences between the club then and today?

Crowe: There is a great difference, as far as I am concerned, in one item. We were doing this as a gift to our country and the Sierra Club. And it never occurred to any of us that there was any fee attached. Then one day we had a New York member--from the New York Chapter--representing us in court with regard to the Storm King development. As we discussed this thing, Mr. Clark said, "Yes, at \$60 an hour." Well, I had never heard of such a thing! [Laughter.] I was completely startled. We commenced to have legal representation, and it turned out that this is never a charitable thing, in the sense that it is done for nothing, as the gift of a skill to help a cause. Just as with my days in the high country, I never thought of charging people for sewing up their scalp when they got thrown off their horse. I still have Sierra Club members who want to come to my office because I don't charge people [Laughter], and this is forty years later!

Searle: [Laughter.] I won't ask you how you respond to these requests.

Crowe: Well, I see them, because they now are people who are elderly, and they are people who are in need of encouragement.

Searle: Our group has not been growing so rapidly lately; in fact, we have reached sort of a static plateau. Do you have any observations as to what might be the reason for this?

Crowe: My own idea about the basis of a change in this is the fact that society has become so affluent that people prefer to go to a deluxe resort where they have a comfortable bed, and someone else makes breakfast and serves it to them in bed. They don't turn toward the wilderness life as the desirable thing. I still think that our youngsters would be delighted as I was to get involved with this. Of course, I was already over thirty-five when I got involved in wilderness activity.

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Glen Dawson

PIONEER ROCK CLIMBER AND SKI MOUNTAINEER

An Interview Conducted by
Richard Searle

Sierra Club
History Committee
San Francisco, California

1975

Sierra Club
San Francisco, California

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PREFACE

Glen Dawson is truly a pioneer rock climber. For many summers, beginning in the mid-twenties, he joined the Sierra Club high trips, where he was introduced to climbing. Many an early morning one would see Glen and Jules Eichorn take off with Bill Horsfall and their "clothes line" rope to climb a neighboring peak.

In 1931, Glen was a member of the Sierra Club group, coached by Robert Underhill, that introduced the proper use of the rope to Sierra climbers. Numerous first ascents were made on this trip, which culminated in the first climb of the east face of Mt. Whitney. Glen's later achievements with the new and proper techniques of climbing bore out Underhill's tribute to him as a "natural-born rock climber."

Glen's father, Ernest Dawson, was active in the Sierra Club as director and president, and Glen himself was a member of the board of directors from 1937 to 1951. He has always enjoyed and appreciated nature and has been a strong conservationist.

Glen and his brother, Muir Dawson, took over their father's bookshop, carrying fine editions and mountaineering books. He has published many fine books, such as the Early California Travel Series, and has been active in the Antiquarian Book Sellers Association.

Marjory Bridge Farquhar
March, 1975

INTRODUCTION

This is an interview with Glen Dawson, a member of the Sierra Club since 1921. Glen is a life member of the Sierra Club. He has participated in Sierra Club high trips, early climbing activities, including the first ascent of the east face of Whitney, and the organization of the Ski Mountaineers and Rock Climbing Sections of southern California. He also has been a member of the Sierra Club Board of Directors. His activities in the club have brought him an acquaintance with, among others, William Colby, Joseph LeConte, Ansel Adams, Francis Farquhar and Norman Clyde.

This interview was conducted on September 23, 1972, at Dawson's Book Shop in Los Angeles, California, where Glen Dawson and his brother, Muir, carry on the family business as antiquarian booksellers. Mr. Dawson has reviewed this transcription for accuracy, making no substantive changes.

Richard Searle
Sierra Club History Committee
March, 1975

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GENESIS OF TECHNICAL ROCK CLIMBING IN CALIFORNIA

Youth In The Sierra Club

RICHARD SEARLE: Glen, I'd like to start by asking you how you came to know of the Sierra Club, and how did you become a member?

GLEN DAWSON: I am a second generation member of the Sierra Club. My father, Ernest Dawson, as a young man, did a great many travels by bicycle and on foot and went down to Coachella Valley by train, and then went off hiking and camping. Then he became involved in the Sierra Club, not as early as Phil Bernays, but he was an early member of the Sierra Club. So I was a second generation and was taken on local walks. My father was chairman of the Local Walks Committee of the southern California chapter (Angeles Chapter) for a great many years, and he loved to go on what he called scouting trips. He would go out and scout.

If you will look at the file of the schedules you will see that he was chairman of nearly all the big trips to places in southern California and in the west. He would first go with one or two cars and scout them out, get it all arranged, and then set up the trip. Trips down to Baja California and so on. As a boy I went on these trips at Thanksgiving vacations, Christmas vacations, spring vacations and summers. So that was the way I grew up going on these trips with my father and my uncle. My uncle, Albert G. "Bob" Dawson was a cripple, but he was a very good car driver. He would drive for my father, and there would be a few other people going on these trips.

SEARLE: Roughly what year were these activities?

DAWSON: I was born in 1912 and went on trips at a very early age. Probably my father would be sort of baby sitting me while he would give my mother a rest sometimes by taking me off on trips. So as

early as I can remember I was on trips and later on went on high trips, beginning in 1926. For a long period of time I was on the Sierra Club High Trips, first with my father and then on my own.

I became a member of the Sierra Club about 1921. When my brother Muir was born, Aurelia Harwood was president of the Sierra Club. She was intrigued with the idea that my brother was named for John Muir and wanted to do something for the family. She suggested that she give a life membership to my brother Muir at the time of his birth. But I was about ten years old at the time and had enjoyed going on local walks. My father wasn't sure what my brother Muir would be interested in doing, so he suggested to Aurelia Harwood that the membership be given to me. So I became a life member at the age of ten.

Later I made it up to my brother Muir because I bought him a life membership. So we are both life members of the Sierra Club directly from Aurelia Harwood, the first woman president of the club and one of the first from southern California. She was also actively interested in Camp Fire Girls and all kinds of other projects.

SEARLE: I believe you were very active in the scouting movement?

DAWSON: Yes, later on I was in the boy scouts.

SEARLE: Did you hold any positions or have to do with any activities in the Angeles Chapter, or the Southern Section I guess they called it then, before you became a director?

DAWSON: No, my father was president of the club and he was very active in it. He was a member of the board of directors. When he retired from the board of directors someone suggested that I more or less take his place, so I was elected following his term of office. I held two terms or two series of terms--one before the War and then I resigned when I went into the Army and then I was elected later on for one or two terms after that.

SEARLE: Oh, I see. It says here you were a director in 1922 to 1925.

Ernest Dawson

DAWSON: No, that would be my father. You mentioned my being president of the Sierra Club. I never was president. My father was, he served as president. My father actually was the one who was really a great character in book selling and the Sierra Club. He was a member of the State Parks Commission because of his interest in the Sierra Club. Of course, William E. Colby, who I knew from the high trips, the great character of the Sierra Club, was the first chairman of the State Parks Commission and was so long as it was a Republican administration. Then when it was a Democratic administration my father, being a bit of a left wing maverick and involved in the election of Culbert Olson to the Governorship, it was necessary for Culbert Olson to pay back a little debt to my father, and he made him logically a member of the State Parks Commission. However, his term of office wasn't too long because they quarrelled about certain policies. My father felt that the State Parks Commissioner should have a certain independence to do things so at one point he resigned, but he did serve for quite awhile and worked very hard at it.

SEARLE: What years would that be now? I remember the name Culbert Olson.

DAWSON: I think we will have to look back to the history books to find these dates. At this time I think dates sort of melt into the, I don't know. But in Culbert Olson's regime [1939-1943] my father was a member of the State Parks Commission. Well, anyway, we are talking about my involvement with the Sierra Club. My father was a pretty good worker and administrator and so on in the Sierra Club and State Parks; and he did a certain amount of climbing, beginning in 1926.

That was my first high trip, to Yellowstone National Park in 1926. I met Horace Albright for the first time; and I met Vernon Bailey, who was Chief Naturalist of the Biological Survey; and a daughter of Cedric Wright's. We went out to catch mice in mouse traps, some of which were let go and some of which were stuffed. Vernon L. Bailey had a permit to catch rodents. That was an experience.

On that trip my father climbed the Grand Teton; I wasn't old enough to go on that particular Grand Teton trip. My father did have some mountain climbing interest but not such as I. I became terrifically interested in rock climbing. As a boy and as a young man that was my great interest, rock climbing, in a period which was the beginning of technical rock climbing in California.

Pioneering Climbs With Rope And Pitons

SEARLE: Who were the people you would climb with?

DAWSON: My father and I in 1928 climbed the Jungfrau and Matterhorn together. When I got back from that I was interested in more climbing, and it was in 1931 that Francis Farquhar invited out Robert L. Underhill. My principle climbing partners were Jules Eichorn, Charles Dodge, Walter Brem and later on Ted Waller. We did a lot of climbing. Some of the earliest climbing with ropes and the use of pitons was on these high trips.

Then, by 1931, would be the east face of Whitney and preceding that there was a trip Francis Farquhar organized to the Palisades. Norman Clyde was on that and Bestor Robinson, Neill Wilson, Lewis Clark, and others were on that. It was Robert Underhill that really, through his articles and through his being out here, sort of laid down some of the rules of climbing that stem back to Geoffry Winthrop Young's Mountain Craft and things of that sort but really gave some training and study instead of just going out and climbing things.

SEARLE: Did they use the dynamic belay as such?

DAWSON: Underhill introduced the belay to us, so it was the first time we had practiced belaying.

SEARLE: Did he take you in hand? His experience, where did that come from actually? He came from the east coast?

DAWSON: From the east coast and from the Alps. I suppose he had been climbing in the Alps and had learned international climbing. So through Francis Farquhar and Robert Underhill was the introduction of climbing to such people as Bestor Robinson, Dick Leonard, Dave Brower and others. So about the same time I got interested in setting up a rock climbing section here in southern California. We went out on the face of Eagle Rock, and we went other places to practice climbing. Arthur B. Johnson was one who was active at that time, and Dick Jones, and other people, so that I feel that just through circumstances I have been involved in the beginning of climbing in southern California.

In some of the early climbing out at Tahquitz Rock there were different people that climbed much more extensively and for longer periods of time, such as Chuck Wilts. But from the beginning of it I was involved with it in the formation of the Rock Climbing Section at the same time that up at Cragmont Rocks [in Berkeley, California] they were going into it more scientifically, testing ropes and pitons and belays--particularly somebody like Dick Leonard, who went into it very scientifically.

SEARLE: Was there any situation where there was a nucleus of climbers in the Bay Area and a nucleus down here?

DAWSON: Yes, I would say the nucleus was a little stronger up in the Bay Area, but we still had it. We would meet at various places. It had its beginnings with the Palisades trip and the east face of Mt. Whitney climb.

SEARLE: Was it the east buttress route you climbed of Mt. Whitney, the one near the mountaineer's route?

DAWSON: We climbed the east face and east buttress too. I was up and down it several times after we made the first ascent. Jules Eichorn, whom I met on the high trips and who was my companion and best friend for several summers, was from northern California. So out at Stinson Beach, he started rock climbing practices out there and at Cragmont Rock. Jules Eichorn had kept up his interest in climbing, taking boys on trips and keeping his contacts with Norman Clyde closer than I have.

SEARLE: You climbed in the Palisades area. What have you done in the Palisades area? Some of your early...

DAWSON: Well, there was the glacier side of the North Palisade, first ascent of Thunderbolt Peak and so on. I think the Sierra Club Bulletins would show articles I wrote and others which would list climbs which technically don't amount to much now compared to what they do at Yosemite, but nevertheless they were interesting as pioneering things. I did get up to Yosemite enough to climb the Cathedral Spires and the Washington Column. Not first ascents but soon after they were climbed. So I did a little bit of climbing in Yosemite in the pioneer days.

SEARLE: I see. Roughly when did your climbing activities taper off? I will put it that way as I assume you didn't stop suddenly.

DAWSON: Well, I got married in 1940. So I more or less gave up active climbing although Mary Helen and I did a lot of skiing, camping, and a lot of tripping but not so much climbing. Then I became involved in the Tenth Mountain Division and was sent to Camp Hale, Colorado, and then to Seneca Rock Climbing School in West Virginia so I got back involved in skiing and climbing and teaching climbing because of the war.

Impact of World War II

SEARLE: Were there other Sierra Club members in the Tenth Mountain Division with you?

DAWSON: Oh, yes, a great many of them that went in. Of course Dave Brower was an officer and Raffi Badayn and a whole host of them. I went into the war fairly late, but my brother had a very long service, both in the Aleutian Islands and Italy and all over the place, southern France. He ended up at Berchtesgaden. My period was shorter, but I did become involved in a ski mountaineering course which we taught at one of the high schools here. We were recruiting fellows for the Mountain Division. So at the time it came for me to be drafted I felt sort of honor bound to go into the Tenth Mountain Division myself.

SEARLE: I see. Well, before we get too near the present, you mentioned your father's activities in organizing

trips for the Angeles Chapter, and I wonder if we might get a few more bits of information. He was president of the Sierra Club you mentioned. Did your father ever relate to you any of his experiences or impressions of things that impressed him particularly in his position as a director of the club or as the president of the club? Do you remember any?

DAWSON: Well, I remember more of his conflicts at the time of his state parks position perhaps, his conflicts with political figures and so on, than his activity in politics in the Sierra Club. I think he served just one term, and I think that he had been well liked and hard working. Although some people didn't agree with his politics, national politics, nevertheless they respected him and he got along pretty well.

Of course I think the Sierra Club has developed tremendously since that time, and there has been a tremendous change from the time he went out first by railroad to near Palm Springs. I can remember his taking me to Palm Springs when it was a dirt street where we went swimming in the mud baths--for a quarter the Indians let us go into the mud baths--and when there was just a dirt road to Twenty-Nine Palms.

The change in southern California from a semi-wilderness, where there was all kinds of exploration possible and it was a real expedition to go out into the mountains and you could still have the feeling of exploring, to the present time of paved highways and things cut up by real estate developments, golf courses, military reserves and so on. In my own lifetime southern California has changed, and the Sierra Club has changed from a rather informal group of people that enjoyed going out camping and incidentally thought about conservation, to a point where conservation and pollution problems become very vital to us.

SEARLE: What period of time did this change occur? Was it gradual or sudden?

DAWSON: It was gradual, but I think the war probably made a big difference in all of the lives of my particular generation. When I went to school I never expected to be involved in the military, but I was. It brought the aircraft and other industries to southern California and the increased population, so it was the war that changed things.

Family Camping

SEARLE: Well, another area of interest. You mentioned going on some of the Base Camp or high trips they called them.

DAWSON: First it was the high trips, and then Oliver Kehrlein and others organized the base camp trips, and I went on two of the base camp trips with my own family. Those were very enjoyable trips.

SEARLE: Can you tell me about some of them?

DAWSON: Well, one of them was up to Bear Creek and one was to Minaret country. There we were packed into a base camp and then went out on day trips from there. They were particularly suitable because my wife and I had children at that time, and we used little surplus mountain tents. Some of our very pleasant experiences were those base camp trips.

SEARLE: Let's see, with mountain tents that must have been after World War II.

DAWSON: That's right. It would have been after World War II that we still continued on some of our trips.

SEARLE: I guess we all benefited from the war in that respect anyway.

DAWSON: Well those were good little tents.

SEARLE: Yes. They did have a little condensation but were good otherwise. Then most of your wilderness trips and high trips have been post-World War II, as far as family activities.

DAWSON: Yes, I got involved with Scouts with my son, Keith, and so I was a club master and scout master and Explorer advisor, which was pretty near a nine or ten year period in which I was active in Boy Scouts. I organized trips, one that was the lower Colorado River, one down to Baja California, a couple of them to Baja, where there were still possibilities to do a certain amount of exploration and camping. It was in a foreign country and a little wilder.

SEARLE: What sections in Baja? Can you name specific areas that you went into? Was it in the mountain region?

DAWSON: Well, we went once by boat to Todos Santos Island and had the boat leave us and camped out on the island there, which was very nice. Then another time we took cars and went down to San Felipe and Puertecitos and up into some of the palm canyons. Prior to that one of my trips was with Nathan Clark and Bestor Robinson (the leader), Norman Clyde, Dick Jones, and Walter Brem, when we made an ascent of the Picacho La Providencia (also known as Picacho Del Diablo), which has become popular later. Probably Don McClain made a very early ascent, but ours was really the first publicized ascent of that particular peak.

SEARLE: Which direction did you approach it from?

DAWSON: We went from Melling Ranch. We had to pack in for a ways, and then we went on foot. It was a longer, bigger trip than we anticipated, but we did make the summit and we did get back. That also is written up to some extent. Norman Clyde wrote an article for Touring Topics.

Norman Clyde

SEARLE: Oh, you didn't mention knowing Norman Clyde. Have you climbed with Norman a number of times?

DAWSON: Well, as I say, I first remember Norman Clyde on the 1926 High Trip and perhaps went on trips with him before that. He was climbing with Jules Eichorn, and I was climbing with Robert Underhill on the east face trip in 1931. At various times we had climbing committees on the high trips and he was along, either paid a little bit or at least given a free trip to lead trips. I also did a certain amount of leading and organizing of trips so that I got to know him. Whenever he came to Los Angeles he would make Dawson's Book Shop his headquarters. He would sometimes need an extra \$5 for something, and my father would loan it to him. He was also a great reader and he would come in and buy books for his winter's reading. He would buy books not only in English but also buy books in Spanish, German, and French because he could read in a good many different languages.

SEARLE: Norman is rather a legend.

DAWSON: Yes. You have heard of people having mice in their houses. At one time Norman Clyde had a mouse in his car. The back of his car was completely loaded with all kinds of gear. Being rather small in order to keep up with larger and stronger people I had to cut down on my equipment on backpacking trips to the absolute minimum, but Norman Clyde would carry along cobbling equipment and extra material which he didn't really need but might come in handy. He would carry an eighty or ninety pound pack, while I would be getting by with a twenty pound pack. He was a little bit slower on the rocks in some ways than I was because he was older. We got along fairly well although Jules Eichorn could relate to him a lot better than I could.

SEARLE: I was wondering about that. I wanted to separate fact from fancy. I was wondering whether generally Norman was easy to get along with, or what kind of person he was to know.

DAWSON: Naturally, I got along better with fellows of my own age, such as Jules Eichorn and Walter "Bubs" Brem. But I was thrown together with Clyde a great deal, and we had no particular conflicts, but he could be kind of ornery and mean sometimes.

SEARLE: I understand he was a very strong willed individual.

DAWSON: Yes, he was very strong willed in lots of ways and very opinionated in some ways, and like I say we got along very well. He was very helpful; we learned a lot from him. He was a real character. He had plenty of time and had the tendency to take a little longer to break camp and to get organized because he had more equipment to look after than some of the rest of us.

SEARLE: Was he a loner, so to speak?

DAWSON: Yes, I would say he lived a great deal of his time alone. He lived up in Owens Valley and was by himself. He came to Sierra Club high trips because he would at least get meals or maybe later on a little pay for being a guide to people. When I was at U.C.L.A. we had a ski team, and we got him to help us out once or twice when the ski team went up to Owens Valley to Fales Hot Springs and other places to do things.

Forming the Ski Mountaineers and Rock Climbing Sections

SEARLE: I understand that you were involved in the organization of the Ski Mountaineers and the Rock Climbing Sections. Maybe you could indicate a little bit more about the formation of these groups, perhaps the Ski Mountaineers in particular.

DAWSON: Well, the Ski Mountaineers was an idea of Walter Mosauer, M.D., Ph.D., who was an Austrian biology professor who came over to U.C.L.A., a very brilliant skier and a very brilliant man. He got together some of us that were interested in skiing, such as Robert Brinton and Louis Turner, Dick Jones, and others. So there was a little organization called the Ski Mountaineers. We were interested in building a ski hut up on Mt. San Antonio, and the Forest Service wouldn't give us any permit because we were a very small informal group. So we got the idea that if the Sierra Club could apply for this permit, it would be given. So the Ski Mountaineers as an independent organization became a section of the Sierra Club. I think that through my father and through my own interest we were able to do that with a minimum of friction. Usually organizations split rather than coalesce. We made the Ski Mountaineer Sections from an independent organization to a section of the Sierra Club.

Then we built a couple of ski huts at San Antonio. One burned down and then another was built and also a ski hut up at Kellar Peak. George Otto Bauwens was a German who was teaching at USC and doing various things, and he was the one that masterminded the actual building. He was a great "do it yourself" man, and he was able to scrounge lumber and cement and various things and design the buildings and get it down and get fellows to build these things.

SEARLE: Did the Rock Climbing Section evolve out of the Ski Mountaineers?

DAWSON: Well, I think they more or less came together. I think that most of us were members of the Ski Mountaineers and Rock Climbing Sections both. Also-- I'm not bragging, but it is just an interesting fact that in my own lifetime these things happened-- I started the Mugelnoos in Dawson's Book Shop where this interview is taking place. We had a stencil machine in Dawson's Book Shop, and I was able to

get out a little news sheet; Tom Neal who is working downstairs right now drew the original little skier sitting back reading a newspaper.

We invented the name, and we were able to get this news sheet out with late information as to snow conditions or activities and get it out in about an hour and mail it out to people. So it could be very timely. I know Francis Farquhar was amazed sometimes--he was a subscriber to the Mugelnoos--that we were able to scoop all other Sierra Club publications about news of director elections and various things because we were very speedy and able to get something in the mail right off the bat.

SEARLE: That leads up to the Brower controversy, which we can talk about later.

DAWSON: I might say from the very beginning the Mugelnoos was a news sheet by and for the Rock Climbing Section and the Ski Mountaineering Section so that really they were the same group of people. There might be some that were skiers and not rock climbers and some that were rock climbers and not skiers, but it was primarily the same group. It was a sort of seasonal thing. In the winter you skied and in the summer you rock climbed, and then there were marginal times when in the spring some people did both. So, the Mugelnoos, the Rock Climbing Section, and the Ski Mountaineers all came together. Then of course my particular activity was up to and including the war period; and then after the war period due to marriage and various other things, family, other people have carried it on.

SEARLE: How did the Rock Climbing and Ski Mountaineers relate to the Rock Climbing Section up in northern California? Were there close ties?

DAWSON: Yes, I would say there were very close ties. We might meet in Yosemite or on the east face of Mt. Whitney, or at the time I was a member of the board of directors, Dick Leonard was also a member of the board of directors and Lewis Clark and Dave Brower and Charlotte Mauk. So I had frequent occasions to be in their homes and to climb at Cragmont and for them to come down here occasionally or to meet. So there were close contacts between the two groups. They sort of developed simultaneously, but I would certainly say the San Francisco group had greater resources--Dave and Jules and Dick and

the whole bunch of them did great climbing of the Cathedral Spires and difficult climbs in Yosemite.

COMPANIONS AND CONFLICTS IN THE SIERRA CLUB

Sierra Club Director

SEARLE: In regards to your experience as a director.
Let's see, you were a director from 1937 to 1951?

DAWSON: Yes. Because of my father's name, perhaps, I was able to get plenty of votes, but perhaps I wasn't quite so close to some people in the Southern California Chapter; I think one of the conflicts might have been in the matter of screening members. I might have been more willing to have minority groups come into the Sierra Club or to have people come without a great deal of screening. I would be of the feeling that it was a conservation organization and I had a certain idealism that I didn't like to have somebody blackballed. I think there are other factors, perhaps, but that might be one thing.

Finally, I didn't run as a member of the board of directors--perhaps I could have been elected or perhaps not--but I felt that I didn't want to be a member of the board of directors without the full confidence and support of the Southern California Chapter. So when I didn't have that, and for personal reasons, I more or less dropped out. I enjoyed it. There were trips to San Francisco two or three times a year, and I was able to combine a certain amount of business with that. There were also trips to such places as Mineral King and Labor Day meetings at various places. It took a great deal of time, not as much time as a director in the present time, but it did take time. But there were some conflicts there.

SEARLE: You mentioned the matter of minority groups as members of the club. Was this one of the concerns or reasons you...well, tell me a little more about that problem, as I do believe there was a problem. At one time, I believe, the chapters used to approve applicants before the national club made them members, or something like that.

DAWSON: It wasn't national but state. It was that...

I knew there was a question that certain people weren't welcome in the club and I didn't approve of that particular situation.

SEARLE: Did you have occasion to bring this point forth or was there some controversy or discussion on it?

DAWSON: I think there was some discussion on it but I didn't agree with the officers of the Southern California Chapter at that particular time.

SEARLE: Who were the officers who felt that way?

DAWSON: I think there must be a record someplace of different slates--I mean there were people nominated on political questions. When I was first a member of the board of directors why, I was nominated and elected without any questions whatever, but when it came to setting up different slates, why it became less attractive to me.

SEARLE: Well then, as I understand it, the politics made it a little less enjoyable.

DAWSON: That's right. There was this certain politics, and I felt that at that time I was on the losing end, but at the present time a person can become a member of the Sierra Club without the red tape, that was having to go down at the Friday night supper and being interviewed by someone. I think the club came around to my point of view at a later point, but by that time I was less active and interested in other things.

SEARLE: In another area, I seem to recall that at one time there was a matter of a loyalty oath issue in the club. Would you have any experiences during that period of the club. Ten years ago or so?

DAWSON: No, I don't recall that.

SEARLE: It was about that time that they reduced the number of sponsors required but that perhaps came a little bit later.

Durable Outdoorsmen

SEARLE: You mentioned a Vernon Bailey in your earlier

discussion. Now who was Vernon Bailey?

DAWSON: He was a chief biologist from the United States Biological Survey, and he was brought along on the Sierra Club trip in 1926 to Yellowstone National Park. He was a man well along in years, perhaps retired. He was brought along to give talks and demonstrations and to add something to the trip. He sort of took me under his wing, and we went off and did all kinds of things. He wrote something on the natural history of New Mexico.

Other persons on that trip--Horace Albright was around at campfires. He was the superintendent of Yellowstone National Park. He still is alive and very active, and I have had the pleasure of introducing him at Westerners meetings. He has recently been made a honorary member. He's one of the most durable of the people that I've known through the Sierra Club. He used to come into the Book Shop to visit my father and later came in to visit me. He is a book collector and a great, great character.

SEARLE: Let's see now. Horace is a member of the Sierra Club, isn't he?

DAWSON: Yes, He's a member. He's probably an honorary member or honorary vice president or something. Although it has been a long time since he's been director of the National Park Service he's been very vitally connected with conservation things all over the world. He's been an associate of the Rockefeller family on such things as Williamsburg and the Virgin Islands. And he still travels and consults in regard to the national parks and conservation.

SEARLE: Horace lives in southern California, doesn't he?

DAWSON: Yes, he lives in southern California.

SEARLE: Do you still have occasion to see him?

DAWSON:: Yes I see him. I've seen him recently. Of course one of my father's great friends and my great friends is Francis Farquhar*who I went climbing with. I was climbing with Marge Bridge and Francis Farquhar before they were married, up

*Interview with Francis Farquhar conducted by Ann and Ray Lage, Sierra Club History Committee, October 16, 1971; and January 29, 1972.

in one of the high trips at Tuolumne Meadows. I've had a double contact with Francis Farquhar through his interest in buying books, and he has been in my home. I appraised his books that were given to U.C.L.A., some of his mountaineering books--a great many contacts with Francis Farquhar. I thought the article published here recently in the Sierra Club Bulletin about Francis Farquhar was very good.

SEARLE: I'm glad to hear that. I notice here on this list that Joseph LeConte was...

DAWSON: I can remember him, as he would have his own pack train and his own camping trip, but he would come to the Sierra Club high trips for several days, he and his daughter Helen LeConte. I went camping and hiking with Helen LeConte on a number of trips.

SEARLE: Were these in the Sierra Nevada?

DAWSON: This was the Sierra Nevada, primarily. The Sierra Nevada I thought because of the climate and sunshine to be an ideal place to camp and go rock climbing, comparably easy rock climbing but nevertheless rope type climbing. You could do things of considerable difficulty when there were only a few pitches involved. Then later on I went off to climb in Europe and even other places.

Skiers and Ski Lifts

SEARLE: Another thing is, I think it was mentioned, you were involved to some degree with San Geronimo and...

DAWSON: Of course I should mention that I grew up not only in Sierra Club but in Western Woodcraft, Western Rangers, Trailfinders of Harry C. James. I recently went out to visit Harry C. James, and I have known him since I was ten years old or so and went on a trip to Arizona, one of his Coconino camping trips. So I have had contacts with a great many people. Harry James sometimes has been a little critical of the Sierra Club at a point when he felt the Sierra Club wasn't moving

quite fast enough. I think perhaps now he would feel Sierra Club is more vitally interested in conservation. He started the Desert Protective League.

I of course had a difficult situation in the San Gorgonio thing in some ways because I was greatly interested in skiing. I organized some of the downhill skiing races at San Gorgonio, and we were interested in building bootleg huts up there to make it easier to go skiing and doing various things. So when the final decision came that we were either going to support putting in ski lifts or oppose it, why I came to the point of opposing the ski lifts, feeling that there were other places where there could be ski lifts and that there ought to be some place left for not developing. There was too little of it and too fragile an area to put in a Sun Valley type thing. So I did go out to San Bernadino and as a skier speak against it at a hearing they had there. It was Joe Momyer that principally carried the battle and Harry James and others that did a great deal more than I did, but I at least helped out a little bit. There are still no ski lifts at San Gorgonio.

SEARLE: I was going to ask if there have been several occasions when the subject of ski lifts has been brought up. Was this one of the initial attempts to put a ski development in at San Gorgonio that you became involved?

DAWSON: There were times when people like Fuzz Merritt (Earl J. Merritt) would take a little motor up to San Antonio and set up a little rope tow of some type, a portable one, to make it easier to go skiing and so on. Of course I was skiing with seal skins and climbing mountains before there were such things as ski lifts. Then I saw first rope tows and then ski lifts and so on. I climbed Mammoth Mountain one winter when there were Niles Werner and several others, Louis Turner. We were the only people in the whole area of Mammoth Lakes skiing, which would be quite a contrast, I understand.

SEARLE: There's been a mammoth change since then [laughter]. What was that last name, Fuzz...?

DAWSON: "Fuzz" Merritt was an athletic coach at Pomona College, and he and his son, Jack, brought a whole group of people. Otto Steiner came over from Europe and through Otto Steiner I got acquainted

with Franz Fischer and Theo Lesch, where I climbed and skied in Europe through them. Wolfgang Lert was one of the really talented skiers. He's stayed close to the skiing business because he went into manufacturing and sales of ski equipment. He's done that all his life. He was a son of Vickie Baum, the novelist. Wolfgang Lert was one of the early Ski Mountaineers and one of the most talented skiers we had. He won the ski races, usually.

SEARLE: You mentioned a Dick Jones earlier in the conversation. Is this any relation to Stanley Jones?

DAWSON: No, the same name but no relationship. Richard M. Jones worked at Dawson's Book Shop and then for North American Aviation. He's recently retired and lives down at Laguna. We as boys were very good friends in grammar school and high school, and we went off camping and hiking and also at U.C.L.A. He was a great skier and climber.

Stanley Jones and Angeles Chapter Politics

DAWSON: Stanley Jones was a school principal, and probably in some of these political matters Stanley Jones would be one of the ones that would be on the other side of the fence. However, when Stanley Jones had a "This is My Life" program at his high school, I went out and made some recollections. I had very friendly feelings for him personally, but perhaps as an officer of the Southern California Chapter he might have been on a different side of the political fence at one time or another.

SEARLE: Can you maybe expand just a little bit in reference to what were the points of difference in regards to this? What does this relate back to? Membership?

DAWSON: Well, perhaps how tightly the membership would be controlled might be one of them. I don't know, there might have been others. It might have been just that I was a little younger and more interested in skiing and rock climbing, and it might have not been anything more than a difference in who was going to be the candidate for the Southern

California Chapter to be the official candidate for board of directors or something like that.

SEARLE: At that time, to a degree, it was sort of like an area-wide sponsorship...?

DAWSON: It might be. They felt that somebody from southern California ought to have the sponsorship of the Southern California Chapter. There were certain people like Leland Curtis that were very deeply involved in the thing, and I just don't know; at this point I can't remember what the politics of it were. Randall Henderson, editor of Desert Magazine, was put up as one of the candidates for director, and I think he kind of got caught in the crossfire of things and was defeated. However, I was able at one point to nominate him as an honorary vice president, which he was, and I think that was some satisfaction to him that he was an honorary vice president.

Fellow Climbers and Club Leaders

SEARLE: Did you know a Weldon Heald by any chance?

DAWSON: Yes, Weldon Heald lived out in Altadena at a wonderful place with lots of redwoods. He was very much interested in trees. Then he moved to Arizona, and so my contacts with him were more by mail. After his death we bought a part of his library. We have a painting which belongs to his widow that we haven't been able to sell, but it is still down here, by Leland Curtis. But we did buy his library.

Through the interest of my father, and my brother and I, at one time Dawson's Book Shop was practically a headquarters for the Sierra Club. Also Phil Bernays* with his Art Shop was also another headquarters for the Sierra Club. Through the years people have come in here, so we have had

*Interview with Phil Bernays conducted by Richard Searle, Sierra Club History Committee, May 30, 1968.

books on skiing and books on mountain climbing. We have just purchased the library of Lee Stoppie, who had a very fine collection of mountain climbing books and we've bought that. We've issued catalogs on mountain climbing, so to some extent people like Norman Clyde and Francis Farquhar and Ansel Adams* and Virginia Adams and other people have come and visited us here at the shop.

SEARLE: You mentioned knowing Ansel. Of course Ansel has been on the board for so long it would be hard not to know him. Have you had any personal experiences or trips or maybe projects together?

DAWSON: He was one that was very encouraging to Jules Eichorn and to me in climbing. We felt so good about him once that we named a peak Mt. Ansel Adams for him. Usually you wait for somebody a little further along to name a peak, but we named a very nice peak for him. As one of the leaders of the high trips he was encouraging to us. They had some rope on the trip and Will Colby at one time let us use it when we climbed Devils Crag, but he wasn't too enthusiastic about letting us go out climbing. But Ansel Adams was very helpful, and he did a little climbing himself.

I was up at his home not so long ago, and he got to playing the piano and doing some things. Virginia said he hadn't played the piano like that for years and years--some of the tricks he used to do, playing the piano with his nose and with an orange and various things. [Laughter] He was originally a pianist and piano teacher before he took up photography. First of all photography was his hobby, and then it became his profession. My father was a great friend of Cedric Wright and of Ansel Adams. They were both photographers. My father would go up and spend almost weeks in the Berkeley area and do things with Cedric Wright.

SEARLE: Ansel did a little bit of climbing, but he was not necessarily...?

DAWSON: He was enthusiastic about whatever he did. He would enjoy doing the climbing, but he was, of course, primarily a photographer.

*Interview with Ansel Adams in progress.

SEARLE: Did he carry a big heavy camera around?

DAWSON: Oh, sometimes he would have all his camera equipment on a mule or other times he would carry it with him. He would go out early in the morning or late at night and fuss around with a certain spot and of course get great results.

SEARLE: Do you have photography as one of your hobbies?

DAWSON: No. At one time I had a very small camera. My idea was not wanting to carry so much. I had a very tiny camera and got some pretty good results, but in recent years I've let my wife do any photography that there has been. I haven't felt inclined to do photography.

SEARLE: What about Bestor Robinson?* You have mentioned him in relation to rock climbing.

DAWSON: Well he organized this trip down to lower California at one time. Of course he was a director of the Sierra Club at the same time. I was a director with Dick Leonard** and Bestor Robinson and Lewis Clark and Ansel Adams and the whole group of them there.

SEARLE: I see. Well let's see. Another person you mentioned, Bill Horsfall.

DAWSON: Bill Horsfall was in the very early times. I guess the first Sierra Club high trip that I went on without my father I was sort of given to his care. He was to sort of look after me. He was a great do-it-yourself person. He had a broken back but he was a great climber, and we did a lot of climbing and camping together. Some of my most pleasant recollections are with Bill Horsfall.

SEARLE: Was Bill married?

DAWSON: Later on he was married. I think that at the time I knew him he was a bachelor. But he married Ethel Rose Taylor, who was on high trips for a long time. I'm not sure; I think that came after I knew him.

*Interview with Bestor Robinson conducted by Susan Schrepfer, Sierra Club History Committee, April 1974.

**Interview with Richard Leonard in progress.

SEARLE: I was wondering because I had met him some years back when I was in the Bay Area, and I believe he had just been married at that time. I wasn't sure if it had been recently or not. Will Colby?

DAWSON: Will Colby, of course, was on the board of directors at the early period that I was I guess. He was mainly organizer and leader of these big high trips--he and Clair Tappaan and then his son Francis Tappaan during this great classic period of high trips. I guess the high trips have pretty much been given up because they feel there are too many animals and too many people in one place, and it's too hard on the landscape. These gigantic expeditions where you had dozens of pack animals chew up the landscape too much and aren't so necessary as they thought they were then.

SEARLE: Will's participation, at least in your experience, was in the outings program. Of course he was the secretary.

DAWSON: He was many years secretary of the Sierra Club, and we knew him also as a customer. He had a great collection of Chinese ceremonial robes and various things. He was a great enthusiast of John Muir, and he was sort of John Muir's understudy for many things. So first through my father and then myself I knew him.

SEARLE: Well, we come down to Phil Bernays. I guess Phil is still active in various ways. Do you recall any experiences?

DAWSON: He was on the board of directors also. He was also a neighbor of ours in the painting and print business so I had many contacts with him in many different ways.

Friction between Chapter and Club

SEARLE: Phil Bernays in our interview recalled an occasion when someone on the board of directors made a motion, I believe, to disband or eliminate the Southern California Chapter. Were you on the

board at that time? Or was that at a different time? If you were, do you recall anything of the situation?

DAWSON: No, I don't know that that was at any time I was on the board. Being from southern California I would stand up for the Southern California Chapter, and yet I felt a stronger loyalty perhaps to the Sierra Club as a whole. I didn't feel the friction between northern and southern California because I had so many friends, such as Dick Leonard and Jules Eichorn, that I had met on the high trips, that I felt a loyalty to the club as a whole and didn't feel this difficulty that some members of the Southern California Chapter might feel.

SEARLE: What do you think it was, the difficulty that you referred to? Maybe you could give your impression of it. I've heard this mentioned from some other people at various times. I'm sure it is not an issue today.

DAWSON: Now there are chapters all over the place. The Southern California Chapter has been divided up into other chapters, and the whole situation has changed. One thing that amazes me is that you see the nominees for the Angeles Chapter committee, the short length of time these people have been a member. Having grown up with it, I of course haven't really been active, but here are people with just a very few years experience. Of course, if they are willing to do the work and to carry out these various things, more power to them.

SEARLE: My earlier question was what was your impression of the problem that might have existed between northern and southern California in that particular period. Is the fact that we have younger officers, with less experience in the club today, is this related to...

DAWSON: I don't know. I suppose when there were principally two chapters, and one of them had the history and had more experience in some ways and then the southern chapter with it's enlarging membership and interest in being better represented on the board, naturally there might be some friction that would come about--a geographical reason, and for the reason that the southern California membership wasn't as well represented on the board.

SEARLE: Was there any specific manifestation of this friction? I don't want to dwell on it too much.

DAWSON: I don't know. I was involved in these things in some ways, and yet my great interest at the time was going off skiing and rock climbing. Those things didn't bother me so much. Perhaps I was in the position of having loyalty to the San Francisco Bay Area people in some ways because I admired some of these people a great deal, but being a resident of southern California. So I was in kind of a difficult position at some times.

SEARLE: Can I summarize it, hopefully correctly? The people who were hot and bothered by that problem were other people, not yourself. Perhaps your feeling then was that it would blow over, and there were people who were excited but it wasn't the whole Southern California Chapter necessarily.

THE CLUB TODAY: PROBLEMS OF GROWTH

David Brower: A Bookseller's View

SEARLE: To what degree are you active in the club today, Glen?

DAWSON: Well, I am a life member, so I am a member. I did go up for an anniversary celebration of the Sierra Club. I do maintain certain contacts that I have. I have written recently to people like Horace Albright and Francis Farquhar. Certain younger rock climbers do come into the shop here to buy books. Wolfgang Lert was in here a few days ago, just before moving to San Francisco. But I am not really active in the Sierra Club. I don't feel that I am a crusader or a fighter. I don't very often write my congressman or do things which I feel are very good for some people to do, but I am sort of passive on these things. I have my own opinions, and I vote at elections, but I don't seem to be a crusader.

SEARLE: Has the change in character of the club, or shift of emphasis, has this had, in your opinion, an effect? What effect has it had on the feelings of the long-time members towards the club, and where they fit into the organization?

DAWSON: Well I think most of them don't object to it. They think it is great, and they generally agree with policies. So far as conflicts, they go back to the point where Dave Brower asked me opinions on publications and then didn't follow my opinions. So there was a little bit of conflict with Dave Brower extending back long before things got out of hand financially and so on with Dave.

Of course I knew Dave and climbed with him, and when he was with the Tenth Mountain Division we had a lot of contacts. I was active in publications through the Mugelnoos and writing for the Sierra Club Bulletins. I think perhaps my brother-in-law George Shochat, who wrote an index for the Sierra Club Bulletin, was one of the first persons to tangle with Dave Brower, and disagree with him. So, first in a good many ways, we were one of the first to disagree with Dave Brower.

SEARLE: Dave was appointed, I believe, I don't know if his title was executive director but I do

believe he took over the position in effect in 1950. Was this approximately the time when you were active?

DAWSON: Well, it was probably after I was active but I would have to work out a time chart here, as to when all these things mesh in. His great period of activity was after I was no longer a member of the board of directors, but I was at one point on a nominating committee and on various committees after that point and certainly was asked opinions about the publications. But as I say I had rather different ideas because I was a bookseller.

SEARLE: What were some of the specific thoughts or recommendations that you had on these policy matters?

DAWSON: Of course there was the matter of pre-publication prices and discount prices and so on. Perhaps some of my ideas, in connection with discounts to booksellers and so on, were rather from a personal or monetary idea that I disagreed with him. Nevertheless, I could see the way, the beginnings of things, when he got very lavish with his expense accounts, getting books which were very beautiful and very fine, but they weren't very practical on a long range basis. My own feeling was that he got the Sierra Club into financial difficulties, although much of the growth of the Sierra Club can certainly be traced to him also because he was and is a very creative and imaginative guy.

SEARLE: When we had the "Brower Controversy"--and that sort of developed over several years although it became apparent to the public in just the last few years--to what extent were you involved?

DAWSON: That was one of the last times that I sort of got involved in the Sierra Club. When Ansel Adams came down here to speak I turned out for it and got people to go. Perhaps that was one of the few times that I might have written a few letters or called a few people on the phone to vote a certain way at that time.

SEARLE: Was this down at the Cal Federal Auditorium?

DAWSON: I was present there. I was interested enough to do a little phoning that ordinarily I wouldn't do.

SEARLE: That's interesting [laughter]. Things like this you have to get people excited about something

they really believe in. I know the Mendenhalls were active at that time too. Was there any way, or any practical way, that you could see the problems that were arising, partially as a result of say Dave Brower or perhaps as a result of the way the board was running itself? Was there a way the problem could have been resolved other than what did happen, mainly Brower being relieved of his position and the big fight over the election? Do you feel in retrospect that maybe it could have been handled in some other way? Do you have any thoughts on that, on the way it should have been done?

DAWSON: Well, I think it might have been that way back certain people like Dick Leonard or others could have held a tighter rein on Dave Brower. I think that they gave him too much leeway. They had grown up together, known each other, climbed together and skied together, the whole bunch of them. In retrospect--hindsight is always better than foresight--if there had been a tighter rein on Dave Brower and more careful financial records, and he was made to toe the line on certain things, it might have been better.

Also, of course in retrospect, if Dave Brower had been willing to accede to the majority of the board, taking into consideration their wishes, and go ahead a little bit more conservatively and more cautiously he might still be executive director. But things just got out of hand both ways.

The Professional Staff in a Volunteer Organization

SEARLE: From the viewpoint of the board operations, maybe this goes back a little bit further than that particular problem, the board itself. Do you think the board fits the functioning of the Sierra Club today or can it conduct itself a little differently? I realize that you aren't attending meetings regularly.

DAWSON: I think I am a little too far removed now from the situation to say. Probably if there came up an internal matter in the Sierra Club I probably at this point wouldn't know how to vote, or I wouldn't

have enough loyalties one way or another to take a position. So as to what is the relationship between the chapters and the council and the directors and the paid staff, as to what it all is, I don't know. I think there is always a problem between the lay or volunteer worker and the staff worker, particularly when an organization grows. An organization originally would be all volunteers like the Sierra Club. Maybe at one point there is one paid worker, a secretary, and then the thing grows, and then it isn't so easy to get volunteers to do certain types of work and it gets done on a professional basis.

I am at the present time president of the Los Angeles Library Association, which is supposed to be a volunteer organization to help the Los Angeles public library. The question comes up as to how much should be done by paid staff or the professional librarians, and how much should be done by volunteers. Ideally a volunteer should be someone who is retired or someone who is independently wealthy and has a great enthusiasm. Sometimes you get an organization where someone will be secretary or permanent president, and they work at it full time because they are able to. Here I have a business to run and have various commitments in other ways. So I am taking this job for one year only, and I am not going to be a candidate to be president again because there are just too many tensions in the problems of what are we going to have the volunteers do and what are we going to have done professionally. Are you going to hire a professional fund raiser to do something, or are you going to have a permanent secretary, or are you going to let someone do it out of their shoebox at home?

These things come up, and I think some of the great problems of the Sierra Club are that as the organization grows you need professional help, and then what is the relationship? What the solution is I don't know. I think somewhere you have to have a group of people who are not involved professionally who will make the final decisions as to what the policy is going to be.

SEARLE: When you were on the board did you or did the board visualize or have an inkling of the growth that was to come? Was there any thought to the future in that respect? Did they ever think something as big as this club would happen?

DAWSON: No, I don't think there was any visualizing that. We didn't visualize the smog problems, or the problems of the Los Angeles airport, or transportation problems in southern California, or the freeways, or these various problems. We didn't visualize there would be people walking around on the moon. Just as I never expected to be involved in World War II as a boy, we just don't know what is ahead in world affairs and events. Same way I don't think the directors may have seen ahead a ways, but I don't know that we at the present time are able to forecast the future of how serious some of these problems are.

SEARLE: Perhaps you have heard, over the past few years the club has been growing about twenty per cent a year, but this year our membership is not increasing; in fact there is expected a slight decrease. Do you have any observations as to why this might be the case?

DAWSON: Well, I really don't know. In the past few years there has been a tremendous interest in saving our environment, and it was sort of the popular thing to do to become involved in these things. Perhaps an organization for various reasons doesn't grow at an even rate. Perhaps it isn't all bad that we don't increase; maybe we can consolidate and get ourselves, the Sierra Club, better organized and work out some of these internal problems. Size isn't all important. There are other things. An organization can be very influential and yet not have a huge membership.

Sources for Sierra Club History

SEARLE: Do you know Tyler and Ethyl Van DeGrift? How did they participate in the Sierra Club or did they? I know their names and that's all.

DAWSON: They participated in a very vital way. Of course in the early days we needed skis and ski equipment, and there was no place to get it. Tyler Van DeGrift was a member of the Sierra Club, and he ran a shoe store. Perhaps he got some boots in on special order for us and then gradually built up so that at one point his store was less shoes and

more ski equipment. He developed into a ski business.

SEARLE: Was this at Fifth and Spring?

DAWSON: It was at several locations. He was on Seventh Street for awhile. I remember Howard Gates invested some money in it at one time. Tyler was an enthusiastic Sierra Club member, and then he became interested businesswise in this.

Ethyl Van DeGrift had a great deal of enthusiasm for writing. She wrote a column for the Los Angeles Times on skiing. She wasn't a particularly good skier herself but she had a lot of enthusiasm to go out and report skiing races and skiing activities. She was a ski publicist and reporter for a long period of time. She has a whole lot of archives and skiing things at the present time, and perhaps better than anyone else could write a history of skiing in southern California because she did keep up with it. Her husband is no longer living. She has a couple of grown sons, and she took some trips to Europe and Sun Valley and so on, skiing. We have known the Van DeGrifts over the years.

SEARLE: I see. I remember another name too, Will Thrall.

DAWSON: Will Thrall was an older man. He was connected with the Los Angeles County, and there was a Trails Magazine. The Trails Magazine--I do have a complete set--are a bit scarce these days. Through his columns, he was principally interested in the history of the Angeles Forest and about the old days in the Angeles Forest, but he would also put in a little news about Big Pines Ski Club which Louis Turner and I were involved in a little bit. You will find a few references to Ski Mountaineers and to Glen Dawson in the Trails Magazine. He ran this rather interesting periodical for quite awhile.

SEARLE: You mentioned Los Angeles Trails Magazine, now...

DAWSON: It was the Trails Magazine, and I think it was financed by the Los Angeles County, particularly with the Big Pines Recreation Park both summer and winter.

SEARLE: Did it contain hiking information?

DAWSON: It contained news or information on how to go on a hike and what the distance was, and where the water was and so on. Things you might find in the old Schedules too to encourage people to use the

outdoors.

SEARLE: Did he also publish a column in the Los Angeles Times, "A Hike of the Week"?

DAWSON: I'm not sure about that.

SEARLE: I was wondering if the two were part of the same thing or not.

DAWSON: I'm not sure. I don't recall that, but I do remember the Trails Magazine very well.

SEARLE: Well, Glen, could you recommend some other people we should talk to, that is people the Sierra Club History Committee should interview who had long experience in the Sierra Club and who might contribute to the Sierra Club history.

DAWSON: Will Thrall, of course, is no longer living, but we mentioned Ethyl Van DeGrift and I feel that particularly from the Ski Mountaineers and the ski angle and the development of skiing and perhaps the conflicts between the ski lifts and the preservation of the environment that Ethyl Van DeGrift might be a very good one to interview. I would think Harry C. James would be a very pleasant expedition for someone to go out between Banning and Idlewyld and make an appointment and interview him. He seems ageless, and he is just as alert as when I remember him when I was ten years old.

SEARLE: Was he a member of the Sierra Club?

DAWSON: Well I suppose he was a member of the club. He was never active in the Sierra Club. He was sort of an independent entity with his Trailfinders organization, but I would say he tended to be more aggressive than the Sierra Club was at one time. He would needle the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club wasn't being quite aggressive enough.

SEARLE: Sort of a conscience for us.

DAWSON: Yes, I think so. I think the people thought he was a little far out on some things, but you look back and at the present time you see that he was right--that we haven't preserved as much of our desert as we should have.

SEARLE: So one of his prime interests was...

DAWSON: The desert. He was interested in the Hopi

Indians. He is a crusader from way back. He is a bit of a loner on it although I have been a member of his advisory committee, and he has had lots of good help. He is a really great character.

SEARLE: Any other names come to mind? Any other people? Those in southern California would be more accessible to me.

DAWSON: Well, any of these people I have mentioned. Most of them are still around.

SEARLE: Like you mentioned Horace Albright.

DAWSON: Of course you have probably already interviewed Horace Albright. He was on the national scene but there are other people here locally. You might get a different angle if you went up to Reno and visited Leland Curtis. He was really a great artist. You mentioned Walt Heniger. I haven't seen him lately, but there are other people around that might give you a little different viewpoint or angle on some of these things.

SEARLE: It is funny but you take Phil Bernays. No one had interviewed him up until 1968. Of course, the program wasn't that far along but sometimes I think obviously this person would have been interviewed because he is aware of so many things, but everyone makes the same assumption. You mentioned George McMannus.

DAWSON: He comes in the book shop. I keep in contact with him because he is a book collector. He was going on Sierra Club trips with my father when I was a boy. He has been retired a few years, but he has a very good memory, and he has a lot of pictures. He lives out in Glendale, and he might have some recollections that would go back to the time when I was a boy when my recollections are a bit fuzzy.

SEARLE: I see. Well that looks like it could be very interesting. Stan Jones is one that you mentioned.

DAWSON: I don't know where he is right at the present moment but certainly he would have information so far as southern California politics. Of course you could get some old Sierra Club Schedules, and see the people that were officers and active and check to see if they are still members. There are people around that were active, and I am sure there

is no end to the possibilities. Each one of them would have some particular slant or viewpoint about their feelings in these matters, and trips, and what they think of the changes.

SEARLE: Let's see now. I've been asking all of these questions and you have been coming up with a number of things on your own. Glen, are there any additional thoughts that come to mind that maybe I haven't asked about and you would care to comment on? Anything goes as far as I can see.

DAWSON: No. I think it is encouraging that the history committee would have enough ingenuity and effort to go out and interview people. I think it is very helpful to get some of this material down.

SEARLE: Well, it is a very interesting and enjoyable experience for this family.

DAWSON: Who are some of the people you interviewed before?

SEARLE: You are the second individual. The first individual was Phil Bernays. I did interview Phil back in 1968. We didn't know what to do with the recording. I was interested in hearing what Phil had to say. I was concerned about it and had the recording for about three years when it was announced, I think it was in 1971, that they were forming the Oral History section of the History Committee. So anyway, the answer is Phil was the first gentleman and you are the second individual we have had the opportunity to speak to.

DAWSON: Of course Nathan Clark would be one who has retired recently. He is a brother of Lewis Clark and he became president of the Sierra Club after I wasn't so active, but he was on this Picacho Del Diablo trip down in Mexico, and he was on early high trips. I have known Nate Clark practically all my life. Through his brother and through his own interests he has had a connection with Dave Brower more closely than I have, and he was actually a president of the Sierra Club. He has retired now, and he is here locally so you don't have to travel as far as you would to do Harry James or the people up north.

SEARLE: Do you have any recommendations for some of the subjects we might discuss with Nathan. Things you believe he would be most qualified to...

DAWSON: He is a lot closer to the more recent matters on the board of directors and more involved with the tremendous growth and change in the Sierra Club, whereas I was sort of at the end of the period when it was an informal organization with limited paid staff, and things ran along on an informal basis. Finances for the high trips were carried in Bill Colby's hip pocket or something like that. Certainly each person you go to, like Nate Clarke, will give you...

Of course a very articulate person would be Ruth Mendenhall. Another person that might be interesting to interview would be Francis Tappaan. He was in Washington, D.C., I think, as an assistant to Senator Kuchel, and he has been connected with U.S.C. and with various things. He, like myself, is a second generation Sierra Club member.

SEARLE: He was president too.

DAWSON: I think he was president. His father was certainly; Judge Clair Tappaan, of course, was an associate of Phil Bernays and an associate of Bill Colby. Francis Tappaan would go back as a young man further than I would in the Sierra Club.

SEARLE: Well Glen, any last thought before we quit for the day?

DAWSON: I appreciate what you are doing and like I say I have lived through a lot of these things. I have some bits and pieces of records and so on, but I turned over some of my climbing things to John Robinson who has been writing hiking guides like the Trails of the Angeles and one on the San Bernadino. And yet I've been involved with other things than the Sierra Club so it seems like a long ways back to some of these things.

SEARLE: Well maybe we can think of this session as not necessarily the last one but maybe sometime in the future we can get together as other thoughts come to mind.

DAWSON: When you talk to Nate Clark, Leland Curtis, and some of these other people, why maybe you will come up with some specific questions, and I will hopefully be able to shed some light on them.

SEARLE: Thank you very much, Glen.

DAWSON: Okay, then.

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