Sierra Club Oral History Project

SOUTHERN SIERRANS III

Robert Bear	Desert Conservation and Exploration with the Sierra Club, 1946-1978
Arthur B. Johnson	Climbing and Conservation in the Sierra Club's Southern California Chapter, 1930-1960s
Roscoe and Wilma Poland	Desert Conservation: Voices from the Sierra Club's San Diego Chapter
John and Ruth Mendenhall	Forty Years of Sierra Club Mountaineering Leadership, 1938-1978

Preface by Paul Clark
Introductions by Louise Werner and John Ripley

Interviews Conducted by Paul Clark and Eric Redd
Oral History Program, California State University, Fullerton
and by Richard Searle

Sierra Club History Committee

PREFACE

After a number of years of somewhat irregular yet generally persistent work, this third volume of Southern Sierrans has now found its way to the bookshelf. Hopefully, it will now sit on the bookshelf in an equally irregular way, being tapped in a persistent manner by researchers! Credit for this accomplishment must first of all be given to the willingness of the interviewees, Bob Bear, Art Johnson, Ruth and John Mendenhall, and Roscoe and Wilma Poland, to share their past Sierra Club experiences through the medium of oral history. Also, interviewer Eric Redd deserves thanks for his donation of time to pursue his interview with Art Johnson.

Institutionally, this volume is the joint product of the California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program and the Sierra Club History Committee. The single interview with John and Ruth Mendenhall by Dick Searle is an exception to this, being an independent History Committee effort which has been included here because of its closely related southern California subject matter. Finally, the writer would like to express thanks to the Angeles Chapter for its financial assistance and to the members of that chapter's history committee, Bob and Maureen Cates and John Ripley, for their continued interest and support of Sierra Club oral history projects in southern California.

Paul Clark, Director
Sierra Club Project Oral History Program
California State University, Fullerton
April, 1980

INTRODUCTION

[This volume brings together the interviews of six southern Californians who have contributed to the Sierra Club in diverse areas. The interview of Ruth and John Mendenhall* conducted by History Committee member Richard Searle and completed in 1979, is included here with an introduction by John Ripley. The other three interviews, all conducted by associates of the Oral History Program of California State University, Fullerton, represent three different southern California chapters of the Sierra Club. All of the interviewees, however, share a common interest in conservation and recreation in the southern California desert. Each has also pursued his individual interests in enjoying and preserving our natural resources through the Sierra Club and other conservation organizations. Louise Werner has written the following remarks as an introduction to the three Cal State Fullerton interviews.--Ed., 4/14/80]

Arthur B. Johnson

Art Johnson is a fierce fighter for whatever he believes in and a meticulous worker in whatever work he undertakes. As a rock climbing leader during the forties, when the Southern California Chapter began to take an interest in that level of mountaineering, Art insisted on strict adherence to the rules of safety, while at the same time encouraging the well-conditioned to dare on first ascents, as when he led parties up the east faces of Mount Muir and Mount Whitney.

When he took charge of remodeling Harwood lodge in 1946, some of the volunteer helpers found it hard to live up to his standards of workmanship. He fought to have Muir Lodge restored after the flood of 1938 partially destroyed it. He lost that one, and his later fight against the tram up San Jacinto.

In the same spirit he fought for Anza-Borrego, along with many others, to save as much desert land as possible from the developers. Always one to love a good battle, never one to give up, Art Johnson came up the hard way, struggling to the level of structual engineer without money and without pull. They don't make 'em that way anymore.

Robert Bear

It would be hard to find a more dependable, responsible, dedicated leader than Bob Bear; or one who stayed with it for so many years.

Consideration for others comes to mind when I remember how he used to stay in the campground until everyone had come back from a hike and would go

to look for people who hadn't. This was supposed to be the rule but not all leaders had the patience.

His leadership combined strength with a gentleness sometimes missing in strong men. Consideration for his family often caused him to curtail his own ambitions in order that they too might enjoy the wilderness. His daughters, Betsy and Ginny, added their youthful exhuberance on many a trip. Bob was especially thoughtful of his wife, Emily, taking pains to bring her out on camping trips, even after she became helpless with multiple sclerosis.

Roscoe and Wilma Poland

Although I do not know the Polands personally, I sense from reading their interview here a tremendous vitality and enthusiasm in their pursuit of wilderness preservation in southern California. Their accounts bubble over with enthusiasm as they describe their indefatigable efforts to eliminate inholdings in the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and their successful fight to prevent the channelization of Topock Gorge and other sections of the lower Colorado River.

Sensitivity to nature, personal knowledge of areas to be saved, and persistence in pursuing their goals--these, it is clear from this interview, are the keys to success for the team of Wilma and Roscoe Poland.

Louise Top Werner
Angeles Chapter
April 1980

Sierra Club Oral History Project

Robert Bear

DESERT CONSERVATION AND EXPLORATION WITH THE SIERRA CLUB, 1946-1978

An Interview Conducted by
Paul Clark

Sierra Club History Committee
1980

Sierra Club Oral History Project

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

This interview with Robert Bear provides a unique opportunity to observe both the Angeles and San Gorgonio Chapters of the Sierra Club. Bear served on the executive committee of the Angeles Chapter during the mid-1950s, and after moving his family to Beaumont, California, the executive committee of the San Gorgonio Chapter during the early 1960s. Having thus acted as a leader in both chapters, Bear is strategically able to provide commentary on the more recent history of these two neighboring club subdivisions. Another major focal point of this interview is Bear's long time exposure to the California desert. He first came in contact with this arid backyard of southern California while attending Deep Springs College near Bishop during the early 1930s. After joining the Sierra Club in 1946, he has consistently been a desert outings leader and conservation spokesman.

Portions of this interview were previously printed as part of a study entitled, A History of Recreation in the California Desert, prepared by Eric Redd and the interviewer for the Bureau of Land Management, California Desert Study Unit, under contract with the California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program. Those parts incorporated from this report are reproduced courtesy of the Bureau. The interviewer, Paul Clark, conducted this interview in two separate sessions, November 3, 1977, and again, June 26, 1978, in the Bears' home in Beaumont, situated not far from the foothills of Mount San Gorgonio.

Paul Clark
Interviewer

24 February 1980
Orange, California

I DESERT EXPLORATION AND RECREATION, 1930s-1970s

College on a Desert Cattle Ranch

Clark: Good afternoon, Mr. Bear. I've come here today to inquire a little bit about your recreational pursuits in the California desert. Perhaps we could begin with an outline of your first experiences in the desert.

Bear: My experiences began in the desert as a 19-year-old high school graduate. I was brought up and went to high school in Evanston, Illinois. As a senior, I was interviewed for a scholarship at Deep Springs College up at Deep Springs Valley, northwest of Death Valley, right near the Nevada line due east of Bishop. I spent three years on a cattle ranch in a junior college set-up. I fell in love with the desert during those three years, and I've been a confirmed desert lover ever since these years during the early 1930s. I stayed in California for a year after those three years attending Pomona College, and I used to get down into the desert, including into Baja California's deserts. I didn't get back to the desert until after World War II, when I settled in southern California where I have worked, married and brought up a family.

In 1959, I moved my family out to Beaumont to escape smogland, and also because it was closer to the desert. I've lived here and been a real desert rat ever since. I still spend a lot of time in the desert. I'm a custodian of a nature reserve that my wife and I donated to The Nature Conservancy in 1971 [Oasis de los Osos], which is located near the community of Snow Creek. It's right immediately underneath the north face of San Jacinto Peak, and about ten miles west of the town of Palm Springs. I go once or twice a week on desert hikes with a group sponsored by the Palm Springs Desert Museum. These are mostly senior citizens.

Clark: You attended college in Deep Springs Valley?

Bear: That's right.

Clark: What sort of recreation did people pursue in that area of country in those days?

Bear: Well, this was an isolated ranch where the administration discouraged contact with surrounding valleys and towns. Our hobbies and recreation were necessarily directed toward enjoying the desert around us. We were the sole ranch and the sole population in this valley, aside from three men that worked at a highway station a couple of miles from the ranch. Our recreation consisted of taking our days off and riding horses and hiking in the surrounding mountains, which are part of the Inyo and the White mountain ranges. My particularly closest friend was a Salt Lake City boy who really taught me how to recreate in the desert. We would spend every free Sunday that we could spare from our busy schedule at the school exploring the surrounding mountains.

Clark: Were there other people in the mountains beside yourself, or were they pretty well vacant of other human use?

Bear: This was during the depths of the Great Depression, and there were few people who had much time to spend on recreating in the wilds. The only people we would encounter when we would wander around the hills would be other students. The student body consisted of only twenty students--and still does--and it had a faculty of to six people. So that group of say, thirty-five people was about the total of our contacts. So, it was pretty much lonesome, exploring, and hiking around those mountains. It wasn't as a member of any other group and you very seldom met other people.

I remember one time a group of people came up from Cal Tech led by a professor who was doing some geological mapping in the White Mountains. It was fun to talk to him and the students that he brought along, but we didn't actually participate in his activities up there. I subsequently read some of his studies which were rather revolutionary, and I'm not sure if they've ever been widely accepted.

Clark: Was this in the White Mountains?

Bear: Yes, he was in the White Mountains. You can drive up into them from the ranch along Wyman Creek, which is the source of the ranch's water. That's what he did, and he went way up, almost to White Mountain Peak, where the road ended in those days. It was only temporarily extended to the very top of White Mountain Peak. That latter extension was abandoned after the builder of it stopped using it. He was a famous publisher connected with Putnam & Sons.

Clark: What was he doing?

Bear: I think it was just recreational travel for him. I believe by that time he had bought Stove Pipe Wells Resort in Death Valley. Perhaps, during the hot season when he closed his resort because people couldn't tolerate Death Valley's heat, he explored around the high desert. This exploring eventually took him to the top of White Mountain. That doesn't explain why he scraped a road to the top. He did put a stone building up there and a less permanent shack, and there have been scientific instruments up there. Perhaps he was doing it in coordination with someone. The Navy had a research station there in the White Mountains. He may have been doing this to help them out.

The Navy still has a research station at the head of Crooked Creek, which is a branch of Wyman Creek. We have been up there with the Sierra Club on outings to climb peaks and to camp perhaps six or eight times since I came out to California after World War II. It was almost always on a Sierra Club outing.

Clark: Was the Sierra Club--or any other hiking club--in those mountains during the pre-war era while you were there? Especially any that you know of down in Death Valley and that area?

Bear: I understand that some of the friends that I met in the Sierra Club when I came out to California after World War II had been accustomed to going to visit the White Mountains, but not all that frequently. It wasn't until after World War II that visits by them and others became much more frequent.

Now I don't know what you're getting at in your reference to Death Valley. I know that people like the student body from our school went to Death Valley one spring vacation while I was attending Deep Springs College. I also know that my friends, whom I later met in the Sierra Club, were accustomed to going to Death Valley in the 1930s.

Clark: Telescope Peak was being climbed at that time.

Bear: That's right. On this trip our student body made to Death Valley during the spring vacation of 1934, we drove a couple of old trucks which were much better adapted to desert travel--even though they were only two-wheel drive--than today's two-wheel drive cars. We drove them all over Death Valley. In fact, we entered it from the north end coming in through Lida, and drove the length of it as far south as Saratoga Springs.

While we were spending this week in Death Valley we crossed into Panamint Valley and drove into Panamint City, up Surprise Canyon. A group of them drove up Wildrose Canyon to the end of the road in those days--which is not as far as it goes today by any means--and hiked the old water line route to Telescope Peak. That water line is the one that went from Jail Spring up and down the intervening canyons

Bear: over to Skidoo. In those days, although the water line had been abandoned for many decades in 1934, it was very much more visible than it is today. Although this was an up and down route, these young fellows in their teens, and a teacher who was in his mid-twenties, were able to make a very strenuous climb up and down Telescope from Wildrose Canyon in one day.

Clark: This was with your college?

Bear: That's right. This was the vacationing group from Deep Springs College.

Clark: Were there any other peaks in the area that were of interest to climb? Or was Telescope sort of the magnet for most efforts?

Bear: In my college days I made just that one visit to Death Valley, and our interest over there was with the people, rather than the peaks that could be climbed. For instance, we were very conscious that Death Valley Scotty [Walter E. Scott] and his sponsors, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Johnson of Chicago insurance fame, had recently built the famous Scotty's Castle at the north end of the valley. We made quite a point of stopping off there and spent a couple of nights at Scotty's cabin at Grapevine Springs. That's near the mouth of Grapevine Canyon, whereas the castle is two or three miles up the canyon. Scotty was our personal host there. We used a pond that was put there for irrigation purposes to camp beside and swim in.

It was a very memorable experience because Death Valley Scotty was just as picturesque a character as historians describe him, and as anybody who's ever met him has always described him. Part of it was because, from all I could see, he started drinking in the morning when he got up and had an edge on all day long until he went to bed! But, nevertheless, he was a lot of fun to be around, always full of a lot of pungent remarks, and very garrulous.

Peak-Bagging with the Sierra Club's Desert Peak Section

Clark: Moving ahead in time to the late 1940s, when did you join the Sierra Club?

Bear: I came out from my Chicago home in January 1946, after I was discharged from the army. I settled in Los Angeles, and got a job with Rexall Drug. At about the same time, in February 1946, I joined the Sierra Club. I was sponsored by two fellows, Bob Brinton and Nelson Nies, who had worked at Northwestern University whom I had met in Evanston.

Bear: I immediately became immersed in one trip after another all over California in the desert and over into Utah, and especially into Nevada and Arizona. It was in connection with these repeated trips that I met a lot of people, including my present wife. I met her on a Labor Day trip in 1947. This happened to be on a camping trip to Mr. Whitney, but I guess desert lovers can be excused if they enjoy the Sierra Nevada and the high mountains as well.

Clark: I would assume that about this time the Desert Peak Section of the Angeles Chapter had been formed. What sort of group was it then, and where were they doing their climbing?

Bear: The Desert Peak Section was the group I was most active with. It had been formed in the early forties by a group of older people who were not subject to the draft. It had very few young members when I came out to join the club and participate in these desert trips after World War II. But soon it became just as popular with the young as with the older people. And we began climbing desert peaks relatively close to the southern California metropolis. It rapidly grew in membership, in the different places it went, and in the types of trips it sponsored. For instance, Chester Versteeg, one of the founders of the Desert Peak Section, sponsored and led a trip up to Mono Lake where they rented a boat and the group went out to Paoha Island, of Mark Twain fame. Of course, in his book Roughing It, Mark Twain talked about the western Nevada country where he was an editor of a newspaper. He also spoke about trips he made down the east side of the Sierras to Mono Lake, and I believe as far as Lone Pine.

Speaking of where the Desert Peakers went and what they did, they kept adding peaks to their official list of qualifying peaks for membership in the section, which they had had from the start. I think, for instance, when the Desert Peaks group started, to become a member you had to climb five peaks from a list of fifteen recognized desert peaks. Shortly thereafter, they decided they would have an emblem for the Desert Peak Section, which they expressed in the form of an enameled bronze pin that you wear on your lapel. In order to earn that, you had to climb three of the more difficult peaks on this list of fifteen, and if you had climbed a total of five, including these three, you could wear the pin.

Over the years, the section has added more and more peaks to the list of fifteen they started out with, which were the official peaks of the section. They have also changed the number and the identity of the peaks one had to climb to get the pin. The idea was to keep people interested in climbing in the desert by giving them more and more of a choice of peaks that they could climb to become members, and by making it more and more difficult to earn the emblem. They eventually dropped some of their easier peaks that you could

Bear: drive practically to the top of, like Cerro Gordo, and they added peaks like Picacho del Diablo down in Baja California, which is quite a difficult peak to climb. It can hardly be done in less than four days and requires very strenuous backpacking and semi-advanced rock climbing.

I am pleased to say that I climbed it in 1951 with two friends from southern California, John Del Monte and Roy Gorin. We were in our thirties. It was quite a strenuous trip, but it was made easier by the fact that it was a small group. The larger your group, the slower you're likely to have to travel because you're always limited by the slowest member of your party. We were all in tip-top shape, and we were proud of the fact that we were about the twentieth people to ascend the peak. With a peak that difficult, you feel like you're among the forefront of explorers! [laughter]

Clark: Were there similar peaks in the California desert that hadn't had very many people reaching the summit during this time period, too?

Bear: I think practically all the peaks that we Desert Peakers went to were seldom climbed by other than ourselves. Only the ones with trails to the top, like Telescope Peak, were regularly visited by other desert lovers. Occasionally, we would find when we decided to visit the high point of a range, which was usually how we decided to go to any peak--it was the crowning point somewhere and kind of off by itself--we would find a rock pile there indicating that someone had been there before. We would seldom find a register where people had left a written record.

It was the habit, and still is, of all Sierra Club climbing sections, like the Desert Peak Section, to put a register there, which means a metal container with a little notebook and pencil for climbers to record their climb. As representatives of the Desert Peak Section, we'd always build a stone monument on top of a peak we thought was worthy of adding to our list of qualifying peaks, and leave a register book.

Clark: This sort of thing has been going on ever since the forties in the desert, or did it start before that?

Bear: Well, peaks like Telescope or White Mountain peak would have huge piles of rocks on top and little informal registers that went way back. But if you found a pile of rocks on top of the average peak, that would be it. Incidentally, the Sierra Club started a custom of having an official, fancy register cast by one of its members, Kasper Kasperson. He would make them for any member of the club who wanted to leave a fancy register with a good secure closure. They went on many Sierra peaks, and they went on peaks around the world for that matter. We Desert Peakers would have Kasper Kasperson make us these

Bear: metal registers. We would take them up and leave them on the peaks. The registers would show the name of the peak and often the year that we were leaving it there, and the elevation. Later on, Kasper realized that elevations were being changed, and to make his job easier he backed off and didn't show the elevation on them. It was quite a bit of work that he was doing as a labor of love.

Clark: He was doing it free of charge?

Bear: That's right, he never charged us for it as I recall.

Clark: How about the materials?

Bear: Well, he may have charged us for what he was out of pocket on the materials. I know that he made one for Mount Inyo, the second highest point in the Inyo Range, at my request. I picked it up from him and led a trip in which we deposited it at the top of Mount Inyo. If we paid him much for it, it wasn't any more than the value of the materials, which was far less than the value of his labors.

Clark: Was he a local Los Angeles fellow, or was he a northern Californian?

Bear: Kasper Kasperson was an immigrant who spoke with an accent. He came first to the Bay Area, and then he moved to southern California. That's why northern Californians knew of his skill in casting metals, and why he was doing it for people in the Bay Area on their climbs as well as for us in southern California, on ours. He probably did a hundred of these round, tubular, register containers, which looked like a two-inch pipe with a cap on one end, before he died about ten years ago. I have found them on literally dozens of peaks all over the desert and all over the Sierra.

Clark: If your memory serves you, could you perhaps list a few of the early peaks, that they climbed at this time?

Bear: The peaks that they started climbing back in the early forties, when the Desert Peak Section was formed, included such peaks as Cerro Gordo, New York Butte, White Mountain, and Waucoba Peak. These are all in the Inyo Range and the White Mountain Range. The White Mountains are really just an extension of the Inyo Range, north of Westgard Pass. Other peaks on their list, in southern California, included peaks like Eagle Mountain, on the southeastern edge of Joshua Tree National Monument; Rabbit Peak, which is near Borrego Dry Lake; and Martinez Mountain, just south of the Pines to Palms Highway. Those are the ones that occur to me as perhaps being on the original list.

Others that were added later included more peaks in the White Mountain Range, such as Paiute Mountain and Sheep Mountain. There was Campito Mountain, which I believe has been on the list, and up

Bear: at the north end of White Mountains, there's Boundary Peak, Montgomery Peak, and Mount DuBois. The latter are all over 13,000 feet high. White Mountain Peak, in the middle of the range, is over 14,000 feet high. It's the only 14,000 foot peak on the list. [laughter] At any rate, there are a lot of other intriguing peaks that we Desert Peakers climbed around 1950 that weren't necessarily on the original list. One of these was Glass Mountain, which is a huge volcanic eruption between the Sierra and the northern end of the White Mountains, north of Bishop and not far from Lake Crowley.

Clark: Did you climb much in the Providence Range, in the Eastern Mojave?

Bear: Now that range's crowning point is Providence Peak, which was a qualifying peak at around 1950. I've climbed that range several times, including Fountain Peak, which is a lesser peak with a trail to the top. I've climbed it [Fountain Peak] twice. It was a good peak to take my children up, when they were small and willing to go along with papa.

I have used this desert peak climbing, incidentally, as an opportunity to take my children and my wife [Emily Bear] out into the desert to enjoy the outdoors and to teach them appreciation of the wilds. As soon as they had the strength, they thought it was great sport to tag along with papa and go part way to the peaks when they were young, and all the way when they got older. And, I might add, if you'll excuse the bragging, there wasn't any peak that I went on that they couldn't easily climb, except Picacho del Diablo and Picacho Peak (near Yuma). With the rather more technical peaks, the non-rock climber should try anyway.

Some other of the early peaks near the Providence Range were Old Woman Mountain, and Granite Mountain, which is very close to those huge sand dunes west of the Providence Range. North toward Death Valley there were peaks that had long been on their list. Avawatz Peak, for instance, was among the early ones that the Desert Peak Section visited. They visited Sentinel Peak, which was a southern neighbor in the Panamint Range of its crowning peak, Telescope. At the north end of the Panamint Range, Tin Mountain was visited early. This peak is across the huge gulf that goes up into the Devil's Racetrack. They climbed Tin Mountain as early as 1950. I remember climbing neighboring Dry Mountain with a Sierra Club group around Christmas in 1950, on a very cold, short day. Some of them didn't get back to the cars until after dark! Grapevine Peak, on the east side of the north end of Death Valley, was added to the list of peaks very early in the game. So was Pyramid Peak, which is due east of Furnace Creek Ranch on the road over to Death Valley Junction.

Clark: How about in the Imperial Valley area?

Bear: Down in that area we already have mentioned Martinez and Rabbit Peaks that were on the list. Picacho Peak was added quite early--that's down near Yuma--and that is, perhaps, the most technical of all the peaks, come to think of it. That's one peak I wouldn't go up without a rope if you paid me! [laughter] Also, down in that area, Chuckwalla Peak near Wiley Well is one of the qualifying peaks. Over west of there, looking down on the northern end of Salton Sea, is the crowning peak of the Orocopia Range.

The Military and the Motorcyclists on the Desert

Clark: How did the Sierra Club hikers--and other recreationists for that matter—feel about the large areas taken over by the military?

Bear: Well at first, in the late forties for instance, we resented it. We felt it was time for military things to be forgotten. We'd gone through a horrible world war in which everybody had lost friends and relatives. We hated to have our rights to explore restricted. But as time passed, we realized a very beneficial thing was happening. The petroglyphs and pictographs were being protected. If we went into a military reservation, they would be there untouched and unspoiled, whereas we were finding that non-military petroglyphs and pictographs were being desecrated and blasted away and carted off for private enjoyment. So we had kind of mixed feelings.

Also, we found that the peaks that we wanted to climb on reservations we could generally receive permission to climb on weekends. Now this did include two peaks that were on the original list that the Desert Peak founders set up in the early forties, which I had forgotten to mention hitherto. They were Coso Peak and Maturango Peak, right on the edge of the Naval Ordinance Test Station near Ridgecrest. Very early in those days--but not among the original list--Argus Peak was also added. Argus is in the same range as Maturango.

There are other peaks in that vicinity that have been put on the Desert Peak's list, such as Black Mountain in the El Paso Range, right close to Red Rock Canyon. There's Wheat Mountain across Searles Lake from the town of Trona. The more I reflect, the more I remember all sorts of peaks scattered around that country. As you drive north from Beaumont, toward the Sierra, you go out [U.S. Highway] 395, and you pass two peaks that are on the Desert Peak's list, Fremont Peak and Red Mountain, which are both in the Johannesburg vicinity.

Clark: In speaking with motorcyclists that we've interviewed, they mentioned that this area was an early favorite. Do you recall seeing motorcyclists in that area? What kind of interaction did the two groups, the Sierra Club hikers and the motorcyclists, have?

Bear: Well, the day I climbed Red Mountain and Fremont Peak--they're quite close together and not very difficult--we could see cyclists using the same approach roads that we were using. They were headed to the Cuddeback Dry Lake. They were allowed to use the lake on weekends, although, the military uses it for bombing practice on weekdays. We didn't really find any conflict with them, except we complained to ourselves that the road was awful dusty because they were using it so much. Otherwise, we were glad to see them using a place like that where the wind and occasional cloudburst covering the lake with a thin sheet of water would obliterate a lot of the signs of their use: their tracks, if not their campfires and litter.

Clark: About when was this?

Bear: This was five years ago. I was attending a Desert Peak trip.

Clark: I see.

Canyons, Domes, and Peaks of Nevada, Arizona, and Utah

Bear: In our discussion of peaks that Desert Peakers have been going to for years, we haven't discussed the fact that there are some marvelous places to go over in Nevada, Arizona, and as far away as Utah, that the group has been going to for years. Now, these include one of the hard-to-reach domes in Zion. I believe it's known as South Dome. Whatever it's called, it is in the western Kolob section. It is one of the more difficult and intriguing peaks to climb because it involves the unusual thing of dropping down into a deep canyon from where you leave your car, then hitting a stream and having to shinny up a log or two past a waterfall which has water coming down. From here you go from one drainage channel to another and over a ridge before you get to the final climb up the peak. It's one of the more interesting peaks the group climbs, and it's one I've never been able to get in on because of the recent policy enforced by the U.S. Forest Service and the National Parks Service limiting the size of all Sierra Club hikes to about fifteen people to reduce the impact on the wilderness. But I'll get there sooner or later!

Bear: This is just one of the many interesting peaks to the east of California's deserts. Other places include Navajo Mountain, east of Rainbow Bridge in the Lake Powell area, and there's Baboquivari Peak in southern Arizona, right near the famous Ajo copper pit. There are plenty of other peaks in southern Arizona such as Kino Peak. One in the Santa Rosa Mountains, east of Oregon Pipe National Monument, is known as Santa Rosa Peak. And there's a Diaz Peak in that vicinity. Other peaks in Arizona that the Desert Peak Section have occasionally visited include one of the highest points in the Hualapai Range south of Kingman, which we have called Hualapai Peak for the lack of a name on the map. The peaks north of Flagstaff in the San Francisco Range, have all been climbed by the Desert Peak Section. The highest peak has long been a member of their list of qualifying peaks--namely, Mount Humphreys. The second-highest mountain, Mount Agassiz, is usually climbed the same day as people climb Humphreys. They are twin peaks, and one climbs the saddle between them to get to either one of them. I've been to both of them twice.

Clark: How about in Nevada?

Bear: Oh, Nevada has several. Charleston was the first to be put on the list. It's the highest in southern Nevada, and is just outside Las Vegas. Most of the desert peaks in Nevada are in southern Nevada, not too far from Las Vegas. They include Hayford Peak in the Sheep Range, which is more or less due north of Las Vegas, and Mount Stirling, which I think of as being at the north end of the Spring Range. A few other peaks in that vicinity are Mount Potosi and Mummy Peak. Mummy is about a mile due east of Mount Charleston with a tremendous gulf in between them.

Then there are peaks in northern Nevada which are on the list. The most intriguing one, which is more or less due north of Tonopah, is Arc Dome. It has quite a massive, bare-rock summit, which the name Arc Dome might suggest to you. Twenty or thirty miles east of it is Mount Jefferson, the crowning point of the Toquima Range. That's a fun peak to go to because you go through a semi-ghost town, Belmont, with an old courthouse in it which is in a very good state of preservation. It's made of red sandstone, and all the windows are out. It's like visiting an Egyptian pyramid, and it looks as though it might have been there for five hundred years, it's so solidly put together. It was the former county seat of the same county [Nye County] that Tonopah is now the county seat of, before the mines were exhausted in that vicinity.

Clark: We seem to have covered the Desert Peak Section. I'm sure you have been interested and involved in the San Gorgonio Chapter. What activities has that chapter been involved in with the California desert?

Bear: The San Gorgonio Chapter doesn't seem to have nearly the interest in peak climbing that the Angeles Chapter does. I found that I was the only member of the San Gorgonio Chapter, when I arrived, who had much interest in organizing trips to climb peaks. For the first ten years, I was out here--roughly during the decade of the sixties--I would lead an average of one trip per year, generally to the peaks in southeastern California. I found that after I stopped leading them, they seldom climbed desert peaks in the decade of the seventies.

On the other hand, there have been a lot of desert camping trips, where members of the chapter would go out to places all over southeastern California from Anza-Borrego to the Wiley Wells area, and over to the Colorado River. These were quite frequent camping trips, and they would involve rock collecting, and boating--if they went over to the Colorado River--and minor peak climbing. I remember, for instance, when we went down to southern Anza-Borrego we climbed an interesting peak that was less than one thousand feet above our camp spot. I don't know, it could have been Jacumba Peak, which I believe is one of the peaks on the Desert Peaks list.

There are some other peaks in San Bernadino and Riverside counties that come to my mind, that have long been on the Desert Peaks qualifying list. I did lead the Riverside Chapter to the aforementioned Eagle Peak, and also over into the Coxcomb Range, on the eastern end of Joshua Tree National Monument. As the name implies, there are some very rocky peaks there, which I led the chapter into a couple of times. Other peaks that have been visited in this area, but seldom by the local chapter--more by the Angeles Chapter people--were in the Big Maria Range, the McCoy Range, and the crowning peak of the Palen Range, which is quite close to Desert Center.

Clark: Then there is a difference in the Sierra Club, as far as recreation goes, between the Angeles Chapter and the San Gorgonio Chapter.

Bear: It amazes me, because it isn't as though the Angeles Chapter's average age level is any lower than Riverside's. Of course, the Angeles Chapter contains a group of people ten times as large. Therefore, if you picked any special activity, photography, natural science, or desert peak climbing, you're going to find ten times as large a pool of people to draw from. I suspect that's why the Angeles Chapter has always found it easy to organize desert lovers to climb desert peaks, whereas, there was a relatively small pool of people to draw from in the Riverside, or I should say, the present San Gorgonio Chapter. I could only find anywhere from half a dozen to twenty people to join me on a desert peaks hike, since I came out here, whereas, when I would attend or lead a trip for the Angeles Chapter, you'd get up to 50 people joining! If it was one like Telescope or Charleston, where you could climb a trail to the peak, they'd come out in droves! Usually, there'd be a nice campground at the start of it.

Clark: Would most of the people on these early hikes—and through the sixties, too--climb the peak, or would some of them be out there doing something else? Perhaps camping or rock collecting?

Bear: Whether it was with the Angeles Chapter or the San Gorgonio Chapter, it might be a small minority from a tenth to a third who would go out strictly for the car camping aspect of it. They enjoyed exploring around the campside and hiking a short distance into the mountain that we might be going to the top of. Generally, it was a very small minority. Sometimes it would just be the spouses and the children of the hikers. Come to think of it, there were families where the wife would do the climbing and the husband would stay behind and do the babysitting. That included myself on a few occasions, but not as often as fairness would have dictated.

II DESERT CONSERVATION AND PLANNING IN THE SIERRA CLUB

Clean-Up Campaigns, Wildlife Protection, Land Use

Clark: I think we've covered the recreational aspects very well. I was wondering about the Sierra Club's conservation interest in the desert. I imagine that you've been a member of the southern section of the conservation committee?

Bear: I have been. More actively, I've been the Conservation Chairman of both the Angeles Chapter and the San Gorgonio Chapter.

Clark: Could you give me a history of the Sierra Club's--especially the southern section's--involvement with desert conservation and planning?

Bear: Well, I'm proud to say, as background, that the idea for the Sierra Club to have a conservation committee at all came from the Southern California Chapter, as it was known in the 1940s. Weldon Heald was the man who conceived of it. He was a director [of the Sierra Club] at that time. He was also a member of the Desert Peak Section, I might add, and he gave a talk at one of our triennial meetings.

At any rate, as far as the conservation aspects of desert peaking go, in the forties, there was practically no thought of what Desert Peakers could do to conserve the desert. As the impact of the burgeoning population of southern California made itself felt on the desert, we saw more and more scars. It started out with rockhounds with shovels, and eventually they were using picks and even heavier things such as earth-scraping equipment. As we saw that starting to scar the desert, we Desert Peakers became conservation conscious. The Desert Peak Section changed its bylaws to include conservation of the desert to be one of its functions. One of the early efforts to help conserve was to get into the litter matter. To me, that's a minor point of conservation, but we made it a point of cleaning up campgrounds and picking up litter on the trail, or wherever we found it as we hiked and camped in the desert.

Bear: Eventually, the Desert Peak Section formed a conservation committee of its own. It was generally a one or two man activity, but the person in charge would publicize it with articles in the Desert Peak's bi-monthly newsletter. One thing they could have done--that I don't recall ever being done--was to schedule trips to the desert for the particular purpose of a conservation activity. Desert Peakers have participated with the BLM in some of their clean-up expeditions into the desert. They have also participated with them in the matter of establishing and cleaning up these "guzzlers" that are put out for the small wildlife, particularly quail. I don't know if I've gotten into it from a historical point exactly, these are things more that the Angeles Chapter did--that I've been aware of--than the San Gorgonio Chapter has done.

Conservation in the desert has often taken the form of protecting wildlife. A lot of us desert lovers have been quite concerned over the impact of exotic animals on the desert, most especially and almost exclusively, the burro. We feel this way not only because of the damage they do eroding steep mountainsides and polluting water sources, but because they're displacing mountain sheep that use these water holes. The burro is very dominant at any water hole, and he will drive and keep away any mountain sheep. Desert Peakers have always been very concerned with this, and participated in, rather than led, efforts to protect the mountain sheep and to discourage the propagation and rapid expansion of the burro population.

I can't think of any other wildlife species that Desert Peakers have been concerned about, except the desert tortoise. The threat to them has arisen from the much expanded human usage of the desert, and has appeared in the Desert Peak Section newsletter. It has long been agreed upon, among all Desert Peakers, that they should by all means avoid damaging the tortoise--which is possible. You'll find them occasionally along a desert road when you're driving into a campsite, and you have to get out and remove the tortoise from the road.

Also, if there are snakes on the road, we'll avoid them too. I'll never run over any snake on the road, even if it's a rattlesnake because I think they're part of the balance of nature. We discourage people from collecting these tortoises, as many people think it's fun to do, because it's long been known that if you take one to town, he's not likely to survive. Later, some people realize that the tortoise isn't prospering there and simply release him into the nearest desert. Scientists have told us that one ought to take them back to the original spot they were picked up at, or else turn it over to some type of zoo where they can be taken care of.

I trust that covers your question.

Clark: Going through some of the minutes of the southern section, I noticed at least some concern with Mitchell Caverns and a number of other items here and there. I was also wondering, were you concerned about the Small Tracts Act and the leasing of lands throughout the desert, too?

Bear: At the start, right after World War II, we thought it was great. We thought it would get people out in the desert, and teach people that it wasn't all barren wilderness of no value or interest. We encouraged it. Randall Henderson, editor of Desert Magazine, was our spokesman. But it didn't take very long to realize that many of the people who took up these small five **acre** tracts were merely land speculators. They would spend the minimum amount required to get the structure on the property, in order to gain title to it for the very small amount you were required to pay. Then, they would not use it all. We realized that it was creating desert slums. So after about five years, we were even more strongly against it than we were for the program originally. We were among those who pressured the government to end the program. It was ended about ten years too late, unfortunately of course; it never should have been started.

Commitment by the Sierra Club's National Office

Clark: What kind of interest have you noticed that the national Sierra Club office has taken toward desert conservation?

Bear: We used to feel that the national office--which meant San Francisco until about 1950--was letting southern California worry about the deserts. After all, there were plenty of us down here to protect it; we didn't need the club as a whole to do it for us. But since then, we have felt that the club Conservation Committee and the Southern Regional Conservation Committee have taken a very adequate course because the desert's in as much need of protection from ill-considered development as the coastline areas have been. In general, though, I think we southern Californians have not looked to the club to protect it. We felt it was the chapter's, or at least the regional conservation committee's responsibility, to attend the hearings and point out to the club directors the policies that needed to be expressed in resolutions of the club proper, or requests for appropriation of club funds for pushing various desert conservation causes.

Some of us desert conservationists today feel that the club is spending too much of its time and attention on conservation projects near the coast, but then we realize that's where the population is. You need to have your conservation, and your preserved parks, where people can get to them without traveling hundreds of miles. With the

Bear: modern shortage of fuel, the time is rapidly coming to an end when everybody can afford to hop in their car and drive a hundred or two hundred miles out in the desert, without thinking twice about wasted fuel.

Conservationists and the Federal Land Agencies

Bear: The Sierra Club has always been very conscious of how important it was to help solve desert problems, to consider the needs, policies, and the reactions of the Bureau of Land Mangement. We realized that our objectives could never be identical to theirs because they had to consider all the conflicting wishes of the different user groups. At the same time, we've always appreciated the fact that they were very courteous and cooperative in notifying us of issues that they were taking up and thought we'd be interested in. We were always very flattered that when we wanted to talk to them about problems, they would assign important people to talk to us about it, including the local Riverside manager who would, on occasion, sit in on meetings with us.

Clark: Would this be Mr. [Delmar] Vail?

Bear: Well, I'm thinking of ten to fifteen years ago. The policy of the BLM has been to cooperate with the desert lovers, whatever protective organization we belonged to. The same has been equally true, though, of the Desert Committee of the [Sierra Club's] Southern California Regional Conservation Committee, that our friend [Lyle Gaston] over in Riverside is chairman of.

The burro is one of the things that the BLM has been just as concerned about as any conservationist. They're working very hard today in the same direction that we would be working, if we were the ones to do the job of reducing the impact of burros on the habitat of the mountain sheep, which are being driven out.

Clark: How would you compare the BLM with other government agencies, as far as its cooperation goes?

Bear: It would seem to me...I would rate them all about the same. You know, when you're dealing with them, you soon realize that we're only one of many users of the desert, and that they have to consider other people's uses. They don't give us a snow job and tell us they're going to do a lot of impossible things that would run counter to the needs of other users, like the off-road-vehicle people or the rock collectors. I have felt, at any rate, that they have been reasonably

Bear: candid with us, and we haven't been too shocked to find that they were giving us a lot of lip service only to find out, when it turned to action, that they weren't doing things the way we wanted to see them done.

Of course, I'm thinking also of the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service, because even down in the desert the U.S. Forest Service does have some domain. The Angeles, San Bernadino, and Cleveland National Forests all border on the desert and the national forests in southern Nevada and throughout Arizona are all surrounded by deserts. So, we have plenty of dealings with them in connection with trying to keep the desert as nice a place to enjoy and live as possible.

Clark: So your primary dealings with federal agencies has been with those three?

Bear: Right. Of course, my conservation activities have not been limited to the desert by any means, even if they were primarily that. The U.S. Forest Service generally was not involved in desert problems nearly as much as the Park Service and BLM. The Park Service comes in in connection with a lot of problems with Joshua Tree, Zion, and the Grand Canyon. But, we're not here to discuss parks.

Clark: No, not as much. Would you say though, that they have suffered similar problems, and been exposed to similar concerns on the part of the conservationists as have the BLM lands?

Bear: Park lands have been subject to the same problems as BLM lands, but there's a difference to the situation. The state and federal parks people have much bigger budgets and bigger staffs to administer and protect the park lands. To that extent, these parks have been much better protected against unreasonable and inappropriate usage than the public domain has. So conservationists in general are much more concerned with cooperating with the BLM to protect the non-park lands than they have ever worried about the need in the parks.

Clark: I see. Well, is there any final statement that you would like to make to the Bureau of Land Management, as far as how you think they ought to manage the desert in the future?

Bear: I would like to see them work hard to get more appropriations from Congress to enlarge the field staff policing the desert. I would like to have as many people on their staff as possible given police powers so they can do something other than verbally instruct people who are obviously violating laws. I would like to see the field people able to issue citations.

Bear: One other thing I'm sure most of us feel, with regard to all governmental operations: we hate to see so many people tied up handling so many papers. It seems to me that government at all levels, including the BLM, is becoming overburdened with paper work. This necessarily ties the people up. You don't see nearly the number of people out in the field. This is particularly true in the Forest Service and the National Park Service. The BLM never did have many people in the field. As they start planning and getting additional appropriations, I hope the BLM won't make the mistakes that I see in the other two branches: that of having their people sit at desks pushing papers.

Clark: It has been a pleasure to have come here to interview you this afternoon, Mr. Bear. I would like to ask just one more question: would you give permission to the Oral History Program, and to the Bureau of Land Management to use the information that you have given us in this tape for our study on the history of recreation in the desert, and for any other scholarly purpose?

Bear: By all means. Just remember everything I have said is personal opinion, and it doesn't express the opinions of the Sierra Club, or of the Desert Protective Council. I'm honored to grant the request.

Clark: If you do not have anything further to say, I would like to thank you on behalf of the Oral History Program, at California State University, Fullerton, and the Bureau of Land Management.

III SAN JACINTO AND SAN GORGONIO WILDERNESS PROTECTION, 1960s

Monitoring the Construction of the San Jacinto Tramway

Clark: Good morning, Mr. Bear. We were chatting here a little bit about your "spying," as some people were saying about your involvement in the San Jacinto wilderness. I know that that's how Art Johnson put it, of course, facetiously.

Bear: This all refers back to the early 1960s when the Winter Park Authority that had been created by the California legislature was setting up the tram at Palm Springs into Long Valley from Chino Canyon. I was an avid hiker and camper in those days, as I still am, and like any typical Sierra Clubber I was very much opposed to the invasion of the wilderness by a tramway which presumably would be used largely by the dilettante types that visit and use Palm Springs.

This goes back to 1961 when Richard Bower of the Sierra Club, who lives in Pleasant Hill [California], recruited me to help him in his very dogged attempt to stop it dead in its tracks, and then after it was authorized, to minimize the extent of its developments, and after it was constructed, to slow down supplemental developments in order to draw more people so that it would become a more profitable operation. I was one of several people who was working with Richard Bower. Others included Arthur Johnson, whom you referred to a minute ago, and still others included Tom Amneus, also of the Angeles Chapter. Tom was supposed to analyze the tramway from the engineering standpoint, picking out flaws and disadvantages from an engineer's viewpoint in the proposals that included not only the end result but the means of putting up the tramway.

I often supposed that, because of the intervention of conservationists like us, the Winter Park Authority was forced to construct the tramway using the very expensive helicopter system. This was used to put the towers in place, and to string the cables, and do all the many steps that were involved in setting it up.

Clark: The helicopter would bring in the towers instead of having a road built in there?

Bear: That's right, or even a trail built. Actually, the towers were built piece by piece. The helicopter would haul it up one girder after another, and they would be assembled on these points where the towers were located, which had to be blasted out of the rock in about two-thirds of the cases. I don't know to what detail you want me to go here, Paul.

Clark: At the moment just say whatever you think is important and we can perhaps go back.

Bear: Since you were going into the fact that I had been a so-called "spy" [laughter]: what I was doing was attending the periodic meetings of the Winter Park Authority that were held for a couple of years before the tramway was started and then a lot during its construction phase. I also attended them for two or three years on a less regular basis after it was completed because at that stage, as I inferred earlier, their patronage was not nearly as good as they had hoped and they were looking at supplemental facilities to put there in order to increase patronage, particularly in the line of recreational developments, such as ski facilities. So every month or two I was going down to Palm Springs and attending meetings of the Winter Park Authority, which had a board of eight or ten members, appointed by the governor. Like a board of directors for a corporation, they made the ultimate decisions which were carried out by the general manager and his lieutenants and by the contractor that was putting up the tramway. I would take detailed notes of these meetings, and then I would summarize them and send the original copy up to Richard L. Bower, who was the most ardent opponent of the tram, and also to these other gentlemen whose names I mentioned, Tom Amneus and Art Johnson. There were also a couple other people whose names escape me at the moment.

At any rate, I feel that the fact that there was an avowed conservationist, who didn't admit that he was a "spy" of the Sierra Club, constantly listening in on their meetings and making detailed notes and occasionally asking questions kept the board honest. My presence emphasized the fact that there was a large minority, if not a majority, in California that was very interested in minimizing the environmental impact of this tramway. I was glad that the chairman of the board, a man from Riverside named V. W. Grubb, owned a cabin on the back side of Mount San Jacinto and was a nature lover like me and my fellow Sierra Clubbers. Really, emotionally, he wanted to see minimal impact on the mountain too. He was head of the board during the construction period and the period of at least five years after the tram was completed. I knew him personally, and when I'd meet him around town, we always greeted each other on a friendly basis.

Bear: I never felt that my being at the board meetings really cut much ice as far as preventing them from going ahead with their plans, or even preventing them from discussing in the open all the details of their hopes and plans. I do think that knowing that there were people like me around who were so concerned with minimizing the impact did serve the useful purpose of achieving the tramway in its present form, which certainly had as little damaging effect on the mountain as one could ever hope it could have.

Clark: You had then a fairly gentlemanly relationship with the chairman of the Winter Park Authority. How were the reactions of the other members of the board?

Bear: The others were the same way. They had the same feeling that the chairman did that I was there representing others, and only one of them actually seemed cold toward me. They realized that I represented a considerable point of view, and, if I remember, on occasion I was asked for my reaction to some of their plans. This, however, would have been very seldom. I might add that at these meetings the press was always represented and so was the Palm Springs Chamber of Commerce, which was doing a lot of publicity work for the tram, particularly as it approached completion and after it went into operation in September 1963. Can you think of any other angles that I might talk about?

Clark: I understand that Nathan Clark, during the late forties and early fifties, wrote a number of technical reports regarding the tramway. Was this before your time?

Bear: The Nate Clark studies were before my time in the sense that I had not become interested in the tramway at that time. I knew that there had been legislative efforts in Sacramento to authorize the construction of a tram going back before World War II, and I guess I was vaguely aware that Nate had written an engineering report showing the expense and impact that such a tramway would have on the mountain. I didn't get involved until around 1960, and I know that at that time Dick Bower was the ringleader in organizing forces to discourage the construction. He did know of this report and was relying on it. I believe he was using the logic that Nate Clark had presented in his report in discouraging the tram.

I might say that I knew Nate from way back early in my joining the Sierra Club because he and I were active outdoorsmen. He was a director and officer of the club, and I attended many board meetings of the club in the early days when they would come to Los Angeles for their meetings. Later, after I became an officer of the Angeles Chapter, I would go up to San Francisco and regularly attend each year their meetings for about five years in a row in the early fifties. I'm sure Nate Clark was an influential person in keeping down the impact of the tram.

Clark: Let's see. When did you pretty well stop observing the tramway meetings?

Bear: According to my file here, which I went through this morning before you dropped in, I noticed that 1967 is the last year when I was exchanging notes with my colleagues in opposition to the tram. That was the last year in which I was collecting literature from the Palm Springs Chamber of Commerce or making clippings from the local papers.

Clark: Was there any particular reason why you stopped then?

Bear: Yes. The reason was that the tram operation seemed to have reached an even keel where it was just about breaking even and the bond holders were being paid interest twice a year. They were even getting caught up on back interest that they had fallen behind on. These payments came up every six months. The board had also stopped their efforts to promote supplemental activities which would have an environmental impact. So, it seemed as though, if I would keep my eye on the papers and watch for information in the press indicating renewed threats of further development, that would be sufficient.

Clark: Has that pretty well proven itself correct?

Bear: It has proven 100 percent correct. I have been a tram user more or less regularly, and I suppose I've averaged one trip a year going up and down. In the process, I would be able to know about developments up at the top. They have been very, very minimal. It was very gratifying to see that, to say the least.

Clark: You mentioned that there was one individual on the board who was perhaps somewhat cool to you. Would that happen to be Earl Coffman of the Desert Inn?

Bear: No, it wasn't Mr. Coffman. It actually was the president of an oil company which sold out to Gulf Oil; a very aggressive executive type of individual who just had no use for anybody throwing sand in the wheels of progress. [laughter] He wasn't at all rude. He was just rather brusk and businesslike in his dealings with all his fellow board members, as far as that went. He was a no-nonsense executive, let's put it that way. He didn't hesitate, for example, to let the general manager know when he thought he was less than effective in carrying out orders and procedures. So, maybe I was just a little sensitive when occasionally I felt his displeasure in my direction.

Clark: What was his name? Do you recall?

Bear: No, I really don't. I'm trying to think of the name of the oil company. I bought gas from them. Oh, it was the Wilshire Oil Company.

Bear: He was the president, and he made a lot of bucks when he sold it. He owned a very fine home in the old section of Palm Springs near the O'Donnell Golf Course, and I admired the guy. I figured he was one of the captains of industry who had made America what it is.

Clark: I think I've pretty well covered my questions on the San Jacinto issue. Do you have anything else to add?

Defenders of San Gorgonio

Bear: Yes. Shortly after the San Jacinto problem was met, the ski fraternity lodged an energetic campaign, not their first by any means, to develop ski lifts, lodges, and facilities on Mount San Gorgonio. The members of the San Gorgonio Chapter, as well as all Sierra Club members to a lesser degree, organized an energetic campaign to oppose this a few years after this San Jacinto campaign. We formed a subsidiary organization called Defenders of San Gorgonio, and the head of that organization was the late Assistant Postmaster of San Bernardino, former director of the Sierra Club [1953-1956] and former chairman of the San Gorgonio Chapter, Joe Momyer. He had other effective and energetic conservationists in the chapter working with him, notably Harry and Alice Krueper. There were lots of others as a matter of fact.

We all worked diligently on public relations and in attending hearings and contacting the legislature and the Forest Service because the proposed ski facilities were in the [San Bernardino] National Forest. They were in the wilderness area of the National Forest, furthermore. We spent a lot of time and energy on that and, while it took several years, it now seems a rather brief period. We were wholly successful. The developers dropped their request about ten years ago, and 1967 is the end of my file on that. There has been no subsequent effort to develop the area, although the history in the past was that about every ten years the ski developers would try to come in there and see if they couldn't overcome the resistance that had defeated them in the past.

Various faces pop into my mind that cooperated in that effort and in the Defenders of San Gorgonio. I think the reason they slipped my mind is because they have moved out of the area and I haven't seen them for years. I remember one of them, a medical doctor, Dr. Eric Lindroth, has subsequently died. It was fun to be in an organization like that because it was a grass roots organization where we would have meetings and everybody would do what they could. We'd have mailing gatherings, and they got out this cute bimonthly brochure, The Defender, probably a bimonthly.

Clark: What sort of an organization was it? Was it principally Sierra Club people or different other types of people, too?

Bear: It was principally Sierra Club. I'm trying to think. There were inevitably others because there are a lot of cross-country skiers who were ardently against the proposed development up there. A lot of them would belong to the Far West Ski Association, or to no organization, or just any outdoor-oriented club. This was like a lot of conservation causes.

Now the Sierra Club has a ski mountaineers group, and there were a minority of those Sierra Club ski mountaineers who would have dearly loved to have a ski development on San Gorgonio. They didn't hesitate to say so, but they were a small minority. They were not aggressive, and there weren't any hard feelings about it that I knew of. Everybody understood each other's motives, and they were in such a small minority that they just didn't have their way. I note here in looking at the last of the periodical newsletters that came out from the Defenders of San Gorgonio that the proponents of the development presented to Congress a bill, HR 10392, in 1967, to have federal intervention to take this land out of wilderness and make it available for ski development. My recollection is definitely to the effect that while the bill was introduced it never got anywhere. I'm not sure whether it even got out of committee.

Clark: I understand there may have been hearings involved with that one in San Bernardino. Do you recall that?

Bear: There were hearings in which this came up. I think that they came up in connection with hearings on the Wilderness Bill, which was passed in September 1964. The proponents of the ski development were active during the last year, especially in late 1963 and 1964 when the Wilderness Bill was passed. They would go to these hearings on the Wilderness Bill and I always say, "No, we don't want the top, or the north part of the San Gorgonio wilderness included under the Wilderness Act." I believe there was a hearing in San Bernardino on the Wilderness Bill, and I wouldn't be surprised if that was the connection in which you referred where you've heard about its coming before a hearing.

I don't think that this ever got outside of Washington, D.C. There was just too much opposition. At any rate it wasn't nearly the problem that the San Jacinto tramway was. We were able to beat the San Gorgonio threat back with no damage, and with immense cooperation from skiers throughout southern California, and even a few from northern California came down.

Clark: Is this downhill ski organizations, too, or just simply cross-country skiers?

Bear: The Far West Ski Association you mean?

Clark: Well, you mentioned the skiers who were opposed to the development.

Bear: It was a cross section. In general, 99 percent of cross-country skiers dislike ski developments of any kind, and they were all opposed. The downhill skiers themselves, many of them, were opposed to it simply because southern California does have a lot of developed ski facilities around, and also because even though San Gorgonio gets more snow than anywhere else in southern California, it is so poor that a lot of them had to admit to themselves that it wouldn't be worth the three hour drive from the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Many people went to Mammoth and do now, of course, for weekends, and I think that argument was one of the reasons why the downhill skiers didn't get behind this as much as they could have.

These are two items that the San Gorgonio Chapter is very proud to have participated in. I think they did remarkably well with their friends and helpers. I just hope in the future that when we have major wilderness problems that we're as lucky in the end result as we were here. As I have implied before, I do not feel that the impact of that tramway on San Jacinto has been nearly as serious as a lot of us feared it would be. We take our families up on the tram and enjoy it, and we really don't feel guilty that it's there to ease our getting into that beautiful mountain wilderness. Well, enough said.

Chapter Outings to Desert Oases and Canyons

Clark: Okay. When I visited you the last time, you mentioned just briefly that we didn't talk too much about the palm canyon excursions that the club would make out in the Coachella Valley and elsewhere. Would you like to comment on that now?

Bear: I understand you to be referring to palm canyons without capital letters. There is a Palm Canyon south of the City of Palm Springs, but you're referring to palm canyons in general, aren't you?

Clark: Yes.

Bear: Both the Angeles and the Riverside Chapters have for years scheduled many trips into these palm canyons such as Pushawalla near 1000 Palms, and some without palms, like Painted Canyon northeast of Mecca, down near Salton Sea. It's a great place for people bringing up kids to spend the weekends where you can hike around without requiring major physical effort. When our kids were young, we went on quite a few

Bear: of those trips. I'm trying to think, I met some very fine desert conservation people that way, like Randall Henderson and Colonel Jim Westerfield. Of course, Randall died on the 4th of July, 1970, but I believe Jim is still going strong, running his date orchard down near Mecca. There were a lot of other desert folks that I met, including Randall's sidekick who started Desert Magazine, I believe with him, McKinney. I don't recall his first name at the moment, but he's still going strong. At the request of Cyria Henderson, when Randall died, McKinney completed a book that Randall was working on. He didn't complete it as Randall's book, but he drew on Randall's ideas and put his own name on it as author and gave "Mr. Desert" Randall Henderson credit for it.

Now, this is getting away from the point of your inquiry about the use of desert canyons for Sierra Club trips. I don't know that there's any particular emphasis to be placed that would be valuable for a Sierra Club history other than to simply affirm that when these weekend camping trips would be scheduled, there would be fine attendance. They would find attractive, interesting campgrounds, often without water. People would have a great time. They would make wonderful places for cold weather camping trips, where other parts of southern California and certainly northern California didn't offer such pleasant opportunities for winter camping trips. Finally, it gave the people that were interested in nature study a great chance to educate themselves and their fellow Sierra Clubbers in botany and geology, to mention the two most common nature sciences.

Clark: In going through the Southern Sierran, I noticed that many of these trips would have groups as large as sixty to a hundred and fifty people. Did the size of the groups have any impact on the environment?

Bear: These trips would vary a great deal in size, but it was not uncommon for over fifty people to show up at these camping trips, particularly when we held them jointly with three chapters, as we did for several years up at Rancho Cuyamaca which is in the Julian area and not really in the desert. The San Diego Chapter for years had been holding weekend camping trips up there in this beautiful state park campground, and it suddenly occurred to one of the chapters, "Why don't we get together with the other southern California chapters and have a joint camping trip there?" I remember that I instigated such a joint trip at least on one occasion in that I was a leader on at least one occasion for the Angeles Chapter retinue there. Those trips really drew rather large groups, but at least we were in official state campgrounds on those occasions.

Now, getting back to the implication of your question, which I would assume to be the impact on the desert or having such large groups: when we would be up Painted Canyon, for instance, we were

Bear: in the bottom of the desert wash where we would be in dire threat of being swept down the canyon if a cloudburst were to hit when we were there. Thus, any disturbance of the soil or the flora there was likely to be eradicated within the next, say, eight to fifteen years when your wet cycles are supposed to come in the desert southwest.

There were some other places, though, where such large groups were not desirable and where you were camping between the sagebrush and the famous creosote bush. A lot of us did have qualms about how many would be there, and oftentimes the impact would be considerable. People would arrive in these heavy campers or big stationwagons. In pulling off a dirt road that dead-ended where they'd maybe camp, they would be crushing some vegetation and compressing desert pavement with its undesirable effect on wildlife, both flora and fauna. I must say that wide open spaces were so abundant that we didn't feel twinges of conscience over the impact because we were sure that we avoided crushing the bushes to the maximum possible extent, which were about 95 percent avoidable.

I must say that I have a lot of very fond memories of these trips, and they cover such places as going to Palm Canyon and camping at the mouth of its branch canyon, Murray Canyon, and having people like Randall Henderson there to talk to us at the campfire. Some other places, besides the aforementioned Painted Canyon, would be the desert canyons in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Down in the south end of it, in the Anza part, there were canyons like Bow Willow Canyon which had magnificent displays of the tree after which it was named. We went up Coyote Canyon and had weekend camping trips there and in Collins Valley also.

It took a four-wheel drive or pickup to make it, but it always attracted some of the most interesting, energetic members of the club. These members would often lead us in songs, like Arnold Wall and teacher-naturalists like Sparky Wilson. I'm referring to members of the Angeles Chapter in this case and to Sierra Club activists that were always into every project that the Angeles Chapter activated, like Russell and Peggy Hubbard. I think of them as participants in the expansion of Harwood Lodge back in the early 1950s, but they always loved to go out camping. They had this cute little four-wheel drive jeep stationwagon that they still have, and it's twenty-five years old, still going strong. We went as far away as Kofa Palms over in southwestern Arizona, between Quartzsite and Yuma, and east of Highway 95.

Clark: Was this principally a recreational event that has seen its day?

Bear: By no means, both chapters are still scheduling many trips to these desert oases and desert canyons of southeastern California, particularly the local San Gorgonio Chapter. This bears upon a peculiarity as

Bear: contrasted with the Angeles Chapter. The folks out in this area are much more interested in camping and less interested in peak bagging than the people I was going with when I was younger and in the Angeles Chapter. As I think back on it, maybe it was a function of age; when I was younger, naturally, I had more energy to climb peaks. When I was older, less so. Perhaps the median age is older out here in the Riverside area, the San Gorgonio Chapter, than it was in the Angeles Chapter area.

IV SIERRA CLUB CHAPTER LEADERS AND INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Angeles and San Gorgonio Chapter Activists

Clark: On conservation matters, would the membership in the San Gorgonio Chapter be of a similar mind as the other chapters around southern California, or would they perhaps be more conservative or more liberal, or would there be any differences on conservation philosophy?

Bear: As between different southern California chapters, I never felt there was the slightest difference in the point of view of the average Sierra Club member in the field of conservation, or in the percentage that might occasionally feel that the Sierra Club was nuts or going overboard on some issues. There has always been a varying minority that thought that the club was being unreasonable to impose our views in uncritical situations where compromise was acceptable. The fact that the Angeles Chapter was so much bigger than the Riverside Chapter made me feel that it was a much more energetic chapter. As I think back on it, I think it was merely because it was so much bigger, and when you would organize an activity like a camera group, why, you'd have ten or twenty times as many participants in it.

It was the same way in conservation. It was easy to organize a conservation committee, an active one, and get plenty of help in the Angeles Chapter. It was much more difficult out here in the San Gorgonio Chapter, and I knew this because I was chairman of the Conservation Committee in both chapters. You would find that those who were interested out here in the smaller chapter were just as dedicated, and just as competent, and just as energetic as those you would run into in Los Angeles, or run into in connection with club leadership in the Bay Area.

I met some awfully fine people that way. Some of them moved away, and I just wish I could mention their names to give credit where credit is due. Bill Long was one of these dedicated conservationists. Of course, Clark and Marjorie Jones were terrific leaders

Bear: in that field, and so were colleagues of theirs. The fellow who was chairman out here when I brought my family out to the desert--it was a childless couple living in San Bernardino, who had a camper they called the "Conejo Blanco"--Forrest Keck was his name, and Mary Keck hers. They and the Joneses were really a kick. They were fellow educators and together they went out and climbed all the hundred peaks on the Hundred Peaks Section list. They were also ardent conservationists, but more so the Joneses than the Kecks.

I mentioned Joe Momyer was so active along with the Kruepers in connection with San Gorgonio; but they were active in countless other conservation issues, both within the chapter confines and clubwise. Joe Momyer had been a club director for a few years in the 1950s, and he declined to rerun for reelection for a very admirable reason I thought. He wanted to dedicate his time to bringing up his children who were approaching teenage at that time. I think a lot of people that lead in society could well follow that priority of family over hobbies.

Assisting the Grand Canyon Chapter

Clark: I understand that the San Gorgonio Chapter helped spawn a chapter in Arizona. Could you say something about that?

Bear: I was on the chapter executive committee at the time when this came up. We had been sending copies of our monthly newsletter, of course, to chapter members in Arizona.

Clark: Palm & Pine.

Bear: Palm & Pine. We had been encouraging them to give us material for a supplement in the back of our activity schedule, and they'd been doing this for years. Then they decided they wanted to have their own chapter. To implement this decision, the members in Arizona held a little meeting and decided to send over Dr. John Ricker, a physician and surgeon specializing in diseases of the arm. He came over and attended two different meetings of our chapter executive committee the last year of four that I was on the executive committee.

Clark: What years were these?

Bear: This would have been about the year 1963 or 1964, I would say. John was a very interesting, well organized individual without a vast sense of humor, but a terrific grip of conservation and organization affairs, and a thorough lover of the desert. It was fun to get to know him and

Bear: discuss some of these side issues about places he had been. Also, we were glad to help him get started by telling him how we operated and letting him see how we ran a chapter executive committee meeting.

We voted to help start out the new chapter, which was going to be called the Grand Canyon Chapter, by appropriating some of the funds that we had in our chapter treasury. After all, we'd been getting allocations from the home office of a portion of dues paid, not only from those who lived in the California part of our chapter, but from the people in Arizona also. So, it was only fair that we give him some funds. It wasn't any munificent amount, but I remember that he was very glad to have us vote $50 or $100 or whatever it was. It was strictly a round amount. There was no effort made to say, well, how many people and what was the amount per person that San Francisco was sending down and how many years should we go back to say this would be fair to turn over. It was kind of a question of what we could afford and would this help? I remember whatever we offered, why, John was more than glad to take it and run. [laughter]

We felt awfully proud to be able to help them, particularly in the light of what a successful chapter it has evolved into. John was an early chairman of it, as I recall, and has subsequently gone on to become a club director. He has led countless clubwide trips, and I'm proud to claim him as one of my friends. I don't really recall any other details there other than to mention I believe at the time of the founding of that chapter that maybe New Mexico was part of his chapter, but I could be wrong in that. It's not very relevant to the subject anyway. The chapter got off to a great start and has been very active conservation-wise since the beginning, and I sure give Dr. Ricker a lot of credit for it.

Social Acceptability: A Membership Requirement?

Clark: There's one other aspect I'd like to cover with you. It's the question of the membership issue in the club that sort of exploded in a sense in the late 1950s and early 1960s. While you were chairman of the Angeles Chapter, did you feel any inklings of this?

Bear: I was not a part of the issue that you refer to in the late 1950s and early 1960s. We didn't feel them over here in the Riverside Chapter, and I don't remember them arising when I was over in the Angeles Chapter. Of course, I was on the Angeles Chapter Executive Committee I suppose from about 1954 to 1957, or maybe 1953 to 1956. It was for two two-year terms. I don't recall chapter feelings or actions by members or leadership of the Angeles Chapter or the San Gorgonio Chapter on these membership problems in the late 1950s.

Bear: There was a problem that our family was very well acquainted with that came up around 1950 in the Angeles Chapter, however. A lot of members of the Angeles Chapter felt very social minded. They thought that nobody should get into the Sierra Club unless they were sponsored by two people, and that sponsorship should cover the subject of whether they were socially acceptable as well as conservationally acceptable. I was chairman of the Angeles Chapter membership committee for a couple of years, and I remember the first club directors meeting I attended was one that they held in Los Angeles. The Southern California Chapter had long been criticized for being too social-minded and not enough conservation-minded. After attending this meeting and for the first time getting to see the viewpoints outside the chapter, I realized that the Angeles Chapter was a bit provincial and a bit off track.

Now, when I was membership chairman, we had some people from the South who were very leery about having Negroes in the club, and we had members of that committee who thought you ought to be polite and conventional in your social habits. The reason I bring this up was that we had a number of Negroes who applied for membership, and I remember that there was a great deal of discussion over it. It took a lot of talking by the majority of the committee to persuade a couple Southerners on the board that it was totally inconsistent with the club's purposes for us to have any racial prejudice. We had to talk them out of some irrelevancies they were trying to drag up that didn't relate to their conservation acceptability, but related to them as individuals. I know we did approve the membership applications of one or two Negroes while I was chairman of that committee. I think we started a good precedent, although I've never noticed many Negroes around the Sierra Club. At that time, my understanding was that there were no Negroes in our chapter. So, at any rate, we broke down the barriers in that case.

The other problem I mentioned was social acceptability. We had a fellow who was interested in the Sierra Club, and we invited him to attend chapter activities, as was common before we suggested that they submit an application. He attended a party, a weekend event, up at Harwood Lodge below Mount Bald. Why, this fellow was observed after the evening meal taking the liberty of eating some of the scraps off of somebody else's place. [laughter] This rather unconventional act was seized upon by a member of our committee as a reason for denying this person's application for membership, even though two people had sponsored his membership.

There were other cases that were totally unrelated to the purposes of the Sierra Club, and contrary to the law of the land, as in the case of Negroes. It really was because of a few individuals on the committee who were always overridden by the large majority. We tried to get away from this because we knew that San Francisco

Bear: looked down their noses at us as not being concerned with recruiting members to support the conservation movement, but rather building up a group of congenial people to go out hiking, camping, and partying with.

I don't suppose there's any more to be said there except that by the time we left the chapter in 1959 the requirement of any sponsorship at all on an application had been reduced and that pretty much ended the need for chapter membership committees. At least, the chapter membership committees no longer took the liberty of reviewing applicants and interviewing them to see whether they approved. That was just a phase the club went through, probably in other chapters as well as ours.

Clark: You were chairman of the membership committee during the early 1950s?

Bear: Yes. I think it would have been in the years 1950 and 1951, or maybe 1951 and 1952.

Clark: And do you recall several Negroes applying for membership?

Bear: Yes.

Clark: And that they were accepted?

Bear: Right. Yes, I'm proud of that. We had to do a lot of tall talking and arm twisting to get some of our southern members to admit that they were wrong there.

Clark: Did these blacks later join the club actively or did you ever see them again?

Bear: No, I never saw them. I don't know but what they were just blockbusters, so to speak, in the sense that Negroes try to get into a residential neighborhood. I think that was one of the subjects that came up in considering them; that they didn't really intend to participate in the club activities. They just wanted to show that they could get in. At any rate, active as I was in the 1950s in the Angeles Chapter, I don't recall ever seeing a Negro at any chapter activity in town or out of town. There are some Chicanos around, but a minimum of them. I can't remember the last time I saw a Chicano at a Sierra Club activity.

Clark: Was there anything else that you would like to add?

Bear: Well, you're interested in the history of the Sierra Club. I would like to say one thing about the Angeles Chapter when I was active there. There was always a feeling of rivalry and animosity, you might

Bear: say, toward the San Francisco base of the Sierra Club, derived in part from what I was mentioning before. Our chapter was more socially oriented, and they put more value on congeniality of their members, but also they felt a little put upon. There was one director, Ansel Adams, who in open meeting would refer to this difference in emphasis between the Bay Area Chapter and our Southern California Chapter.

I was very happy to see, as I got to know the folks from where the club had been formed in the Bay Area better and better, that the folks down in southern California came around to this conservation emphasis and de-emphasized the social. However, I don't recall that any of them except Ansel was candid enough to come right out and tell the Angeles people that--call a spade a spade. [laughter] It needed to be said. The Angeles Chapter did grow and evolve and improve in its approach toward being a participating and constructive chapter in the club, I thought, in those years.

Personal Relationship to Nature

Clark: That pretty well covers the questions I have except perhaps one last one. What, may I ask, are your personal feelings about your relationship to nature?

Bear: Well, I'm the happiest when I'm the closest to nature. I'm kind of a loner. I love to go down to this nature reserve that our family donated to The Nature Conservancy, and to the world at large. I enjoy being there by myself and exploring this beautiful stream that comes down out of San Jacinto Mountain, and observing the flowers that grow near the stream and up in the hills, and the birds. I just feel very close to nature when I get out in it. I love, when I get a little frustrated or tired, to step out in our backyard here and admire our bushes and our lawn and what little of our own greenery we have.

Whenever I see anybody who wants to despoil nature in any way, whether animate or inanimate, it always gripes me, especially when I see a highway blasted through mountains in a way where it could have gone around ridges instead of being cut through them. I'm very much a nature boy. I feel like an Indian does about nature. I revere it. Nature is such a big term that I'm perhaps not reacting to your question in the way you meant the word.

Clark: Well, my question was really wide open.

Bear: It surely was. [laughter] We brought up our children to enjoy nature. I think it helped produce a couple of well integrated young

Bear: ladies who have gotten to their upper twenties with minimal problems and crises in their lives so far. I think that teaching them to feel at home in nature and to feel self-confident in it and able to cope with it has given them the same resourcefulness to cope with life that I've always felt in my life.

Transcriber: Linda Jantzen
Final Typist: Marie Herold

INDEX -- Robert Bear

Sierra Club Oral History Project

Arthur B. Johnson

CLIMBING AND CONSERVATION IN THE SIERRA CLUB'S SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER, 1930-1960s

An Interview Conducted by
Eric Redd

Sierra Club History Committee
1980

Sierra Club Oral History Project

TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Arthur B. Johnson

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The following interview with Arthur B. Johnson adds to the Sierra Club Oral History Series the perspective of a southern California outdoorsman and conservationist who has been actively involved in the Sierra Club and other conservation organizations since the 1930s. In the Sierra Club, Mr. Johnson served on the board of directors from 1951-54, as Angeles Chapter chairman (1950), organizer and first chairman of the southern chapter's Rock Climbing Section (1936), and member of chapter and club conservation committees (1940s and 1950s).

Mr. Johnson gives a candid analysis of some of the internal controversies in the Sierra Club from the 1930s-1950s; his view as a Southern California Chapter leader brings new insight to the nature of the club in these years. He also relates his experiences as founding member of the southern Rock Climbing Section and discusses his role in conservation campaigns as a leader in the Sierra Club, the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, and the Desert Protective Council.

The interview was conducted by Eric Redd, an associate of the California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program, on 21 June 1977, and 9 August 1977. Mr. Johnson reviewed the interview transcript with care, responding to the editor's requests for further clarification and elaborating on points when necessary. Because of subject overlap in the two interview sessions, topics were reordered as necessary for clarity; tapes are available in The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Ann Lage, Editor
Sierra Club History Committee

31 March 1980
Berkeley, California

I SIERRA CLUB LODGES AND OUTINGS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Harwood Lodge Construction

Redd: The following is an interview for the California State University, Fullerton, Sierra Club Oral History Project, by Eric J. Redd with Mr. Arthur B. Johnson, of West Covina, California. Mr. Johnson is a long-time Sierra Club member; he joined the Sierra Club in 1930.

Mr. Johnson, why did you join the Sierra Club?

Johnson: I was invited to join by a fellow that I worked with. I was interested in hiking, and at that time the Sierra Club was a hiking, outdoors, camping club. The club was little concerned with conservation as it is today.

Redd: What year was that?

Johnson: That was in September of 1930. My first trip was to Harwood Lodge during the construction, and I spent two weekends up there before I actually joined the club. Peter Van Oosting and, as I recall, Mr. M. A. Knapp, were my two sponsors. At that time, we had to have two sponsors. Mr. Van Oosting was the chairman of the chapter executive committee and was in charge of the construction of the lodge. He was also on the executive committee of the chapter at that time.

Redd: Did you help rebuild Harwood Lodge?

Johnson: I started the addition to it, yes. I was chairman of the supervisory board and also the chairman of the building committee.

Redd: Harwood burned, didn't it?

Johnson: No. You're probably thinking of the old cabin up on the saddle, the miner's cabin, which was on the site of the present ski

facilities up there. The Sierra Club bought that from an old miner and used that as a shelter hut for a number of years. It burned down in 1927 or 1928, I believe, and the Harwood Lodge was a replacement for that old cabin.

Redd: What did it cost to add the addition to Harwood?

Johnson: I have no recollection of the figures. I would have to guess somewhere between five and ten thousand dollars, although, at the time that I left the project, it wasn't complete. Since then there has been considerably more invested into the improvements than was in the original concept.*

Redd: Now, you were also on the Muir Lodge Committee. When was that?

Johnson: I was appointed in the fall of 1937 as chairman of the lodge committee. I had served as a member of the committee for several years previously.

Redd: So you were involved in the maintenance?

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: Did the Forest Service help you with the maintenance of the lodge?

Johnson: No, no. The only thing the Forest Service did was to collect the money for the rental and come up and tell us to clean the place up every once in a while, the underbrush and poison oak. Of course, generally we didn't wait for the Forest Service to do anything like that. We policed it pretty well ourselves.

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*As I recall we started with around $2,500. As of a 1951 estimate I found in my records:

Estimate total costs	$9,711.00
Spent to date	6,378.68
Required to complete	3,333.00

ABJ, 8-26-77

4

MUIR LODGE

The storms and floods of early March unfortunately damaged Muir Lodge to the extent of completely washing away the womens' annex, the wood shed, and demolishing the upstream half of the main building which included the kitchen. The upstream portion of the lot was denuded of top soil, as were other portions of the lot. The men's annex and the sequoia tree were virtually unharmed.

As this Schedule goes to press, the following steps have been taken by your Executive Committee in an effort to secure aid in arriving at a recommendation to make to the Board of Directors at its May meeting regarding the disposition of the property.

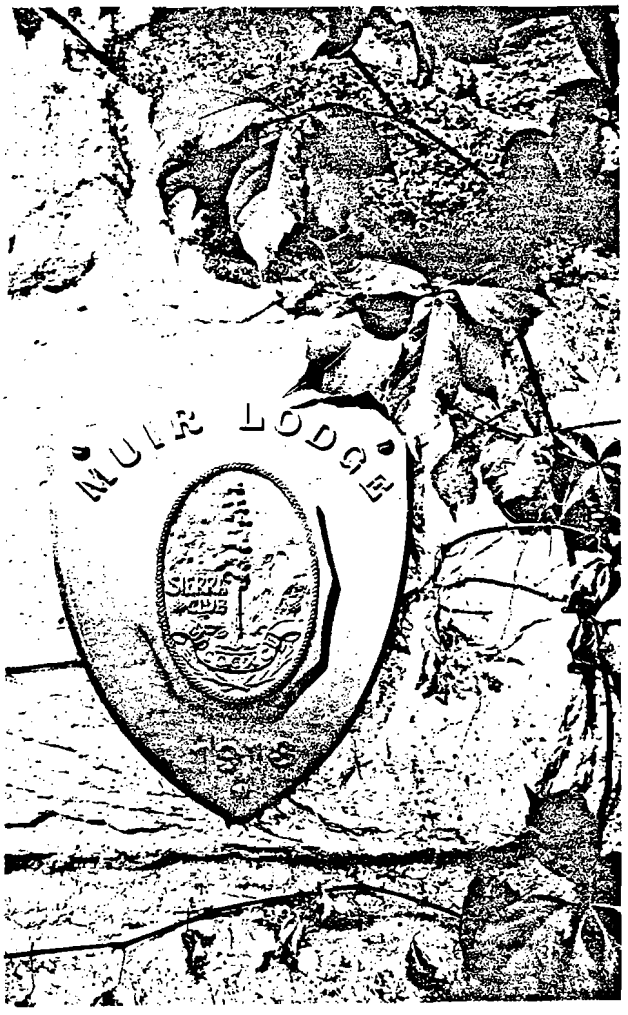
(1) Appointed a Special Committee of seventeen members to visit the site, study all aspects of the problem and to make a report to the Executive Committee. This Committee by a large majority recommended abandonment.

(2) The Executive Committee, at is regular meeting in April, approved unanimously the recommendation of the Special Committee to abandon.

Both Committees felt that the light use of the Lodge did not warrant rebuilding.

(3) The Executive Committee, realizing that the members at large are entitled to a voice in the matter, mailed a brief statement and a ballot to each, returnable not later than April 30, 1938.

PROPOSAL TO ABANDON MUIR LODGE, from the Schedule of the Southern California Chapter, 1938



MUIR LODGE PLAQUE, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER, SIERRA CLUB

Muir Lodge History

Redd: Had Muir Lodge suffered from vandalism much?

Johnson: No. Muir Lodge was dedicated in the name of John Muir. That's how it got its name. Occasionally, there was some vandalism, but back in those days you didn't have the trouble with vandalism that has developed since World War II. Also, the cabin owners in the area had good rapport with the rangers, and the rangers did some very good patrolling in the area. So there wasn't anything more than possibly a broken window. I think one time the door was broken open, but nothing was taken, as I remember.

Redd: I understand that the lodge got flooded out in 1938.

Johnson: Yes, March 3, and here is a postcard that I have. It shows the dedication plaque at Muir Lodge,* and I will show you a picture of the lodge as it was built. That is a picture of the main lodge as it was originally built. Later on, the club acquired an adjacent U.S. Forest Service lot with a cabin. They then built another structure, an annex upstream from the original lodge building. It became the women's locker room. The men's locker room was the cabin on this extra lot that they had purchased. You could sleep two or three on folding cots in the men's annex. The women's annex couldn't sleep anyone in it.

There was a wood shed near the women's annex where we stored our wood. The Forest Service would allow any downed tree to be cut up and used as wood. The lodge had a fireplace, and also in the kitchen end of it was a wood stove. We didn't have any fuel other than wood for our cooking, whereas up at Harwood Lodge there was butane. Originally, when Harwood was built, we used coal and then during the thirties, when butane or propane became available, and they were trucking it, we converted the stove--it was an old coal stove--to butane.

Redd: When Muir Lodge flooded out, who decided what to do with it?

Johnson: I have here in Schedule No. 95, May 1 to July 31, 1938, a statement in the schedule that tells about the rebuilding of Muir Lodge or the decision not to rebuild.*

Redd: How did you feel about that, when the decision was made not to rebuild it?

Johnson: I was very disappointed. I wanted them to rebuild the lodge. The washout was the wood shed and the women's annex and the north half of the lodge. There was a window in the back of the lodge on each side of the fireplace. It got as far as the window, took

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*See page 2a.

the kitchen part off, but the stoop that you see over the door was still hanging. So it was only a question of filling in the area that had been washed out and rebuilding the lodge in the same way materially, because actually three-quarters of the lodge was still standing.

As in all tragedies, it's a one-in-fifty-years flood, or one-in-five-hundred-years flood, but it can always happen next year. It was that: "We don't want to rebuild it again because it could happen again next year." Now, what is it, thirty or forty years later, and we're having a drought, and anything close to a fifty-year flood is very remote. That was what it was rated at that time, somewhere between a fifty- and a hundred-year flood.

But I found that there were on the committee that was appointed two persons, and one of them had offered a hundred dollars and another one had offered, I think, twenty-five dollars to rebuild. I hadn't made a commitment because I was going to find out how it was going to go. We had what I computed to be approximately between a half and three-quarters of the amount of money that had been pledged toward the cost of rebuilding. And I was quite hopeful it would be. The Forest Service had wanted to know what we were going to do, were we going to rebuild it or tear it down? In other words, if we didn't rebuild it, we had to tear it down, and they were anxious to have us make a decision. I felt that we could talk the U.S. Forest Service into giving us sufficient time to rebuild it if we decided to rebuild it, and we didn't have to do it in one week or one month for that matter. The chapter decided to dispose of it and let this one lot where the lodge sat go back to the Forest Service and demolish the walls, and then sell the other lot.

Then this committee heard that some people were willing to give the Sierra Club a hundred dollars for the men's annex and demolish the walls of the old building. So the chapter decided to sell it. I was very disagreeably surprised to find that the two persons who bought the lodge were the ones who offered the hundred dollars and the one who offered the twenty-five. When they decided to buy, they withdrew their pledge. That was not known to me, that they had withdrawn their pledges. They said the people have withdrawn their pledges, and then they showed up to be the buyers.

Redd: That's how things are sometimes. That's too bad.

Summer Homes on Forest Service Land

Redd: You mentioned the Forest Service. Why don't you tell me about the different contacts you've had with the Forest Service over the years, not just in the thirties. Tell me what you think about them and maybe some specific instances of either where they've done some good work or maybe where they've made some mistakes.

Johnson: Well, the Forest Service has done some good work, and then they have done some foolish things. Like any governmental bureaucracy, it has its good points and its shortcomings. One of the things that the Forest Service did that was objectionable to a lot of people was when they were phasing out the summer homes. Some people felt that they took liberties with some of their decisions in phasing out certain cabins. The Sierra Club has always had good relations with the Forest Service on all of their dealings with them up until the time that I left the local scene. I can't say anything about the local situation since 1955.

Redd: What year did they phase out the cabins?

Johnson: They started that after World War II. In some cases they wouldn't allow an owner to sell his cabin because they wouldn't give the new owner a lease on it. The leases that the Forest Service had with the cabin owners were on a yearly basis, renewable from year to year. It was more or less automatically renewed unless the person abandoned the cabin and didn't pay their lease on it. Then the Forest Service would, of course, not give the lease to someone else in many cases. They've tried to phase out their summer homes in certain areas. In certain areas they still exist and probably will continue for a long time. There are certain areas like the Bear Creek area back of Altadena. They had a fire in there and burned a few of the cabins, so the Forest Service wouldn't allow any rebuilding. They also told the other cabin owners that hadn't been burned that they were canceling their leases. That's one area in particular.

Weekend Hiking with the Southern California Chapter

Redd: Have you been on the High Trip?

Johnson: I never was on a High Trip. I went in, hiked in, and met a High Trip once and hiked with them for three days. That's the only time that I was with the High Trip.

Redd: Did you first start taking trips with the local chapter or with the mountaineering section?

Johnson: With the local chapter back in 1930.

Redd: Where did you go?

Johnson: Back in these hills (gestures towards the Angeles National Forest). At that time we went on weekend hikes on Saturday afternoon and Sunday, or we'd go up to Muir Lodge or Harwood Lodge overnight on a weekend. Sometimes members might stay there for several days. If you'll look at one of the old schedules, you'll find that they had a considerable number of weekend hikes. In other words, they'd go to "Gray Back," Mount San Gorgonio, over a three-day weekend, the Fourth of July, or Labor Day weekend. They would camp either at Forest Home or up at Barton Flats and hike to the top and back. Or they would go to Idlywild and hike up San Jacinto. They would hike to Mount San Bernardino from Forest Home. On a lot of the hikes they would take the PE (Pacific Electric) car to the end of the line and hike from there. At others, where the PE didn't go, they would drive their cars to the end of the road and hike up the trails. They had scheduled hikes almost every weekend. Sometimes they would be camping at Red Rock Canyon or out on the desert for overnight camps and some hiking.

II THE ROCK CLIMBING SECTION

Origins of the RCS, 1934

Redd: Now I understand that the southern Rock Climbing Section started in 1934.

Johnson: The Rock Climbing Section started in 1934, and it first appears in the fall schedule of the chapter, but I don't remember exactly when the section was formed. It was formed sometime during the summer of 1934 because it was in the September 1934 schedule that the first names appeared. I think John Ripley has found out about it from some of the early minutes. He has a lot of the early minutes of the Rock Climbing Section.

Redd: Whose idea was it to start the Rock Climbing Section?

Johnson: It was my idea originally. Glen Dawson had scheduled a trip out to Eagle Rock to go rock climbing. He had got interested in this high angle rock climbing in the Sierra because of a trip that he had with Norman Clyde and Robert Underhill and Jules Eichorn. They climbed the east face of Mount Whitney, and it was quite a feat. Dawson took some of us out on Eagle Rock and taught us how to rope and climb the face of Eagle Rock. I wrote to him and suggested that he start a climbing group since he was an experienced climber and since they had already formed a group in San Francisco. Originally the Bay Area group was called the Cragmont Climbing Club after Cragmont Rock in Berkeley. Then the members--Dick Leonard and, I think, Bestor Robinson was in that--anyway, Dick Leonard and Kenny May and Dave Brower and a few of the others were climbing. They became a section of the San Francisco Bay Chapter, so they called them the Rock Climbing Section there.

I suggested Glen start a Rock Climbing Section down here. He wrote back and told me that he couldn't do it; he didn't have the time, and he suggested that I do it. So I talked it over with a lot of the people who had been out on Eagle Rock, and we decided that we would form the Rock Climbing Section. We went to the chapter executive committee and asked them if they would object, or if they would allow us to use the club's name and would sponsor it.

Originally, we didn't have a section group idea in our chapter bylaws. We had committees. In other words, you had your Muir Lodge Committee and Harwood Lodge Committee and your schedule committee and your membership committee, etc. The executive committee said, "All right, we'll appoint a rock climbing committee and you're the chairman." At that time the chairman would generally, except on the nominating committee, be appointed. The chairman of the committee picked his committee members. That was the practice. I then picked the members of the group that appear on that slip. That's how we got started.

Redd: When did it become a section then?

Johnson: It was right around January 1, 1937, that it became an official Rock Climbing Section of the chapter.

Redd: Now, I understand you first started climbing out at Tahquitz Rock.

Johnson: No, the first climb was on Eagle Rock.* It was after the section had been formed that we were exploring around for different sites. In the beginning, it was Eagle Rock and Stoney Point. Then some of us went out to explore the Tahquitz Rock as a possibility. The first trip was on Armistice Day, November 11, 1935. We were turned back by the cold and by starting at the wrong spot. Later on we went back and found the right spots to start.

Redd: Did you have to get permission from anyone to climb on Eagle Rock?

Johnson: Not at that time. Later on, the police ran the section off of Eagle Rock and forbid climbing there anymore. That was just before the war, I think, or maybe it was just after the war.**

Redd: Where did the Rock Climbing Section go then?

Johnson: They did some climbing in the gorge below Devil's Gate Dam, in the Arroyo Seco. Then they developed the climbing out on Tahquitz Rock. That would give them their high angle stuff out there. During the summer on three-day weekends they would take trips to Yosemite Valley or to the east side of the Sierra. They would climb in the Whitney region or in the Palisade region or in the Minaret region. One trip they went up Rock Creek and camped at the end of the road in Rock Creek, considerably farther than you can drive now, and did Bear Creek Spire over a three-day weekend.

Redd: Where did the first rock climbing trip go, to Yosemite?

Johnson: The first was, yes, I think it was a Memorial Day trip to Yosemite.

Redd: And that was in 1934?

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*Eagle Rock is located next to Freeway 134 in the Eagle Rock area of Los Angeles.-Ed.

**The police "ran" us off because spectators, mostly kids or teens would watch us and then try to climb the face, generally unroped. They would get stuck and the police or fire department would have to rescue the person. The police felt the best way was to stop all climbing as it was public property. - ABJ, 8/26/77

Johnson: No, in 1935. Let's see, I don't know whether they had one in 1934 or not, because the section wasn't formed down here until September of 1934. So 1936 would probably have been the first trip that we took, and we had a joint trip then with the Rock Climbing Section in the Bay Area. We met in the organization camp, which used to be Camp 5 or Camp 9, as I recall, in Yosemite and then we climbed the various spots around the valley from our base camp.

Redd: How many were in your party?

Johnson: There would probably be as many as twenty-five or thirty all together--probably six to ten from southern California and the rest of them from the Bay Area. It's just a little short run over from the Bay, 120 miles, and from here it's 260 miles, so there were always more from the Bay Area.

Redd: Was there a charge? What did it cost?

Johnson: There was no charge then to get into Yosemite or into Yosemite Park. The only cost would be the travel expenses and the food, and so a trip like that would probably cost one person maybe five or six dollars for gas, oil and food for the three days.

Redd: Did you climb with Norman Clyde and Francis Farquhar?

Johnson: No, I didn't climb with Clyde or Francis. I've been in the area where they were climbing, but not with them.

Memorable First Ascents: Monument Peak, Washington Column, Mount Muir

Redd: Did you make any first ascents?

Johnson: Oh, yes.

Redd: Why don't you tell me about those?

Johnson: The one that I liked the best, and think is the prime one, is the ascent of Monument Peak. Monument Peak is the northwest corner of the Colorado River Indian Reservation. The Peak is several miles northwest of Parker, Arizona. John and Ruth Mendenhall and a fellow by the name of Paul Estes and myself made the first ascent. It's only been climbed once since.

Redd: Now when was that?

Johnson: Our first ascent was on January 1, 1941.

Redd: How come you were able to climb it, and many subsequent parties have failed?

Johnson: Well, it's the type of the rock. I don't know whether any of them have failed or just turned away. The fact of the matter is there were several attempts made on the peak that were turned back because of the rock. John Mendenhall had tried it several times and he wanted to make one strong party and see if it was possible. He had some ideas as to a possible route. So we did it over the January weekend. It took us two hours, as I recall, to do thirty vertical feet. That is, we didn't go directly up the thirty feet, but we started at one spot and went around and then came back to a spot about thirty feet above. It took us two hours to make that detour. It's a volcanic neck, and the volcanic brachia is so fragile and so loose that nobody wants to try it again. Chuck Wilts and a party made the second ascent, and his remarks aren't printable.

Redd: Did you have to spend the night on it?

Johnson: No, we did it up and rappeled off it, and I guess we were on the peak for about five hours. It's only 350 vertical feet from the notch where we started climbing to the top. The other side of it is 800 feet straight down.

Redd: What other memorable ascents have you been on?

Johnson: A couple of trips up the north face of Mount San Jacinto in the wintertime; the Sunshine Peewee route on the east face of Mount Whitney; the first ascent of the east face of Mount Muir, and a climb of the northeast buttress of Mount Sill, I guess, would (all be memorable). Then the climb in Yosemite, the Washington Column, is the one I would say that I enjoyed probably as much as anything.

Redd: Who did you climb Washington Column with?

Johnson: I started up one day with Muir Dawson and two others, on a rope of four. We got over the difficult part, and it started raining. We decided that it looked like some difficult stuff ahead, and we didn't want to try it wet, so we roped off. The next day I went back with Neil Ruge and Jack Reigelhuth, as I recall. They were from the Bay Area, and we went up the same route. If I'd known as much the day before, we'd of gone up it the first day, because we only had about twenty-five feet more to climb, and then it was brushwhacking from there on.

Redd: I understand you climbed Mount Muir, the east buttress.

Johnson: Yes, the east buttress or east face, with Bill Rice. So far as we know, it was a first ascent. It wasn't the first ascent of the mountain; it was the first ascent of that route.

More Firsts: Whitney's East Buttress, Moro Rock, Columbine Peak

Johnson: Then there was the east face of Mount Whitney. I had looked at it and felt that there was a new route, a new direct route up the east face of Mount Whitney. We went up to--well, it was called Ibyx Park then, now it's called Big Horn Meadows--and camped out for a Labor Day weekend. We were going to climb the east face by this new route. We were going to put a two-rope party on the ascent. One rope was to be Howard Koster and Jim Smith and myself. The other rope was to have four on it.

The day before we were practicing up on what is called Thor Peak, east of Mirror Lake. I had led up part of this pink perch route on Thor Peak. We'd rotated the rope, and so I went to the third man and Howard Koster, and Jim went ahead. All of a sudden I heard, "rock!" which means there's a rock rolling. I was standing on a narrow ledge and about two and a half or three feet above me was the edge of the sky. I looked up to watch so I could get my head out of the way. It came right towards me. I got my face and head out of the way, but I couldn't pull completely free of it, and it caught me on the left leg, just above the knee. I had a bad bruise, so I couldn't go the next day, but the other rope went. They made the first ascent of this new route, the Sunshine PeeWee route, which was the straight ascent of the east buttress of Mount Whitney.

Two weeks later, my knee came out of it all right, and so Bill Rice and I went back on a two-day weekend and went up and down the route in one day. The other party climbed the route and came down the trail, we went up and climbed down. To the best of my recollection, we did a shortcut, whereas the previous party came up to a buttress and went around it, we went right up a wide or one-sided chimney. So in that respect, it was a new route on the east face. Then when we came back we climbed right down the same route. We didn't rappel around or go back on an easier route. We climbed right back down, so that is one I consider as one of my first ascents.

Redd: I wanted to ask you about climbing Moro Rock.

Johnson: Carl Jensen, Howard Koster and myself made the first ascent of the skyline that you see as you drive up to Sequoia Park. From the highway you can look up at the skyline of Moro Rock, and we

made the first ascent of that skyline.

I did make a solo first ascent, that is, a first recorded ascent. Now it wasn't a first ascent because I found a cairn on top of it, but there was nothing in the cairn. They say that Norman Clyde actually made the first ascent, and apparently I was the second one, but it had no name and so I put a tobacco can in and marked it as the first recorded ascent.

Then I named the peak, and it's now on the maps. It was sent into the board of geographic names and named Columbine Peak. It's on the ridge west of the crest south of Doosey Lakes. The reason for naming it Columbine was that just about two hundred feet below the summit of the peak, around twelve thousand feet, a bush of white columbines was growing. They apparently had not water, just the water that soaked into the sand. Columbines generally want their feet in water, so it was so unusual that I dubbed the peak Columbine Peak, and that's the name it wound up with.

Redd: That's a good name for it.

Snow Climbing

Johnson: Then, of course, the first winter ascents of Mount San Jacinto through Snow Creek. It has been climbed several times from the Snow Creek side, but never in the wintertime. Very few ascents have been made of Mount San Jacinto in the wintertime. For that matter, few ascents have been made at Mount Gorgonio or even Baldy in the wintertime. There have been some.

Redd: What did you do in the Snow Creek-Mount San Jacinto ascent?

Johnson: Well, we climbed it. There were nine thousand vertical feet from the place where you had to park the cars and start climbing to the top of it. We went up one day and bivouacked on the summit or near the summit, and then came down the next day. We re-tracked our route, not exactly, cut closely.

Redd: Did you take skis?

Johnson: No, you don't take skis on ice. And the fact of the matter is at that time we didn't have any steel edges on the skis, and you didn't take skis on snow that steep. It was ice. It was not only a crust, it was stuff that you had to cut footsteps in with an ice axe, so

you don't go skiing on that. Also there wouldn't be room enough to maneuver skis.

Redd: What year was that ascent?

Johnson: There were two of them, 1935 and 1936. One was in March, the other in April. They would be in the schedules over there.

Redd: Were you a skier with the club?

Johnson: No.

Redd: You didn't do that.

Johnson: No, I couldn't convince myself that there was any skiing snow in southern California. I had a pair of skis, but it would be cross-country skiing that I would go for. So many of them were breaking their legs and arms and necks, so to speak, that I decided it would be a whole lot more fun to climb anything using crampons than it was trying to go skiing. So other than buying a pair of skis and a pair of boots, I did not ski. When the war came around, I gave them all away.

Climbing Safety and Technique

Redd: Now when you started climbing, was this before the use of pitons?

Johnson: They were being used in Europe considerably and they were introduced into this country just shortly before we started the Rock Climbing Section. We had to import ours from Europe. There wasn't anything available in 1935 from any American supplier.

Redd: So did you climb with any of the old bolts?

Johnson: No bolts, it's all been pitons. Bolts didn't come in until after World War II.

Redd: There was something earlier than that, though, wasn't there?

Johnson: The ones that developed the pitons were the Germans, and that was after World War I. Then that climbing spree that the Germans did led all that high angle climbing after World War I.

Redd: Was your technique of roping together different then than it is now?

Johnson: I don't know whether it was any different than it is now. We didn't use the double ropes and stuff that they do now or use their fixed rope. If we wanted to do direct aid, why, we would use slings; tie slings of rope into the eye of the piton or into a carabiner. All of this modern stuff, we didn't have back then. We didn't know what it was. It's all been developed in the last twenty-five, thirty years.

Redd: Did you have to spend the night on a mountain many times?

Johnson: I have never had to spend a night out that wasn't planned for.

Redd: So you always had a ledge you could camp on or something?

Johnson: I always got off the mountain before or else planned on staying. The two times that we climbed Mount San Jacinto in the winter-time we planned on staying on top overnight, so it wasn't bivouacking. Well, it was a form of bivouacking, but it's not something where you were forced benighted, so to speak. No, I've never been benighted. I've been on trips where a person or a couple have been benighted, and I've been out all night looking for someone who was lost off of a trail, but not on any climbs.

Redd: Did you consider that you were doing something dangerous at the time?

Johnson: No, well, the thing is that there is danger in any high angle climbing. It was to alleviate and to overcome that danger that we decided that we should form this section. We wanted to train people on how to behave on rocks, how to use the rope, and how to maneuver certain types of pitches, laybacks, jamcracks, and all the different movements of climbing and use of the rope. Most of the climbing was free climbing, not direct aid, although we did some direct aid. We practiced some direct aid out on Tahquitz because there was no place around other than Tahquitz, and we couldn't get anyplace for direct-aid rock.

The Rock Climbing Section was formed for the training of our members and to teach some of them so that they could do this high angle climbing themselves. We did train quite a few. Some that we trained in the section are still climbing. The Mendenhalls are two, and Ruth is now on the board of directors of the American Alpine Club. It was the training that they received; it was just a practice to do these things that we might be called upon to do in the mountains. The Rock Climbing Section was to be no more than a training ground for high angle climbing.

Redd: The policy in regard to the leader was quite different then, wasn't it, than it is now?

Johnson: I don't know exactly what you mean by that.

Redd: Well, that he was more responsible for the party than he is today. I read one article that suggested that if the leader started to fall that the policy of the party was to cut him loose rather than try and hold him.

Johnson: That was not a policy of the section; no, it never was. Now, I don't know where you got that.

Redd: I was just speaking in general terms about how climbing has changed.

Johnson: I know that someone put that idea up, but it drew considerable fire from those of us who were climbing. No, the idea was that we were climbing together using ropes to protect one another and the idea of cutting the rope to let the guy go was counter to what we were trying to do. We were trying to learn how to climb together to protect one another. We practiced falls; we practiced belaying, just so as to train ourselves.

Redd: Did people then have subsequent falls? Have you been involved where people had falls that came pretty close?

Johnson: There was one fall that happened out on Tahquitz Rock that could have been very serious. The piton pulled loose, but held, so that the fall was only about five to seven feet actually. If that piton had not held...it was loose; it pulled out, but it still held because it was hooked over the edge. Although, when the tension was taken off of it, it fell out; it was still holding the weight of the climber until he got so he could get his footing back. That is the only fall.

There was a fall I was involved in, but I wasn't roped. That was one of the reasons why I felt that we needed a place to train, and that was on the face of Eagle Rock. That was on one of Glen Dawson's climbs he had out there. I had done something foolish. One of the fellows was on a rope. His rope was dropped down from the top of Eagle Rock; he was up about thirty feet, and he got himself into a spot where he couldn't move. He couldn't get up, and he couldn't come down. They couldn't pull him up and they were afraid to have him go on the rope because it wasn't too well anchored above. It might be that they couldn't hold him and let him slide down.

I'd been up this route on a rope before so I went up to point out to him where a hand-hold was that he needed to go on. He couldn't see it. He couldn't understand or see it from where he was, so I went up and pointed it out to him. I was unroped. I'd been up and down like this before. We'd go up several feet on it

just without ropes. Well, one of the rocks I was standing on, I guess, actually came out. I never did know what happened, and so I fell about thirty feet.

The plantings around the base of the rock--there was some planting with oleander trees in it and they weren't very high--and it was freshly irrigated and cultivated and soft. I figured that if I could keep my feet directly underneath me, I could hit on my feet with my knees flexed a little bit and go down and bounce off, and I'd be all right. Well, I didn't bounce back; I was just a little bit off balance, but I laid over on my back, rolled over backwards, and got up and walked away from it. It was due to the fact that it was on soft ground. That was a fall that I was involved in, but never with any of the Rock Climbing Section. That was before there was any Rock Climbing Section.

Ropes, Carabiners, Crampons, and Pitons

Redd: You had manila ropes then, didn't you?

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: When did the nylon ropes come in?

Johnson: Nylon ropes came in after the war. Nylon was a product that was developed for parachutes, and after the war they started spinning it into cord. I guess they used nylon in the cords of the parachute, but it was too expensive to use for ropes in the early days. It was in the late 1940s, I guess, before the nylon rope came out.

Redd: Did that give you more versatility on the mountain or did it change things much?

Johnson: The nylon rope has its problems. The original rope was hemp. The original rope that they used over in Europe was hemp, and then over here we used manila. By that time, the weaving of rope had developed to the point where they were using sisal. Sisal is the rough part of it. They would take the longer fibers from the manila plant or from the sisal plant and they were a little softer, a little more springy and easier on the hands. They wove that into what they called yacht rope. It had a stronger and finer quality. We used yacht rope for climbing. We used manila rope for rappels. We used that quarter-inch manila, and doubled it. It was fine for rappels because nobody was falling on it, just sliding down the rope.

Redd: Were you using carabiners when you started?

Johnson: Yes, on our direct aid we used carabiners, but we had to import them from Europe because we couldn't get anything in this country. They were all imported either from England or from Germany. Most of the stuff we imported was from Germany because they had a better price in Germany.

Redd: Was the ice axe in use?

Johnson: Yes, we used ice axes but the ice axe is only used on snow and ice. We had to import the crampons, also.

Redd: I understand that the Rock Climbing Section had a scouting committee.

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: What did that entail?

Johnson: The committee was to go out and try and find new places for climbing, more places where we could get rock where we could climb. That only lasted until they settled on some of the better places. We found out there were very few places in southern California where we could get rock that is climbable, but the idea of this scouting committee was to scout for possible climbing areas.

Redd: When you were climbing in Yosemite, would you remove your pitons as you went up? I understand there is a problem now with the cracks in the rocks getting split open too wide, and it's kind of a cluttered area to climb in. It's not a clean area anymore.

Johnson: No, we didn't retrieve our pitons. We didn't use too many of them to begin with, and if we'd run across one we would test it. If we felt that we needed it, we would test it and use it. If we didn't, why, we would just bypass it. There was quite a controversy whether to remove them or not, whether you would do more damage. Now, if you were on a long climb, and you were using quite a few pitons, the last man would clean the wall, so to speak, but that was something that came later. Originally, we found very few uses for pitons, and we left them in even in Yosemite walls.

Redd: It wasn't crowded there then, was it?

Johnson: No, no, the only climbing done in Yosemite in those days was by the Sierra Club and that was over Memorial Day and Fourth of July or Labor Day, when we would go up. They would generally go on a three-day weekend. By Thanksgiving it was getting too cold up there to climb, and it was generally too cold to climb before Memorial Day. It was all dry rock climbing unless you got rained on.

All of the rock gymnastics have come later. In the early climbing of the Rock Climbing Section, we went more for free climbing, training ourselves to do the difficult spots and only going to hardware as protection. In other words, there was some feeling whether we should even use it for direct aid. So all of this modern rock gymnastics came on the walls of Yosemite during the fifties and sixties. There wasn't too much of that in the forties.

We tried to use pitons on Monument Peak. We did put in a couple and we left them because we felt we needed some protection; although, I don't think any of them were used for direct aid. They were only for protection. We found that one of the walls we started was only about twenty feet high, right directly up from a ledge. We had lots of cracks. It was a basalt wall. Not quite vertical, but it would have been a direct aid deal; that wall wouldn't take pitons.

Redd: I know what direct aid is, but I'm not sure that everyone that's going to read this transcript will know that. Why don't you explain that?

Johnson: Direct aid is what used to be called "going on iron." You'd use your pitons and carabiners to climb on. When you use pitons only for protection, you climb without using them. But when you have to use them, you put in pitons often enough that you could either put rope slings into the piton, or carabiners and slings. That then is "climbing on iron," as they used to call it, or direct aid.

III CONSERVATION OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA DESERTS AND MOUNTAINS

The San Jacinto and San Gorgonio Campaigns

Redd: Were you in on the Mount San Jacinto tramway fight?

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: Why don't you tell me about that?

Johnson: That's a long story. The Sierra Club was against the tramway from the beginning. We weren't successful in preventing it; however, the warnings that we gave to the state people have been proven. There were a certain number of influential people from Palm Springs that figured that the tramway would be very beneficial to the economy of Palm Springs, and money always talks. We warned them to the effect that it would become bankrupt. There was no question of that. It was just a question of whether it would be one year, two years, three years. As it turned out, it was eighteen months.

Redd: Do you know who were the people in Palm Springs that wanted the tramway?

Johnson: I can't name them right offhand, but you'll find it in a lot of the early literature of our controversy. They were the original proponents, and they were all members of the regional Mount San Jacinto Winter Park Authority, so you can get the names of the early members off of the records. Robert G. Bear can name all of them. He was our "spy." He attended all the commission meetings.

Redd: That was defeated several times, wasn't it?

Johnson: It wasn't defeated; it was only postponed. The legislation that created the Tramway Authority was vetoed twice by Governor Earl Warren. The third time he signed the bill over the objection of the Sierra Club.

Redd: Do you see that as a defeat for the club?

Johnson: It was a defeat for the club in that they lost the battle. It was not a defeat in that it was a mainspring that took the Sierra Club members into the Conservation War in which the club has been more of a winner than a loser.

It was built over our objections; however, it went bankrupt as we prophecied it would and that the state would have to take it over. The state has because it was a state authority, so it belongs to the state. I don't know how they're financing it since it went bankrupt. I haven't paid any attention to it lately.

Redd: How about the San Gorgonio, fight to save the San Gorgonio Primitive Area in 1947?

Johnson: I didn't get too much involved in that. Joe Momyer from San Bernadino was the ringleader in the fight on a wilderness area there. Joe is dead now, so you wouldn't be able to get in touch with him. Also, Charlotte Mauk from San Francisco was involved in the early San Gorgonio fight and she's gone. You're going to have to get the stuff off any records that you can get. The Sierra Club was actually somewhat divided. Some of the ski mountaineers and some of the Ski Mountaineers Central Committee--I never did like that name central committee--favored the Far West Ski Association stand that it shouldn't be a wilderness area because there should be skiing in what we called the Valley of the Thousand Springs. They have another name for it, but it was always called the Valley of the Thousand Springs in the early days. (They thought it) would be a good place for ski huts and a ski development, but the wilderness prevailed, so they never did get a chance to test it.

One of the things that probably had much to do with it was that one year we had a very low snow year in which we didn't have any snow until February. That kind of took the steam out of some of the skiers because we could throw it back at them: you can't run a ski development with years of no snow.

Anza-Borrego Desert Enlargement

Redd: I know the club advocated the enlargement of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in 1941.

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: Were you involved with that?

Johnson: I was chairman of the chapter's State Park and Publicity Committee at the time. Yes, I was very much involved with it.

Redd: Could you go into that and tell me about it?

Johnson: At that time the chapter had little interest in conservation as we have nowadays. They did get interested in conservation in the Kings Canyon National Park fight, in 1940 when the finally got the Kings Canyon National Park bill through Congress. The chapter had a state parks committee, but it had been very inactive because there wasn't much doing.

Then in 1936 the United States Congress gave the State of California the right to patent the lands in eastern San Diego County and western Imperial County and to take them into the state park system as a desert state park. The state had taken in about 200,000 acres north of the Kane Springs-Julian Highway (State Route 78), and then there was a certain length of time that they could patent more lands. The park commission had decided to extend the park south as far as they could and had applied for 153,000 acres of additional land south of Highway 78 to extend down into the Carrizo and the Vallecitas area. Some of it was to be down in the Carrizo Gorge area, the Pinon Mountain and some of Fish Creek wash areas. The San Diego County Board of Supervisors decided that they didn't like the idea of having all this public land taken in by the state and started objecting to it. Randall Henderson, who was the publisher of The Desert Magazine, and a fellow by the name of Hayes, Robert Hayes I believe, who was the secretary of the El Centro Chamber of Commerce, decided that the park commission needed some help to resist the campaign being put on by the Board of Supervisors of San Diego County to get the state to withdraw their application for these lands.

As the new chairman of the State Park Committee of the chapter, I received a newspaper clipping from someone telling about the problem that was developing down in San Diego County with the enlargement of the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. At that time it was called Borrego State Park. The person who sent the clipping suggested that I find out what it was all about. So I made a tour with Randall Henderson over a good part of the area south of the highway. I took three people with me on this inspection trip and one of them was Margaret Byrkit. We decided that not only should we have it in the state park, but we should also add as much more area as we could get.

We formed a committee, or a group, not a committee, because the Sierra Club worked separately. The people of El Centro were encouraged by their chamber of commerce being on their side, and by Randall Henderson publishing The Desert Magazine in El Centro.

Guy Fleming was the southern district superintendent for the California state parks, and he had considerable influence with some relatively wealthy people in the La Jolla area and could encourage them to help along with donation. We put together enough money to round out a quarter of a million acres and gave it to the state to be used to pick up the rest of this plan. It was the support that the State Park Commission received from the Sierra Club, from the Scripps heirs in La Jolla, and from Randall Henderson and the group in El Centro that stiffened the backs of the park commission. They went ahead with the project.

The one thing that the San Diego County Board of Supervisors did was to get the U.S. Land Office to hold a hearing in San Diego. I went down there to represent the Sierra Club. It was not a formal hearing. It was an informal hearing where you could tell your story, and you weren't questioned; you weren't on the witness stand. It was the enthusiastic support of the people that convinced the Land Office commissioner, who came out for the hearings, to decide that the protest from the San Diego supervisors was not meritorious and to rule against them. That left a way open for the state park people to accept the money, and they added the quarter of a million acres south of the highway to the park. Since then they have enlarged it even beyond that.

Redd: How much money did you help raise?

Johnson: We, the Sierra Club, raised monies for 67,000 acres. All told they raised enough money to add 97,000 acres. I can't recall the exact figure. One of the donations that I'll always remember occurred during a Friday night meeting at the cafeteria in Los Angeles. I was the head of the committee to raise the funds, and one little old lady had a glass of water for dinner so she could give twenty-five cents to the fund. There were others that gave twenty-five dollars, and such as that. The actual cost of the land was not based on its value; it was based on the filing fee which was so much an acre and that was only to process the papers. I forget the figure, how much an acre. At the present time, BLM (Bureau of Land Management) charges $2.50 an acre, but at that time it was considerably less than a dollar an acre.

The Desert Protective Council's Work

Redd: I wanted to ask you about the Desert Protective Council. I understand you were executive director.

Johnson: Yes, in 1973 and 1974.

Redd: What is the Desert Protective Council?

Johnson: It's an organization that was originally formed for the protection of the deserts, the mountains within the deserts and the ranges surrounding the deserts--for their preservation and protection. Somewhere here I have one of their publications, El Pisano.

Redd: You were elected to be executive director?

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: How many members do they have?

Johnson: Oh, at the time that I was the executive director, they had around four hundred members. At one time they had as many as nine hundred. It was organized in 1955. I had gotten an invitation to come to the organization meeting. When I went down to the meeting with the directions that they had given to me, I couldn't find it. They had changed the location of the organization meeting and I didn't show up. If I had, I would have been a charter member. So it was six months later or something like that I joined. Then from 1963 to 1965 I was on the Board of Directors of the Desert Protective Council, and I was the Treasurer of the Desert Protective Council for those three years.

Redd: What conservation battles have they been active in?

Johnson: The biggest conservation fight that they got into was in 1964; The army had a big maneuver. They staged a war where Arizona was invading California, a mock war over the rights to the waters of the Colorado River. The army did very considerable damage to several million acres of the Mojave Desert from the river--to a hundred miles from the river. So the Desert Protective Council got out a lot of letters to the army. The army was going to come back the next year and have a repeat.

With the furor that had been raised, helped out by an article that appeared as a special four-page article, in the Southern Sierran (the Angeles Chapter newsletter). The article was called "Desert Strike" or "Desert Stricken," and it pointed out with photographs some of the material that had been left and the damage that had been done. The chapter sent that issue of the Southern Sierran to all of our congressmen and to the army and to the head generals, and it caused quite a stir. The Desert Protective Council in conjunction with the Angeles Chapter put out such a bunch of critical information that thirty days before the exercises were to begin the next year, the army cancelled it and held it in Fort Benning, Georgia, instead of coming here. You

might say that was one of the big conservation battles that the DPC (Desert Protective Council) was involved in.

Of course, we worked with the Desert Protective Council and several of the other organizations, San Bernardino County Museum, and some of the people out in the Needles area where they had some mock battles and left some debris. They left some live ammunition around in places and said they went back and cleaned it all up, but then somebody would go out and find several bandoliers of machine gun ammunition. They were blanks, but still they were live ammunition. So the army decided that they wouldn't hold another one. Of course, the first invasion of the desert was by Patton in 1942. That's where he trained his tank corps for the African campaign.

Redd: In the Mojave, right?

Johnson: In the Mojave Desert and the scars from his tanks are still visible, very visible in places.

The other desert conservation campaign has been--not only the DPC, but also the Sierra Club and the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs--involvement in preventing the building of a highway through Coyote Canyon in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Now one of the projects--it's a program, not a battle or anything--that the Desert Protective Council has, is the buying up of inholdings scattered throughout the park. Every once in a while somebody comes up and finds out that they have an inholding. They get a tax bill and so they say, "Oh, gee, this is desert land. Maybe it might be valuable." Word comes to the ABC committee, as we call it, the Anza-Borrego Committee of the DPC. The state park people alert the committee or they find out by other ways that this inholding is for sale. So they have this program of buying them up, and then when they get them, they turn it over and give it to the state. And I think that they latest figure I have seen is that over the years they have purchased around three thousand acres all together.

The two or three most important ones were three forty-acre tracts down in the Carrigo Gorge area that had water. One of them had a seep, and two of them actually had flowing springs. They were able to buy this 120 acres at a figure of around twelve thousand dollars. They didn't have the money, so one of the members of the board went on the mortgage for the land so as to get it. Then Devereux Butcher, from Virginia, an old time conservationist, gave them around five to six thousand dollars in 1975. There was also some money that they had received from the estate of Josephine Spates, an old Sierra Club member who lived in Newport Beach for quite a while. She gave the Desert Protective Council 5 percent

of her estate. They got two amounts, the first settlement was around seven thousand dollars plus a little, and the second one was about the same. They used some of that Spates money, along with Devereux Butcher's money, and cleared it off. That also now has been turned over to the state. That was essentially the work of the Desert Protection Council.

Education, Career, Club Recognition

Redd: Oh, that's good! that's great! I understand you have a life membership in the club.

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: How did you get that?

Johnson: The Executive Committee of the Southern California Section, when I had to quit the Harwood building project, purchased this life membership and presented it to me for the work that I had done for the chapter and particularly on rebuilding Harwood Lodge.

Redd: Why did you have to quit the Harwood Lodge project?

Johnson: In the fall of 1951 Neal developed polio. I happened to be unemployed temporarily at the time and the shock of him developing polio reacted, and my thyroid became toxic, not malignant, but toxic. In other words, it became out of balance and was pumping thyroid extract into my body a whole lot faster than I could use it up. I had to have it removed and that then put me out of service for a while. So I had to quit Harwood.

I was on the board of directors also at the time. I got over the operation all right, and I attended the board of directors meeting Labor Day at Tuolumne Lodge. The only thing was that every time I moved my head I had to hold it to keep the pain down. Whenever I pulled my neck muscles, the muscles hurt because in order to remove it, they had to cut my throat from ear to ear. I just had to quit the Harwood project. It was that fall that they give it to me.

Redd: I need some details on your career. I know you're an engineer. You're sort of a self-made man.

Johnson: No, self-educated, if that's what you want to call it, because I didn't ever go to college. I took a lot of college extension courses in the subjects that I needed and not a lot of the things

that are required in some of the college courses. At that time the University of California required 136 units, and I accumulated about seventy. Some of the courses were graduate courses, courses that I needed, courses that took a lot of night work to make the grade.

Redd: You're a structural engineer?

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: Where have you worked:

Johnson: I worked most of the time for the state of California, but I had my own office for awhile. I worked for Ralph M. Parsons Co. I worked for Fluor Corporation, for Pasco Steel, for Rademaker Engineering, and for Donald R. Warren Company. Oh yes, also the City of Los Angeles Building Department.

Redd: Has this been primarily bridge construction?

Johnson: No, not bridge; it's been building construction.

Redd: What did you do during the war years?

Johnson: I spent three years, six months, and one day as a Seabee.

Redd: Did your Sierra Club experience enter into any of that?

Johnson: No.

IV SIERRA CLUB INTERNAL AFFAIRS, 1930s-1950s

Attempt to Disband the Los Angeles Chapter, 1945

Redd: Are you familiar with the "Save the Sierra Club" battle during the forties, when the Angeles Chapter tried to control the board of the Sierra Club and then they were subsequently. . .

Johnson: I beg your pardon, but the board of directors tried to control the Southern California Chapter of the Sierra Club. It was the other way around!

Redd: Okay, why don't you set it straight?

Johnson: All right, I'll set it straight. The story is this. The Ski Mountaineers were a section of the Southern California Chapter. They were raising money and the money was supposed to be, according to Sierra Club rules, chapter rules, under the control of the chapter. The Ski Mountaineers went out and bought some equipment for publishing The Mugelnoos. The chapter had also bought the same piece of equipment. They (the executive committee) felt that the Ski Mountaineers should have at least consulted the executive committee before spending the money. They asked the chairman of the Ski Mountaineers for an accounting. The chairman of the Ski Mountaineers refused to make an accounting of their monies. How the board got into it was this: the chairman of the Ski Mountaineers at that time, Nathan Clark, was the brother of a member of the board of directors.

The chapter executive committee said that they were going to have control of the monies or they were going to disband the Ski Mountaineers. Of course, the chairman of the Ski Mountaineers being a brother of a member of the board of directors, it went to the board of directors and they had one very disturbing meeting in San Francisco. It was a December meeting in 1945. At that time they had their annual dinner in December, and they'd have a board of directors meeting, and then their annual banquet that evening.

The motion was made to disband the Southern California Chapter. The president (Duncan McDuffie) was able to have the motion defeated by one vote, his vote, and kept us from separating, but feelings were running very high. I happened to be at that meeting.

Redd: Did you hold an office then?

Johnson: No. Let's see, that was in 1945. No, I didn't hold an office then, that I recall, because I don't think we got into the Harwood rebuilding until 1949. I don't recall having held an office at that time.

Redd: Were you around during the Will Colby controversy when he resigned in 1949?

Johnson: I don't recall too much about that. As far as controversy, I don't know what you mean by that.

Redd: Well, the younger people in the club were more strict environmentalists and he was more for opening up the national forests and the roads and that sort of thing.

Johnson: No, I don't recall any particular controversy, and I didn't think that he resigned over that. I thought that he resigned because he was getting too old, and he felt that there should be some newer blood. He'd been the secretary of the Sierra Club since 1902, and he felt that some newer person should take over.

Electioneering For the Board of Directors, 1936

Redd: You mentioned controversy about a club election. Why don't you tell me about that?

Johnson: All right. I was always interested in the chapter and right from the beginning I began leading some of the trips. At one time the Sierra Club was San Francisco and Berkeley; anything south of the Tehachapi was cow country. Then the people in southern California decided that they should have a group down here and asked the Sierra Club to form a chapter or allow chapters. The first project of the Southern California chapter was to build Muir Lodge. They invited John Muir, who was president of the Sierra Club at that time, to come down to dedicate the lodge, but he couldn't make it. When I came into the chapter and into the club in 1930, late 1930, I liked the group and became quite hike-oriented with them.

Then the club, under one of the previous presidents, decided that we should have some sections. One of the first sections was the Ski Mountaineers, and then the Rock Climbing Section was formed later. Also there was a section that tried to encourage the younger people, especially those of college age, to get interested in the Sierra Club, and they formed a junior section.

(At this time a) member of the board, Ernest Dawson, came to the chapter committee and encouraged them to put up a young man for the board of directors as a candidate from the chapter. After the executive committee meeting, some of them got to talking it over and wished they hadn't been--what they considered pressured--into this. The one person that they should have put up, they didn't put up, and they decided that they should do something about it. Well, some of them didn't like to be the one to lead it. They would do the work and all that but they didn't want to be known as the leader. So I volunteered to be the so-called leader of the group and the idea was that everybody seemed to feel that this person that they had been induced to name as a candidate for the board of directors didn't know much about the Sierra Club and shouldn't be on the board. There was a possibility that he might be elected.

Redd: What year was this?

Johnson: Oh, I can't remember whether this was 1935 or not. (1936). You can find out from one of the old bulletins because Francis Tappaan was one of the members of the board at that time. He is the son of Clair Tappaan for whom the Tappaan Lodge at Norden is named, an old-time judge from southern California and one that was instrumental in getting the chapter formed originally.

Anyway, the scheme was that we would get up a letter campaign to members of the chapter and that the mailing list would be made available. We would send letters to all of those who were not active. Those who were active around, whom we could talk to, we would tell what to do on the vote. We got considerable support from the active members, but those who were not active, we sent a letter campaign. I volunteered to be the one to be the so-called ringleader, and signed all the letters. We sent this mailing out and said that we recommended that the people vote for southern California candidates--at that time you could write in--and we nominated William J. Murray the chairman of our executive committee by petition so that we got him on the ballot. He was the one that we wanted. So this letter campaign went out. In order to keep from offending people it asked them

to vote for the southern California candidates and especially Mr. Murray. We had, I think, around eight hundred members down here at that time in the chapter, and there were, probably, all together three thousand members in the Sierra Club.

We got out the biggest vote that was ever brought out in southern California, and lo and behold, Francis Tappaan was number one on the ballot, even ahead of Bill Colby who, at that time, had always been number one on the ballot. That stirred up some feelings in the Bay Area, and some of that carried over into the 1945 disagreement.

Redd: Oh, I see.

Johnson: But after it was over with, I wrote to Bill Colby and told the story to him. I said that I took the full responsibility for what had happened. I got the nicest letter back from Bill Colby--I have it somewhere. It reads to the effect that he had heard some rumors of this, but he paid no attention to it because, after all, that was a local affair. As far as he was concerned it was nothing to worry about. I'll always appreciate Bill Colby's stand.

Then a corollary of that was that Mr. Tappaan was elected the president of the Sierra Club, and he fortified the opinions of the Berkeley-Bay Area about the cow town of Los Angeles. He was attending a meeting of the board of directors as the president and asked to be excused because he had to go to Berkeley to attend a football game between USC (University of Southern California) and the University of California. This did not set well with the rest of the board of directors, and some of them voiced their opinion quite strongly. I thought that maybe that would be a piece of interesting history that you would like.

Bay Area-Southern California Tensions

Redd: One thing you mentioned to me was about the Bay Area Sierra Club people being a little bit prejudiced against the southern California group. I understand you have an anecdote about hiking with the wife of one of the club directors.

Johnson: If you don't mind, I would like to give some background to this. The Sierra Club was formed in San Francisco, and originally the ninety-two members or something like that that formed the Sierra Club were of the elite from the University of California and from Stanford. That's how its been. John Muir had a reputation for his writings; the wilderness writings of John Muir are a

classic. So they looked on the Sierra Club as a vehicle of influence because Professor Colby or Professor LeConte, Professor this, Professor that, who knew people in Washington. Professor LeConte was the famous geologist, and Mr. Colby became a famous mining lawyer.

With the other famous professors they then started enlarging the club. They felt they had to have money to work with, so the professors talked their students into joining the club. The club was an elite organization of intellectuals, and in the early beginnings it was the writings of Muir, the advice of LeConte and others that gave the Sierra Club its influence. They could talk to Pinchot, and they could talk to Roosevelt. Teddy was a man that could be talked to. They had a prestige; however, to some extent their prestige may have been more in their own minds than actual.

As things progressed and as they started the High Trips and tried to get people in the club, although then people came from Berkeley or were students, they didn't land there; many came to southern California. Members of the club that first started it here in southern California were artists like Phil Bernays and Clair Tappaan, who was a superior court judge. They were all persons of known prestige and influence. Then we started bringing people in through the outdoor activities of the Sierra Club--which the club held to get the people into, to get the influence in order to spread the doctrine. This "education of the people" is on the creed of the Sierra Club. When we educated the people, they started coming in.

In southern California the people that joined the club were the people that liked to hike and get out in the outdoors. Yes, (in northern California) they would go over to Mount Tamalpais or to Diablo on weekends and hike up, but their activities were generally the summer High Trip activities. Down here we had hundreds of miles of trails that we could get to, and we could drive in all kinds of the weather. The people in the club down here became the lesser and the lower, the surveyors or the chainmen and the teachers and pattern makers and such as that. We didn't have any professors because all the professors were in Berkeley or Palo Alto.

Yes, we had a little university down here known as the University of Southern California, but it didn't amount to much until they got a fellow by the name of Howard Jones to come along and make a football team. Then they started going places. Also, the University of California decided that they had to have a southern branch because they didn't have the facilities or the room at Berkeley. They moved down here in 1923. They used the old normal school campus out on Vermont Avenue for the first

classes. Then a big real estate outfit, to advance the development of west Los Angeles, gave four hundred acres to the state of California if they would build a university. Well, of course, we didn't have any professors down here. The university was a music school and a dental school and they didn't have any LeContes.

Of course, the federal reserve bank and all the federal regional offices were in San Francisco. Therefore, the people in the Bay Area looked down upon southern California because they thought we were a bunch of hicks down here. In 1920 I remember San Francisco then was the biggest city in California, up until 1920. In the 1920 census Los Angeles became a few thousand larger than San Francisco, and you should have heard, well, seen the jealousy that this brought about with people. Here was this cow town down here in southern California; it's suddenly getting more people. So the people in the Sierra Club looked down on the people in the Sierra Club that were from southern California. That is the background that brought this up.

You had to have a name even to be considered for the board of directors or go on the High Trips.* How Clair Tappaan made it was that he was a superior court judge. He went on High Trips, he was a good talker, he was a good story teller. He would tell stories around the campfire so that people from San Francisco got to know him. So Mr. Tappaan was an acceptable person. He was one of the few, one of the exceptions that proves the rule, so to speak, though the Southern California Chapter was looked down on.

Now, the funny part of it was that some of those older ones who went on the High Trips belonged to the Sierra Club, yes. They lived down here, but they found that there were enough people in this area that wanted to get together, wanted to meet one another, that they decided that we should have a chapter of the Sierra Club, not a new club, but a chapter of the Sierra Club. So the board of directors said we might have a chapter.

Then the chapter started doing things. They went up the canyon back up here, the big Santa Anita Canyon, and they built

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*See Southern Sierrans I (Sierra Club Oral History Project) for High Trip recollections of southern California members and further comments on tension between northern and southern California.

this lodge. Then they took over an old mining claim up on the saddle at the head of the waters of San Antonio Canyon, an old miner's cabin up there. They took that over and made that into a lodge that they could stay in when they wanted to climb Baldy. When that burned down, Aurelia Harwood, who was fairly wealthy and well known in San Francisco, decided that we had to replace that. She is the one that encouraged it and put up considerable money to build that lodge, Harwood Lodge. Then skiing came along and the skiers decided that we should have a ski hut. So there was a lot of jealousy of the southern Sierra Club members because these cow town bumpkins down here were getting out and doing things.

Now that leads up to the thing that you wanted to talk on. With the younger ones when I came into the Sierra Club, that feeling was starting to erode to some extent, but we weren't conservation-minded down here. We were more interested in going out for weekends, so that was another thing that we were looked down on for.

Another thing that happened was that the people of the Sierra Club down here would go out on hikes, and say, "Well, let's have dinner Friday evening and plan our trips." The Friday night dinners were organized. In those days many people only had Sundays off, and some of them like school teachers and some of the lawyers and professional people would have the Saturday off, but some of them didn't get anything but Sundays off. Then when we came along, we got off at noon on Saturday. That Friday night dinner was the logical thing, and it was a growing concern. We would have a hundred to two hundred members come to the Friday night dinners. You might not be going on a trip, but you'd go down to the Friday night dinner so you could see a friend. They tried to copy that up in San Francisco Bay Area and it flopped on them. That was another thing that created a little jealousy.

Then the annual banquet, the Sierra Club banquet, was held in December every year. Down here they decided, "We can't get up there, so we'll have a banquet down here, but we won't interfere with the San Francisco banquet. We'll have ours in October." And they did. Finally beginning in the early thirties automobiles became quite prevalent and people started traveling more and more. The members on the board of directors from southern California went up to the banquet, but then some of the other members down here got interested. They started going to the banquets, and that pleased them up there very well, that we thought enough of the Sierra Club that we'd come up there to the banquets. Of course, it would only be three or four, maybe five, maybe six, and that pleased them, but they still said, "Why don't more of them come up?" Well, they

had their own banquet down there and what did they come up here for, just to, well, but this is the Sierra Club, that kind of thinking or attitude.

As I said in the beginning, in the thirties, some of us started driving up. They started the five-day week and that helped a little bit because you could drive up Friday night and rest up Saturday morning and then go to the banquet and then drive home Sunday. So some of us began meeting the younger ones, the Dick Leonards and the Dave Browers. Then the rock climbing brought some of us together. The younger ones didn't have that attitude, but the older generations still did carry that feeling.

One time I couldn't get off the time, thirty days, to take a High Trip. They divided it up so you could go the first two weeks or the second two weeks. In the thirties, why sometimes you didn't have enough money to spend a hundred and twenty-five dollars to take in a two-week High Trip. You could get together ten or fifteen dollars for food and maybe enough money to get a sleeping bag or make your own, or something like that, so a lot of us got to back-packing ourselves. It was very easy to get into the Sierra by going up Highway 95 or what was called the Sierra Highway at that time. It was on one of those backpacking trips that I made a point of meeting the High Trip and hiking with it for a couple of days. Two days and a half actually I was with the High Trip, almost three days.

In one of those high meadows up in the Kings River high country I was hiking along with my pack, and this lady was sitting alongside the trail. She spoke, I spoke and so for an hour or more we hiked along, and I had a very delightful conversation. She was friendly as all get out. We were up in that wilderness, and she was glad I had come up and hiked into this area, backpacked just to be in there, as one of us, as a member of the Sierra Club. Then she said, "Well, you want to get down to the camp and I'd like to sit down and rest once in a while. Why don't you just go on ahead and don't hold back for me?" I said I was in no hurry but I went on two or three miles or so without her.

Then I went to the banquet that December, and in those days you wore formal. I went to the banquet, and I saw this lady who happened to be the wife of one of the members of the board of directors. I thought that we'd had such a delightful talk along the trail, and she was a very friendly woman, that I would go up and introduce myself and recall that we hiked together on the trail. I was flabbergasted at the reaction. "Oh, how do you do! I'm so pleased to meet you, Mr. Johnson." She turned her back and walked off because I was from Los Angeles, I guess.

Redd: That's too bad.

Johnson: That illustrates the depth of bad feeling between the Bay Area and southern California. I thought that little story would be the best way to illustrate it.

Redd: To go on with that a little bit more, in our last interview, you talked about a board of directors meeting in which the board of directors almost voted to abolish the Angeles Chapter over the control of the Ski Mountaineers' funds. Do you remember much about that meeting? Could you tell me about that meeting?

Johnson: Yes, that was the December 1945 meeting. There were six of us, I think, that went up from here. We took some time off in the morning to rest up because of the long drive; some of us didn't want to go to the Sierra Club, but I did so a couple of us went up to the Sierra Club Board of Directors meeting. When we got there, it was quite, well, you could feel it, the atmosphere. There was something up. Here was a discussion going on about outlawing, unchartering or taking away the charter of the Southern California Chapter of the Sierra Club because the chapter wanted to control the Ski Mountaineers Section. This was a section of the chapter and this money has been collected by them for their operation. The question--what does the executive committee of the chapter, what business do they have of controlling or trying to control this money? The feelings were running rather hot and the discussion was quite strong on both sides, back and forth. One of the members of the board of directors, a very well known architect from Pasadena, couldn't take it any longer. He got up and said, "All right, gentlemen, if you want to disband the Los Angeles Chapter, you have the right to do it, but if you do, I am going to resign from the Board of Directors of the Sierra Club and everybody is going to know why." They came down to the vote and the vote was a tie vote. So it was up to the president, it was his last meeting, and why I know it was 1945 is because of who was the president at that time, an elderly man. He was so shaken by this thing that his hands were, ordinarily they didn't, but he was so filled with emotion, that his hands were shaking. With a tie vote, it pleased him, I guess, because he decided to keep the chapter. So it was Duncan McDuffie that kept the club together.

A Closed Circle on the Board of Directors

Redd: Is there anything we might have left out about these issues?

Johnson: There was one thing that I maybe should have mentioned because it is part of the history, and it was at one time a vital or vivid part of the interplay between north and south. It got to be a joke down here, and was called the "father-son, brother-brother, husband and wife." In other words, a director would pass away or not run for reelection. Next year his son would be put on the ballot, and his name would elect him. And he would go on the board. That father-son happened twice, and then there was one brother and brother, and there was one husband and wife.

Down here it was felt that it was unfair to the others who worked hard for the club who wanted to do something for the club. They were generally ambitious people or they wouldn't be in there doing things (in expectation) that they could look forward to the recognition of officership, either on the executive committee of the chapter and hopefully the chairman of the chapter. (Everyone thinks) gee, maybe I can make the board some day, and then there was always, gee, if you make the board and you're liked and stay on the board, you might become president. Well, this father-son thing was kind of disheartening to that type of person.

Redd: Because no one else would get a chance.

Johnson: Yes, and then if there was a vacancy when someone decided they wouldn't rerun, wouldn't run or wanted to retire, there was always somebody that would be put up from the young aspirants from the Bay Area who knew the board of directors and knew the influential people of the club. Since the Bay Chapter was the largest chapter in the club at that time, they are the ones that would get the nod over persons from other parts of California. Other people in San Jose, Sacramento, from Riverside and Santa Barbara, San Diego may have been just as qualified. Their knowledge of what the club was doing and thinking was just as good, or maybe even better than some of the others, but they didn't have a chance.

Politics and Religion in the Sierra Club

Redd: You were just telling me about the controversy when Sierra Club people were trying to identify the club with the Communists.

Johnson: I wouldn't say that the people were trying to associate the Sierra Club with the Communists or the Communist party. There was, at that time in the mid to late thirties, a good deal of public

sentiment, anti-Communist public sentiment, and anyone who was suspected of being a Communist was looked down upon publicly. A lot of people didn't want to be associated socially with such people. There was some fear and some if it was real fear, not put-on fear, that there might be a conspiracy to infiltrate the Sierra Club by the Communist party. That public aversion to communism at the time made it so important.

Redd: How did this get started? What happened exactly? I'm a little unclear on the whole story.

Johnson: I am not sure how it got started. There were some rumors, like in all organizations. There is a certain amount of gossip. There are tattletales, and somebody is always looking for a juicy piece of gossip. It's been so long ago, in the mid to late thirties, and I don't recall all the details. I do know that, when one member of the Sierra Club Board of Directors resigned from the board, he stated in his letter of resignation that the time he spent or had to spend as a member of the Los Angeles area Communist Party Central Committee precluded him from continuing on the board of directors. Of course, that letter then became public notice to Sierra Club members, and it was indeed a very shocking incident. Many, many persons were shocked that this person, who had been well liked and very influential in the Sierra Club, should turn out to be an admitted member of the Communist party.

Redd: Now this was about 1936?

Johnson: This was early 1937.* His son had a few years previously graduated

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*The following interchange was between the editor and Mr. Johnson, when Mr. Johnson reviewed the transcript:

Ed.: Did the rumors and gossip circulating in the mid-thirties force or encourage this member of the board to resign?

ABJ: No. He had just been elected as club president in May 1936.

Ed.: How widespread was the knowledge of this individual's affiliation with the Communist Party?

ABJ: Not.

(continued)

from a university and had gone on a trip around the world. He went to England to study the profession of his father and spent some time in England and went over to Russia. Of course, this was after 1933 when FDR had sanctified relations with Communist Russia. This person spent two or three months in Russia and went on some outings with Russians of his sport. That is what put some suspicions in some minds as to why this person might be a Communist. Of course, when his father resigned from the board, why that confirmed the suspicions. However, the club as a whole didn't apparently hold anything against the family because his son was immediately elected to the board of directors for the following year.

Redd: Was all this controversy in the thirties linked up with the controversy during the McCarthy hearings?

Johnson: It was prelude to that. It was during the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings that the FBI was setting up the practice of infiltrating cells. It came out in the Los Angeles area public press when H.U.A.C. was holding public hearings in Los Angeles, that an FBI agent identified these persons as being current members of a certain cell. It was the West Los Angeles cell of the Communist party.

The former member of the Board of Directors was identified as a current member of the Communist party. He had been president of the Sierra Club also, in the 1930s. Now his son was not identified, but his son-in-law and his daughter were identified as current members of that cell.

Redd: I wanted to ask you about your religious background. I know some people that are active in the club have maybe been members of a church that stresses that kind of thing, the outdoors, or love of nature or something like that.

(continued)

Ed: How did his letter of resignation become public notice? Did you see it?

ABJ: No, I did not see it. However, when a long time and very respected member, the president of the Sierra Club at the time, would suddenly resign from the board, one did not need to see the letter to become acquainted with its contents.

Johnson: I have never been a religious man. I would classify myself as a Protestant. I believe in the Christian doctrine. I have never been a member of a church. I went to church meetings when I was young, and my parents went. They didn't belong to any particular sect. They went to Baptist meetings or Methodist meetings.

My wife was very religious and she belonged to the Church of Christ. She never tried to get me to go because she knew that it would be more or less useless because I had my own way of worshiping nature. In other words, I worshiped the out-of-doors and worshiped nature. I didn't need the halls of a church to inform me of what nature was. Because of that, I have never held with some of the religious principles that see God as a physical interpretation, as so many people present him, as a reincarnation of the human frame. I could never stand that. I could lie in a sleeping bag and look at the stars at night, and realize and feel that there was some force much more powerful and superior to anything on earth and worship that force without personifying it into any diety of the eight major dieties of our eight major religions.

Redd: Have you noticed different religions having an influence on the Sierra Club, or particular churches influencing the club?

Johnson: No, no, because the members of the Sierra Club, as I've associated with them, never questioned one another's religious beliefs. We weren't interested in one another's religious beliefs. We were interested in their companionship, their fellowship and being with them in the out-of-doors or socially.

Now when they went on the High Trips and in some of the Base Camps, they would have their religious services, nondenominational, but there was no compulsion on those trips of anyone having to attend the services. They could or could not, and some of them did not and some of them did. On local weekend hikes or excursions there was no attempt at any religious exercise.

The Long Beach Group

Redd: I also wanted to ask you about the Long Beach group. What was your involvement with it?

Johnson: There are a number of groups in the chapter. The first group that was formed was the Pasadena group because there were a number of people who lived in the Pasadena area that felt to get down to the Friday night dinners was too difficult. They could go over to one of the playgrounds in the Arroyo Seco where they had a meeting hall

and could get together once a month or biweekly. So they started meeting unofficially at some day during the week with a small group and then became known as the Pasadena group. Then other areas, West Los Angeles and Long Beach and Orange County, took up this same idea.

Now when I came back from the service for a few months I was living with friends in Long Beach who were members of the Long Beach group. They had ten or fifteen persons that would meet. They induced me, of course, to go down to the meetings. When a new chairmanship came up I was made the chairman of the group for a few months. Then I (we) rented an apartment in Long Beach and lived there for about a year and a half before the house that we had bought was completed. So during that time I was in the Long Beach group because of the people down there that I'd become acquainted with in the club. They would meet down there some evening during the week, but never on a Friday because those who wanted to go up to the Friday night dinners would go.

I was working in Los Angeles and so was my wife, Mary. Instead of going home, we'd go over to the Friday night dinner and meet our friends there and then go on home. When the Long Beach group would meet once a month, I would, of course, go to their meetings because we knew the people. That would have been from 1945 to 1947 because I got out of the service in September 1945 and we moved to the new house in April of 1947.

IV CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP, 1950s - 1960s

Chapter and Club Offices

Redd: What year were you elected to the board of directors?

Johnson: I was elected to the board of directors in 1951.

Redd: Now, had you held any other office besides the Harwood committee office before then?

Johnson: Oh yes, I was chairman of the chapter at the time.

Redd: Well, I should get that first then. When were you elected chairman?

Johnson: I was elected chairman in November, 1950, and then was elected to the board of directors in April 1951.

Redd: Why do you think you were elected? Did you run? Did you campaign to be chapter chairman?

Johnson: Yes. I was elected. At that time the nominating committee would put up the candidates for the ballot. It was because of the work that I had done on Harwood. They felt that I should be on the executive committee of the chapter as a reward for the work I'd done on Harwood reconstruction. That was the reason I was put on. John Banks had been the previous chairman, and he felt that I should take over. He was retiring from the chapter executive committee, and so I think that he did some work with some of the members in favor of my election as the chairman of the chapter. It was a little unusual to come on to the executive committee and become chairman the same year.

Redd: What were the main directions of the chapter during that period? What were you involved in as chapter chairman?

Johnson: Up until that time the chapter did not have a conservation committee. Yes, we did conservation work. We worked on Kings Canyon National Park, and we worked on the Anza-Borrego deal, but we didn't per se have a committee. The club had a conservation committee but not until 1945 and I don't know whether the Bay Chapter had a conservation committee or not. Someone (Alfred Gustus) called me on the phone one night and suggested that we form a conservation committee down here for the conservation of local areas and so I said it sounds like a good idea. I told him, "You're appointed chairman."

Then later on the conservation committee of the Sierra Club took over all of the conservation work and more or less overran the local chapters. This was done because there were instances where the local groups wouldn't quite see it the way that the club would. They might go to a hearing and say something different from the position of the club; so the club decided that they would set the policy and direct the local conservation committees.

Redd: What are some instances when that happened?

Johnson: I couldn't recall any particular incident.

Redd: Let's go on then to your being elected to the board of directors. Now, how did that happen?

Johnson: I was put on the ballot by the local executive committee. When there was a vacancy a new person would be elected. I was the one that had enough votes to make the vacancy.

Redd: That was a vote by the general membership?

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: Did you have a platform or anything like that?

Johnson: We didn't politic in those days.

Redd: You were just well known enough?

Johnson: Yes.

Sierra Club Reorganization and Issues of the 1950s

Redd: Now, I understand you were on the board from 1951 to 1954.

Johnson: I was on it for three years, yes.

Redd: What were the major things that the board was working on during those years?

Johnson: That was the beginning of the wilderness concept. One thing the directors did was to change the Sierra Club from a club to a conservation organization. They elected Dave Brower, who was then a member of the board of directors, as executive director. He then resigned his position on the board to take over as executive director. It was a six months' trial and Dave felt that he could increase the membership of the club enough to pay for his salary.

Dave felt that we needed more members and we needed more monies for carrying on the work of the Sierra Club, because at that time the big conservation fights that have developed since then were just emerging. He felt that we had to have more members so as to have more clout. Also he wanted to have more members to be able to have someone permanently working on conservation and not just a secretary writing letters in his spare time.

Redd: Was there any haggling back and forth when Dave Brower was made executive director?

Johnson: No. There was some hesitancy by some members of the board about the idea. They thought it would change the Sierra Club, which it did, actually. This action changed the Sierra Club radically, not instantly, but over the years. I don't know where the suggestion came from, but he had some very strong sponsors. They felt that if it was successful--if he could increase the membership enough to pay for his salary and his expenses--that it would be well worth the try and well worth the effort. I don't know whether the vote was unanimous or not. You'd have to look at the minutes of the directors' meeting.

At that time, most of the work of the Sierra Club was on forestry and forestry practices. Clearcutting was one of the things that they were against, and they were against some of the other Forest Service practices. Of course, not all of the members of the board of directors saw alike, either. Tioga Pass Road, I think, was one of the issues at that time. Of course, the Sierra Club was against the high-speed road. They fought it, but they weren't successful because there were those in the Park Service that wanted it; also, the Bureau of Public Roads was the one that was building it.

One of the things that the Sierra Club was opposed to was a lot of these Forest Service highways for getting out lumber. In other words, the government building highways into the U.S. National Forests for the purpose of bringing out the logs, making it more economical for the lumbering interests to get out logs. Then

there would be this high-speed highway into (the National Forest) causing overcrowding of the area by recreationists.

Redd: Have you been involved with any of the Sierra Club publications?

Johnson: My wife (Mary E. Johnson) was the editor of the Southern Sierran (newsletter of the Angeles Chapter) for a couple of years.

Redd: But you haven't written anything for the Sierra Club publications?

Johnson: As I recall I wrote one article for the (Sierra Club) Bulletin on the state riding and hiking trail, and I wrote most of the editorials that went into the Southern Sierran while Mary was editor. Then there was the special I prepared on the desert war in 1964, called "Desert Strike," or "Desert Stricken."

Redd: I know the Sierra Club is involved with the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs and that it joined the federaion in 1934. Could you tell me what the federation does? It's mainly a conservation organization, isn't it?

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: Why did you join the federation?

Johnson: I liked the idea of the federation, and they had a convention down here in 1955; I attended it and liked what I saw.

Redd: Now, you're vice president of the federation, aren't you?

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: Were you elected by the general membership because they knew you?

Johnson: The only members of the federation actually are member clubs. They meet once a year at an annual convention and then the delegates to the convention elect their officers.

The State Riding and Hiking Trails Advisory Committee

Redd: I understand you were on different advisory boards also, pertaining to riding and hiking.

Johnson: That wasn't in the Sierra Club; that was for the state of California. I was on the state of California Riding and Hiking

Trails Advisory Committee to the State Park Commission. I was on that committee for twenty years (starting in February, 1947).

Redd: Did you ask to join that or were you chosen by the state?

Johnson: The original setup of the committee was that there would be two from northern California, two from central California and two from southern California. There was a vacancy that occurred on the committee from southern California, and the chairman of the Park Commission asked the president of the Sierra Club (to nominate someone). The legislation said that members should be appointed by the Park Commission from lists provided by interested organizations. Up until that time they'd all been horsemen from the California Horsemen's Association. So the chairman of the Park Commission asked the president of the Sierra Club to recommend somebody, not a horseman, from southern California. The president asked one of the directors from southern California to find somebody to recommend.

I was at a Friday night dinner and Phil Bernays saw me and called me over and said, "Would you read this letter?" It was a letter from the president of the Sierra Club, Bestor Robinson, to Phil asking Phil if he could recommend anybody. I read the letter and said, "Phil, do you have anybody in mind?" He said, "How about you?" I said that I would, and he sent it to Bestor, and Bestor sent it on to Joe Knowland, who was the chairman of the Park Commission at that time, so I was appointed. That's how I became a member.

Redd: What did you do? Did you recommend trail improvements?

Johnson: At that time, a riding and hiking trail was proposed. (It was to be) an almost two thousand mile loop to start at the Mexican border and to go to the Oregon border through the Sierra and the Cascades and across the Siskiyous, then down the Pacific Coast Range, to connect the loop here in Los Angeles County. The committee was advising the Park Commission on where to locate the trail and what the trail rules should be and how the trail should be managed, and such as that.

Later on, in Reagan's Administration, they changed the name from the Riding and Hiking Trails to the California Recreational Trails Advisory Committee and increased the membership on it and made it somewhat autonomous. In other words, they don't have to go through the Park Commission anymore for everything. They have their own financing. (The committee functions are) to create a system of recreational trails and to include all kinds of recreational trails instead of just riding and hiking trails. There

are bicycle paths and motorcycle trails and whatnot. In fact, the legislation now allows them to develop off-road vehicle parks, as units of the park system. There's one proposed--I don't know how far it's gone--down near Ocotillo Wells in part of San Diego and Imperial Counties.

Redd: Many times the Sierra Club is against that sort of thing. How do you feel about it personally?

Johnson: There have to be a certain number of recreational trails, especially for horse and bicycles. Some of them are all right, but some of them I don't know. If you could get certain of the recreational elements to stay in certain designated areas, why, it would take a lot of the pressure off of other areas. Now, as far as the locations of some of them are concerned, that is where the controversy comes in.

Yes, I know that the Sierra Club has a lot of objections to some of them. One of the reasons why I left the board of directors of the club was the fact that I went along with the members of the trails committee in developing a trail up in Marin County, up Mount Tamalpais. That trail was bitterly opposed by one member of the Sierra Club who later became a member of the board of directors. Try as I could, I couldn't convince him that it wouldn't do any damage to the trails that they had been using up there to designate that particular trail as a riding and hiking trail. The number of horses that have been on that trail in the last twenty-five years could probably be counted on the fingers and toes of one person. It was due to his agitation, along with some others up in the area, that I was defeated for reelection on the board of directors.

Changes in Club Leadership and Structure

Redd: I wanted to ask you about different club members you've met. I know you've met a lot of the different chairmen and executive directors and some of the other outstanding personalities. Do you want to tell me anything about them or comment on any of them?

Johnson: There would be so many of them that I don't know just where to start. Yes, I know Dave Brower and Mike McCloskey who were the only two executive directors that the club has ever had. I got acquainted with Mike when he was the representative of the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs) from the Northwest area. Then he went from there to the Sierra Club and was one of Dave's assistants. Some of the other earlier ones I knew Norman Clyde,

Francis Farquhar, Walter Starr, Bill Colby, Dick Leonard, Lewis Clark. Lewis Clark succeeded me as president of the federation. Ed Wayburn and, I guess, Arthur Blake.

Redd: How did you feel about Dave Brower leaving the executive directorship?

Johnson: I had some strong feelings on it. I think that the board of directors played that wrong. They could still have had Dave. Dave did more for the Sierra Club than anyone that I know. Mike is carrying on pretty good, but he isn't the dynamic person that Dave was and is. If the board of directors had worked it right, they would have been able to control Dave, I think. Of course, they may not have been either; he may have left of his own accord rather than being forced out the way he was. I think they made a grave mistake when they did that.

Redd: You mentioned that you knew Weldon Heald. Now, I understand you won the Weldon Heald Award in 1961, the conservation award.

Johnson: Yes.

Redd: Why don't you tell me a little bit about your association with him.

Johnson: Well, there's not much. He was on the board of directors at the time of this "firing" of the Southern California Chapter of the Sierra Club in 1945 and was one of those who more or less told the board of directors that if they outlawed the chapter he was through. He was very well liked by the members of the board, and that had some influence on their final decision to put the executive committee "on probation," so to speak. Then in the next year, some of the feelings got quieted down a little bit.

Redd: Have you held political offices outside the club, in the city or county?

Johnson: No. I've never held any political office.

Redd: Why don't you tell me some of your opinions on changing the club's organization or policies or publications or what have you? I understand you have some strong opinions about the club.

Johnson: Yes. I don't like the fact that the club is not a club anymore. At one time it was a fairly closely knit group of people who liked to meet and be together. Now you know very few of the people and a lot of the members don't give a dang whether they know anybody or not. So many of them join the Sierra Club for

the conservation, or to help out with conservation, and a lot of them, that's all they're in the club for. They just think they're a help, and they're not.

Of course, society has changed too, in the last forty years. You'll notice that in some of the other clubs. The other clubs are having changes. The Roamer Hiking Club used to be a very viable hiking club; now it has very few younger members coming in, so that the membership is old. It will die out one of these days because they're not getting new members in.

Also, when the Forest Service closed the mountains back here (in the Angeles National Forest), they probably had good reason for it because they were too dangerous to allow many people into the area. But in the early days of the twenties and the thirties and even some of the early forties there weren't enough people going back into these hills to be of any danger to them. Those that did go in thought too much of the hills to be of any hazard to them. Yes, everybody carried matches; everybody carried a flashlight. If they got benighted, why, they might build themselves a fire to keep themselves warm, but they knew how to build a fire so that there wasn't any danger for them to be in there. But since the public has gotten so outdoors-minded they've had to close it. Well, that also has foreclosed a lot of the activities that the old Sierra Club did. The outdoor recreational patterns have changed.

The public has probably changed also, but it used to be that you could go down to a Friday night dinner and you would find fifty to a hundred people there every Friday night, sometimes a hundred and fifty and you knew almost all of them. If somebody new would come into the club, you would know they were new members. Now you go down to their dinners, I guess they have them once every two weeks, and they get twenty-five or thirty people. They changed the club from the local chapter to a bunch of groups.

Tule Elk Preservation

Redd: I understand that you were active in the preservation of the Tule Elk.

Johnson: Yes, I'm still a member of the Committee for the Preservation of the Tule Elk, and I was on their board of directors for several years. I knew Mr. Dow who moved the Tule Elk from Yosemite Valley

to the Owens Valley in 1923 or 1928. Dow owned the lumber yard, Dow Lumber Company, in Lone Pine. He also owned the Hotel Dow there. He'd heard that the park people had twenty-five Tule Elk taken out of the Tupman Buttonwillow Reserve and put on the floor of Yosemite Valley. They thought that that would give the people and visitors who use Yosemite a chance to see some wildlife, but it didn't work out very well. After two or three years the park people decided that they wanted to get rid of them, and they were available to anyone who would come and get them.

Dow heard about it and went over and made arrangements. He took two or three of his lumber trucks and built pens on them and brought, not all of them, but a nucleus of them from the Yosemite Valley and turned them loose on the floor of Owens Valley. They did very well there. Yosemite wasn't the right habitat for them. They were the valley elk. They roamed all of the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys in the early days. Then as the valleys were developed, they were driven out. They get their name from the fact that they could hide out in the tules or the brush along the streams and survive that way.

I don't know how many it was he took. There was six or eight head up there originally, and now they're up over four hundred. Some are killed off every once in a while. The California State Department of Fish and Game is responsible for them, and they've limited the population to, as I recall, four hundred and ninety. If it goes beyond that, why they eliminate them, and keep the count down. Now they have a herd they've established up at San Luis Island, up in the northern end of the San Joaquin Valley, west of Modesto.

Now they also are trying to get them introduced into Point Reyes. You see, they're a cousin of the Roosevelt Elk. That was native in the northern Californian area. They're the southern cousin of the Roosevelt Elk, so we thought that maybe they would work well at Point Reyes, and the program is to introduce some there. I don't know whether they've been introduced on Point Reyes yet or not, but that's part of the plan.

Dinosaur, Glen Canyon, and the Wilderness Act

Redd: Why don't you tell me about the struggle over the Wilderness Act?

Johnson: That grew out of the Dinosaur National Monument argument and the controversy over Glen Canyon. The Glen Canyon authorization was

a compromise from the Dinosaur or Echo Park fight in 1956.

Redd: Okay, yes.

Johnson: After the Glen Canyon Dam was under construction, in 1960 there was the big fight over Rainbow Bridge, and of course, I got into that. I was in the Dinosaur fight, as an officer of the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs in 1957. Then as president I got into it on the protection of Rainbow Bridge, and then, of course, out of that, we decided that we had to have the Wilderness Act. Howard Zahniser was the head of the Wilderness Society at that time and was able to get it introduced. Of course, Dave Brower of the Sierra Club was involved and the federation.

We were right in there with them. I went over to Phoenix and testified before the U.S. Senate field hearings on the Wilderness Bill and met Goldwater for the first time at the Phoenix meeting. Then in 1964 I was representing the federation at the Las Vegas House field hearings. I met Congressman John Saylor at the Las Vegas hearings. The congressman that was the head of the committee, the House subcommittee, was the congressman from Nevada, and of course he was having a heyday in Las Vegas. I remember that was January 1964 and I'd met Howard Zahniser before then, but that was the last time I saw him because he passed away shortly after that.

Redd: What were those hearings like?

Johnson: You petitioned to be heard, and you prepared your statements. Then those that they don't want to hear they always put down to the last. To start off with, of course they have limited time, so you're limited to five minutes. But the guys that are speaking the way that the chairman is believing--the chairman, the fellow from Nevada that was the chairman for the subcommittee, was against the Wilderness Act, so of course all the opponents got all the time they wanted.

They got the opposition first, and then they finally got down to us. I was reading my federation statement and right in the middle of a sentence was told that I was out of time. I fooled them. I stopped talking right then, and one of the members of the committee, a fellow from Oregon said, "Mr. Johnson, will you please finish that sentence? (Laughter). And then he got to ask a few questions. Zahnie got a kick out of it because generally they call time and people will ramble on. I did it intentionally, more or less, to turn the tables on them and made it ridiculous by redundance. I think I made the point very clear, much more clear than if I had rambled on.

A Structural Engineer Looks at Diablo Canyon and Nuclear Plant Safety

Redd: I know you have some strong opinions about Diablo Canyon. Do you want to talk about that?

Johnson: Yes, I do have. Diablo Canyon is the outgrowth of Bodega Bay or Bodega Head. The PG&E (Pacific Gas and Electric Company) was originally going to build this nuclear power plant on Bodega Head. They got permission, and they opened up the foundations for the reactor vessel, and here it was setting right across a fault. Nobody in his right mind, including PG&E, would ever build a reactor on a fault. Bodega Head is right on the San Andreas Fault. The fault comes across east of Point Reyes and goes up the bay and right out into the ocean.

Now there had been an argument as to whether that was a safe place before, and PG&E had said, yes, it was a safe place. But when they got in there and found that they were setting right on a fault, why that killed it.

So Dave Brower maneuvered and made some compromises with PG&E. Dave, and I think rightly so, knew that he couldn't stop the plant. It was going to be built, so okay, let's find the place that is out of the way. I don't know whether PG&E suggested that or not, but Dave agreed that, well okay, we will.* The fact of the matter is I think that they tried to get it moved from Bodega, or from the Bodega Head down there before, but PG&E wouldn't. So of course, when the thing fell through up there, why PG&E just moved down to Diablo Canyon.

Well, there's always some activist, some of them not too well versed at all, but they are willing to jump up on a soap box and wave their arms. After the Sierra Club had agreed to back the location at Diablo--at that time the Sierra Club was becoming more environmentally concerned. Up to that time, we were more wilderness concerned, not (concerned with) environmental issues. Somebody went down there and found there was some oaks at Diablo Canyon or some other kind of trees, and they raised a big fuss about Diablo Canyon not being right. Out of that controversy grew the club referendum (on the Diablo Canyon site approval). The question is

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*See interviews with David R. Brower and William E. Siri (Sierra Club Oral History Project Series) for a different factual account of Diablo Canyon event.

what could the Sierra Club do after they said it was okay? I think that the Club actually voted to (approve the Diablo Canyon site) although some of them didn't like it. Some of them felt they were being forced to vote this way and that if they'd had a chance originally, they might have voted differently.

Now, you said I have strong feelings. Yes, I do have some strong feelings. Being an engineer, a civil engineer basically, and a structural engineer by practice and having served for several years on the Seismology Committee of the Southern California Structural Engineers' Association, I have some fairly reliable knowledge on earthquakes, earthquake faults and such. Also our energy problem is serious. Now, some of them will say, we've got coal enough to last three hundred years. Yes, we do. We can gasify coal. Actually the first gas they had in Los Angeles was coal gas, made from coal, and the old coal plant was right along the present Santa Ana Freeway where it crosses the Los Angeles River.

Yes, you can gasify coal. You can make crude oil, petroleum, out of coal. However, the cost in doing it, and the cost in the plant is very heavy. I question whether it's economically feasible unless it's a last resort. Now atomic energy is safe in my opnion, and there are those scientists who back up my opinions. I have done some study on atomic reactors; they are safe. They won't blow up. They can't blow up because the type of atomic energy used in a power-plant nuclear reactor will never blow. It's not concentrated enough and something has to be done to even the concentrate to make it blow. It's impossible to do that to the weak fuels that are in a nuclear-power reactor; it's impossible to trigger an atomic explosion.

Now, the other thing that could happen, and the only thing that could happen, is a meltdown. That is where the thing gets so hot that it'll melt down through the floor of the reactor. The reactor is a vessel. It's an airtight vessel, pressure type vessel, set on concrete slab, and the concrete slab is on rock. Now if it melts down through the concrete, it melts down through the rock. Any radiation from that will come back through the hole that it creates as it melts down. Now after it goes down so far, it's going to stop because it'll cool off because of the energy that's expended. But all the radiation will come right back up into the pressure-proof vessel and will be held within that vessel, so the only thing that could happen would be to have the vessel fractured in an earthquake, if the earthquake happened at the same time of this meltdown.

The chances of that happening simultaneously are so remote that I think it's well within the reasonable limits of risk, and we all have to chance a certain amount of risk. Every time I take

that car out of the driveway I, to some extent, risk my life. Every time I went on a mountain wall, to some extent, I risked my life. What the percentage of risk was, was remote for the simple reason I knew what I was doing; I knew what to do and I knew what not to do. Well, we know the same thing about nuclear reactors. It is the cheapest method that we have of producing electric energy.

There are some side effects of it. One is that it takes a considerable amount of water. There's two methods that they can use: one of them is to build it on a large body of water and use the water to cool the condensers--because they have to reduce the steam back down to liquid before they can repressurize it into steam again to run the turbines. One way to do this is to use a big body of water. The largest body of water that we have on this planet is the Pacific Ocean, and of course California, having twelve hundred miles of Pacific Ocean as a shore, has a complete abundance of cooling water.

The other one is to use the water in cooling towers. A cooling tower is wasteful of water. In other words, the water that goes into the cooling tower goes off into the atmosphere and is lost. It takes much less water to use a cooling tower method than does the pass-through method that is being used down at San Onofre and Diablo Canyon. However, the plant that's east of Sacramento, I don't know whether it's a pass-through off of the American River or not.

Yes, it will have some ecological effect adversely, admittedly, on the marine life adjacent to a plant because certain marine life is critical to a rise of temperature. But there is some rise in temperature from winter to summer. In other words, the water temperature in wintertime will be in the fifties and in the summertime it will be in the sixties. And the funny part of it is that the water temperature up in Washington is higher than it is in California because the water of the Pacific Ocean we get here is the tail end of the Japanese Current. You have the big Japanese Current that comes up by Japan, the Aleutian Islands and across and back down to Mexico, then sweeps west and past the Hawaiian Islands down around the Equator back to the Philippines and starts its way up. So that the ocean water is warmer at Tokyo than it is at San Francisco, and it's warmer at Puget Sound than it is at San Francisco. So the water, from the standpoint of cooling, the further south toward the Mexican border, the more efficient it is for cooling. Is that marine biology that will be affected locally by the increasing temperature of the water so critical to our existence, or more critical to our existence than power? I don't think it is.

Redd: A lot of people would agree with you on that. It's like any issue. There are two sides to it.

Johnson: Oh, yes. Now, as I say, from my technical background and my knowledge of engineering and what's involved there, I have two or three strides ahead of the ordinary citizen. I know that some people can't be talked to. They just won't listen. I learned that in the Sierra Club. There are members of the Sierra Club who you can never convince of anything after they've made up their mind on it. It didn't make any difference whether it was a way to bake bread or where to roll out a sleeping bag.

Redd: On behalf of the Sierra Club History Committee and the California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Project, thank you for your interview and your time.

Johnson: It's my pleasure.

INDEX -- Arthur B. Johnson

Sierra Club Oral History Project

Roscoe and Wilma Poland

DESERT CONSERVATION: VOICES FROM THE SIERRA CLUB'S SAN DIEGO CHAPTER

An Interview Conducted by
Paul Clark

Sierra Club History Committee
1980

Sierra Club Oral History Project

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

The following pages express the long-time commitment which Roscoe and Wilma Poland have had fighting for environmental causes affecting the Sierra Club's San Diego Chapter. This husband-wife team joined the club only four years after the formation of this southern California chapter in 1948. They almost immediately involved themselves in the chapter's affairs. In 1955 Roscoe became the chairman of the chapter's conservation committee. This post allowed him to take a seat on what was then known as the Southern Section of the club's Conservation Committee. Here both he and Wilma obtained educations as volunteer conservationists in not only the many issues confronting the club's environmental agenda during the late 1950s and early 1960s, but also in resolving internal club conflicts and concerns. In later years the two branched out into other extra-Sierra Club interests, such as the publishing of a short newsletter, Conservation Call, and the state park support group, the Anza-Borrego Committee of the Desert Protective Council. In recognition of his long-time dedication to conservation work, the Sierra Club honored Roscoe in 1967 with a Special Achievement Award.

The interview was conducted in the Polands' home in San Diego on August 6, 1977. The interview included two recording sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Paul Clark, Chairman of the Angeles Chapter's History Committee and research associate with the California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program, served as the interviewer.

Paul Clark, Interviewer
Orange, California
February 24, 1980

I CAREERS IN ILLINOIS AND CALIFORNIA

Midwestern Small Town Roots

Clark: This is an interview with Roscoe A. Poland for the Sierra Club Project of the California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program, in cooperation with the History Committee of the Sierra Club. Today's interview is being conducted in Mr. Poland's home at 3942 Hughes Court, San Diego, California. Today's date is August 6, 1977, and the time is approximately 12:00 o'clock. The interviewer is Paul Clark.

Good afternoon, Mr. Poland. Perhaps we can begin our talk this afternoon with some comments about your family life, your parents, and your early exposure to the out-of-doors.

R. Poland: Yes, I was born in Springfield, Illinois, Abraham Lincoln's home town, and as far back as I can remember, I was an outdoors person. I was outside as often as I could be. I was not a kid that engaged in sports as such. I was always heading with congenial companions to the backcountry we had in central Illinois. At an early age, however, we moved to Chicago, and I was taken away from my outdoors. I always remember Chicago as an unhappy period in my life--as a boy going to elementary school, and then years later when I returned as a grown man to work in the advertising field. Looking back upon it, these were unhappy years primarily because I was shut in by the big city canyons instead of by nature's canyons [laughter].

Ironically, as far as a career is concerned, I might have had a medium successful one in advertising. Certainly, although the last time I lived in Chicago was in the thirties, I did better financially then than any time since. However, I don't really think I'd be alive today if I'd stayed in Chicago because my health was very bad then. Smog was not a word that we heard those days, but I can now realize that the climatic conditions and the pollution had a very deleterious effect upon me.

R. Poland: I left Chicago and went not back to Springfield, Illinois, but to my mother's home town, a small town in the central cornfields called Clinton. It was a town with a population of about six thousand, halfway between Decatur and Bloomington. In Clinton, I was fortunate enough to get a position with a printing firm. This was a family enterprise of very wonderful people with whom to be associated, and I was really like a member of the family. We all worked together and all struggled. These were depression days, you understand. They called me the office manager, but I was general "stooge," and worked in about everything except literally setting type and running the press. While there I started and edited a monthly publication for this firm which went on until the starting of World War II, at which time I left.

I joined the Navy and served from early 1942 until late 1945. My service was in the South Pacific. I spent time in New Guinea, the Admiralty Islands, some of the islands of Indonesia, and wound up in the Philippine Islands. Our outfit was getting ready to go to China when the bomb was dropped. Consequently, I was returned to the United States and was discharged as a Chief Aviation Storekeeper.

Because I had received my naval training in San Diego, I'd made a discovery that there was a place where it didn't snow in the winter and where the sun shone most of the time. So, instead of returning to Illinois, I settled down in San Diego where I have been since. I was unmarried at that time. I had been all my life quite tied down, in the sense that my father died at an early age, and I had had the care of my mother, but she had passed away shortly before World War II, and I felt the need to be independent and on my own.

Instead of going into advertising again, working for an agency, I made a stab at free-lance writing and also free-lance advertising. I made a connection with a printing firm in Sacramento. As I look upon it, this was very fortunate in that here I was furnishing material and about 80 percent editing a house organ service that this man had. He prepared house organs for various businesses and sold them throughout California and in several other states. I prepared copy and wrote various articles for a number of years.

Then I met my wife, and after we were married it was necessary to get into something more definite where there was a paycheck every month. I went to work for the city of San Diego Parks Department. I got this job because I wanted to be outdoors. It was as close as I could get to the mountains because by then I was really too old to start what I would have liked to have

R. Poland: done. That would have been as a state park ranger or perhaps national parks ranger. At the time I thought that perhaps even the Forest Service; however, after I really became involved with conservation, I have been too much in disagreement with the service, and I would never have made it with them. Do you want to ask something here?

Clark: Who were your parents, and what was your family like?

R. Poland: My father was Ora M. Poland. He was born in southern Illinois, and at the time I was born, he had a barber shop in Springfield, Illinois. Later in life, he became a traveling salesman. He passed away at an early age. He was only fifty-four. My mother's maiden name was Bertie Miller. She came from a farm family near Clinton, Illinois. I can't say my parents were in any way involved in conservation. When I was growing up, I never heard the word mentioned. Both Springfield and Clinton were really small towns of the day. I think Springfield is really like a small town even yet, and certainly Clinton has not grown much through the years, although ironically the growth that has come to it has been because of the building of a nuclear plant there.

W. Poland: It's a town of six thousand.

R. Poland: Yes, when I was living there, it was a little over five thousand. Now it has increased to six. They have one other factory there, Goodyear Rubber Factory. I'm not sure at this point what they manufacture,maybe rubber gloves or some small item.

To come back to the family background, everyone in my father's family and my mother's family were basically the small town country people that live in the prairie country of central Illinois. As I look back on it, I seem to have been the maverick in the sense that I was the one that was not satisfied. I never wanted to stay in Illinois, not because of great dislike for it, but I had the feeling that I wanted to get into or near wilder country. I read about the West and the mountains. I felt that if I couldn't be directly in such a place as the Sierra mountains, then I wanted to be close by it. It took forty years before I got to it, which came about from settling in San Diego.

W. Poland: But you did have a trip out here.

R. Poland: Yes, that might be mentioned. The desire to live in the West was clinched by trips made with friends. I came out with three other fellows in 1939. This was sort of a rambling trip up through the West, through Colorado, Wyoming, and so on to California. We saw Yellowstone and Yosemite for the first time and went back by way of Grand Canyon.

W. Poland: Was the trip down into the canyon the highlight of your trip for you? Because you mentioned it so many times.

R. Poland: Not that time. That trip in 1939 was with Harry Breighner and Elmer Dunn. In 1940 I came again. This was just with one other friend,and we hit most of those places again.This time we took the mule trip down into the Grand Canyon. Of course, the great thing about a trip like this is that it imbues you with such a fascination with and love for the area. Then years later the conservation issue affecting the place really hits you. It is such a great thing to visit these places firsthand. See what's there, what the values are, and what's involved when one of the seemingly endless series of assaults is made upon its values.

Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Advertising Man

Clark: You mentioned that you left Springfield at an early age and went to Chicago. About when did that happen?

R. Poland: About nine years of age. At that time my father was in the barber trade. He moved to Chicago because he had an opportunity to buy a shop. Those, I guess, represent historical items for the people of your age, when barbers shaved people and gave massages, and so on. It wasn't just haircutting or hair styling as it is today. It was a good opportunity for a skilled barber to have a shop in a city like Chicago, particularly in the downtown area if possible. Barbering was certainly a trade you'd never be idle in. So, we moved to the west side of Chicago, as I recall, when I was about nine years old.

I'll go on from there. It was never good for me to go to Chicago because I seemed to be affected by the climate. I really became what you would call a sickly kid, and in those days they were concerned about sickly kids developing tuberculosis. They didn't realize that it was pollution and the very foul climate of Chicago that so aften afflicts kids there. Doctors usually would say, "What this boy needs is a change of climate." My mother took me, and we spent nearly two years in Denver. My health was better in Denver because at that time the air was pure. It was certainly better than in Chicago, but after returning, it was just as bad as ever.

I was thirteen years old when we moved to Clinton, Illinois, because my mother had the idea that it would be good for me. And it was, too, to be in a small town outside of city pollution. Actually my growing years were spent in Clinton rather than in

R. Poland: Springfield. Before returning to Chicago, we moved back to Springfield where there were better opportunities for work. I did get my start in the advertising agency of Springfield, a firm which now has a nationwide service. It specializes--I think it still does--in advertising for funeral directors. Perhaps you've seen advertising for a funeral home, that specifies it is a member of the Order of the Golden Rule.

Clark: Yes.

R. Poland: That's a service of this firm. It was then called the Hahn-Rodenburg Company. I'm not even sure if it's under that name.

W. Poland: Why didn't you go on to college? Why did you feel you had to go to work immediately?

R. Poland: Because my father died at the time. As I say, he was only fifty-four and actually hindsight is very clear. Other fellows went to college and worked nights, and so on. This is probably what I should have done, but I didn't feel I could do it at this time. What I did instead was take a course in commercial art. I had asked this firm, for which I eventually went to work, for a job, just to start as anything. At that time, I was also afflicted with the urge to scribble, and I was hopeful I could get in as a sort of apprentice copy writer. They had no opening, but they were interested in people coming in the art department. I also had scratched around with drawing to an extent, and I thought this could give me an entree.

I took a course in commercial art and advertising. With that background I did get a job with this company. However, it was in the art department, and I became a lettering artist of sorts, and a layout artist, and also what at that time was called a production man. A production man is one who follows a job through from the start and sees that all the work is done. I was doing a little of everything in Springfield.

After I left Springfield and went to Chicago, I primarily worked as a copy writer and often as a layout man. I was not a Madison Avenue advertising man, but a Michigan Avenue advertising man. I worked for some time in the Palmolive Building, which at that time was home for a great many advertising agencies and small firms, such as the one I worked for. I worked for a man who did work on assignment from the big agencies. People that remember back to those days would find the name Lord and Thomas familiar. That was one of the greats in the American advertising field. I did not work for them. I worked for this man who did jobs on assignment for them. I was also at what you might call the second level of advertising.

R. Poland: Considering how far money went in those days, I made a great deal of money in that field, more than I've ever made before or since, but I was quite unhappy. Advertising was a killer in those days because when you were in a firm like this, the big agencies would come up with a campaign and the art work, and the layouts that they wanted, the tentative copy that they wanted, and they would send it to you a little before five o'clock. They had done their work, and we had to do so much night work. We often worked twenty-four hours around the clock. I rather have the impression now that they just don't have to do this anymore. I hope not, anyway.

I know that I had a great deal of respiratory trouble, throat trouble, when I was in Chicago and part of this was before I became what most Sierra Club people are, from my experience, a non-smoker. I used to be a chain cigarette smoker, but I gave that up long before I got in Sierra Club. Maybe I was getting the Sierra Club character.

An Outdoor Parks Job in San Diego

Clark: Can I ask you a little bit about your job with the San Diego Parks Department? What exactly did you do?

R. Poland: I was a gardener. At the time I took on this job, as I say, I was looking ahead. I thought it was time that I got into something where there would be a pension. As I couldn't get into the Park Service, where they have pensions, I would get into something where I could be outdoors. It's rather interesting as I look back on it. Before I did this, I made the rounds of the advertising agencies in San Diego. I feel quite confident I could have gotten back into the advertising field, but when it came to it, after being in San Diego, I couldn't go back behind a desk indoors anymore.

W. Poland: You were disillusioned with advertising as a field, too, weren't you, because you had to lie often. You didn't believe some of the things you had to write.

R. Poland: I don't know if I ought to go off on this tangent, but I guess I might as well say it. I had been, all along, quite disillusioned with advertising. I have found myself in eyeball to eyeball confrontation to it in my conservation efforts, very much the outdoor advertising industry in San Diego, which I might mention later. As Wilma says, I had grown so disillusioned with

R. Poland: advertising. Really, advertising is organized misrepresentation in ninety percent of what it does [laughter]. I couldn't stand going back to it. So I went to work for the city of San Diego as a simple gardener.

I am a writer and cursed with this urge; I have to be writing something all the time. I wasn't sure what it was going to be at the time, but I knew I could do that in my off time. I really wanted a simple and healthful outdoor job, and this was a good move in that regard. I have been really healthy right up to the present date since I came to California and did outdoor labor with my hands. It has been very beneficial to me. You know, they tell us that gardeners and mailmen live longer than any other trade or job, and it's attributed to doing outdoor work.

It is interesting, too, in thinking of working for the city, that all my working time, totaling fourteen years, was spent in Balboa Park, our great city park, which is almost always having a conservation assault upon its integrity. I thought myself very fortunate to spend my time in this park. Even while there I had to be a conservation defender as much as I could undercover because as a city employee I was greatly hampered in what I could do. I really had to carry on sort of a cloak and dagger thing to do this, but since retirement, I've been able to be in the open on it. A little later I can mention what some of the issues are here.

Clark: You say there was a bit of a conflict between your conservation ideas and your job at the city. What kind of conflicts? How would you be pressured perhaps, or how did you feel pressured in that job?

R. Poland: Well, a city employee was not supposed to speak out against any issue that concerned the city. For example, our big conservation issue in the city of San Diego has been the question of managed growth because San Diego, for a long time, was the fastest growing city in the United States. The developers have swarmed in here. It started right after the end of World War II, and it's accelerated through the years, development after development. This great growth of population in the city brought about demands on the city's sewer system that brought about the building of a new sewer system. As the city continued to grow there were, of course, demands that the sewage plant be enlarged. Also many, many developments in our backcountry--out in the mountains and in what had been just tiny, rural communities--were rapidly becoming small cities. Well, there's the problem of the sewage. Those of us who wanted at least to slow the growth of San Diego, and consequently the pollution and all the varied problems that come with too much and too rapid civic growth, tried to stop any more development of the sewage system. If you don't have the facilities for the sewage, the city can't grow.

R. Poland: We have had a mayor in San Diego, Pete Wilson, who headed up what has been called, by its detractors, the no-growth policy, which is not true at all. It is a principle of slowing it down, keeping it manageable. This concept attempts to keep the suburbs from growing. We're presently trying to develop the centers of the city, bring it back to life and to get the population growth to, insofar as possible, be in the present city that we have.

Clark: In your case, did you ever speak out in these cases or did you have to remain silent because you were a city employee?

W. Poland: Well, the sewage system issue was a recent thing and that's been since he's retired. I wanted to bring out the road through Balboa Park being enlarged. Do you remember the highway that goes through the park and you did speak out at that time?

R. Poland: Yes, that's why it's good to have both of us. I was saying that we have been in so many things, I have lost the sequence of them. That's right.

W. Poland: That was a big one right there.

R. Poland: When you come in San Diego, you may have gone through Balboa Park, on Highway 395. There was an enormous fight and struggle over this. That was in the sixties, wasn't it, early sixties.

W. Poland: I don't remember.

R. Poland: You'll find we're poor on some of these dates.

W. Poland: They even talked about a double-tiered highway in the park, you know. Of all the asinine things to try to do, to use park land. In the first place, the land was dedicated to park use only. Balboa Park was given by a former owner to the city to be used for this purpose. Over the years the city has given land to the Navy, to the schools, and all the periphery. Now they were going to take more land for highways. This was part of our argument over highways. We also had an argument over the airport, and the development and beautifying the land around it, where you did speak out.

I think probably the fact that you were a low echelon worker let you speak out more often than you thought you could. You did it because you could just say you were Roscoe Poland, rather than say "I'm from the park department," because if you'd been head of the department they would have known who you were immediately. Since they didn't, you often got away with it. Just the same, you felt a little reluctant at times until you just couldn't stand it.

R. Poland: I was better off after I became the conservation chairman for the San Diego Chapter because then you could say you were the conservation chairman speaking for the Sierra Club in this instance, and, of course, it was not brought up that you were a city employee. Wilma is right, by being quite low on the totem pole, no one ever caught onto this, or if they did they didn't say so, that I was a city worker speaking on these issues.

II THE SIERRA CLUB IN SAN DIEGO, 1950s-1960s

First Contact with the Club: The Outings Program

R. Poland: In 1952 we joined the Sierra Club because we still felt a great need to get out more in the outdoors and to get into the wilderness. All we knew about the Sierra Club was that it was an outdoor group, and we knew the Sierra Club worked for conservation. We weren't even aware what "conservation" implied. We didn't know the issues. We were innocent enough to think that great areas had been put aside in our state parks, in our national parks, and therefore they were protected. Probably all that was needed was some action to protect those lands that were not designated as national park, national forest, etc.

Our first real contact with the Sierra Club was a trip to Evolution Valley. This was the first trip which was headed up by Cliff Youngquist, one of the great old-time leaders, and a director of the Sierra Club. On this trip we also met Oliver Kehrlein, again one of the old greats of the club. We were reminiscing before you came that Oliver was known as a glacier man because he hiked and climbed everywhere, but he made a specialty of glaciers. He became no small expert on the subject, too. Oliver stands out as one of our all-time favorites.

I think it's interesting, as we look back on our twenty-five year membership in the Sierra Club, that on this trip we were bothered with something that wasn't even realized in the club. This trip had 175 people on it, and so you can think of the impact on the camping site. After the trip, which was really most enjoyable, something to always remember, we went into Sequoia National Park and visited a friend there. He was a park ranger. We were so innocent and naive at this time. We were quite shaken up to have our impressions confirmed that this was just too much to put 175 people into a camp.

We had been bothered, too about the disposal of the trash. All of the garbage at that time was deposited in a hole and buried. This was what you did then when you went into the wilderness. The books you had instructed you to bury your garbage and your trash, even your tin cans. They were burned first and then buried.

Clark: They were never packed out?

R. Poland: Never packed out. The park service was most unhappy about this. Our ranger friend, who was a member of the Sierra Club, was very forthright in remarking that this was something that should not be done.

W. Poland: Huge bags of food, like dried apples and things were just dumped. Very edible food would just be dumped if it wasn't used, never packed out.

R. Poland: This seemed to be something that conservationists all over had to learn. I think it's because they didn't realize this. Groups were small before, but the Sierra Club was just then starting on its great growth. People were mostly like we were. They were coming in; they wanted to go outdoors. These trips were available.

I remember too that the trips were all in the Sierra. It was felt to be a great advance two years later when we went on the first Sierra Club trip down the Green River in 1954. This trip occurred because of the Dinosaur National Monument controversy. They proposed the Echo Park Dam and the year previous all of us in the San Diego Chapter, as with the rest of the Sierra Club, were up in arms about this. We wrote and saw our congressmen when possible. When this trip was offered, we jumped at it. We had the chance to see the area firsthand, which is a thing that we have tried, insofar as possible, to do ever since that time. Mineral King comes to mind immediately because Mineral King came to the floor as a big battle. We took a trip there. In that case, it was on our own. We went up to see what it was all about.

Past President Phil Bernays

Clark: You mentioned that you have met quite a few people in the Sierra Club, particularly Phil Bernays. Do you have any particular anecdotes of stories about Phil?

R. Poland: The way we met Phil is interesting. The San Diego Chapter was formed in 1948 with the usual fifty members. You probably know that Ivy Foster with her husband Loris were the founders of the San Diego Chapter. Ivy was the first chairman, so she would go to the board meetings. I don't think she ever missed any. I made many of the board meetings after that time. We joined the club, and consequently the chapter in 1952, and Ivy and myself made this great plug in 1958 to get the board to come to San Diego, which they had never done. They had gone to the Los Angeles Chapter, but that was all. 1958 was the chapter's

R. Poland: tenth anniversary, and by dint of a great deal of lobbying we were able to convince the board to meet in San Diego. As a consequence of this board meeting and banquet here, there were people who were former presidents and former directors, such as Phil Bernays traveling to San Diego.

W. Poland: We offered hospitality for anybody that wanted it in our various homes.

R. Poland: That was our first contact with Phil and his first wife Eva. In light of what has happened since I have always felt kind of humble. Phil seemed to take such an almost instant liking and feeling for us. I have several letters from Phil here; you might look them over to get the feel of the relationship. He was always so flattering about our work in conservation and seemed to think that we were good people some way [laughter]. This was a part of, to use the old cliche, a beautiful friendship. It really was. We kept in close contact all through the years. Not long after this, Eva passed away and after a time Phil married Louise, who was an old childhood friend. He was very, very fortunate. They had a very happy marriage. I was looking in the letters there. It lasted eleven years and Louise passed away in 1974, and Phil passed away in 1976.

Educating the Sierra Club on Desert Problems

W. Poland: Also, we had a field trip in connection with the banquet and meeting because that was why we wanted to get them down here. We have always in southern California been interested in the desert, but particularly the board members, who at that time were mostly from the Bay Area, thought differently. The desert didn't mean anything to them. So, we wanted them down here, and we had this field trip to the desert. Bernays and his wife went, and she wasn't too well. It was hard for her to get in and out of the jeep even then, or in and out of the car, but there was a rapport built up there.

One of my pet peeves was that many of the board members would not go to the desert even then, and we still are having problems convincing board members that the desert is a very important part of our ecology, the picture of our whole environment.

Clark: Are there any particular directors that come to mind?

W. Poland: Well, Brower was one of them who was here, and he had to leave just the minute the thing was all over to go to the airport. There were some others, too, that didn't go. I remember Brower particularly because he was so influential and we thought, "Gee, this is an opportunity to show some of the things to these people."

R. Poland: Remember he was executive director.

W. Poland: Yes, he was the executive director. We also had quite a few people from Sacramento and other areas come to this meeting. Some of them, after they'd been to our desert, said, "Anybody who wants to go the desert can have it." They did not realize the desert is our recreation area. This is a big recreation area for thousands of people.

R. Poland: This has been a sore point with not only the Sierra Club, but with many others, and not just directors. It's been amazing through the years the number of people who hold this negative idea of the desert. I recall one prominent person in the club who told me one time that we were very fortunate to live down here where there were no conservation problems like the Cascades, the Three Sisters, the wilderness areas in northern California, the lumbering, the hassles of the Forest Service, and all that. We had nothing like that down here because what could hurt the desert. What could hurt what he called those old bald-headed mountains in the desert? So, we've had a struggle to educate which I don't think is over to this day. We were disappointed that some of the directors would not come. My memory's treacherous enough so that it would not be right to say who didn't go. I can think more of those who did: The Wayburns, Edgar and Peggy, were on that trip, and Harold Bradley, dear Harold. Was Elmer [Aldrich] on the board then? He would certainly have gone to the state park, but I can't remember. Both Lewis and Nate Clark were there. One of them went and one didn't, so it wouldn't be fair to say which one.

I notice going ahead a little bit that you mention internal club work and problems, and the Diablo Canyon question, and Brower. This was, you might say, the start of the feeling we had against Dave. I've always said, and I freely state, that Dave Brower is a genius in his grasp of the picture of ecology, the problems, not only here but the whole worldwide issues, the whole thing. We were unhappy with Nate Clark not recognizing his enormous abilities. However, we've had the feeling that Dave very much wanted to do what he wanted to do, to take that ball that he wanted to run with. We were just not happy with what we could get from Dave, or from the club, in the way of help here.

R. Poland: On this point I should say, for us, the lasting ongoing effort here has been over the southwestern deserts, specifically Anza-Borrego State Park and then the Lower Colorado River and its national wildlife refuges. We will come to that a little later, the great enormous battle that we had over the channelization and the fight to save Topock Gorge. You were speaking about the Achievement Award. The Achievement Award was given in 1967 and it shows my name, but it should have been both our names because my wife was in it as much as I was. We both knocked ourselves out on that, and the club was good enough at that time to consider that we were responsible for saving Topock Gorge from channelization.

We were able through our congressman to get to the then secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall. Our appeal was bolstered, of course, with many others. We had a very big effort going against it.

Desert Conservation Ignored by National Organizations

R. Poland: I was bothered even at that time that the San Diego Chapter had to carry this effort pretty much on its own. I was not satisfied with what the club put in on this, so this has been a feeling through the years that we desert conservationists are kind of on our own.

Unfortunately this has held true with the other groups, too, because I don't know whether you know this or not, but through the years I've also been very active with the Wilderness Society. For a very short period I was a paid representative for the Wilderness Society here until they ran out of money. I have been and still am bothered with the Wilderness Society that we are pretty much left out on this, too. I was very happy during the short time I was the representative here, because I thought that there would be a representative for the desert in the Wilderness Society. However, in their recent upheavals the society has a lot of new people assigned to various areas, but they still don't have anyone solely for southern California. When you say that, you mean for the deserts, too.

Again, I don't know whether you have this or not, but I was conservation chairman for the San Diego Audubon Society for a couple of years. I know this sounds as if I am a perpetual grouch, but I was not able to do what I wanted to do for the desert there either.

R. Poland: For years the Sierra Club has had a representative in Arizona, John McComb, who's a very estimable conservationist, but John really hasn't ever crossed the river so to speak. I guess he felt that he had enough going in Arizona and New Mexico. He's in Washington now.

The San Diego Chapter's Controversial Mountaineering Book

Clark: Bob Marshall in his interview mentions a problem that the San Diego Chapter had with David Brower over a backpacking book that the chapter produced at one time. Are you familiar with this?

R. Poland: Yes. The San Diego Chapter pioneered, I believe, in setting up what they call a basic mountaineering course. I might mention in passing that our family took the first basic mountaineering course offered here. Our daughter was nine years old then. She took the course and was granted the privilege of taking an oral examination instead of a written one in order to receive the basic mountaineering certificate, because at nine she couldn't read everything.

This course was devised by several people, notably Aubrey Wendling, who was the chapter chairman at the time. Aubrey is the head of the sociology department over at San Diego State and a great mountaineer. He came here from Seattle. He had a long experience of mountaineering in the Cascades and the Olympics. When he got down here, I think he was a little taken aback with the dry mountains, but he still wanted to get a mountaineering course done. The San Diego Chapter prepared their basic mountaineering book and offered it. This created bad feelings in San Francisco. They seemed to feel we were just too big for our britches.

W. Poland: That was in 1957 I think. That's the year that it started.

R. Poland: Other people also took issue over this book. Harvey Manning is a fellow in Washington with the Mountaineers, the organization of that name in Seattle, Washington. He's like David Brower, a tremendous conservation worker, and he was for years editor of the publication put out by the Mountaineers called Citizens for the North Cascades. They put out this publication for years, and another called the Wild Cascades. Harvey in his time was looked on as a wild radical. He was said to be too forthright, too savage, but he was devoted to the Cascades.

R. Poland: He took very great issue with our chapter's book. We were never able to understand this. They felt we somehow didn't have the right to put out a basic mountaineering book. We were down here in dry mountain country and, of course, our book treats largely of glacier work, snow work, the whole package as well as the desert. It was a very sore point.

W. Poland: The basic mountaineering book Manning put out was a real thick book that you put in your library and read,* whereas our chapter publication was a small paperback that you could put in your pack and take along with you.

R. Poland: It was literally the basics.

W. Poland: Practical type thing. And there was no plagiarism in it as far as we could see because we took the course and the book was based on the course. They realized they had to have something to hand the students afterwards. At first, we had loose papers, you know, like you get in a college course. Our exam that we took at the end was about four or five pages typewritten, just like you'd have in a college exam.

It gradually boiled down to Manning feeling that we had actually taken his material. They were jealous of the thing in the first place probably because they had this wonderful book, but it isn't something that you carry with you. It's too thick.

Clark: The Sierra Club, you say, already had a book out?

W. Poland: No, the San Diego Chapter put out this little book. It grew out of the mountaineering course. Now I think mountaineering courses are given all over now, aren't they, but this was the first chapter that had ever attempted to do anything like this. Aubrey admittedly had originally been in Seattle and knew that they had courses up there. However, he wasn't trying to preempt anything of theirs because we found in the course there was nothing in his material on the desert. Now this is what our hiking for the most part was. In fact, most of us have done very little snow work even since taking the course. We took it basically for safety. We wanted to learn the safety principles of rock climbing, doing chimney climbing, doing all these things in case we ever had to do it, if we ever were in a situation where we had to.

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*Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills, Harvey Manning, editor (The Mountaineers, Seattle, Washington, 1960).

W. Poland: Neither Roscoe nor I were interested in doing this sort of recreation. Our daughter thought it was great, but we didn't like that part of it. It was the idea that if you're going to be out hiking, you should have all the safety principles down. We found it was tremendous.

R. Poland: If you'll excuse a little family pride, we should mention that as a consequence of taking this mountaineering course Stephanie, our daughter, not much later was able, to everybody's surprise but me, to claim a first. This was on a trip to Picacho Park on the Lower Colorado with one of the fellows from the chapter here. They climbed a kind of a spire. It's not very high, but it's a tremendous climb and from all that we were able to find out at the time--I don't know about since--she was the first female to climb what they called the Yar.

To come back to controversy, this was a sad thing. We felt bad about it, but we were picked on because of this book and I thought some ridiculous charges were made. Harvey Manning, for example, said that the literary style was terrible [laughter]. I think this is a little sad and funny to say anything like this because I'm sure no one was thinking of producing a gem of literary art in this book. There was quite a bit of bad feeling at that time. The chapter chairman who came after Aubrey Wendling was a fine old gentleman, Colonel Gilbert Parker. He is now eighty-seven and is still living, I think, not far from here at a resthome. We take him out to the desert every so often. He's still able to get about.

At that time, Gilbert had a real wrangle at one of the board of directors meetings. My memory is not exact enough to state--I don't believe this was during a board meeting, but it was more with a group of directors. There was quite an argument about it. We felt badly that some of the directors would do this to our chapter chairman. Gil is a retired Air Force colonel, and he has a military man's temper [laughter]. I know he has admitted that he said things that he wished he hadn't later. Again, that was a sad chapter in history. I'm sorry that it came about.

I knew we felt at the time we were disappointed in Brower's attitude on this also. Dave, to my mind, is a person that, while he has such a great mind, and tremendous ability, he must be a little insecure because I've always had the feeling that if a head sticks up a little too high for his liking he chops it off. Apparently this is what has gone on with his organization, Friends of the Earth. He's had several people of great ability--Joe Browder and Gary Soucie and some others. I notice that they are clear out of Friends of the Earth now, and I would guess that

R. Poland: that were disagreements there. I think he doesn't care for people--especially in an organization that he's directing--showing too much initiative and coming up with something innovative.

Clark: Were you involved at all in the election campaigns in 1969 when Brower ran for board of directors? There was two opposing groups at that time, ABC and CMC.

R. Poland: At that time I was the San Diego representative in the Southern Regional Conservation Committee. I was involved to the extent that I was a member and, of course, knew all that was going on. Bob Marshall, the chairman, was carrying the ball on that. He was the one that got the slings and arrows too. I was not involved as such. I was of the feeling that it was very much necessary to get rid of David at that point because as it turned out later, I guess, as a club we were just about down the drain financially. He had gone completely haywire over his grandiose ideas and the promotion of the books, as good as they were. I have most of them, and every one is a great work in its way. But it was best that Dave leave and I think it's been to the benefit of the Sierra Club, and to the benefit of Dave Brower. He formed Friends of the Earth and they have done many good things. He must be more comfortable heading up his own group and is able, I presume, to accomplish more than he did before. But I was not out in the forefront of that issue.

III LOWER COLORADO RIVER CONSERVATION ISSUES, 1960s-1970s

Fight to Preserve Topock Gorge

Clark: Could we talk now a little bit about the issue of Topock Gorge?

R. Poland: Yes. The problem of Topock Gorge is really the problem of the Lower Colorado River. I'll give you this folder that is a product of our campaign to save the Lower Colorado from channelization. This issue surfaced in the early sixties. We were made aware of it by various cooperators who told us that the Bureau of Reclamation had a terrible scheme. This scheme, in essence, sought to straighten out the curves of the Lower Colorado, channelize it, dredge it and clear away what they called "the naughty vegetation on the banks that drank water." That started a battle that lasted several years.

It became a standoff in the sense that most of the channelization they proposed was done, but they also proposed to dredge Topock Gorge which is really the scenic heart of the Lower Colorado. It's just a short distance below Needles on the California side. It's an area that is scenically beautiful and rich in wildlife. A great deal of wildlife was destroyed or driven away in the channelization, so it was very important then to preserve Topock Gorge if possible. This was an all-out effort by the chapter and others. We aroused conservationists on the river and warned people about what was being done to the river and to the banks and the effects on the wildlife and the whole countryside that came from this. When the proposal came up to dredge Topock Gorge, we doubled our efforts.

In my case, I really worked with my congressman to see if he couldn't get through someplace. I prepared a letter in 1966 giving the facts, the background and the need to preserve the Gorge. The letter was supposed to have been hand delivered and placed on Secretary Stewart Udall's desk. As a consequence of that, and of

R. Poland: many other efforts, he sent somebody out. A plane flew over, and they made quite a study of it, recommending that it not be channelized. This was one of the few areas, where we were able to save some of the Lower Colorado, although it was and is the most scenic part of it.

We still have, at all times, to keep a watchful eye on the Lower Colorado. We were disappointed when the Wilderness Act reviews came along. We were active in the hearings for the wildlife refuges on the river, the Havasu Wildlife Refuge and the Imperial Wildlife Refuge in particular. These were not implemented in any way such as the conservation organizations wanted them. For instance, in the Havasu area we fought for them to take in several thousand acres on the Arizona side of the river which contains the mountains called the Needles. That's where Needles, California, gets its name, from the very sharp peaks on that side. This is very wonderful desert country. So far, the wilderness is confined to the California side, which is not near as valuable, scenically speaking. We are hoping that the new surge in wilderness interest by the government means we may be able to eventually increase the size of these refuges.

Commissioner Floyd Dominy's Plan for the River, 1965

Clark: There was apparently in July 1965 a meeting of the Southern Council of Conservation Clubs in Los Angeles. At this meeting, the Reclamation Commissioner Floyd Dominy brought this question up, and apparently there was some controversy there. He, in fact, reversed his formerly hard line position.

R. Poland: Yes, that is right. He backpeddled, and the program was modified.

Clark: Do you recall any of the dynamics of this council meeting?

R. Poland: Yes, the Sierra Club Bulletin of January 1966 contained an article on channelization of the Lower Colorado by John Gregg, and it gives the essence of it. "When you think of conservation crisis of the Colorado River," the article says,

> You tend to think of the upper basin where the Bureau of Reclamation proposed to build Bridge Canyon and Marble Gorge power dams within the Grand Canyon. On July 28, 1965, the Southern Council of Conservation Clubs met in Los Angeles. Commissioner of Reclamation Floyd Dominy addressed the assembly telling them what was wrong with the Lower Colorado River. "After the Colorado River

R. Poland: passes through Davis Dam, it turns into a tramp, a hobo. It is lazy, dissatisfied, restless, unreliable. It just meanders about from one place to another. The worse thing about the river is the loss of valuable water that wastes away by seeping into the underground or being sucked up by the sun." To Dominy the solution for this water waste and to all problems of living with an unstable river seems simple. Build a channel 450 feet wide with a bank slope ratio of 1.5 to 1 and put the river in it.

Work has been suspended on the remaining three divisions. They had designated nine divisions of the Lower Colorado and the others were to be channelized. As it says, the Mojave Division channelization--that was done early--had been completed. The Palo Verde, Cibola and Laguna divisions were then being channelized.

Work has been suspended on the remaining three divisions, Topock Gorge, Parker and Yuma, because Dominy was virtually the only person at the July 28 meeting who supported channelization. After hearing other speakers, he admitted he had failed to submit proper plans for review and that his program needed to be reevaluated. Said Dominy, "We have failed to submit and plan in advance the final product of what our proposal actually is for official review required by law. Also, I think we need to reevaluate our entire program," but there was a hedge. Any work not already committed, acts underway at the moment, any new dredging, any new river alignment program will not be undertaken until we have complete reevaluation. How much work will be considered already committed is an unknown that affects the significance of Dominy's pledge.

Now they didn't go ahead with some of those segments in those divisions. Several years later we went down the river in canoes with a fellow from the San Diego Chapter, Allen Van Norman. We started at Blythe, and came out at one of the little resorts on the river called Walter's Camp, and we had to get back from there. In fact, he took us back to our car from the camp. At that time at this place on the river, there was channelization and dredging going on close by. As they did with so many of these, they literally, were left high and dry, on a curve. Why they'd just straighten it out like that and put the curve over here, and there the resort sat, unable to get their boats in or out. Walter's Camp was one the places, as I recall, where Dominy backtracked. The Bureau of Reclamation didn't work there for a while. I don't think Dominy was even in the office when they came back and did it.

W. Poland: I'm not sure when they came in. They didn't do it for a while. Particularly down around Yuma, there were several of them that they didn't do. They did what had to be done in order to get the tules out only. It's what they call remedial work so water would run. The tules would grow in some of those areas so badly that that's the only thing they did. We did stop them. We did change several of their projects. The thing of it is we got on this Lower Colorado River problem long after we should have. We didn't even know about it, it was going on and somebody over here finally found out about it. It was then that we looked into it and were able to make changes, but some of the damage had already been done.

I can think of one or two places, simple resort areas, along the river where the river goes like a snake and if you were on a nice curve you were just cut completely off because they riprapped the river with huge rocks. They wanted the river to go straight. These resort areas had people coming to them year after year, and one family that I know of owned a place along the river for three generations. The service wanted the water to go on down quickly, because they claimed there was a lot of evaporation and waste. The trees were taking the water. They dredged the stuff on the bottom of the river and put it on the banks, and then nothing would grow. That was "spoil," as Bu Rec accurately calls it. We certainly weren't able to stop all this stuff. I think south of Blythe there were areas, especially at Cibola, where they almost removed everything entirely.

Clark: Would you say that this meeting in July 1965 was a significant turning point in this campaign?

W. Poland: I think it brought it to a head, he had to answer us.

Clark: Before that he didn't?

W. Poland: No, he didn't answer to the conservationists, and he finally had so many organizations fussing at him he had to come and answer us.

R. Poland: The San Diego Chapter, as this article states, drew up an eighteen point indictment of channelization which Dominy answered point by point. The charges and rebuttals were mimeographed and distributed at the July 28 meeting, but reclamation's argument convinced almost no one. Dominy was forced to retreat during the afternoon session. He agreed to reevaluate the program he had defended only that morning.

W. Poland: Under whose administration was this?

Clark: Lyndon Johnson's.

W. Poland: So we fought it a long time.

Clark: Did you assist in the writing up of this eighteen point proposal?

R. Poland: Yes, there were several of us who had a hand in it. Actually, I did more on this. I would say about half of the copy in there is mine. This was a committee job, so I was more involved with that.

W. Poland: The San Diego Chapter did that entirely.

R. Poland: Yes, right.

W. Poland: We took that on as a project.

R. Poland: You know George Paul helped.

W. Poland: Yes, and Harriet Allen did a great deal of work on that. She's a local San Diego Chapter member, a long-time active conservationist. She and her husband both went over with us on two field trips that I can remember. I'd like to have a nickel for every field trip I participated in over the Colorado River [laughter].

Local Support from Yuma County, Arizona

W. Poland: We also interested the Yuma people. There were two or three people from Yuma that became involved in this. Remember we met once at the Stardust Motel, and it turned out the manager of the Stardust had been told that he shouldn't even let conservationists stay at his motel, if I remember correctly. He was told this, I assume, by the Bureau of Reclamation. This was the story we were told, anyway. He said, "Okay, if that's the way it is, I'll do as I darn well please!" He fought them, whereas before he was lukewarm. He was later transferred out because the Stardust is part of a chain.

R. Poland: He was transferred over here, but that was not a demotion.

W. Poland: It did give a lot of impetus to the local people to realize they had something there that was bringing people in, and that it was of value for recreation, and they should do something about it. Some of the local people got quite interested. We had one member, a doctor, who was a Sierra Club member, who became quite interested in it. Up to then a lot of the local people, until they were threatened, didn't notice it. That was part of the problem. Of course, Yuma is way down the river. It all started up higher.

Clark: And worked its way down.

W. Poland: At Topock Gorge, they did decide one way they could solve that problem, instead of dredging it, was to allow no camping in the area. You can picnic and go down for day use only. The last time we were over there, they had made these rules. Before people were going in there with their boats and they'd stay in the little areas among the tules or back in the sand areas and camp for several nights or, if it was Easter week, all week. They were leaving trash. Really, it was a terrible mess to clean up.

Clark: When did it sort of appear that you were able to bring things to a head? When was it that you felt that you people had things under control on the Lower Colorado as far as the Bureau of Reclamation?

R. Poland: We were able to get this, well, here, this is a copy of Udall's letter. "Dear Mr. Poland," this is dated July 2, 1968,

> under previous correspondence, you are aware of my decision to review the channelization work of the Topock Division planned under the Lower Colorado River management program. That review encompassing the many issues is now complete, and there is enclosed a copy of our news release of June 23, 1968, announcing a postponement of the dredging program below Topock Gorge.

I believe this letter would still be a high point, one that postponed some of the dredging below Topock Gorge. Later he ruled that Topock Gorge would not be dredged.

I should say then that some years later the Bureau of Reclamation also came back and began dredging above Yuma. In that case, while we entered into that fray, it wasn't necessary to strive quite so hard because by that time the people down at that end of the river saw what had happened before, and they rose in great numbers. At this time, the Chairman of the Grand Canyon Chapter, Dr. Lester Olin, lived in Yuma, and he did very good work. The dredging above Yuma was stopped. The last time we were there I think they still had one of the small dredges there. They were just doing remedial dredging, cleaning out tules and opening up back waters so there would be circulation of water. It's an attempt to make it halfway natural again so that the river can flow and circulate somewhat as it did before for the benefit of the wildlife.

The continuing creature of concern on the Colorado is the Yuma clapper rail which is endangered. There are just a few hundred left. They call it the Yuma rail because it occurs in greatest numbers above Yuma. That's why we rose up; that's their

R. Poland: habitat there. Hopefully by doing this remedial dredging, they've helped them a little. The Arizona Department of Game and Fish recently took a clapper rail census and as near as they could figure it out the rails had increased from about four hundred to about six hundred.

W. Poland: Roscoe, going on back on this Cibola deal, we went over to Needles to at least two meetings. The Fish and Game from Arizona and from California, and the U.S. departments were all there along with other bureau members from the various bureaus that would be involved. It was held in the Masonic Lodge building upstairs in back. Do you remember the approximate date of it at all?

R. Poland: I think it was 1970.

W. Poland: What interested me about this was the amount of politics involved in all this. The various agencies declare that they all want to work together on it, and when you get away from these meetings suddenly politics becomes the name of the game. You don't get the cooperation that they say they're all going to give.

As a result, for years to be able to get information on Colorado River problems around Needles, we've had to take the local newspaper, the Needles Desert Star. Local people will tell you what the new developments are; otherwise you never hear about them. We still have to go over there to talk to somebody at Blythe, Needles and Yuma, but we found that we're still taking the paper to keep up on the various things that are going on. It's rather an interesting thing that this is the way it's done. I guess it's because everybody is busy, you know. Roscoe and I both get involved in something, get interested in it, and it becomes an ongoing thing. Often you'll wonder, "Well, what's happened over there?"

Water Resource Use on the Colorado

W. Poland: Now, on a national scale, water is one of the most important things in this area we're talking about. Everybody's interested in what the water situation is. More water is run in the summer through the river than any other time, and then they use it for irrigation. They were also putting new land into agriculture, so they'd run the water over the land, leach it, run the water back into the river. Some of this is happening up around Needles and Blythe, and you wash your hands in that water that they claim is clean water, and it's like washing it in gravel. It has so much salt in it. The water itself is a problem.

W. Poland: I don't know whether Roscoe went into this or not, the water use of the river: Arizona has a certain amount, California has a certain amount, and Mexico is supposed to have something. There should be a certain amount of water for recreation. That's one of the biggest uses of the river, really. The water is used to irrigate for agriculture, but people also boat up and down there. People go hunting up and down there. When the geese are flying over, this is a big deal. Hundreds of people are over there, and it's a big money thing for both states because they sell hunting and fishing licenses. It really is amazing if you count in dollars how much money is involved. Yet, no decision has ever been made that I've ever heard that declares recreation a use of the river, and this should be. Something has to give on that.

R. Poland: Recreation is one of the big uses, but shouldn't really be the primary one.

W. Poland: I realize that the valley over into El Centro and Yuma uses a lot of irrigation water. Irrigation is a big thing, and I realize it's part of it. But at the time they were putting in fields of cotton around Blythe, they were taking cotton out of production in the South. It doesn't seem to balance itself off. These farms are largely syndicate farms. They are big investment deals where big money has been invested, using a lot of expensive equipment.

Working with the Bureaus of Reclamation and Land Management

Clark: In your experience with the Bureau of Reclamation, have you noticed an inability not only to communicate with them, but also a lack of being able to get information from them?

R. Poland: Not only does this happen, but also what I call plain duplicity. This brings up another one of the ongoing problems here. For many years there's been an effort to build two dams in and near to Camp Pendleton on the Santa Margarita River. It's been called the Santa Margarita Project. This project, just for one item, would take away the water from two different Indian tribes in the area. That's perhaps been where we were interested the most. But we've also been interested in a very scenic area called De Luz Valley. Under the original plan, a large part of the valley would be flooded out in times of high water, but the rest of the time it would just be a lot of snags and stumps sticking up. Our water situation is such now that even with a dam it would be seldom that it would extend up to this valley. You wouldn't even have a lake there. You would just have a scene of desolation.

R. Poland: In line with this, it has always been most difficult to get accurate information from the Bureau of Reclamation. Of all government agencies they're certainly one of the most difficult to work with. As you were saying earlier, it's like a blob. It's hard to get a hold of anything, but there has been opposition from residents of the area and from conservationists who keep this thing squelched. They've never made a start on it.

Just last year we were alerted that the bureau was coming up again with another proposition. They had a very long, detailed plan several years ago, and apparently they now have something else. I haven't seen this as yet, but the political climate is not good for this now anyway. We think particularly since Carter has come into office that we should be able to prevent anything like this from getting started. He didn't do well in stopping the Central Arizona Project, and several of these other boondoggle water projects, but we're hoping that with this administration that the Santa Margarita Project won't get off the ground.

As for the Bureau of Reclamation, we frankly felt we didn't know what to believe. We have never been happy in our contacts with them.

W. Poland: We'd hear a rumor there was a meeting. We'd call to see where the meeting was, and they'd say, "No, there isn't any such thing." However, we'd go up there, and there was a meeting.

Clark: I see. Are there any other remarks on this channelization issue that you'd like to cover before we move on to another subject? Perhaps a summation.

W. Poland: The Bureau of Land Management was trying real hard over there, particularly around Yuma, to build recreation areas and to do something with their land. They have so much land.

R. Poland: That was literally the land on both sides of the river. When Ralph Conrad was in the Yuma BLM office, he was interested in developing recreation areas. The Bureau of Land Management had been opposed to what the Bureau of Reclamation was doing.

W. Poland: The BLM has done a lot. The last time we were over there was last spring, and on both sides of the river they have made parking areas and camping sites. People used to go in and make their own camp areas. You are now supposed to stay in certain areas where there are johns and other facilities.

Clark: Do you view this as good or bad?

W. Poland: I view it as good, because I think recreationists were running all over the desert. Many of them will take a camper, a dune buggy, or a motorcycle and run all over the desert. So, they were getting tracks going all over. Now that part of the country has not been archeologically gone over carefully, and there are a lot of Indian sites that should be studied. The Bureau of Land Management is just beginning to get a handle on use of the desert. They have been trying real hard.

R. Poland: The Bureau of Land Management is presently working with the wildlife refuge people on the preservation of these areas. We were pleased on our last trip to find the wildlife refuge people were stopping overnight camping within the Imperial Wildlife Refuge. This activity is too detrimental to the area. This is a move which will not hurt campers.

The Bureau of Land Management is also asking for our opinions. For example, at the Lake Martinez resort area they wanted to put in a new sewage plant. The one they have there is too small. We largely approve what they were going to do there. We feel this will mean that there will be an area of stores and places to get beer and wine and so on. People can come in close and camp around there. These ORV people seem to be so gregarious that they like to jam up close to each other, just the opposite of Sierra Club people. I would say, club members would want to be spread out. This collecting of ORV people is good since you get them closer together in one area that's already developed anyway.

W. Poland: Roscoe, why was it that the California side had never been developed or people hadn't camped on it? There was no way to get in there, was that it?

R. Poland: Yes, that was it. You'd have to walk in originally.

W. Poland: That area is neat looking, very neat looking. Now there's a bridge across. On the Arizona side they built, and built, and it looks like shack city. Orderly development is needed when people go into these areas because of sewage and other problems. You can have sickness. A lot of people have campers, and mobile homes, and what have you. They want to go and have a place where they can have a recreation spot, and some of them built very poor in Arizona.

I personally felt good about California when I saw the California side. It looked very nice and it's all due to the Bureau of Land Management, as I understand. They really did a nice job of land use there, I think. There's a marine base near there, on the Arizona side. While we were there one time, they brought over a busload of marines to go swimming on the California side. It's neater, it's cleaner, it makes you want to go there.

IV SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION CONCERNS

A Conflicting View on Mineral King

Clark: I would like, if you have nothing further to say on this subject, to discuss your involvement with the southern section of the club's Conservation Committee. How did you become involved in that, and who were the different personalities on the committee?

R. Poland: Becoming Conservation Chairman of the San Diego Chapter in 1955 made me a member of the Southern Section Conservation Committee, as it was called at that time. Clark Jones, then of Riverside, was the chairman. Looking back to those early days, I remember that Mr. and Mrs. Bill Henderson were members, as well as Irene Charnock, Arthur Johnson, and Al Gustus. In passing, Al is another person that should be interviewed. He became chairman of the committee after Clark Jones gave up the position. He and his wife Margaret are old timers in the Sierra Club and in conservation work. They were on the committee at the time when I started. I know Robin Ives and Bob Marshall came a little later. I don't know the exact dates.

We, as I look back, always had the most tremendous agenda. It seemed like the issues multiplied from month to month, and we just had to send in what we had to the club headquarters. San Francisco took up some issues, and others it didn't. We never did know just why this was. There were some concerns that died on the vine, so to speak, while others that came to us went on and became issues that continue to this day.

We were saying earlier today that Mineral King was one of the issues at that time. What they called the Southern Regional Committee extended as far as Kern County and to Tehachapi. The Mineral King issue then was started with the southern section when the Kern-Kaweah Chapter informed everyone about this oncoming problem. At the time, we didn't have any idea that it would be

R. Poland: as bad as it's turned out to be because we did not have the full details of the Disney proposed plan. We thought we had enough, so we sent it in.

We hardly received any interest from San Francisco at that time. Looking back, I can see why because we presented it as a needed program for a ski resort in this area, pointing out that people in southern California had to go such a long distance to do skiing. Mineral King would be closer, and it was an ideal place, etc. However, we did not have all the details about what a grandiose thing this was to be. We were not aware of Disney's plans to build on the mountains, the number of ski lifts they would have, and that it was going to be a year round development. They were planning on so many thousands of people per day coming in, and, what was it, three hotels to house them. In other words, it was a scheme to completely transform Mineral King from what it was to just a Mickey Mouse thing.

Establishing the Conservation Call, 1969

Clark: Bob Marshall mentions in his interview* about being able to go to San Francisco and being stimulated by what he refers to as the very shrewd and well thinking minds that were on the Sierra Club board of directors at that time. Marshall also mentions at that time the board of directors would listen to their committees, which later, according to him, they did not. Did you have a similar impression of the board of directors?

R. Poland: Yes, that's right, that's my feeling. At first I thought perhaps it was the old feeling that things down at this end weren't as important. Also, the board was, in the true sense of the word, swamped with so much else, and by what seemed to them enormous issues. The Dinosaur thing and the Redwoods aroused great concerns. But I think there was more communication and more concern shown in the earlier period. Later on, and I think I know the period to which Marshall was referring, I became increasingly frustrated with them. I didn't think we were even hitting a blob or anything of this sort. They were not paying any attention.

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*Robert R. Marshall, Angeles Chapter Leader and Wilderness Spokesman, 1960s, Sierra Club Oral History Project, 1977.

Clark: At what time would you say this not paying attention suddenly became apparent to yourself?

R. Poland: I recall feeling particularly this way in 1968. 1968 was the year that I came back and served one year as the chapter conservation chairman again. I had been presuaded to do this. I had the feeling then the atmosphere might be a little better for accomplishing things. We might be able, if we used a two by four, to get the mule's attention with all our southern problems. I know how Bob felt on that because that was my feeling. I was asked to continue after 1968, but I would not do it.

In fact, I felt so strong about it that in 1969, when the seemingly endless problem of the Coyote Canyon Road in Anza-Borrego came up, and the continuing concern over the Colorado and what the Bureau of Reclamation might do there, I started sending alerts asking people to write and trying to rabblerouse. By this time, as all conservation chairmen get, I had quite a mailing list. Fortunately I was able to get response, and then I continued sending out these alerts called Conservation Call. I just rubbed my head and came up with this heading. I began to get killed with the postage because so many people wanted to be on the list and be informed. The third issue I said, "If anybody can spare a dollar, it will help out in the mailing of this publication and to pay for postage." A lady in Chula Vista sent seventy-five dollars. I had said a dollar would help, and she sent seventy-five dollars. That was certainly something in 1969, and other people responded generously, though not like that, too.

So, I was sort of pushed into making it a regular publication. One year went after the other, and it's continued to the present time. Eventually, we reached the place where it seemed best for what we wanted to incorporate. It is now Conservation Call, Incorporated, a family corporation. We did this primarily so we could be nonprofit and try to get tax deductible donations, and to apply for grants to make a film. We wanted to make a desert conservation film emphasizing Anza-Borrego.

The film was to have two purposes. The first was to call attention to the overall damage of the desert environment. The second was to focus on the attitudes of many people who think Anza-Borrego, being a state park, is safe. This is not so. We have had a great many assaults upon it, both actual and proposed. The park has lost some of its territory in the Carrizo Impact Area that the Navy took away during World War II. They have since said that they want to relinquish it, however, and it's in limbo.

Clark: My impressions are that you formed this outside conservation organization out of frustration with the Sierra Club.

R. Poland: Yes, and I dropped off the club conservation committee, too. I felt very bad about this later. At the time I just told the chapter that I didn't feel it was worth my time. It wasn't the committee, but I said we weren't getting anything done. I said talk to Bob Marshall. The chairman of the San Diego Chapter at that time was a fellow named Carl Swedelius. He was a most earnest, real intense worker. I didn't realize until after it happened a few years later, that Carl was one of the many who were cut off at an early age, one of the many coronary victims. It wasn't until I talked to his wife later that I knew that he felt very bad about this. I've been of two minds since. He was so disappointed that I left because (again, some of the flattery I received which I don't think is deserved) they felt I was the one to do it. The feeling was that I could have, in the long run, accomplished something. That's just one of those things.

To answer your question, yes, frustration was largely the reason. When I got this response from just sending out these little typed mailings, I thought, "Now look, maybe I can do something this way myself." So, in spite of a big draw into other things, such as a lot of work with the Wilderness Society, and then later with the Audubon Society, I guess I had the Conservation Call as something to fall back on. This publication, I'm very happy to say, has never been very large; however, I have quite a hard core of supporters, mostly in San Diego.

Communication Barriers in The Sierra Club

Clark: Can you specify any points where you were specifically frustrated with the Sierra Club?

W. Poland: Let me say one thing. If you had a problem and you wanted to get some information, you would phone San Francisco. When Brower was the head man, he was never available. He was always either out of town or he'd phone you, but he never phoned you. McCloskey [Michael McCloskey, executive director, 1969-present] was the same way. One day I finally got a hold of McCloskey, and I guess I was sharp [laughter]. He knew I had called several times. It's funny, they always manage to get out from under something that they didn't want to give you an answer for. You'd write and say, "This is the latest problem we're having, and we want to do such and such. Is it all right to go ahead and do it here?" You couldn't get an answer. This is one of the things.

W. Poland: Communications has always been a problem. We've gone to several Sierra Club study groups where everybody comes and you discuss all the problems you're having. Communications is the first one that comes up and they all discuss it, and nothing ever changes. Now you go ahead. Maybe you can think of a specific thing.

R. Poland: We're not sure. We've been really not that active in the club since 1968. I don't know how it is now. I know that generally speaking, in regard to the people I know who have been in the Sierra Club as long or longer than the San Diego Chapter, they are unhappy with the chapter we have today. I think part of this has just been inevitable. It happens when people grow older. They see younger people doing it, and life and situation changes. The new people have different approaches, and the Sierra Club has been restructured. I just think this is a natural thing. Personally, I'm not inclined to blame the new people. I'm so glad that there are young people that are that interested, and are working. That's why I say we don't know. You'd really have to ask the present chairman about the communications.

W. Poland: For many years when Roscoe and I were real active, this is what we'd run into. We'd get an issue or problem or something that came up, so we'd call. You write a letter and you don't get an answer, so you call. You would find the only person that could possibly answer this was Brower or McCloskey. They were always out of town. The staff would say that they would get them as soon as they got in but apparently they never did. This could be a real frustrating thing.

Clark: Did you have to get their approval?

W. Poland: The club itself had certain procedures and policies that they felt should be followed. You were supposed to go through those procedures.

R. Poland: At this time there was a bunch more in the chain of command, so to speak. We thought that we had to have approvals in these issues from the top down. It's my understanding that it's not so much this way anymore. The chapters are more autonomous now. I know we've seen that in <u>High Sierrans</u>. They can take the ball and run. I take this to mean that if the Coyote Road should come up again, down here we could go ahead without clearances.

W. Poland: One of the problems that happened during that time that you were active, one of the chapters, I can't remember which one it was, printed some things in their monthly newsletter, and the board took issue. It was apparently against the club's policy to say such and such. You could not go out on a limb like that. On

W. Poland: the one hand you were being reprimanded if you did, and on the other hand they were not giving you any go ahead. You finally got the idea that if you didn't hear from them that meant go ahead.

R. Poland: We never got any backfire on it.

W. Poland: Sometimes when you're using a name of a national or international organization to back up something you're saying, you hesitate to say "Sierra Club says this" unless you know that you're going to be backed up. You don't want to get yourself out on a limb on some of these things. That's part of what we ran into, and I wish I could think of the individual incidents because we had so many.

R. Poland: There were so many it blurs.

Conservation Goes on the Offensive: The Wilderness Act

W. Poland: Yes, and it's just a blur of so many fires that we were fighting. We were always on the defensive. I think now it's hard for anyone who wasn't living or wasn't active at that time to understand that most of the twenty-five years that we have been in conservation were all defensive. Dinosaur and all these big things were defensive actions. The offense is what the Sierra Club is doing now, such as going to court and saying, "I want you to do this." They are actually taking the offense in many instances.

R. Poland: For us, the first time that a forward thrust happened was with the Wilderness Act [1964]. There were these hundreds of areas to be reviewed, commented on, and fought for. Can you remember how many hearings have we attended?

W. Poland: Oh, we attended a great many in Arizona, California, and Nevada. Weren't those over in Yuma? Yes, they were wilderness hearings because they were the Kofa mountains.

R. Poland: Yes, and we went to, of course, Havasu, and Imperial and the Desert Wildlife Range in Nevada. There were a great many of them. By this time, I was working with the Wilderness Society. I started working with them particularly because the Wilderness Society did great work on those wilderness reviews. That was what they did at that time. I made it a point to inform myself, and write on many of those. I know that I kept myself informed, and followed up on at least a hundred of those including many in the east, if I had the tiniest thread to pull on.

R. Poland: For example, they had one close to Boston, a wildlife refuge. In this case, I wrote to an old navy shipmate and asked him about it. I didn't know anything about the refuge except the proposal I got. Well, he knew the area and was good enough to go out and check it out. He made a recommendation, and then I felt I could adequately write on it. So, to come back, that was about the time we felt we were being positive and not just reacting to something.

W. Poland: We had so many local issues here plus issues that were on a little further like the desert areas out in Anza-Borrego. We were having dozens of little things we were keeping track of, not just one. Dinosaur was, of course, a huge thing when we first got started. You had to learn about everything.

Anza-Borrego Desert Problems: Pipeline and Inholdings

Clark: We seem to have covered quite a few topics here. Maybe we could focus a little bit on Anza-Borrego, and Coyote Canyon in particular. I understand that there was an attempt to build a pipeline through there. This was one of the early issues that came before the southern section of the conservation committee. In fact, you went out there one time with Art Johnson on a field trip, I believe, in regards to this pipeline question.

R. Poland: I think there were two or three field trips. I didn't go on all of them, but the pipeline was very much an issue. This was a gas pipeline by Tenneco. They called it Tennessee Gas Transmission in those days. They proposed to build a pipeline from Texas to California through Anza-Borrego. We employed a private pilot to go up, take pictures of the area, and also take pictures of a pipeline in Arizona. These pictures showed what a pipeline does to the desert terrain even years later after it's supposed to be all smoothed over and forgotten about. That was a positive thing accomplished by the committee. We were able to get that one squelched.

W. Poland: May I say one thing? At that time, when we were first just getting started, we were babes in the woods. We didn't know the politics in this state at that time was such that there had been money appropriated to build an interpretive center at Anza-Borrego State Park. Here we were on this committee, and we didn't know this at all. However other people knew it, and they called themselves the Forty-niners, didn't they?

R. Poland: Death Valley Forty-niners.

W. Poland: So, they saw to it, through political intrigue, that the money was transferred to the federal government. The interpretive center that you see in Death Valley now was built with our money literally. It was built by state park money that should have been used to build the Anza-Borrego center.

I didn't believe it when I first heard it. I heard it a few years later, and I said, "It isn't so." Everybody I've told I've had to say, "Look, it sounds impossible, but it did happen, and this is what can happen if you are not aware of what's going on in the political scene in your state." We weren't, we were babes in the woods and we learned very slowly that you had better learn what's going on.

You must meet your representatives and get them interested in the state parks. We have done this with several. We try to take anybody who's running for an office in our area here out and show them Anza-Borrego State Park. We've had several trips out there to show candidates the area and tell them why we're interested even before they're elected. We do this if we can because they have more time then than they do later to find out about it.

This lays a little groundwork for another thing, the ABC Committee that was formed later. Do you want to tell about that? This is not Sierra Club, but we got into it because we had been involved in Anza-Borrego.

R. Poland: That's just another of many offshoots of working in conservation by a number of people. In 1967 the California Department of Parks and Recreation suggested that there should be a committee concerned with the welfare of Anza-Borrego just as there are many other regional groups that are devoted to one place. Several of us were called in and this little committee was formed. It's remained a little committee. As it started out we decided to call it the Anza-Borrego Committee. The big issue in Anza-Borrego, although we keep remarking on Coyote Canyon, are the inholdings, the privately owned lands. It's always looked like the map's been hit with a shotgun pattern.

It was decided that the big need was to get these privately owned lands into the state park. Then they would be protected because even if some guy wants to put up a hamburger stand, he can do it. The only thing that prevents this is that many of these properties sit on top of a pile of rocks someplace. Beautiful desert country, home of the Big Horn, but absolutely worthless in man's commercial sense.

W. Poland: Why are there inholdings? Tell him why.

R. Poland: Because, as far back as the 1920s real estate people, and some con men, were advertising widely. They would say, "Buy land in the beautiful Borrego desert." It wasn't until later they hyphenated it and made it Anza-Borrego. They would show beautiful desert scenes, and it was very cheap, too. You could buy an acre for a few dollars. These parcels were called a beautiful retirement spot in your later years or a relaxing spot to camp in, etc. They were sold in the East, and Midwest. Just as today; we are astonished at it. People pay out a lot of money for desert land somewhere, not only sight unseen, but they never go to it. It's almost as if they don't want to. They may have, underneath, a suspicion they've been had, and they don't want to have it confirmed.

Bud Getty, who is the manager of Anza-Borrego, states that, particularly during the winter, there isn't a week goes by now in recent years that someone hasn't come to the park office and asked, "Where is this? I bought it back in 1950," or "My father bought it in 1928. Where is it? I'd like to sell it." They get out the map and, more often than not, it's down in a canyon or, as I say, on top of the moutains, literally. It isn't worth a dime. Many more of these people are writing, and sometime they will just say, "Sell this for me!"

The reason they're doing this as never before is taxes have gone up. The taxes at one time did not even pay the expense of keeping the records in the assessor's office. Twenty acres was a dollar and a half or something? It was the most ridiculous thing you ever heard of, even for land on top of the mountain. Some years back that was changed because all real estate is just quadrupling and quadrupling again. The desert is no exception. Taxes have risen sharply where people live. In Borrego Springs, for example, they're screaming down there how it's gone up. They have measurably increased the taxes on the inholdings. So, that's why people are trying to peddle.

To come back then to the committee, we said the Anza-Borrego Committee will have one purpose, and we will not discuss anything else, no matter how drastic, at our meetings. We will strive to get the inholdings. This is done by getting the names of the owners of these thousand and one lots. We start out by asking them if they're interested in earning a tax deduction by just plain donating this to the state. A number of people have done so.

R. Poland: We try to do that with people, but if not that we'll ask them to sell it to the Anza-Borrego Committee. The committee has limited funds, and this means that we almost invariably offer them far less than what they think it's worth. As the years have gone by, more and more people have heard of it. Many people write and say, "I have lots of so much footage wherever, and I paid this much for it, and I think it is worth two thousand dollars now." Our chairman, Mrs. Josephine Read, has chosen a good reply. To check values out, she talks with the real estate people in Borrego, and we have some there that are good about giving a fair evaluation. Even with increased taxes, realtors say, nothing's going to happen out there. You can't build there; you can't do anything with it. Using that as a figure, where somebody might say, "I want $2000," the committee will offer them $200. Sometimes they take it. They realize that they might as well have that as a sharp stick in the eye.

W. Poland: If they get a good evaluation, they can actually have somebody evaluate it at two thousand dollars. Then they can take it off their income tax as a deduction. This is perfectly legal, we understand. Four thousand acres have been donated through the ABC Committee. We've got so much we want to do, but we've given quite a little bit in the ten years the committee has been in effect.

This is an offshoot of Sierra Club because there are some who are Sierra Club members, and some that are not.

R. Poland: At first, we had thought that this would be just a little adjunct of the Sierra Club. However, they thought, and I think correctly at this point, that it should really be with a desert organization. We became the Anza-Borrego Committee of the Desert Protective Council.

I think it sounds like we're on the outs with people, but there was a dissatisfaction with this with some people in the Desert Protective Council. As our chairman says, and very truthfully, the Anza-Borrego Committee is the only one that's ever accomplished very much of anything, and some people were plain jealous. To make it brief, we considered breaking away, incorporating and just being ABC by ourselves. Actually, I would have preferred to do this myself. Later we found that the parent organization was amenable to letting us do our thing. Maybe it is better to still be affiliated with the DPC.

W. Poland: We were seeking tax deductible donations, so we had to be sure we were affiliated with a tax deductible organization.

R. Poland: That is the same with our Conservation Call corporation here. You have to have some such status to go to foundations.

W. Poland: Fortunately, we have through this committee, with the help of the state park people, obtained some very respectible donations of land. It's becoming something to do that has status now. The desert, as it stands, is beautiful, and if we don't get these inholdings, people can build little shacks and can demand some kind of road access in there. We have hopes that one of these days we'll be able to buy the land. We sure know the state never has a cent half of the time.

Stopping the Coyote Canyon Road

R. Poland: I can give a good instance of what you are talking about. There's a long time pioneer family, in Borrego Valley, the Burnand family. The old gentleman owned land in Coyote Canyon. It's really the approach to Coyote Canyon and extending up into the canyon to Santa Caterina Springs. This is a place where the DeAnza expedition passed through, and it was up in there, supposedly, where the first white child was born in California. Burnand tried for a Coyote Canyon road time and time again. It's too bad I don't have those listed numerically, but we have beaten that down at least eight times, haven't we?

W. Poland: At least.

R. Poland: Eight times in twenty-five years. I think it's ten times now? Anyway, I know in 1968 a tremendous effort was made, and we managed to knock them down at that time. Burnand always supposedly had been an enemy of conservation. Several years ago he tried to prove it because I guess he was still smarting over that road. He plowed up his land, literally, and put sprinkler pipes in. It was going to be used for agriculture. He owned it. Nothing could be done. He ruined the desert terrain, but there was a great backlash from other people. When they saw it, a great many of the people who were even hostile to us thought that a road would not be good when they saw what it meant to tear up the desert so utterly as he did.

W. Poland: And he did not give any access to the water. This water runs through Coyote Canyon all year long and in the desert it's tremendous. It's a thrill to me to see it.

R. Poland: We didn't realize at the time there was such a backlash. We were so fortunate with the state park people. Jim Whitehead (retired), who was the district superintendent and Bud Getty, who is the area manager of Anza-Borrego, are truly dedicated conservationists. I think both of them together, but particularly Bud, worked with and on Burnand and didn't make him mad. Their efforts and, I like to think, the example of the ABC Committee in plugging away and making a little dent, as in our giving them ten acres, made a startling change.

Burnand suddenly donated, not only the Coyote Canyon land, but the whole thing with a spring and a little later donated some other land which does not include, but which is adjacent to what we call the Elephant Trees, one of the great sights of Anza-Borrego. This was very important because if he had wanted to he could shut you off from going up and viewing these trees.

Apparently, as we get it, he didn't want to do this because he was still thinking of money, I guess. Apparently, his son-in-law is more progressive. He thought, "Well, we can get a nice tax write-off here." We would like to think that our example made him think that way. The story goes that they finally gave Mr. Burnand a bottle of bourbon and put him on a plane for Hawaii. The son-in-law said, "Just get out of town and we'll take care of it." It was all he could stand to do this, after all these years of struggle. We had fought literally over twenty years on that road. He turned completely around and gave that land. A number of people from the San Diego Chapter have gone up there and worked, literally moving rocks and raking. Didn't Bud say they actually did some transplanting?

W. Poland: I think this was the Singles' group, wasn't it? I don't remember for certain.

R. Poland: You have the feeling that these people, whose thoughts usually are just to make a buck, finally just get so stunned by people doing these things. Not only do they not make any money, they spend their own money for transportation to further hearings to fight Coyote Canyon roads. They spend their time, and they work in the hot desert sun replacing rocks and trying as best they can to repair the damage that was done in Coyote Canyon. I guess in spite of themselves, they have to relax and sometimes make donations of this kind. You know, several places around here they pop up and they make a donation of land or do something. It may take about a quarter of a century to do it, but we're beginning to see it, so slowly. It does happen.

W. Poland: One of the things about the Coyote road is that the Coyote Creek is a flash flood area. This also has been one of the big contentions of conservationists. You spend a lot of money building that road, and you're really going to have a big upkeep for it. You ruin an area that is primarily a recreation area. Every single weekend, during the winter particularly, you will see at least ten Boy Scout troops going through in there, hiking and backpacking. Probably more than that, plus the ORVs and all the people along the creek camping. There must be thousands of people. It's amazing how many people use that for recreation. So really I think it may take people ten minutes longer without the road. I think we figured twenty minutes could be saved going from L.A. to Anza-Borrego or Borrego Springs if we had a road through Coyote Canyon. That really doesn't justify building a road in that area. Of course, with inflation and other factors, the cause of conservation has been helped.

The DiGiorgio family owned a lot of land down there. One of the men was on the Park Commission for a long time, and we were afraid that we weren't going to be able to resist. I was told once, "Wilma, you just have to forget it. You can't do it." I said, "Over my dead body," but I was afraid it was going to be, particularly when we first started. There were a lot of powerful people that could have gotten it done. Somehow or other there have always been economic factors and other things that happen that helped slow it down.

The recent one we heard that one of the baseball teams wanted to use Borrego Springs as a spring training camp. They would have liked to have a faster road. Twenty minutes still isn't valid enough reason for building a road. San Diego County would be the main one that would have to pay for the road and its upkeep. Now that the state owns more of Coyote Canyon, we probably have a little better chance of never having a road.

R. Poland: We have leverage there because we have so much more. The only twitch we've had lately is a development that has been approved just below the city of Borrego Springs. This is called South Slope Development, and this is by the DiGiorgio Corporation. DiGiorgio was in agriculture before when they wanted this road so much, but that's died out. They are not growing grapes or growing anything now, so they applied for a very large development there. We think it's very unwise because I don't think enough water is there. However, the county finally, after great hassling, approved a scaled down development. It's about a third of the size. Of course, that may be what they intended all the time. The building will come in. If you get that many people in there, the developers will think, "Maybe we should have a Coyote Canyon road because there will be more traffic coming and going." That's just been said.

R. Poland: There's no guarantee that the development will get off the ground. I don't think it will ever become another Palm Springs. There are thousands of people that want to come to sunny San Diego, but I can't believe there are that many people who want to pay the price that these homes will sell for in Borrego.

Aside from this problem, we trust now that Coyote Canyon Road has been laid to rest. I should say in passing that for years the road was delineated and marked on the county maps of San Diego and Riverside Counties and was shown as an eventual road. Four years ago, Riverside County removed its segment, which was comparatively small but still important. That would have been the north end of the road in Riverside County. I went up to Riverside and spoke in favor of its deletion.

W. Poland: Also, one of the last times the Coyote road was talked about, they finally decided to build the Salton Sea road which was over the old Truckhaven Trail. We had hoped that that would take the pressure off. That was about the time that the Anza-Borrego Committee was formed, too, wasn't it?

R. Poland: I think it was a little before. We were talking about the southern section of the conservation committee. This [the Truckhaven Trail] was one that we really had some heavy sessions on. I don't know whether Art Johnson mentioned this or not, but I know he had a lot of soul searching on that. He was so opposed to it. As with me, we finally were sold on it. Give them that outlet then. I think it has helped. It might have made the difference in stopping a Coyote Canyon road. We said you've got that now. No more.

W. Poland: Yes, it's a good road. It can take you into Palm Springs pretty fast. The trucks go that way. They don't have to have the big grades that they would have had on the Coyote Canyon Road.

V THE FOREST SERVICE'S ACCESSIBILITY AND MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

Herbicides for Fire and Brush Control

Clark: I'd like to, before we leave, speak a little bit about the U.S. Forest Service. What in general has been your attitude toward it?

R. Poland: We were unhappy with the Forest Service as a national agency, generally speaking, from the first here with the Cleveland National Forest. We had a supervisor for many years whose name was Stanley Stevenson, and he very much had the philosophy of multiple use. All you heard then was multiple use. I know Stan would never consider the Wilderness Act. However, he was a good guy, and you could go any time and talk to him. I got off work at three-thirty, and drove right down to his office. The door was always open, and he put his feet on the desk, and we'd have at it. We mostly didn't agree, but it was friendly. They didn't go behind your back or anything of the sort. Stan retired and we've not been happy with the supervisors since that time.

Let's see, that's when they came up with the herbicide program. They did the herbicide spraying in the forest. Not just here, although they did it here, God knows, but in the Angeles Forest, too. That was fire control to kill out brush. Now they've come up with controlled burning.

W. Poland: Well, it was brush control, too. They wanted to get rid of the small stuff so that the animals that browse in there could browse better, because they get smaller grass growing.

R. Poland: Yes, it was to get grass growing. There was a tremendous upheaval here. The service was picketed. Many other people took it up, too. There's a large element of people in San Diego who are opposed to spraying, period. You've noticed that they're in a stew here about the Japanese Beetle. When I first started on

R. Poland: that program, they wanted to spray each individual house in San Diego. They sprayed in Balboa Park, and I could have killed them for that. There were many people that were opposed to spraying, because many people can't stand spray. She [Mrs. Poland] is one of them. If she gets within a mile, she'll be feeling the effects.

W. Poland: We had a feeling that they had a lot of the DDT left over from Vietnam.

R. Poland: The chemical companies wanted to sell this off, and they worked it through the government. Our belief is that the Forest Service was told, "Here take this and use it." Another fellow and myself went up to one of the back country offices of the Forest Service. We got in and we took pictures of the drums. They would never admit that this was the Vietnam defoliate, but the code was on the drums. The labels didn't say anything about Vietnam, but it was the code word for this. It was not this Agent Orange that you have heard about. You know, they had to take that out to sea and burn it. This was something not quite that bad, but nearly so.

We always felt that we proved to our own satisfaction it was Vietnam defoliate. There was such a big to-do over that. They had to stop it. This Forest Service supervisor was not here a long time. Apparently the service thought he really muffed it, and he was sent to Minnesota. Kenton Clark was his name.

W. Poland: They even had a hearing here, remember. They brought down their experts from up north, and they sat up on a dais. The told us what they thought. It was like a king giving his proclamation. And they had paid several professors from Davis and Berkeley. They were supposed to be the experts, and none of us were supposed to know anything. Anybody who got up and said anything was acting very hysterical. That was their attitude.

R. Poland: They didn't want emotional testimony.

W. Poland: A huge room that was filled with people, really filled. It wasn't just Sierra Club, although there were a lot of Sierra Club members there.

R. Poland: Kenton Clark was transferred and they brought in another man named Donald Smith. Don Smith was transferred after a very short time to the Rogue River National Forest, and he was replaced by Fritz DeHoll, who is the present supervisor. This does not even seem like the same service in regards to approachability because the Cleveland National Forest Headquarters is now in our new Federal Building downtown. It's not their fault, but it is in a bleak, sterile building. I usually call it the Bastille because

R. Poland: it rivals the main San Diego Post Office building which I still think is the ugliest building I've seen in any country I've traveled in. It's hard to approach these people anymore. You have the feeling that it's really a stone wall.

The Laguna Mountain Sanitation Timber Harvest Program

R. Poland: Their philosophy of such intense management and manipulation of the forest is just so foreign to our thinking. For example, they proposed what they called the Laguna Mountain Sanitation Timber Harvest Program. This program called for cutting over five thousand trees and goes directly against the original 1926 order by the secretary of Agriculture setting up the Laguna Recreation Area as a recreation resource to be carefully preserved.

This Laguna area is just a little island in the Cleveland National Forest. It has development in it. There's a community, and it has campgrounds and a road runs through it. The Forest Service in 1975 claimed a general deterioration of the forest environment from drought, insects and fires. Laguna forest has existed for untold thousands of years and has survived all these natural assaults and will continue to do so if not interfered with by man. Dr. Carl Hubbs at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography states the case:

> The Forest Service claims a general deterioration will become much worse if the forest is not managed in the environment to preserve its attractiveness for recreation. I cannot agree that cutting thousands of trees in a locality already showing numerous stumps will achieve this. We do not know that many of the large trees marked for cutting will not live on far longer than even the youngest of us.

In this connection, they had marked, we thought, some very large fine old trees because they had showed signs of beetle infestation. This is a chancey thing. Because of the long drought, it is true that the beetle infestation is increasing. It's quite sad, but they're getting into trees and particularly these large trees. I had people that know far more about trees than I do that tell me that that doesn't mean the end of the tree. You see beetles here today. That tree is probably going to live far longer than any of us walking around its roots now. So why cut it down now? Why not give it a chance and sometimes the beetles go so far and stop. The trees live. Many die, this is true, but we feel that this is largely nature's cycle, nature's way.

R. Poland: I say that nature can best handle problems. I was asked by the paper to write that, incidentally.* The Forest Service disclaims revenue as a prime reason for this action, but after viewing the area on a field trip, my opinion is that a good number of large flourishing trees had been marked in order in to interest potential loggers. This would be very natural as the Laguna forests are of poor timber quality. The service tried actively to interest lumber companies, all of them out of town. We don't have anyone around here that said if they could cut as many as five thousand, they probably would be interested.

The Forest Service has never said that timber resource was one of the uses or assets of the Cleveland Forest. However, we had the feeling that the prime reason was to get some money in, and the Forest Service has always said that. I went on then to say [in the newspaper column] this forest can indeed be affected adversely. They cut much of it to save it, and this largely affects the natural production of the forest mantle to which all the vegetation contributes if allowed to go through a normal life cycle. That was one pitch.

There's a little anecdote on this, too. The San Diego Union has this ongoing thing called the Pro and Con. When an issue surfaces, they will ask someone to write his or her "for" position and same way with those against it. The guy writing for it was the ranger in charge of the Laguna area, and I wrote the opposing viewpoint. I received an acknowledgement from the editor, Sam Zumwalt, who handles those things saying this was a very alive issue. He said, "We received many letters concerning Ranger Beutler's and your position." That was the way he put it. I've never learned the numbers, but apparently the reaction was about three to one in favor of my position.

The upshot was that they did not go ahead with this proposed program, although they have quietly gone ahead and cut trees here and there. They did spare many of these big ones that we asked them not to cut, so that was sort of a standoff. It's too bad, but this young fellow by the name of Beutler was transferred out. I thought this was unfair. He's a nice guy. He was truly saying what he believed in. He has the Forest Service philosophy. Apparently, at least here in San Diego, we find that if the higherups in the Forest Service feel that the local men have

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*San Diego Union, December 25, 1974, p. B-9.

R. Poland: muffed somthing like this they transfer them out. So, this is again part of my feeling against the Forest Service, as particularly constituted now.

Clark: You've seen a change, then, over the years from this period where you were able to walk into the supervisor's office.

R. Poland: They were accessible and approachable. You felt that they did listen, and there were times when you influenced them. Now, they play close to the chest, and when you influence them now, it is literally when you make a protest. It's when you get people in the streets, as we did with the herbicide. As with all these things, no one person or two people protesting do this. It's when you get public sentiment aroused as it was three to one previously. Then they give it up and come up with something else.

RARE II and the Agua Tibia Wilderness

R. Poland: The latest thing the Forest Service has going is called RARE II. They are going back again and looking at the wilderness areas in the national forests for something of wilderness caliber. During the Wilderness Act hearings, when we were trying to get Agua Tibia upgraded to a wilderness, there seemed to be no doubt ever that we were not to have a wilderness there. The question was how large. I am happy to say here that I feel I had a very real part in getting Agua Tibia established to its fullest extent.

The reason I was able to do this I think is rather interesting because through the years I have tried to work closely with Senator [Alan] Cranston mostly through his local office. The young man, Greg Hennessey, who was in charge of the San Diego office at that time was a conservationist, a very able young fellow. Using the information several of us supplied him with, he prepared an Agua Tibia Wilderness proposal. He was able to respond to us because he was on the spot. We took him out there, and he went through it.

Later, I was able to get Cranston's office to send their principal aide out here. An Audubon member, Sierra Club member, and myself took these people through Agua Tibia. They saw, and understood what was involved, so when Greg Hennessey sent in his proposal calling for a much larger Agua Tibia Wilderness than the Forest Service had put up, it went through. Part of our proposal

R. Poland: involved a little segment of land. It would have been nice to have it, but it wouldn't have been fatal if it didn't go in. They even put that in. I'm happy about this because I felt I had positively done something.

I should say that the Wilderness Society helped on this, too, because they were interested in this. Cliff Merritt, the Western Director of the Wilderness Society, came. In fact, he stayed here and spoke at the hearing and so on. I think all this occurred in 1972.

But again, at the wilderness hearing, the supervisor of the forest was the only one that spoke for the comparatively small area. Everyone else there was for the large one. Just to give you an idea of the politics, if you don't already know, they're very desirous of having as many organizations' names appear as possible. I've been with the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, and Audubon, yet I wore the hat in this instance of the California Roadside Council [CRC, now defunct]. I was a member of that. It would be another whole interview in itself about our fight against billboards. In this instance, I was the California Roadside Council representative just to get another name in. Largely, our success resulted from our ability to get Cranston's people interested. We had hoped that he would come himself, but in this case he relied on staff. He did very well on this thing as per schedule.

W. Poland: Roscoe, for many years, when Stan Stevenson was there, we would have meetings up in Agua Tibia to go through it. We had one trip where we did a complete walking trip through it. On another trip we were taken through in vehicles where all the gates had to be unlocked because there are a lot of keys owned by farmers or ranchers in the area. These were such amiable groups when we got together there. Usually they were southern section people, most of the people. They'd come from down L.A. or wherever and Sierra Club members from San Diego.

R. Poland: Yes, Art Johnson came down and Al Gustus, Jerry Foote.

W. Poland: Jerry Foote, yes, Marjorie and Clark Jones, Al and Margaret Gustus and quite a few other members. I can't remember exactly every one of them, but we had a real good group, and those of us who had children brought our children. It was almost an outing. Even the Forest Service men often would bring their children. As the years went on, this sort of thing continued as there was another reason to go up in that area or another part of the forest, and if we saw them, we would ask about their children or families. It was a very friendly sort of atmosphere.

W. Poland: We had a very good rapport with the Forest Service, as I see it. As I look back on it, at the time it occurred everybody got along. You could go and sit in the office and talk as you mentioned earlier with Stan Stevenson. Now, that didn't mean that you all agreed on everything or that we agreed. They would not follow through on every one of our grievances or our recommendations, but at least we could talk while Stan Stevenson was there and his assistants. They were all very good, and a conversation could go between the two of you. You felt free to go in any time, which has not been so since Stan left.

Clark: About when did Stan leave?

W. Poland: He retired, oh, dear, five years ago. Stan did do something that I think was very good for the Forest Service. Now he may have been taking orders from San Francisco or they may not have liked what he did, but he was down here for many years, and he apparently made them happy anyway. He was here for a good fifteen years. So were his aides, too. They all liked it here and they stayed here. Their children were here.

The feeling now is very different. For instance, Roscoe's going to a meeting next Saturday, and he is supposed to be on a mailing list to know about that meeting, but he has never been put on the mailing list. Apparently, he's not the only one. Others also are not getting mailings. Yet, last Saturday he went to a Forest Service workshop. They were talking about these possible new roadless areas they were going to add, and they said, "We're revising our mailing list." Well, they're revising it I guess to throw it in the wastebasket every time you walk in there. That's all we can figure. They don't want us to show up. It's a very, very interesting situation that's going on in the Forest Service. We can't understand them.

It just happens there are several people who are gadflies and who are not going to be put off by that. Roscoe doesn't happen to have time to go down and check, but there are others that do. They go by and they keep asking questions, and the secretaries do give them some information in spite of themselves.

VI MEN TO MATCH OUR MOUNTAINS

William O. Douglas: Most Admired American

Clark: I understand at one time you had a meeting with William O. Douglas.

R. Poland: This was just a brief thing. This was at Clair Tappaan Lodge. Douglas had come there from walking the Olympic Strip. He made famous the need for preserving the Olympic Strip through these famous walks. Several years later he did this again to publicize the Olympic Strip and also the cause of wilderness in general as I remember. A number of people including Art Johnson, were with him. Art literally walked with him on that trip as I recall, and several people, including Justice Douglas and his wife of that time, came on down and stayed at Clair Tappaan Lodge.

W. Poland: He was going to go on some kind of a trip with the Edgar Wayburns, wasn't he? They were going to go into the Sierra for some kind of a backpack trip as I remember.

R. Poland: Well, I forgot that. I was so thrilled to meet Douglas, shake his hand, and be able to tell him that I just wanted to state my appreciation for what he'd done. He's really my hero. I think he's the greatest living American. It was a great thing to be able to see him and to state this.

W. Poland: This was not a Sierra Club meeting. This was a Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs meeting. You were on one of the committees that had worked up several resolutions for the annual meeting there. They have a meeting over Labor Day weekend somewhere every year, and it just happened this time it was Clair Tappaan Lodge. I think Brower was there, Wayburn was there, and several of the board of directors. Some of them are members of Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs.

R. Poland: I can't remember why I felt called upon to say anything. I guess I felt it should be said. I just said people should realize the great work Justice Douglas had done to preserve liberties in this country. I considered at that time that the Warren Court was a great and liberal court. I felt that a lot of it was due to the fact that he was there and could influence the others. I still feel that way, seeing what the court has become since he retired.

W. Poland: You shook his hand and told him, and he stood there with his mouth open.

R. Poland: He was like a little boy. I was quite touched by it. He acted embarrassed by it, kind of hung his head.

W. Poland: Roscoe thanked him for all the things that he'd done to preserve individual liberties in the United States. I was too much in awe to even shake his hand, but Roscoe felt a very great need to shake his hand and to tell him this. We were amazed to find the man so embarrassed to be told that he was a great man. He really was very shy about it.

Man and Nature: A Personal Philosophy

Clark: I have a few more "grab bag" type questions. This one I'm about to ask I'd first like you to answer it fully, Mr. Poland, and then maybe you, Mrs. Poland. I would like to ask you what do you believe your personal relationship with nature is. How do you personally relate to nature? What is nature to you?

R. Poland: Nature is to me the whole complex of life. I feel very much that not only myself but all of mankind is just a part of nature, a part of the animal world. We happen to be able to reason to a much greater degree than the animal kingdom, but I sometimes think that's been the great misfortune for the animal kingdom. I literally feel that I am as much a part of it as an oak tree or an old wood rat or an elk or you name it. That's my feeling. I feel that I must play my part in trying to keep insofar as possible the balance of nature from being upset by my being.

I wish that we were living in harmony with each other, that we were not killing things, that we were not using whales and dolphins or any other of the endangered animals which are threatened by our existence and our needs. I firmly believe

R. Poland: that when an animal becomes extinct or is even driven perilously close to it, this has and will have a detrimental effect upon man, too. You just come right back to John Muir: when you tinker with anything, you find it's fastened to everything else in the universe.

Clark: Mrs. Poland.

W. Poland: I don't think I often go as deep as he does into thinking of nature. I think of it more as enjoyment. My enjoyment of nature is what we see and what we do. I'm getting as I grow older more against any killing of animals and humans. As he says, we kill whales,and we kill porpoise to get tuna to eat. But I think more in the terms of enjoyment when I think of nature. Roscoe is thinking of the whole picture here. He even hesitates to kill the ants sometimes around here. However, we all appreciate nature in a little different way.

The Sierra Club's Brock Evans

Clark: I'd like to pose one more final question. What do you believe is the future of the Sierra Club as you see it?

R. Poland: Judging from the present, I am optimistic about the future of the Sierra Club and the direction it seems to be taking; that is, its great efforts in litigation in going directly to the courts, confrontations with the government agencies. This has increased so much in recent years, and they've got many good people working on it. If they continue in this direction, I think that they'll have a very good future. It has accomplished good things. Hopefully now that we have for the first time a [U.S.] president who seems to be pretty much conservation oriented, I think that there will be more successes, more than we've had in the past.

I'm just guessing, but I think the Sierra Club is changing, and that perhaps it'll be a truly activist organization. The social side will pretty much die down. For example, in San Diego the executive committee has discussed whether or not they should continue to have monthly meetings because the turnout is comparatively small in comparison with former years. We have four thousand members where once we had four hundred, but there aren't as many people actively working, that is, actively working on any phase of Sierra Club activities, like the outings or our lodge or conservation, that sort of thing, but still the work

R. Poland: that is done contributes to the better successes the Sierra Club is having in its efforts. It's changing and will change quite a bit from the organization we were ten years ago. So as a force for conservation, I'm optimistic about what the Sierra Club will do in the coming years.

However, I can't help but insert something at this time to show how I feel about this. After Carter got in office, I wrote to him. He had said he wanted people to write. I said, please appoint a conservationist as the secretary of the Interior. I said the Sierra Club has a man that I consider eminently qualified, and that's Brock Evans. What could I lose? To appoint Brock Evans as secretary of the Interior. He's one of the great guys in conservation that really does things. [Evans was director of the Sierra Club's Washington Office until 1980; currently, he is associate executive director of the Sierra Club.] He's just forty now. I remember very well when he came west in 1966. We took a trip to Hawaii. We camped on all the islands with Clark and Marjorie Jones. We wound up going to a Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs convention they had in the islands that year.

When Brock Evans was appointed the Sierra Club's Northwest Representative I think he had been living in Ohio. He's a pleasant looking fellow, but like William O. Douglas doesn't show on the outside what's inside [laughter]. But, oh, he really tore up things. That was in 1967. We were sweating out the North Cascade National Park then. They had a hearing in one of the smaller towns in Washington. Congressman Wayne Aspinall was chairing the committee. There would have been a time you would have been delighted if you could get two hundred out.

Brock Evans, as I was told, walked the streets like somebody going through a precinct, and he knocked on the doors, and he made people listen. He told people what was involved and told them to come to this meeting and two thousand showed up in this small town. Aspinall was infuriated. "What do you mean having so many people here! We can't hold them all." They had to find some auditorium, and they still couldn't get them all in. They were hanging in the windows, everyplace. That's just one thing that he did.

The guy was a ball of fire, but he's much more than a rabblerouser. His ability was such the club sent him to Washington to be the representative there because they wanted him to be able to go in, as the saying goes, turn his wolves loose on Congress. He's not just a firebrand; he's tremendously well informed. He is an attorney. I considered him eminently fitted

R. Poland: to be secretary of the Interior because he was young and yet he'd racked up impressive experience. I suppose this was overruled from the very fact I asked for a conservationist. I'm sure Carter would say, "Well, I have one in Cecil Andrus."

The guy who took Brock's job as northwest representative was Doug Scott. I know him very well. He's much the same way. He was trying to get his doctorate, and he started working for the Wilderness Society. He went here, there and everywhere, had preached conservation and worked on it so much that he never was able to write a dissertation. A college gave him his doctorate because of his work for the wilderness. This was brought out at a Wilderness Society seminar in Washington I attended. He hung his head while they were talking about it, but he never mentions this himself.

Clark: Is there anything else that either of you would perhaps like to bring up before we close?

W. Poland: I think something Roscoe has said in the past is a good statement to end this: each individual who lives on this planet should justify his reason for being here. There has to be something that he contributes to the world. Now each one may think they're contributing in some way, but I think working for the planet in conservation is the best way of contributing. I think he certainly has done that.

R. Poland: The only thing I might add is, as I say, I'm always writing something. We get out an annual Christmas letter and usually I'm sounding off. I can't keep away from the subject of conservation. Some years back, I think was the year we went to the Cascades. We realized fully for the first time that wilderness is our necessity and I mean to get out as often as possible into and with the natural world. In his farewell address, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was ninety years or more at the time, said, "The work is never done as long as the power to work remains." I have always remembered this. Now that I've got up to three score and ten, I find that that's true. The work of conservation is never done as long as you have the power to do something for it.

Clark: On that note, I would like to thank you, Mr. Poland, and also Mrs. Poland, for your time today, to express your thoughts and your reminiscences of your experiences with the Sierra Club. I'd like to thank you on behalf of the Oral History Program at California State University, Fullerton, and the Sierra Club History Committee.

Transcriber: Linda Jantzen
Final Typist: Matthew Schneider

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JOHN AND RUTH MENDENHALL

FORTY YEARS OF SIERRA CLUB MOUNTAINEERING LEADERSHIP, 1938 - 78

An Interview Conducted by
Richard Searle

Sierra Club
History Committee

1979

SIERRA CLUB ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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April 1979

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PREFACE

The Mendenhall name is strongly associated with mountain sports in southern California. This is appropriate, although the Mendenhalls no longer live in the area, nor did they start out there.

John Dale Mendenhall moved to Van Nuys, California, from his native Missouri as a boy of eight in 1919. Family vacations to the Sierra stimulated an interest in mountaineering, and he had made three first ascents near Convict Lake before 1930. That year John and a friend made the first ascent of the Northeast Gully of Laurel Mountain, generally accepted as the first belayed climb in the Sierra. The youths had been practicing on Los Angeles area cliffs, using techniques gleaned from library books. John published accounts of his climbs in the Sierra Club Bulletin but did not join the club until later.

John attended Cal Tech, graduating with honors in 1933. He entered the profession of civil engineering and went to work on water projects on the Colorado River. Despite a competing interest in wrestling, he continued climbing throughout the early and middle 1930's, often with Sierra Club members.

Meanwhile, Ruth Eleanor Dyar had come to southern California and developed an interest in the Sierra Club. She started out on a farm at Kiesling, Washington; she and her four siblings moved to nearby Spokane when she was fourteen. Ruth's father worked for a newspaper in Spokane and was an author and playwright. She likewise took to writing and earned a BA cum laude in journalism from the University of Washington in 1934.

Ruth joined the club's (then) Southern California Chapter in late 1937 and its Ski Mountaineers Section in January 1938. With her journalism background, she was naturally attracted to the recently started Mugelnoos, the joint newssheet of the chapter's Ski Mountaineering and Rock Climbing sections. She became editor in April, 1938, quickly establishing a distinctive, witty style that was a club-wide hit.

John returned to Los Angeles from the desert in early 1938 and joined the Sierra Club. He was climbing more than ever and soon became active with the Rock Climbing Section (RCS). Ruth was drawn into climbing by the Mugelnoos crowd, and she and John first met on an RCS trip to Tahquitz Rock in the Spring of 1938. They both became RCS members on June 29, 1938. During the 1938 season, John made the second ascent of the infamous Mechanic's Route at Tahquitz Rock, and Ruth, on her first Sierra trip, took part in the first ascent of the North Buttress ("Swiss Arete") of Mt. Sill.

John joined the Ski Mountaineers Section in December 1938, and the two now crossed paths skiing. In May 1939, they became charter members of "Base Camp," a cooperative with other young skiers and climbers. The rented house became an unofficial headquarters for the RCS and Ski Mountaineers and was the scene of huge parties held to publish and mail the Mugelnoos.

Climbing together frequently in 1939, John and Ruth made first ascents on Strawberry Peak locally and in the Mt. Whitney area of the Sierra. The peak of that season, however, was down in the valley: John and Ruth were married on September 22, 1939. Their honeymoon included a climb at Pinnacles National Monument.

Their pace seemed to quicken after marriage. John became the third RCS chairman, while the Mugelnoos reached undreamed of heights of popularity and influence under Ruth's continued editorship. In August of 1940, they broke out of the local scene and entered the ranks of internationally active climbers by attempting difficult Mount Confederation in the Canadian Rockies--a big step at a time when only one other party of southern California climbers had ventured so far afield.

The war years took them to San Jose, California; Delaware; Missouri; and finally Birmingham, Alabama, where daughter Vivian was born in 1943. These years saw more Sierra first ascents, climbs in the Devil's Lake area of Wisconsin, ascents (including a first) in the Tetons, and various local climbs and backpacks.

Again in southern California by 1945, John and Ruth returned to their Sierra Club activities. John resumed

leading outings. Following the birth of Valerie in 1946, Ruth became head of the committee overseeing the Mugelnoos. By now the editors changed each month, and Ruth took her place in the rotation.

The Mendenhalls' years since the war have been too busy to permit anything resembling a complete account. Some of the highlights follow:

--Trips to Canada, resulting in the first ascent of Mt. Confederation (1947); the first ascent of the North Peak of Mt. Lowell (1948); ascents of several Bugaboos (1949); first ascents of Mt. Synge, Midway Peak, and difficult Aiguille Peak (1952); the first ascent of Mt. Palmer (1953); a weathered-out attempt on Robson (1954); and the first climb of the Northwest Ridge of Mt. Temple (1957).

--Myriad Sierra Climbs, including the first ascents of various points on Palisade Crest (1954-55) and of the North Face of Mt. Williamson (1957). In addition, John made many other technical first ascents (far too many to mention) and three first winter ascents (Mt. Sill, 1957; Middle Palisade, 1960; Mt. Gayley, 1961).

--Innumerable climbs at Tahquitz Rock, including the first ascent of Super Pooper (1952). Additionally, John and Harry Sutherland pioneered the Open Book (1947), John and Royal Robbins created Human Fright (1952), and John and Chuck Wilts made the Consolation (1953).

--Climbs of most of the major Cascade volcanos, many with the children.

Unlike many top climbers, the Mendenhalls have not avoided the world of volunteer organizations. Many of their activities have, of course, been with the Ski Mountaineers and RCS. John and Ruth served on the Ski Mountaineers Central Committee at various times, led many ski tours, and helped build Keller Hut. John was Keller and Baldy huts treasurer from 1945 until 1978. In the RCS, John led more days of climbing than any other leader in the section's history (over 100 days). Ruth served as secretary-treasurer 1953-54; John served a second term as Chairman 1958-59. John was a member of the Safety Committee from the first one in 1946 until 1978, and Ruth

was on the committee 1969-78. Ruth was chairman of the Mugelnoos Committee until 1978.

Outside the sections, Ruth served on the chapter Publicity Committee in the '40s and was on the national Editorial Board 1940-41 and 1953-59. John was on the Harwood Lodge Committee and served a number of years on the Angeles Chapter Executive Committee. They both instructed in the chapter's Basic Mountaineering Training Course.

John and Ruth joined the American Alpine Club in 1966. Ruth was elected an AAC director in December 1974, reelected 1977. She also served on the Membership Committee (1976; chair 1977). John has served on the Conservation Committee since 1976. Ruth, following her journalistic instincts, took over as editor of the American Alpine News in 1978.

They have produced several books. Ruth authored Backpack Cookery (1966, revised 1974) and Backpack Techniques (1967, revised 1973). John and Ruth jointly wrote Introduction to Rock and Mountain Climbing (1968, revised 1975). They contributed to the 1954 and 1965 editions of the Climber's Guide to the High Sierra, and Ruth's articles have appeared in Desert, Summit, National Parks, etc.

1978 was the climax of the Mendenhalls' years in southern California. At a special Mugelnoos meeting in May, they were given certificates of RCS honorary membership, voted by the section for forty years of loyal support and climbing achievement. At the same meeting, a member of the club board of directors presented them with the Farquhar Award, the highest Sierra Club recognition for mountaineering. Shortly thereafter they moved to Seattle to begin a new era following John's retirement.

Their friends in southern California remember with gratitude their years of helping to teach beginning climbers and skiers. Few, if any, climbers of their caliber have befriended so many. That they have never lost the desire to meet new friends and help others find joy in the mountains is a great gift to us all.

John Ripley
Historian
Angeles Chapter Rock Climbing Section
February 24, 1979

INTRODUCTION

The following interview is with John and Ruth Mendenhall. John and Ruth have been active in the Ski Mountaineers and Rock Climbing Sections of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club since 1938. They first met at the base of Tahquitz Rock, a favorite climbing area in southern California. Mountaineering has continued to the present to be a major aspect of their activities, both with the club and on private trips. As climbing partners they have made several first ascents and pioneered numerous new climbing routes.

John was Rock Climbing Section chairman for two terms, and for many years treasurer for the Keller and San Antonio Ski Huts. Ruth for thirty-nine years was chairman and frequent editor of the Mugelnoos, the first Sierra Club section or chapter news sheet. She is now on the board of the American Alpine Club and editor of the American Alpine News. In May of 1978 Ruth and John Mendenhall were presented with the Sierra Club's Francis Farquhar Award for major contributions to American Mountaineering. John and Ruth are truly the mountaineering family of southern California.

This interview was conducted on Tuesday evening, December 13, 1977, at the Mendenhall's home in Pasadena, California.

Richard Searle
Interviewer
Sierra Club History Committee
March 1, 1979

TWO ROUTES TO TAHQUITZ

Backgrounds in Washington and Missouri

Richard Searle: Ruth could you give a little background as to when and where you were born, places you lived, and such information as that?

Ruth Mendenhall: Yes, my parents lived about ten miles south of Spokane, Washington, in such a small town that it wasn't really a town though it had a name, Kiesling. It was named after my mother's father. We had a ten-acre farm, but it was just a living farm. My father, Ralph Dyar, was a newspaper man and a playwright, and he commuted to Spokane. I had one brother and three sisters. I lived in the country until I was fourteen years old, and I always loved the country life.

RS: When were you born, if I can ask you that?

RM: I will say that I was born Ruth Eleanor Dyar around the start of the First World War, but I'm not going to commit myself exactly.

RS: Were you educated in Washington?

RM: I didn't go to public school until I was nine years old, and by that time I seemed to have learned everything that people learn in grade school from my parents teaching and from reading. I went to school in another town, riding on the train--sort of the old time equivalent of being bussed to school. I attended grade school for four and a half years, and I was in high school in Spokane for four and a half years. I then went to the University of Washington in Seattle, where I took my B.A. in journalism.

RS: Roughly what year did you graduate from the University of Washington?

RM: In 1934.

RS: That was in the middle of the depression.

RM: That's right.

RS: John, where were you born and when, and what is some of your background?

John Mendenhall: I was born in Burlington Junction, Missouri, in 1911. But my life there did not really have much influence on my subsequent years because when I was eight I came to southern California. I had a love of the mountains then and fortunately my parents liked the mountains too, so even as a child I was taken where I could wander through and climb local hills. I was fortunate in also having access to Stoddard's Lectures. These were published around the turn of the century, with well-written text and many illustrations of the Alps and Rockies, etc., as well as general travel. I have one brother, who lives in Beverly Hills.

RS: Did you go to college?

JM: Yes, I went to Caltech, with a degree in civil engineering, with honor.

RS: And when did you graduate from Caltech?

JM: 1933.

RS: Did you take a job in this area after graduation and live here or did you move to a few other locations?

JM: Upon graduation I went to work for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and worked in the desert for two and a half years. I then got a job at U.S. Steel and worked for them and really never came back to this area with sustained office work until about 1938. That's when I started climbing with the Sierra Club. I first saw Ruth at the base of Tahquitz Rock.

RS: Well, Ruth, how did you get from graduating in journalism in Seattle to the bottom of Tahquitz?

RM: In the first place, the year I graduated was the first year that the University of Washington School of Journalism had not placed all its graduates; this was due to the depression. They told me that the few jobs that they had they were giving to the men, which I suppose I should have resented more than I did at the time, but I just took it in stride, and went home for a few months. A cousin in California who was working for the State Relief Administration offered me a secretarial job, and since I felt that I should go to work I came to California to take the job. It was sort of a cultural shock to come to the Riverside-Imperial Valley Los Angeles area of California, after living in Spokane and Seattle.

RS: You mean because of green to the golden, if I can be kind?

RM: The green to the blah, let's say. But after I'd been working here and there for a few years a cousin of mine and I heard about the Sierra Club, from Mr. Clymer, who lived across the street from my cousin. At that time you had to have sponsors to join the Sierra Club, and Mr. Clymer sponsored us.

RS: Approximately what year was that?

RM: That was the last part of 1937. My first months were with the Ski Mountaineers; I couldn't ski, but that didn't prevent me from having a good time.

Joining the Rock Climbing and Ski Mountaineering Sections

RS: The Ski Mountaineers were not a section of the Sierra Club officially at that time, were they?

RM: Yes, it was, it was the first section in the Sierra Club as far as I know.

RS: Even around 1937?

RM: This had been a club that Glen Dawson belonged to when he was at UCLA. This group of very highly motivated young skiers wanted to build a ski hut up on Baldy. They

RM: could not gain permission from the Forest Service which thought that a group of that nature was too irresponsible. Glen's father Ernest was then president of the Sierra Club, and he suggested that they join the Sierra Club en masse. The Forest Service then gave them permission to build their hut, so they actually came in as a separate section already formed.

RS: And they gained this respectability by virtue of acting on Mr. Dawson's recommendation.

RM: Well, by belonging to the Sierra Club, which is a much more stable organization than a college club where the perscnnel changes so fast.

RS: Now you mentioned meeting each other at the bottom of Tahquitz Rock. I was wondering if the ski mountaineers also rock climbed then, or did that come about later?

RM: At that time almost all ski mountaineers became rock climbers along about the time that the snow melted--and almost all rock climbers changed to skiers in the winter. That's why I started rock climbing; well, partly why I started rock climbing. I really started rock climbing because I read about it in the Sierra Club's schedule, and since I had always liked climbing trees and climbing fences and climbing houses and things like that, it suddenly occurred to me that I knew I would like rock climbing.

RS: So actually the ski mountaineers and rock climbing and everything went together. Now you used to ski, I suppose, up in Washington also?

RM: No, I started down here.

RS: That's not unusual today, but it's a little bit unusual back in those times when skiing wasn't really a major thing.

RM: Skiing wasn't really a sport when I was in college; I didn't have any money for that kind of thing, and since I didn't know anything about it, I wasn't interested.

RS: John, Ruth has indicated how she became associated with the Sierra Club. Now how did you learn of the Sierra Club, how were you introduced to it, sort of leading up

RS: to the base of Tahquitz so to speak?

JM: To go back to the very beginning, before I had met anybody in the Sierra Club, I had heard of it. I used to go to the Los Angeles Public Library every chance I could get, and of course they had the complete set of the Sierra Club Bulletins there. I read every one from the very first right up to the latest one. I also was fortunate at Caltech to know a couple of members of the Sierra Club, who had been on the summer outings. After graduation, I began climbing in the Sierra with several club members, a very fine group, although I was not a member at that time.

RS: Do you remember the names of these climbing people you knew?

JM: Oh yes, the people who were climbing in the Sierra then are very well known today. Dick Jones, Mary Jane Edwards, Bill Rice (who was unfortunately killed on the Grand Teton), Sophie Rice, and Nelson Nies whom I also knew at Caltech.

RS: So this got you active with them, and then you went on some of the climbs with them and then eventually you joined the Rock Climbing Section?

JM: Yes, I didn't join the section till I came in permanently to the Los Angeles area in 1938.

RS: Ruth and John, I presume that you met at the base of Tahquitz and you started climbing together, and I guess it's been your habit ever since.

RM: Well, not quite; after we met, there was an interval of a year or two when we didn't have that much to do with each other.

JM: Just friends, typical like everybody else.

RS: Well, eventually you did tie the knot. After that, of course, you have had many activities in the club, both together and I assume as individuals. Have you climbed separately on trips very much, or do you tend to participate together?

JM: Generally we have been on trips together, and our

JM: biggest climbs have always been together. Of course there was quite a period of time, especially after the children were born, that we would alternate trips. One of us would stay home and take care of the children, and one go on the trip; that worked out very satisfactorily.

RS: Incidentally you have two daughters I think, Vivian and Valerie?

RM: Yes.

RS: When were they born?

RM: Vivian was born during the war in 1943, and Valerie was born shortly after the war, in 1946.

RS: John, were there any other influences that you can think of beyond those that you might have mentioned that may have shaped your attitudes and interests in the Sierra Club, in the social aspects, the rock climbing, ski mountaineering, and the conservation aspects. Have there been any other people that may have been an influence in your orientation in that regard?

JM: I would say "not", because it happened that I drifted into the Sierra Club because of like interests. I joined primarily because I loved the out-of-doors, as did the people I was with. I enjoyed skiing and climbing, and then later began to get the conservation picture.

RS: I would like to put the same question, Ruth, to you. In addition to the things that you've mentioned, were there other people or events that may have had significant influence?

RM: I think it was very definitely a family influence. My parents were interested in the outdoors, and really appreciated it aesthetically. My father was a newspaperman and playwright. Recreationally he was an enthusiastic fisherman and nearly always went fishing on his vacations. He had a little fishing cabin in British Columbia, which he had to backpack to get to. It became a special place for our whole family. As a matter of fact, it still is in the family. Also my father was sort of an original conservationist. I first heard about litter from my father, not from the Sierra Club. When we used to go walking, he would pick up reams of litter and toilet paper that was lying around--much to the

RM: embarrassment of his teen-age daughters, but unfortunately we grew up to pick it up too.

RS: It wasn't always fashionable back then.

RM: Well, not everybody does it even now.

RS: You were members of the Ski Mountaineers and Rock Climbing Sections. Has that been your major association with the Sierra Club? What other associations did you have? Ruth, you might comment on that.

RM: As far as I'm concerned skiing and climbing have been almost my exclusive interest in the Sierra Club. This includes the social events, the friends and activities, and so forth. But I have participated in conservation issues and was on the Editorial Board of the Sierra Club Bulletin in the old days when it existed. I've done quite a few editorial jobs, book reviews and things like that for the Southern Sierran. Of course, I've taken care of the Mugelnoos for a good many years, but that's the news sheet of the Ski Mountaineers and Rock Climbers. Also after I wrote my backpacking books, I spoke to various Sierra Clubs and other groups about backpack cooking.

Base Camp: Center for Sierra Club Skiers and Climbers

RS: We may talk a little more about it, but this did bring forth a thought--your maiden name was Ruth Dyar? And you had, or have a sister, Joan, who is now Joan Clark. Did Joan meet Nathan before you met John, or was it the other way around?

RM: It was the other way around. I'd been in California for several years, and in the Sierra Club eight or nine months, before Joan came down. We had an apartment together for a while. I don't know exactly when she met Nate.

RS: You'll have to read the Nathan Clark interview* and get

*Nathan C. Clark, Sierra Club Leader, Outdoorsman, and Engineer, interview conducted by Richard Searle, Sierra Club Oral History Project, 1977.

RS: some insight into that. Joan commented on how they met. There was apparently some sort of rooming house, or...

RM: Oh, you mean "Base Camp?" Oh yes.

RS: Please comment on Base Camp.

RM: John and I and Joan were three of the charter members of Base Camp, one of the greatest institutions the Sierra Club ever had.

RS: You might say a little bit about it then. When was Base Camp, and where?

RM: Let's see, we moved to Base Camp on May 9, 1939. It was located at 4343 Griffin Avenue, which was down on the bottom of the hill where Nate lived and still lives.

JM: That was pure chance. We hadn't even met Nate then.

RM: That winter a number of us had been talking about trying to find a house where we could live together, inexpensively, in a home atmosphere, sharing the work and so forth. It finally ended up that the six people who went in as charter members were Glen Warner, Olga Schomberg, Howard Koster, John, Joan and I. We had been looking for a long time for a suitable house. It is hard to believe but by chance we actually found the perfect landlady in the form of Mrs. Grace Shults, who was a relative of Aurelia Harwood (Sierra Club president, 1927-28). Apparently, at least on the surface, she took it for granted that Sierra Club young people must be doing the right thing.

RS: I was going to put the question maybe in a different way, because at that time, unmarried people living in the same house...

RM: Even our young friends said it "wouldn't work," but it did. It was quite a large house; it doesn't look big from the front but it has lots and lots of room inside. Actually Mr. and Mrs. Shults stayed there in a little apartment for a few months. It didn't occur to me till thirty years later that they may have stuck around to see what was happening in their house. Mrs. Shults was very good to us, and also she sincerely said that we were the best tenants that she ever had, as we took such good

RM: care of her house. It was like a big jolly home. There was always a lot of laughing at Base Camp.

RS: This was from 1939 I think you said?

RM: We moved in on May 6, 1939. John and I were married in the fall of that same year and moved out, so we were there only four and a half months. But after we left, others moved in. Base Camp lasted two and a half years, and for the whole time it was the center of social activities for Sierra Club skiers and climbers. Base Camp went on until the early months of the war, when so many people were being called away that they couldn't keep it up.

RS: Then Joan was there somewhat longer than you were?

RM: She was there for the whole span.

RS: Incidently too, when you were at Base Camp, were you working as a secretary?

RM: Yes, we were all working. We worked all week to support ourselves, climbed or worked at the ski huts near by every weekend, and did our homework and socializing evenings. I wrote the Mugelnoos every two or three weeks and we always had a big party at Base Camp on Mugelnoos nights. The guests brought the food, did most of the work, and entertained us.

RS: Was one of you working as a secretary for the Angeles (then Southern California) Chapter or helping in some way?

RM: Joan was for a while.

RS: She was then helping at the Sierra Club office at the Philharmonic Auditorium Building, the old chapter headquarters.

RM: Yes. Base Camp was really a great institution in more ways than one. It was sort of before its time. For one thing, the men and women did all the same work. My friends were just scandalized that the men helped to do the cooking, laundry, and housecleaning.

RS: What about your parents; of course you were long out of

RS: the home?

RM: We had all been on our own for several years. I'm not sure that any of our parents approved of it, but they didn't say so. On our second Sunday there, we went rock climbing at Eagle Rock and Devil's Gate Dam in the morning and had a Mother's Day dinner for all available parents in the evening.

RS: John, what about your experience with the Base Camp?

JM: It was a wonderful institution. As Ruth says, the men and women had interchangable work in almost everything. The method was quite simple: a man and woman worked as a team, always a man and woman worked together. That was a good idea because the man would do any of the heavy jobs, and women had special skills. We would change jobs every week, and partners every three weeks. Cooking was the worst job. Sometimes we were shelling peas or baking pies at midnight for the next day's dinner for twelve. It was really very good because we lived quite well and very economically. All of us climbed and skied. We all also had our outside activities; we got time to do our own work or study.

RS: It would be considered something like your earliest version of a commune...?

RM: That's exactly what it was, but it was much more successful than some communes I've heard of.

LEADERSHIP IN THE ROCK CLIMBING AND SKI MOUNTAINEERING SECTIONS

Hut Management: Conflict with the Angeles Chapter, 1945-46

RS: During that period you were active in the Rock Climbing and Ski Mountaineers Sections, and the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club, I believe. John, I will put these questions to you. From an overall viewpoint, what have been some of your activities in the Sierra Club? The rock climbing I am aware of; were you ever chairman of the section? What other groups or activities have you been in over the years?

JM: I was the RCS (Rock Climbing Section) chairman for a couple of years. We both gave much time to instructing new climbers over our whole climbing lifetime. Instruction included both rock and ice climbing. We also both served for many years on the Safety Committee for the Rock Climbing Section, which has an outstanding safety record.

I was vice-chairman of Ski Mountaineers, which was a large section of about 125 people. We both attended many work parties at the ski huts. I didn't have a great deal of activity outside of that. Another job of mine, which was one that I've held for something like thirty years, has been treasurer of the two ski huts, Keller and Baldy. That's been a long-continuing job. These are the chief activities that I remember.

RS: Are you still treasurer?

JM: Yes.

RS: Now it seems to me there was some episode associated with those huts in regard to the management one time between the Angeles Chapter and the Sierra Club. The huts

RS: were built by the Ski Mountaineering Section, am I correct?

JM: Yes.

RS: And the Ski Mountaineers actually administer the huts for the Sierra Club? Is this the way it is handled?

RM: It used to be.

RS: This was at least for a period of time.

RM: This was up to two or three years ago when the national club extracted itself from managing all lodges, and insisted that they were to be given to the chapters that were most involved.

RS: There was some episode between the Angeles Chapter and the Ski Mountaineering Section when the chapter tried to exert more influence on the section activities than the section thought was appropriate.

RM: I think I know the period that you're thinking of.

RS: I wonder if maybe you could amplify that and explain it.

RM: Can you remember when that was John? After World War II?

JM: It had to be after the war because Lewis Clark appeared on the side of the Ski Mountaineers for this hearing, wearing his commander's uniform. I remember that. And being an old-time skier from the north, he had the sympathies of the Ski Mountaineers at heart.

RM: At that time the Ski Mountaineers were running the two huts single-handed so to speak; that is, the section was doing it all, handling the finances, the upkeep, the management, everything about it. As I remember, the Angeles Chapter just decided that they wanted the ski hut money to come to the Chapter.

RS: And roughly when was this?

RM: This must have been about 1945.

RS: Now Lewis lived up in Alameda I believe but it came to his attention...

JM: Probably through his brother Nathan.

RM: I think Nate must have been the chairman of the Ski Mountaineers at that time, and the Ski Mountaineer Section was not going to hand over their money without a fight. They appealed to the national Sierra Club.

RS: Do you remember any of the particulars? Were they attempting to take over the Mugelnoos or the equipment?

RM: They never attempted to take over the Mugelnoos. We were right in there fighting at the time, but it was so long ago; for some reason, I at least don't remember many of the details.

JM: The reason we had to maintain control of the money and control of the huts was the fact that that money had been raised to support the huts. Without the income, such as it was, from that money, without the ability to spend it, the huts would have been right up against the wall with no way to handle the considerable maintenance expenses. These are necessary for the buildings up in the region of snow in the winter. They would deteriorate very fast; they take a lot of work and supplies and maintenance and building materials and etc. That's why we were not in any position whatever to just let our funds go; that would have been the end of the huts.

RS: Do you remember the names of any of the principals, let's say on the side opposite that of the Ski Mountaineers; do you know any person or persons who might have been advocating this at the chapter level?

JM: The chairman of the Southern California (now Angeles) Chapter was.

RS: Was that Stanley Jones?

JM: Stanley Jones.

RS: So he was chairman at least sometime during this episode. How long did it take to get all of this settled; was this a long drawn out affair?

RM: The Ski Mountaineers presented it to the board of directors, and the board put the huts in with their Lodges and Lands Committee.

RS: Now did the Angeles Chapter come to the Ski Mountaineers first and say, "We're going to take it over," and then you protested? Or did they just go to the main San Francisco club and say, "We're assuming control"? Do you remember how that happened?

RM: The chapter came to the Ski Mountaineers, who went to San Francisco.

JM: This had been brewing during the war, and I was away. We were both away during the war, as were lots of other people, so we did not get in on the beginning of this. In fact I had no hand whatever in that battle before I got back.

RS: Well, eventually it was settled at that time, and the Ski Mountaineers retained the financial control in that area. Many years later, about 1973-to '75, I gather that the huts did come under Angeles Chapter jurisdiction. I suppose conditions were vastly different in 1973 and 1975 than they were back in '46 or so.

RM: With the vast changes in the sport of skiing over a thirty year span, the Ski Mountaineers hadn't really been doing it all any more for quite a few years. Committees were running the huts. Also there had gotten to be so many problems at the Keller Hut that it was really an entirely different set up.

Changes in Membership and Technology

RS: Progressing from the topic of hut management, what are some of the highlights, John, in your experience in the Ski Mountaineers in terms of an organization? I'll touch on your personal experiences later. Were there any other turning points in the history of that organization that would be worth noting? I don't know exactly what year it was formed, but somewhat before your time. Has it continued pretty much the same as to types of people in the organization today as it was back when you joined?

JM: The membership has changed quite a bit. It used to have over one hundred active members. It was a very active group, and it was family-oriented to the extent

JM: that a great many people were husband and wife and (later) children skiing together. And it was a quite strong group both outing-wise, and social-wise. Since that time, I suppose because of the proliferation of ski lifts and facilities in general, the great ease of going to the mountains, and the huge numbers of people there, the active members of the Ski Mountaineers have dwindled down to a very, very few people. They still hold a few long tours in the Sierra and shorter ones locally. But it is a much different group than it was in the old days.

RS: You mentioned as many as a hundred members. Were those active members?

JM: Yes. There were times when both Keller and Baldy were just bursting at the seams with people, both on ski weekends and at work parties. That hasn't happened probably for fifteen years or more.

RS: Well now, how many would you say, comparatively speaking, are active today on the same basis as you had a hundred or so back from 1938 to 1946 or so? How many are active today in 1977 in terms of ski mountaineering?

JM: I would judge from the sizes of the tours I've been on it's down to probably not more than a dozen.

RS: The membership in name is substantially more than a dozen isn't it?

JM: Yes, it is, but that's because they do not require active participation in skiing to maintain membership. The Rock Climbing Section, on the other hand, requires active participation in scheduled climbs, to maintain membership.

RS: We've talked about the Ski Mountaineers. Back in '38 to '46, was there a large number of rock climbers? I know you said that most of the ski mountaineers did climb.

JM: Rock climbing was having its first surge of popularity about 1938-41. Of course not many could climb much during the war years. But I remember one year, after World War II, when we had 125 show up at Stony Point; I thought that was fabulous. Then we had a horde of more than that down at Tahquitz--just terrific outings in those days. But there again the same thing has happened

JM: to quite a degree in climbing as has happened in skiing. Back in the old days when you were climbing, practically everyone you saw on the rocks was a member of the Rock Climbing Section. Now RCS members are generally in the minority, even when we have a club climb down at Tahquitz; most of the climbers are not RCS members, or do not even know us. Both sports are expanding, and so by dilution, you might say, club members ceased to be the only group in the mountains.

RS: When you say you see many people at Tahquitz you're just saying there are many climbers at Tahquitz climbing at the same time.

JM: Yes, it has become such a popular sport; the non-club members nowadays generally outnumber the club members.

RS: Ruth, putting the same question to you about the Ski Mountaineers and the Rock Climbing sections, would you care to add or maybe comment on some of John's comments?

RM: I think John put it very well when he said that the great technological changes in skiing have changed the Ski Mountaineers too, because when the group was first formed there were no ski lifts, nor were there ski resorts in the sense we have today. The Ski Mountaineers in building huts were forming their own little resorts for their own group. Now, as we know, people travel everywhere for skiing. In a sense, that's true of rock climbing too; climbers travel extensively. It used to be a big deal to get to the Canadian Rockies; now climbers are off to Peru, the Arctic, the Himalayas; it is nothing unusual.

RS: That's true, it's sort of packaged adventure, as one way to describe it. The thought occurs to me that today so-called cross-country skiing is getting increasingly popular. That seems to be different from ski mountaineering; my visualization of cross-country skiing is like going out for a day's hike as opposed to backpacking.

RM: Well, it depends on whom you talk to.

RS: I'd like to get your viewpoints on that, Ruth and John.

RM: When we started ski mountaineering everybody had the old wooden skis with sort of loose bindings of the bear trap type, and we had to climb up if we wanted to ski down. I climbed Baldy often on skis. That was ski mountaineering.

RM: But of course equipment has changed a very great deal, and there has been much specialization such as Alpine-type ski mountaineering and Nordic-type ski touring. There is a certain amount of overlap, but there are also specialized aspects of what might be the same sport.

RS: And again it's just a case of technology changing in some way?

RM: I would say so. Different equipment and so forth.

RS: Can you cite some of the examples of prewar equipment compared to what is used today? You mentioned the bear trap type bindings; I know they weren't ski-free bindings...

RM: Well, no, not at all; also we used to have loose old leather boots. Our skis did have metal edges.

RS: Aren't those the kind you used to put on yourself, stainless steel strips?

RM: I always bought skis with the edges already on, but I guess people did put them on themselves. I think they still do sometimes.

RS: They are coming back I hear, metal edges on skis.

RM: Quite a few things seem to run in cycles.

RS: From your viewpoint John, anything in technology or in the equipment aspect that has changed?

JM: As you are well aware, snow touring or cross-country, has a great deal to recommend it. The Snow Touring Committee of the Angeles Chapter is larger in numbers than the Ski Mountaineers. Downhill, cross-country, and Alpine skiing all have advantages.

RM: There again, where you live probably has a good deal of influence on what type of skiing you really specialize in. I read somewhere not long ago that cross-country skiing developed in Norway, for instance, as a means of transportation, not as a sport at all. That's logical if you stop to think about it. Peaks are suitable for Alpine skiing, for instance, and plateau country for cross-country.

RS: You mentioned, John, that there are things you wouldn't attempt on cross-country ski tours that you might in ski mountaineering. What do you mean?

JM: As you well know, your equipment for ski touring has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage, of course, is that you can move fast and easily over rolling terrain. On the other hand, if you are on slopes where you are going to have to come down through breakable crust, or ice, or anything in between, it is almost impossible unless you have good downhill equipment.

RS: I would like to ask John this: You mentioned being the treasurer for the Keller and Baldy ski huts and working with the Ski Mountaineers; were there any other organizations or activities in the Sierra Club that you were involved in to some significant extent that you might want to mention?

JM: Conservation efforts were concentrated on:
(1) excluding vehicles from the mountains,
(2) watering small trees on Echo Mountain, and
(3) backing the Sierra Club Foundation.
More than that, I have felt responsible to my profession of engineering.

RS: That was probably at least five days a week most of the time anyway.

Ruth: Editor and Steward of the Mugelnoos

RS: Ruth, I know that you were editor of the Mugelnoos. When did you take on that job?

RM: As you probably know, Glen Dawson invented the Mugelnoos in January, 1938. It was the very first Sierra Club section or chapter news sheet. The second one was the Yodeler, started by the Bay Area Rock Climbing Section and soon taken over by the Bay Chapter. The Mugelnoos was first the news sheet of the Ski Mountaineers, but when they turned into climbers with the advent of summer Mugelnoos became a joint Rock Climbing Section publication. It has been published by the two sections together for forty years.

RM: I took the Mugelnoos over a few weeks after Glen started it. I was editor for several years--until the beginning of the war and for a while afterwards. At that time I edited every issue, and it came out every two or three weeks. After that I just became chairman of the Mugelnoos committee. I always edited one issue a year.

RS: Did Glen think of the name, Mugelnoos?

RM: At that time the Ski Mountaineers chairman was George Bauwens. He was an engineer from Munich, and he taught engineering at USC, but he had retained a very strong German accent. I think that as soon as he spoke English well enough that people could understand him, he saw no need to change. Anyway, the Ski Mountaineers were always teasing him about his accent and mimicking him. "Mugel", as I understood it, was an idiomatic Austrian term meaning little bump in the snow. (It has been corrupted into "mogel" now-a-days, which is deplorable.) And "Noos" for news was supposed to be George Bauwens' German accent for news.

RS: Are you still the head of the editorial committee?

RM: No, I resigned last month. I resigned because I'm going to edit the American Alpine News, and I wanted to get rid of a couple of other things to have time for the new job.

RS: That's a long run; you said 1938...

RM: That was about thirty-nine years; that was long enough.

RS: They must have been very interesting years. Did anything happen in the history of the Mugelnoos that you think might be of interest to people? Did you ever miss an issue?

RM: Never. That's one of the interesting things about the Mugelnoos. It has always come out and on time too, which is not invariable with Sierra Club publications! For one or two issues there was some sort of a crisis. We used to mimeograph it at the section meetings. I remember one meeting where, for some reason, we had no paper. It just happened that a fellow came, who had never been at a meeting before and never came to one since. His landlady had some mimeograph paper. He went

RM: home and got some, so that Mugelnoos came out on time after all.

RS: That's pretty good. You had an addressograph or something that went with that job too as I recall.

RM: Yes. Susan Moir was the Mugelmailer for a long time and a good one. Unfortunately the addressograph burned up in a little house she had in the back of her lot. Her building, her cats, and the addressograph burned to the ground.

RS: Jean and I were Mugelmailers, and we had the addressograph for a while in 1957-58. Did this happen after that?

RM: It must have been after that. I had forgotten that you were a Mugelmailer. I would have been giving you credit as it is one of our most important jobs. For a long time after the addressograph burned up, we had all kinds of trouble; but now the young people have it computerized.

Controversies and History in the Mugelnoos

RS: What about the Mugelnoos in terms of issues? Did it ever promote issues or causes or anything in its pages at various times?

RM: Once in a while an issue has sort of sprung up. I remember when nuts first came into use instead of pitons in rock climbing. There was a kind of a transition period, of course, where people were using both. The then-chairman of the Rock Climbing Section wrote an unfortunate article that aroused a lot of irritation He said in it that the Rock Climbing Section should get up-to-date and "in touch with the real world", and stop using anything besides nuts. This caused a great deal of correspondence in the Mugelnoos. He was somewhat appalled by what he'd brought on.

RS: Of course that's one function of a group publication--to bring forth ideas and get responses.

RM: That's what I thought.

RS: Does anybody today use pitons any more to speak of?

RM: Yes, they do in some of the far ranges, but I don't think they do in our local rock climbing.

RS: I'm curious to know, would you say that the use of nuts enables you to climb at least as far out (if I can use that terminology) as pitons did?

RM: What would you say, John?

JM: I would say that the use of nuts in general raises the climb's difficulty by perhaps two decimals. In good rock, chocks don't have the security and stayability of pitons.

RS: On an upward pull or something like that you could run into trouble?

JM: That's right, you could pull out or up; or your body is out from the cliff and you could jerk your protection straight out--I've had that happen. On the longest fall I ever took, the upper two nuts came out and the last two held me. If you've grown up with pitons as Ruth and I have, sometimes you can tell nuts are safe, and sometimes you just wonder! Sometimes you can't get one to stick in the crack where you want protection. You finally say "Here goes", and you go without it. So it makes it chancy...

RS: I'm going to have to bring up this matter of techniques again later on in our discussion, but first I want to go back. I do recall the Mugelnoos carried some articles on the Brower controversy.

RM: That's right, we carried on a very strong campaign when we realized what was going on and that for years on end so much had been swept under the rug in the Sierra Club Bulletin and so forth. We did quite a bit of research, and we worked very hard to be exactly accurate in what we published. We tried to publish the truth.

RS: Did you get much of a reaction then to the things you were publishing? It was an emotional issue.

RM: We got a lot of reaction. One of the strangest things that happened during the Mugelnoos campaign was when

RM: a fellow who is no longer with us, and had not been in the Rock Climbing Section very long, had the editorship assigned to him one month. Though he knew the Mugelnoos's views, he took the completely opposite side in his issue, because he had just been reunited with his estranged wife, and she thought that we were being unfair to Brower. So to please his wife, he went against the Mugelnoos policy and even went so far as to twist articles to say the opposite of what had been written. The rest of us, many of whom had been misquoted, got together and brought out an eight or ten page issue the next month to make the Mugelnoos's stand unmistakable.

RS: I guess this was in the fall of 1968 or maybe the spring of '69.

RM: Yes, it was in '68.

RS: I don't have a good set of the Mugelnoos. I believe in your notes that you sent to the club history committee, you indicate that you have a complete set.

RM: Yes I have, and I've given all my extra Mugelnooses to John Ripley, who is now in charge of the Mugelnoos committee. He doesn't have a complete set, but he has almost a complete set. He is on the history committee for the chapter and is also chairman of the RCS History Committee. The missing Mugelnooses could be xeroxed. I've just been through a long campaign that took me several years to get a complete set of original Mugelnooses for the American Alpine Club library in New York. They will be bound for the AAC library. There is a tremendous amount of climbing and skiing history in those Mugelnooses.

RS: How big a stack are we speaking of--about fifteen to eighteen inches high then?

RM: At least. The October 1977 issue was Mugelnoos #538. Many issues were four to six pages, two or three sheets long.

JM: It started in '37 or '38, '38 wasn't it?

RM: Number 1 was January 29, 1938. I might remark that we used to supply the Angeles Chapter with the Mugelnooses. The chapter even had the first five years worth that

RM: were bound. One day Chuck Gerckens was passing by and found that the chapter had thrown their Mugelnooses all in the garbage. So he plucked them out and took them home for posterity.

RS: Now as to the type of information that you had in the Mugelnoos: certainly there were write-ups about the activities of the sections; but what other things were there in the Mugelnoos?

RM: We had announcements of things that had happened in the world of climbing; for instance, in one of the 1938 issues you will find an account of the first ascent of the north face of Eigerwand. There were also editorial comments on issues of the day, analyses of accidents, discussions of equipment, a lot of humor, depending on whether you think puns are funny or not.

RS: Does the Mugelnoos have a circulation beyond the section members?

RM: Roughly a third of its subscribers are RCS members; a third of its subscribers are on the Ski Mountaineer list (of course that includes a lot of old timers), and the other third are just people that subscribe because they like it. This is just a rough estimate.

RS: What kind of a circulation does it have approximately?

RM: Somewhere between three and four hundred.

SERVICE TO THE SIERRA CLUB: PUBLICATIONS AND CONSERVATION

The Bulletin and the Editorial Committee

RS: Ruth, were there other activities that you were involved in besides your Mugelnoos work? Have you been on any other task forces or committees or things of that nature?

RM: In the Sierra Club? I was also climbing and skiing, running a household, raising two children, and writing articles and later books on outdoor topics. I have been an officer of both sections. During the last two or three years I was a member of the Sierra Club Mountaineering Committee. I was on the Editorial Board of the Sierra Club for quite a few years.

RS: Roughly when?

RM: It was while Brower was still in, so I imagine it was probably around the fifties to the end of the sixties.

RS: Was August Fruge the chairman?

RM: Yes.

RS: You were on the committee. Do you recall any special situations?

RM: They used to meet down here once in a while because the people in the south complained that we were completely ignored; but they still kept ignoring us pretty much. I suggested, for instance, that they might allow the southern representatives to do the book reviews, since that would naturally all be done by mail anyway. So they sent us two or three review books that had nothing to do with Sierra Club affairs and interests, and never printed the reviews. They probably felt they had discharged their duties. This was Brower's doing, I must

RM: say, and not August Fruge, who was a very fair man.

RS: Do you have any observations, in your tenure on the committee, about the situation in regards to the publications? Of course it was during the Brower period. Do you have any observations in that regard? The book business was a big thing.

RM: Before that, I think I should say something about the Bulletin. I would have liked to see it come out on time instead of up to a year later than its publication date, for example.

RS: You say a year later? The annual Bulletin of course...

RM: That's the one I'm talking about.

RS: As a matter of interest, you did make some comment about the character of the Bulletin and how it has changed in time or hasn't changed. Do you wish to add to that?

RM: When I speak about the Bulletin, I think of the old annual Bulletin; of course now it's a monthly. I must admit that I think it has become sort of a bore.

RS: Do you read it regularly?

RM: No, I don't; I only look at it.

RS: What about you John, any comments on the Bulletin today?

JM: It has definitely changed from what it used to be, of course; it was formerly oriented more toward outings and activities; today, it's almost all conservation. That is good, but you will find that a large number of people join a club like the Sierra Club because they like the out-of-doors, and they want to be with kindred spirits and share enthusiasms. Conservation comes later; conservation is very important, of course, but there could be a good balance between that and recreation. To get enough enthusiastic backers to put through a conservation program, more attention should be given to the outings and activities aspect of the club in its publications.

RS: At this time really all they have is essentially an outings issue of the Bulletin; that's about it.

RM: And that's just an announcement of what outings they are going to have.

Opposing Off-Road Vehicle Encroachments

RS: In regards to your activities in the club have you ever been drawn into a conservation campaign or activity? For instance, there was a San Gorgonio Wilderness issue which came up several times. Did you or did the Ski Mountaineers get involved in that?

JM: Our chief conservation activity has been to combat the off-road vehicle and motor bike encroachments into the local mountains. And that's were we've appeared and spoken.

RS: When you say "our", you mean the Ski Mountaineers or you?

JM: No, as individuals.

RS: Can you comment on some of the occasions or circumstances?

JM: I remember in particular a meeting up here in Altadena that we attended, and it's a good thing we did. We got there early. There was supposed to be an official Sierra Club representative there, but he couldn't even get inside because the room was so crowded. So I was able to get up and give some pretty good hard facts as to why they should not permit motor bikes and off-road vehicles to go where they wished in the local mountains. Without me there would have been no voice of the Sierra Club.

RS: Roughly what time was this, in what year, and what was the particular problem that you speak of here?

JM: That was at open hearings being held by the Forest Service, in Altadena on the question of whether or not the whole San Gabriel range should be opened to motorized vehicles, or whether there should be some trails made especially for them, and they be permitted only on those trails, or whether they should be excluded completely. The Sierra Club thought the activity should be

JM: banned. We were very pleased and surprised that there were a large number of young high school people who were speaking in exactly the same vein. The chief proponents of free participation by the motor vehicles were largely family groups that had their motor bikes and their four-wheel drives and were up there in force; with them, of course, were the merchants who sell those services and those vehicles. They were there strong too.

RS: What was approximately the year of this particular episode?

JM: As I remember, it was about 1973.

RS: Was that when the off-road vehicle issue came to the fore in this area, or was this when you primarily got involved?

JM: That was the first public hearing that I heard of locally.

RS: Ruth, have you been involved in those particular aspects?

RM: Yes, I write letters about them and so on. As far as conservation in general, the Mugelnoos has restrained itself from getting into any issues except those related to climbing and skiing.

RS: Does Mugelnoos have any policy in regards to conservation in mountaineering?

RM: My policy was to take the Sierra Club's side, but not to spend as much space on it as the monthly Bulletin and the Angeles Chapter publication do. People just won't read the same thing over and over again.

RS: John, jumping back again to the matter of off-road vehicles, you described the first hearing. Have there been subsequent times when you've worked on the off-road vehicle situation?

JM: I think the point was won at the time described; what is happening in more distant areas I can't say. Of course there is a big controversy continuing in the desert as to whether to set aside sections for off-road vehicles, or let them have unrestrained access, or bar them completely. In my opinion, the effort to have certain sections set aside by the Bureau of Land Management down in San Diego County may be the best answer.

RS: Do you know any of the details of that? I remember something like 250,000 acres being made available to off-road vehicles. Is that what we're speaking of or can you amplify what the issue is today?

JM: I haven't followed it that closely. Art Johnson has been working on that; he's an old climber and is the founder of our climbing section. I haven't seen him for some time, so I don't know what the recent developments are on that.

Building Conservationists Through Outdoor Activity Sections

RS: John, you interjected a comment a while back about the matter of conservation. You were going to make a comment about the conservation aspect of yours and Ruth's climbing activities. Would you like to make that comment for the record?

JM: I think that the future of the club and of conservation depends a great deal upon having good participation and interest by the younger people. But they generally join the club for the same reason that Ruth and I did, because they love the out-of-doors and want to be with people who participate in outdoor things. I know that I get my reward when some of the younger people turn out to be quite ardent conservationists. At Tahquitz Ruth and I took a young man on a good climb. I remember one comment he made after we got back; "This morning I went out to the family car and rubbed my finger across the hood; there was just scum on it. All day long when I'm down there I'm breathing that stuff; we've got to do something to save the air." Now there is a real conservationist, and we're getting him into the club at a time when he can put some vigor and vitality into the fight for conservation. I think that these young people coming into the club through an activity section such as ours will find congenial people that are helpful and understanding. Later they are going to go on and be good conservationists.

RS: So then the thought is that the active introduction of people to the outdoors is a very important aspect of conservation. Such activities create a situation or a

RS: feeling which will support conservation in the thoughts and minds of people?

JM: Definitely.

RM: I don't see how anybody could possibly be interested in preserving the wilderness or the out-of-doors if they didn't know anything about it.

RS: So all of us have something to contribute toward conservation whether it's by virtue of being a conservation activist, or being a person who introduces other people to what conservation is about in terms of the experience.

JM: That's quite correct--that's the way we try to get people to join the club. The strength of the club is people who are interested in conservation; that means that we have to show these people the value of belonging to the club and then helping in conserving not only the wilderness as such, but the air and every other environmental element.

RS: Ruth, since we've gotten into conservation a bit, do you have any philosophical thoughts along these veins?

RM: Of course I think it is extremely important to preserve wilderness, and it really annoys me very much when I read the statements that the Sierra Club wants to lock up all the wilderness just for itself, that only the young and very rugged people can go in to the wilderness. Simply none of those statements are true.

RS: Are those statements just tactics, or is there any justification, possibly because of the way the Sierra Club presents its issues? What do you think?

RM: I do think in some cases perhaps such a deduction was made from the way the issue was presented. Also, I think part of it is ignorance on the part of people who don't care about the mountains. After all, if you actually are in the mountains, you see people of all ages, from babies that are being carried to old people who can hardly totter and are using their canes to get along the trails; so there is quite a variety. You also meet a great many people enjoying the out-of-doors who are not Sierra Club members.

RS: Say today, 1977 as compared to 1937 or maybe '47, what is your visualization as far as the number of people who enjoy the outdoors as a percentage of the total population?

RM: My guess is that in the United States there is a larger percentage now than there was back then. There are probably complex reasons for it. It's probably partly that more people are in the cities; people are better off financially; they have better transportation, they have more money to spend on packframes, boots, and other equipment. Also perhaps it's a bit of a fad--you read more about it. It is hard to say, but I do think you find more people in the out-of-doors. Certainly it was my impression in Europe that a larger percentage of the population there did fairly rugged outdoor things than in the United States because Americans are notoriously a bit lazy.

RS: You mean in 1937 or today?

RM: No, I'm speaking of maybe ten years ago.

RS: John, any observations that are amplifications on Ruth's thoughts in that area?

JM: Not particularly...

RM: I'm taking John's turn, but I was just going to say that people seem to know more about specialized sports like rock climbing than they used to.

RS: It may be that today people have more leisure than they had.

JM: Probably true; working hours are shorter.

RM: When we were young and were starting rock climbing, we still had to work Saturday mornings. That really cut into a weekend.

FORTY YEARS OF ROCK CLIMBING

Canadian Climbs: Mount Confederation and Bugaboo Spires

RS: Perhaps it's a good time to go a little bit into your own personal experiences in mountaineering. Ruth, perhaps you can comment on some of the trips that you've been on, either as private parties or with the Rock Climbing Section, and maybe give some of the highlights of some of the things that you remember in mountaineering that you feel other people should know about.

RM: We went on countless weekend trips with Sierra Club groups, mostly the Rock Climbing Section, and climbed extensively in the Sierra, at Tahquitz, and elsewhere. But our summer vacations we always took by ourselves, or with one or two or three Sierra Club friends, or with our children.

RS: Where would you go?

RM: We went nine times to Canada, mostly to the Rockies, and once to the Bugaboos. In the sixties, we made many climbs in the Cascades and also climbed in the Alps.

JM: We went to Canada once before the war, in 1940, and many times in the late forties and fifties. We attempted Confederation in 1940 because it was unclimbed; when we walked away it was still unclimbed.

RS: Where is Confederation?

JM: Mount Confederation is in the southern part of Jasper National Park. We tried it in 1940. We had bad weather and didn't make it. Then the war came along, and we stopped climbing except for ten days in the Tetons in 1943. We went back in 1947 to try Confederation again. Our try in 1947 was the seventh attempt on the mountain

JM: by various parties, and we made it.

RS: You did climb it?

JM: Yes, we made it.

RM: And to this day some of the people that tried it and didn't make it complain to me that we climbed their mountain.

RS: What were the difficulties at Confederation? Can you describe the climb a little more? Weather certainly is a problem up there.

JM: That was what turned us back the first time; it was not a particularly difficult mountain; but it was a long climb, and up in the key sections the rock was quite slippery. The rock was better than we had later on, on the first ascent of Aiguille--much better rock than that. On Confederation we had mixed snow and rock work most of the way to the summit. Some quite good parties had tried it, and nobody seemed to get the key. We finally found the solution, which was a couloir on the west side, and went up that.

RS: Was this an ice-filled or snow-filled couloir?

JM: There was some snow on the lower portion of it; above, the rocks were wet but free of snow. Just took perseverance--we just had to keep plugging away hour after hour up this long ridge, and then finally up the buttress to the summit.

RS: What class of climbing was it? Was it mostly rock climbing?

JM: It was class four, mixed rock and snow. We roped all the way when we got on the ridge.

RM: And it had the most terrible approach of about twenty miles through down timber.

RS: What is the elevation of Mount Confederation?

JM: I recall, it is just under 10,000 feet.

RS: And what was your base elevation at the start?

JM: Down on the Athabaska, it is pretty low; probably two thousand feet. One of the principal things was that going in that area, we had to have supreme confidence in our ability and in each other because we would be many many days from help if anything happened.

RS: How many people did you have in the party and do you remember who they were?

RM: I remember who they were. They were Ruth and John Mendenhall.

RS: That was it?

JM: We had to hump our loads up the valley, and there were no man-made trails. We had to follow the game trails and climb up over these windfalls. It was hard to get in; it seems harder to get in that blasted country than it is to actually make the climb at the end. Climbing the big windfalls was the most dangerous part of all, because they were usually wet and drippy and you could break a leg in that stuff.

RS: You mentioned Confederation, and there were some other adventures in Canada such as the Bugaboo Spires. I had the impression that that was a trip where you had some maybe unfortunate adventure, didn't you?

JM: I put a leg through the snow on the glacier, but I didn't go out of sight; and I think Ruth fell in shortly after that, but she didn't go out of sight, so nothing really happened.

RM: Actually nothing really worth remarking on has occurred because we very seldom had anything that one could call a misadventure on our trips, but we always had lots of fun.

RS: Then as far as your mountaineering experiences go you never have had an accident of a serious nature?

RM: Never, and have never been near an accident that somebody else had, which I think is extraordinary luck.

JM: We had a few close shaves, but that's to be expected.

Other Memorable Climbs and First Ascents

RS: Let's explore another way; what do you consider some of your most enjoyable and memorable climbs?

JM: Three first ascents were most enjoyable: Confederation (1947), Aiguille Peak (1952), and Monument Peak (1940) here in California. Monument Peak was the first; we made that with Paul Estes and Art Johnson. Some pioneer routes were put through, like the Super Pooper, the Human Fright, and the Open Book, all at Tahquitz Rock. Some pleasures are just the satisfaction of really long days of climbing, when we made our peak and got back the same day. (Once in a while we didn't get back until the next day.) Of course we had a thrill when we got on top of the Matterhorn, it being an American obsession.

RM: I think for sheer euphoria it's hard to beat your very first season of climbing.

RS: What was your first season of climbing? What was the high point?

RM: As to the high point, Mt. Whitney was the highest in elevation but maybe that wasn't the most exciting climb.

JM: I think your most exciting adventure must have been the first ascent of the Swiss Buttress on Sill.

RM: That was my first climb in the High Sierra; it was the Fourth of July in 1938. The Rock Climbing Section had gone in there, and most of us were pretty inexperienced. Our particular party included Dick Jones and Spencer Austin, who were the two experienced people, and two fellows who really never did turn out to be enthusiastic rock climbers. They didn't like it, but they happened to get onto this climb too. I think now it was really quite daring of us to make that ascent, which even today is considered quite difficult.

RS: This was the Swiss Buttress?

RM: Yes. Then it was known as the Northeast Buttress of Mount Sill.

RS: I think I know what you mean there; there is the regular

RS: route which is from the Gayley Saddle, and this is a little bit further around to the northeast.

RM: To the left when you are facing the peak from the east.

RS: That's to the south.

JM: Yes, you're talking about the North Couloir and I've done that. I tried the Swiss Buttress this summer and almost got killed when a rock came down. The climber above me fell and knocked this rock off; I was looking up into the sun and couldn't see it, but it came so fast that it hit and splintered and just ripped my shirt as it went by. We hurriedly traversed over to the North Couloir. But it's a formidable climb to this day; it was Ruth's first big climb, and I don't know how the devil she did it.

RS: What class would you describe it as today?

JM: Five, probably.

RS: It's a pretty hard fifth-class range anyway.

JM: Up there you're over 14,000 feet elevation on the climb and it's quite difficult.

RS: Ruth, did you do any leading on that?

RM: On no, I didn't lead on that. I led first on Tahquitz. On the Sill route, Dick Jones and Spencer Austin led; they were excellent climbers, but we were certainly a weak party. The other two fellows were really nervous.

RS: They were happy to make it to the top and get down the easy way?

RM: Well, they had embarked on it and had to keep on going. For myself, I thought it was just wonderful!

RS: Maybe you remember the time I went up with you on the Switchbacks?

JM: Oh, yes.

RS: That was really fun. But I will register a complaint, John; it's not really a complaint, but you put those pitons in very solidly, and because you were traversing to the

RS: right when I pulled one out, if I didn't have a good hold on something, I would break loose and end up in a pendulum swing. I ripped the seat of my pants out.

RM: Is that what happened to you?

RS: I pulled the piton out and then peeled of ..

RM: I do remember belaying you on that fall, Dick.

RS: It was enjoyable, but I must admit I was worried about what the view was from below.

JM: That's quite a climb. I climbed it a few years later, and I would look up and think, "What am I doing here; what's happened to this mountain?" It was much steeper than I remembered it being. That's true today; the mountains just keep leaning over me now. They didn't used to do that.

RS: I had one disappointment on the Switchbacks; we didn't reach the top. We didn't go all the way up but rappeled off there someplace; I wish we had gone to the top.

JM: We had done the difficult climbing, and then we came down.

RM: That's the usual way at Tahquitz. The northside climbs end nearer the top.

RS: Ruth, do you have any ambitions, something that you haven't done that you would like to do in the mountain climbing area or something that you've tried but haven't done yet?

RM: Well, yes, there are one or two things, but I know that I'll never do them now. I wish I had had a chance to climb the Grand Teton.

RS: Any others?

RM: No, not really.

RS: What about you, John?

JM: I'm responsible for Ruth not making the Grand because I climbed the Grand one day with a fellow there, and was going to climb two days later with Ruth. But I came

JM: down with a bad back from an old football injury. It doubled me up so I didn't know if I was going to get out of the mountains or not, so Ruth went off and did Tepee Pillar that day.

RM: That was a very adventuresome trip; we were living in Alabama at the time, during the World War II years. You could hardly go on trips, but we did; we had an extremely weird trip between buses and trains and one thing and another. We took a bus up to the campground at Jenny Lake. There was an absolutely enormous campground, and we were the only people in it! Then toward twilight, another car drove up--and with the whole campground to choose from, they chose to camp right by us.

RS: Did they explain why?

RM: It was inexplicable.

RS: Were they afraid of what might happen if they were all alone?

RM: Maybe, but they were a bunch of ranchers armed with their axes. Finally we had to carry our sleeping bags about a mile away so we could sleep.

RS: You climbed other things in the Tetons, like the Middle Teton or Symmetry Spire?

JM: We climbed Teewinot, making the first ascent of the west face. We also did the Middle, by the black dike. We also climbed Nez Perce. So we had our fun there.

RS: Let's go back to just a few of the other climbs that you referred to as first ascents. To be more specific you mentioned Monument Peak. Where is Monument, what is it like, and what were your experiences on that and when?

JM: We climbed Monument Peak the winter just after we were married, on New Year's Day of 1940. Monument Peak is near Parker, Arizona, on the California side; there is a group there called the Monument Range, near the intake of the Metropolitan Water District. The spire is one of those rare peaks that's higher than it is thick. I tried that first in 1937 with a friend who had even less experience than I did. Luckily we didn't get up there too far. Then he took quite a fall, and I caught him. We gave it

JM: up, having neither experience nor the equipment for it. Later, Glen Dawson tried it and decided it wasn't a safe thing to climb. Then we got a party together--Paul Estes, Art Johnson, Ruth and myself--and went out on New Year's Day of '40 and made the climb. It was a very loose peak but you could get up the thing.

RS: It's a conglomerate, isn't it?

JM: Yes, it's a conglomerate desert peak with a lot of desert varnish on it. It was a good climb.

RS: How high a climb is it from the starting point to the summit?

JM: I would say it wasn't terribly high. It may have not been over 300 feet or so. It's not a tall peak but you worked for it all the way up. Sort of a wavy loose rock.

RS: Was there much direct aid?

JM: No, it was just a clean fifth-class climb.

RS: I imagine you would have had trouble getting some nuts in that kind of rock there.

JM: Nuts hadn't been invented. We were using long, long pitons.

RS: John, you mentioned Aiguille. I wonder if you would describe that climb.

JM: Aiguille was an unclimbed peak in the Canadian Rockies. It had been tried by a guided party--they looked at it, but I don't think they made a serious attempt on it. It's one of these mountains that is rather spectacular looking. Ruth and I surveyed it from the east and decided not to try it from that side; there is quite a barrier range before you even get to the mountain. So we had our equipment packed twenty miles up the Howse River on the west side. We then backpacked in another six miles cross-country and finally established high camp not too far below the glacier. Next day we crossed the glacier and saw that we had to do rather an odd thing, which was climb clear up over the west peak and descend to the notch between that and the main summit, since the south cliffs were wet and impassable. Finally we could hit the main peak.

JM: The crux was climbed sixth class. It might have gone fifth class, but the rock was so poor that I was afraid to climb up and then fall on the pitons, because they wouldn't stay there. By doing it by aid and applying pressure very gently on the pitons, they would probably stay in, and that's the way the climb went. We reached the head of that particular pitch; then Ruth and I alternated leads clear to the summit. The climbing was pretty straightforward after we got above that point. That was quite a bit of satisfaction. We had a terrific view from the summit.

RS: Do you recall when that climb was?

JM: It's in the guidebook--1952.

RS: Do you know if it has been climbed since that time?

JM: I haven't heard of anyone climbing it.

RM: Aiguille is hard to get at and that makes a difference as to how often a peak is tried.

High Sierra Favorites

RS: As to the Sierra Nevada, you've mentioned climbing on Sill and on Whitney. Do you have any favorite climbs in the Sierra Nevada?

JM: The mountains around the Palisade Glacier, because of the effect of the glacier. Crossing a glacier to those high peaks makes them really Alpine regions. That's why I like to go back to the Palisade Glacier area, and have done so time after time.

RS: What about you, Ruth, do you have a favorite climbing area in the Sierra Nevada?

RM: I too love the Palisades with their many 14,000 foot peaks. There are other beautiful areas of course. The whole Sierra Nevada, on the east side in particular, is a lovely range. We've had some good trips in the Minarets. I have always enjoyed high elevations.

JM: The east side of Whitney, of course; we have been back there many times.

RM: We had a gorgeous trip in the Humphrey Basin one summer, when our daughters were teen-agers. John had been working in Germany all summer, and it had been a hard summer for all of us in lots of ways. When he came home, we took two weeks and went in to Humphrey Basin. John and I climbed Hymphrey twice, two days in succession.

It was sort of a funny trip in some ways. It was absolutely impossible for us to carry as much food as we needed.

RS: Was this the teen-ager effect?

RM: In part. Toward the end of our trip we were getting awfully hungry. We actually got so empty and so low that we went around begging from camp to camp to see if people had any food left over. A large group of boy scouts had just burned up quantities of leftover bread and bacon--really a terrible thing! We managed to eke out our whole trip as long as we were going to; we all lost quite a bit of weight, because we were really beginning to starve, but I always thought of it as a really great trip.

JM: One of the most satisfying climbs we made was the north face of Williamson. Ruth and I put up the first route that has ever been made there; I've only heard of one other route, which was one that Tim Ryan, Fred Wing and I put through a couple of years ago to the west of that. That first route in 1957 was quite a source of satisfaction! That is one of the greatest faces of the Sierra. Few people get in there, though it's visible from the valley, just because it's a long jaunt to the face.

RS: What would your approach really be?

JM: Over Symmes Creek Pass, over Shepherd Pass, and then drop easterly to a tarn. Then you climb awhile, go past the altar, and finally get to the north face.

RM: In those days you left the car even lower than you do now.

RS: Shepherd Pass is about five or six thousand feet up and down. How high a face is that? It looks like it would be at least 3,000 feet.

JM: The contours indicate 2,200 feet.

RS: What was the difficulty of the climbing? Would you say it was a sustained fifth class or..?

JM: Where Ruth and I climbed it, it was mostly fourth; there was one section of fifth I remember. I got up in a chimney there that finally wouldn't go, so I put in a piton and we did a pendulum traverse over to the adjoining chimney. This led out to the top.

Defensive Climbing

RS: Have you ever gotten in a situation on a climb where you wondered why you were there and how you were going to get out of it?

RM: I've thought on rare occasions that perhaps it was a little foolish to be there. But we always knew that we would get out of it, because we had to. In most of our climbing years, people didn't get plucked off by helicopters when they got in trouble; they either plucked themselves off or they didn't get out.

RS: John, can I put the same question to you--have you ever been in a situation in climbing where perhaps you wished you were elsewhere at that moment?

JM: There have been times and places where night was coming on, and I would have rather been down in camp than up on the mountain.

RM: That's a more sensible answer.

JM: It's true that I've always divided pitches into two classes: those I'm enjoying, and those where I'm glad afterward.

RS: You mentioned earlier that neither of you had ever had a serious accident or even anything that would be considered a serious inconvenience. Do you have any observations about other people having accidents or any observations about the people who do get into accidents in mountain climbing? What is the major cause in your opinion?

RM: We really always have been very careful; it becomes automatic, especially when you're often just two people in the boondocks. But I think there is an element of luck too that you just have to recognize. Anybody can be hit by a rock; you're on slippery gravelly slopes where anybody could slip; that sort of thing.

RS: I suppose on the highway of course you could be run over by someone else, and that corresponds to being hit by a rock.

RM: There you have the element of luck again. But there are also the elements of judgment and care.

RS: How does one develop that, or does somebody inherit that; is it training? What's more important?

RM: I would say attitude and experience; what would you say John?

JM: Certainly attitude and experience. I also think you have to be born with a certain amount of caution. Probably you, like Ruth and I, climb with a certain awareness; it certainly isn't fear but you know that things can easily happen. So many loose rocks, soft crusts of snow, so many things to watch out for; you don't fear them, you just take them into consideration.

RS: Sort of defensive climbing?

JM: Yes, I would say it's almost defensive; that's a good term. And it doesn't detract from one's enjoyment; as a matter of fact, it makes it more enjoyable because I know that in climbing as safely as we can, we're doing something in a workmanlike manner. The fact that we're knowledgeable about these dangers really enables us to do a better job.

RM: Accidents do happen to good climbers who are being careful. You read and hear about accidents that sound as if they could not be described any other way--it's an accident. But in the large proportion of mountain accidents the people have done something foolish or careless.

Several Climbing Generations: Clyde, Bedayn, Robbins

RS: In your years of climbing and outings and such, you no doubt have met many people that are known for their accomplishments--unusual people, great people, interesting people. In your answer to our questionnaire, Ruth, you mentioned Clyde, Bedayn, Robbins, and Sherrick. It would be appreciated if you might share some of your observations about these people as you knew them. What were they like as you knew them? In what manner were you associated with them?

RM: I suppose the most famous of the California climbers is Norman Clyde. John really knows more about him than I do.

JM: First, Norman Clyde was very helpful to a boy like me. I first got to know of him through reading "Touring Topics", published by the Automobile Club of Southern California. Back in the early twenties, they had wisely commissioned Clyde, who was then the dean of California climbers, to do a series on the Sierra, and he did very well. He wrote a well-illustrated article about the fourteen-thousand-foot peaks, next the thirteen-thousanders, then the twelve-thousanders, and finally certain groups of peaks. I wrote and asked him how to nail boots. In those days you used the Swiss edge nails.

RS: Roughly what year was this?

JM: This would have been about 1927. He wrote back a very long letter describing just how to do it; I followed his directions and came out with a very good job. And so I had a writing acquaintance with him long before we ever chanced to meet.

RS: You did meet him, then?

JM: Yes, finally, up in the mountains.

RM: We used to meet him in later years sometimes on the trail. I remember once he wanted to carry my pack a little ways so I let him because he apparently wanted to show that he could.

RS: Was he getting along in age at that time?

RM: Well, I thought he was. He was considerably older than I was.

RS: I think he died only about five years ago, didn't he?

RM: The last time I saw Norman was on one of the Sierra Club base camp trips, where my daughter and her husband were the leaders. Norman used to go on some of those trips. I think they packed him in so he could. He looked just about the same and seemed to be wearing the same hat.

RS: I suppose his mountain climbing activities were pretty much over by the time you met him in the Sierra Club?

RM: I don't know; probably. He certainly wasn't climbing when he was eighty-five. But he was out in the Sierra. Every once in a while one does read about somebody climbing to the top of a mountain at the age of around ninety-five.

RS: Did you ever have any conversations with him of any length or any philosophical aspects?

JM: Not really; he was a pretty close-mouthed type person. A real true outdoorsman.

RS: What was your contact with Bedayn?

RM: As far as I can remember we first met Raffi Bedayn down here about 1938. He had come south for some reason and came to a climb at Eagle Rock. I remember his complaint that he didn't get very good street car service, and we were all very surprised because as true southern Californians we had never gone to a rock climb on a street car as they did in the Bay Area. Then the summer of 1941 when we lived in San Jose, we climbed with the Bay Chapter climbers. Raffi also was one of the first people that invented dehydrated foods. I remember that after we were married, perhaps in late 1939, he visited us in South Pasadena where we were living. He brought a bunch of dried foods that he'd worked up some way. He was in the wholesale grocery store business at that time. In recent years we have seen Raffi often, as his term on the Board of Directors of the American Alpine Club has overlapped with mine.

RS: Have you done any climbing with him in the Sierra Nevada?

JM: We'd meet at Yosemite when climbing. Our RCS and the Bay Area RCS used to go up there every Memorial Day, but they didn't mix up their ropes much. The Bay Chapter had their ropes, and the LA chapter had their ropes.

RS: Was he involved with the Bedayn carabiniers?

RM: He invented and manufactured them.

RS: Were they aluminum?

JM: They were some of the earliest.

RM: He might have invented them after the war. I don't think that we had aluminum carabiniers until after the war.

RS: We didn't really get superalloy until later on. I have also mentioned Sherrick and Robbins.

RM: Mike Sherrick climbed with the RCS so we knew him well. Later we worked together in the American Alpine Club's local section.

RS: Have you climbed with Robbins or Sherrick? I don't know them myself, and in some ways they are a newer generation than I was.

RM: They are certainly a newer generation than we are. The first time I ever saw Royal Robbins he was a boy of around sixteen; he had his arm in a cast and was climbing around like a lizard at Stony Point.

JM: He is a person of great daring. Ruth and I both climbed some with Royal Robbins when he lived down here, and even then he showed remarkable skills. I remember particularly because he would seem to press his luck so far that some of the conservative members of the RCS were very critical of him. Ruth and I would always say, "Well, it's all right for him to do that because what would be unsafe for other people is safe for Royal--he's such an exceptional climber." Our prophecy was proven true. Because he, of course, became an outstanding climber long ago. As we said, we've climbed with Royal, and know he's very safe. I've had the luck to make quite a few climbs with him, and he was always meticulous in his anchorage and belaying.

RM: Even when he was very young he knew exactly what he was doing.

JM: He never took chances. So when he was doing these very high angle climbs he was doing it in safety; that's what some of the older people didn't seem to recognize.

RS: I guess you do look at these things from different viewpoints based upon your own fears and experience.

RM: Certainly you do, and there always is a conservative and a less conservative element in rock climbing groups. Often the less conservative become more so as time goes on.

RS: Is it a good description to say that there's a new generation of climbers or is that just always happening?

RM: There's a new generation of climbers at least every five years.

RS: What about solo climbing as an example? It seems to me that's something that has become a little more popular in recent years.

JM: It has. I've done quite a bit of enjoyable solo climbing, but it was always well within my capabilities, and I was careful. I got quite a shock this spring: it was on the Snake Dike on the west face of Half Dome. It was 5.7, just all I could handle; here comes a fellow climbing up. One little slip and a person wouldn't have a ghost of a chance of stopping; we were many pitches above the ground. I suggested that he climb through, and he did. How people have that kind of iron nerve and ability I don't know.

RS: He had no self-belay?

JM: Nothing whatsoever, he was just climbing.

RM: But it would give you a great deal of freedom if you could do it.

RS: Well, you would have to have supreme confidence.

RM: Yes, you would, absolutely.

RS: I see something like that and say, "Boy, I don't want to be there."

RM: But once you start to think that, you're lost.

JM: Andy Fried, a very good climber, said he took a header off of the Snake Dike. If he had been climbing solo that would have been the end of Andy!

RS: An interesting thought occurs to me. If I have a rope on I can go up to the edge of a cliff and look down a thousand feet, and it doesn't do anything to my nerves; but I wouldn't feel safe at all to walk up to that same edge without a rope and of course a belay. A rope provides a confidence that you have a second line of defence.

JM: I feel exactly the same way; I can lead fourth-class climbing quite well even though it is obvious that if I should fall I would go an equal distance below the belay and might get pretty badly hurt. If I'm solo just the thought that I wouldn't stop at all would make me refuse to do it.

RS: It's an important psychological thing.

RM: Theoretically, it should be perfectly easy to climb anything without a rope that you can climb with it. In fact easier, because you don't have the drag and nuisance of the rope.

JM: Yes, I can tell myself, and yes I can lead it, but it just doesn't feel right.

RS: How did you become active in the American Alpine Club? And what are your positions today?

RM: We didn't even join the American Alpine Club until 1966 because we felt that our local club was really doing everything for us that we needed in the way of a club. But we became interested in it, and we did join. I never did anything for them until one day three and a half years ago I received a letter asking me if I would be a director. I was really surprised, because usually they pick out people who have already done some work. But they hadn't had a woman director for years, and obviously thought they should. Probably they had a little trouble finding a woman who was willing to do it. I began to think that it would be quite interesting to serve, so I accepted. Since then, I have become very interested in the club and have done a lot of work for them. I have been their membership chairman for over a year, and I'll be editing their News starting after the New Year.

RS: They meet in New York, don't they?

RM: The club's offices are in New York. The directors meet three times a year, in different parts of the country. They had a meeting at Idyllwild last spring, for example. I was in charge of that meeting. During my term as director, they've met in Portland; Boulder; Seattle; Washington, DC; Philadelphia; and Berkeley. They try to meet in different areas so that local climbers can come and meet the directors and talk with them. Also it divides up the travelling expenses.

Observations on the Sierra Club

RS: One other thing that we haven't touched on in much detail is the Mugelnoos and the Brower controversy. Do you have any other observations on that period of the club, or perhaps an earlier time when there were some problems in the Angeles chapter in regards to minorities? Do you recall any events in that area?

RM: I don't think I ever got involved in any of these minority problems, though I was aware of them. I certainly think that the Sierra Club should have minority members who are interested--and it does.

JM: Over the years, our climbing and skiing groups included, at various times, two blacks and several Orientals.

RM: In our groups, members of all races are accepted as people--for their outdoor ability, sense of humor, good fellowship, helpfulness, and other contributions, which have been extensive.

As far as the Brower thing was concerned, I really thought it was too bad, because Dave had done a great deal of good for the club, and he was a very talented fellow. Somehow it seemed to go to his head. I never really quite understood what happened; it seemed as if he began to think of himself as the king of the club--but he was breaking up the club. That was my impression.

RS: That episode occurred a little less than ten years ago. How do you view the outcome now?

RM: I still think that the solution arrived at was absolutely the only thing that could have been done. Since then, the club has weathered any problems that I know about, has continued to grow, and is the strongest conservation voice in America today.

RS: John, do you have any additional thoughts on the things that we have talked about this evening?

JM: I think the biggest problem is conservation; the club has progressed a long ways because at the very beginning it was concerned only with preservation of wilderness areas in their various forms. Now the club has become involved with far broader reaches of the environment, urban as well as rural. This is a far more complex problem. The club will do well in its approach to not get the reputation of being against every development, but be very selective because the reputation of just being against things is not going to achieve what the club wants. I think that its objectives for conservation have to be considered very carefully, and then we should go only for the meaningful ones. Not just get the reputation for being against every type of development.

For example, the club has the reputation of being against almost every power development. I notice this time after time. It's one thing to be sure that minimum restrictions are met, but it's something else to be just against things. The club apparently feels that, yes, you can be against all power development because that would cause people to conserve. Well, you look at the fate of the energy conservation efforts in Congress right now, and you realize that the people aren't very much given to conservation. I think we've done a very good thing in what we have achieved, such as forcing the cancellation of some projects which would be very detrimental. But power plants are going to have to go in some places, because this country is just not about to cut down to the point where the existing power sources will be adequate forever. It's a matter of choosing our shots so we can take care of the most pressing needs.

RS: Thank you John. Ruth, do you have any thoughts, past, present or future, maybe a little philosophy that you would like to share with other people?

RM: I think the Sierra Club has been a very important voice.

RM: It has grown a great deal stronger and more respected nationwide over the last thirty or forty years. I think one reason that it's so fanatical is that it takes the opposite side from so many business voices that are fanatical in the other direction. But I do think it will have to be careful not to spread its efforts too thin and not to get involved in things that really have nothing to do with the environment or the wilderness. It is really a great organization and has meant a great deal to a great many people, including us.

RS: Thank you very much, John and Ruth. It's been a pleasure to be with you this evening, and this doesn't necessarily mean that it's the end. We can get together again sometime and share some more thoughts--but until that future day I want to thank you very much for a very pleasant evening.