

Sierra Club Oral History Project

SIERRA CLUB WOMEN

Elizabeth Marston Bade	Recollections of William F. Bade and the Early Sierra Club
Nora Evans	Sixty Years with the Sierra Club
Marjory Bridge Farquhar	Pioneer Woman Rock Climber and Sierra Club Director
Helen M. LeConte	Reminiscences of LeConte Family Outings, the Sierra Club, and Ansel Adams
Ruth E. Prager	Remembering the High Trips

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1972 - 1977

These interviews constitute volumes one and two of the Sierra Club Women series.

Sierra Club History Committee
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Sierra Club Oral History Project

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ELIZABETH MARSTON BADE

RECOLLECTIONS OF WILLIAM F. BADE AND THE EARLY SIERRA CLUB

An Interview Conducted by
Eleanor Bade

Sierra Club
History Committee

1976

SIERRA CLUB ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
INTRODUCTION	v
WITH THE SIERRA CLUB IN 1906	1
The Second Kings River Canyon Outing	1
To the Sierra by Rail and Stage	2
ON THE TRAILS OF JOHN MUIR	5
Tracing Muir in Florida, Cuba, and Alaska	5
<u>The Life and Letters of John Muir</u>	7
<u>The 1909 Outing with John Muir</u>	11
WILLIAM FREDERIC BADE: ENSURING THE MUIR LEGACY	12
The LeConte Memorial Lectures of 1919	12
Spreading Muir's Message	14
Four Generations of Sierra Club Service	16
INDEX	19

PREFACE

Elizabeth Marston Bade was born in San Diego, California, June 13, 1884, the third of five children of George W. Marston and Anna Lee Marston. She received her A.B. degree in German from Wellesley College in 1905. Due to her father's influence--Mr. Marston was an early member of the Sierra Club and went on High Trips soon after the operation began--she too went on early Sierra Club High Trips, participating in those of 1906, 1909, and 1916 and capped these experiences with a base camp trip on the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River in 1950.

With her marriage to Dr. William Frederic Bade, January 12, 1917, her Sierra Club activities and John Muir associations greatly intensified. In fact, on their honeymoon, the Bades retraced considerable portions of the Muir Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf. On another trip they did another partial retracement of the Cruise of the Corwin. These, it might be said, were but beginnings, for it took some years to bring to a successful conclusion the task of being, on the part of Dr. Bade, the biographer and literary executor of John Muir, a task so modestly and expertly done that many people think Muir got out all of his books himself. A third were edited from Muir's journals by Dr. Bade.

At this writing, many people no longer speak of the Life and Letters of John Muir, seemingly unacquainted with it. This should be corrected. For my part, this set of books is the most valuable of Muiriana and reflects the essence of John Muir. A reading is most revealing and instructive. Dr. Bade's work with the Muir materials continued even beyond the early twenties, for other printings followed and some still continue.

Later, Dr. Bade got back to his field of the Old Testament by beginning archaeological investigations in Palestine in 1926. Mrs. Bade, the Marston family, and other friends were patrons, a good many drawn from Sierra Club associations. The investigations were carried on in 1926, 1927, 1929, 1932, and 1935. Mrs. Bade came on the last three and, as director of the commissary,

kept us all healthy.

The two children, Mrs. Wilbur Bacon, now a director of admissions at International House, Berkeley, and William G. Bade, now a professor of mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley, came on the 1935 expedition. Although but twelve and eleven they made valuable contributions to the work. As their supervisor, they called me a "slave driver." The parents permitted me to be exacting. The work required it.

It was a great loss when Dr. Bade died in 1936. Mrs. Bade not only carried on with the publication of the archaeological research, she also supervised the Muir material until disposition could be made to the Muir family and certain institutions. The Muir books by Linnie Marsh Wolfe belong to this period. In addition, Mrs. Bade implemented in 1939, with the help of friends and the Marston family, the erection of the Palestine Institute building of the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley. Here many of the Palestine materials are on display, in conjunction with library, offices, and other research facilities.

As for myself, Mrs. Bade sponsored my membership into the Sierra Club in 1937 and in 1938 sponsored my "first summer" in the Sierra Nevada, and I have a feeling of much affection for these benefits. From them as first steps, the result was a wilderness "missionary." There could have been no finer people to work with than the Bades.

Good things do live on, Anthony's speech notwithstanding. Another evidence is that in May, 1976, by authority of the Board of Trustees and the administration of the Pacific School of Religion, the Palestine Institute is to be changed to the Bade Institute of Biblical Archaeology.

Joseph L. Wampler
Berkeley, California
April, 1976

INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth Marston Bade was born in San Diego June 13, 1884. She grew up and was educated there along with three sisters and a brother, until she went to Wellesley College, graduating in 1905. Her family took part in the early growth of San Diego, and were very active in the development of Balboa Park, Borrego State Park and Presideo Park. They have supported the Sierra Club and its endeavors since the early years.

After her marriage to William Frederic Bade in 1917, she moved from San Diego to Berkeley. Dr. Bade had been active in the Sierra Club for many years. He participated in the fight to prevent the construction of Hetch Hetchy Dam and had been a director of the club since 1907. He was editor of the Sierra Club Bulletin from 1910 until 1922 and was president during the years 1919-1922. He had been chosen by the Muir family to be John Muir's literary executor and for several years after their marriage he continued with this work. After the publication of The Life and Letters of John Muir in 1924, he turned his full attention to his teaching at Pacific School of Religion and to his archeological research.

Mrs. Bade's recollections concern her early experiences on Sierra Club High Trips when she was a young woman and the years during her marriage when her husband was writing The Life and Letters of John Muir. The interview was conducted on March 13 and March 16, 1972, while Mrs. Bade was visiting her son's home in Berkeley, California. I, her daughter-in-law, interviewed her under the auspices of the Sierra Club History Committee.

Eleanor Bade
April, 1976

WITH THE SIERRA CLUB IN 1906

The Second Kings River Canyon Outing

Eleanor Bade: Now do you want to tell a little bit about yourself, Marnie?

Elizabeth Marston Bade: I'm quite an early member of the Sierra Club, but I can't remember the exact date when I joined, myself. But my father had gone on an early trip to the Kern in 1902 or 1903. He so enjoyed it, that from then on he read numerous works to us, especially The Mountains of California, and it became one of the most treasured books in the Marston household. Little did I think then that I would ever marry the literary executor of John Muir.

My own first trip was to the Kings River Canyon in 1906. A small group were with the club that year because it followed so soon after the earthquake and fire in San Francisco, but I had the opportunity to become acquainted with many of the persons who became the most prominent people in the club.

EB: Did you meet Bill's father on that trip?

EMB: No, no. Mr. Bade was not on that trip; I think he was in Europe that year. I did not meet him until many years later. But Mr. and Mrs. Colby were there; Marion Randall and her sister Mary, and Mr. Parsons; and a large group from Los Angeles, who had not been affected by the earthquake, and several from San Diego also.

EMB: My first mountaineering was done with a small group who climbed Goat Mountain. I was camping with a Boston friend, Mrs. Prince, who had come out with some other members of the Appalachian Club, and through her I was invited to go with a small group led by Mr. Joseph LeConte, Joe LeConte, Jr., for a day's climb to Goat Mountain. From it we had a wonderful view of the other high mountains around. Later I was invited to go with a group who were to take a trip to Rae Lake. It was the first time the Sierra Club group had ever tried to take as large a number; there were six girls and sixteen men, as I remember. Some of the best mountaineers were going and Marion Randall.

I consulted Marion Randall as to whether I would be able to do it, and she said, "You will have to decide that for yourself." So I decided I would! We had to carry our sleeping bags ourselves, but the food was carried by one lone horse, as I remember it or two horses. It proved to be a very rugged trip, as Rae Lake was frozen over, and we slept practically in the snow. And going over Glen Pass the horse went snow blind. The men had to take all the provisions off the horse and carry them, and we women folks had to take turns leading the horse.

To the Sierra by Rail and Stage

EB: How did you get into the mountains in 1906?

EMB: Automobiles were very rare. When we went by train to Visalia we found we arrived early in the morning, and the stage coach was not to leave until the next morning so we had twenty-four hours in Visalia. We realized then what a wet winter it had been, because the street from the railroad station to the hotel was so muddy that we walked on planks set on barrels, which was a good practice for walking over the logs over the rivers later that season.

We left early in the morning in a four-horse stage and drove over the mountains to Millwood where we spent the night and met the group who had come down from the north. We started off walking into the west bank of the Kings River, and there, finding

EMB: the river in such a flood that the bridge had gone out, we had to sit on the west bank waiting for the rangers to fix the bridge. The Sierra Club men got in and helped, and finally we got over and camped near Kanawyer's just opposite that wonderful dome.

I remember lying in bed and seeing the sun touch the top of the Grand Sentinel. It comes slowly down the face of that rock, which was on the west side of the river. We were camping on the east side. Oh, it was so beautiful. It was a very choice group--those eighty people that were on that year--and I was very fortunate that my trip was taken with those seasoned mountaineers and that they took me in and let me walk with them.

EB: Do you remember who was in the stage coach with you? How many people were in the coach?

EMB: There must have been about a dozen people, I think, going in from the south.

EB: Had you come with a friend?

EMB: I came all alone up from San Diego and took the night train up to join Mrs. Prince from the Appalachian Club from the east. She had been on the 1904 trip to Yosemite with my sisters and my father. She knew the Colbys and the LeContes and other long time members of the club. So I was fortunate to be camping with her. Mrs. LeConte was not on the trip that year but her sister, Miss Kate Gompertz, who later became a doctor, was. I had been majoring in zoology in college, and so with great joy I helped her cut up a rattlesnake which had swallowed a gopher.

EB: Did you bring it back with you?

EMB: No, we didn't. It was great fun and I don't think I've ever seen Dr. Kate Gompertz since. I don't remember her in Berkeley afterwards.

EB: Were there many experiences like that? I've never seen a rattlesnake in the mountains.

EMB: Oh there were a great many rattlesnakes that year. You see there were very few people in the mountains that had been killing them.

EMB: As we went up, I think it was to Paradise Valley, they killed about six just upon our arrival in camp. When we took our shoes off at night we had to take them into our sleeping bags, for fear we would find a snake in the morning. But I was used to rattlesnakes coming from southern California. They held no terrors for me compared to the eastern people who didn't like them at all.

EB: Was this a long trip you went on?

EMB: The Sierra Club trips were all a month. I think it was the month of June. I don't remember the exact dates. The headquarters were there in Kings Canyon; Camp Kanawyer's store was there. People went in groups on side trips, according to how good mountaineers they were. The high water did curtail the activities somewhat that year.

EB: Was it because of that trip that you met Bill's father?

EMB: Oh, way later, way later. I didn't meet him in the Sierra. That is a popular story that we met in the mountains, but it was not until later when he came to San Diego in 1916, in the interests of Belgian relief to organize a group. He was the chairman of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium in the state at that time, working under Dr. Vernon Kellogg, who had gone to Belgium. Now, my father met him, I think on one of the early Sierra Club trips, perhaps 1902 or 1903.

EB: So you went on two High Trips in the early years before you met Mr. Bade.

EMB: Three. I went in 1906 to the Kings, in 1909 to Yosemite, and in 1916 to the Kings. And I went to the Kern. I remember that beautiful camp on Moraine Lake. That was a beautiful trip. Mr. Bade came in the last two weeks. We went in from Los Angeles again and came out by Independence, taking the train from Independence back to Los Angeles and then on to San Diego. So different from these long auto trips which people take now--the chapter in San Diego lists its trips and it will say, "drive of 400 miles." I can't see how they would have any energy left to climb the mountains after they get there.

ON THE TRAILS OF JOHN MUIR

Tracing Muir in Florida, Cuba, and Alaska

Eleanor Bade: When did Mr. Bade begin writing The Life and Letters of John Muir?

Elizabeth Marston Bade: He didn't begin to write this book until after Mr. Muir's death. Muir's death occurred Christmas eve in 1914. And after that Houghton Mifflin Company, who had published a book of my husband's, The Old Testament in the Light of Today, joined with the Muir daughters, Mrs. Hanna and Mrs. Funk, in asking him to be the literary executor and take charge of all the unpublished manuscripts which were out at the old home in Martinez.

EB: Oh, I see. So did they ask him to edit the unfinished books at that time?

EMB: Yes, and he went on to Boston to spend his sabbatical year from September 1916 to June 1917. He stayed in the home of his friend John Wells Morss, a member of the Appalachian Club, who had several times come out with groups from the Appalachians to go on Sierra Club trips. Mr. Bade and I were married when he came out at Christmas time and down to San Diego for our marriage January 12th, 1917. He then had plans to follow the path of John Muir on his trips through the south which he took very soon after the Civil War. When that country was devastated Muir walked from Indianapolis down through Georgia, as told in his journals, which were later published as the Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf. Mr. Bade was editing those journals.

EMB: So we went by train from California to Jacksonville, Florida, and by auto up to Fernandina, which was the port where Mr. Muir had landed in a little boat from Savannah, Georgia. He had walked, I think it was in 1869, from Fernandina across Florida to the west coast to Cedar Keys, a small town not very far from the Swanee River. The Swanee River was probably the best known place in Florida at that date, from the old song which was so often sung. We took a steamer from Jacksonville up the Oklawaha River to Gainsville and then took a train across to Cedar Keys, where we spent several days searching for traces of John Muir.

EB: Did you find material there?

EMB: Well, the people with whom he had stayed had died, and we found very little known about him there. But my husband took pictures of the place. Then from Cedar Keys we returned by train to Jacksonville and took the train down south in Florida to go over to Cuba. Mr. Muir had spent some time botanizing along the coast in Cuba, and my husband had his journals; it made it very interesting for us to follow as closely as we could.

EB: Did you go to Cuba?

EMB: Yes. We spent a few days in Havana and went out on day trips. From there we went up to Boston and spent the time until the middle of June visiting our friend John Wells Morss. My husband had a cubicle in the Weidner Library where he could consult the books, first on Florida and afterwards on Alaska. The next book which he edited was the Cruise of the Corwin, and much valuable material concerning Alaska was in the Weidner Library.

EB: Did you go to Alaska then, from Boston?

EMB: We had intended to come home by way of South America, but the United States went into the World War in April 1917, so we decided to come back by the Canadian Pacific and go up to Alaska. After working over Muir's accounts of his travels in Alaska, my husband's mind was so full of Alaska that we decided to go up and see it and see the Muir Glacier. Muir's travels in Alaska had been published at the very start of my husband's taking over the material; it was practically complete by that time, as Mrs. Marion Randall Parsons had acted as secretary to Mr. Muir

EMB: for some months while he was finishing the manuscript, and my husband had only written the introduction.

We had with us on these travels the notebooks in which Mr. Muir had made drawings. The camera was not developed then so that he couldn't use it, but he made very interesting drawings. These books were in our home for many years, and so valuable, we felt, that whenever we left home for any length of time we put them in a suitcase and put them in a bank for storage. Here, by showing them to the captain of the good ship "Mariposa", in which we were sailing, we got him so interested that he took the boat out of its course so that we could see the Muir Glacier. I don't think there was a soul on that boat who didn't know who John Muir was by the end of that trip.

EB: The drawings are very good. Could you recognize things from his drawings?

EMB: Oh yes! These journals for safekeeping were in the Bancroft Library for some years. I understand that recently they have been taken out to Stockton, to the University of the Pacific at Stockton, where they are specializing in California history. Mr. Muir's granddaughter, I believe, is responsible for that material having been taken from the Bancroft Library out there. The University of California had given Mr. Muir an honorary degree and had been very much interested in this material, but for some unknown reason the Muir heirs made the change.

The Life and Letters of John Muir

EB: Well then, from Alaska did you come back to California?

EMB: Yes, we came back to California by early July, as my husband's work at the Pacific School of Religion began by the middle of August. We then remodeled the attic in our home on College Avenue; it made a beautiful study for my husband, and all the Muiriana was taken up there. This material had been arranged by a secretary, Mrs. Elizabeth Grey Potter, and was in very good form for working material.

EB: Had she been associated with John Muir?

EMB: No, I don't think she had; it's very dim to me. She died some years ago, and I'm not able to verify these statements that I'm making, but I know that she did this work. She may have been a member of the Sierra Club. But it's so long ago, I'm sorry to say, and I was not living in Berkeley. I was living in San Diego before my marriage, and by the time I came to Berkeley she was the librarian at Mills College.

EB: Oh I see, so she really had had training in organizing library materials, as well as secretarial work.

EMB: I guess so. I know that there were two filing cabinets brought to my husband in which to keep all this material so that he could get at it easily. And all his spare time for the next years was spent on the Life and Letters of John Muir.

EB: On any of your trips, did you meet anybody who had known John Muir? On the trips you took right after you were married?

EMB: No, I don't remember that we did then. My husband had been in New York before I was married, and he met Dr. Henry Fairfield Osborne and others. It was not until my husband received an invitation to come to the University at Glasgow to receive an honorary degree that he had the opportunity to go to Dunbar and to see the birthplace of John Muir. That was in 1934 and was the only time he went to Scotland, I think. But I did not accompany him as I had stayed at home with our children.

EB: Bill said that something that pleased you both very much was that his father had discovered the botanical notebooks that John Muir had left. I wonder, that's an interesting story. Bill didn't know it, but he said you would be able to tell it.

EMB: Yes. When my husband was writing the Life and Letters of John Muir he took every opportunity of meeting the old friends of Mr. Muir, and in Indianapolis lived a family...Mols, Graydon... those names come back to me. He went there to talk to them about Muir, because it was they who had been so very kind to him when he had had an accident in the mill there and had thought that he had lost the sight of one eye. But it came back, due to

EMB: their getting him the best of medical treatment of that time. Mr. Bade told them that he wished he could find the herbarium which Mr. Muir had taken along with him. And a young man of the family said, "There's something up in our attic that sounds like that," and went up and found it and came down and gave it to him.

I'm not just sure where that is now, whether it was given to the Sierra Club, or not. After my husband's death when I was going to sell the home--rent it and then later sell it--I sent a whole little truck load of things over to the Sierra Club office. Mr. Colby asked me if I didn't have things which would be good, and I said, "Oh, there's so much I don't know what to do, how to sort it." He said, "Well, just send it all over and we will sort it." So my daughter, Elizabeth Bade Bacon, drove over with a young man from International House and delivered all of these things.

EB: That was a wonderful thing to find, because I suppose you knew where he'd gone and what he'd done from his collection.

EMB: Yes, that herbarium was a very important find. I'm very sorry I can't remember if that went over to the Sierra Club, but the Sierra Club ought to know if it has it.

EB: I guess Bill's dad felt very pleased that he'd found this.

EMB: Yes. It was very helpful in tracing where Mr. Muir had been from the time he left the University of Wisconsin until he went south and took that walk. I'm not sure, it's been so many years since I've seen it, just what years it covered, but I think it was the year in Canada and in states of the United States.

EB: Yes, because he was collecting all that time.

EMB: Oh, yes, botany was his great hobby, his great interest at the University of Wisconsin.

EB: You spoke, Marnie, of finding this early picture that's in the first volume, and how happy you were, you and your husband were, about that picture. How did you find that?

EMB: Well, it must have been among those which were sent to him. He asked those members of Muir's family to kindly share pictures and letters, and of course returned them to them later. They were very cooperative. One of his sisters lived in Pacific Grove. He went down several times to see her and got interesting material about Muir's early life. But of course Mr. Muir himself had published an account of it in My Boyhood and Youth. But he got letters; they shared many letters with him which were copied and then returned to them.

EB: Did the family ask Bill's father to write the book because of this work he had done with John Muir, as well as already writing a book? Do you know why?

EMB: That was before I was married, but I think they knew that my husband in his early years had taught botany. He also had a very good knowledge of the Bible, to which Mr. Muir referred so often, and had had a book published by Houghton Mifflin, The Old Testament in the Light of Today, so they knew he could write. And he had worked with Mr. Muir and the Sierra Club directors in the effort to save Hetch Hetchy. Yes, that was why, I think, he was selected. And he had been on the board of the Sierra Club Bulletin. He became editor of the Bulletin in 1911, and he had contributed articles to it.

EB: So he had been doing literary work for the Sierra Club already.

EMB: Yes. I think that his first trip on the Sierra Club was made to the Kern, and I think that was in 1903, and he was asked to write the account of the trip. He went with Dr. John McLean. Dr. John McLean, the president of the Pacific School of Religion, was responsible for my husband's coming out here to teach there, and he was going on the trip with some members of his family and he invited Mr. Bade to go along. He took to the mountains like a duck to water and enjoyed it so thoroughly, and he wrote it up. I'm not sure in what volume, you'd have to look in the bound volumes of the Sierra Club Bulletin to find out just when it was published. We have a complete set in San Diego; I took them down there when I went back to live there. I am saving them for my grandchildren, who are already becoming active mountaineers.

EB: Well, I read Mr. Bade's article about the water ouzel, and it was very nice.

EMB: Yes. He loved the water ouzel and took Kodak pictures of it.

The 1909 Outing with John Muir

EB: Was John Muir on that first Sierra Club trip that Mr. Bade was on in 1903?

EMB: No, I don't think so.

EB: It was through his work with Hetch Hetchy that he met him first, or did he meet him a little bit earlier?

EMB: He met him at the Sierra Club meetings in San Francisco first, I think. I don't think John Muir was on the 1903 outing--oh, I'm quite sure he wasn't or my father would have told us that. John Muir was so busy with his own work at that time, and the Sierra Club trips were very tame, you see, in comparison with what he was doing.

But he did come in to the trip in Tuolumne Meadows in 1909. I went on that trip, but my husband was not on that trip; my sister and I went with some other friends. I spent two weeks in Yosemite Valley first, to get acclimated and to see the valley, which I had never seen. Then we went on up to Tuolumne Meadows. Later John Muir came in for a short part of the trip. I'm not sure how long he was with the club, but I remember he spoke by the campfire, and we all listened with most intense interest. And he walked along out to Hetch Hetchy, I think, because we followed him one day. But that year I was asked by Mr. and Mrs. Huber to join their group, which was going down the Tuolumne Gorge to Hetch Hetchy, and so I'm not sure about what Mr. Muir did or how long he stayed with the club.

EB: That was when he was about 70 then?

EMB: Yes.

WILLIAM FREDERIC BADE: ENSURING THE MUIR LEGACY

The LeConte Memorial Lectures of 1919

Elizabeth Marston Bade: My husband had hoped to finish work on the Life and Letters of John Muir during his sabbatical year. He thought that by getting away from Berkeley where he was continually called on for other lectures he would have the time to do it, but there was so much more material than he had expected that it went on for several years. During this time many people who had known Mr. Muir contacted him, and he had many interesting opportunities.

In 1919 the University of California extension division announced the LeConte Memorial Lectures to begin in the Yosemite Valley. The first series, the 1919 series, was about Mr. Muir. I have the typewritten copies of my husband's lectures. The first was on John Muir, nature, and Yosemite, given on the floor of the valley. The second was Muir's view of the valley's origin and the third, on the fourth of July, was Muir's services to the nation. Mr. Stephen Mather (Director of the National Park Service) was in the valley at about this time with Mr. Lorimer of the Saturday Evening Post. He gave a dinner up at Glacier Point at the lodge, inviting a large group to come up and spend the night at the lodge.

I remember on my earlier visit to the lodge, I'd eaten my meal out of a blue bandanna. So I was rather astonished to have the elaborate menu, the only item of which I can remember was hearts of artichokes salad. Speeches were made and a great deal of effort was made to give Mr. Lorimer the right word on the valley. Afterwards he published many articles in the Saturday Evening Post which were helpful to the cause.

EB: Did the LeConte lectures last for a long time, a week?

EMB: Yes. This time they began with Professor Jepson, on Tuesday the 24th of June, on the origin and distribution of buttercups in Yosemite; on the 26th, the biology of the chaparral; the 27th, the ancestry of the Yosemite pines and Sequoias. Then the dates of my husband's lectures were July 1, 3, and 4. This was followed by Dr. Francois E. Matthes, geologist from Washington D.C., on the origin of Yosemite Valley as indicated by the history of its waterfalls, July 8; the highest ice flood in Yosemite Valley, July 9; the origins of the granite domes of Yosemite, July 10. Then Professor A. L. Kroeber from the Department of Anthropology, University of California, spoke on the tribes of the Sierra, July 11; the Indians of Yosemite, July 12; the folklore of Yosemite, July 13.

Most of the lectures were given in the pavilion or the open air and certain of the lectures, those by Professor Jepson and Dr. Matthes, were delivered at places in Yosemite which gave concrete illustrations of the scientific side of the subjects under discussion. Following my husband's lectures he joined the Sierra Club at Tuolumne Meadows for a few days. I stayed in the valley with a stepdaughter, Evelyn Bade, who had friends of her own age in the valley.

EB: There were other people there too for the lectures? All kinds of friends?

EMB: Oh, yes. The Muir family were very much interested, and Mrs. Hanna came in for the lectures.

EB: Were the two sons with her?

EMB: Well, I don't remember about the boys. They had five boys and one girl eventually. But I know the two older boys were camping in the valley alone, and they went up to Tuolumne Meadows. They had begun at an early date. My husband saw them there.

EB: Did Mr. Jepson go on up to Tuolumne Meadows after that?

EMB: I don't know. I don't remember. We did not get in in time for his lectures. This I remember. We went in and stayed at

EMB: Yosemite Lodge near the falls.

EB: Did Mr. Mather stay for the whole program?

EMB: I don't know. I don't think so. I think he had Mr. Lorimer in tow and was getting publicity for him.

EB: It was very nice that they called them the LeConte Memorial Lectures.

EMB: Oh yes. Mr. LeConte had been camping in the valley so much, and the Sierra Club had built the lodge, the LeConte Memorial Lodge.

EB: Were some of the meetings held in that lodge?

EMB: Oh, that was a small lodge. The meetings at which my husband spoke were held outdoors as you can see by the pictures. They were out in the fields.

EB: This program was presented because your husband was involved in the Life and Letters of John Muir.

EMB: Yes. He had all the material which he found they could give him, and some of the material he used in the lectures was afterwards incorporated into the book. The first volume was published in 1923 and the second volume in 1924.

Spreading Muir's Message

EB: Did Bill's father do a lot of lecturing during this period when he was writing about John Muir?

EMB: The reason he was so long getting the volumes finished was he was asked to speak for so many schools, nature societies, women's clubs, church dinners, that he could hardly get up into his study. If he had not made the attic into a redwood study, which was reached only by a narrow staircase with no telephone there, I'm sure he never would have finished the books.

- EB: Did you have a chance to go with him when he talked?
- EMB: Oh, off and on. I went to innumerable church dinners and other things. I didn't always go because they were far away. There was one thing--when he was asked to talk and bring his pictures and slides, he would say he would do it if he could bring his own lantern man from the university. I think his name was Mr. White, I'm not sure. He would take care of the slides. So many of the organizations had poor lanterns, and the slides got too hot and were ruined. That was his one stipulation. Five dollars for the lantern, and often that was all. He felt that he was passing on the good word about Mr. Muir.
- EB: I suppose that there were memorials and dedications to John Muir during this period of time at which he participated.
- EMB: Several schools were named for John Muir. There was one in Seattle, and then, of course, in Berkeley there was the John Muir School. I remember the Seattle school put on a pageant, and they wanted material for the pageant and other places. There was a great deal of interest.
- EB: Did Mr. Bade feel that this work really contributed to a greater knowledge of conservation?
- EMB: Oh yes, he did. John Muir was a figure through his writings. It was a time when people were beginning to appreciate the need for saving the redwoods and saving the parks. Of course, Theodore Roosevelt did a great deal during his presidency. When he came out to California, he asked that he could go into the mountains for two or three days with John Muir alone, that they camp out, and that it be kept absolutely secret. It was arranged for him, and he was so impressed with all that he learned from John Muir that he provided a strong force for conservation.
- EB: After his presidency did he continue to work for and with John Muir for conservation?
- EMB: Well, he always worked for conservation but you see, John Muir died in 1914 and I think Roosevelt lived about ten years more. But he was always helpful with things of that sort. He did love to hunt, and he kept on hunting. Of course John Muir would

EMB: never have killed any wild animals.

EB: Did he contribute anything to the book the Life and Letters of John Muir?

EMB: No. The work was all done on this coast. It was during the war years and following that my husband was working on this, so he could not go to see John Muir's birthplace or to Wisconsin. He had to trust to the letters and Muir's own accounts so he did not visit Dunbar until 1934 when he went to Glasgow. He enjoyed very much going to see Dunbar, but of course even a little Scotch town had changed somewhat in those many years. Afterwards Mrs. Linnie Marsh Wolfe went to Wisconsin and spent quite a little time looking up any traces that were left of the Muir family. I believe that the publishers financed her visit there before she brought out John of the Mountains.

EB: I see. She spoke to you about your husband's book when she was beginning her book, I think.

EMB: Mrs. Hanna arranged for Mrs. Wolfe to continue the publication of the material that was left at our home. So she came for it and took it to Alameda County Library where they allowed her space for it. She brought out this beautiful book, which received the Pulitzer prize for biography. I was very glad to help her with whatever I could about it. She was a very fine woman.

EB: I think that biography is still available.

Four Generations of Sierra Club Service

EB: Did you ever write of your Sierra Club experiences yourself?

EMB: No. No writing and no speaking for me. The only work I ever did for the Sierra Club was in the war time. About 1917 after I was married that next winter, so many of the people on the Bulletin had gone away in the service. Mrs. Parsons, who ran the book reviews, had gone to France, and I wrote book reviews and helped in that way. I read proof too. I read a great deal of

EMB: proof. I've written very little, but I have read miles of proof in my lifetime ∟aughter∟.

EB: That is a skill in itself.

EMB: Yes, I know. I read the Sierra Club proof, and I read the proof of the Life and Letters of John Muir and later the Records of the Tell en Nasbeh Excavations of my husband. It really put my eyes on the blink ∟aughter∟.

EB: Do you remember the years when Mr. Bade was president of the Sierra Club, and all the things that happened?

EMB: I remember the dinners were very interesting occasions. Usually they were held at the Palace Hotel or the Fairmont. But one year in the war time to be economical the dinner was held at the Women's City Club, and it was very nice. It was a smaller dinner and a cheaper dinner, but it was a very nice one as I recall it. The only one of which I have special memory, and I can't tell the date unless I look it up somewhere, was the one where my husband asked Chester Rowell to speak. That I found very interesting. Being the wife of the president of the club gave me the opportunity to sit next to Mr. Rowell, which I enjoyed very much. I never thought then that my son and his wife and grandchildren would be living in the home that he was then living in in north Berkeley.

EB: What did he speak on at that dinner?

EMB: I don't remember. It must be in the Sierra Club Bulletin.

EB: He must have been a very forceful man.

EMB: Yes he was. He was very fine. The Fresno Republican was considered one of the best newspapers in the state. When he resigned from that and came up to live in Berkeley, I think he was doing some writing or was in the state legislature. You should have gotten on this project sooner because my memory is getting very dim ∟aughter∟.

EB: No. You have remembered so much from so long ago. Now, Bill's father finished his Life and Letters of John Muir after he

EB: was president of the Sierra Club I think.

EMB: Yes. The second volume came out in 1924. Then he felt that he must give his time to his own work at the Pacific School of Religion, writing on his major subject there, and he began to become interested in archaeology. So as soon as he could he went to Palestine during a summer sabbatical. His companion for that trip was Dr. Willis L. Jepson, and the two men had a very good time together.

EB: When the books were published and they came out did the Muir family express how they felt about them?

EMB: Oh yes. They were very happy about them. Very happy indeed and very generous in their praises. Mrs. Hanna was the one who came to see us often. I only remember Helen Muir Funk coming once to our home on College Avenue, but Mrs. Hanna and her husband and children often came, and we went out to see them in Martinez. We had very friendly relations with them.

EB: Well, it is a long and extended period that your family has been working with the Sierra Club.

EMB: Yes. In conclusion, I want to say how happy I am that the interest in the Sierra Club and its objectives is a continuing one in our family. My father, George W. Marston helped in the establishment of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in San Diego County. My husband led the fight for the Kings River Canyon Park. Since I returned to San Diego to live in 1937 I have watched the San Diego chapter grow to over 1,000 members. My daughter and son have taken many high Sierra outings. Bill married the daughter of two southern California chapter members, Gilbert and Rebecca Barry who took their child camping at the tender age of one. Needless to say my six grandchildren are already seasoned mountaineers. The eldest, Michael, has been a student member of the club and has been on several clean-up trips and will spend this summer on the project in the Kings River Canyon.

INDEX

- Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, 18
 Appalachian Mountain Club, 2, 3, 5
- Bacon, Elizabeth Bade, 9
 Bade, Elizabeth Marston:
 Sierra Club outings, 1-4, 11
 marriage and family, 4, 5, 18
 travels to Florida, Cuba, and Alaska, 5-7
 at LeConte Memorial Lectures, 1919, 12-14
 Sierra Club involvement, 16-17
 Bade, Evelyn, 13
 Bade, William Frederic:
 conservation work, 10, 18
 Muir literary executor and lecturer, 1, 5-10, 12-15
 relief work for Belgium, 4
 Sierra Club Bulletin editor and contributor, 10-11
 Sierra Club outings, 10, 11
 Sierra Club president, 17
 See also The Life and Letters of John Muir
 Bade, William George, 18
 Bancroft Library, 7
 Barry, Gilbert and Rebecca, 18
 Belgium, 4
- Colby, William E., 1, 9
 Commission for Relief in Belgium, 4
 conservation, 15, 18
 Cruise of the Corwin, 6
- Dunbar, Scotland, 8, 16
- Fresno Republican, 17
 Funk, Helen Muir, 5, 18
- Goat Mountain, 2
 Gompertz, Kate, 3
 Grand Sentinel, 3
- Hanna, Wanda Muir, 5, 13, 16
 Hetch Hetchy Valley, 10, 11
 Houghton Mifflin Company, 5, 10
 Huber, Mr. and Mrs. Walter, 11
- Jepson, Willis L., 13, 18
John of the Mountains, 16
- Kanawyer's camp, 3, 4

- Kellogg, Dr. Vernon, 4
 Kern River Canyon, 1, 4
 Kings River Canyon, 1-4, 18
 Kroeber, A.L., 13
- LeConte, Joseph Jr., 2
 LeConte, Joseph N., 14
 LeConte Memorial Lectures, 1919, 12-14
Life and Letters of John Muir, 5, 7-8, 14, 16, 17
 Lorimer, Mr., 12, 14
- McLean, John, 10
 Marston, George W., 1, 18
 Mather, Stephen, 12, 14
 Matthes, Dr. Francois E., 13
 Moraine Lake, 4
 Morss, John Wells, 5, 6
Mountains of California, 1
 Muir, John:
 botanical notebooks, 8-9
 heirs, 5, 10, 18
 influence on Theodore Roosevelt, 15-16
 lectures about, 12-15
 Sierra Club, 10, 11
 travels in Florida, Cuba, Alaska, 5-7
 writings, 1, 5, 6, 10, 15
My Boyhood and Youth, 10
- Old Testament in the Light of Today, 5, 10
 Osborne, Dr. Henry Fairfield, 8
- Pacific School of Religion, 7, 18
 Parsons, Edward T., 1
 Parsons, Marion Randall, 1, 2, 6-7, 16
 Potter, Elizabeth Grey, 7-8
 Prince, Mrs., 2, 3
- Rae Lake, 2
 Randall, Marion. See Parsons, Marion Randall
 Randall, Mary, 1
Records of the Tell en Nasbeth Excavations, 17
 Roosevelt, Theodore, 15-16
 Rowell, Chester, 17
- Saturday Evening Post, 12
 Scotland, 8, 16
 Sierra Club, 9, 14
 dinners, 17
 Hetch Hetchy campaign, 10, 11
 outing, 1-4, 5, 10, 11
 San Diego Chapter, 4, 18
See also Sierra Club Bulletin

Sierra Club Bulletin, 10-11, 17

Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf, 5
transportation to the Sierra, 2-3

University of California, 7, 12, 13

University of Glasgow, 8, 16

University of the Pacific, 7

University of Wisconsin, 9

Visalia, 2

Weidner Library, 6

Wolfe, Linnie Marsh, 16

Yosemite National Park, 3, 4, 11, 12-14



NORA EVANS

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SIXTY YEARS WITH THE SIERRA CLUB

An Interview Conducted by
Judy Snyder

Sierra Club
History Committee
San Francisco, California

1976

SIERRA CLUB ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
INTRODUCTION	iv
SIXTY YEARS WITH THE SIERRA CLUB	1
The Giant Forest in 1911	1
Travails on the Trail	2
Sierra Club Manners and Mores	4
High Trip Fashions	5
Climbing the Peaks: a Women's View	5
INDEX	7

PREFACE

Nora Evans, a native Californian born in 1887, has trekked up and down this state with the Sierra Club since 1912. I remember her first on a High Trip in 1939, surrounded by a group of friends, reminiscing about her Scottish father, a Civil War flag bearer in the New Market Battle in West Virginia; about his years as Superior Court judge in California in Senator Sharon's and "Mammy" Pleasant's days. Nora spoke with a low, pleasing voice, which prompted me to ask if she was a singer. "No! I'm a math teacher at Oakland Tech, but my mother had a beautiful voice, and Angelina Patty's manager offered her a contract to sing in London. But Mother chose matrimony and motherhood--we were four children--as a career."

Nora remembers growing up in San Francisco in a large house with marble fireplaces in every room, thirteen foot ceilings, gas light and no electricity. She was allowed to eat at the table with grown-ups when she was six or seven years old. After her father's death the family moved to Berkeley. Anna Head School, Visalia, and Oakland Tech treasured Nora's firm and stimulating teaching methods.

Retiring at sixty-two, Nora bought a house in Mill Valley where she began her love affair with her raccoons. Sterling North pictures and describes them in his book, Raccoons are the Brightest People. A clothespin clasp food, attached to a string coming through a hole in the wall, rang a bell in her kitchen. This temptation started the intelligent coons ringing for regular service. I'll never forget the coon who braved a silent party of ten ladies, staring as he sat in the middle of Nora's living room Oriental rug, delicately eating a raw egg without spilling a drop!

Nora, now a sturdy eighty-nine years of age, credits the Sierra Club with profoundly influencing her entire life. To some of us old timers, the mere thought, "SIERRA CLUB," sparks our adrenalin--mountains, Dick Leonard's early morning wolf calls, Dave Brower's cross country "short cuts"; Norman Clyde, Francis Farquhar, and many other wise and patient leaders in the ways of nature's revelations; people getting lost not following directions, climbers too. But always there was Nora knowing how to get there, how to stay dry, Nora helping newcomers, Nora, a symbol of the real core and meaning of our Sierra Club.

Madi Bacon
March, 1976

INTRODUCTION

Nora Evans, the subject of this interview, is a very spry lady in her mid-eighties. She had no difficulty recalling her early days in the Sierra. Today Nora lives on the twenty-fifth floor of the Sequoias, in San Francisco. The view from her windows is breath-taking--the Golden Gate, the Bay Bridge, Marin and Contra Costa Counties, plus downtown San Francisco.

Nora is still an active hiker in the Sierra. To keep fit during the winter months, she hikes between one and three miles almost every day around San Francisco. Getting to know Nora during the interview was a tremendous delight to me, and I imagine that I'll run into her on the Sierra trails next summer. The interview was conducted in her home on October 2, 1972.

Judy Snyder
Sierra Club History Committee
October 22, 1972



SIXTY YEARS WITH THE SIERRA CLUB

The Giant Forest in 1911

Judy Snyder: I'll start off, Nora, by asking you about the trip you took in 1911, when you went by horseback from Visalia to the Sequoias.

Nora Evans: I was teaching in Visalia. There I met Elena Rice, who had been on one of the trips with the Sierra Club when John Muir was one of the leaders. She said, "Nora, let's ride up into Giant Forest. It'll take us only two days; it's sixty-five miles." Mr. Hart, who owned a sawmill at that time--there's a tree named after him--said not to bother about bringing food because we could eat at the mill.

After visiting the Giant Forest Mr. Hart mentioned that we should ride further and see the General Grant and the tunnel tree. He said we could stay at that camp with Mrs. Jones, a friend of his. So we arrived, but the mill wasn't operating--something wrong with the machinery--and they all thought we had come in just to see the boys. Mrs. Jones said that she was awfully sorry but that she couldn't put us up, so we went on to the regular camp.

We were sitting at the lake watching the sunset. Two boys asked if we would like to go rowing on the lake to see the sunset, and we said, "No thanks." Then they asked if we would have dinner with them. I was glad to accept because the only place to eat was in the saloon, and I was a little terrified about going in there.

NE: We had dinner and when we got back to our camp I said, "Elena, you're older than I am so you should have known better than to be going to dinner with those boys." And she said, "Who accepted?" [Laughter.] So we got up the next morning and saddled our horses, and after breakfast in the saloon we rode out.

JS: How about telling me about your first trip into Yosemite in 1916?

NE: In 1916 I went with some friends into Yosemite. This was the first year that you were taken into the valley floor by motorbus. Up to this time, you were taken in by stagecoach. We were at Camp Ahwahnee. The only other camp was Camp Curry.

I arranged to have horses ready for us, and I took two girls up to Clouds Rest. And then I rode by horseback up to the top of El Capitan alone, but at breakfast they discovered that I was hiking alone. They sent two boys to run up and find me and escort me up and back.

Travails on the Trail

JS: How about other early trips and all the luggage involved?

NE: The year following our trip into Giant Forest my friend Elena told me that the Sierra Club was leading a trip from the west to the east. Nowadays you go in a car and leave it sometimes as high as 9,000 feet. In those days there were no roads, and you were lucky if you got up to 3,000 feet from the west side. On the east side you could go from Lone Pine or towns like that which were between 5,000 and 6,000 feet high.

Elena said that we could go and ride our horses in with the group on the west side. When they began to go out on the east side we could turn around and come back. Mr. Agnew, after whom Agnew Meadows is named, said he would look out for us. The amount of dunnage that we had was very heavy. They did not have sleeping bags in those days. We made our own bags out of an eider down or wool comforter and a blanket. No real

NE: rainproofing over it either.

JS: On that trip did you use tents or tarps?

NE: No, they didn't have tents until 1924. You see, before that on the Sierra Club trips, we seldom camped as high as 9,000 feet, and never above the timber line. So there were always trees heavy enough that you could keep pretty dry.

We first used tents in 1924, and they were made out of parachute material. The first night it began to rain a bit. I was in the tent with Florence Furrell and I said, "Florence, I'm getting wet." And she said, "Stop your fussing." A few minutes later, she said, "Nora, I'm almost floating in a lake." And I said, "Stop your fussing."

The material was no good, and the floor was of that material so it had no way of running off. That's how we had to spend the night. There was a lot of drying out to do the next morning. Tarps were used after that.

JS: In 1928 you went through the high camps.

NE: We hiked from Camp Curry to Little Yosemite, and then to Camp Merced; then up to Babcock Lake and down the valley to the Tuolumne River and back to Tuolumne Meadows. On this trip I wanted to climb Clouds Rest. As I started out one morning I caught up with a lady and her daughter as I left camp. She said, "What's the matter with the people in that camp, don't they ever get up?"

I said, "Well, they've been up almost all night chasing bears. What is it you want, breakfast?" She said it was first aid that she needed. As she was walking up the river a bear kept following her. She had bacon in her knapsack. I asked her if she gave the bacon to the bear, and she said, "Yes, after he had come up and bit me on the buttocks."

JS: Did bears ever bother you?

NE: No. We had them around all the time though. Once on a trip I foolishly kept some bacon by my pillow one night. I woke up at

NE: dawn, and here was a huge bear about fifty feet away. I screamed, and the bear ran off as I woke up everyone in camp. They all shouted, "What's the matter?" I said I had to save my face in more ways than one.

Sierra Club Manners and Mores

JS: What were the early groups like?

NE: Usually 250 people went on these trips. In those days, everyone was awakened each day by the song, "Everybody get up, get up..." and we'd have breakfast together. Then we'd hike along at our own rate, lunch where we wanted to, rest, go swimming, and then all rejoin at the next campsite. In the early days most of us knew the trails. If we went cross-country and some of us didn't know the route, they would string toilet paper from tree to tree and the last group would bring it into camp.

The camp was always laid out in a definite pattern: married couples camped opposite commissary; single men camped upstream; and single women camped downstream, because they did too much washing. Dinner was all together. There were three iron stoves used. Sometimes if we'd have steak or something like that you'd line up first stove rare, second stove medium, and third stove well done. We'd all wash our own dishes.

In the evening we had campfire. It was usually one big campfire although you could have your own little campfire if you wanted. People would lead us in group singing. There was a girl named Jimmie James who was awfully good at that. Then different people would talk about the interesting experiences they had had, and that made it very nice. Ansel Adams wrote several plays for the campfires--one I remember was called "Trudgin' Women". Another skit had something to do with a bride. My brother Perry was the bride, and he had mosquito netting hanging down his back as the bridal veil.

High Trip Fashions

JS: What about the clothes women wore?

NE: We wore long divided skirts and middy blouses. No woman wore pants. They wore skirts to the knees and boots to the knees. That was 1912. In 1913 they began to wear something a little more comfortable. In 1912 we hiked over the Kearsarge Pass. My friend and I rented horses. I had my costume made for the trip. I had bloomers made out of some kind of black material and a cotton skirt and a Russian blouse so my figure wouldn't show.

A friend of mine took some of us on a knapsack trip while on this trip. His name was Sterling Binell. It was a bedless knapsack trip, since it was impossible to carry those heavy beds. It was fine except that each one of us had to take about a forty minute turn each night keeping the fire going, so you could roast your toes and freeze your shoulders. Since I was going on that trip I didn't wear my skirt, just my bloomers. I was walking along, and a friend of mine said, "Nora, are you planning on carrying a couple of loaves of bread in the seat of those bloomers? They're too loose." [Laughter.]

By 1920 the women began to wear pants, and shorts appeared around 1932. People were beginning to wear fewer clothes when they went hiking. At one time there was a rule in the national parks that a man could not walk without a shirt.

Climbing the Peaks: a Woman's View

JS: Let's talk about some of the peaks you have climbed.

NE: I'll start with the early 1920s. I climbed Mt. Whitney. You climbed it from the west side in those days, although there wasn't any trail. I also climbed it another time. Around 1926 or 1927 some girls and I were traveling through the Rocky Mountains Parks. We climbed Longs Peak. On the climb down we

NE: got caught in a tremendous storm; suddenly I came to on the ledge. The lightning had struck the granite and my hobnail boots had carried the lightning into my body and then out again. My feet felt as though I was walking on hot coals, but the skin wasn't burned too badly since I was wearing two pairs of thick socks.

My next climb was Mt. Rainier, although the ranger felt I wasn't a good enough climber for it. There were seven men, and I was the only woman. I made it to the top successfully. On the way down we crossed a tremendous stretch of snow. We had to cross a huge crevasse, but they had put a ladder across it. As I looked down I could see that the first two rungs of the ladder were missing. I said, "Supposing I don't hit that first rung?" The men said to hold onto the rope, and they'd pull me up. When we got back, I went to the ranger and said that I had a suggestion. Send a man up there to take the third rung off that ladder, and one would have a much more exciting trip.

In 1929 I went on a trip to Mt. Ritter. In the early days--I guess even into the 1940s--the leader of the trips would invite the people they wanted to hike with them. So in 1929 Ned Allan asked a group of us to go. At one precarious point I told Ned that I knew an easier route for the three women in the group. So I took it and eventually led the women to the top.

JS: Did you know any of the prominent Sierra Club people?

NE: It was due to William Colby that Sierra Club trips were being organized. He said that we would have more members in the Sierra Club if they had any idea of what there was to preserve. And so that started the trips. After going on the Sierra Club trips I had an intimate group of friends. I owe so much to the Sierra Club because it has changed my life. Since William Colby had suggested the trips I wrote him a note of thanks.

JS: Do you still hike?

NE: This past summer I hiked around the high camps. I hike every summer.

JS: Thank you, Nora, for this interview.

INDEX

Adams, Ansel, 4
 Agnew, Theodore C., 2
 Allan, Ned, 6
 bears, 3-4
 Binell, Sterling, 5
 camping equipment, 2-3
 climbing. See Evans, Nora, climbing
 Colby, William, 6
 Evans, Nora:
 1911 horseback trip, 1-2
 1916 Sierra Club Outing, 2-3
 1928 high camp tour, 3
 hiking clothing, 5
 climbing, 5-6
 Evans, Perry, 4
 Giant Forest, 1, 2
 High Trips. See Sierra Club, outings
 James, Jimmie, 4
 Mt. Rainier, 6
 Mt. Ritter, 6
 Mt. Whitney, 5-6
 Muir, John, 1
 outings. See Sierra Club, outings
 Rice, Elena, 1, 2
 Sierra Club:
 outings, 2-5, 6
 women, 4, 5, 6
 "Trudgin' Women," 4
 Visalia, 1
 Yosemite National Park, 2, 3



MARJORY FARQUHAR

PIONEER WOMAN ROCK CLIMBER AND SIERRA CLUB DIRECTOR

An Interview Conducted by
Ann Lage

Sierra Club
History Committee

1977

SIERRA CLUB ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
INTRODUCTION	v
EDUCATION AND FAMILY	1
Bay Area Girlhood	1
An Unusual Early Education	5
ROCK CLIMBING IN THE SIERRA, 1930s	8
First High Trips	8
The Rock Climbing Section	14
Building the Clair Tappaan Ski Lodge	17
Overnight on Mount Whitney	19
Marriage and Family	22
Rock Climbing, Then and Now	23
PHOTOGRAPHY: AN INTERRUPTED CAREER	26
Establishing a Photographic Business	26
Snowbound on Tioga Road	29
War Time Photography	31
A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE SIERRA CLUB	33
Bay Chapter Activities in the Thirties	33
Sierra Club Director: Opposing Club Expansion	35
Some Comments on Conflicts in the Club	40
The Dave Brower Controversy	43
SOCIAL HOSTESS FOR THE SIERRA CLUB	48
The Farquhar Home: West Coast Center for International Rock Climbing	48
Reflections on the Woman's Role	50
APPENDIX	55
INDEX	56

PREFACE

When Francis Farquhar gave his oral history interview in 1971 he stated that on the Sierra Club High Trip of 1931 "this red-haired girl followed me along" to the summit of the Unicorn. "I paid no attention to her...[and] she said that she would never speak to me again." However, the red-haired girl continued to follow along and a week later swam with Francis through Muir Gorge in the 5,000-foot depths of the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne, the first woman to do so.

It took a lot of skill and determination for the red-haired girl to continue to follow Francis, who in 1921 had made the first ascent of the most difficult 14,000-foot peak in the Sierra. She did so, making the first ascent of Mount Ansel Adams with Francis and Ansel, and early ascents of the magnificent east face of Mount Whitney with Francis. Finally, the "red-haired girl" accomplished her objective. In October, 1934, she made the third ascent of the slender Higher Cathedral Spire in Yosemite and two months later Marjory Bridge and Francis Peloubet Farquhar were married in the beautiful old chapel there.

Marj's skills were, of course, far broader and more valuable than being one of the most expert woman climbers of America. Early in her career she studied photography in New York and went on to several decades of fine professional photography. As the senior partner of Bridge & Gunn and Bridge & Leonard she specialized in children and weddings.

Marj was always active in the Sierra Club, particularly as the generous and delightful hostess to welcome leaders in mountaineering and conservation from throughout the world. She served with stimulus on the Board of Directors of the Sierra Club from 1951 through 1955. At the present time, she serves generously on the Board of Directors of the Save-the-Redwoods League.

Marjory Bridge Farquhar has always been effective, exciting, and interesting, and always will be.

Richard M. Leonard
Honorary President
Sierra Club

February 22, 1977

INTRODUCTION

Marjory Bridge Farquhar has been an active Sierra Club member, skier, and mountaineer for nearly fifty years. She joined the club in 1929 on the summer High Trip to the Sierra and soon became interested in the developing sport of rock climbing. Quickly becoming an expert rock climber--one of the foremost woman climbers of her day--she made several first ascents and climbed all the 14,000 foot peaks on the Pacific Coast, with the exception of Mount Rainier.

Marjory Farquhar firmly believes that participation in outdoor activities builds dedicated conservationists, and her own contributions to conservation confirm this point of view. She served as Sierra Club Director from 1951-1955, is presently on the Board of Directors of Save-the-Redwoods League, and is a contributing member of Save San Francisco Bay Association, the Regional Parks Association, Friends of the Earth, and others.

Marjory Farquhar was the wife of Francis P. Farquhar [1887-1974], a noted historian of the Sierra Nevada and one of the foremost Sierra Club leaders, who served as club president twice (1933-1935 and 1948-1949) and edited the Sierra Club Bulletin with great distinction for twenty-one years (1925-1946). The Farquhar home in Berkeley, California, for years has been a Sierra Club meeting place and a Bay Area hub for international mountaineering circles.

It was in this gracious home that the following interview with Mrs. Farquhar took place on February 9, 1977. As is evident from the transcript, she spoke with her usual vivacity and openness of an unusually active and vital life. The interview focused primarily on her own experiences, rather than on recollections of her distinguished husband, in order to highlight her interesting background and her contributions as a pioneer woman rock climber and Sierra Club leader. The interview was one of a series on Sierra Club women completed for the Sierra Club History Committee's Oral History Project.

Ann Lage
Sierra Club History Committee
April, 1977

EDUCATION AND FAMILY

Bay Area Girlhood

Ann Lage: Let's start, Mrs. Farquhar, with your telling us something about your background, your family, where you grew up.

Marjory Farquhar: Well, I'm a second-generation Californian. My mother was born in San Francisco in 1861. My father's family had been married here, went east, and then they came over the Isthmus when he was three, in 1863, I think it was. They were married, and we always lived around the Bay. My parents were some of the first settlers in Mill Valley when it was opened for summer homes.

My family always loved wilderness, and country, and the outdoors, and they became so fond of Marin County in California that my mother and father finally settled in Mill Valley, and my father's brother and his wife settled in Belvedere. So we grew up really in Marin County, and we would go to San Francisco just in the winter time, during the rainy months.

My sisters, the older ones, went to school in San Francisco and would commute, and I just had a private tutor with friends and only went to San Francisco for wintertimes, for the two rainy months. Education and schoolwork, I guess, were never very important. But I did get to be an awfully good roller skater around Nob Hill; my cousin and I used to ride on hockey sticks, sit on them and straddle them as brakes to go down the hills there. We used to have a lot of fun, got to be masters at it, I think.

Well, in the winter of 1914, when, you see, I was just about ten, my sister went off on a Sierra Club trip, and that was my first knowledge of the Sierra

MF: Club. It was a Sierra Club trip where they chartered some railroad trains that took the group up to Truckee. There they had, I guess, an engine that was hitched on, and they got their heat from it, and they had skis and snowshoes and had a wonderful time. On that particular trip my sister did meet her future husband. Being young, I always remembered that that was where you got a man.

AL: Your sister was quite a bit older than you, then.

MF: I was the youngest of four girls, and she was the oldest. She had been in that famous class of 1912 at the University of California--the one that had Earl Warren, Newton Drury, and Horace Albright. She had had two years here and two years at Columbia and had come back and was a teacher. So I always remembered that.

But my father apparently had asthma or something, and he liked the bay. He and my mother had a rowing club even before they were married, with these beautiful shell boats that they kept over by Tiburon, and a small group of people back in the nineties had this little rowing club. Then later on my father had a sailboat, and as my sister got older she would provide her friends as the crew, and my father always had beautiful weekend trips out on the bay.

In fact, he had his own business so that he never really took a two-week vacation, but he would use all the weekends. The long weekends he would use taking the boat and the young people up the Sacramento River or up the San Joaquin and anchoring it, and then we'd leave it sometimes and come back down on the riverboat and return the next weekend.

It was during that process that I learned to climb the mast--shinny up the mast--because the river was such that we had these levees, and from a boat on the water you couldn't see over the levees to see what was growing. But if I got up the mast or climbed up on the sail rungs or rigging, I could look over, and if there was a big cornfield or a good fig orchard I'd let them know. Then we'd tie up to the bank and go ashore and make a deal with the farmer. So I started my climbing young, and apparently wasn't bothered by heights.

MF: Whenever my father traveled anywhere he'd look for the tallest building in town and find out how he'd get to the top. Then he'd go up to the top of the building and get oriented to the city by a bird's-eye view, and whenever I traveled with him that was my habit too. So I was used to being up, but I never, as a matter of fact, climbed up Mt. Tamalpais until I was in college because I always managed to ride free. I never had climbed it until I had a house party over there many years later and tried to take my friends up.

AL: I want to get back a little bit more to your family life. It sounds as if you were extraordinarily active and outdoor-oriented. Was that usual for women at those times?

MF: Well, you see, I was the youngest of four girls, and my father took the second girl and treated her more like a boy, and then he treated me more like a boy. I was a constant companion of my father's, and living in Mill Valley and loving the country as much as we did, I was with him constantly in and around nature and the country. Growing up in the country like that, why, we'd go swimming in the creek, and we would play around in the wilderness and climb the trees, so that I was used to the outdoors far more than I was accustomed to the city. It was quite an adjustment, in a way, when we did leave Mill Valley and went to San Francisco for a year and then came to Berkeley.

We would come to Berkeley every time a sister went to college. Mother would work on my father to get him to go to Berkeley, and the daughter would have six months or a year at college without her parents, and then the family would move to Berkeley. Then when the child got through college, why, we'd go back to Mill Valley or San Francisco, and then another one would come along, and we'd go back to Berkeley. When I went to college, the family moved over in '23 and bought a house, and then they stayed in Berkeley after that.

AL: Was there ever any feeling that this type of activity or upbringing wasn't quite refined enough for a young lady of the time?

MF: I don't know. Mother might have objected, but Dad wouldn't listen to her. I remember she used to get

MF: quite provoked when he would have us help him move the furniture, and we always had to carry heavy bags, and we always had to help him do things. She didn't think it was particularly ladylike, but he said it was good for us, and I think he was quite right. It was.

My mother did believe in having her daughters independent and individuals. We were never after a pattern at all; we were always allowed to develop our own initiative and our own resources, so that I think the combination of her giving us the freedom and my father's guidance, why, we just came along. I have one sister, she never went to college, she was a prize beauty, and--

AL: Were those two things connected?

MF: Well, she was very lovely, but she liked parties, and she liked dresses and things; she was sort of a problem to mother and dad because she was quite different from the rest of us.

My father never went to college; he had to help his mother raise his brothers because his father died when he was young. He respected knowledge and educated people, but he didn't really feel it was necessary for a daughter to go to college, but mother was most adamant about it, so we got our college education.

RL: Where was his family from?

MF: My father was from Boston. He had a great-aunt who had been a teacher and a principal back in the town of Dorchester--which I think is all Black now--but the house where she lived was a very old colonial house that had been in the family for a long time.

AL: What kind of business was he in?

MF: My father's business first was tailoring, an exclusive tailoring shop for men in San Francisco, H.S. Bridge and Company. He dabbled in real estate and investments, and then in 1921, or a little before that, he sold the tailoring business and was doing just the real estate and investments--a lot of second mortgages and things.

An Unusual Early Education

AL: I just want to get a couple of dates down. Let's get your birthdate.

MF: I was born on November 7, 1903, and I was the last of four girls, and the sister nearest me was nine years older, so in a way I sort of grew up like an only child. But I had one cousin who was two and a half years older than I am, and we were most compatible. I did live in Marin County, and we were up the wrong valley from the school. There were two little girls that lived next door that were granddaughters of friends of my mother's and father's. So the families got together, and they had a governess for us, but I was a ringleader of being very naughty.

AL: I can believe that.

MF: We weren't very good. If Jean got an "excellent," she could get a treat; and if her sister Marion got a "good," she got the treat; but all I had to do was to get a "fair," and I was allowed the same treat. I got in on two treats--once we had lunch at the Poodle Dog in San Francisco, and once I went swimming at Sutro Baths out by the beach--and those were the only treats I got in about five years of schooling!

We'd only study what we liked, and so I never learned to spell, and I used to be very good at math, but I had a whole little system that I worked with facing a clock.

Then when we did move away--I went to San Francisco in a public school--well, it was a little bit of a problem. I was put in the fourth grade because my sister said that's where I should be, but the teacher didn't like the way I subtracted, and I couldn't spell, and she had too many students anyhow, so she finally told the principal she wouldn't have me any more! And as there was no room in the third grade, they put me at the age of ten in the second grade! Finally they got one desk in the third grade, so after I had six months in the second grade they moved me up to one little empty desk.

MF: Then we came to Berkeley, and I was put then supposedly in the low fourth. I had two days of it, and then I went down to the principal and said, "This isn't where I should be--we learned all this last year in third grade in San Francisco," and he got simply furious. "All the Bay schools are the same! You came in the fourth grade and you'll stay in the fourth grade!" And so I stayed, but there was nothing for me to do then but to cause trouble.

So, for the next three years, I caused trouble. I would tease the boys behind me and tease the girls beside me, and I'd get them in trouble. I'd know how to take care of both ends of the closet, but most of the time I got somebody else in trouble who got in the closet, and I ended up in the principal's office. So I used to answer the telephone, and run errands, and do all those kinds of things, and it was fine, but that was my early education!

Then my mother got wise to it all, and I was taken out. For six months I had a tutor, and I did a year and a half and got caught up to date. Then I went down to Willard [Junior High] and when I got to high school, I did four years of high school in three. Oh, then I was out six months from high school to college, because my mother and father signed up for this marvelous tour of the Orient; it was the first goodwill tour by the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and they chartered one of the Panama-Pacific boats.

AL: What year was that?

MF: This was the fall of '21--I think it was October, November, or December. When we came back I entered college six months late. Then I did five years of college in four and a half, so I finally came out more or less contemporary with the right age group.

AL: What was your class?

MF: Class of '25.

AL: And you got an MA in social work?

MF: No, I don't think you got an MA, you got a social service certificate.

AL: Masters of Social Welfare, they call it now.

MF: Yes, something like that.

AL: When did you meet Helen LeConte and Harriet Parsons-- you mentioned that you've known them forever.

MF: Oh, pretty near--because, you see, with this episode of Berkeley all the time, I really got more schooling in the Berkeley schools than anywhere else, so I knew Helen LeConte* I guess in Willard if not Emerson [elementary school]. In 1918 Harriet Parsons and I, with another little friend, the three of us went together to a little girls' camp up on the Navarro River.

AL: Is that where you met her, or did you know her before?

MF: No, I knew her before, but we of course became much closer friends after that experience of a girl's camp. So I knew Harriet off and on since 1916, and Helen LeConte before that; of course, Harriet went east to college for a while; Helen went to college here, but I knew Helen all through high school.

*Helen LeConte, Reminiscences of LeConte Family Outings, the Sierra Club, and Ansel Adams, Ruth Teiser, interviewer, Sierra Club Oral History Project (Sierra Club, San Francisco, 1977).

ROCK CLIMBING IN THE SIERRA, 1930s

First High Trips

Ann Lage: Did you get into the Sierra Club through them at all?

Marjory Farquhar: No, my joining the club had to do with the idea that I always had wanted to go because of the wonderful experience my sister had had. It met with my ideals, and I wanted to go.

AL: Was your sister a member?

MF: Oh, my sister had been a member of the Sierra Club for a long time, but my father never had. Of course, my whole family knew the Colbys, Rachel and Will Colby, and Rachel was a sorority sister of both my sister and myself, so that I did know the Colbys.

I had heard about the Sierra Club for many, many years besides my sister; I was a very good friend of Dean Thomas Putnam's daughter, Madeline, and at one time he said he would take us on a Sierra Club trip. We were all set to go in the summer of '25, and then I found I had the responsibility of presiding over some student conference down at Asilomar, and the dates were wrong so I couldn't make the Sierra Club High Trip, and I didn't go. In 1926 and '27 I was in Europe, and I didn't go in '28 because they were going out of state, they were going to Canada--and I thought that if I had never been with them before maybe they wouldn't let me climb or do anything, so I went off on a private pack trip, and it wasn't until 1929 that I got on the High Trip.

MF: In those days the Sierra Club had a four-week trip, and you could go for two or four. I went the first time for four and was just elated and thrilled with every experience that I had, so I think I went just as much as I could every year after.

Harriet Parsons was going to go with me in 1929, and this other friend that had been at girls' camp too in 1918. But the friend got married, and Harriet wasn't well that summer, and the doctor wouldn't let her go into the mountains at all. But she was awfully nice; she took me down to the railroad station--the Mole--and introduced me to everybody she could think of to give me a good start.

That trip of course was in the days when you took the train at the Southern Pacific Mole and went down the San Joaquin Valley. We got off at Fresno. Then we got buses and went over and around and up to Florence Lake and then went across through Blaney Meadows. We started off on the trip from there and ended up at Tuolumne Meadows. By that time I had become very good friends of Ansel's and Virginia's [Adams] and Cedric and Rhea's [Wright] and that whole group on the trip.

I never will forget having been out for a whole month--in those Days Dan Tachet was a marvelous cook, but just the same you did get canned string beans and all kinds of canned things, and no milk. When a group of nine of us left Tuolumne Meadows to go down to the valley, we stopped--I think it was at Little Yosemite--and Virginia phoned her father and figured out about what time we'd be back down, and she said, "Be sure and meet us with lots and lots of fresh milk!" It wasn't the ride from Happy Isles that was so appreciated as it was the fresh milk that we got from her father!

AL: It sounds like you got to know people very well, just during that month, and you talk as if you made very good friends.

MF: Yes, I did, and as Helen LeConte was on that trip, she introduced me to many people. I did meet Francis,*

*Francis P. Farquhar, Sierra Club Editor and Mountaineer, Ann, Ray Lage, interviewers, Sierra Club Oral History Project (Sierra Club, San Francisco, 1974).

MF: but he didn't meet me. He was very busy with some friends that he'd brought out from the East. But I just had a wonderful time.

AL: And you did some climbing at that time?

MF: Yes. I had never really climbed much in mountains until I went on the Sierra Club trip in 1929. That was my first experience of climbing mountains. I had taken a fishing rod along and thought I would fish, but the only time we used it was to get a pin or something that had fallen down between two rocks, and I undid the fishing rod and swept that out from Lake Ediza. Mountain climbing was so wonderful to me, and it was such an exhilarating sport that I was just thrilled to death when I was able to climb both Mount Ritter and Banner all in one day.

Then Francis led a trip up Seven Gables, and that was the first. They announced at the campfire that anyone who wished to go the next morning could meet Francis at seven o'clock, or something, and go. I went, and that was the starting of it. I just loved the climbing, and it was thrilling to go to the top and to see the beautiful views of the Sierra.

AL: Now tell us how that progressed, how your climbing got more professional, so to speak.

MF: That was in '29, and then I went on the High Trip in 1930, but that was right after the depression, and my recollection is that there were very few men on the trip. Now I don't know if I was looking for men or not, but there were very few, and so there were a group of us girls that got together and did a fair amount of climbing together. Carolyn Coleman was one of them, and I've forgotten now who the others were, but in 1930 I did climb Mount Hilgard and Mount Abbot, and I did climb Turret Peak with Jules Eichorn and Glen Dawson, and I did Darwin, and I know that I did Goddard with a hen party.

I remember on the climb of Goddard a group of us women went off and knapsacked up out of Colby Meadow and stayed all night. Then we went over and climbed the north face of Goddard. We went over an awful lot of snow, and one of the girls on the trip just

MF: couldn't take it very well. Every step she made we sort of had to hold her feet so she wouldn't slip back, so it was quite a workout, but anyhow, we did it. Then I think that I had to go out at the end of three weeks; I had to be a bridesmaid at a friend's wedding, so I left when we got down to LeConte Meadow.

In 1930 Francis had gone up to Canada with the Harvard Mountaineering Club and climbed, and that was where he really got in on the technique of rope work properly. So when I went up on the Sierra Club trip in 1931, Jules Eichorn came and said that Francis Farquhar had just come back, and he was going to take a group up and show them how to use a rope--would I like to go? So of course I did! That was the time there were, I think, five boys and myself, the only girl, and Francis, and we climbed up the north face of Unicorn and had the rope lessons.

AL: Was Robert Underhill there at the time?

MF: No. He was not there the first two weeks; he may have come after. I was only in for two weeks, and I had to leave again, so I did not meet him, but Francis did give us instruction in the use of the rope that first day.

AL: Was the use of the rope completely unknown--I mean had you not used it at all before?

MF: We had not used it. Now I will tell you that dear Bill Horsfall and Glen and Jules used to go up and do a lot of climbing; they did it in '29 and they did it in '30. They would go, and all that Bill Horsfall ever had, I think, was a rather decayed clothesline, and that was just used for emergencies, but it was not at all involved with any technique of belaying and climbing properly with the use of rope for safety that Francis brought back, and that we did on this Unicorn climb.

Then we left and were going to go down to Pate Valley. I knew that some of them were going to go down through Muir Gorge [of the Tuolumne River], and I had a terrible time sort of hanging around commissary, trying to wait for an invitation to join them. I thought it would never come, but finally I think one of

MF: them came up and said that Francis was going to see about going down Muir Gorge and would I like to join them, so of course I did.

We went down, and we had lots of fun jumping off boulders and going down the stream. But the poor sad fact for Jules was that we came to this one place where there was a waterfall on either side of this huge rock in the middle, and beyond that is the gorge itself--which is quite a long stretch of deep water--and Jules Eichorn did not know how to swim.

So we looked, and then we said, "Too bad, Jules, I guess you'd better take all the cameras." We loaded poor Jules down with all of our cameras, which we did not want to get wet, and then we went on.

AL: Wasn't it nice that someone didn't know how to swim?

MF: It was very fortunate. We got down and swam, and poor Jules had to cross the river and climb way up over that hogsback and then way down again, and then he managed to get back down to camp.

That was our first trip, and then we did it again in the summer of '34. In the summer of '34, when Francis and I went, we left the Sierra Club trip, and we had Tony Charlton-Thomas, a New Zealander that had looked us up through contact with the New Zealand Mountaineering Club, and he joined the Sierra Club. He came, and Louise Hildebrand, and a Mary Saylor from New York who was on the High Trip. We went down from Ten Lakes Basin down Cathedral Creek and down to the Tuolumne River, and there we were joined by Bestor Robinson,* Kenneth May, and Morgan Harris, and they brought in fresh meat and everything.

We camped out, and we went down the Muir Gorge this time completely equipped with movie cameras; Bestor Robinson had a movie camera, and I had a movie camera. We kept them in waterproof bags. One would go up to the front of the party, and one would go to the

*Bestor Robinson, Thoughts on Conservation and the Sierra Club, Susan R. Schrepfer, interviewer, Sierra Club Oral History Project (Sierra Club, San Francisco, 1974).

MF: back of the party, so we covered the whole trip from fore and aft, and we had movies of the whole trip.

AL: Was that the same trip you made in '31?

MF: Yes.

AL: Does the water have to be high or low?

MF: It has to be low, and of course you can't get it in many years.

AL: Do you think you could this year?

MF: Yes, I'm sure you could. Charles W. Michaels had done it, and it had been done in the late fall, but it's miserably cold, because if you get fall weather in order to have your water level low, you're going to have awfully cold weather and a short sun. These two times that we did it when the water was low were really quite pleasant because it was midsummer and we had the warmth, but we didn't have the high water. I think in a summer when you had high water it wouldn't be wise to do it.

AL: I thought it would be impossible.

MF: I think it would be. Well, after we made it in the '31 trip some of the others got real inspired, and they went back up, which was much harder because they had to swim against the current, and you'd be quite well affected by that in the long narrow gorge part going up. I remember--I think Nathan Clark* was one of them--he said they'd swim for a while, and then they'd try to look for a little tiny crack to try to catch their hands in so they could rest a little bit before they went on. That was in the summer of '31.

*Nathan Clark, Sierra Club Leader, Outdoorsman, and Engineer, Richard Searle, interviewer, Sierra Club Oral History Project (Sierra Club, San Francisco, 1977).

The Rock Climbing Section

- AL: What happened after the summer of 1931? How did the Cragmont Climbing Club come about? Was that already a going thing by 1931?
- MF: No. Back in 1931, when Francis taught them all, Bob Underhill came down for the last week or the last two weeks of the Sierra Club outing. Then they went down and made the first ascent of the east face of Mount Whitney, but they didn't invite me to go. My feelings were a little hurt, but anyway I wasn't invited. I don't know that I could have gone, but it would have been nice to say no--I didn't have a chance.

I think it was after that that Dick [Leonard]* got started with the Cragmont Climbing Club. We used to go out to Cragmont Park up here in Berkeley, and on the east side there's some marvelous--well, call them cliffs if you want--and we could practice climbing there. Then after we got organized with the Cragmont Climbing Club we petitioned the Sierra Club to become a Sierra Club section and became the Rock Climbing Section in 1932.

We would schedule climbs every single Sunday. We had lots of fun scouting out places to climb; there was Cragmont Park, and there was the Pinnacle Rock, and there was Grizzly Rock--that wasn't too good--and Indian Rock, and then we would find other rocks all over wherever we could. I remember one time we went up to Napa and found some rocks up there to climb on, on Mount St. Helena.

Of course we liked to do the rocks along the coast, but they're awfully bad rotten stuff, so you had to be very careful for that. Then sometimes we would go down to the Pinnacles and have a weekend, but usually we scheduled these rock climbs in San Francisco or around Berkeley and meet every Sunday.

*Richard M. Leonard, Mountaineer, Lawyer, Environmentalist, Susan R. Schrepfer, interviewer, Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, U.C. Berkeley, 1976.

- AL: Was there a lot of emphasis on developing techniques and safety?
- MF: That was the whole point of it, to practice technique, and as you could read in the little rules there--do you want me to read them to you?
- AL: We could put them in a little appendix.*
- MF: It started out where the club would accept no responsibility, but people had to follow the rules. The whole point was to teach people how to belay and how to catch a falling climber, and then the other person would practice climbs. We had all kinds of climbs there, and they were all numbered, and you would do one climb after another.
- Of course, it was a thing that high school boys just adored to come out to. In the end, a lot of people that became active in the Sierra Club Rock Climbing Section developed into leaders in the Sierra Club and fed into the Bay Chapter activities and into the Bay Chapter Executive Committee, and from there they worked their way up into active participation in the club itself.
- AL: For a while the whole board of directors was rock climbers.
- MF: I wouldn't be surprised; I've never checked it carefully, but just about.
- RL: What size of a nucleus did you have in the Cragmont Climbing Club, or the Rock Climbing Section?
- MF: Well, I don't remember now; there was a committee, which was about four or five of us, and then the group that came would number around ten or fifteen and gradually build up more. Lots of times afterwards we'd go somewhere and have a dinner or supper--picnic supper.
- AL: Did Francis participate in that?
- MF: Not too much, because Francis usually was spending his Sundays editing the Sierra Club Bulletin. Of course, that was after we were married, but even so, I think

*See Appendix, p. 55.

- MF: before we were married he'd spend an awful lot of time on the Bulletin, and so I don't really remember his being out too much on the Rock Climbing Section.
- AL: Do you have any recollection--I seem to remember somebody telling me that some of the older members of the club were reluctant to bring in the Rock Climbing Section; they weren't too sure about this wild-eyed activity.
- MF: Well, I think that's quite true, and I suppose maybe from their point of view, they may have been worried about the responsibility or the liability of the Sierra Club, and I think maybe they felt that it was more a sport than it was an outlook toward conservation; yet you had the other group that felt that the more you can educate people as to how to behave and conduct themselves in the mountains, whether it's camping, building a fire or climbing, it's all following the purposes of the Sierra Club itself. But I know we didn't know whether they really would take us in--but they did.
- AL: They took you in, and you took them over.
- MF: [laughing] We developed good leadership.
- AL: Were there very many women involved in the Rock Climbing Section?
- MF: Yes, really there were. In looking over the records today, I notice that there were a lot of them. There was one girl--I was the first woman up the Higher Cathedral Spire, but Virginia Greever was the first woman up the lower spire, and she was a very good climber. As you look through the records now, I see that there were a lot of women that went up. Of course Helen LeConte did a lot of climbing, and Harriet Parsons did a lot of climbing; Helen had had it almost all her life, and Harriet had had it a lot.
- AL: And you were the first woman up the east face of Whitney, is that true? *
- MF: Yes, but that comes in 1934--let's see where we are. The Rock Climbing Section was really established in

*See Appendix, p. 55.

MF: 1932, and then I went east for six months; Helen LeConte was east--we didn't live together, but we were together an awful lot of the time in New York--and then I came back, and then I climbed Mount Shasta. Then Francis said, "Why don't you see how many 14,000 foot peaks you can do?" That was a nice little goal to see how many I could do.

AL: Was that on your own, or on a Sierra Club High Trip?

MF: That was just after I came back from the east; it was in September, I think. It wasn't a Sierra Club trip, but we stayed at the Sierra Club lodge that was up there.

Building the Clair Tappaan Ski Lodge

MF: Then, of course, I had been skiing, because I love skiing. I had gone, I think in about 1928 and '29, up to Long Barn, where you rented skis; all you had was a little strap across the ski, and you stuck your foot in it, then you went. When a group really got interested in skiing, the Sierra Club did have two very interesting trips. One was in 1933, and one was in 1934, when we rented or got the use of the Boy Scout hostel or something, called Pohatsi. We went in there and had ski trips, and then we climbed some peak there, and the Hildebrands and Bestor Robinson and the Leonards were in the group--it was a wonderful outing.

AL: Now, was this '34 or '44?

MF: This was '33 and '34. A group of us had been going up and skiing; in fact we'd been up, I guess it was in '32, and we really had no place to stay. Once we slept in the old station at Soda Springs, and then there was the German Turisten Verein place, where we went and stayed once. And I remember I went with a group, and we rented some cabins down at Cisco Grove, and then we'd drive up to Sugar Bowl and go skiing, and then go back to Cisco Grove.

MF: Finally the group decided that really the Sierra Club should have some place where Sierra Club people could go and stay. It seems that Bestor Robinson, and Horace Breed, and a group had already gotten a Forest Service permit for this land, and they said, well, all right, they'd turn it over to the Sierra Club, and we would build a lodge.

Then the Sierra Club members all got busy--Mr. Ratcliff did some of the designing for it, and different members worked on the lodge, and then we girls had charge of commissary. We'd have these work weekends, and we'd all pool and go up in the car. The Sierra Club, I think, would pay for the food, and we girls would cook and provide all the meals for the laborers, and then put our spare time in between meals in doing different things--hauling sand or something, or going down and shoveling sand from the river for the concrete, and I remember spending quite a number of days putting panes of glass in and puttying it all up.

We were up there in September, almost finished but not quite; the first lodge was almost done. Louise Hildebrand and I knew a storm was coming, and so I thought I'd sleep inside up in the women's loft and see how satisfactory it was going to be, and Louise said, "There's no place colder than a thing like that on a hard floor. I'm going to sleep outside."

Well, I woke up the next morning, I had a nice snowdrift on the loft about three feet high beside me, having frozen most of the night, and then we couldn't find Louise. Finally the boys went out and trotted around in the snow, and then they picked her up with her ground cloth and brushed off the snow and brought her in, and she thawed out--she was really, I think, warmer than I was, as she was so nicely covered with snow! But then, of course, there was that December that they had a big New Year's eve party and dedicated the Clair Tappaan Lodge, but it was built that summer, in '34.

AL: You say you started skiing in 1928. How did you get interested in skiing? Through friends?

MF: I don't know.

AL: There wasn't a lot of ski activity at that time.

MF: No, although I know that John and Margaret Hatfield had done it; they'd been people who'd gone up even earlier than that to Cisco Grove and had done skiing. But I don't know--maybe it was because I had this friend who was teaching school in Sonora. We'd go up, and then she'd say, "Well, let's go up to Long Barn and get skis." I remember going two or three times, but we didn't know how to turn; you'd just go shooting downhill. That was all I knew, and I can't actually remember how I first got started with the Sierra Club.

AL: Joel Hildebrand was involved in skiing.

MF: Oh, he did an awful lot. Once the lodge was built, they organized classes and developed classifications for skiing, and then we always had someone at the lodge who would give lessons. Fred and Bill Klein were there, and Haven Jorgenson was there, and of course I raised all my children with their skiing by going to the Sierra Club lodge--many generations I took there.

Overnight on Mount Whitney

MF: So, let me see, now we're back to what was happening in 1934. I'd gone on the High Trip in 1934, and had climbed Unicorn Peak and done Echo Ridge, and then we did the Muir Gorge. That time we took movies, and in the summer we worked on Clair Tappaan. Then in August, I went off--and I think Francis went too--so I could climb the east face of Mount Whitney. But Francis was always susceptible to mountain elevations, and when he got there he didn't feel so well, so Jules and I did the east face--this was second time for Jules and my first time. Then Francis felt a little better, so he ended up by coming around up the Mountaineer's Route and meeting us at the top.

The next time I climbed the east face of Mount Whitney was in the next year. Francis wanted to climb it, and there was this fellow, Farnie Loomis, who was out from the east. We went on a pack trip in over Mount Tyndall. Farnie and I climbed the east face of Tyndall, and then we worked on south. Then we climbed the east face of Mount Whitney, and Francis did it too.

MF: We were very slow because Francis was a bit slow, and when we got up there it was quite late afternoon, and we all got the same idea. We looked at each other and we said, "Let's stay all night."

Of course we hadn't gone equipped to stay, but the little hut was still there, that had been built earlier when they were doing that scientific work. We looked around and counted the sticks of wood, and there was enough for a little fire, and the snow was on the floor inside. I went around and picked up all the paper bags I could find around, and we tried to scrape the floor off and get the snow off the dirt inside this little hut. We had it fixed so we could sleep one, two, and three, and then we started the fire. We figured that one log every twenty or thirty minutes would see us through.

Well, all we had for dinner was snow and cracker crumbs and chocolate--anything we could find that was left over in our knapsack from lunch--that was our dinner. It was just beautiful, because we watched the sunset, and then we went in and went to sleep. Well, of course, the one furthest away from the fire woke up first and then would come around and sit on top of the woodpile, and we got so that finally in the end, I remember, Francis and I were standing holding onto each other, trying to stay awake and yet rest, and one person would sleep down on the floor, and then we'd shift.

Every once in a while you'd just have to go outside to see how beautiful it was, because it was so exquisite, the view from there, and the sunrise was marvelous. After the sun came up we went down the Mountaineer's Route to our camp and really got a good night's sleep the next morning before we came on home! Anyhow, Francis did that east face and was very happy over that, and that was in the summer of '35.

Then in '36 we went into the Sierra on a High Trip, and a group of us had a small knapsack party and went over and climbed Barnard. I joined the group to do the east face of Whitney again, and this time I had a movie camera. The other two climbs had been on the Fresh Air Traverse--that's what that route was called--

MF: but this time we went up Shaky-Leg Crack, and I took movies of it, and there was one party that went up the other way, so I have views of both of it.

AL: You took movies while you were climbing?

MF: Oh yes--well, I mean, from one spot to another. You need both hands when you're climbing, but I did take a movie of it. So that was '36. And then in '37 Francis was on a grand jury in San Francisco, and he couldn't get away for much of any time at all. When he did get away for a very short time we went up to Tuolumne and went down to Waterwheel Falls and saw that. Then we went over to the east side and took the car. We wanted to do White Mountain Peak, because there was another 14,000 for me. Of course, a lot of these others were 14,000s too. I've done all the 14,000s on the coast with the exception of Rainier, which circumstances every time seemed to get in the way of, and I never did it.

AL: You might still do it.

MF: No, I'm too lazy now. [All laugh.] I'd rather ski downhill or go ski touring.

But it was wonderful because we went up, just the two of us, and we managed to get the car up to about 8500 feet on an old, terrible road--I don't know sometimes why the car didn't fall off--and camped overnight. We were right in the bristlecone pines, but at that time there had been no publicity for them, and we didn't know what they were. They were just the most beautiful, exquisite trees. We left the car there and hiked along a trail that was twelve miles over to White Mountain Peak.

Then we meet a shepherd, and he said, "When you come back, come and stay all night," so we went down and had dinner with the old shepherd--grazing his sheep way up on the top of the ridge--and stayed all night and then hiked the returning twelve miles to the car and came home. It was beautiful up there in those gorgeous trees, looking over at a beautiful view of the Sierra that you get from there. It was just unbelievable!

Once you asked about different people that I might have met through Francis--after we got back

MF: from that trip, we went to Fallen Leaf Lake where my family were. Francis knew that James Bryant Conant was there, so he went and called on Conant and invited him to go on another private trip on which Francis and Jules and Conant went later. Any more questions?

Marriage and Family

AL: You didn't mention when you were married.

MF: Yes, that's right; I didn't. Well, Francis obviously met me in 1931, although I met him in '29, and we were married in December of 1934. It was in October of 1934 that I climbed the Higher Cathedral Spire, and lots of people said that Francis said he wouldn't marry me if I couldn't make it! [All laugh.] Anyhow, I did make it, and we were married, so it was all right.

AL: He admired your climbing skill by then....And you were married in Yosemite?

MF: We were married in Yosemite, yes. I would have liked to be married in Muir Woods, but December didn't seem a safe time to plan a wedding there, and we did want it sort of out in the wilderness, so we made arrangements to be married in Yosemite. Everybody came up, and the wedding was somewhere about two o'clock in the afternoon so people could come up and get there in the morning, or if they'd been up, they could stay, leave and go home. And then of course we left everyone there with ice skating and everything that they would enjoy, and we came back down to the city! From there we went up to the Sierra Club Clair Tappaan Lodge and stayed up there for a couple of days and then came home for Christmas.

I will admit that my active rock climbing days disappeared, really perhaps for two reasons: one because I went into the baby production business, and the other because of the war. Our first child, Peter, was born in 1938, and Suzanne came in 1940. We had gone on a private trip into the Sierra--Francis and Henry Hall from the east and my sister, and I've forgotten who else--and it was while we were up there going over Army Pass and coming around to Whitney that

- MF: the Germans made their move. So when we came out Henry Hall was so upset that, instead of continuing with us on another trip, he went back east, but we went down to Lake Mead. I think it must have been a Sierra Club group that had a boat trip on Lake Mead, and we went down and joined that boat trip. It just went from Boulder City up to one of the first rapids and back.
- AL: Were the club activities during the war at a minimum, or did you have High Trips?
- MF: I couldn't tell you; we'd have to look it up. I just don't remember, because so many of the people, you see, that we knew were off in the service. Dick [Leonard], and Bestor [Robinson], and Einar Nilsson, and Dave Brower, and oh, so many were off, and I couldn't have gone anyhow because, as I say, I was in the production business for a while, and so it was just sort of out of my line.
- AL: And then did you take it up again after the war ended?
- MF: What do you mean? After all, I always still climb, but I didn't go back to rock climbing because if you're not in condition, the agility's gone, as far as I was concerned. We took the children on camping trips and always took them with the Sierra Club. We went back on the High Trips; each time a child was nine it was allowed to go on a High Trip, as far as our own were concerned. Of course I introduced many other people's children to the Sierra Club--after all, the Sierra Club got Louise Dunlap, Sarah Dunlap, and Sue Dunlap as cooks for High Trips, and I was always chaperoning nieces and friends' children and foster grandchildren on High Trips.

Rock Climbing, Then and Now

- AL: You must have read Chris Jones's book, Climbing in North America.*
- MF: I have it, but I haven't read it yet.

*University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976.

AL: One thing he mentions is the feeling of competition and rivalry among rock climbers, present day. Was there anything like that in the early days of rock climbing?

MF: No.

AL: What kind of a feeling was it; can you say?

MF: In the early days of climbing? Well, let's see-- Francis brought in the rope, and then we had development with the pitons, and then a great discussion would come up--would you use pitons only for safety, or should you use them as direct aid? And then of course you'd hear, "Well, the British school doesn't believe in anything like that--you should have a natural climb."

I believed in them for safety, but to tell you the honest truth, the last twelve feet of the Higher Cathedral Spire was done by direct aid for a long time for everybody, and then finally they did get another route. Of course, part of the difficulty, I think, was that on the first number of climbs that were done--later it became called an "easy day for a lady"--but at first it was longer to do and harder to do because it was new, and there was the emotional thing, and there wasn't the time to work it out. Then when it became an easier climb, and more people were used to doing it, they got going earlier and they managed to find another route without the direct aid. I guess maybe that's more or less the only time that I've used direct aid, although I approve of the pitons for safety.

Then of course, you're having trouble now when too many people's pitons get drilled in, you're defacing the cliffs, and even if you take them out, there's still to a certain extent the hole in the crack. Now the pendulum is swinging so they're beginning to try to do their climbing without the aids now--so, that's another phase of it.

But, all the time that I was climbing, on the whole, it was for the sport of it and to see if you could master the proposition, it wasn't trying to beat the other fellow at something. I think it probably has swung into that now--they probably want to do it faster and quicker and bigger and better, but when I was doing the rock climbing it was more a good sport and see if you could do it.

AL: And good feelings?

MF: Good comradeship. Now it's more cutthroat.

AL: That's what he wrote; it sounds a little bit unpleasant.

MF: Don't say this, but it may be that Chris also had the attitude like some of the newspapers these days, to build things up. Sometimes I think things are better left un-built-up and skipped.

AL: Don't skip anything in this interview. [Both laugh.] That's not supposed to be your attitude here.

PHOTOGRAPHY: AN INTERRUPTED CAREER

Establishing a Photographic Business

Ann Lage: Tell me how you got interested in photography. You mentioned that you took movies and--

Marjory Farquhar: Oh yes! I went to Europe with a group of YWCA students in '26 and '27 to some student conferences that were most fascinating. Right after the war some student groups had gotten organized--the International Student Service--where they helped students in different countries; they did an awful lot for helping students after the war--organizing hostels and student cooperatives. Then, when Japan had the terrible earthquake in 1923, students all over the world contributed money to help the Japanese students. And this conference that was held in Yugoslavia to which I went, was to decide whether or not they would continue the organization or whether they would disband it because the students in the world seemed to be getting along all right at that point.

AL: Was that the YWCA, did you say?

MF: No, I was with a YWCA group that went there, but it was an international conference, I think under the auspices of the World Student Christian Federation. The conference was held down in Yugoslavia, in Karlovac, which was the Greek papal church center. It was held during the vacation when they were all off, and we were quartered in the dormitories where the priests had been. We sat in groups--English-speaking, French-speaking or German-speaking--so whoever spoke, everyone would hear that and then there would be an interim where it was interpreted into the other two languages that were not spoken. Then we had small

MF: groups and committee meetings. There were two groups of students that went under the YW and one under the YMCA from the United States, and there were students from all over the world.

Anyway, while I was in Europe I took pictures, and everybody wanted some of them, and I liked them. I found I couldn't spend all my money in Europe having enlargements made--you got nice enlargements in Europe--so I decided that I wouldn't do it any more. But when I got home I wanted to learn how to make pictures, so that I could make enlargements of these pictures that I'd taken in Europe. So I got this man to give me lessons, because this was before there were any photographic schools.

I studied, and then I got involved because it was kind of interesting, and I took some of the pictures that I had and made darling little bridge scores and bridge tallies and sold them for Christmas. Then someone said, "Would you take my house for Christmas cards?" Then someone said, "Would you take my children on the front doorstep for a Christmas card?" And then after Christmas they would phone and say, "Oh, I saw your photos of Mrs. So-and-so's children; would you come and take my child's pictures?" All of a sudden I found that I was in business taking pictures.

My sister used to have pictures of all her friends hanging around her room, and they were always head portraits, and I always called it her rogues gallery. I wanted pictures where the children were doing things, people were doing things--it wasn't just a head--and so I specialized in doing home portraiture of children or family groups.

Then I met Consuela Canaga, and she had been doing candid camera shots of weddings. I thought I would like to do that, so I would do candid camera shots of weddings. I used to make these little books up with the pictures of the children in a book and have the children doing their things, and then I did the same thing with the weddings--little books that I made up that had the pictures--candid camera shots of weddings. I also did some commercial work, because my motto was, "If anybody else can do it, I can do it too; never say no, but try!" So I did some commercial jobs, and I had a studio in the back yard.

MF: In college I had trained to be a social worker, and I had always figured that that was a good idea-- I should learn how to earn my living if necessary, but if I should marry a millionaire, I could be Lady Bountiful and do volunteer social work. Well, when I came back from Europe, besides studying the photography, before I got going in the photographic business, I did try doing social work.

In those days you only got one Saturday off, and you worked the other three Saturdays in the month, and it didn't fit in the family pattern. I was living at home, and my father depended upon one sister and myself as being his chauffeurs, and we were supposed to drive him around when he had business calls or property to check on. He had given up the sailboat, but he had a cruiser, and he loved to go out on the bay every weekend, and of course we were to provide the crew and have our boyfriends or whoever we wanted and have wonderful weekends out on the boat.

So it really did seem foolish to spend your time doing social work, particularly when I looked around and saw these poor harassed social workers so worn out every night that they were too tired even to go to a symphony. And while I worked at it, I would work out a plan with a family and then some neighbor would talk them out of it, and the more I looked at it, I thought, "What right do I have in trying to tell these people how to live? I'm only a young squirt out of college, and I don't know near as much about life as these people do. I don't feel that I have any right trying to tell these people how to live." So I just gave up social work and did the photography.

AL: So, your interest in photography began about 1927.

MF: Yes, '27-'28.

AL: Did you have any formal study in photography?

MF: I just had private lessons from this man who was a salesman for Hirsch and Kay, which was a photographic supply company.

AL: That was primarily the technical aspect of it-- developing and enlarging?

MF: Yes. And he started me out on glass plates--I learned how to take pictures on glass plates, and I still have them.

Snowbound on Tioga Road

MF: Once--it was so funny--in June of '28 my father and a friend of his and a friend of mine, the daughter of Dean Millbury of [University of California] Dental School, went on a camping trip. I had just had all these lessons in photography, so I had my four by five studio camera, and I had my little glass plates. We camped at Tahoe Meadows, and a wind came up, so Dad said he thought we'd better go on, and I said--this was when I didn't know about mountains and weather--"Oh, the wind's coming from way up there, why don't we go south? I've never been over Tioga Road or to Yosemite; why don't we go down the inland route and up to Yosemite?"

My father said, "Well, maybe that's a good idea," not realizing that that was just the prevailing wind, but a good storm was coming. Anyhow we got packed up and got in the car, and we went down to Lee Vining. At about four o'clock we left Lee Vining, over the Tioga Road. We were driving through the lower meadows when the snow began to come. We all said, "Isn't it beautiful, isn't it lovely?" We started up, and it began to snow a little harder.

I was the only one that could drive. I turned one corner like this, and the wheel sort of skidded around, and my father said, "I think we'd better turn around and go back." I said, "Oh, no, I just didn't handle the car right," so we went on. This was before there were automatic windshield wipers, so he had to lean over and wipe the windshield, which began packing more and more with snow.

We kept going along, and all of a sudden a cloud came down. I thought that maybe, before that cloud had come down, I had seen the road turn to the right, but I didn't know. The road was so narrow that if the snow was there, you know, you couldn't see quite where the gutter was at the right, and you couldn't see quite where the road went off on the left because of the snow. So I stopped the car and said, "I guess you'd better get out and see."

My friend got out of the car, and they just left me in the automobile, an old Packard, backing inch by inch till we got it in, right beside a snowplow parked

MF: at the corner of the road. As we began to figure out what we'd do, very nicely, a Southern Counties truck came along and the fellow said, "Anything I can do for you? It had just got too much for me, I decided I'd better go back and report down lower."

So we decided, "Well, in that case we'll go along with you and take our suitcases," and he said, "Sure," because he had the nice old caboosè in front, and then it was an open truck behind. So they put the suitcases there, and the driver said very naturally that Toddy and I could sit in the caboosè with him, and my father and cousin, who was about his age, an older man, were going to sit on the suitcases, and all of a sudden my father said, "Oh, wait a minute, I have an idea!" So he goes to the car, and he takes out this beach parasol that was on top of the car, and these two men sat on top of the suitcases in the snow with this beach parasol on them, and he drove us all the way back to Lee Vining.

This was June 6th and it was one of those quick, heavy storms and gone--so the next morning Dad went over to the garage and bought chains and asked the man to take us up. In the meantime, people were all waiting, so we started off and led this caravan with about five or six cars that wanted to go over too. They all had to stay behind us. When we got to our car, the man had to put the water in and fix the gas, and then we put the things back and put the chains on. I was the first car, and I had to drive leading the way.

Well, it was one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen, because it was absolute pristine snow, and it was about four or five inches thick. I'd never been over the road before, but I was thrilled because it was all so beautiful. I was seeing such beautiful shots that I stopped, and I got out the camera and the tripod and dashed off to take a picture. I kept doing this, and finally my father said, "If you don't stop I can't face these people--I've got all their names and addresses, and I promised them I'd send them pictures of everything."

So I said, "Just one more!" and I got out the camera and I ran, and because I ran fast I stubbed my toe and I fell flat in the snow, with the tripod here and the camera there! And then we didn't take any more pictures; we just went straight down into the valley. But it was one of the most beautiful scenes I've ever seen.

AL: And I thought you didn't have a good memory!

MF: What I can't remember are these battles of the Sierra Club.

AL: We'll get to those. They'll come back.

War Time Photography

AL: You've talked about your early photography; why don't you continue and tell us more about it.

MF: Well, I continued, and then this friend suggested that maybe a friend's daughter would like to learn photography from me, and so Charlotte Gunn came, and that was when we really went into big business--we would have teas every Friday and invite all the future brides, and we'd show them our work, and we really did have a good job. Then Charlotte got married, and I was still struggling along, but I did need some help. Doris Leonard called one day and said--

AL: This is before you were married?

MF: No--Well, maybe it was before I was married. She was only married six months ahead of me, but maybe it was that winter. She decided she'd come and learn photography. We had a studio together, and instead of being Bridge and Gunn, it was changed to Bridge and Leonard, which we kept for some long time. In fact we were going to keep it up longer, and in 1951 Annie Nilsson--Einar Nilsson's wife, Annie, who worked in the Sierra Club--was going to go in with us. We were all set to really open up and get into real business when we lost our little boy, and Francis and I took a trip around the world. Annie went to work for the Sierra Club, and Doris threw her energies into other conservation work, so the official studio was no longer.

You were asking about the work that Doris and I did during the war in the photography. With little children, we were limited, of course, in what we could do, but we found a woman who was willing to come and take care of my children as her war service, and then Doris and I took pictures only for husbands overseas.

MF: We would go in the home and take pictures of the children doing their things and with the wife and print them on very thin paper so that the wives could mail them to the husbands overseas, which was really a good morale builder, I think, for the fellows that were overseas. We were doing what we could do; it was something, in the war service.

AL: And you still do some photography.

MF: I do a little now, but not very much. Of course, I always do photographs of grandchildren, but I have been mostly limiting my photographic work to volunteer work. I've been doing publicity photography and publicity for the university YW, which I've always had an active interest in helping, and then I also did quite a few pictures and made them into little notepaper, some of which were sold for the benefit of the YW and some of which were sold for the benefit of the Echo Lakes Ecology Team, which was really started by Dick and Doris Leonard's daughter Frances. Things like that I'll do, but I don't really take on any commercial jobs now. I don't seem to find I have the time.

AL: Did you get any benefit from your friendship with Ansel in your photography?

MF: I always found Ansel hard to follow, but of course I've had a wonderful association with Ansel all these years, and I've been very free to visit with him and visit in the darkroom. I think he gives me credit for knowing more than I know, and as I say it's hard to follow him, but just by observing, I've learned a lot.

Cedric [Wright] was wonderful. Years ago he built me some beautiful drying racks; he used to help me fix up my darkroom. Cedric could fix up almost anything--he was marvelous--so I had a wonderful association with Cedric and Ansel and Virginia. Of course, I got to know them on the High Trip in 1929, and Francis had known them before that.

A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE SIERRA CLUB

Bay Chapter Activities in the Thirties

Ann Lage: You mentioned you were on the San Francisco Bay Chapter Executive Committee.

Marjory Farquhar: Yes, from the Rock Climbing Section I progressed to the Bay Chapter, and I was in the Bay Chapter from 1934 to 1937.

AL: On the executive committee?

MF: On the executive committee. I ended up by being secretary. I guess it was only three years that I was on it.

AL: Did the chapter at that time have much interest in conservation, or was it mainly a social group?

MF: I can't remember the details now, but I remember quite a bit of something to do with Mt. Tamalpais State Park. They did local conservation issues, and of course, good times, but again, a lot of it was carrying out the general policies of the Sierra Club High Trips--I mean weekend trips and things like that, and even getting new people in and teaching them how to behave and how to take care of themselves in the mountains and how to treat the mountains.

AL: Do you think the purpose of the High Trips was fulfilled in building people interested in conservation?

MF: I think it did an awful lot, I mean terrifically. You couldn't help but absorb it, and just like Colby's original plan in trying to get people--if they knew what they were talking about they could fight for it,

- MF: but just unseen and not understood, why, what's the difference? I think one reason why they got through so well with Dinosaur was by running those river trips and getting the people to see and to know and understand. It's really very important.
- AL: As you look at these questionnaires we get from the old-timers, it's so obvious that most of the people who contributed a lot to the club came in through the High Trips and recreational interests, and then got into conservation.
- MF: And of course now, they say, they come the other way, and I think because they come the other way--I'd be inclined to think they don't really take as active a part as if they came in through the trips. I think when they came in on the trips they got the feeling of working on something, and when you just sign a paper because you believe in conservation it's more of a passive joining than it is an active joining. But of course there's quite a difference between five thousand and fifty-seven thousand--and it's true that large numbers speak well as pressure groups for getting things accomplished. It pays, I guess.
- AL: Anything else you can think of about the Bay Chapter?
- MF: No, I can't remember. I can remember staying up nights and trying to work out things, but I can't seem to remember what it was all about now.
- AL: Do you remember who you worked with? Was Lewis Clark involved?
- MF: Oh yes, Lewis Clark was there, and there were quite a number of names I noticed when I referred to the list yesterday--people that all came along in the club. Quite a number of them have gone now.
- AL: Women and men as well?
- MF: There seemed to be a good number of active women. There was a woman president of the club, Aurelia Harwood.
- AL: We have a big jump there from '37, to when you became a member of the Sierra Club Board of Directors in '51.

MF: Well, in there, you see, you had the war and the baby business [laughs]--so it took time out. Francis was active all the time in the Sierra Club, and as I look over my diary we were always having company. This house has always been open house for Sierra Club groups and American Alpine groups and different groups like that; of course, because of Francis's library, whenever any of the younger group was interested in any kind of expedition they would come and use Francis's books and then his advice and wisdom--so that the house was always full of young climbers.

AL: That kept you pretty busy.

Sierra Club Director: Opposing Club Expansion

MF: There is quite a gap between the board of directors, '51 to '55, and the Bay Chapter, '34 to '37.

AL: Do you recall how you got involved in the board of directors? Were you nominated by the nominating committee?

MF: Well, you see, Francis had been on for years, and then he decided to get off. They put my name up, and I guess I got in on the name of Farquhar [laughter]. Then I resigned in 1955 when we left to go away for a year, to Europe, because we were going to take the whole family to Europe.

AL: Now '51 to '55 were the main years of the Dinosaur battle, and also the time when the club expanded beyond California, so those would be a couple of things maybe you could--

MF: Yes. Let's see, that first Dinosaur trip was in 1953, the river trip, I mean. Francis and I had been doing river trips before that, because we had gone with Norm Nevels. Francis had gone in '42 with Norm Nevels on the San Juan, and I was busy with a baby. After that we had two trips on the San Juan, and then we did part of the Colorado River with Norm Nevels, so we had done all of that before the Sierra Club took to river trips.

MF: Then we were on the club's '53 river trip, and then in '54 I was a leader of one of the Sierra Club trips-- one of the river trips, the Yampa and the Green.

AL: Those were basically designed to interest people in Dinosaur and to get support.

MF: Yes.

AL: I know we're getting ahead of ourselves, but I know that you were not interested in seeing the club expand beyond California, but you did support the club having interests outside California, like the Dinosaur.

MF: Oh, definitely, but I--well, I think probably Dave was right in the end, but I just felt that the Sierra Club had been originally the Sierra Club of California, and conservation, yes, but what I objected to was trying to have chapters outside the state.

AL: You didn't object to the interests beyond the boundaries.

MF: No, but to the idea of having chapters all over--I was afraid that the tail might get too big for the body, and then, diplomatically, I thought that perhaps we should have worked through other clubs and that all clubs should do things in their own localities, rather than the Sierra Club try to take them all over. But of course, they didn't, and the Sierra Club has done an awful lot.

AL: Did you ever, through your contacts with other mountaineering clubs, discuss getting some of these other clubs, like the Mountaineers or some of the others, more interested in conservation?

MF: No, I didn't. We never got the opportunity. We were married in '34, and then the war came in '39--well, I mean it started in Europe, and it was not, of course, till '41 that we were terrifically involved--but no, I didn't.

AL: Was Dave Brower* the one who primarily was pushing for enlargement of the club and formation of the chapters outside of California?

*David R. Brower, interview in process.

MF: Yes, I think Dave was definitely the one for that, and I don't know, maybe Francis and I perhaps were only a small group of us that weren't for it. I just felt that it was--well, that was my feeling at the time, that the Sierra Club was California and it was all right for them to have interests, but that it would be a stronger group if they stayed within themselves, within the state, but of course they moved right out with the Pacific Northwest Chapter right after that, and then the one in Nevada, and then they went from there on.

And of course the Sierra Club Council was started just before we went to Europe; I worked on some of the early meetings of it. Then we went to Europe. The idea of that was to try to get some of the chapter groups and people active in the club without being on the board of directors. There was a time when some of these people in the chapters and groups felt that each one of them should have someone on the board of directors to represent them, but you couldn't have an efficient board of directors if each one came from a different chapter. So by having the general board of directors, with the people that you felt were outstanding leaders, and then developing the council, you would have in the council representatives from all of the local chapters, and that would be educational and develop leaders from there and move on--but of course it got so big that it didn't work that way after all.

AL: It has developed a lot of leaders that later went on to be on the board.

MF: I think it's very essential because it got to be such a large group it had to--but of course the size of the Sierra Club has just grown so terribly that it's an entirely different organization; I mean you've got to handle it entirely differently.

AL: I guess there was one particular meeting in Los Angeles where the subject of expansion was discussed. Do you remember how people lined up; did anyone else agree with you?

MF: I don't remember now. There may have been one or two; I guess I was the more outspoken. I just felt that you had the Mazamas, you had the Mountaineers, you had the Appalachian group, and if someone could have gotten

- MF: each one of them to work toward conservation all over....Well, it's all right, it's worked out all right, except the Sierra Club isn't what it used to be. The sad thing about the Sierra Club now is that I meet so many people that won't have anything to do with it because they say that the Sierra Club is always tearing everything down and doesn't have anything constructive to offer.
- AL: Do you feel that way yourself?
- MF: Oh, I think it's true; I see an awful lot of it. I still think that maybe as it is, it's fine, it wakes people up, but it does irritate an awful lot of people. And some of their ideas are a little wild. [Laughter.]
- AL: Now, you left the board to go on a trip to Europe. Did your leaving the board have anything to do with your disagreement about expansion?
- MF: I know nothing about it. All I know is that I resigned because I felt that if I was going to be gone a year they should let someone else go on the board, and I, of course, thought that they'd put my name up again when I came back, but I was never put up again, so that was that.
- AL: But you have no idea who was responsible for putting up names?
- MF: No, I know nothing about it. I just was a little surprised I wasn't asked to run again.
- AL: Disappointed? Or just surprised?
- MF: I think maybe I was a little hurt at first. But that's all right.
- AL: Well, that's an interesting sidelight. Do you think that Dave Brower had something to do with it?
- MF: I don't know. I heard someone say once they thought that Dave had volunteered for the nominating committee that he believed I did not want to be on--something like that, but I don't know anything about it. All I know is that I resigned; from my point of view, I felt that if I was going to be gone someone else should be on for the meetings, and I was a little disappointed

MF: when I wasn't asked to run again the next year. I mean, I could have been defeated, but I wasn't even nominated--so it's all right.

AL: So you'll never know.

MF: I'll never know and it doesn't bother me. It's all water under the bridge and gone.

AL: Were you on the board when Dave Brower was hired as full-time executive director? I think you were--wasn't that '52?

MF: Yes, because I went on in '51.

AL: Was there discussion about that?

MF: You see, it got so that there was so much more work to be done, it was asking an awful lot of a president to take over the load. If you had an executive director, he could carry the load, and your president could still be there and work but not lose his own job because he was president. That's happened, I think, with a lot of organizations--you start out fine, and then you find that there's so much that has to be done that someone has got to hold it together.

And of course Dave, with his vision of conservation and what should be done and his eagerness--it seemed like a very good idea to have Dave as executive director. As I say, it was just too much of a load for a president to carry; he had to have help. And so that was fine.

AL: So there was no disagreement over that decision to hire a full-time executive director.

MF: No, it seemed the right thing to do. And Dave was very good. Dave had two shortcomings: he never understood money--he believed that if a thing should be done it should be done, and it could be done, but he didn't know how to balance a budget. And he overstepped his bounds; he got so he never followed the directives of the board of directors.

AL: Was there any problem with that while you were on the board?

MF: No, but you see I got off when he was only starting. Dave was very good for a while.

AL: Do you remember any discussions--after the Dinosaur battle was won, apparently Dave Brower wanted to continue the fight and try to defeat the whole water project for the upper Colorado, and the board of directors didn't want to go along with it. Do you remember? [Pause.] That might have been while you were in Europe.

MF: I don't recall--not enough to say anything.

Some Comments on Conflicts in the Club

AL: If there's no more on that, I think we can turn to what you do remember on conflicts within the club and then discuss the Dave Brower conflict some more. Do you remember some of these earlier conflicts?

MF: Well, I remember the great harsh feeling about the relocation of the Tioga Road, and of course that's one thing that Walter Huber was so upset about. There was very bitter feeling about it, because if the club was supposed to be a conservation group and want to protect things, why couldn't the road go up the back instead of going right around across Tenaya Lake. That was a very bitter one.

I'm unclear about the details, but I just remember that it was quite a touchy subject. I know we all felt violently on it. There were two points of view definitely: If you're going to see the beauties, why not let the people go out and see the beauties? And the other point of view was, why have those people spoil the beauties that the club has saved? There were definitely two points of view.

AL: There apparently was some ill-feeling.

Whenever we interview someone from southern California, it's always mentioned that there was a considerable amount of friction between the two sections of the club.

MF: Well, there was, and I can't seem to remember what the fuss was all about, except that I do remember a number of times Francis and I said, "Oh, heck, why don't they

MF: get out if they feel that way! Good to get rid of them!" They were awfully sticky about their membership. They were awfully snooty about it, and they wouldn't take a person in until the poor person had been to dinner at least two times and been passed all around and introduced.

AL: Sort of a country club affair.

MF: Yes, I'm afraid that was what we felt, and we felt up here that our goals were a little different; if anyone was interested in wanting to be with the Sierra Club we would love to have them. Now I don't remember having had any Blacks or Orientals or anything, but to me it never came up--but they used to be awfully fussy down south.

But that wasn't all the trouble either, and I don't remember what all the trouble was, because there was a group that tried to branch off for a while, and it caused some trouble too.

AL: You mean become a separate chapter? Phil Bernays* mentioned something--there was a move to secede.

MF: Yes, that was when we up here said, "Why don't they get out then?" [Laughter.] They didn't, and it's all gone overboard now, but I don't actually remember what all the fuss was about.

AL: Do you recall on the High Trips, was there any sensitivity or anybody from southern California excluded, or were there feelings of separateness or envy?

MF: No, not that I was ever conscious of.

AL: Was there any cliquishness in any of those affairs, do you think?

MF: Oh, perhaps there was some cliquishness, I don't know. I mean there was one little group--Elsie Bell Earnshaw had her little group, heaven sakes alive. She was from the south; what difference does it make if she had--it wasn't a north-south thing with her at all.

*Phil S. Bernays, Founding the Southern California Chapter, Richard Searle, interviewer, Sierra Club Oral History Project (Sierra Club, San Francisco, 1975).

AL: It's just surprising how many people mention it. They felt that the club was run by the northerners for the northerners--the southerners must have always felt left out.

MF: Well, of course, the Sierra Club was founded in San Francisco, and that was the first group, and then the group down south. I think the Angeles Chapter really felt the board was made up mostly of northerners, and they wanted a stronger representation and voice on the board.

AL: Do you recall when Ansel Adams moved that the southern California chapter be abolished? That was in '45, I think.*

MF: No, it was probably all there at that point in time, but I don't seem to remember what the fuss was all about. I still think they were the ones who made the fuss--the southern group. I don't know really what they were all fussing about, but we kept saying, "All right, if you want to, get out!" One or two people said, "No, you shouldn't. We should all be one club; we should all be the same."

AL: Do you remember much about the loyalty oath controversy?

MF: No, I can't. I remember it here in the university, but I don't remember a thing of it in the club. I don't know whether it even came up.

AL: Well, it did, it did. I heard two different dates.

MF: In the southern group?

AL: Yes, definitely. Two different dates. One of them was when Mr. Farquhar was president, in 1949, and in '59 it came up again, and there was actually a petition on the club ballot and a vote about it, on whether the club should have a loyalty oath.

MF: It never made much of an impression on me; I'm sorry.

AL: And you don't recall any problems with racial discrimination in this area, in the north.

*Sierra Club Board of Directors minutes, December 1, 1945.

MF: No.

AL: Only in the south.

MF: Yes, because they had their little--they needed two people as sponsors, I think, to sign on their things, and they had to go to the dinner parties. We were far more loose up here. I don't really remember anything; I just remember myself once thinking, "Oh, there are no Japanese or Chinese here--I wonder if I know anyone who would like to join?" But I never got around to it. There was no consciousness on my part, because there never had been anyway; I'd never bothered.

AL: But apparently it was a problem in the south. Was it discussed up here, do you recall?

MF: No, I don't recall.

The Dave Brower Controversy

AL: Do you have any more to say about the controversy involving Dave Brower? That must be the biggest controversy the club has had. Could you tell us something about Dave? You've had a long association with him; you've known him for a long time.

MF: I've known Dave since--what?--his high school or college years, yes, very, very long, and I'm very fond of Dave. I think he's done an awful lot for conservation, and he's done a lot for the Sierra Club, good and bad.

AL: Just as a background, do you recall anything about him as a youth? He worked pretty closely with Mr. Farquhar on the Bulletin, I guess.

MF: Oh, yes, and he was very good literarily. He came back from the war very, very hipped on conservation. He was upset about some of the funiculars he saw in Europe. I remember when he came back from the war he was so upset about those, and of course there was the time that they wanted to put the one down there at Idlewild, out of Death Valley, and the Sierra Club fought so hard against that.

AL: Was that the one in San Jacinto?

MF: Yes, and there was discussion a long time ago about putting one in Yosemite Valley and going up to Glacier Point--not any recent one but a long time ago. Of course, everybody here would be against that, but when Dave came back from Europe after the war he was very adamant about a lot of those things.

Dave himself, I think, is a very sensitive person--let's see, his mother was blind, wasn't she--yes, blind--and...well, Dave was very sweet and gentle and came along in the Sierra Club and came to be a very good climber and very intently interested in conservation. As I say, the war effect was very strong on him to fight for it. I think he just got to the point where he thought that God had sent him to save the world. [Laughter.]

AL: He seemed like kind of a shy and quiet person?

MF: Yes--very shy and quiet when he was young. He's developed and grown a lot. And my greatest complaint about Dave is that he never understood the dollar. The dollar never meant anything to him, and he would never know how to balance a budget. If a thing needed to be done to save conservation, why, we're going to do it--it's the end we're after and to heck with the means. Because he didn't have a good sense of business and balancing the budget, he got the Sierra Club into very deep water.

Then of course I know in the contacts with Francis that time and again the editorial board would say, "You can't publish that; we can't afford it," and he'd say, "Well, that's too bad, but I've already signed the contract." And he just would go ahead. He was the boss completely as far as he was concerned, and he wouldn't take directives from the editorial committee or the board of directors or anything.

And of course the thing that got the club into so much trouble was when he ran that ad in the New York paper [June 9, 1966], because the club was only getting its tax-free status because it was working toward conservation and not doing any lobbying or anything of that nature; when you run an ad, a whole page ad like

MF: that, why, wham! the IRS came down and that was that. Of course, the far-sightedness of people that were able to get the Sierra Club Foundation started so that it could take over is a thing that really has saved conservation, in my opinion.

AL: Well, they apparently saw it coming.

MF: Sure they did. They saw it coming, and they thought that was the best thing to do, and it's done a lot. But I do believe the Sierra Club would have gotten an awful lot of money if it hadn't lost its tax privilege, and I still don't think it had to do the lobbying it did the way it did.

AL: Would you say that would be one of his major faults-- that business to do with the tax deductibility?

MF: Certainly. That, and then there were some other things he did--financial maneuvers that were very bad, trying to get money for the club, the idea of mortgaging the property the Sierra Club owned and all of that, which just was terrible.

AL: Do you recall anything about the growth of the movement to finally oust him? You must have been involved in that in some way or heard about it?

MF: Well, let me see. That was the time we had one group of members not liking the nominating committee's selection. They began getting petitions out for their favorites. They mailed out a lot of literature and made up their own slate for the board of directors. Then the opposite point of view had to counter it. It was the new liberals, the new young followers of Dave, versus the more conservative oldsters. Yes, I gave some money to one group [laughter]. It was too bad, and it really split the thing up. It finished the Sierra Club as it had been. It has never been the same.

AL: You feel it did permanent damage?

MF: Well, I don't know if it was permanent damage, but it certainly has changed.

AL: And was that battle one of the things that changed it, you think?

MF: Well, sure; I mean it's hard to have an organization split like that. I think anything like that--the southern chapter not liking the way things were going and wanting to get out, well, that's all right, that was a different type of principle. And if they preferred to be on their own and get out, it would have been all right. In the end they didn't, and it still is one organization.

But when you have this inter-wrangling among your board of directors and one group fighting against another, and you don't have any continuity in your thoughts or harmony in your discussions or anything--it was just my side versus your side, and if we can get more on my side, then we'll run it our way. I think it was very, very bad. That group probably felt the rest of us were a lot of old dodos.

AL: Who would you say was the crucial person in organizing an opposition to Dave? Who got all the former presidents to get together and sign a letter?

MF: If I once knew I've forgotten. I'm not up on these things; I've just forgot them all.

AL: You remember the beautiful parts--the trips.

MF: But when it comes to the fights and the fussing I've no use for it.

AL: That's fine. Is there anything else you can think of along those lines of conflicts or interesting side-lights?

MF: No. When it was a small organization you got to know the people very well, and there were very wonderful people that were leaders in the club, and then the bigger you got, you got fine people, but the personal contact was really gone. I don't know how it works now. It just astonishes me--the huge staff and the great volume of money necessary just in even getting the staff going and working, and I would be inclined to think that all personal contact and feeling of warmth is gone. As I say, it's a different organization; it's a world-wide organization now, and maybe it's doing a lot more good.

MF: The only thing that I'm bitter about is the way Daye went ahead and spent so much money trying to push through his ideas. And I wouldn't have minded if he pushed through his ideas without financial difficulties. But maybe conservation is all the better off because of it--maybe he woke up a lot more people to it. Certainly he's active with Friends of the Earth. I don't know how their finances are. Some very interesting things come out of that--those articles in Not Man Apart.

AL: Are you a member of Friends of the Earth?

MF: Oh, yes.

SOCIAL HOSTESS FOR THE SIERRA CLUB

The Farquhar Home: West Coast Center for International Rock Climbing

Ann Lage: We talked somewhat about people that you met through the club, and the fact that your home really was a center for rock climbers.

Marjory Farquhar: Francis should have all the credit for it. Because of his climbing and what he had done, he was a member of the American Alpine club. Really, through his influence, Helen LeConte and Harriet Parsons and I became members of the American Alpine Club and took active parts in the American Alpine Club, and we have met many wonderful people. When the Everest party came out on their lecture tour, Francis, really because of his contact with the American Alpine Club, had charge of the climbers and the arrangements for the speeches and everything, so we became very close friends with the [Edmund] Hillarys and with Charles Evans, who was the leader of the Kangchenjunga climb, and that whole group.

Then we had that darling Swiss fellow, Jurg Marmet, who climbed Lhotse and Everest. He and his wife were here. Noel Odell, who was the last one to see Mallory and Irvine on Everest, is going to be here next month, but he and his wife stayed with us here.

Our home was the center, and it tied in with the Sierra Club because so many of the American Alpine Club members here are Sierra Club members. They got their start in climbing through the Rock Climbing Section. I mean they just came in that way--the Rock Climbing Section, and then the Sierra Club, and then

MF: the American Alpine Club. So it's all that group that have always been coming here. Whenever there was not a visiting fireman, but a visiting mountaineer, they used to check in here; now, of course, they go to Al Steck, Raffi Bedayn, and the others. But they always used to, and we've always tried to have parties for them with everybody around, with Sierra Club people and American Alpine Club people, and...

AL: And so this has sort of cosmopolitanized California climbing, I would think.

MF: Yes, and for years, you see, the Sierra Nevada section of the American Alpine Club used to be right here in this living room. This last December, I only had a hundred twenty-five here for breakfast, because they had the American Alpine Club meeting here in Berkeley.

Then there were other people through the Sierra Club--Horace Albright, who was director of national parks, was a very close friend of Francis's and a close friend of mine; and then Brad Washburn, who did all that work on Mt. McKinley in Alaska, has been a very good friend of ours and visited here; and Francis was a very good friend of Tracy Storer, who has a hall named after him at [the University of California] Davis, who was an authority on the grizzly bear--and so this really has been a very active center. I think the Leonards used to be more or less the center for the Rock Climbing Section years ago--we used to eat there an awful lot after our Sunday rock climbing--but for the bigger things, why, they came through here.

AL: It's also mentioned that your home and you and Mr. Farquhar had quite a role of fostering the younger generation of climbers and also historians, people interested in mountaineering literature.

MF: Well, Francis had such an outstanding library that anyone that wanted to find out anything would check with Francis. The library was always open, and there have been quite a number of young people who have come and done research here in Francis's library, or just talked to him, getting started on different things. So we've had them all, as I say, if they ever had an idea that they wanted to go on an expedition. The Makalu group came and studied here, figuring out what mountain they

MF: wanted to go for, and all of that, right in the library downstairs here.

AL: How about the Everest expedition--did you get in on that at all? The first American expedition?

MF: Oh, yes! Makalu was first and then that came.

Reflections on the Woman's Role

AL: You mentioned to me one time something to the effect that family responsibilities interfered with some of the life goals--or maybe that's just what I read into it. Did you ever have that feeling? That your role as hostess and your family interfered with something that you might have--

MF: Oh, yes. Well, I would have done a lot more with photography, but the minute we moved to this house, there was just one thing that happened--it became a first-class hotel and pensione. In the other house I had the darkroom right underneath one of the children's rooms, and it was smaller, and I could control things very well. But we moved here during the war, in '44, and you couldn't get any help, and if I had a sick child up there I couldn't be down three floors in the darkroom.

It just got to the point where I couldn't do everything, and I felt it was more important to be a social hostess and help Francis in that respect than to follow the photography. After all, I couldn't compete with Ansel anyhow, and so [both laugh] I might as well leave it.

AL: One other question: In interviewing you we wanted to get a little bit of the woman's angle, your experiences as a woman, and I think an unusual woman. How did you feel in the various roles you played in the Sierra Club--how were you treated as a woman? I mean, was your footing equal, or were you deferred to, or were you not listened to as much as if you'd been a man?

MF: Oh, no--I just felt I was as good as anybody else, and I never felt I was either--anyway. I mean I just was accepted as me--because I don't remember holding back.

AL: You don't seem the sort to hold back.

MF: Well, you'd be surprised. I really had an inferiority complex once in my life! [Laughter.]

AL: Well, it seems fairly much a men's club. It's had one woman president and that's it, and that was a long time ago. Do you think the men were willing to give women their due?

MF: I think that a lot of women didn't have the time to do it, and a lot of them weren't interested.

AL: Of course, the men were really quite busy too; they've all had such active careers. And yet they took the time.

MF: Charlotte Mauk spent an awful lot of time and did an awful lot for the Sierra Club. An awful lot. But she didn't have the responsibility of a home, family and a husband. Harriet Parsons watched after her father quite a bit, so she didn't have quite as much free time.

I never thought of it as a men's club; could you say that now? There are mostly men on the board, and there always were; but there were an awful lot of women that did other things--I mean the Bay Chapter, and different committees, and an awful lot of work. Maybe some of the harder work was done by the women.

AL: That's the thing, they did the harder work but did not hold the higher offices. Was something keeping them, aside from their own--

MF: Oh, I don't think it came from above. I don't think so at all.

AL: You don't think there were the subtle forms of discrimination that we talk about today.

MF: No, I don't think so--but I don't know why more women didn't. But I don't think it was looked at as "no, she's a woman."

AL: You had the same give and take and respect for opinion. You've always felt that, at least. Okay. Ray, do you have any thoughts of what we might have missed?

RL: I can't think of any, Ann. We covered most of the ground that I think we had intended to. Are there some last thoughts?

MF: I just happened to remember--Francis, of course, was the first American to climb Mount Olympus in Greece. When we went back to Greece in '51, we climbed it together with the Greek Alpine Club, and then they made us honorary members.* Again there were just other contacts that came both through Francis and through mountaineering that were very nice.

AL: A lot of worldwide contacts that you've had.

MF: And I hope to see some of them this summer when I go back to Greece. Well, no I'm not. I'm going on a trip, and I have about four hours to see these friends. I'd like to go back for longer, but it won't work out this year.

I have climbed, but there's no rock climbing for me any more, unless I'm teaching a grandchild. I still do that.

AL: Are your grandchildren interested in rock climbing?

MF: Oh, I've had little David do quite a lot of it on the cliffs in back of our Echo Lake cabin, and of course all our children climbed. Peter became a member of the Alpine Club, but he doesn't enjoy climbing now unless there's a specific purpose for it. He thinks just to climb like a monkey is silly. There are too many important things to do in the world. One has to divide up his time--there certainly isn't time for everything.

Rock climbing is awfully good, in some respects--the physical exercise and the mental challenge--as long as it doesn't get to the point of trying to beat someone or show off. But if you get true enjoyment out of

*See Francis P. Farquhar, "Mount Olympus Revisited," Sierra Club Bulletin, October, 1953, pp. 43-50.

- MF: proving to yourself that you can do a thing and do it well and do it safely, I think it's very creditable.
- AL: And that's the way the Rock Climbing Section set it up, it seems--do it safely and well.
- MF: It's just like your High Trips and your learning how to camp and your other trips, and your Sierra Clair Tappaan Lodge and your skiing program--they were trying to show people how to do it and do it right, and along with that, you learn to protect your wilderness.

Of course, this lovely battle is going on with Mineral King and the skiers. I was there at some of those board meetings when at a particular time Bestor Robinson said, "Well, maybe it is a good place--maybe we'd better have Mineral King for skiing."

- AL: What time was this?
- MF: While I was on the board, I think it was, that the Sierra Club first approved it.
- AL: I think it was '49.
- MF: That is one of the times that I remember, and then it was later that the other group were all against it. I don't know; it's a problem. These skiers never see in the summer just what their lifts, gondolas, and and garbage do to the wilderness.
- RL: I guess as we've sat and chatted with you this evening, I had the sense that once again the Sierra Club has obtained some very memorable recollections from you for its historical treasury, and I recall very well that it was in this same room that the very first published oral history interview the Sierra Club History Committee completed was conducted with your Francis.
- MF: Oh, he had a marvelous memory.

APPENDIX

SIERRA CLUB

San Francisco Bay Chapter

TO MEMBERS OF THE
ROCK CLIMBING SECTION:

All climbing with the ROCK CLIMBING SECTION is done strictly at the climber's own risk. However, safety is one of the cardinal principles of climbing. It is therefore urgently requested that members of the ROCK CLIMBING SECTION observe the following precautions:

- (1) Practice climbing should never be attempted without an upper belay.
- (2) Each person should practice at least five minutes of "falls and belays" before each day of practice climbing.
- (3) No person should attempt to use a belay of any kind until he has first demonstrated to the Committee on Rock Climbing his ability to hold properly the particular belay that he intends to use.
- (4) Before starting each climb the climber should test his belay with his full weight upon the rope.
- (5) One should never attempt a climb without being sure that the securing knot is properly tied. It is earnestly recommended that climbers have a practical knowledge of all climbing knots.
- (6) Serious climbing in which an upper belay is not possible involves a different technique and more experience than practice climbing can give. It is therefore most strongly recommended that no one attempt the leadership of such a party without adequate and thorough preparation.
- (7) It is to be understood that safety in practice climbing depends upon the strength of the rope. Therefore no rope of doubtful quality or strength should ever be used.

November 23, 1932

COMMITTEE ON ROCK CLIMBING

RICHARD M. LEONARD
ChairmanMARJORY BRIDGE
LEWIS F. CLARK
JULES EICKORN
KENNETH MAY

Climbing rules, from Sierra Club Rock Climbing Section schedule, November 23, 1932

THE DAILY

Alumna Scales Mt. Whitney in Record Climb

**Highest Peak of the United
States Yields for First
Time to a Woman**

To get to the summit of Mt. Whitney is no particular feat, for that can be done on horseback, but to reach the summit by way of the east face had been done only once until Friday. On that day the first woman ever to climb the east face came to the top of the highest peak in the United States.

Marjorie Bridge '25 made the record climb with a Sierra Club party. Other members of the group were Jules M. Eichorn '37, Francis P. Farquhar, president of the club, and Ted Waller.

The four left their Ibex park camp, at an altitude of 10,300 feet, at 3:30 a. m. Friday.

Using ropes the entire distance and taking turn about at leading, the climbers followed with slight variations the original route found in 1931.

From Mt. Whitney Eichorn and Miss Bridge went on to climb Muir peak the same day. Miss Bridge thereby achieved the distinction of being the first woman to climb the east face of Whitney and also accomplished the unusual feat of climbing two 14,000 foot peaks in one day.

The original route was found in 1931 by Sierra Club climbers. Members of this party were Jules M. Eichorn '37, Norman Clyde and Robert L. M. Underhill. Eichorn says this ascent is one of the most difficult in the state in which the roping technique is used without pitons.

Daily Californian (University of California student newspaper),
August 23, 1934

INDEX

- Adams, Ansel, 9, 32, 42
 Adams, Virginia, 9, 32
 Albright, Horace, 49
 Appalachian Mountain Club, 37
 American Alpine Club, 35, 48-49
- Bernays, Philip S., 41
 Bridge, H.S., 1, 2, 3, 4, 28, 29-30
 Bridge, Marjory. See Farquhar, Marjory Bridge
 Brower, David R., 23, 36-37, 38, 39-40, 43-47
- Canaga, Consuela, 27
 Charlton-Thomas, Tony, 12
 Clair Tappaan Lodge, 18, 19, 22
 Clark, Lewis, 34
 Clark, Nathan, 13
Climbing in North America, 23
 Colby, Rachel, 8
 Colby, William E., 8
 Coleman, Carolyn, 10
 Conant, James Bryant, 22
 conservation, 33-34, 40, 43, 53
 Cragmont Climbing Club, 14. See also Sierra Club,
 Rock Climbing Section
- Dawson, Glen, 10, 11
 Dinosaur National Monument campaign, 34, 35-36, 40
- Earnshaw, Elsie Bell, 41
 Echo Lakes Ecology Team, 32
 Eichorn, Jules, 10, 11, 12, 19
 Evans, Charles, 48
 Everest, Mount, 48, 50
- Farquhar, Marjory Bridge:
 family and youth, 1-6
 education, 1, 5-7, 28
 reasons for joining Sierra Club, 1-2, 8

treatment as a woman, 3-4, 50-52
 travel, 6, 8, 26-27, 35, 52
 Sierra Club outings, 9-11, 20-21, 23, 48-49
 rock climbing, 10-11, 19-23, 24, 52
 photography, 12, 20-21, 27-28, 30-32
 skiing, 17, 18-19
 marriage and family, 22, 50, 52
 social work, 28
 Sierra Club offices, 33-34, 35-40
 hostess, 35, 48-50
 Farquhar, Francis, 9-10, 11, 14, 15, 19-20, 21,
 22, 24, 32, 35, 37, 42, 43, 48, 49, 52, 53
 Friends of the Earth, 47

Greek Alpine Club, 52
 Greever, Virginia, 16
 Gunn, Charlotte, 31

Harvard Mountaineering Club, 11
 Harwood, Aurelia, 34
 Higher Cathedral Spire, 16, 22, 24
 Hildebrand, Joel, 17, 19
 Hildebrand, Louise. See Klein, Louise Hildebrand
 Hillary, Sir Edmund, 48
 Horsfall, Bill, 11
 Huber, Walter, 40

International Student Service, 26

Jones, Chris, 23, 25

Klein, Louise Hildebrand, 12, 17, 18

LeConte, Helen, 7, 9, 16-17, 48
 Leonard, Doris, 31, 32, 49
 Leonard, Frances, 32
 Leonard, Richard M., 14, 17, 23, 32, 49
 Loomis, Farnie, 19

Marmet, Jurg, 48
 Mauk, Charlotte, 51
 Mazamas, 37

Mill Valley, California, 1, 3
 Mineral King, 53
 mountaineering. See rock climbing; Sierra Club,
 Rock Climbing Section; Farquhar, Marjory, rock
 climbing
 Mountaineers, 36, 37
 Muir Gorge, Tuolumne River, 11-13

Nevels, Norman, 35
 Nilsson, Annie, 31
 Nilsson, Einar, 23, 31
Not Man Apart, 47

Odell, Noel, 48
 Olympus, Mount, 52

Parsons, Harriet, 7, 9, 16, 48, 51
 photography, 12, 20-21, 26-32
 Putnam, Dean Thomas, 8

Robinson, Bestor, 12, 17, 18, 23, 53
 rock climbing, 19-20, 48-49
 rewards, 10, 52-53
 development of early techniques, 11, 15, 24
 women, 10-11, 16
 competition among climbers, 24-25
 Rock Climbing Section. See Sierra Club, Rock
 Climbing Section

Saylor, Mary, 12
 Sierra Club, 1-2
 Angeles (Southern California) Chapter, 40-43
 Brower controversy, 39, 43-47
 Bulletin, 15-16, 43
 conservation, 33-34
 Council, 37
 expansion, 36-38, 46
 finances, 44, 45, 47
 membership policies, 41-43
 outings, 8-11, 20-21, 23, 33-34, 35-36, 41, 53
 Rock Climbing Section, 14-17, 48-49, 53

San Francisco Bay Chapter, 15, 33-34, 51
ski lodge, 18, 19, 22
women in, 10-11, 16, 18, 34, 50-52
Sierra Club Foundation, 45
skiing, 2, 17, 18-19, 53

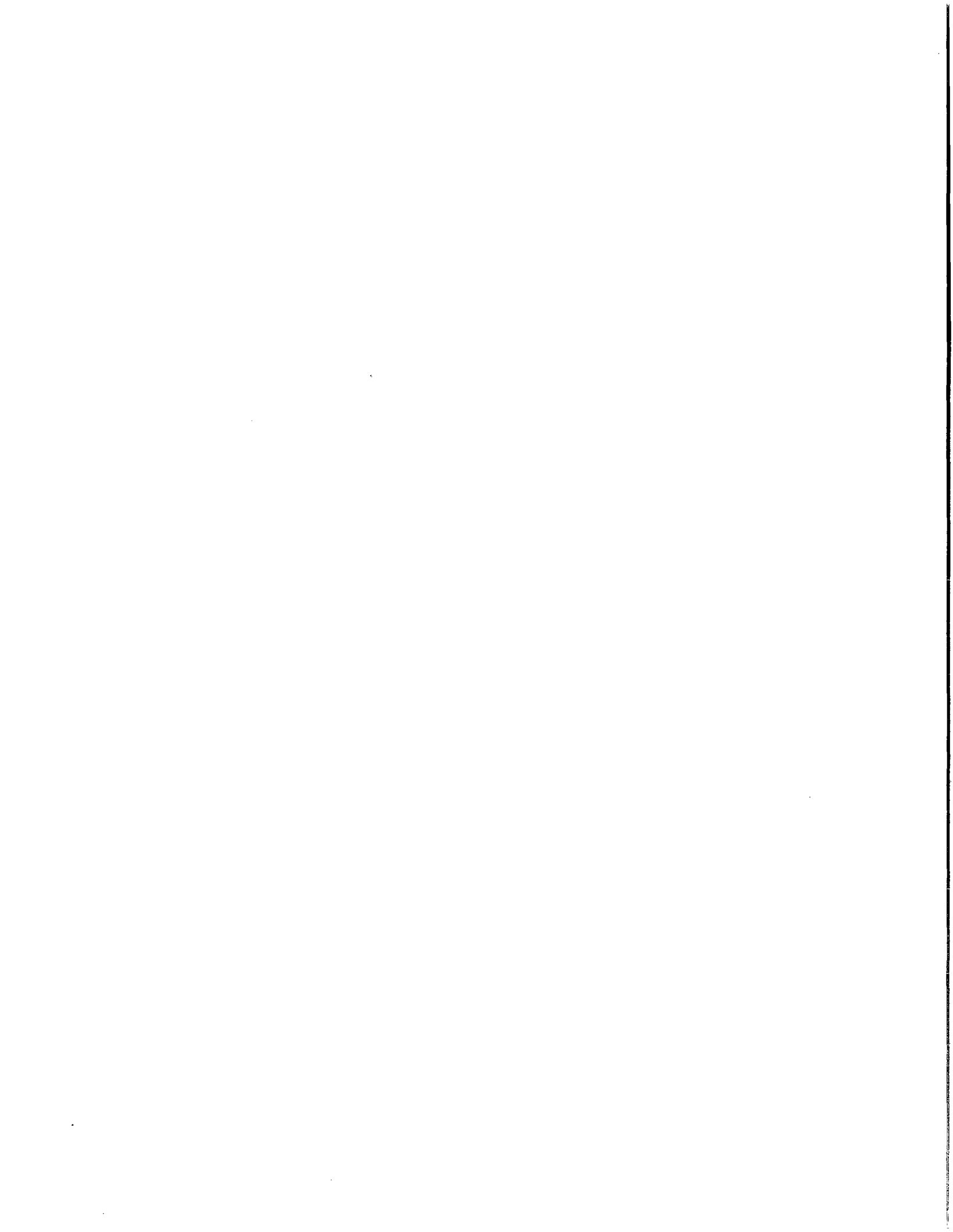
Tachet, Dan, 9
Tioga Road, 29-30, 40
transportation to Sierra, 9

Underhill, Robert, 11, 14

White Mountain Peak, 21
Whitney, Mount, 14, 16, 19-21
women, 3-4, 10-11, 16, 34, 50-52
Wright, Cedric, 9, 32
Wright, Rhea, 9

Young Women's Christian Association. See YWCA
YWCA, 26-27, 32





HELEN M. LeCONTE

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REMINISCENCES OF LeCONTE FAMILY OUTINGS, THE SIERRA CLUB,
AND ANSEL ADAMS

An Interview Conducted by
Ruth Teiser
and
Catherine Harroun

Sierra Club
History Committee

1977

SIERRA CLUB ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
INTRODUCTION	v
SIERRA OUTINGS AND THE SIERRA CLUB, 1912-1956	1
Early Years and Family Camps	1
Pack Trips of the Twenties	9
First Outings with the Sierra Club	13
High Trips and Base Camps, 1912-1956	20
Sierra Club People	26
"Wonderful Old Men of the Mountains"	30
PORTRAITS OF SIERRA CAMPS AND CAMPERS	33
Family Camping Trips, Continued	33
Porcupine Flat and Camps of the Twenties	37
An Ansel Adams Trip Album, 1923	44
Early Climbs in the High Sierra	46
Characterizing the Mountaineers	49
Sierra Club Changes	54
NOTES ON ANSEL ADAMS	58
Ansel Adams's Photographs	58
Ansel Adams as a Young Man	64
JOSEPH N. LeCONTE AND HIS FAMILY	71
INDEX	78

PREFACE

The LeConte name has always been an illustrious one in the annals of the Sierra Club. Joseph LeConte, Helen's grandfather, born in Georgia, became professor of geology at the University of California. His Journal of Ramblings through the High Sierra of California by the University Excursion Party in 1870 [Sierra Club, San Francisco, 1930, 1960], tells of his first experiences in the Sierra, and the exhilaration he found in the high places. He had many more trips into the mountains, was a charter member of the Sierra Club, and passed on to his descendants his love of the mountains. His son, Joseph Nisbet LeConte ("little Joe" as he was called), was described by his father as "the best camper and mountaineer I ever knew, tramping 400 or 500 miles in the Sierra every summer, and probably knowing them better than any living man, unless possibly Mr. John Muir." LeConte Lodge in Yosemite Valley was built in memory of the senior Joseph, who died in the Valley in 1901.

It was "little Joe", Helen's father, who explored and mapped many parts of the Sierra, hitherto uncharted: portions adjacent to the Yosemite, to the Kings River, and the Central Portion of the Sierra Nevada and of the Yosemite Valley. These maps were printed by the Sierra Club in 1893 and 1896. His account of A Summer of Travel in the High Sierra in 1890, published in 1972, is as zestful and interesting as his father's journal of twenty years earlier. He brought up his family to know and love the Sierra, as can be seen in these reminiscences of his daughter Helen.

She camped and climbed with her family, with independent parties, and with the Sierra Club, learning to know well the peaks and canyons, the lakes and rivers. She was an excellent and agile rockclimber and has been a member of the American Alpine Club for many years. She majored in music at the University in Berkeley, and taught piano for several years. Two years in New York City, far from the mountains; her first trip to Europe; and then came the Depression of the thirties. A secretarial course made it

possible to find jobs, though lowpaying, with the Crowell Publishing Co., the administrative office of the WPA, and then as secretary with the architect Arthur Brown Jr. She had further experience in several architectural offices and then worked for the printer Lawton Kennedy, until her retirement in 1969. Her last trip with the Sierra Club was a Base Camp Trip to Bench Lake in 1956, when it rained every day! When she found the high country and rugged camping not too easy for her and had to give up the strenuous life of the mountains, she said she was being "arty not hearty" for a change, and she has managed to keep busy with many interests, including volunteer work in the Sierra Club library. But ask her about almost any part of the Sierra, and she can tell you.

Harriet Parsons
San Francisco, California
March, 1977

INTRODUCTION

This interview with Helen M. LeConte is a somewhat homogenized blend of four tape-recorded sessions, edited with corrections and additions by the interviewee. The editing was particularly important because of the more or less random organization of the parts, and because of Miss LeConte's determination that the interview be as accurate as possible.

The first tape, that of May 2, 1972, was intended simply to give background information for an interview with her friend Ansel Adams, which was being conducted for the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Subsequently, the Sierra Club asked if we would interview Miss LeConte to record her general recollections. The request undoubtedly came to us because we had been friends of Miss LeConte since about 1948; but when we broached the subject to her she refused to participate.

However, by May 18, 1974, when the three of us went by car to Carmel Highlands to visit Mr. and Mrs. Ansel Adams, we felt that she might relent enough to succumb to a ruse. While Catherine Harroun drove, Ruth Teiser aimed a portable tape recorder microphone at Miss LeConte and told her she was about to be interviewed. The ruse worked, although the circumstances were not conducive to the most thoughtful kind of recollecting.

The following year, 1975, Miss LeConte listened to the tapes of those two sessions, and on August 23 she gave another to fill in material and bring the discussion up to recent years. On September 29, in a short final session, she filled in additional information about her father, Joseph N. LeConte.

Of him she said in the interview, ". . . he loved being with friends." It is a characteristic she inherits. We hope that we have succeeded in bringing out in this interview some sense of her remarkable talent for the enjoyment of life and for enhancing the enjoyment of life for the many people who are her friends.

Ruth Teiser
Catherine Harroun

San Francisco, April 1977

SIERRA OUTINGS AND THE SIERRA CLUB, 1912-1956

Early Years and Family Camps

Ruth Teiser: This is an interview [May 18, 1974] in behalf of the Sierra Club about you, your background, the club, and camping in the Sierra. Let me start the way I do other interviews and ask, "Where and when were you born?"

Helen M. LeConte: I was born in Berkeley, California, on December 14, 1904.

RT: What house were you born in?

HML: It's no longer in existence.

RT: Where was it?

HML: It was on 2735 Bancroft Way. Right now there's the U.C. law school building there.

RT: When did you move to the house that you grew up in?

HML: 1909.

RT: What was the address?

HML: 19 Hillside Court, Berkeley.

RT: That was the one that stood through the 1923 fire?

HML: Oh, there was no fire south of the campus. It was in no danger from the 1923 fire. It's still standing.

RT: Your father's name was Joseph . . . ?

HML: . . . Nisbet LeConte. But it was pronounced "Nesbit". And it's been misspelled by Ansel Adams in the foreword to his journal.

RT: Your father's journal?

HML: Yes.*

RT: I see. Was that a family name?

HML: Yes, my grandmother's name; it was her name before she married.

RT: And your mother was . . . ?

HML: Helen Gompertz.

RT: And her father was . . . ?

HML: Charles Gompertz.

RT: And her mother was . . . ?

HML: Helen Malcolm.

RT: Malcolm. And that's your middle name?

HML: Yes.

RT: Your father planted a tree at your birth?

HML: He got a little redwood tree when I was born, a Sequoia Sempervirens. It was in a little pot, and that was my first Christmas tree. Naturally, since I was only ten days old, I don't remember it. [Laughs.] When Joe was born, he got him a little sequoia. I mean a Gigantea, Sequoia Gigantea, in a little pot. Both those trees were planted in the Berkeley garden at 19 Hillside Court.

RT: Still there?

HML: They should be. They're just getting much too big, and I know they've had to top the redwood, the Sempervirens, the one that was my tree.

RT: How young were you when you first went into the mountains with your family?

HML: Seven years old.

RT: Really!

* Joseph N. LeConte, A Summer of Travel in the High Sierra. Ashland, Ore.: Lewis Osborne, 1972.

HML: But just to Yosemite. Not high mountains.*

RT: Had they gone in the mountains before that and left you home with someone?

HML: Yes.

RT: You and your brother both?

HML: Yes. It wasn't until my brother was old enough to go that they took me.

RT: When was your brother born?

HML: December 9, 1908.

RT: And he is . . .

HML: Joseph LeConte.

RT: No middle name?

HML: No.

RT: You went to Yosemite when you were seven, then?

HML: Yes.

RT: Do you remember it?

HML: Oh, yes! Very vividly!

RT: Where did you stay?

HML: We camped in a very nice private place, a lovely big campsite on the Merced River, with nobody else around. It was protected from other campers by great oaks and yellow pines and much thick shrubbery such as wild azaleas, dogwood, thimble berries.

RT: Where was it?

HML: On the Merced River, about a quarter of a mile down from Camp Curry, and there's an island in the river--a big island--so that even if people were camping across the river they couldn't see us or we couldn't see them. It was completely private.

RT: Who was in your camp then?

* See p. 33.

HML: It was my family, and their friends kept coming and going all summer. My aunt Anita Gompertz was, I think, there all summer. It's a little confusing, because we did that for several years, until 1917, and I can't remember which things happened which year. I know that my uncle Charles and his wife and their two children drove in, against the laws of the park over the Big Oak Flat Road. At that time the army was in charge of Yosemite Valley. The Colonel had his car chained to a tree. [Laughter.] They couldn't take it out, even.

RT: That's Charles Gompertz?

HML: Yes, Jack's father. Ruth Gompertz Watson, who lives down here in Carmel, told me all about it. I don't remember that part.

RT: Essentially your camp was your family and relatives?

HML: And friends.

RT: University friends, or Berkeley friends?

HML: Oh, I don't know. Both I'm sure. I remember a little bit more from the next time, in 1915. (I was ten.) I remember Bob Howard was there, and Don Gregory, and they were seventeen, and I thought they were wonderful! [Laughs.] And there were two girls about sixteen. They were having a great time.

RT: They were all friends of the family?

HML: I don't know who they were. They were there somehow. Friends of friends. I think they were friends of Ruth Watson. I don't know.

RT: Do you remember how you spent your days when you were there?

HML: Oh, playing in the river, going for walks and picnics. Once we walked up to the foot of Vernal Falls. That was very exciting. This was when I was seven. My father carried my brother on his shoulders, all the way up. You know how kids sit on shoulders, with one leg over each side? It isn't very far from the foot of the trail to the foot of Vernal Falls--but we had to walk on the level all the way from camp to the foot of the trail--2 or 3 miles. Then I think we went part-way up to the foot of Yosemite Falls on a trail.

In 1915, we went up the Ledge Trail to Glacier Point, just my father and myself. It was like climbing a mountain for me, because there was no trail built. It's just a wide ledge--very rough--quite a scramble for a little girl. It goes up from Camp

HML: Curry, right up the south cliff of the valley, 3,000 feet. I think that they don't allow people on it any more, not because it's so dangerous and difficult, but too many people going roll rocks and get lost and get off the trail and cause a lot of trouble.

RT: Did your father teach you about climbing as you went?

HML: Well, we just went, and it just seemed to be perfectly natural. [It's like learning to climb trees. No one teaches you.--HML] We got to the top in the early afternoon and had dinner and stayed all night in the little old mountain lodge, and the next day walked back by the trail that goes by Illilouette Falls and then Nevada and Vernal Falls.

RT: Did you look forward to this. Did you know about it before you went?

HML: I always heard about the mountains, ever since I can remember.

RT: Did you stay in Yosemite every year for three summers, is that it?

HML: No, we went in 1912. The next year, my father went on a great High Trip, down around the Kings River with the Sierra Club. My mother didn't go at all. She didn't do any climbing after Joe was born, I think. In 1914, we went to Georgia, and then my father and mother went to Europe. Got caught in Germany in World War I. In 1915 we went back to Yosemite.

RT: Did you stay at the same place?

HML: Yes. I remember that Mrs. Alberta Bancroft Reid and her daughter Frances Ann (just my age) were guests in that camp.

In 1916, in that year, we took our car for the first time because they opened the Tioga Road, and they changed the management from the army to the National Park Service. We spent just a little while in Yosemite and then started up the Tioga Road, in short stages, camping along the way. I think that was the year I first met Ansel [Adams]* but I don't really remember exactly.

RT: What kind of car did you have?

HML: A Locomobile.

RT: How many were there? Just the four of you in your family?

*Ansel Adams, oral history in process.

HML: The four of us and my aunt Anita Gompertz, later Mrs. Brooks Palmer. Then our very dear friends James and Eleanor Hutchinson, in their old car, which was an Auburn. The Hutchinsons were always with us on all those family trips, and later the [Duncan] McDuffies, Professor Charles Noble, and Mr. James Moffitt.

RT: James Hutchinson, was he an attorney?

HML: He was an attorney, and his wife was Eleanor Hutchinson. They had no children, but they adopted a girl, and they brought her along.

RT: They were friends of your father and mother?

HML: They were their dearest friends.

RT: Were they along your first year?

HML: Oh, yes! I'm sure.

RT: Every year?

HML: I'm sure.

RT: And the McDuffies, that was . . . ?

HML: Duncan and Jean McDuffie. He was of the Mason-McDuffie [real estate] company. Mrs. McDuffie was a sister of Sidney Howard, the playwright, and the most handsome, stunning woman! Mr. McDuffie was very handsome too. They really looked like a--well, they used to call him the Duke of Northbrae [laughs].

RT: What were the Hutchinson like?

HML: Just charming. Mrs. Hutchinson was kind of difficult; either you liked her or you didn't.

RT: But you did?

HML: Oh, we did, but she couldn't get along with some people at all.

RT: How about Mr. Hutchinson?

HML: Oh, he was delightful. I just loved him dearly. They were Uncle Jim and Aunt Eleanor. He was full of wonderful humorous stories and comic verses. He was a splendid camper and climber.

RT: He was your attorney until his death, wasn't he?

HML: Yes.

RT: And they were all of a mind about camping; all liked to camp the same way?

HML: Yes. Of course, the wives by this time were not able to "rough it", really. So this was pretty luxurious camping, compared with packing off with knapsacks. We had everything--a little wood-burning stove--and we built a table so we could sit. They got stumps of dead trees, sawed them off, and made chairs to sit around the table.

RT: What did they sleep on?

HML: On the ground. People could bring cots if they wanted, but if you get enough pine needles, it makes a lovely bed. Lovely mattress.

RT: This was the day of bedrolls rather than sleeping bags, was it?

HML: Oh no, sleeping bags. They're much warmer. But not like modern ones that only weigh three pounds--eiderdown. They were really heavy, but we were in the car, so it didn't matter.

RT: Did you have tents?

HML: For rain, yes.

RT: Otherwise you slept outdoors?

HML: Yes. The stars were incredibly beautiful in the intensely clear air at high elevations.

RT: What did the women do during the day?

HML: They'd go for little walks, and botanize, and talk, and read. They brought lots of books. There was lots to do.

RT: And as you got older, what did you do?

HML: We went on as many walks as possible. Is this, you mean, in Yosemite, or going up along the Tioga Road?

RT: Either. Whenever you were in the Sierra. As you got older, did you climb more?

HML: Oh, yes! We had a wonderful camp that my father and Mr. Hutchinson discovered in 1916 on Porcupine Creek, which is a little creek-- I guess it's a tributary of Tenaya Creek. It's beautiful. I don't

HML: know if you know Yosemite well enough to know where North Dome is, but it was probably five miles north of North Dome, also near Tioga Road, and they'd always go and erase the tracks of the cars so nobody would see where we turned in.

That was not far from Mt. Hoffmann, which is not very high, but it's delightful to climb, very easy, though there are a lot of big rocks at the top, so that if people want to, they can make it into a very difficult rock climb. This has been done later by a modern group of rock climbers. I climbed it first in 1919.

RT: Were there actually climbing techniques that your father showed you?

HML: No. Heavens, no. That was all developed in the thirties, when somebody from the East [Robert Underhill] came out--a friend of Francis Farquhar*--and went on a Sierra Club trip. He brought ropes and told everybody how to belay and do things, and climb. I never did go for that much.

RT: When you were first walking and then climbing around as a youngster, did you always go on trails?

HML: Oh, no. Heavens, no! There were no trails around Porcupine Flat. Although probably there was a trail that went from the top of Yosemite Falls around behind North Dome, but that was miles from our camp. I don't know, perhaps it went below North Dome.

All our early automobile trips were first to Yosemite, followed by trips up the Tioga Road to Porcupine Flat and on to Tuolumne Meadows. The Tioga Road was very, very rough in those days and not well graded.

After 1917 in Yosemite, my father thought the Valley was getting too crowded with campers. So in 1918 we drove up the Big Oak Flat Road and directly up the Tioga Road to Porcupine Flat--then two weeks later to Tuolumne Meadows, where there are many walks to take and scrambles up the granite domes. I climbed my first real mountain that year--Mt. Dana. It's not a bit difficult but it's on the main crest of the Sierra with a tiny glacier on the east side and a great view all around. It's directly above Tioga Pass on the east side and is 13,050 feet high.

We did this again in 1919, and I climbed a great deal more, including my first real rock climb up Unicorn Peak; that was more fun than a big peak like Dana.**

*Francis P. Farquhar, Sierra Club Mountaineer and Editor, Ann, Ray Lage, interviewers, Sierra Club Oral History Project (Sierra Club, San Francisco, 1974).

**For further recollections of early trips, see pp. 33-44.

Pack Trips of the Twenties

- RT: How old were you when you started going out on your own, without your father or another adult?
- HML: First of all, after my mother's death in 1924, in 1925 my father wanted to go on a real high pack trip and take me and my brother. He wanted somebody else, too. That's when he asked Ansel to go. We went all over the Kings River watershed, the south fork and the middle fork (with three burros--jackasses, my father called them, usually jacks for short). Then that went on for two years, '25 and '26.
- RT: Ansel went on both trips?
- HML: Yes.
- RT: How long were you out each time?
- HML: Six or seven weeks, I guess. We had to send in, on a pack train, a whole cache of food, which was hidden somewhere among the rocks. Hopefully the bears wouldn't get it [laughs]. So we'd always have to come back to the Kings River Canyon (south fork), because you couldn't really carry enough food for six weeks. That was sort of headquarters, and we'd make trips around from there.
- RT: It was you and your brother and Ansel and your father.
- HML: That was the first year. The second year, I invited--or rather my father said, "Invite some friend of yours." Well, I didn't really know Virginia [Best, later Adams] then, at all. So I invited the only girl I knew who would care to do that kind of thing. That was Mary Elizabeth Plehn. And so she came with us, and she's in these pictures in the album. We had four donkeys that year.
- Before my father came, Ansel took us on a two-week trip. Ansel and Mary Elizabeth Plehn and a friend of his, Mary Isabel Wocker, whose aunt was his first piano teacher and lived right behind his house, and Admiral [Charles F.] Pond and Bessie Pond--we went on a little two-week trip. (Admiral Pond was a brother-in-law of William Keith.)
- RT: Where was that trip?
- HML: That was into a branch of the south fork of the Kings River called Roaring River.

RT: And then your father joined you?

HML: Eventually. The Ponds had never gone with pack animals before. They just used to carry their beds and maybe just eat nuts and raisins. [Laughs.] Or dried fruit or hardtack. We took them back and met my father, and then we went all over the Kings River region again.

RT: High up in the mountains?

HML: Yes. After that trip my father said, "You kids have got to go on your own!"

RT: How old were you kids then?

HML: I was twenty-two.

RT: Joe was . . . ?

HML: He was eighteen. So Mary Elizabeth would come, but we certainly needed men! [Laughs.] So first we got Cedric Wright to come, who was a good deal older. But he couldn't stay for very long, so Mary Elizabeth had a friend. She was studying architecture, and she knew a young architectural student, Wesley Cherry. He was brought up on a ranch and knew all about getting along with animals, so he was awfully good at packing and that kind of thing. He went on a lot of our trips. That was 1927.

RT: Where'd you go?

HML: We still went back to the Kings River Canyon on the Kings River as a base, but always went to the high country, up Bubbs Creek or the Middle Fork. That is the most interesting of all of them, to me anyhow, the headwaters of the Middle Fork of the Kings.

RT: Did you go back to places that you'd been, or did you go to new places?

HML: Each time we'd go do something else, another canyon. Or we'd make little variations and climb a new mountain.

RT: Did you like being out without your father?

HML: Oh, sure. Except that, really, he was awfully good at camping and making you get up in time, before the snow melted. Now the one trouble with the trip with Ansel and the Ponds was that we never wanted to get up, and Ansel couldn't make us. [Laughter.]

HML: So we had one heck of a time getting over a pass, because there was a lot of snow that year, 1926. When we finally got up to the snow, it was all soft and mushy. The donkeys just sank in up to their armpits--whatever you call it. [Laughs.]

We had to unpack every one and haul the stuff up with ropes and drive the donkeys without any packs. That took all day, so we had to camp on the top of the pass, Copper Pass. Not a tree in sight. Luckily, there had been an old copper mine there, and there was some wood that the miners had brought up, years and years ago, when they were mining their copper mine. They hadn't used it all up, so we could light a fire. We could light a fire and cook dinner. Otherwise we'd have had to eat cold stuff.

RT: Helen, you said that prior to that the Ponds had just gone with backpacks. How long could people ordinarily stay out that way?

HML: Gee, I don't know, I never did it. Well, I did it once with the Sierra Club, but we had a base, you see, of food from the club, and we went off on knapsack camps. We stayed a long time, but we had all the resources from the Sierra Club commissary.

I don't know how long. It depends on how strong you are, how much you could carry.

RT: And on how much you eat?

HML: If you're big and strong you need more food. They do it for two weeks, these kids now, because they have so many new dehydrated foods that are so lightweight, and their sleeping bags now only weigh three or four pounds.

RT: What actually did you eat on those early trips?

HML: I remember that the best thing was corned-beef hash. [Laughs.]

RT: Canned?

HML: Yes, the beef was, but we boiled the potatoes and fried the onions, and we always had a side of bacon and an Edam cheese, a great big one. Maybe we had ham, I don't know; canned things, canned fruit and vegetables; and lots of hardtack! Of course, flour, sugar, salt, some kind of lard, macaroni and rice. Knorr's dried soup we called "Dynamite" because it came in long packages, just the size and shape of a stick of dynamite.

My father used to always stop and unpack the donkeys for lunch and make a pan of biscuits. Ansel was always amazed. We

HML: had a reflector oven. You build a fire against a rock and then set up this oven in front of it with these reflectors. The pan fits in, and the fire is reflected into it.

RT: Ansel mentioned that your father would really settle down and make lunch. Was that a reasonable thing to do at midday?

HML: Yes, I think it was, on a trip like that. It gave the jacks a rest too. Now, with the Sierra Club, where all the work was done for you, of course you didn't. There were too many people to stop and cook lunch for. You had dried fruit, cheese, Ghirardelli chocolate, and hardtack for lunch in your bandanna, and in your knapsack. They didn't cook lunch for you unless the camp was not moved that day.

RT: I see. On the Sierra Club trips, did you make an effort to really sit down and rest at noon?

HML: Oh, yes! It's so social! You have your little group and you can get off away from the rest. We always had tea or bouillon cubes for hot soup. One of the pleasures of the day!

RT: So you had a real rest at midday.

HML: Yes.

RT: When your father would get you up, what time would he get you up?

HML: Five o'clock.

RT: When would you leave?

HML: We would have the animals packed and be off at seven.

RT: What time would you stop for lunch?

HML: When there was a good place. There had to be feed for the animals and a stream, or at least where we could melt snow when it was very high.

RT: How about the afternoon when you would stop. Same thing?

HML: No, we would really find a camping place and unpack. We could decide that we might stay there two or three days.

RT: Did you often know where you were going to be at the end of the day?

HML: Oh yes.

RT: Sometimes not, though?

HML: No, I think we really always knew, because you can't go with donkeys very far from the beaten trail, although some donkeys are pretty good rock climbers. They don't have shoes on their feet. They don't have horse shoes or donkey shoes, so their little hooves are just fine. They stick to rocks.

First Outings with The Sierra Club

RT: What was the first Sierra Club trip you went on?

HML: My first real trip was in 1922. I was seventeen and had just graduated from high school, and I went with three older cousins, Mildred, Josephine, and Cecil LeConte . . . my second cousins. They are younger sisters of Tallulah [LeConte Elston].

RT: And the four of you went on a Sierra Club trip?

HML: We went on a Sierra Club trip, and it was to the Kern River--the Kaweah and the Kern. We ended up at the Kings River by going over Junction Pass, but we climbed Mt. Whitney on the way, and that was the most! At the age of seventeen, that was the greatest thing you could do [laughs]--it was the highest mountain in the United States.

RT: How big a party was it?

HML: Two hundred.

RT: That many?

HML: Oh, there always were, in the early days, but they don't allow that any more. Actually, we were about the only people there. There was a great emphasis on cleaning up the camps and leaving everything natural. Of course, the thing that really was bad was that we had to have so many mules, and they ate up all the feed in the meadows.

RT: Who led that trip?

HML: Mr. Colby. William Colby.

RT: Was Ansel on that one?

HML: Oh, no. He didn't start going with the club, I think, until 1927. That's why we had to get Cedric Wright and Wesley Cherry.

RT: Who helped Mr. Colby then?

HML: There was a very famous Sierra Clubber, Judge Clair Tappaan, from Los Angeles, who was just one of the best and most delightful leaders. Ansel took his place at campfires in 1927. "Tap" would tell such funny stories and get everybody laughing and joking.

RT: Was he a judge by then?

HML: Yes, I think he was. After he was too old to go, his son took over the management, but he didn't do anything at campfire; he just ran the commissary. Ansel took over campfires.

RT: Did they really get two hundred people at one campfire?

HML: You don't realize how big the country is, and the Sierra is. You wouldn't see these people, except at dinner and campfire.

RT: How did they serve dinner?

HML: It was like a cafeteria. We had a wonderful chef in my day, Dan Tachet. He was a French-Swiss, I think. He loved the mountains. He was the chef at some big club in Los Angeles, and he missed the mountains in Switzerland, so he just loved coming on Sierra Club trips.

He could really make very dull food taste good. Much better than what I had later on, when I went on some trips. The food didn't compare. Though it may have been better food, it wasn't as tasty.

RT: What was at the campfires? You said Judge Tappaan told jokes and things. Was there a theme?

HML: No, no, no--everything spontaneous. There were lots of interesting people on all of these trips, and he was good at getting people to talk about their subject, something they knew.

RT: Like what?

HML: For instance, Cedric's uncle was William Wright, who was the head of Lick Observatory. He'd talk about the stars. There maybe would be a geologist along, or a botanist. Cedric used to play the violin at the campfire, and he always brought a pupil, and he would arrange music so that all kinds of things that weren't written for two violins could be played by him and his pupil.

HML: They'd pack the violins along for free. Cedric invented some kind of wonderful case for them to go in, and they were put on the most stable mules. Dorothy Minty was one of those pupils, most talented.

RT: Did your father ever come on the Sierra Club trips?

HML: Early ones, but he didn't like all those crowds.

RT: So he didn't go on any with you?

HML: No. Of course, by the time I was going on lots of Sierra Club trips, he was over sixty and wasn't really very anxious to go. He made his last pack trip, though, when he was sixty in 1930. I wasn't on that trip. I think that's when I went to New York.

RT: Where did he go then?

HML: Back to his same old camping grounds.

RT: Who went with him then?

HML: My stepmother, and I think some former students of his and Professor Clarence Cory--a retired professor of engineering, who used to go with him on early trips in the 1890s.

RT: Not Joe?

HML: No. Joe was always at a job in the summer until he got married.

RT: Joe didn't go on the Sierra Club trips?

HML: He never went on the Sierra Club trips.

RT: Did he continue hiking?

HML: He went one summer, the summer I went on my first trip with my three cousins. He and my father and Professor Cory went on a pack trip into the Evolution country. That's in the headwaters of the San Joaquin.

RT: He didn't go camping after that time?

HML: He went in 1925, '26 and '27. After that he always got a job with PG&E, up in the mountains or in the foothills, but later he took his two sons on short pack trips on the east side of the Sierra.

RT: After your father's last trip, in 1930--did he ever go up to Yosemite after that?

HML: No! Too crowded. He'd go up to this place near Donner Summit--Soda Springs--where he and a group of friends that used to walk every Sunday in the Berkeley hills built a cabin. They called it the Ski Club, but of course none of them really skied except Professor [Joel] Hildebrand.*

They'd go up there the day after Christmas and stay a week. Then they'd all go up in the summer with their families and hire a cook.

RT: This was after their real camping days?

HML: Yes, they were all older.

RT: Who was in that Sunday walking club?

HML: Lincoln Hutchinson and James Hutchinson. They lived up there in Berkeley where Panoramic Way and Canyon Road split. They lived on that hill. All kinds of people . . . I guess Professor [Carl] Plehn, Mary Elizabeth's father; Professor Noble, Charles Noble; Mr. Colby; Walter Kellogg; Walter Starr; Professor Chauncey Wells.

RT: Was the Berkeley group kind of the nucleus of the Sierra Club still, at that time?

HML: No.

RT: Did the Berkeley people think they were different from the southern Californians?

HML: Oh, yes! [Laughter.]

RT: Better, of course.

HML: They looked down on those. [Laughter.]

RT: Because they were newcomers?

HML: It was kind of a joke. It was because they were boosters, you know. They were always bragging about Los Angeles.

RT: Helen, you were mentioning the man who named the mountains in the Evolution country.

*Joel Hildebrand, Sierra Club Leader and Ski Mountaineer, Ann, Ray Lage, Interviewers, Sierra Club Oral History Project (Sierra Club, San Francisco, 1975).

HML: Theodore Solomons. The highest mountain in that group is Mt. Darwin, and then there also is Mt. Huxley, Mt. Spencer, Mt. Wallace, Mt. Haeckel--I forget all the rest of them. And then Solomons named the lake at the foot of these mountains Evolution Lake, so it happened that the creek that ran out of it was called Evolution Creek. The whole group of peaks was the Evolution group.

RT: How'd he happen to do that?

HML: I don't know. He was just a very imaginative person. Did you read the biography of him in Francis' book?*

RT: No.

HML: Well, you'll find out anything you want to know there.

RT: What was he like?

HML: I don't know, I never met him.

RT: Was he considered an eccentric?

HML: He was kind of a loner. He went all by himself and did a lot of exploring. He was just exactly the same age as my father.

RT: Now, tell me more about your first trips with the Sierra Club.

HML: I had been on one in 1922. The whole trip took four weeks, with my cousins and my companions.

RT: Did you enjoy it?

HML: Oh, I just loved it! [Laughs.]

RT: In those days, who were the people you remember?

HML: Most of the people were older people. At least I thought so then, but they were probably only in their thirties and forties. I was the youngest person on that trip. Now the trips are almost all young people--teenagers and young twenties. But I don't think there were any very young people on that trip.

RT: How old were the oldest?

HML: I don't know. I suppose sixty.

RT: You liked those older people?

*Francis Farquhar, Place Names of the High Sierra. San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1926.

HML: I don't really remember them now. I'm sure there were people I liked of all ages.

RT: You didn't mind being with older people?

HML: I was an awful lot with my cousins, and maybe too much so, because I was shy and didn't mix too well. One of my cousins, Josephine LeConte, was quite amusing and could think up stunts to do at campfire groups. I don't know how. She was an amusing person. So I got to be in a lot of stunts, under her direction.

RT: What were they like?

HML: I can't remember, really. Just silly stuff. Everybody roared with laughter, so I guess they were good.

RT: You'd do these for the whole two hundred?

HML: Oh, yes. Campfire in the evenings was just wonderful. They'd build this great fire and then everybody would come and sit around. Mr. Colby would give a little talk and tell what we were going to do the next day. Then Clair Tappaan would tell his funny stories. He had the most wonderful series of talks that he gave that were parodies of nature talks.

They were all about funny, made-up animals. I wish I could remember them all, but I can't remember any of them. I am sure that that's been written down by someone,* just like Ansel's Greek tragedies have been written. But Tap never wrote them down first. They were off the top of his head, improvised.

RT: How far did you walk every day on those trips?

HML: They were varied. Very much. Some days it was a few miles, and then there would be a great tremendous long like to get over a pass. We'd have to go until there were enough trees to camp near, and enough feed for the animals, and that might be twenty miles. That was very seldom.

I would say ten or twelve miles. But then, we'd always lay over somewhere for three or four days.

RT: And then people could hike as far as they wanted?

HML: Or climb a mountain, or have a tea party, or do their laundry.

*They were published in the first Sierra Club Handbook of 1947 [H.M.L.].

- RT: When you'd go out and climb a mountain, would you have a large group?
- HML: Not too large.
- RT: Supervised?
- HML: There would be a leader, and you were supposed to do what the leader said. If it was a difficult mountain, you certainly did. But there wasn't any fancy rope climbing in those early days. Nobody thought about a rope. If you couldn't do it without the safety of a rope, you didn't do it. There wasn't nearly so much mountain climbing as there is now.
- RT: More hiking?
- HML: Yes. We'd go walk to the top of a ridge and see what's on the other side. Or go over this ridge, and there would be a lake, and we'd have lunch there. A lot of people would go fishing.
- RT: Do they do that much now?
- HML: Yes. The lakes are stocked with trout. Down around Mt. Whitney there's a very special trout . . . the golden trout.
- RT: Was there then?
- HML: Oh, yes. It was indigenous to a certain creek because of some mineral in the rocks and gravel.
- RT: Do you think you did anything on those early trips that they don't do now?
- HML: No, I think they do much more now.
- RT: Did you do anything any certain way that they didn't do later?
- HML: We were allowed to take heavier dunnage bags (35 lbs) because they hadn't invented all these lightweight things. Now it's 30 lbs or less.
- RT: I suppose that you had to be careful of your surroundings, as they are now.
- HML: Oh, yes! Everybody was urged to clean up any litter, and if you didn't, there was always some team from the commissary that would go through and bury everything.
- RT: What happened if you didn't? Was there social opprobrium?

HML: I don't know, because I think everybody was pretty good about cleaning up.

RT: Did you go to campsites that had been visibly used before?

HML: I guess so. There are not so many places where there is the right combination of wood, water, and feed for the animals.

RT: I was just trying to think of ways in which people were not so careful as they are now about damaging nature.

HML: We probably did damage it. But nobody else ever went through in such large groups, and there were very few individual small parties, and it always recovered. Go there the next year and you'd never know that the Sierra Club had been there.

But now that's not possible. All the trips are limited to about twenty-five people, maybe fifty at the most.

RT: Do you think that's better?

HML: I think it has to be. The advantage of a large group was that you weren't stuck with a few people that you might not like. You could always find your own congenial group, and you didn't have to pay any attention to people you might think were boring. Maybe they weren't at all, or perhaps they thought you were boring.

After Ansel and Virginia stopped going and that whole group didn't go on the trips any more, I found new friends, and one of the nice things about my little group was that we had the Pennyroyal Club. When we were in the parts of the Sierra where the pennyroyal plant grows and also where there was snow, we would have a pre-dinner gathering. Everybody brought their tin cups (you never were parted from your tin cup), and we would rub pennyroyal leaves in the cup, then fill it with snow, and then pour in a jigger of whiskey. It was better than a mint julep!

RT: Did you make friends that you kept that you wouldn't have otherwise?

HML: Yes. Later on I really did make most of my friends that way. Marjory Bridge Farquhar* was one--Rimo Bacigalupi another.

High Trips and Base Camps, 1928-1956

RT: You continued going on those trips then, every year?

*Marjory Bridge Farquhar, Pioneer Woman Rock Climber and Sierra Club Director, Ann Lage, interviewer, Sierra Club Oral History Project (Sierra Club, San Francisco, 1977).

HML: Later on, after my father stopped our pack trips when we went with donkeys, then I started going every year with the Sierra Club--except for two years when I was in New York and Europe--until I got a job when I only got two weeks vacation. But one year I even got a leave. I persuaded my office to give me two weeks without pay, so I could go for the whole four-week trip in 1935.

To me 1932 was one of the great trips. I had just come back from New York, and suddenly got home and realized that I had all these wonderful Sierra Club friends. It was the best group of people that ever were, on that trip.

RT: Who were they?

HML: Ansel and Virginia, to begin with. Cedric and Rhea Wright. First time I ever met Fritz and Ollo Baldauf. Francis Farquhar was along, and he had some charming friends from the East--Boston or suburbs of Boston--two nice married couples. Batch [Rimo Bacigalupi] was along; Milicent Sperry, who's now Milicent Cooksey; her sister, Mary. Dr. Hans Leschke and his son, Helmut.

RT: Was that also a big group?

HML: Yes, that was still in the days of big groups.

RT: Where'd you go?

HML: We started from Giant Forest. We went through the Kaweah watershed. That river doesn't head back very far, so we went over some pass into Kings River watershed, then over Forester Pass and into the Kern watershed. Then to Little Five Lakes basin, and then up to Moraine Lake, and that's where Ansel has the story of Mrs. Daisy May Huber and her spyglasses.

RT: Oh, yes. [Laughs.] Tell that story.

HML: Well, I can't tell it the way Ansel can.

RT: Go ahead!

HML: Mrs. Huber was so upset because the girls were going swimming in the lake in the nude.

RT: I thought it was the men.

HML: Yes. They did too on the other side of the lake. Well, I think it was even funnier that the girls did, down at their camp. What she was upset about was that the packers--the fellows that packed

HML: the mules--they looked down on us dudes as stupid, I guess because they all rode horses. They thought we were stupid to walk. And they were looking at the girls! [Laughter.]

Oh, and I can remember when, after Mrs. Huber got so shocked about the men over here going swimming and the girls there, Ansel and Virginia decided that we'd have to have a morals committee--a joke committee of course. Virginia was going to be the chairman, and we were going to see to it that there was no hanky-panky going on. [Laughs.] [I recall now that Virginia was the Vice Chairman!--H.M.L.]

RT: Where did you go that year?

HML: Well, that was in the Kern River watershed, and after that we went up to the foot of Mt. Whitney. I had climbed it ten years before and had no desire to do it again, but everybody else did! Almost every person except Rimo and me. We stayed in the camp and helped Dan Tachet make French pancakes for the whole bunch--crepes suzettes--200 of them.

You know, Dan was one of the most delightful people. He spoke this lovely broken English, and he had two sons that he ordered around as if they were slaves.

RT: They came too?

HML: To help him.

RT: How long were you out that year?

HML: Four weeks.

RT: Did you go once to Canada?

HML: Yes. Oh, that was a thrilling trip for me! It was just heavenly. I'd never been out of the United States, at that point.

RT: What year was that?

HML: 1928. I had had three weeks in the Sierra with my father and some other friends, so I was in good trim. We had a special train that went right through to Jasper Park, and then we rode back down the track on a flatcar with all our dunnage bags and got off in the middle of nowhere.

We hiked up fifteen miles to a place called Tonquin Valley, with this tremendous range of mountains. And it rained most of the time! It didn't seem to bother anybody. This was no kind of

HML: a trip to go on and sit around and have tea parties. You really had to get out and hike and climb, because of the weather.

Everyone was allowed five pounds extra to bring a tent. We never had them in the Sierra, because of the lack of rain. We had two Swiss guides that had been guiding on Mt. Rainier. They'd come from Switzerland. So they would take limited little groups of people up the mountains. I remember climbing with Ansel and Elsie Bell Earnshaw. The guide would only take three on this mountain. Then, of course, there were the really difficult ones where only the very select experienced mountain climbers could be considered.

Then after a week there at Tonquin Valley, we went back down the fifteen miles and got on another flatcar and went twenty more miles down the railroad track and got off at Robson National Park.

It took two days to get to the foot of Mt. Robson, which is the highest mountain in Canada. It isn't really very high, but it is spectacular because it's high above its base, but its base is low. A lot of times a mountain could be right at sea level, and only be five thousand feet high, but what a mountain!

RT: Did you all climb that?

HML: Oh, God no! [Laughs.] It was a party of about twenty very topnotch climbers that were picked by the guides. They were all men, except one girl, who came from Illinois, and she'd climbed in the Alps--Switzerland. She was really good! And the two Swiss guides, of course. We all camped at the snout of the Great Glacier that comes down from Mt. Robson and Mt. Resplendent--talk about glaciers! Here in California we don't even know what a real glacier is. They are simply tremendous things, great rivers of ice, full of beautiful shapes and color.

But we did--oh, quite a few people--did climb another mountain right next to Mt. Robson--Mt. Resplendent. I have some awfully good pictures of that of all of us on the top. The top was just a knife edge of ice. Ice climbing is very different from rock climbing. The guides cut steps in the ice all the way up. Oh, but Mt. Resplendent was such a beautiful shape! And I think I have an enlargement of Ansel's great photograph of it.

RT: Did Virginia go on that trip?

HML: No. They had just gotten married and didn't have any money. Ansel's way was paid because he was the official photographer, and he also helped Mr. Colby with the campfire entertainment.

RT: Mr. Colby led that?

HML: Yes.

RT: Was this the first trip out of California for the Sierra Club?

HML: No, they had been three times out. In 1905 they went to Mt. Rainier. In 1924, I think they went to Glacier National Park in northern Montana, and in '26 they went to Yellowstone.

RT: Was this the first out of the United States?

HML: Yes.

RT: Was that a big departure?

HML: Yes, I guess it was. Now, of course, they go all over the world. Oh, on that trip there were wonderfully interesting people! Jessie Whitehead, the daughter of the famous philosopher, had a terrible stutter and could hardly talk, but she was just full of joy and excitement about everything. On top of a mountain she discovered a trilobite embedded in a rock. By God, she lugged it all the way down! It must have weighed twenty-five pounds!. She took it back to Cambridge and put it in the museum. And there were some darling gals from Milton, Massachusetts, who were great friends of the Whiteheads.

RT: For the most part, were they California people, though?

HML: Oh, I think so, yes. Also a lot of people from the Seattle area came, because it was not so far for them.

RT: Did the California people think that these other people from out-of-state were rather exotic at that time?

HML: No, no, we were all friends. There wasn't any snobbishness on Sierra Club trips.

RT: You didn't feel any provincialism?

HML: Nobody was "small town" people on those trips, and certainly this trip. I just thought it was interesting to meet so many kinds of people. There were lots of people from the Middle West, from near Chicago.

RT: The club at that time had no political axes to grind?

HML: No, no, no, not as it has now. Oh, well, they did everything they could to promote national parks, and I think they were quite

HML: influential, but it wasn't the way it is now. For instance, I'm sure that they did a lot to get the Kings Canyon National Park and Sequoia Park enlarged and joined together, so now it's all one big park. I think it is.

RT: Were individual members asked to participate in these efforts?

HML: No, I think they all volunteered. Or maybe the directors would.

RT: Did your father, for instance, do any of this sort of campaigning?

HML: Well, he was not much on making speeches. No, he never did.

RT: I just wondered what kind of pressure was brought to bear, how it was done.

HML: Well, there were quite a number of influential members in San Francisco, I think. And I don't think there was any great opposition, either. This is all such high country, it can't be used for any other purpose. It can't be used economically, or you can't build a tract of cheap housing there. Can't have a housing development up there. [Laughs.]

There wasn't any opposition, much, to it, though I think there was some talk by eager beavers of building a highway into the Kings Canyon and on up Bubbs Creek (blasting it out of solid rock) and finally up over Kearsarge Pass and over on to the east side and down to Independence in Owens Valley. The result of this--it would no longer be a wilderness area and would bring in hordes of people, as has happened in Yosemite Valley.

Also, there was some thought of damming the river lower down and flooding up the valleys like Hetch Hetchy was flooded.

RT: Did your father take any part in the Hetch Hetchy matter that you know of?

HML: I was only about eight years old, and I wouldn't know.

RT: He didn't tell you about it afterwards?

HML: I suspect he might have; I'm sure maybe his photographs of Hetch Hetchy and maps and articles he'd written for the Sierra Club Bulletin and the old Sunset magazine might have had some influence.

RT: What was the last Sierra Club trip you went on?

HML: In 1956, I went on a base camp. That means that you just were packed in to one place and stayed there. Because I was getting too old

HML: and tired to go on a strenuous hiking trip. It was a marvelous group of people. It was a lucky thing it was, because it rained every single day.

It was just wonderful that there were such interesting, charming, delightful people. Betty Coulter came out from Washington and went with me, and Sylvia Hermanson; the three of us camped together. And there was Ruth and Henry Colby (Henry was Will Colby's son) and John and Margaret Hatfield, Ollie and Fritz Baldauf, Tay and Merle Wilson, and many others.

On the base camps there were somewhat different kinds of people from the hiking trips--more family groups and older people.

RT: They had had base camps earlier?

HML: Yes, I went on the first one in 1946, and Roxy [Roxana S. Ferris] went along on that.

RT: They had them all the time?

HML: No, I think they started them just about then, after World War II. Oh, they may have had them before that. I really don't know.

RT: But they were for people who didn't want to be active?

HML: They were the trips that Oliver Kehrlein ran.

Sierra Club People

RT: Helen, what was Mr. William E. Colby like? What sort of a man was he?

HML: Well, he was very tall and rugged and serious, but with a nice sense of humor and a sparkle in his eye, and just dedicated to the Sierra Club. He was a mining lawyer, which was quite a specialty in the field of law, I guess. You know, mining claims. If you get a mining claim, and maybe it runs down into the ground and goes under somebody else's, does that belong to you or to the other person?

He was just a wonderful leader, and well, I don't know how to describe him. He was a very strong person; he gave us all confidence in hiking or climbing, and especially in appreciating the beauty of our environment.

RT: Was he strong physically?

HML: Physically, and his character and personality, and perfectly delightful. He might sort of intimidate some people. I don't know, but it might be possible. He really was just a wonderful person.

RT: Was this his whole recreational interest?

HML: Yes. I think at first it was. Later on he used to collect things, and he had to have the biggest thing or the most things.

RT: What kind of things?

HML: He started collecting records, and they had to be the loudest! [Laughs.] And then Oriental things, and Albert Bender sold him a lot of things, and some people said that they were all fake, but I don't believe it. They were great friends, although Albert never set foot off a city pavement, I'm sure.

RT: He apparently, from some letters I was looking at today, had gone up to Yosemite with the Adamses once.

HML: Well, yes, but that's very civilized.

RT: What was the economic range of people in the Sierra Club in the early days? Were there any poor people?

HML: Not really poor, but there was a butcher's son--Jack Rieglehuth and an Armenian fellow who was the son of a grocer, who had a grocery at Clay and Mason, Raffi Bedayn. They were probably richer than anybody. [Laughs.]

RT: But they were not of the same class as the rest of them.

HML: Well, you never thought about that. There wasn't any class feeling, I don't think.* There were always a few snobs.

RT: What were they snobbish about?

HML: Oh, I don't know. Elsie Bell Earnshaw used to just put everyone in their social positions, but everyone laughed at her.

RT: But mostly these were professional people, were they?

HML: Yes, and of course teachers went, because they got longer vacations, and college professors. And they also arranged it, very often, so that people could go for the first two weeks or the last two weeks. But two weeks just seemed so short; you were just getting used to

*See also pp. 49-51.

HML: the life and getting hardened to it so that everything was easy, and then it was time to go out. And if you came in the second two weeks, here were all these other people, all in great form from hiking, and here you were just a softie! So I would just have hated to come in the last two weeks.

RT: How did people join the Sierra Club in those days, do you know? How did they know about it?

HML: Well, they just loved the mountains.

RT: You could just apply for membership?

HML: Not at first--you had to have two sponsors. You don't any more. Once I sponsored Dick Holmes. That was Roxy's friend. He's chairman of the department of botany now, at Stanford. I and somebody else sponsored him. Some little dolt [laughs], a nitwit in the office wrote and wanted to know all about his qualifications and his background and if he was trustworthy. I was just furious! And I refused to answer her questions. But I wrote back, and I said, "I have sponsored dozens of people, and no one has ever questioned my word." [Laughs.]

I was just furious! And I think this happened to a lot of other people too who were furious. So now nobody sponsors anybody. Anybody who wants can join. Of course, they want members, members, members because they're now a big political force, and the more members they have, the more weight they have, and the more money they have.

RT: But then it didn't make any difference how many members?

HML: Well, they weren't out to get them at first. They were just a small club, I mean just a few thousand. Maybe 2,500, 3,000 people at the most. We hadn't begun to worry about the environment.

RT: When you knew somebody you liked, did you suggest that they join the Sierra Club?

HML: Well, if they enjoyed living outdoors and camping, yes. But to a lot of friends I wouldn't even think of suggesting it.

RT: But the people who joined then, they were supposed to be of good character?

HML: Oh yes. [Laughs.]

Note: There is no page 29 in this interview.

RT: I suppose you wanted them to be pleasant enough to get along with on a trip?

HML: Occasionally there were some very trying people on the trips. I won't mention any names. You know, they were the minority. Ansel was very good--he could put them down when they tried to speak up at campfire and be obnoxious. [Laughs.]

And, as I say, there were enough people that you didn't have to bother with these people.

RT: In what ways would people be obnoxious?

HML: Oh, just show-offs and know-it-alls.

RT: Were there complainers?

HML: I guess so. They didn't last long. Really, one way to get to know people is to go on a camping trip with them.

"Wonderful Old Men of the Mountains"

HML: I wish I could remember some of the funny old men of the mountains that we'd meet on our little trips. They ran their horses in there in the Kings River Canyon, before it was a park. They used to just spend their summers there in the Kings River Canyon.

RT: Were they from the San Joaquin Valley?

HML: Yes, or the Owens Valley. We were old friends.

RT: You're speaking of when you went with your family? Not the Sierra Club?

HML: They wouldn't come near the Sierra Club!

RT: Did they join your camp, then?

HML: Well, they'd come over in the evening after dinner. Oh, they had their own type of food. Once in a while, we'd invite them to dinner. We weren't too anxious to go to their camp for dinner.

RT: Did those men travel in large groups?

HML: No. Just one man.

RT: Would he come to your campfire in the evening, then?

HML: Yes, or we'd ask him to come over.

RT: Did they tell stories or anything?

HML: Oh, yes, they used to talk with my father. They'd talk about old days and how much better it was. They were just wonderful old characters. I don't suppose there are any people like that any more in existence. They were all old bachelors and didn't have any descendants. Ike Wildemuth was one. And another was Ed Zumwalt.

RT: Ike who?

HML: Wildemuth. I don't know how he spelled it, whether it was Wildermuth or Wilde-muth. Actually I think they just ran horses up there because they loved going into the mountains. [Laughs.] They were just funny old characters, old bachelors, old mountainmen. Not that they climbed, that was foolish--they rode horses.

RT: Were they ostensibly taking them to pasture?

HML: Yes, because it was too dry down in the foothills. But I think for some it was just an excuse to get into the mountains. There were two of them down in the Kings River Canyon, one on each side of the river, Wildemuth and Zumwalt. I don't know if they spoke to each other. But there was one beautiful meadow that they could run their horses in.

And then there was another fellow way up Bubbs Creek above the south fork of the Kings River. I think some wealthy man built a cabin there, and he was supposed to be the caretaker. The wealthy man probably never went there more than once in five years for about five days.

RT: These are people that you just didn't meet once, but saw again?

HML: Oh, they were there every year.

RT: Were people grazing anything but horses?

HML: Oh no, no.

RT: Weren't allowed to?

HML: Well, I don't think that there was enough feed for cattle. And sheep were out, because they'd just ruin the country. That had been outlawed. I think John Muir was very influential in this.

HML: He worked for a sheepherder one year and saw the devastating effects--nothing green left anywhere.

And then we'd, every now and then, meet up with Norman Clyde, who was this fanatic mountain climber. He had been a school teacher, but he spent his life and his summers climbing, all the time, in the Sierra. He probably climbed every mountain in the Sierra.

RT: What did he look like?

HML: Oh, I'll show you a picture. Rugged fellow, very broad. He'd carry everything on his back, it seemed, including a doctor's kit and a blacksmith's outfit. [Laughs.]

Once Ernest Arnold had a terrible toothache in the wilderness. Was it Norman Clyde that pulled his tooth? No, no, no, it was another wonderful character! Bill Horsfall, who was a plumber. Now this is just fantastic, this Bill Horsfall was perfectly delightful, wonderfully sweet, kind, a good plumber, but no other education. And he'd go on Sierra Club trips. He's the one who would carry everything but the kitchen sink. And he pulled Ernest Arnold's tooth when the official trip doctor couldn't or wouldn't.

PORTRAITS OF SIERRA CAMPS AND CAMPERS

Family Camping Trips, Continued

Ruth Teiser: This is August 23, 1975, and we are continuing Helen LeConte's interview, she having listened to the tape of the first one we had made.

We are now at Helen LeConte's apartment on Lombard Street in San Francisco. We're not in the back of an automobile, enroute from Carmel to San Francisco, as we were before in May, 1974.

Helen M. LeConte: I think I mentioned that the first time I went to the mountains was in 1912, when I was seven years old. But I never told how we got there.

RT: And you can remember how you got there?

HML: Of course! Seven years old isn't very young for a memory. Anyway, we took a train to a place called El Portal.

RT: From Berkeley?

HML: Yes. To a place called El Portal, which is down in the Merced Canyon. And then we took a stagecoach with four horses into the valley. The reason that they had horses was that the army was in charge of the park, and they had a cavalry troop in there. Automobiles scared the army horses. And that's why, when my Uncle Charles came in with his car, they chained the car to a tree.

RT: How many people could ride in a stagecoach?

HML: I don't remember, because I sat up in the front seat with the driver in my father's lap. And I didn't know what was going on in the back! [Laughs.] How many people . . . My brother was in there with my mother. A lot of people.

- RT: We were looking at your album, and this is you playing in a stream with a stick.
- HML: That's Joe and me.
- RT: On that same trip?
- HML: Yes.
- RT: You had on overalls.
- HML: That's what I wore, except for dress-up things. You'll see later I had a dress on for one picture.
- RT: Mostly you wore overalls?
- HML: Oh, yes.
- RT: Who washed? [Laughter.]
- HML: Everybody! Well, I guess, my mother. [Laughs.] There were two ladies that came along on this first trip and got their trip free. They did all the cooking.
- RT: Were they friends or were they servants?
- HML: They were friends of my Aunt Anita. They were not servants.
- RT: Who were they? Do you remember?
- HML: One was Miss Goin, and one was Mrs. Goin, her sister-in-law. [Laughs.] I guess that's what it was.
- RT: So you had quite a party there.
- HML: Oh, yes! Lots of people. There's a picture in there of us all at the dinner table. These early trips into Yosemite were quite luxurious compared to our later pack trips with burros into the real wilderness. [Turns pages of album.] Here are the ladies cooking in the kitchen.
- RT: Well, they put up a little kitchen. And they have caps on.
- HML: Yes. And here are some of us at the dinner table.
- RT: You had regular chairs.
- HML: This is Aunt Anita's tent, because she was very modest and had to sleep in her tent every night.

RT: Everyone else except Aunt Anita slept outside every night?

HML: Yes. Ah, here we are. [Indicates photo.] This is the one of all of us at the dinner table.

RT: Well, you're one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen!

HML: This is me.

RT: Right down at the front.

HML: Yes. My father usually sat there, but he took the picture.

RT: Then there were fourteen of you, really.

HML: This is Uncle Charles. And this is Jack Gompertz.

RT: A little fellow.

HML: This is his sister Ruth, who's Ruth Watson. She lives in Carmel. This is my Aunt Anita, who willed me the blue-and-white Chinese dishes.

RT: Who's this?

HML: This is Jack's mother, who was named Anita also, and this is Miss [Nell] Taggard, her sister, who became the first secretary of the Sierra Club. She and Mr. Colby ran the Sierra Club for about the first twenty years of its existence.

RT: What was Miss Taggard like?

HML: Oh, she was just very pretty and charming. I don't know, she was just delightful. She was a perfect public relations lady to have in the office.

RT: Was it just a one-person office?

HML: Oh, yes. And after that, my cousin Mildred was the secretary. Mr. Colby and Mildred ran it.

RT: Mildred who?

HML: Mildred LeConte--one of my cousins who went on my first High Trip.

RT: Whose daughter is she?

HML: Well, she's John LeConte's granddaughter.

RT: And who's her father?

HML: Julian LeConte. Uncle Jules. [Indicates another photo.] Well, here's Jack and me all up at a place at the foot of Yosemite Falls. Aren't we a tough bunch? [Laughter.]

RT: Who's on horseback here?

HML: This is charming Mrs. Hutchinson.

RT: Who rode horses, and when, Helen?

HML: Oh, they rode often with the Sierra Club, if they were not very rugged they went on horseback.

There's Joe playing in the river. [Indicating a photo.] Isn't this funny? Here's poor little Joe. [Laughs.]

RT: Getting mashed! By whom?

HML: Jack.

RT: Your father loved to take pictures of you kids, didn't he?

HML: Well, that summer was the first time he had any kids around.

RT: Is that a fireless cooker? That box?

HML: I don't know what that is. Maybe so. I know we had one in Berkeley. A big one that held three pots.

RT: Maybe it's just a chest to keep the bears from the food.

HML: Well, we didn't have any trouble with bears at that time, because the bears didn't realize they were protected yet. [Laughs.] They hadn't caught on to the fact that they could come. That came later.

RT: So there really weren't bears around the camps?

HML: Not that year, certainly. There were at Porcupine Flat, but that was several years later, in 1919.

RT: Was that a more remote location?

HML: Oh yes, that's the camp up on the Tioga Road, behind North Dome.

This picture is Berkeley, back in '15.

RT: Who is that?

HML: That's Joe.

RT: Joe has a little of the expression of your father, does he?

HML: Well, sometimes. No, he really looks more like some of the Gompertzes. Except for his eyes. Now these are some of us out Sunday walking. This is Professor [Chauncey] Wells, and this is Walter Kellogg, and this is Mr. Hutchinson, or is that Duncan McDuffie? I can't tell.

RT: They all went out Sunday walking with your father?

HML: Yes.

RT: What time of day would they start?

HML: About ten, I guess. Afterwards, they'd all meet at the Hutchinsons and have a drink, and come home for a one o'clock dinner.

RT: Nobody went to church?

HML: Oh, no. [Laughs.]

Porcupine Flat and Camps of the Twenties

HML: I have some pictures of the Porcupine Flat camp. Here's Mr. Moffitt sitting on his bed, which he made for himself. I forgot to say that James Moffitt usually came on these high trips. Not to Yosemite, but to these trips along the Tioga Road and Tuolumne Meadows.

RT: He has a cot.

HML: Which he made, I think. He put pine needles on it. Because he built a little bridge across the stream, it was called Moffitt's Bridge. [Laughs.] It's still there, I think.

RT: He has a little shelter on top of his cot. What was he like, Helen?

HML: Oh, he was just wonderful. You know, I say all of these people were wonderful; they were all very different.

Here we are at dinner. This is Joe. Now this is Charlie Dutton, who was a character that the McDuffies brought along. This is Mr. McDuffie. Charlie Dutton amused us constantly by his very funny conversation. Incidentally, he was a musician.

- RT: This was in 1921?
- HML: Yes. Mrs. McDuffie, was here, I guess. There she is! She was so beautiful that she ought to be in there.
- RT: Who's this?
- HML: That's Professor Noble, Charles Noble, professor of mathematics.
- RT: And he cam on trips also?
- HML: He came along with Walter Kellogg.
- RT: What was Professor Noble like?
- HML: Oh, he was another very striking-looking man, with great dark eyes and white hair.
- RT: He looks very somber there.
- HML: No, they were none of them somber. They were posing for their picture.
- RT: James Moffitt of Crocker Bank?
- HML: They were very well off, and lived in Piedmont, and his wife never went camping. But she understood it, and always had us all to dinner afterwards. And also Mrs. [Charles] Noble never went, but Mrs. Hutchinson loved it. She'd been on early Sierra Club trips, on the very earliest trips.
- After Porcupine Flat, we went on to the Tuolumne Meadows, which is a great open meadow miles long, but it has trees, of course, all around it, and in the middle of some of it. You know, it's where the Tioga Road--have you been over Tioga Pass?
- RT: Yes.
- HML: And you've been down through Tuolumne Meadows?
- RT: Yes.
- HML: My father there found a marvelous camp that nobody could get at. It seems that the Tuolumne River has two forks, one that comes down from Mt. Dana, the other from Mt. Lyell. They come down into the meadow and come together, and then they form the great Tuolumne River. He found a place where there was an old road that had been a ford, so we could drive over the river and into this triangular land between the two forks of the river, and a beautiful camp there!

HML: Well, people would come around the other side and say, "How'd you get across?" and my father would say, "Well, there's a bridge about a mile and a half down," which was perfectly true, but the bridge crossed the main river, and if they did go across the bridge and up the other side, there was no road, and they would have gone up the Lyell Fork anyhow. [Laughs.]

We camped there for three different summers, but then Stephen Mather was in the meadow one summer (he was the director of the National Parks) with all his family and friends, and he was thrilled with our camp. We had them to dinner. And the next summer we got there, lo and behold, he was camped there!

RT: At your camp?

HML: Yes! [Laughs.]

RT: What did you do?

HML: We had to find another one.

RT: How mean!

HML: It was!

RT: Where did you go?

HML: Well, we went further up the Dana Fork and found a place. It never was as nice. [Laughs.]

Then the very first trip in the car we stopped at Porcupine Flat and then went on to Tuolumne Meadows, for a week I guess. And then we went over Tioga Pass. Well, that road--it was the first year that it was open to automobiles.

RT: What year was that?

HML: 1916. And, of course, it was the same roadbed, but it was just a one-track, one-way road! [Laughs.] Well, there were turnouts every now and then, but it was the most scary! It was precipitous. I don't know if they've made it a two-lane road; by now they must have. It's probably paved, too. But it was quite an adventure, and we only got down to the foot of the grade--on the east side--just before the road comes out on the desert.

We camped in a grove of aspens, the last trees. Clear beyond that is desert and Mono Lake. The next morning we packed up and decided that we were going to go 'way up the east side of the

HML: Sierra and get as far as we could towards Lake Tahoe. But after about two or three miles, just as we were approaching Mono Lake, Mr. Hutchinson's car was ahead of us, his lovely Auburn,* and all of a sudden the back end went down like this, and we saw his rear wheel rolling off into the desert. He'd broken the rear axle.

RT: What did you do?

HML: We were near a place called Leevining, which is right on the lake, and somehow they towed him in. There was a garage there, and they towed him in. I don't know how, without a wheel, but anyhow the car did get in, probably dragged it.

We camped there on an irrigating ditch [laughs] in a little grove of aspens, behind the little settlement. There was a general store, and a funny old hotel, and a few cabins. It was just as Mark Twain described it, in Roughing It. It really was. The Indians came in every Sunday to gamble. There was a little apple orchard, and they came into the hotel and played gambling games.

There were no parts for Auburn cars at Leevining or even in San Francisco, so they telephoned to Los Angeles, and finally a rear axle was sent up by stage, I guess. I don't know if the train went up, but it wouldn't have gone beyond Bishop. But it finally came, and my father and Mr. Hutchinson put it in. They connected the wheel up again.

RT: Your father knew very well how to take care of automobiles, did he not?

HML: And how to put them together, yes--what made them go.

RT: Helen, in this 1921 album, here is a picture of a whole bunch of people on a real peaky peak.

HML: Oh, this is probably the top of Mt. Lyell. Yes, this is Mt. Lyell. And this is a real little glacier, but it's tiny.

RT: Who are these people walking across it?

HML: This is Joe and me. We packed up from Tuolumne Meadows with Mr. Hutchinson and Mr. Moffitt, and Mr. McDuffie, and one mule.

RT: This was summer, wasn't it?

*He used to call it the sweet Auburn, the loveliest of the very plain.--H.M.L.

HML: Oh, yes. This was July. There's perpetual snow on many of the mountains. There's always snow, unless it's a very dry year. This is Joe and me, and that's Mr. Moffitt.

RT: Was he a big man?

HML: He wasn't a small man by any means. He was not as tall as Mr. McDuffie, who was a very tall man.

RT: Who is that on the next page there?

HML: This is my father; this is Joe; this is Mr. Moffitt, I guess; and I don't know if that's Mr. McDuffie. He used to wear one of those tropical helmets. He said that his head got so hot in a felt hat that he liked them. I guess Mr. Hutchinson took these pictures.

Here's a picture of a sort of hotel, I guess you'd call it, where they'd put you up in the Kings River Canyon--Kanawyer's.

RT: It looks like a barn.

HML: Mr. Kanawyer was named Napoleon but he was always called "Poley," and Mrs. Kanawyer was named Violet.

This is my grandfather. And this is Mrs. Kanawyer, and this is Poley, and these are various relatives. My aunt Emma was on that trip, but she's not in the picture. That's a good picture of my mother, it really is (1900).

RT: Now she was dressed the way one would dress . . .

HML: She had to dress formally. But she did wear trousers, bloomers, when climbing mountains.

RT: She did?

HML: But she didn't want anyone to see her! [Laughs.]

Now here's the Sierra Club having dinner. See the long dresses? (1902)

RT: Where was this?

HML: This was in the south fork of the Kings River, that's in the Kings River Canyon. Now the middle fork is much harder to get into. I believe that there's a road in this far now into the South Fork.

RT: They have on waists and full skirts. White cotton waists and hats.

HML: "Waists" is right. Not "blouses."

RT: Long-sleeved waists, and hats, and full skirts, and what kind of shoes, I wonder?

HML: Oh, boots.

RT: They did wear boots?

HML: They were afraid of rattlesnakes--and also the dust and dirt of the big main trails.

This must have been the Fourth of July dinner, 'cause they had lanterns. Now there's an awfully funny one of the "Floradora Sextet." This is Tallulah.

RT: Your cousin Tallulah . . .

HML: Tallulah LeConte Elston. Arthur Elston used to go on these trips too.

RT: This woman has on a dark blouse and a skirt.

HML: It was very warm in the day and very cold at night. Unless you're really up high, and then it's never very warm.

RT: You must have had to carry along lots of layers of clothes?

HML: Well, sure.

RT: And sleeping bags?

HML: Oh, yes.

RT: And what were they? Down-filled?

HML: Not until later. We just had wool comforters to make a bed. They were made pretty heavy; that's why we had pack animals. We didn't go knapsacking.

RT: They were just the kind of wool comforters you'd use at home?

HML: Well, I think so. Usually covered with a dark brown cloth, so it wouldn't show the dirt. You could put a sheet in if you wanted to, but we weren't too fussy.

I meant to mention Professor [Chauncey] Wells, who went on some of the automobile trips.

RT: What was he like?

HML: He was a professor of English at Cal. He was a charming person, very amusing. I don't know how to describe him. He was a very scholarly gentleman, with a lovely sense of humor. He never would have done any climbing, you know, I don't think he would have gone on a rough pack trip, just on the automobile trips.

RT: Actually, then, some trips were really rough and some trips were deluxe.

HML: Until 1925 they were all quite deluxe. Oh, no, there was one--well, it was sort of half-and-half. In 1920, we'd been going to Yosemite and up to Porcupine Flat and Tuolumne Meadows for many years. Then my father and mother had a friend, Mr. Jesse Agnew, who lived in Visalia, and he owned property all over the Sierra that wasn't in parks. He owned a large meadow called Horse Corral Meadow, just a few miles from the Kings River Canyon, and he had a great summer place there, little cabins and a dining room with canvas cover in case it rained, with a dining room table there.

He had all his friends come. It was like our camps except that it was a permanent thing. And he had a lot of cattle, cows, and horses. They all rode horseback. But anyhow, I think we went to Giant Forest first and left our car. I think we camped there a couple of weeks. My mother was able to ride a horse in, and it took two or three days to get to Horse Corral Meadow. And then we spent the whole summer there--six weeks, I guess. There were some other young people there my age.

But in the middle of this, Mr. Agnew and my father and Joe and I took a pack trip into the Kings River Canyon. I was fifteen, and that was my first real pack trip. We camped there two days. Then we went up out of the canyon, this terrific climb, up the north wall to a place called Granite Basin--practically no trees, just white granite--and I guess we stayed all night there. Then we went down into the middle fork of the Kings, which is very remote. This is one of the few ways to get into it, to a place called Simpson Meadow, and guess what?--there was the Sierra Club! [Laughs.]

RT: 1920?

HML: Yes. And they'd come there to end their trip. They'd come over--I don't know how they'd come--from the Evolution country and over Muir Pass, I guess.

RT: And they were hiking in too?

HML: Yes. I don't know if I should say layover or lieover, which is correct . . . anyway, they were there for several days, because there were many places to go. And then we stayed with them for a few days and went on further up the middle fork of the Kings. And that really is wonderful, wild, rugged country--my very favorite.

But then we had to leave the club and go back to our camp.

Ansel Adams Trip Album, 1923

RT: This next album?

HML: This is the trip with Ansel.

RT: This was 1923, and this is an album that Ansel made, is it not?

HML: Those are all his early pictures. The trip was into the back country of Yosemite. I think we climbed Half Dome and Clouds Rest. See, this is Nevada Falls, on the Merced River. We camped up there, back in a place called Little Yosemite. And then we climbed Clouds Rest, and then went down the wall of Tenaya Canyon and up Half Dome.

That's my father [indicating a photo] and Joe, and he had a friend, Ted Linforth, here. And this is Mary Elizabeth Plehn, and this is me.

RT: And Ansel was taking the picture?

HML: Ansel took the picture.

RT: Is that all of you?

HML: Yes. We packed our beds and food on one white mule named Blacky and one small burro named Mistletoe.

RT: Let me read the first caption. This is called, "The trip to Merced Peak in 1923. Just a few photographs by one of the bunch." The caption on the first picture is, "The party is here seen at the base of Nevada Falls. The photographer is hungry already. It was a grand morning." I guess that's the tone of them all, isn't it?

HML: The photographer is very hungry in the next two or three pictures! [Laughs.]

RT: Was Ansel carrying a lot of equipment?

HML: Well, not as much as when he went on a really big pack trip to the Kings River. He had a whole kayak full of glass plates. Even though glass plates were long gone, had been replaced by film, he still felt that maybe he could get better pictures with glass plates. So those two summers that he went with us, he carried them--or we carried them on the donkey. In that picture of Ansel's donkey on top of the pass, all those kayaks are full of glass plates.

RT: When you say kayaks--

HML: Oh, that's not the boat that you go down the river in. It's the boxes that they pack on mules and donkeys. We call them kayaks. I don't know why they use that same word.

RT: Did Ansel make this album for your father?

HML: Yes, as a thank-you for the trip.

RT: Who's this?

HML: That's my father trying to push over that boulder. [Laughs.] This is an example of the eroding away of the ground around it, leaving a hole.

RT: Yes, this is a boulder on a very small base, and this is picture #14, and the caption says, "The remarkable glacier boulder on the Quarter Dome. The professor exhibiting his muscularity. He will tip the Half Dome next." [Laughter.]

Was Ansel always amusing on those trips?

HML: Oh yes! Always.

RT: Was your father funny?

HML: Well, together they were lots of fun. Yes, I think he was, although he got awfully grim and serious lots of time. But he was so happy in the mountains that he was really very pleasant to camp with. Besides, he always got us up in time to get there!

RT: When your father was home, was he likely to be more somber?

HML: No, he was both. Sometimes he'd get awfully angry about nothing.

Catherine Harroun: But he was great at a party, wasn't he?

HML: Well, he loved his friends, and he just loved to have them come. You know, it's hard to talk about your family objectively.

RT: You say that Ansel and your father were fun together, but there was quite a good deal of difference in their ages.

HML: Oh, that didn't matter. Ansel was a very unusual young man. When he was young, he was so mature in many ways. Of course, he was crazy about photography, even though he thought that he was going to be a musician. And he loved the mountains so much that it was a very pleasant combination.

RT: Of course, your father knew a good deal about photography.

HML: Yes, he knew about that.

RT: Did your father talk to him about it?

HML: Yes, I'm sure. He also made a whole album after the 1925 trip of pictures around Lake Marion, which my father named after my mother. It was her middle name, but there were already three Helen lakes in the mountains so he used her middle name. And they are beautiful shots, although made in the early manner of the Parmelian Prints.

Early Climbs in the High Sierra

RT: On these early trips with your family, did you do some heavy hiking?

HML: Well, it depends. I think that my first trip to Glacier Point, when I was ten years old, up the Ledge Trail, was really quite a climb for a little girl, because there was no trail; it was just a way to get there--a very wide ledge. It was very steep, and then it turned into a big, very steep gully where the stream was. We practically had to walk and climb in the stream the whole way. Waterfalls and everything. [Laughs.]

RT: Anything to hang onto?

HML: Oh, yes, there were rocks everywhere.

RT: When you went on the trip with your father and Joe in 1920 from Horse Corral Meadows, did you just have knapsacks?

HML: Oh, we had horses to pack.

RT: Oh, you packed your stuff on your horses?

HML: Yes, on Mr. Agnew's horses.

RT: So it wasn't backpacking.

HML: Oh, no. I couldn't have done that. I did go on some short knapsack trips with the Sierra Club in 1933. But we didn't have to carry very much because we had all the Sierra Club resources, all their food, and we only had to carry enough to last the few days that we were going to be away.

But it was lots of fun, because we had a nice little group of people who just liked to climb. That's when we really did climbing with ropes. Half the time that year I was never in the Sierra Club camp, but off on these little knapsack camps. I think I climbed eight good peaks that summer--fairly difficult. Among them were Mt. Humphreys, Mt. Darwin, Devils Crags (the big one only) Middle and North Palisade.

RT: Who's this climbing in this picture?

HML: Well, now, this is a trip that my father and Mr. Hutchinson took in 1912, and they were the first people to go up the Tenaya Canyon. Nobody had ever been up Tenaya Canyon because there's a tremendous boulder right in the way, and the creek fills it from side to side here.

RT: I can see the scale, I can kind of guess.

HML: They had to go around that boulder. Now this is the back of the Half Dome that you can never see from Yosemite Valley.

RT: How'd they get around it?

HML: Well, this is how they got around. They rigged up these hooked ropes. I can remember how excited I was hearing all about it afterwards, my father pointing out how they wound up to the spot through the brush.

Here's the creek, and they had to go up the slick slopes and up this way somehow. This is the picture of Mr. Hutchinson going up the slick slopes.

RT: It looks as though it would have been impossible to get a goot-hold or hand-hold.

HML: It was very hard.

- RT: How did they do it?
- HML: Well, they were skillful. They had tennis shoes on.
- RT: Did they have any spikes?
- HML: No.
- RT: Did your father write an account of that?
- HML: Probably. It was just the highlight of the summer for him. I think that John Muir had been down the canyon once, when the water was very low. Once I went up that canyon, and I didn't have to do that, because the water was low enough. I was with three very fine rock climbers, and we all just climbed up over that rock, and the water didn't matter. We got up into a perfect little paradise of a valley that maybe no one had ever been in maybe since John Muir came down to it.
- RT: When was that?
- HML: Oh, just one weekend, about 1935.
- RT: Who were you with?
- HML: I remember Edith Hertgin was there. She's the daughter of one of the Livermores, who'd married Mr. Hertgin, a German fellow. He was a singer. And then Boynton Kaiser, whom she later married, was with us. And the other one was Jules Eichorn, who was a very fine climber.
- RT: By then you would have had lots of experience.
- HML: I was pretty good for my size. [Laughs.]
- [Indicates photo.] This is the North Palisade and the Middle Palisade. These are among the highest. And these things in the foreground are the Devil's Crags.
- RT: And you've climbed them?
- HML: I climbed the highest crag. My father made the first ascent of the North Palisade in 1902 or 1903, I think, with Mr. Hutchinson and Jim Moffitt. There was a little glacier on the east side that did not compare with the Canadian glaciers or the ones in Switzerland.
- RT: And you climbed that peak yourself at a later date?

- HML: Oh, yes. A lot of people have climbed it. The main difficulty in the early days was to get to the foot of the peak. It was so far away, and you didn't know how to climb it or which side to go. You had to figure out what route to take.
- RT: When you went out climbing these peaks, did someone in the party carry maps?
- HML: Oh, there were always geological survey maps, but they're not terribly detailed.
- RT: Did you ever go out without maps?
- HML: Oh, no. I never wanted to, because I loved to follow maps. I remember saying in the first part of the interview that when we started climbing, we all pooh-pooed ropes and all. That's true. But later on, I did do some climbing with ropes, and I know I did a lot of things that I never would have done without assurance that if I'd fallen, I would have had the rope.
- You're not supposed to use the rope. It's just for safety, because you know it's there, and supposedly the fellow above you can hold you. I was light enough to be held easily. [Laughs.] I remember climbing with Jack Riegelhuth, and he said, "Hurry up! I haven't got a very good belay here!" That was on the Middle Palisade. [Laughter.]
- RT: When you climbed with people, you really had to trust them, then, when you were using ropes?
- HML: You weren't allowed to go out and climb unless it was known that the climbers were good.
- RT: I mean, when you were out climbing without any such aid, each of you was on your own. But when you were using ropes, you really had to organize as a team.
- HML: Oh, yes. There were only three on a rope. The leader, of course, had to be able to do it without. Except, theoretically, the next man could have held him if he'd fallen. But nobody ever did that.

Characterizing the Mountaineers

- RT: Can you characterize the kinds of people these were who liked the mountains and liked to go on these trips?

HML: Well, they were sophisticated intellectually; they thought that nature was beautiful; and they loved the freedom of it, the simplicity, and yet they had lots of luxuries on these automobile trips. This wasn't really "roughing it." They seemed to me to be all intellectuals.

Now that I think about it--you were asking about the different classes of people who belonged to the Sierra Club--it never occurred to me what they did, or what their social position was, in society or anything, or what their class was.

RT: But mostly they were upper-middle-class?

HML: Yes. I suppose so.

RT: And more or less intellectual?

HML: Well, I don't know that they were, not necessarily--

RT: Educated?

HML: Educated, yes.

Some of the people I remember on the Sierra Club Trips were Dr. Herbert Evans, who was a very famous scientist. He came with his second wife, Margery, who had been his laboratory assistant. And Professor Andrew Lawson, Andy Lawson, who was a famous geologist. He was in his eighties, and he came with his young bride in her twenties, his second wife.

I didn't mean to be condescending when I spoke about Jack Riegelhuth's being a butcher, and Raffi Bedayn, because Jack became a National Park ranger. And Raffi now is a big building contractor. He lives in Orinda, and he married a society girl from Piedmont. [Laughs.]

I'd say that people didn't worry about your social place on our Sierra Club trips, anyhow. You must have heard about Bill Horsfall (a plumber) marrying Ethel Rose Taylor. But I also remember that Jessie Whitehead was very fond of Bill Horsfall. [Laughs.]

And I also didn't mean to say that just because these people came out from the East that we were so terribly impressed, but just because they were interesting, nice people. And they were more impressed with us, I think, because they thought it was all cowboys and Indians out here. To have us arrive as somewhat sophisticated people was quite an eye-opener for them.

RT: Sophisticated?

HML: Well, like Ansel is sophisticated. Ernest Bacon too. He went on that Canadian trip.

RT: There were many musicians, it seems to me. Is that by chance?

HML: Well, no, I don't think so awfully many. There were probably just as many writers and artists, but they could not perform at the campfires. Cedric brought his pupils, and they got the trip free for playing. And other people just could sing, not always professionally but very well. Mrs. Baldauf used to sing every German folk song that ever was, and she had a lovely voice. She had a lute that she brought and accompanied herself.

Then I remember on that very first High Trip that I went on with my cousins, there was a flutist from the Los Angeles Symphony who used to play, but with no accompaniment; he was just like Pan piping.

RT: Were there painters?

HML: Oh, yes, there were some. There was a man named Leland Curtis from southern California who painted what many people thought were very lovely paintings in the mountains. They don't appeal to me very much; they're much too literal.

RT: Did he paint on the trip?

HML: Oh, yes. He brought all his stuff. Harriet Parsons has some of his that I really do like.

RT: Were there other artists? Did other people sketch?

HML: I think so, I don't remember about artists.

RT: Did a lot of people take photographs?

HML: Oh yes, yes. Almost everyone!

RT: I think we talked with Ansel about the different attitudes towards the countryside. How people are not even supposed to gather wood for a fire?

HML: Right. But then, in the twenties and thirties and of course earlier, so few people went in, and there was so much dead wood everywhere. A tree would die and fall, and even if you couldn't pick up wood from the ground, you could always break off dead limbs.

RT: So there was fuel.

HML: There was lots of fuel. On the Sierra Club trips, all the freshmen had to bring wood. That was the men's job.

RT: Who were freshmen?

HML: They were people on their first trip.

RT: What were the women on their first trip?

HML: Freshmen too. We didn't worry about using "person" in those days. [Laughs.]

RT: Were there berries or nuts or anything that you could eat?

HML: No, only in much lower elevations.

RT: Did you fish?

HML: Oh, yes. There were lots of people who fished on trips. On our private trips, my father wasn't very good at it, and Ansel didn't have time, but we took this fellow, Wesley Cherry, one year and oh my! Was he a good fisherman! He'd bring in the limit every day! And oh, are trout good!

RT: And you drank the water in the streams?

HML: Oh, yes. We bathed in the streams and washed clothes in the streams, and drank the water, and nobody thought a thing of it.

RT: And you could pick boughs for your bed?

HML: Oh, I don't know. You get pretty toughened and can just lie and sleep soundly on anything after a while. I wouldn't pick boughs unless I was going to stay for a long while. Pine needles make a lovely soft mattress. But up in the high country, you just have to get tough. The trees are all small and stunted but to me the most beautiful of all.

RT: What were your staples for food? Were they beans?

HML: Well, we had a side of bacon and a ham, I think. Macaroni and cheese, potatoes, onions, canned fruit and vegetables, flour, sugar, salt, and mush. Cooked cereal for breakfast--that mush is what got you up the hill! Sticks to your ribs!

We had powdered milk. You could add water to that and beat it up. It wasn't good enough to just drink, but it was good to

HML: put on fruit, or to put on your cereal. It tasted all right. And you could make pancakes, of course--flapjacks. And corned beef hash was one of the nicest things. My father could flip a whole pan of corned beef hash, as people flip flapjacks. [Laughs.] I don't know of anyone else that did that. When he wasn't there, we had to turn it over, gingerly, with pancake turners.

RT: Was your father a cook?

HML: Yes, a camp cook. In fact, I learned to cook from camping.

RT: Did your mother cook too?

HML: Well, on those luxury trips we usually had a college girl along to do the cooking, and mainly the dishwashing. My mother would be superintendent and plan the menus, that kind of thing.

I remember that I hated to wash dishes. But Mrs. McDuffie was so charming, and she figured out a way. She said, "Now Helen, you and I are the gold-dust twins, and we're going to do the dishes." Well, I was about so high, and she was a very tall, stately, beautiful woman. She looked like an Italian countess! [Laughs.] But I'll always remember the way she said, "Now the gold-dust twins are going to do the dishes." We used Gold-Dust soap powder in those days. Remember? It was some kind of powdered scouring stuff.

RT: What about the entertainments in camp?

HML: The only entertainments were at Sierra Club camps, but in our little camps we didn't need it any more than a group has to be entertained at one's home.

RT: On the Sierra Club trips, however . . .

HML: There were interesting people, and they'd talk on their subject. I wish that Clair Tappaan had been able to go longer, because he was so funny at campfires and gave these nature talks that were parodies of scientific lectures. He had named all the animals and birds by making up names and inventing imaginary animals.

Then, of course, there was Ansel and his Greek tragedies. I have some pictures of the people that acted in them. But then Ansel was so amusing himself.

RT: Did Ansel organize these plays?

HML: No--Virginia was stage director. He just spontaneously wrote these things, because they were parodies not only of Greek tragedies,

HML: but mainly of Sierra Club trips. They were done in the style of a Greek tragedy--the words, and probably the meter, the rhythm, and everything, because I know he studied Greek literature. Maybe he studied Greek, for all I know.* I remember the chorus of trudging women all saying, "Woe, woe, woe! There's another pass to go over!" Things like that.

Now I remember that the name of one was "Exhaustos," and the other one was "Oroastus."

RT: There was great esprit de corps, I gather, among these people.

HML: Oh, well, any bunch of people that is going to go off that way, no matter how different they are, they all love to go and enjoy the experience, and so you really got along very well and found your own group, with such a large number of people.

Sierra Club Changes

RT: In your observation, in the years that you went on trips and were active in the Sierra Club--I know you're still active in that you work in the library--but in all those years, how did it seem to you to change?

HML: Well, the great change, of course, came when it got larger and larger, and people all over the United States now belong; instead of being just a few thousand people who live on the Pacific Coast, it's all over the country.

RT: Did you observe this change taking place?

HML: No, not really. I only read about it in the Bulletin, that now we had 100,000 members, and the next year it was 150,000. I don't know what it is now--200,000?

In the early days it wasn't a political force. We didn't worry, even then, so much, about the environment, because there were still very, very few people in the Sierra. But now there are 10,000 people a year who want to go over Kearsarge Pass with their horses, and down to the headwaters of the Kings River. And the Park Service has to limit them!

RT: In your observation, was there a different feeling about the group on your last trip than on your earlier ones?

*He did.--Ed.

HML: Well, it was under different leadership, and it was a base camp, and that's a different type of person, usually. They are not as active as the people who went on High Trips, where you moved every three or four days.

I went in 1946 on a base camp (I told you that) with Roxy and Mary Chamberlain and I can't remember who else.

RT: Was there a difference between '46 and the '56 trip?

HML: No, I don't think so.

RT: It wasn't really changed?

HML: Not very much. Not until it really began to grow, and people became aware that they were just ruining the wilderness, what little there was left of it. But more and more people kept going in, and it just got to be--well, I would never want to go back. When the trails are just covered with people, like Market Street--well, I wouldn't say as bad as that.

Dave Brower really started the movement toward conservation because he inspired everyone. And because of him, really, they saved the Grand Canyon from being dammed and being made into a lake.

RT: He inspired everyone with what?

HML: The love of preservation of what is left of the wilderness--so very little is left.

RT: So the interest shifted towards preservation?

HML: Yes, towards conservation. Now there are so many more young people who are all ardent supporters of the environment--what is the word--the ecology.

RT: The controversy, then, that came up in the club--could you say it was partly a manifestation of this problem itself, of the trampled environment?

HML: Goodness, I don't know. I'm sure that the Sierra Club, when it went through with those great parties, did trample things. It was clean, but everything was trampled down. But there weren't enough people to do much damage. If another group had come in the next day, and this had gone on day after day, then it would have been terrible. And that's what's happening now.

RT: I'd like to get your views of the David Brower controversy in the club. Do you think that was partly due to his own character?

HML: Yes, I think so. I think he had many very good qualities. He really has a great deal of persuasive ability. He was a very charming and forceful speaker, too. He could convince people. And he would travel all over, and of course, he ran up the bills of the club just terribly and spent everything in the treasury--full-page ads in the New York Times!

But, of course, he thought that that would pay for itself in the end, and who knows, maybe it did. I don't know.

He was never authorized to do these things. Supposedly, the board of directors made the policy, and he had to carry it out, but he never waited for them. He just went ahead.

RT: You rather sympathize with the board of directors and the people who were against him?

HML: Much as I liked Dave, I voted against him, because I thought and heard on good authority that the club was going broke. People called me up--they were so afraid that I was going to vote for Dave! I was really quite on the fence. I think he's doing a great job now with his Friends of the Earth, but he must have some millionaire backing him.

RT: In the Sierra Club, he overspent on organizational bills?

HML: Yes. But the books are the most beautiful. I certainly hand him that.

RT: So you don't disapprove of his taste or his ideals?

HML: I certainly don't disapprove of his taste. And his ideals are fine. I like Dave.

RT: How do you think the board's getting along now?

HML: I don't know. But, now, for instance one director told me that the directors don't know each other. They come from all over the United States. They come here for their meeting, or they go to Washington for their meeting, and if you elect a new set each five years (I think it's five at a time--fifteen altogether), well, they have to get acquainted. They have to get to know what they're all talking about. I don't know how this is done in big companies; maybe they keep the same old directors. That's the way it used to be. I thought, of course, at first, that I would

HML: certainly want to vote for everybody from all over, and then I began to wonder.

RT: You now work in the Sierra Club library as a volunteer?

HML: In the library. There are dozens of different chapters now, in every state. And within each chapter are lots of sub-groups, and they all have monthly newsletters. I used to file them away, but now I just get them in order. Alphabetical order, because it's too hard for me to get down to the lower shelves and to reach up to the higher shelves. Then there are all kinds of other little jobs. Harriet [Parsons] and I read the shelves. Rather, I get the box of shelf cards out of the file and then read her the cards, to be sure that the books are there. It's amazing how many books have been lost; people have just taken them. And then there were a lot of books that didn't have cards. Also I fill out little forms to send to the Library of Congress for filing cards. When the cards come, they must be distributed and "Cutter Numbers" given each book, etc. Finally the number must be "etched" onto the book itself.

RT: Do they ask you to answer questions about the club's past?

HML: Oh, no, they don't know who I am. [Laughs.]

RT: They don't know that you're this fountain of knowledge! [Laughter.]

HML: I wouldn't say I was--only a very limited fountain.

NOTES ON ANSEL ADAMS

[This interview was originally taped on May 2, 1972, for information to be used in interviewing Ansel Adams.]

Ansel Adams's Photographs

Ruth Teiser: What was it Cedric Wright did that you mentioned to me?

Helen M. LeConte: After Ansel had taken one knockout picture that everyone just raved about, Cedric would go around to the exact same spot, and ask Ansel what exposure, what time, and everything. And then he'd take the same picture [laughs] and it was darn near as good.

RT: How did Ansel Adams come to know Cedric Wright?

HML: I really don't know. Ask him. Cedric's uncle, William Wright, was a great astronomer (he was head of the Lick Observatory) and Ansel's father was keen on--just loved--astronomy. It was just a hobby. He was not a scholar. But he just was fascinated with astronomy. It could be that he knew Will Wright, and then through him somehow got to know Cedric. Now here, in this book, This Is the American Earth,* there might be a Cedric Wright photograph. This has some of Ansel's work and a lot of other photographers! It might be a very interesting comparison. Here's Cartier-Bresson, and here's one of those airplane views. William Garnett. This is William Garnett's, too; smog, if that ever was! [p. 58]

RT: This is Ansel Adams', isn't it?

HML: This one, yes.

RT: "Thundercloud." [p. 56]

*By Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1960).

HML: That one is, too.

RT: "Trailer Camp Children." [p. 57] That's very unusual for him, isn't it?

HML: Sort of like Dorothea Lange? Say, what was it that Dorothea Lange had against Ansel when she called him a money-grubber or something? Well, he had to make money, didn't he? This Is the American Earth was the first of the Sierra Club books, the very first. It was Dave Brower's idea, all this.

RT: It was?

HML: For all these publications, yes.

RT: I gather from Nancy Newhall's book on Ansel Adams that Cedric Wright had a great influence upon Ansel.

HML: Well, Cedric was a real Bohemian. You know, Ansel's family was very conservative, very New England. His mother was the fussiest little old lady I ever knew. His aunt Mary always lived with them too and was even fussier. They were darling people, his parents. And his father understood a lot more about Ansel and his talents than his mother and aunt did. He was a very intelligent man, his father. I mean, he allowed Ansel to not go to school, and they were able to have tutors to help him. He never even got through high school, I guess. He just rebelled and wouldn't go.

RT: But he studied Greek?

HML: Yes, and he studied English literature. He used to quote Shelley and all kinds of poets, and that's why he was so terribly good at doing these parodies of Greek tragedies that were given on the Sierra Club trips. They were just marvelous parodies of Greek tragedies. The rhythm, the strophes, and the meter in which the Greek tragedies were written.

RT: Were they written down?

HML: Yes, and Virginia has them.

Then, of course, we improvised marvelous costumes, and acted these things out. It was really just one of the great joys of going on those trips [laughs], with some of the funny things that people did at campfire.

RT: Adrian Wilson was telling me yesterday that in these workshop programs at the University of California at Santa Cruz, Ansel

RT: Adams is very good at doing his part, then receding into the background, and then running errands and organizing people. He keeps things going. I presume that that's what he did on the Sierra Club trips?

HML: When he first went, he went as the official photographer, and he got his trip free, and that was all. He had a special mule, and sometimes a boy to help him carry his paraphernalia. I don't know if he still used glass plates, but when he went with my father on our trips, he was still using glass plates.

RT: When was that?

HML: 1925 and 1926.* That was because he thought that glass made better prints than the film that was then made, though I don't suppose that applies any more. And then afterwards, Mr. Colby finally just had to try him for leading a trip. Ansel took over and did it, and I guess he was paid a salary. Well, he didn't have to do the commissary part. There was a young fellow, Francis Tappaan, whose father, Judge Clair Tappaan, had run the commissary earlier. He was a marvelous character, Judge Tappaan.

So Francis Tappaan and Ansel ran the trips. And Ansel would handle the campfires, and talk, and get people to do things. Cedric always went along with his prize pupil, and they played arrangements that Cedric would make for two violins. Cedric got his trip in return.

RT: You said that Cedric Wright was a real Bohemian?

HML: He was in that time. He wouldn't be today. The picture of him here is just awful. It's just posed. It was a snapshot that didn't look anything like him.

RT: This is in Words of the Earth by Cedric Wright. It's the frontispiece.

HML: In this one, This Is the American Earth, I think there's one of Cedric. Oh! [Laughs.] This [p. 35], I'll bet my father took. This was our donkey. His name was Andy Gump. [Laughter.]

RT: It's of the donkey loaded down with paraphernalia.

HML: Now the glass plates were in those boxes.

*This corrects a notation in the chronology in the catalogue Ansel Adams, Photographs 1923-1963 (San Francisco: De Young Museum, 1963) and again in the chronology in Ansel Adams edited by Liliane DeCock (Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: Morgan & Morgan, 1972). Both give the dates 1924 and 1925 for Ansel Adams's mountain trips with the Joseph LeConte family. According to Helen LeConte, the years were 1925 and 1926.

- RT: Here's the one of Cedric Wright, on page 37.
- HML: Now that's like him. That's more like Cedric.
- RT: Here's one, on page 81, that Cedric Wright took--a lot of people standing.
- HML: Oh, the Sermon on the Mount! [Laughs.]
- RT: Was that Cedric Wright's sort of humor?
- HML: Cedric's humor, yes. [Laughs.]
- RT: Do you recognize any of these people in Sermon on the Mount?
- HML: No, I really don't. This might be a woman called Elizabeth Cuthbertson.
- RT: On the right end.
- HML: I'm not sure. I might be there. I had a little Swiss Alpine hat. A pointed hat. I don't see it there anywhere. I think this is Anne Wyckoff.
- RT: In the striped white shorts.
- HML: She and Estelle Caen were the first people to wear shorts on Sierra Club trips. [Laughs.] That was 1929.
- RT: Here's Jules Eichorn, on page 103.
- HML: He was a piano pupil of Ansel's, when Ansel was a piano teacher.
- Did you read in here how, when Ansel went to New York, everyone said, "If you haven't had training from French people, you're no good." And that's how he developed his absolute hatred of foreigners, the French especially. Of any foreign country. He'd never been out of the United States.
- RT: Not even to Mexico?
- HML: No! Virginia goes to Mexico.
- RT: Not even Canada?
- HML: Yes, I was with him on his first trip to Canada.
- RT: When was that?

HML: 1928. It was a Sierra Club trip to the mountains.* No cities.

RT: When you first knew Ansel Adams, was he writing poetry?

HML: Perhaps he was, but he was playing the piano like mad. Every summer he went to Yosemite, and he was a custodian of the Sierra Club lodge there.

RT: The LeConte Lodge?

HML: Yes. I think in here there's a picture of Mr. Holman, who had been the custodian [page 32].

RT: Nancy Newhall indicates here that he kept being interested in writing.

HML: Yes, I think he did write, sort of pseudo-Walt Whitman poetry. He's written all kinds of technical books, too.

I just saw in Books, Inc., five of his--The Print, The Negative, Artificial Lighting, Natural Lighting--those are the titles of these books. And then, The Camera and the Lens.

RT: You worked on one of them?

HML: Yes. I think it was on lighting. But he had to do it all over after it was typed.

RT: Does he re-work things tremendously?

HML: I don't know. I know he takes dozens of shots of one thing. I guess all photographers do.

RT: Nancy Newhall wrote that he renounced pictorialism in 1931.

HML: Well, look, this was 1923. This is Banner Peak [pages 40-41]. Now, isn't this sharp and clear?

RT: Yes, that's what I can't understand.

HML: This one [on p. 30] is from 1920. It's a little different. Now there is one that's just typically pictorial.

Oh, there's his father.

RT: Was he nice, interesting?

*See pp. 22-24.

HML: Oh, he was darling!

RT: Was he interesting?

HML: Yes, very interesting.

Oh, there's that Mr. Holman. [Francis Holman, p. 32.] He only had one eye. And there's the little lodge. [LeConte Memorial Lodge, p. 33.] He took Ansel on his first high mountain trips.

RT: Yes, that looks like a nice little lodge.

HML: But they had to remove it. Camp Curry grew up and engulfed it. And then--they were just such fools--they didn't take the proper measurements. They built the stone walls, and then the roof didn't fit, because they'd made the roof all in one piece. So it's never been quite right. The roof doesn't fit very well. [Laughs.] Oh, here is one that's just a typical pictorial view by Ansel.

RT: That's "Grove, Lyell Fork of the Merced River, 1921." It's on page 38.

HML: Sometimes they were brown.

RT: Sepia prints.

This book, Helen, Sierra Nevada, The John Muir Trial, is one that I've heard about, and I didn't realize you had it.

HML: Ansel gave it to my father, and then I took it when my father died.

RT: This was published by the Archetype Press of Wilder Bentley in 1938.

HML: That's not so early.

RT: Ansel Adams wrote this?

HML: It was before he knew Nancy.

RT: So he was writing his own.

HML: Yes.

HML: These are really more than just great big mountain scenes. The quality of that rock! How many of these books were made? This in number thirty-two.

RT: It says five hundred copies printed. "Engravings and prints made by the Lakeside Press, Chicago . . . designed, set up, and printed on Wayside Text by Wilder and Ellen Bentley."

HML: That's the kind of thing that I just love. A little water, a stream flowing through the rocks. It's print XII, "Rock and Water."

Ansel Adams as a Young Man

RT: When did you meet Ansel Adams?

HML: My father says that we met in 1916 up at the top of Yosemite Falls where my father had taken me, and Ansel's father had taken him. But I don't remember. I remember him when he used to come over and play the piano at our house, about 1918 or '19.

RT: How'd he happen to do that?

HML: Because our fathers knew each other.

RT: Your father knew his father?

HML: Yes, even when they were children they knew each other.

RT: I see.

HML: Then, at that time, 'way back, the Sierra Club had just a little office about as big as my bedroom. [Laughs.]

RT: Six by eight.

HML: And it consisted of Mr. Colby and a secretary who was sort of a social secretary as much as anything. [Laughs.] And she was my cousin Ruth Gompertz's aunt.

RT: What was her name?

HML: Nell Taggard. And I think Ansel used to go in there, and they used to talk. So she invited him over to play the piano at the Gompertz's home.

RT: He wasn't just being offered a place to practice but was asked to come and play for the pleasure of the audience?

HML: Yes. Well, he was just asked to dinner, and he was not at all backwards about coming forward afterwards. [Laughs.]

RT: Was he taking pictures much then?

HML: No. Well, maybe. But he didn't show them to anybody. I think he'll tell you about how he first had a little Brownie box camera.

RT: But you knew him as a pianist?

HML: Yes, and he had a marvelous technique and tone. There are all kinds of theories of how to play, and the old-fashioned way was just playing with the fingers, not putting in all this arm weight. That "weight" thing was coming in, and he scorned it.

A little old lady that lived in the block on Twenty-fifth Avenue, just behind him, gave him piano lessons and made him just use his fingers. And that really produced great clarity of playing. Especially Bach and other early music. I suppose when it comes to big things like Brahms, you do have to use your weight.

RT: Did he continue playing in that style then, always?

HML: Well, he got much more romantic in later life. I was a bit disappointed the last time I heard him play. But that's quite a long time ago. Now he can't at all, because of arthritis.

RT: He taught but did he give many concerts?

HML: No, he didn't give any concerts. He must have played in Cedric's studio for large groups of Cedric's friends, but not for money.

Then, of course, we met Cedric, who was a violinist, although not a very good one. Cedric had studied with great teachers in Europe. But he just didn't seem--he never could produce a beautiful tone. It was never clear--well, I don't know. He just always seemed like a man who was a genius who didn't have any medium until he took up photography, and then he did much better.

I believe that he did a lot of secret, hush-hush photography during the war for the Atomic Energy Commission, but nobody knew anything about it. He never talked about that. When he didn't want to talk, he didn't, but usually, he told everybody everything about everybody. [Laughs.] Used to embarrass people a little bit. But not in a mean way.

RT: Did he make fun of Ansel Adams, or just make jokes?

HML: Jokes. Oh sure, he made fun of him, but nothing Ansel didn't like.

RT: After Ansel Adams came to your home--

HML: --then we met him every summer in Yosemite. Then finally my father thought the valley was too crowded, about 1917, so we didn't go in there. Ansel used to come up sometimes to our camp on the Tioga Road at Porcupine Flat.

Then one time we did go back, in '23, and the superintendent let us camp on Tenaya Creek where no other people were, and Ansel and my father and Joe and I and a friend of mine and a friend of Joe's went on a little trip, with two pack animals. It was just for a few days.

Then after my mother died in 1924, the next year my father wanted to go in the mountains again, on a real pack trip, and he didn't know who to take along. Finally, he decided that Ansel would be the right one. But, then, Virginia felt, why didn't you ask me too? Well, they were supposedly engaged. But at the same time, Ansel was madly in love with a lot of Cedric's pupils. [Laughs.]

We couldn't tell if he was engaged to them or to her or what, and my father didn't want any other women anyhow. He hadn't been on a pack trip in a long time, and he was a little leery.

RT: So who finally went?

HML: Just the four of us. And then the second year, I was allowed to ask a girl that I knew, Mary Elizabeth Plehn, and then there were five of us.

RT: And so Ansel went along the second year too?

HML: There were just two times he went with us, '25 and '26.

RT: Were they both long trips?

HML: Yes, oh yes. All summer. Six weeks at least.

RT: How could Ansel Adams afford to take six weeks out of his summer?

HML: Nobody has piano pupils in the summer. My father didn't charge him or anything. [Laughs.]

RT: Just took him along as his guest?

HML: The food amounted to nothing, and of course, when the trip was over, Ansel did a whole album for him.

RT: Was he taking pictures all the time?

HML: Oh my, yes! On those trips, that was it! He was just about to turn over to photography at that time. But he could tell you much more than I could.

RT: Well, before I ask him, I have to know what to ask. The more I know, the better I can ask questions. Something I was going to ask--were you or Joe ever interested in photography then?

HML: No, we knew too many great photographers.

RT: But your father was?

HML: Yes. He was a good photographer. He started in the 1890s.

RT: Was he interested in what Ansel was doing?

HML: Oh, yes! He was fascinated.

RT: Was he taking pictures himself at the same time?

HML: Yes. The negatives are in the Bancroft Library, including later photographs that don't amount to anything--not like the early glass-plate prints. I didn't realize, until Mr. Kantor of the Bancroft told me, that he had a great set of photographs of San Francisco just the day after the 1906 earthquake.

RT: They're at the Bancroft?

HML: Yes.

RT: To return to Ansel Adams's change from pictorialism to straight photography, or whatever, you said that when you went to New York--

HML: When I went to New York in 1930, he was still doing pictorials. Although I think he did a few magnificent early photographs in the Sierra that were as clear as crystal. But when I went to New York he was still in it, and when I came back it was just a new world. I came back in 1932, and he was right in the middle of f/64.

RT: It was in November of 1932 that they had that f/64 show at the De Young? Did you see it?

HML: Oh yes, I guess so. But I guess I saw every show at that time. I don't remember when he had that little gallery. I guess it was about then. Or before then?

RT: A little later, I think. What kind of gallery was that?

HML: It was downtown. I think on Geary Street, or maybe Maiden Lane.

RT: Did he take pictures there in the gallery?

HML: I don't think so because, I think, he took outdoor pictures. If he took portraits, he went to the home of the person, like that portrait of Carolyn Anspacher. Actually, I don't know where that was taken. And another one of Anna Rosenshine. That's a beautiful portrait. I think it's a profile. She was a stunning woman.

RT: At the gallery, they would be putting on shows of photographs?

HML: He was putting up all the photographs of the f/64 group. Each one would have a show, or something like that. He also exhibited paintings.

RT: And would sell them?

HML: They'd sell them, try to sell them.

RT: And he was giving lessons there in photography?

HML: Yes, he did. He did everything he could think of to earn a little money to pay the rent for the gallery. Finally it just folded.

RT: On the first trip with Ansel into the mountains with just your father and you and your brother--

HML: He didn't have any of the modern gadgets that tell you how long to expose things. And you had glass plates because they were the best. And you had yellow filters and red filters and you had to guess at the time.

RT: You said you used to watch him--it took hours to make an exposure.

HML: It would take hours to get the light just right. And then he would count out the seconds, a-thousand-and-one, a-thousand-and-two, a thousand-and-three, and so forth. Maybe he'd use a filter. You know, the light is so brilliant up in the high Sierra, and the air is so different. It's so tremendously clear that they use filters all the time to decrease the glare. I was only twenty then, at that time, and he was only twenty-three. He still thought of himself as a pianist, I think. I don't know if he'd met Albert Bender then or not.

RT: He met Albert Bender in 1927.

HML: Not until then?

RT: That's what Nancy Newhall says. At Cedric Wright's house.

HML: Then he really was still in the music business. But he still had to have perfect photographs if he could. And he did get some beautiful ones even then.

RT: You said about his snapshots--

HML: Oh, that was much later on Sierra Club trips, when there were a lot of people. They were just wonderful pictures of people unaware of being photographed, and just talking and laughing or complaining. You know, whatever they do. [Laughs.]

RT: Candid shots.

HML: Candid camera, that was the rage. After the trip, he'd make proofs of them. Of course, he just didn't think they were worth making good prints of them.

I remember that earlier, in 1921, Ansel got a telegram down in the Yosemite Valley from my cousin, who was staying at our house in Berkeley. The house behind us had burned to the ground. But luckily, because the wind was right, our house did not burn.

So Ansel thought we should get the telegram, even if we didn't know there was a fire [laughs]. So he came up Yosemite Falls trail to the top of Yosemite Falls, and then just cut across country, and he knew approximately where our camp was. He arrived there, and as he'd been going through brush and dense forests, he must have knocked a bird's nest out of a tree.

He had a funny little straw hat [laughs]. With a crown that was a little bit concave, I guess you'd call it. He didn't know, but when he walked into camp there, there was a little baby bird sitting in the crown of his hat. [Laughs.]

Of course, we all exclaimed, and it was alive. Mrs. Hutchinson took very tender care of it, and they fed it bread and milk, and then worms and bugs. They tried everything, but the poor little thing finally died.

RT: That's sad. Then what happened?

HML: It was buried. [Laughs.] I think there's a picture there in the 1921 album of the little grave of Chinquapin. That's what they named him. It's the name of a kind of brush.

RT: [The May 2, 1972, tape was made for information to be used during Ansel Adams's interview, but we thought we'd like to transcribe it to use as part of the interview with Helen LeConte herself. At our request she later listened to that tape before continuing on Sept. 29, 1975.]

HML: I think that I told how I met Ansel, and what I remembered about him, and how he went on these camping trips with my father and brother and myself. And took some of his first, early, really fine photographs. But I never said what a delightful companion he was on a camping trip, and what a good camper and a good worker, and how delightful it was to travel through this country with him, because of course, his eye was so perceptive.

He saw so much more than I did, and it made me see more. Then, he was such fun, and always cheered us up when it rained, and was just a perfectly delightful camping companion.

RT: He had a quality of leadership, didn't he?

HML: Well, he did later on, on the Sierra Club trips. He didn't do much on these little trips, because my father was quite a boss. [Laughs.]

JOSEPH N. LeCONTE AND HIS FAMILY

Helen M. LeConte: I think Ansel learned quite a lot from my father about camping and packing. He had been on quite a lot of other pack trips, but maybe they weren't so efficiently run.

Ruth Teiser: As the ones your father ran?

HML: Yes.

RT: How did your father develop this, I wonder?

HML: Well, he just, as you probably know, went camping all his life, and through the years he became more proficient at it.

RT: Did he teach himself to be?

HML: Oh, yes. There isn't anything to teach. You just learn it by experience. He had a very scientific mind.

RT: He had gone camping as a child with his family?

HML: Yes. That was just to Yosemite. In my aunt's diary of 1878,* you may remember that her little brother was running around bothering her.

But then, that great diary he wrote, which was published by Osborne**--that was his first great trip, into the same country where we went with Ansel. Of course, it was a pretty rough trip compared with our trips, because they had such an inadequate kind of food. There were no bridges, and the trails were terrible.

*Carrie E. LeConte, Yosemite 1878, Adventures of N & C. San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1964.

**Joseph N. LeConte, A Summer of Travel in the High Sierra. Ashland, Ore.: Lewis Osborne, 1972.

- RT: By the time you got there?
- HML: It was much better. I won't say it was a bit civilized, but the trails were well-graded, and there were usually bridges or logs where you could walk across and then drive the donkeys through the river.
- RT: Did your father reminisce about his earlier trip?
- HML: Oh, yes. He loved to do that. Especially the first one!
- RT: Especially when you went over the same territory, I suppose. Your father was sure of himself, wasn't he?
- HML: Well, about camping he was, and about the subject that he taught, he was. But he was quite shy otherwise, I think. He hated to speak before groups.
- RT: Even though he was used to teaching and addressing classes, he didn't often speak?
- HML: Because he was prominent in the club and had been a charter member and was a director all his life, he often had to, and he didn't like it.
- RT: Gerrie [Geraldine Knight] Scott said that he was the littlest man with the biggest cocktail shaker she ever saw!
- HML: Gerrie has a very dramatic way of putting things, but a little bit exaggerated. [Laughter.]
- RT: Anyway, he liked to have a good time.
- HML: Yes, he loved to. Oh, he loved being with friends and talking with a small group and exchanging conversation. But to get up and give formal speeches--
- RT: What sort of thing did he and his friends talk about?
- HML: Just everything! [Laughs.] I don't know. A great many of his friends were also Sierra Club members and had also been on the private trips of their own.
- RT: Did he talk about politics?
- HML: Oh some, yes. He was a good Republican, and he never got over the fact that Jim [James K.] Moffitt, president of the Crocker Bank, was a Democrat! [In a tone of mock horror.] A banker!

- RT: How did your father happen to be a Republican?
- HML: Well, everybody seemed to be out here. Although, of course, my grandfather, I guess, was a Democrat from the South, I don't think he had any politics.
- RT: Your grandfather?
- HML: No, I don't think so. And even my father, even though he was a Republican, he voted for--was it Davis that ran against Harding? And he voted for Al Smith, which nearly killed my aunts! [Laughs.] My Gompertz aunts.
- RT: Really?
- HML: Oh, think of that dreadful Mrs. Smith in the White House! [Imitates horrified tone.]
- RT: A lot of people voted for Al Smith because they thought Prohibition was nonsense, didn't they?
- HML: Yes, that was one of the reasons that he did. But he voted for Hoover later.
- RT: Did he regret it after?
- HML: No.
- RT: What did he think of Roosevelt?
- HML: He thought he was terrible.
- You know, I won't say he had an easy life, but he'd never had to look for a job. He'd always done the kind of work he loved, and he didn't really understand unemployment and an economic collapse. The university went right on. It went right on paying him salary. So FDR seemed like a radical. Oh, he probably got a ten per cent cut, but that wasn't like having your whole income just evaporate, like a businessman's did.
- RT: He had gone to the university and gone straight into teaching?
- HML: Right into teaching here. He had a year at Cornell, graduate work.
- RT: But I suppose there was never any doubt that he'd come back and teach here?
- HML: No, I don't think so.

RT: Helen, did he ever feel any sympathy toward the South? Did he ever feel his background as a Southerner?

HML: Well, he loved to go there and visit, because he was very fond of his relatives there, but he believed in the Union side. I think he admired Abraham Lincoln. Even some Southerners do.

RT: Did he feel that he had roots in the South?

HML: Well, I suppose he did. His mother was really so cute about it all. [Laughs.] She was still a rebel!

RT: She was?

HML: And he used to call her an unreconstructed rebel when joking. He used to love to tease her. [Laughs.]

RT: Was he right?

HML: I guess so. Well, I don't know. [Laughs.] She died when I was ten years old.

RT: What was she like?

HML: She was little and cute. As an old lady, she was getting blind. It was very sad, I guess, at the end, but I wasn't old enough to realize it. She had cataracts, and they didn't know how to operate.

RT: About your grandfather, Joseph LeConte--

HML: He died before I was born.

RT: And your great-uncle, John LeConte?

HML: Oh, he died long before. Much earlier. He was a good deal older.

RT: Did your father have great loyalty to his father?

HML: Oh, yes. He was very fond of both his parents.

RT: And his mother lived with you, did she?

HML: Yes, at least after we moved up to Hillside Court. I was born in a little house that was built in the back yard of the big family house on Bancroft Way.

RT: Your grandfather's house?

- HML: Yes. He and my grandmother and my aunt Caroline lived there. Then they built this little house in the back, for my father and mother, when they got married.
- RT: Your father had married a little late, had he?
- HML: Well, not so. Thirty, he was, or thirty-one. I don't think that's so late. But my mother was older, so she married late.
- RT: And so your grandfather built them a house, and that's where they lived?
- HML: Until Joe was born, and then I guess--I don't know--my grandmother really financed that big house up there on Hillside Court, I think. You've never been in it, have you?
- RT: No.
- HML: If you go upstairs, it was arranged so that there was a bedroom for my grandmother, and a bathroom, and another room for a companion, sort of a practical nurse. And you could shut it off, by just one door, from the rest of the house. So it really was built for her comfort and privacy.
- RT: Did she have a companion then upstairs?
- HML: Yes. Always, as far as I could remember, she had somebody. They used to take me to the Cliff House when I was about three.
- RT: Your grandmother and her companion?
- HML: Yes.
- RT: That made quite a household for your mother, didn't it?
- HML: Oh, yes. But we had a maid at first, and then after my grandmother's death, we had college girls working their way through college.
- RT: Was your mother very active outside of your home, too?
- HML: I don't think so. She had loads of friends and was a founder of the Town and Gown Club. She loved to entertain and was, I guess, a fine hostess. She wasn't active in any crusades or anything. No politics.
- RT: Had she been before she was married?
- HML: She was a schoolteacher in the Berkeley schools, and she probably would have been a principal if she hadn't married.

Catherine Harroun: We were going through some of the early issues of Sunset magazine, and there were a number of articles by your mother before her marriage.

HML: Yes, she went camping with two of her college schoolmates long before women ever did such things. These girls all by themselves went up to Yosemite and Tuolumne Meadows. And I think my aunt Anita Gompertz went along. This was in the 1890s.

Then they met up with my father one year, and so he took them all up Mt. Lyell, which is the highest mountain in Yosemite National Park, a beautiful mountain with a little tiny glacier on it.

There's some awfully funny pictures [laughs] of them all.

CH: I think there were some pictures in Sunset of their camp. The pictures were taken by your father, and the article written by your mother, before they were married.

HML: And then there was a wonderful trip, the last trip my grandfather ever went on. See [showing article in bound volume], this is 1900, and they are pictures Ansel has printed. They've been in lots of things. See, here's "A Tramp To Mt. Lyell." I think that's by my mother. And this picture, "Miss Isabel Miller," and, oh, "Mr. George Stratton, Mr. J. LeConte and myself, and a diminutive burro." This is my grandfather's account of it. This is in the Sierra Club Bulletin [October, 1900], but there are some in Sunset. And when I was in Georgia with my cousin Emma Shaw, I read my aunt Emma LeConte Furman's account of it. Aunt Emma kept a diary.

RT: Well, this is where your father and mother met, then?

HML: No, they grew up in Berkeley together as children.

RT: They had known each other all the time?

HML: Yes. The faculty was housed in little cottages where the Faculty Club is now. The Faculty Glade, you know where that is? That's where they lived.

RT: Your Grandfather Gompertz?

HML: And Grandfather [Charles F.] Gompertz lived 'way down by the eucalyptus grove in a little cottage.

RT: He taught there?

HML: He taught some classes in Spanish, but was not a real professor.

RT: This painting over here, Helen--

HML: This is Mr. [William] Keith's painting that Aunt Alice says he painted for my mother. It is the lower slopes of Mt. Lyell; it isn't the summit. But I thought he painted it for my father.

RT: They were friends?

HML: They were all--the Keiths, the LeContes, and the Gompertzes--were friends. I have some of the funniest pictures of their parties.

Evidently Mr. Keith was a very jolly person. Great fun. I did meet him, but I was only five years old, and he had two enormous dogs that were bigger than I, and they barked and scared me to death. [Laughs.]

I also met John Muir when I was about eight years old. It was in the old Sierra Club Office in the Mills Building (not Mills Tower). Mr. Muir gave me and my brother each a five dollar gold piece. My father thought that was pretty good--for a Scotchman!

- Adams, Ansel:
 family, youth, education, 59, 62-63, 64-66
 on LeConte family trips, 5, 9, 10, 11-12, 44-46, 66, 70
 on Sierra Club outings, 13-14, 21-22, 23, 53-54, 59-60,
 69-70
 photography, 23, 44-46, 58-64, 67-69
 pianist, 64-65
 Adams, Virginia Best, 9, 20, 22, 23, 53, 66
 Agnew, Jesse, 43
 Anspacher, Carolyn, 68
- Bacigalupi, Rimo, 20, 21, 22
 Baldauf, Fritz, 21, 26
 Baldauf, Ollio, 21, 26, 51
 Bedayn, Raffi, 27, 50
 Bender, Albert, 27, 68-69
 Bentley, Ellen, 64
 Bentley, Wilder, 63, 64
 Best, Virginia. See Adams, Virginia Best
 Bridge, Marjory. See Farquhar, Marjory Bridge
 Brower, David, 55, 56
- camping equipment, food, and apparel, 7, 9, 10, 11, 34-36,
 41-42, 48, 53, 61. See also Sierra Club outings
 Canada, 22-24
 Cherry, Wesley, 10, 52
 Clyde, Norman, 32
 Colby, William E., 13, 14, 16, 18, 23-24, 26-27, 60
 conservation, 19-20, 24-25, 54-55
 Cooksey, Milicent Sperry, 21
 Cory, Professor Clarence, 15
 Curtis, Leland, 51
- Dutton, Charles, 37
- Earnshaw, Elsie Bell, 23, 27
 Eichorn, Jules, 61
 Elston, Tallulah LeConte, 42
 Evans, Dr. Herbert, 50
 Evolution peaks, 16-17
- Farquhar, Francis P., 8, 17, 21
 Farquhar, Marjory Bridge, 20
 Furman, Emma LeConte, 76
- Gompertz, Anita, 4, 6, 34-35
 Gompertz, Charles, 2, 4, 76-77
 Gompertz, Helen. See LeConte, Helen Gompertz

- Hildebrand, Joel, 16
 Holman, Francis, 62, 63
 Horsfall, Bill, 32, 50
 Huber, Daisy May, 21-22
 Hutchinson, Eleanor, 6, 38, 69
 Hutchinson, James, 6, 7, 16, 37, 39-40, 48
 Hutchinson, Lincoln, 16

 Keith, William, 77
 Kellogg, Walter, 16, 37
 Kings River Canyon, 5, 9-10, 21-22, 43

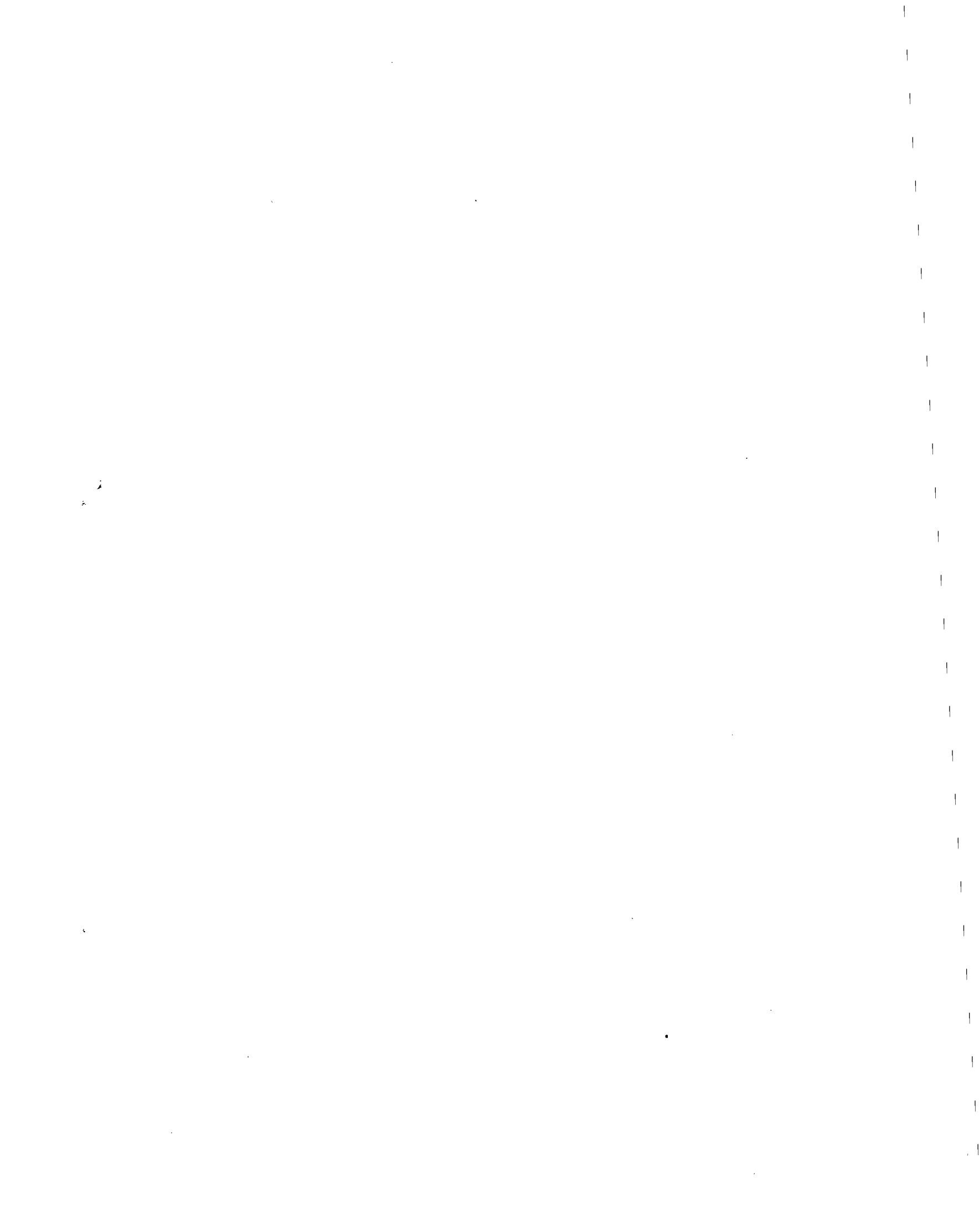
 Lawson, Professor Andrew, 50
 LeConte, Helen Gompertz, 2, 5, 9, 43, 46, 53, 75-76
 LeConte, Helen M.:
 family and family friends, 1-13, 33-46, 71-77
 early outings to the Sierra, 2-8, 33-44, 66-67, 69
 climbing, 8, 13, 22, 46-47, 48-49
 pack trips, 9-13, 43-47
 Sierra Club outings, 13-15, 17-26, 47, 50-54
 Sierra Club volunteer, 57
 LeConte, Joseph (Helen's brother), 2, 3, 9, 15, 36, 37
 LeConte, Joseph Nisbet, 1-2
 Berkeley circle, 16
 camping trips, 9-10, 11-12, 15, 31, 36, 38, 39, 44-48,
 53, 71-72, 76, 77
 characterized, 45-46, 73-75
 conservation, 25
 photographer, 67
 LeConte, Mildred, 13, 35-36
 LeConte Memorial Lodge, 62, 63

 McDuffie, Duncan, 6, 37, 40, 41
 McDuffie, Jean, 6, 53
 Mather, Stephen, 39
 Moffitt, James K., 6, 37, 38, 40, 41, 48, 72
 Muir, John, 77

 National Park Service, 5
 Noble, Charles, 6, 16, 38

 Palmer, Mrs. Brooks. See Gompertz, Anita
 Pennyroyal Club, 20
 photography, 45-46
 Plehn, Professor Carl, 16
 Plehn, Mary Elizabeth, 9, 10, 66
 Pond, Admiral Charles F., 9, 10, 11
 Porcupine Flat, 7-8, 37-38

- Reid, Alberta Bancroft, 5
 Resplendent, Mount, 23
 Rieglehuth, Jack, 27, 49, 50
 Robson, Mount, 23
 rock climbing, 8, 19, 47-49
- Sierra Club:
 Brower controversy, 56
 Bulletin, 25, 76
 changes in, 54-57
 character of members, 16, 17, 20, 27-30, 32, 49-51
 conservation, 19-20, 24-25, 54-55
 friction with southern California, 16
 membership policies, 28
 See also Sierra Club outings
- Sierra Club outings, 5
 campfires and entertainment, 14-15, 18, 53-54, 59
 climbing and hiking, 18-19, 22, 23, 47
 conservation on, 19-20, 51-52
 food, 11, 12, 14, 22, 52-53
 people, 20-22, 24, 26, 41
 to Canada, 22-24
- Sierra Nevada, The John Muir Trail, 63-64
 Sierra Ski Club, 16
 skiing, 16
 Solomons, Theodore, 17
 Sperry, Milicent. See Cooksey, Milicent Sperry
 Starr, Walter, 16
Sunset Magazine, 76
- Tachet, Dan, 14, 22
 Taggard, Nell, 35, 64
 Tappaan, Clair, 14, 18, 53, 60
 Tappaan, Francis, 60
 Taylor, Ethel Rose, 50
This is the American Earth, 58-59, 60-63
 Tioga Road, 5
 transportation to the Sierra, 33
 Tuolumne Meadows, 8, 38-39
- Wells, Chauncey, 16, 37, 42-43
 Whitehead, Jessie, 24, 50
 Wildemuth, Ike, 31
 women, 7, 76
Words of the Earth, 60
 World War I, 5
 Wright, Cedric, 10, 14-15, 21, 51, 58, 59, 60-61, 65-66
 Wright, William, 14, 58
- Yosemite Valley, 3-5, 8, 16, 34-36, 62, 63, 66
 Zumwalt, Ed, 31



RUTH E. PRAGER

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REMEMBERING THE HIGH TRIPS

An Interview Conducted by
Ruth Sumner

Sierra Club
History Committee
San Francisco, California

1976

SIERRA CLUB ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
INTRODUCTION	iv
SEASONING OF AN OUTDOORSWOMAN	1
San Francisco Parks and Swiss Chalets	1
Meeting the Sierra Club	3
Fashion on the Trail	6
The High Trip Commissary	7
The "Morals Committee"	8
MEMORABLE PEOPLE AND TRADITIONS OF THE HIGH TRIPS	10
Musicians, Artists, Educators, and Climbers	10
Storytellers and Campfire Shows	11
Bandannas and Billy Cans	13
Tragedies and Hardships	15
Base Camp Experiences	16
THE SIERRA CLUB, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL	18
Out-of-State to Yellowstone, 1926	18
Hawaii and New Zealand	18
European Hiking	19
The Club's Lasting Influences	20
INDEX	22



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PREFACE

I first met Ruth Prager on one of the early High Trips, probably in the 1920s or 1930s, when she worked in the commissary. On returning to San Francisco where we both lived, we renewed our acquaintance. I then discovered what a versatile and interesting life she had led, both in her profession as a social worker and in her hobbies of folk dancing and music.

As a highly skilled social worker with nineteen years at the Presbyterian Orphanage in Marin County, she was sent to Europe after World War II. Under the auspices of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, she helped with the enormous task of relocating displaced persons--trying to find them their homes again and, if not, then getting them places to live and jobs to support themselves. She was three and a half years at this work--mainly in Germany--first at Mannheim, where there was an enormous labor camp including children of all nationalities, and later at the University of Heidelberg, where displaced students were helped.

On returning from Europe, she worked for the Jewish Family Service Agency in San Francisco for twenty-three years doing similar things for immigrants coming to this country--finding them homes and jobs, at which she was most successful. This all required a great understanding of people and of course tremendous energy, both of which Ruth has in abundance.

When she was not working, she would spend most evenings ushering at the San Francisco Opera House for all the symphonies, operas, ballets, and concerts. Then if she had a free evening she would go folk dancing. She had a large collection of gorgeous folk costumes collected in Europe--so many in fact that in her apartment she had to have an extra room just to hang her costumes in.

Now that she has retired she has slowed down a bit but still is busier than most people. Camping trips are no longer possible, but I most like to remember her on High Trips, helping our great chef, Dan Tachet, to make dreary dehydrated food taste delicious.

Helen LeConte
San Francisco, California
March, 1976

INTRODUCTION

Ruth E. Prager has been an active participant in the Sierra Club outings program since she joined the 1921 High Trip in Tuolumne Meadows, as a young woman of twenty-two. In this interview she recalls the classic High Trips of the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the club's early international outings in the 1950s and 1960s. Miss Prager acknowledges the strong influence that her Sierra Club experience has had on much of her life. Her words help illuminate the contribution of the outings program in developing, as Muir and Colby foresaw, a committed and knowledgeable cadre of club members--an important source of strength to the Sierra Club still today.

This interview was conducted on April 20, 1973, by Ruth Sumner, a volunteer interviewer for the Sierra Club History Committee. Only minor alterations of the interview transcript have been made; the complete tape recording is available in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Ann Lage, Editor
Sierra Club History
Committee
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SEASONING OF AN OUTDOORSWOMAN

San Francisco Parks and Swiss Chalets

Ruth Sumner: Miss Prager, will you tell me something about your early life and your family?

Ruth Prager: I was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1899; so that's the last century. I came down to San Francisco in 1905 just before the earthquake, which was celebrated yesterday. I like to think of the earthquake as my first camping experience because the hotel apartment we lived in fell apart, more or less, and we had to move out to an aunt's house. We were not allowed to sleep in that house overnight but went to the park several blocks away and slept out on the grass. That was my first night out under the stars.

From there we packed up in wagons and went out to the Presidio and put up temporary tents and what-not. That was a great experience for me, and I enjoyed it a lot. I was free of my mother and the nurse and my sister and everybody else. I could run around and enjoy the out-of-doors, so I always think of the earthquake as the beginning of my camping.

The next camping experience I had was very wonderful. I went with my parents, because of my father's ill health, in 1909 to Europe. My sister and I were placed in a boarding school in Lausanne, Switzerland, on the lake of Geneva, with a glorious view of the mountains and the French Alps across from us. I was the youngest child in the school, very much loved and taken care of. We learned French and German and also English.

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RP: But what was most exciting was our summers. The forty-five girls of different nationalities all packed up and we went up the mountains. We took a chalet and lived there for about six weeks. We had a guide who came in about every other day or so. He would tell us about the mountains and take us on short walks until he thought we were sufficiently acclimated and in good condition to lead us on overnight hikes. Then we would go up to the higher mountains where the animals are kept during summer, and we would spend the night there in a hut and maybe climb a glacier the next day. Being the youngest I was always right behind the guide. Once in a while he would go off and pick edelweiss for us. I have wonderful memories of my six summers off in the mountains.

RS: How old were you when you first began?

RP: I was nine years old when I left San Francisco. I had my tenth birthday on the boat. I stayed over in Switzerland for six years. In fact we came back for two reasons. One, we had always said we would return for the Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915, and the second reason was World War I. It was time to get out. The family in America were having all kinds of ideas that we were suffering, which we weren't. We came back to America in 1915, and I started going to Girls High School in San Francisco.

The thought of the mountains completely disappeared. I didn't know there was a mountain around. No one talked mountains. We lived in a hotel on Van Ness Avenue, and there was a charming Italian couple who lived there, Dr. Mario Isnardi and his wife. One day they laughingly said, "Come see the extra room we've just rented in the hotel." When they opened the door there the two beds were, spread with all kinds of camping equipment. I said, "What's all this?" Knapsacks, parkas and sleeping bags! They said, "We are going on a Sierra Club trip."

Well, I had never heard of the Sierra Club; it was completely new to me. And he said, "I and my wife, we go hiking almost every weekend on Tamalpais." Here I was, sixteen, and I had never been up Tamalpais and didn't know a thing about it. The doctor said, "Tomorrow we are hiking; come with us." So I

RP: climbed Tamalpais, got blisters, and came back so thrilled, on a Saturday. I went up again on Sunday. So that was my introduction to hiking around the Bay Area. Although I knew no one else who would do this with me, I knew it was something I wanted to do. But there was no chance. My mother wasn't letting me out alone at that stage.

So the next thing that happened was I went to college over at Berkeley and took up social work. In my last year of college I heard about students who were able to go to Yosemite and work as waitresses. Three of us decided that was what we were going to do. We were going to go up and get to the mountains. My mother was horrified. She said, "I didn't raise you to be a waitress, and I don't want you to go." But she made me beautiful little dotted swiss aprons, because we could wear what we wanted, and I went up well equipped and well dressed to be a waitress at Camp Curry [laughter].

Meeting the Sierra Club

RP: Mother Curry, who was then very active, was wonderful to me. I eventually waited on her table out on the porch. I met all her friends, and they were all especially nice to me. Every week, when I had my free day, I would go off hiking someplace alone to various parts of the valley. But sometimes I would not go. I'd save up my days off so that I could have a couple of days and take a longer trip. That's what I did the end of my first year in 1921. I decided to take the Tenaya zigzag with my knapsack and go up as far as I could, to Tuolumne, if possible.

RS: Alone?

RP: Yes, I was alone. And when I got to the top of the Tenaya zigzag and came to a road, I hitched a ride in to Tuolumne. When we got to the meadows, the driver stopped at the Soda Springs. There were mobs and mobs of people. The Sierra Club was there getting ready to go off on a trip. The first person I ran into was Eleanor Croff, a friend from college. She introduced me to the leader, William Colby. He loved to meet young people who had

RP: the nerve to go ahead and do something on their own and was most gracious. He said, "You stay with us tonight." Of course I didn't have a sleeping bag, but he borrowed one from one of the packers. He said, "Tomorrow we are climbing Lyell, and you can come along with us." "Certainly I'll come along, but I am suppose to go back to Camp Curry." He urged me not to worry about that, so I dashed and got a postal card from somebody and wrote a note to Mother Curry that I would be back in a few days and sent it down to the valley.

The cook at that time was Dan Tachet. He was a Swiss. Of course, there was a great affinity between Dan and myself because I had lived in Switzerland and we could speak French together. He wanted me to help him in the commissary right away, so I was put to work that same night. I still have pictures of everybody standing in line waiting to go to dinner. And the next day everybody helped me get up Lyell. I remember the thrill it was, coming down the chute and sliding through the tunnel with Mr. Colby just ahead, helping me get to the bottom. Well, I was sold on the Sierra Club after that.

The next summer I went back to Curry and worked at the Kiddie Camp, taking care of children while their parents went hiking. I still wondered what the Sierra Club was doing, and I hoped that I would get to be a part of them. One evening just before we closed, along by the fence came a man, I said, "Why, Ike, what are you doing here?" He was one of the packers from the Sierra Club. "I'm taking food up to the group that is camped near Merced Peak. Why don't you come along?" So I went to Mother Curry and told her I had a chance to go up to meet the Sierra Club. She was willing to let me go.

I dashed into my trousers and got my knapsack and camping gear. Ike must have had about seven animals, all packed with crates of lettuce. He rode ahead, and then came the animals. I rode behind with all the dust. We started up. Supposedly we should have reached our destination around six or seven o'clock. Well, it got later and it got later, and we kept going. Ike began to get nervous and said, "I think I'm lost." I did not know whether he was making this up for my benefit or not, but I kept him in his place, saying, "You know Ike, I'm engaged." (I wasn't). That got his respect, and he was very, very nice.

RP: When we finally came to a small forest where the trees were close together we heard a "pluk, pluk, pluk." The wooden slat boxes were breaking open, and all the lettuce was falling along the trail ~~laughter~~. "I think we had better stop," he said. "It is too dark. I can't see what we are doing." So he unpacked all those animals and built a big fire, and we spent the night there. We started out very early the next morning, and I don't think we were a half hour from camp. So I was never sure whether he was putting that on or not ~~laughter~~.

Anyhow, when we got to camp the first person I met was Cedric Wright. I had met Cedric Wright through friends before. He was a very fine violinist and teacher, and he came along with the club to give concerts and work in commissary. He and his wife Mildred would give special concerts at our parties. Well, the club was going to climb Merced Peak that day so I went along with them on that trip. It was very steep and difficult. I was a little worried, but Cedric took care of me by telling funny stories all the way up the trail and up the mountain. I did get to the top and signed the register.

That was about 1922 or 1923. After that I decided the club had been so nice to me I had better do something about it. I wrote to Mr. Colby and thanked him and said, "Wouldn't you be willing to let me join your commissary and work for the club?" He wrote back and said that the next year I could be a member of commissary.

That was a terrific privilege. We had our transportation taken care of, and I think those first years we might have earned a few dollars. I don't remember. But that wasn't important. What was important was to be with the club and be part of it. That is the way I am. I always like to be a little part--not too much responsibility, but a part of what I am doing. Now I usher for the concerts and the operas, so I feel like I am a small part of the Opera House.

Fashion on the Trail

RP: I can remember the excitement of packing for my first trip and getting everything together. My mother and sister would sit in the front room and I would go out and get all dressed up. "Now this is what I am wearing for the trail, trousers and this shirt, and this is what I am wearing for commissary." I'd give them a whole show to be sure everything fit and all the buttons were where they should be. I don't think we had zippers in those days.

RS: Would you take a moment to describe what the outfits were like in comparison to what people were wearing on the street?

RP: When I had hiked in Switzerland we wore knickers, but here they were already wearing jeans. Some of the stories told at campfire about what people used to wear just had us in stitches-- huge voluminous skirts, big hats, hat pins, and high boots. It seems to me that I wore high boots too. But the costume wasn't too different in my early days from now, except that we had no nylon.

There was only one outing a year--the High Trip. About 250 went along. On those early hikes you went for a whole month. I loved it so much. Then when I came back to San Francisco, before going home to my mother, who was shocked by all of this, I would go take a Turkish bath, have my hair washed, and get all cleaned up laughter.

RS: And tan?

RP: Tan. You know in those days we didn't have suntan lotion, or if we did I didn't use it. I use to come home looking absolutely black. You would get blisters on your lips and on your face. What we did use was zinc oxide. It was white, so that when we climbed on the glaciers we really looked as if we were covered with masks. It did look funny.

The High Trip Commissary

RP: Working in commissary with Dan Tachet and his sons was just heaps of fun. The food was completely different from what it is now. There were sacks of dried apricots and dried peaches and prunes, and dried potatoes, etc; the minute we hit camp and the animals came in with the food, all this had to be soaked in water overnight. One of the first things we in the commissary had to do with the help of the volunteers, was to get out long yellow looking sausages. This was concentrated pea soup, and hard as a rock. We'd have to hammer it and break it up with our fingers to make it into a powder. While we were doing this Dan with his sharp knife was chopping up bacon, very, very fine, which he always used as a base for his soup and his salads. Then we would mix together anything he wanted. If he was making rolls or bread we had to butter the tops before they went into the oven and watch the soup and not turn the steak more than once. In the morning we made thousands and thousands of pancakes!

RS: How did you manage butter and other perishables?

RP: Butter you could buy in those days, if I remember correctly, in cans. I guess you still can. They came in a large red can. We didn't have too many perishables. When Ike and I went in with the lettuce we were bringing in the fresh food to a group that had been out several weeks already. There would be caches ahead where the food would be left that we picked up as we went along. Maybe it had been left that day, or would be brought in when we had a layover.

You see, these were trips that moved practically every other day. We weren't coddled! It wasn't four or five or six miles. Sometimes it was ten to fifteen or more a day, and we all did it. The leaders, Mr. Colby and whoever was in charge of commissary, knew where we were going and where the camps were to be. Of course the packers knew the country inside out. I was kind of a show-off, I think, in those days. I used to insist on being the first one up in the morning and taking a dip in the river, ice cold that it was. I also insisted on being the first on the trail. Now these days I come in last but in those days I wanted to be first.

RP: There were always a group of maybe three or four of us girls in commissary--I remember Marjory Bridge (Farquhar) in those days--that worked together and also a group of fellows. Just as now, the men got the firewood, dug the holes, and took care of garbage. There was usually someone in charge of making the coffee and the chocolate in the morning. Dan looked after all the big things--the ovens and the meat. By the way, we cooked in square stoves that fit into gunny sacks on the animals. I don't know how those poor horses carried those stoves.

RS: Were these like collapsible metal stoves?

RP: Oh no. They were about two feet square and they were heavy. Some of the stories around the campfire that I remember so well were about the early, early kitchen days, when the club did have cast iron stoves. They had to throw them aside the first time out because they could not carry them. Then there was Charlie--I don't know if you have heard of Charlie, the Chinese cook. He was a fine cook, but he used to hit the bottle. Sometimes he would go off for days, and they couldn't find him. They always had to take extra rice for him.

The Morals Committee

RS: Were there very many women on the trips? It was a very adventurous thing to do then.

RP: Oh, yes. There have always been more women than men. I have a list of all the people who went on these trips in my album. I've kept the names and pictures of all my outings in my albums. Camp was very different from what it is today. The sexes didn't mix as they do now. When we arrived in camp, usually the pack train had passed us on the road and the food was unpacked. Mr. Colby was there, or Mr. Tappaan, or Mr. Drew, and one of them would say, "Girls upstream, boys downstream and marrieds in the middle." [Laughter.] Everyone protected.

First thing we naturally wanted to do after a long day on the trail, dusty and dirty, was go swimming. There weren't all

these rules you now have. You could use soap in the river as we were the only group out and rarely met anyone for a month. If a man decided he wanted to go fishing instead of swimming he had to go upstream. If he went anywhere near the girls camp, he had to yell, "Man in camp, man in camp." All the girls would duck. Besides that, I think, I don't swear to this, but I think there was a "morals committee" that watched out after the girls to see that we all behaved properly and were chaperoned. We used to talk about a "morals committee," those ladies who had binoculars to see how things were going laughter.

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MEMORABLE PEOPLE AND TRADITIONS OF THE HIGH TRIPS

Musicians, Artists, Educators, and Climbers

RP: There were marvelous people on those trips, a great many professional people and people who had made a mark for themselves in the world--Cedric Wright, for instance. He took up photography after he decided he wasn't going to be a concert violinist. He kept teaching music too, and he wrote beautifully; the Sierra Club has published a book of his writings and pictures. He and his wife, Mildred, and their little girl, Alberta, were very dear friends of mine. I visited them often in Berkeley and met many other Sierra Club people there.

When I was at Camp Curry someone used to go by the soda fountain where I also worked. He wore a straw hat and sang; it was Ansel Adams,* very debonair and very full of fun and a fine pianist. Now that was long before he had married Virginia Best, who was also later in commissary. Her father ran the Best studio in Yosemite. Virginia and I became close friends, and since she married Ansel I've seen a lot of them both.

There were many famous people on the trips--Dr. Herbert Evans, who was a big name at the University of California, and the Millers and the Thompsons, high school principals and high school teachers. There was Aurelia Reinhardt, who was then

*Interview with Ansel Adams, conducted by Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, in progress.

RP: connected with Mills College. I have a whole list here. There was a very famous painter, Leland Curtis, who had been to the South Pole with Byrd. I was thrilled one day when I hiked along with him. He sat down to paint, and I went to the stream and got fresh water for his water colors.

Then there was Ed Rainey and his wife. He was the secretary to Mayor Rolph here in San Francisco. He was a very good sport and full of fun. There was the Pasmore family--Susan Pasmore, a violinist with the symphony, and her husband, Ray Burrough, I think it was, who was an etcher and painter.

There was Ernest E. Dawson and his children* from Los Angeles. I'll never forget him. I met him on the trail near camp one morning with a small group of hikers (I thought). He asked me to join the group. Pretty soon I discovered this was no hike but a mountain climb--no less than up North Palisade. I had no chance to turn back, but I was game. Gail Evans, then in her teens, and I consoled each other on the steep cliffs. At a danger point a rope was let down. There were no rope climbing instructions in those early days, so I tied the rope around my middle and called, "Pull!" Anyway, Gail and I made it to the top. I never saw such huge boulders, or such a fine view.

However, another time the view from Milestone was not so good. Norman Clyde led us, and we ran into a thunder and lightning storm. Hairpins were popping out of our hair, and we came down off the mountain as fast as possible.

Storytellers and Campfire Shows

RP: There were wonderful, wonderful campfires in my early days because the leaders on the trips had been with the club since its inception. Mr. Colby was a very good talker. He was a mining

*Interview with Glen Dawson, conducted by Richard Searle, Sierra Club History Committee, 1975.

- RP: lawyer and knew mountains well. He had known John Muir very well and gave us all a real deep respect and affection and love for Muir. I was always sorry I had not a chance to meet him. Another man who was an early part of the club and a very close friend of Mr. Colby was Clair Tappaan.
- RS: You mentioned that he was a great storyteller.
- RP: Oh, he was a storyteller. He used to tell the most lovely stories about how some of the trees got twisted, and about the owls that sat on the trees and kept turning their heads and the trees turned with them. Oh, he had all kinds of weird stories. Another fine storyteller was Dr. Harold Crowe,* who was later president of the club. He could tell fantastic stories at campfire. He invented Margie. Margie never did come to camp; she was always on the trail just about to arrive, and things were always happening to her. He would tell these wonderful Margie stories at campfire, and we always hoped that some day we would meet Margie.
- RS: You mentioned a Mrs. Earnshaw.
- RP: Elsie Bell. Oh, I wish she could be interviewed, but she unfortunately is a sick woman and is in Majorca, Spain, in a rest home. Elsie was a fantastic person. She had worked at I. Magnin's and she knew all about clothes and style, so she would put on our fashion shows. What we came up with out of our dunnage bags was unbelievable. She would have the girls dressed up for weddings and parties and what-not. Of course, we would use our mosquito nettings and night gowns, pinecones and branches, and spaghetti from Dan's kitchen for beads.
- RS: Were these skits you put on?
- RP: These were skits at campfire. We had not only fine speakers, but people who would write plays. Ansel Adams and his friends wrote I don't know how many plays that we put on, in the Greek style too. "The Trojan Women" became the "Trudgin' Women".

* Interview with Harold C. Crowe conducted by Richard Searle, Sierra Club History Committee, 1975.

RS: Did they also make masks?

RP: Oh yes. They did everything. They were marvelous. And then we would have parties in the afternoons. We would have to come disguised as a book or an opera or a play. I know my favorite character was always Salome because I had a bright red mosquito net. I would take my hair and puff it way out, put the mosquito net over it, and wear my pajamas. I would carry a silver (tin) platter and a big pinecone for the severed head.

Bandannas and Billy Cans

RP: And then the bandanna show. I have noticed the last few years, unless I am along in camp no one knows what it is all about.

RS: What is it?

RP: Kleenex had not been invented. So everybody carried a bandanna, and you usually carried a great many extra bandannas in your dunnage. We would give prizes to the person making a list of the most bandanna usages, such as: wash rag, towel, shoe polisher, sun shade, bandage, sling, a bag, a sunsuit, a swim suit--if you had to.

Towards the end of a trip we used to have a bandanna show. Most of us knew this was going to happen so we would take gorgeous bandannas with us. Special ones we had picked up in Europe or that had come from India or whatnot. Elsie Bell was often in charge of those bandanna shows. People began to smuggle bandannas in, within the weight limit.

When the bandanna show came off it was a riot of color, and there were hundreds of bandannas displayed. A rope was strung up in a square. We sat in the center of the square and the bandannas were pinned to the rope. Usually it was the afternoon. The commissary would have made pink punch and cookies, and Cedric, or whoever was in charge of music, would play. Someone would give a speech.

RP: The bandannas would be fluttering in the wind and the mountain flowers added to the color. With two hundred people, and everyone putting in two or three bandannas, you can see there would be a lot of them. Then there would be a prize for the oldest and the best, for the silk one and the cotton one, and for the most useful. All of this naturally created a lot of good feeling; everybody looked forward to these parties.

Campfire was the job of the freshmen. The men before and after dinner would go out and bring in the wood. They didn't chop down green trees in those days any more than they do now, but there was plenty of dead wood around, and there was no competition. We would have enormous campfires every night. The men would bring it in, and the girls would yell, "More wood, more wood." The men would pile the wood on, and then we would sing until all hours of the night.

Sometimes if we had a talented group of packers they would come and join us. There were some very clever packers, who knew real risqué, good songs. Some times the packers were very stand-offish and had their own campfires. They were always fed first too. The packers were taken care of; after all without them we couldn't move. But when they were friendly and they would lend us a horse and let us go out riding and tell us stories, it was a lot of fun. They were usually quite a young bunch.

After the campfire--this doesn't happen anymore of course--it was a sight to see people going off to go to bed, because we didn't have flashlights. The first thing we did when we went down to commissary at the beginning of a trip, was to sign up for what we called a "billy can". A "billy can" was a large, empty tin, used for tomatoes or coffee. You would cut a door in the front, the top would be off, and the handle was of wire. You would put your candle in the can, and everybody would walk home with his or her little lanterns. It was very charming. Climbing up the hills you would see these little lights go up and up.

In those days we were also allowed to have our own individual campfire. So we would build a little rock fireplace. We were taught how to fix it and how to put it out and how to take care of it. You would see these little campfires all up and down the hills. But I guess now there isn't even a central campfire any more. I

RP: was disappointed last year when I went to base camp and we sat around the cook stove and made believe it was a campfire. There just wouldn't be enough wood now, with so many on the trails.

Tragedies and Hardships

RP: Campfire really sort of inspired you, and you just wanted to spend the night there. Talking about spending the night at campfire, we did that occasionally too when something went wrong, and the pack train didn't come in. We had no sleeping bags, and we would share our sweaters and whatever we had left in our knapsacks for dinner, and sit up all night around the campfire singing and telling stories until the pack train came in. That happened occasionally.

There were very exciting adventures that took place. Some that were tragic. Someone would go off and get himself killed doing solo climbing, which was against the rules. That happened on several trips when I was along. I remember one night when the leaders all had to go off. They came to me and said, "You take over campfire." It was quite a thing to do to take it over and to keep peoples' spirits up telling things about the club's early days.

Then there were times people would take a wrong turn on the road, not listening to directions the night before, and get lost. I guess they still do but it's not so easy nowadays, because the trails are better defined, and there are more people around to tell you where to go. We were given instructions, just like now, as to what to do if we did get lost. We were to sit down and stay there until the morning, not wander around and get confused. I can't remember ever actually getting lost. I can remember almost getting lost but all of a sudden finding I was on the right trail. You do have a few moments of panic before you are sure of where you are.

I have been off on trips where it has rained every day. That is kind of tragic and difficult. Under every tree you would see-- when you were hiking or when you were suppose to be hiking--a

RP: little brown squirrel, and it would be a Sierra Club member in a brown poncho waiting for the rain to stop laughter. Then you finally got to camp dripping wet, and the men would have built an enormous big campfire. Everyone would stand around after getting dunnage unpacked. If their sleeping bags were wet, people would come down and dry their bags and try to arrange things so as to have a comfortable night.

They say it never rains at night in the Sierra, and it really almost never does. I've never taken a tent to the mountains. I usually take a tarp that I can tie up to trees. You know now everything is made so much better and lighter than it used to be so that you can take more with you. Just think of all the things that have happened to make camping easier. I won't say it isn't as much fun now but it isn't quite as adventurous. But it is still very, very wonderful.

Base Camp Experiences

RP: I went on about eight trips with commissary in the beginning. Then I went as a guest. I went on many, many High Trips, and then all of a sudden Oliver Kehrlein, with the consent of the club, introduced the base camp. That was the first time the club had tried to do something different. I went on the first base camp and while I wasn't in commissary I did help a lot. Base camp was a lot of fun if you felt the High Trip was too strenuous. You stayed in one place and went out every day, maybe overnight, and then came back.

Oliver was a very good leader. He had one fault that we tried to cure. He would talk too long at campfire. So what the kids used to do was to pack up a big ball of snow and hand it to him and say he could talk only as long as he could hold that ice cold ball laughter. Oliver was interested in glaciers, just as Mr. Colby was too. Mr. Colby never did have the one dream realized that he wanted, which was to go to the Himalayas. But Oliver did go and see many glaciers and found some new ones in the Sierra. He would come back and tell us all about them. His sons went along too.

RP: Talking of sons, Mr. Colby had two sons, Gilbert and Henry. Mr. Tappaan had sons, and those boys took over from their fathers. They went first as young boys and then gradually took over and turned out to be excellent leaders. I use to just marvel at how well they did as real young kids. We always had some very good young people.

RS: How old would they have been?

RP: Oh, they must have been in their early twenties, or their teens when they first went. Colby's boys were quite young. I can remember them hopping from rock to rock at night and scaring us to death when we were at campfire. Oliver Kehrlein's son was a little devil when he was a young boy, but he grew up and became quite reliable too. They used to give him the job of taking care of chicky pail. That was the slop pail at the end of the food line. He didn't like that job very much. He used to give us a pretty bad time, but he learned. He got disciplined by everyone.

We had many interesting people who would visit us for talks at campfire. Rangers would always come to see us, and heads of the park. Everybody sort of welcomed us. Of course Mr. Colby and Mr. Tappaan were known as friends of John Muir and the Sierra Club was looked up to as a help in conservation.

THE SIERRA CLUB, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Out of State To Yellowstone, 1926

RP: After being with base camp for quite a few years I decided I wasn't as ancient as I thought and that I should take High Trips again. So I went back and enjoyed those for several years. One trip that thrilled me very much when I was with the commissary was the first trip the club made out of state to Yellowstone. A large group went in 1926 for four weeks.

When that trip was finished and we came back to California I was fortunate enough to go with the Sierra Club on another month's trip. This time the Sierra Club was being host to the Appalachian Mountain Club that came all the way out from the East Coast. One of their members, a Mr. Chamberlain, had been on previous Sierra trips and I had met him. He was so enthused about our mountains, and he told us a great deal about the Appalachians and how one got lost in those dark forests. You didn't have the open vistas we had here in California. He wanted all of his friends to come out to California, and they came. I was in commissary on that Appalachian trip.

Hawaii and New Zealand

RP: Once having gone out of state the club gradually got into the habit of going further afield. I didn't go on their first trip to Glacier--I went later--but I did go on their first trip to Hawaii in 1962. Dr. Stewart Kimball was the leader. That was on the

RP: big island--Hawaii. We were gone almost a month. It was a very wonderful trip. We climbed, or some of us climbed Mauna Kea. I remember everyone trying to get into a dormitory style house, but I took my bag out under a big log. It was dark by that time so I didn't know exactly where I was, but I woke up in the night and saw the tracery of a dead tree above me and the moon shining through it. It was just stunning. Then I felt my nose. It felt kind of funny, and I realized it was practically frozen. It had gotten so cold, as we were so very high. I snuggled down under and when some of my friends got up around four in the morning and went to the top I stayed in my sleeping bag.

Other firsts with the club were Japan in 1956, South America in 1964, and New Zealand in 1966. On this past trip, we did the Milford Track in pouring rain and enjoyed it because the New Zealand guides were so helpful. They even carried my knapsack to the top of the pass for me. Everytime we reached a sheltered place, they would stop and make tea and produce biscuits.

We couldn't take the regular trail down the mountain. They had to open an emergency trail, because the regular one was washed out. We had divided ourselves up into three groups, with each group leaving one day after the other so we wouldn't all get to an overnight hut at the same time. When we did get to our hut, the group I was with found that the twenty or so that had been ahead couldn't go on because of the rains, so there were forty of us! We doubled up in little bunks, but at least there were warm showers and warm food and we didn't have to sleep out. That was something. New Zealand is a wonderful and beautiful country for hiking. But the Sierra are my first love.

European Hiking

RP: I'm very happy that the club has branched out and visits other countries. I think it makes the club more interesting. It isn't just California oriented, or the United States. It spreads its interest all over. I am sorry I didn't go with them on their trip to Switzerland, but then I had been all through Switzerland as a child and had climbed all over.

RP: When they went to Norway and some of the northern countries I didn't go because during the war I worked in Europe for three and one-half years at the displaced persons camp in Germany, and any time I had a minute free I dashed off someplace where I could climb. I did get up to Norway. In fact I was the first American hiker up there after the war. From Bergen I took the bus as far as I could, and then started hiking up. I was in a snow storm, but luckily I met some Danish people who took care of me. Hiking in Norway is fantastic because trails are arranged between huts. In fact most of Europe is that way. You go from hut to hut. I remember how impressed I was when I would see these huts in the distance. When you would arrive, there were the hand woven bed spreads and the hand carved tables and chairs and a shower room and a room where you could dry your clothes. They would give you lunch for the next day too. They are much more than youth hostels. Everyone used them for a small fee.

Then in Austria after the war I went hiking a lot. I had some friends, and I had bought an army jeep that had two gas tanks. So I had plenty of gas and could get far away. I went on a great many trips in Austria and Germany. What impressed me there in the huts were the blankets. They were embroidered at each end, "foot" or "head" laughter. That was very clever. So I've really seen a great many countries and a great many mountains.

The Club's Lasting Influences

RP: The last years I have gone back to base camp, as I am getting slower and slower. Everybody knows that they must not wait for me on the trail. I will get there, and I don't like someone behind me; then I feel pushed. I like to sit down when I want and enjoy the scenery or sketch. If you sit down and look at scenery intensely you can also relax; when you get back on the trail, you feel like a new person.

I hope to go this summer to Long Lake on the base camp. I have friends that are going. Last year I took a horse in, but I am not going to do that again. It is too hard getting off laughter. There is nothing I look forward to more than getting out in the

- RP: mountains, or telling my friends about the Sierra Club, or getting them to join up. I can't think of anything that has happened to me in my life that has given me as much pleasure. I have met such wonderful people and feel that everything we did and do is worthwhile, something everyone should have the opportunity to do.
- RS: Well, thank you very much. You mentioned in your reply to the questionnaire that you have become increasingly concerned with general conservation issues as the club has. Do you want to comment on that? You also commented on how pleased you were with the influence of Sierra Club members overseas. I think this all fits in.
- RP: Conservation of course is the big thing. We all have to preach it and practice it and write all the letters the club asks us to when we have the time and the energy. I feel badly every time I go to Marin and see more roads and houses and less land and fewer flowers, but there really is still a lot of very beautiful land in and around California that you can see and can enjoy if you just make the effort to go out and hike.
- RS: Oh, I am sure that there is too. Thank you very much.

INDEX

Adams, Ansel, 10, 12
Adams, Virginia Best, 10
Appalachian Mountain Club, 18
Austria, 20
bandanna show, 13-14
base camp. See Sierra Club outings, base camp
Best, Virginia. See Adams, Virginia Best
Burrough, Ray, 11
Camp Curry, 3, 4, 10
Chamberlain, Allen, 18
Clyde, Norman, 11
Colby, Gilbert, 17
Colby, Henry, 17
Colby, William, 3-4, 5, 7, 8, 11-12, 16-17
commissary. See Sierra Club outings, commissary
conservation, 21
Croff, Eleanor, 3
Crowe, Dr. Harold, 12
Curry, Mrs. David A. (Mother), 3, 4
Curtis, Leland, 11
Dawson, Ernest E., 11
Dawson, Glen, 11
Earnshaw, Elsie Bell, 12, 13
Evans, Gail, 11
Evans, Dr. Herbert, 10
Farquhar, Marjory Bridge, 8
Germany, 20
Hawaii, 18-19
High Trip. See Sierra Club outings
Isnardi, Mario, 2
Kehrlein, Oliver, 16, 17
Kimball, Dr. Stewart, 18
Mauna Kea, 19
Milford Track, 19
Mt. Lyell, 4
Mt. Tamalpais, 2-3
Muir, John, 12, 17
New Zealand, 19
North Palisade, 11
Norway, 20
outings. See Sierra Club outings

packers, 4-5, 7, 14
 Pasmore, Susan, 11
 Prager, Ruth:
 early life and education, 1-2, 3
 meets Sierra Club, 2-4
 works in Yosemite, 3-4
 joins commissary, 5
 Sierra outings, 6-16
 base camp, 16-17, 20
 out-of-state trips, 18-19
 international trips, 19-20
 Rainey, Ed, 11
 Reinhardt, Aurelia, 10-11
 San Francisco, 1, 2
 Sierra Club, 2
 conservation, 21
 international influence, 21
 women, 8-9
 See also Sierra Club outings
 Sierra Club outings, 3-4
 base camp, 16, 18, 20
 campfires and entertainment, 11-15, 17
 commissary, 4, 5, 6, 7-8
 international trips, 19-20
 "morals committee," 8-9
 out-of-state trips, 18-19
 Switzerland, 1-2, 4, 6, 19
 Tachet, Dan, 4, 7-8, 12
 Tappaan, Clair, 8, 12, 17
 Tuck, Charlie, 8
 Tuolumne Meadows, 3
 Wright, Alberta, 10
 Wright, Cedric, 5, 10, 13
 Wright, Mildred, 5, 10
 Yellowstone National Park, 18
 Yosemite National Park, 3