

Sierra Club Oral History Project

SIERRA CLUB WOMEN III

Cicely M. Christy	Contributions to the Sierra Club and the San Francisco Bay Chapter, 1938-1970s
Wanda B. Goody	A Hiker's View of the Early Sierra Club
Ethel Rose Taylor Horsfall	On the Trail with the Sierra Club, 1920s-1960s
Harriet T. Parsons	A Half-Century of Sierra Club Involvement

Interviews Conducted by  
George Baranowski  
Ann Lage  
Ray Lage  
Garth Tissol  
1978-1982

Underwritten by  
The National Endowment for the Humanities

Sierra Club History Committee  
1982

Sierra Club Oral History Project

Copyright © 1982 by Sierra Club, San Francisco, California  
All rights reserved

## PREFACE

## The Oral History Program of the Sierra Club

In fall 1969 and spring 1970 a self-appointed committee of Sierra Clubbers met several times to consider two vexing and related problems. The rapid membership growth of the club and its involvement in environmental issues on a national scale left neither time nor resources to document the club's internal and external history. Club records were stored in a number of locations and were inaccessible for research. Further, we were failing to take advantage of the relatively new technique of oral history by which the reminiscences of club leaders and members of long standing could be preserved.

The ad hoc committee's recommendation that a standing History Committee be established was approved by the Sierra Club Board of Directors in May 1970. That September the board designated The Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley as the official depository of the club's archives. The large collection of records, photographs and other memorabilia known as the "Sierra Club Papers" is thus permanently protected, and the Bancroft is preparing a catalog of these holdings which will be invaluable to students of the conservation movement.

The History Committee then focused its energies on how to develop a significant oral history program. A six page questionnaire was mailed to members who had joined the club prior to 1931. More than half responded, enabling the committee to identify numerous older members as likely prospects for oral interviews. (Some had hiked with John Muir!) Other interviewees were selected from the ranks of club leadership over the past six decades.

Those committee members who volunteered as interviewers were trained in this discipline by Willa Baum, head of the Bancroft's Regional Oral History Office and a nationally recognized authority in this field. Further interviews have been completed in cooperation with university oral history classes at California State University, Fullerton; Columbia University, New York; and the University of California, Berkeley. Extensive interviews with major club leaders are most often conducted on a professional basis through the Regional Oral History Office.

Copies of the Sierra Club oral interviews are placed at The Bancroft Library, at UCLA, and at the club's Colby Library, and may be purchased for the actual cost of photocopying, binding, and shipping by club regional offices, chapters, and groups, as well as by other libraries and institutions.

Our heartfelt gratitude for their help in making the Sierra Club Oral History Project a success goes to each interviewee and interviewer; to everyone who has written an introduction to an oral history; to the Sierra Club Board of Directors for its recognition of the long-term importance of this effort; to the Trustees of the Sierra Club Foundation for generously providing

the necessary funding; to club and foundation staff, especially Michael McCloskey, Denny Wilcher, Colburn Wilbur, and Nicholas Clinch; to Willa Baum and Susan Schrepfer of the Regional Oral History Office; and last but far from least, to the members of the History Committee, and particularly to Ann Lage, who has coordinated the oral history effort since September 1974.

You are cordially invited to read and enjoy any or all of the oral histories in the Sierra Club series. By so doing you will learn much of the club's history which is available nowhere else, and of the fascinating careers and accomplishments of many outstanding club leaders and members.

Marshall H. Kuhn  
Chairman, History Committee  
1970 - 1978

San Francisco  
May 1, 1977  
(revised May 1979, A.L.)

#### PREFACE--1980s

Inspired by the vision of its founder and first chairman, Marshall Kuhn, the Sierra Club History Committee continued to expand its oral history program following his death in 1978. With the assistance of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, awarded in July 1980, the Sierra Club has contracted with the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library to conduct twelve to sixteen major interviews of Sierra Club activists and other environmental leaders of the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, the volunteer interview program has been assisted with funds for training interviewers and transcribing and editing volunteer-conducted interviews, also focusing on the past two decades.

With these efforts, the committee intends to document the programs, strategies, and ideals of the national Sierra Club, as well as the club grassroots, in all its variety--from education to litigation to legislative lobbying, from energy policy to urban issues to wilderness preservation, from California to the Carolinas to New York.

Together with the written archives in The Bancroft Library, the oral history program of the 1980s will provide a valuable record of the Sierra Club during a period of vastly broadening environmental goals, radically changing strategies of environmental action, and major growth in size and influence on American politics and society.

Special thanks for the project's later phase are due to Susan Schrepfer, co-director of the Sierra Club Documentation Project; Ray Lage, cochair of the History Committee; the Sierra Club Board and staff; members of the project advisory board and the History Committee; and most importantly, the interviewees and interviewers for their unfailing cooperation.

Ann Lage  
Cochair, History Committee  
Codirector, Sierra Club Documentation  
Project

Oakland, California  
April, 1981

SIERRA CLUB ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
April 1982

Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library

David R. Brower, Environmental Activist, Publicist, and Prophet, 1980  
Richard M. Leonard, Mountaineer, Lawyer, Environmentalist, 1976  
William E. Siri, Reflections on The Sierra Club, the Environment,  
and Mountaineering, 1950s-1970s, 1979

SIERRA CLUB LEADERS, 1950s-1970s:

Alexander Hildebrand, Sierra Club Leader and Critic: Perspective on  
Club Growth, Scope, and Tactics, 1950s-1970s, 1982  
Martin Litton, Sierra Club Director and Uncompromising Preservationist,  
1950s-1970s, 1982  
Raymond J. Sherwin, Conservationist, Judge, and Sierra Club President,  
1960s-1970s, 1982  
Theodore A. Snyder, Jr., Southeast Conservation Leader and Sierra Club  
President, 1960s-1970s, 1982

In Process: Ansel Adams, Phillip S. Berry, Claire Dedrick, Brock Evans,  
Norman B. Livermore, J. Michael McCloskey, Stewart Udall, Edgar Wayburn

Sierra Club History Committee

Elizabeth Marston Bade, Recollections of William F. Bade and the Early  
Sierra Club, 1976  
Philip S. Bernays, Founding the Southern California Chapter, 1975  
Harold C. Bradley, Furthering the Sierra Club Tradition, 1975  
Cicely M. Christy, Contributions to the Sierra Club and the San Francisco  
Bay Chapter, 1938-1970s, 1982  
Nathan C. Clark, Sierra Club Leader, Outdoorsman, and Engineer, 1977  
Harold E. Crowe, Sierra Club Physician, Baron, and President, 1975  
Glen Dawson, Pioneer Rock Climber and Ski Mountaineer, 1975  
Nora Evans, Sixty Years with the Sierra Club, 1976  
Francis Farquhar, Sierra Club Mountaineer and Editor, 1974  
Marjory Bridge Farquhar, Pioneer Woman Rock Climber and Sierra Club  
Director, 1977  
Alfred Forsyth, The Sierra Club in New York and New Mexico, 1965-1978, 1981  
Wanda B. Goody, A Hiker's View of the Early Sierra Club, 1982  
C. Nelson Hackett, Lasting Impressions of the Early Sierra Club, 1975  
Joel Hildebrand, Sierra Club Leader and Ski Mountaineer, 1974  
Ethel Rose Taylor Horsfall, On the Trail with the Sierra Club, 1920s-1960s,  
1982  
Helen LeConte, Reminiscences of LeConte Family Outings, the Sierra Club,  
and Ansel Adams, 1977  
John and Ruth Mendenhall, Forty Years of Sierra Club Mountaineering  
Leadership, 1938-1978, 1979  
Stewart M. Ogilvy, Sierra Club Expansion and Evolution: The Atlantic  
Chapter, 1957-1969, 1982

Harriet T. Parsons, A Half-Century of Sierra Club Involvement, 1981  
Ruth E. Prager, Remembering the High Trips, 1976  
Bestor Robinson, Thoughts on Conservation and the Sierra Club, 1974  
Gordon Robinson, Forestry Consultant to the Sierra Club, 1979  
James E. Rother, The Sierra Club in the Early 1900s, 1974  
Anne Van Tyne, Sierra Club Stalwart: Conservationist, Hiker, Chapter and Council Leader, 1981  
In Process: Ruth Bradley, Robert Braun, Lewis Clark, Fred Eissler, Stewart Kimball, George Marshall, Susan Miller, Sigurd Olson, Tom Turner, Walt Wheelock, and others.

California State University, Fullerton--Southern Sierrans Project

Thomas Amneus, New Directions for the Angeles Chapter, 1977  
Robert Bear, Desert Conservation and Exploration with the Sierra Club, 1946-1978, 1980  
Irene Charnock, Portrait of a Sierra Club Volunteer, 1977  
J. Gordon Chelew, Reflections of an Angeles Chapter Member, 1921-1975, 1976  
Arthur B. Johnson, Climbing and Conservation in the Sierra Club's Southern California Chapter, 1930-1960s, 1980  
Olivia R. Johnson, High Trip Reminiscences, 1904-1945, 1977  
E. Stanley Jones, Sierra Club Officer and Angeles Chapter Leader, 1931-1975, 1976  
Marion Jones, Reminiscences of the Southern California Sierra Club, 1927-1975, 1976  
Robert R. Marshall, Angeles Chapter Leader and Wilderness Spokesman, 1960s, 1977  
Dorothy Leavitt Pepper, High Trip High Jinks, 1976  
Roscoe and Wilma Poland, Desert Conservation: Voices from the Sierra Club's San Diego Chapter, 1980  
Richard Searle, Grassroots Sierra Club Leader, 1976

University of California, Berkeley--The Sierra Club and the Urban Environment

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CHAPTER INNER CITY OUTINGS:

Patrick Colgan, "Just One of the Kids Myself," 1980  
Jordan Hall, Trial and Error: the Early Years, 1980  
Duff LaBoyteaux, Towards a National Sierra Club Program, 1980  
Marlene Sarnat, Laying the Foundations for ICO, 1980  
George Zuni, From the Inner City Out, 1980

SIERRA CLUB OUTREACH TO WOMEN:

Helen Burke, Women's Issues in the Environmental Movement, 1980

In Process: Labor and the Environment Series

Sierra Club Oral History Project

Cicely M. Christy

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SIERRA CLUB AND THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY CHAPTER,  
1938-1970s

An Interview Conducted by  
Ann and Ray Lage  
1978-1982

Underwritten by  
The National Endowment for the Humanities

Sierra Club History Committee  
1982

Sierra Club Oral History Project

Copyright © 1982 by Sierra Club, San Francisco, California  
All rights reserved



TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Cicely Christy

INTRODUCTION by Richard M. Leonard	i
INTERVIEW HISTORY	ii
I RECALLING THE EARLY YEARS	1
A Britisher in California	1
Introduction to the Sierra Club--the 1938 High Trip	4
The Club War Effort: Manning the Napa Valley Harvest Camps	8
Building an Adequate Bay Chapter	11
Club Membership Policies: Conflicts over Screening of Applicants	13
II TIMES OF GROWTH AND CHANGES--THE 1950s and 1960s	17
Burgeoning Membership	17
The Conservation Committee and its Chairmen, Blake and Brower	19
The Birth and Coming of Age of the Sierra Club Council	21
Chairing the Committee on Committees	23
Dave Brower: A Characterization	24
The Point Reyes Campaign, 1960s	27
Conservation, Business and Politics	29
III COMRADES AND COMMITMENTS IN THE SIERRA CLUB	33
Women in the Club	33
Conservation Correspondent for the <u>Yodeler</u>	34
Recollections of Charlotte Mauk	36
Personal Qualities of Club Leaders	37
Inspiration of the High Sierra Outings	40
TAPE GUIDE	43
INDEX	44



## INTRODUCTION

Cicely Christy is exceptionally gentle, yet powerful and effective in support of the conservation ideals of John Muir and the Sierra Club. She was born in England, but has long been an American citizen, active in almost all parts of the good work of the Sierra Club. "Chris" has been a very busy activist working effectively for the protection of the environment long before it became known as a "movement." Her profession as a landscape architect provided a sound basis for her love of natural beauty and her lifelong determination to protect it, particularly in parks, wilderness areas, and other dedications. We are all fortunate for her foresight and accomplishments.

Richard M. Leonard  
Honorary President  
March 28, 1982

## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Captivated by the scenic beauty of the Sierra, first experienced on the 1938 Sierra Club High Trip, Cicely Christy was inspired to give a great deal of her time and talents in service to the club and its San Francisco Bay Chapter over the next forty years. For her many contributions to conservation and to the smooth internal operations of the club, she was awarded one of the club's highest honors in 1967--the William E. Colby Award--as well as the highest honor of her chapter, election as honorary chapter chairman.

In this oral history interview, Miss Christy discusses her early experiences on the high trip; draws careful portraits of longtime club leaders; and tells of her work on the club membership and conservation committees, in the Sierra Club Council, and as conservation editor for the Bay Chapter's Yodeler.

Because her hearing loss makes communications difficult for her, Miss Christy was a somewhat reluctant interviewee, but in general this problem was overcome in the interview situation. Her modesty about her considerable contribution to the club made her less willing to enlarge on her own endeavors than to tell of the contributions of others. She was also unwilling to discuss in detail some of the internal controversies of the past which she felt were better laid to rest and forgotten.

During the course of these interviews, Miss Christy moved from her Berkeley Hills home to a retirement home on the shores of Oakland's Lake Merritt. This unsettling experience for her, as well as the interviewer's own commitments, made completion of the interviews difficult to arrange. Ray held the first taping session in August, 1978, and continued in June of 1979. Ann finally persuaded her to complete the interview with a final short session in March, 1982.

Cicely Christy's habits of precise expression and her concern with a fair and accurate presentation of facts, the hallmarks of her years of Yodeler articles, were very much in evidence during the taping and editing of these interviews. She made no substantive changes during review of the transcript, however. Tapes of the interviews, as well as some personal papers relating to the Sierra Club, have been placed in the Bancroft Library.

Ann and Ray Lage, Cochairmen  
Sierra Club History Committee

12 April 1982  
Oakland, California



## I RECALLING THE EARLY YEARS

[Interview 1: August 24, 1978]##

A Britisher in California

R. Lage: This is a Sierra Club Oral History Project interview with Miss Cicely Christy, and the location is Miss Christy's home in the Berkeley hills, overlooking San Francisco Bay. The date is August 24, 1978. It is terribly nice to be here with you this evening, Miss Christy.

Christy: Well, I think it is very nice of you to come--to be interested in the old things.

R. Lage: Oh, we are excited about your interview, believe me. I wonder if we couldn't begin perhaps with your telling us a little bit about your background and family?

Christy: I think that before I go into that--I would like to explain that I am eighty-one years old, and at that time of life memory is apt to be like a series of slides, and not a continuous movie. So now we will go back.

R. Lage: That is true with all of us and is quite all right. You go ahead and tell us a little about your early life in England.

Christy: I spent the first third of my life in England, where my family were citizens of a country town. My father had one of the first electrical supply businesses in that

---

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 43.

Christy: district, built up so that they are still running under the same name almost a hundred years later. He was very young when he started this, married and had two children, of which I was the first. I was educated in the high school of the neighborhood, and through my parents' careful arrangements, throughout my life, I was able to go on to Girton College in Cambridge in natural sciences, which I managed to pass although I was never a very good student.

That was during the First World War, and after the war there was little to do in England that would attract young people. I was interested in America because of friends who had been here and because of distant relatives who had been in America. I heard of a connection in southern California to which I wrote to find out what prospects there were out here. I had at that time entered a career of landscape gardening, as a result of my chief botanical interest in college. I did do two years teaching in England, high school teaching. I disliked it intensely and turned to the open air. It so happened that I was finally accepted as an immigrant with a proper number--I still have the original passport which I insisted upon keeping--and I found myself in southern California, rather stranded, because the offer was not good on the spot. I was cared for by people, but there was no prospect. However, a chance connection--a certain meeting with a clergyman there in southern California who had actually been born in my own home town in England--introduced me to a new set of people with connections in San Francisco. So I found myself here a year later, staying first with the family of Bishop Edward Parsons of the Episcopal Church, and later at the YWCA in Oakland.

Gradually friends introduced my name to their friends, and I had some offers of work, which I was gradually able to build into a fair-sized business. It was always a personal business, much in San Francisco, almost entirely with small gardens, and I had an extremely pleasant set of clients. The one problem in that was that they didn't want anything to do with their gardens at all. They just wanted somebody to make their garden the best in the block. However, at one time I had sixteen to twenty gardens under my care. I had a man working for me. Well, about that time came along the depression, and after the depression when it was a little hard to keep going I was suddenly asked by a friend what I was going to do in the summer, and why didn't I join the Sierra Club and go to the mountains with her.



R. Lage: Now if I may, I would like to interrupt you just for a moment, and I want to take you back to your life in England. Was yours a brother or a sister?

Christy: I had a sister.

R. Lage: A sister. She remained in England?

Christy: Yes, she married and has now four grandchildren.

R. Lage: Oh my, how nice. And have you been back to England?

Christy: Oh, many times.

R. Lage: I think it would be nice to know a little more about your father perhaps, and your mother. What were their interests? Were they outdoors people? How did you inherit your--?

Christy: My father always loved the outdoors. He would take me for long walks in the country with him. My mother was not so interested.

R. Lage: So the interest in the outdoors comes naturally?

Christy: Yes, it came very naturally to us. We lived on the very border of the country. On one side of us the houses went down into the town, and on the other side were large fields.

R. Lage: So you had ample opportunity to get out, taking long walks. Did your sister share those interests as well with you?

Christy: No, except that she is still keenly interested in her vegetable garden and, in fact, feeds the family winter and summer from the vegetable garden still. She freezes what grows in the garden. She is a very vigorous young woman-- at least three years younger than I am. She has a good husband to help her do that; he likes to work too.

R. Lage: How many children did she have? She has four grandchildren?

Christy: She had just one, one daughter. And the daughter lost no time in getting a very nice husband and has proceeded to have four children of her own, and is running two farms. She started her own Jersey herd of cows. Later, she expanded that farm and was given a lease by the government which controls open space on the edge of London--the Green Belt-- and is very careful how that belt is farmed. So my niece is head of quite an establishment there and has this prize

- Christy: herd of cows. Her husband is still working as a chemist and has a very good job nearby, so altogether that has helped a great deal in buying the cows.
- R. Lage: So you might say you were a natural hiker even before you ever developed a relationship with the Sierra Club? From your long walks with your father?
- Christy: Yes, I enjoyed getting out in the country, certainly. But I had no conception of the mountain country. We went to Lake Tahoe one summer in the early thirties, and I thought it was wonderful. I had never seen a hill in my life that was more than one thousand feet high, so Tahoe looked formidable.

Introduction to the Sierra Club--the 1938 High Trip

- R. Lage: Then you began to tell us about your introduction to the Sierra Club.
- Christy: Yes, the introduction to the Sierra Club was my being taken downtown by my friend and urged to buy a pair of logging boots, men's logging boots. I thought I had ten-ton weights on my feet. But those boots walked me a hundred miles or more in the Sierra, so they were a very good investment.
- R. Lage: Do you recall the name of your friend?
- Christy: My friend was Bishop Parson's daughter, Harriet Parsons, who is well known in the Sierra Club.
- R. Lage: And what year was it then, that first summer?
- Christy: The first summer was 1938. I went on the high trip. Now, the winter of 1937-38 was one of the very heaviest snowfalls the Sierra has had. They had to change the itinerary of the high trip several times because we couldn't get over passes. A great deal of our first week's camping was done at 9000 feet, which is despised at any other time! But it was also one of the first times, the only time perhaps, that I really took a pair of boots to bed with me the first night out, to prevent them from being frozen solid in the morning.

R. Lage: It was that cold!

Christy: For somebody straight from the city, it was quite an experience. I was forty-one years old at that time, and I had said I am quite sure that over forty in the mountains is not for me. Well, I little knew! Every year after that I could possibly get on either a high trip or a base camp trip, I did. I think I took six high trips and seven base camp trips in all. After that, an illness stopped me for a while, and then I did not go back onto the trips again, but I made many other expeditions to the mountains.

R. Lage: Was there anything memorable about that very first trip, the very first outing that you took?

Christy: The first outing started at Reds Meadows over Minaret Summit, in full view of the whole panorama of the Minarets, covered with snow at that time. The memory that is sharpest there is being taken out on a nature trip the first day. They really didn't know what to do with the campers; they couldn't go anywhere. It was just a walk for miles in the deep snow. But we learned many things--about animals living in the snow, how the tunnels are made under the snow, and the storage, and then one wonderful moment in the silence there, the leader said, "Listen," and we heard this hermit thrush song coming up from the woods below. It was really something to remember.

R. Lage: Can you recollect who some of the people were on that very first trip?

Christy: They were all so new to me that I have very little memory of those people except for the immediate neighborhood friends--Harriet Parsons, and I would have to look up the names again of others.

R. Lage: That's fine. I must confess having read a description of that trip. A delightful description by the way, that Harriet wrote for the Sierra Club Bulletin, and she titled it "Mountain Medley". One of the people that she mentions who was on the trip was Norman Clyde.

Christy: Oh yes.

R. Lage: And he has always been an intriguing individual, to me and the club.

Christy: Norman Clyde was such a definite character. I was privileged to go on a number of trips which he attended. But I am no climber, and I did not climb under Norman Clyde. I watched Norman Clyde go out from camp with, as they said, everything but the kitchen stove on his back. Once, when he was much older, on one of the last trips that I took, he did lead a moderate climb and walk to the snout of a glacier up on the east side of the Sierra. He was such a personality that he had little to say--he was just there! And of course he was a magnificent climber, and anybody who he consented to take climbing was very proud of that, being chosen. Climbing was not for me. I like scrambling, but that's all.

R. Lage: Do you recall something of what the purposes of the club were in those days?

Christy: Yes, the club was beginning in those days to do a great deal of work towards getting interest and legal standing for Kings Canyon National Park. Sequoia was already a national park, but this tremendous back country had only just been opened up. I should say that for the first two trips that I went on, it was rare indeed to meet anyone on the Muir Trail. If you met them, they were likely to be invited to campfire and perhaps to dinner. The contrast between the trail today and the trail then shows how new the Sierra was to people in California.

R. Lage: Can you remember some of the early members who were perhaps most memorable to you from those days?

Christy: I think we had better save that for another time when I could have a list with me. Then I would remember because the names would bring it to me. It is hard to pick them out now.

R. Lage: Yes, of course. Do you recall perhaps anything about the type of individuals who became members of the Sierra Club?

Christy: The type of individuals who became members of the Sierra Club were so varied and so different in the city, and so completely homogenous in the camp. You didn't know if you were talking to a cabinet minister or a plumber--we had both! And each had their own interest, their own things to contribute at campfire, their own things they could do around the camp. Everybody helped. I learned to chop vegetables

- Christy: properly at that time. I remember Ethel Rose Taylor, Ethel Rose Horsfall now, showing me so gently, "My mother did it this way." So I learned the right way to do it.
- R. Lage: The members then as you recall came from many different walks of life?
- Christy: Indeed they did. And they came from all parts of the United States, but not so cosmopolitan a group, I think, as came later, after the Sierra Club had such an influx of new members. The groups appealed to then had already been conditioned to the out-of-doors, and their interest was in that line. They were interested in the national parks, national monuments. They had explored. I remember one woman whom I met here, not on the high trip, but in the Sierra Club trips later in Marin County. That was Inez Mejia, the well-known explorer. She had gone up the Amazon by herself with a knapsack on her back, in the days when the Amazon was wild indeed. That type would naturally gravitate to the Sierra Club. They found great satisfaction amongst others of the same kind. So did I!
- R. Lage: How would you characterize the women members of the club? Were they of a certain type, were they adventuresome?
- Christy: I think the question of venturesome brings up something different. Our education on those trips was in being careful. The idea that someone would have to look after you if you hurt yourself was deeply impressed, not by word of mouth, but by example. And we learned many things. On that first snowy trip I remember learning from Dick Leonard at campfire just how to walk on a snow bridge. You don't tramp, tramp. You tread very softly and gently.
- R. Lage: So there were many good lessons that were learned on those high trips.
- Christy: Yes, particularly on rock climbing. Primarily that it was much easier to go up than to come down, and never venture until you were sure of a return.
- R. Lage: Do you recall whether in those early days, were the members of a particular political stripe?
- Christy: It didn't exist. I have never heard a discussion which divided camping people into political cohorts, not on the outings, no. Even in the club office, you could tell perhaps who was Republican and who was not, but they got along very well together. They had a larger interest.

The Club War Effort: Manning the Napa Valley Harvest Camps

- R. Lage: You had also taken us a few moments ago, perhaps a couple of minutes ago, you had taken us to the place and time when the beginnings of the Second World War were about to occur on the 1939 trip.
- Christy: We came on quite a dramatic incident during the Sierra Club high trip in 1939, when the world was very tense and on the verge of war. Everybody knew it, but in the mountains there were no communications, and we had been ten days away. We did at that time meet a party on the trail--three young men, who had a mule, and they also had a wireless, so they brought us the latest news at campfire. I can remember very clearly one young man stood up and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, the news is that today England guaranteed the independence of Poland, and, ladies and gentlemen, that means war." And so it was, but it was a strange thing to happen in the middle of the wilderness.
- R. Lage: What was your feeling about hearing that news?
- Christy: What would it be when I knew that it was affecting so much of Europe? I think those with an English background would probably feel it more sharply than in this country, at that time.
- R. Lage: What sort of activities did the club engage in during those war years--the Second World War. Was there a so-called war effort?
- Christy: Yes, the camping trips were abandoned for the moment. There was one base camp trip which was held because they had the material all ready for it, but I think for four years there were no high trips. There was a chapter effort, in the cases of the two chapters that were most active, the Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Chapters. I was interested in what the San Francisco Bay Chapter was doing, because we were closely involved in the agricultural effort around the bay. There was an appeal for people to go for weekends picking fruit. Picking up fruit in fact, because we were invited to the prune orchards, and you pick up prunes on your knees. We had one weekend like this, and the St. Helena city fathers invited us back and suggested that we set up a camp in their high school. This as I remember was first published in the Yodeler [newsletter of the Bay Chapter]. I was taking the Yodeler at that time and reading it very carefully, and I saw this appeal for somebody who would like to run this harvest camp, as it was called, for the

Christy: San Francisco Bay Chapter. I felt very much hesitation, and I called them back, and said I thought I could perhaps handle it and was promptly gathered into the executive committee of the Bay Chapter and given the job to do this. It was rather overwhelming. I found myself hunting ration coupons through the offices of San Francisco. But I was in a peculiar position to help because I had special gasoline to carry on my business and travel all through San Francisco. I kept my car in San Francisco, and I was able to do a good deal of the office work involved in this.

That reminds me very much of the personage at the San Francisco Sierra Club office. The office was in care of Virginia Ferguson. She was originally Mr. Colby's secretary, and he gave her up to the Sierra Club when the Sierra Club first obtained an office in the Mills Building. There she stayed through the next fifteen to twenty years or more. She ruled the office with quite an iron hand, but she was totally dedicated to the Sierra Club. I remember that, on one of the occasions when the directors had a falling out between themselves, and there were hard words said, which did happen, one of the directors went back into her office, and she was crying.

I talked to her, having this harvest camp on my hands, and she said, "I haven't decided how much I am going to help. This is a chapter assignment." ## I said no more and left her alone for a while. Well, Virginia came through with the most marvelous help for the transportation to St. Helena from San Francisco. The calls came in through the office, and she matched them and talked to them and arranged reservations and cancellations--all those things that an office can do. I couldn't possibly have done it myself, living in Berkeley and not being in the city very much. She was most faithful to us, all the time, most helpful. That was her temperment, and she was one of the outstanding personalities of the early days of the Sierra Club.

R. Lage: And the club did send quite a number of its members off to assist in the harvest camps?

Christy: Yes, weekends we would have a number. It was never as successful as I would have liked. People took their vacations gradually--two weeks here and there, and for about six weeks we had a group there. Small in the week and larger at weekends. We could get gasoline--they arranged to give us gasoline--and we learned a lot about prune picking, grape

Christy: picking, and walnut picking, all of which are done in different ways at different times. I think we were more of a moral help to the community up there than a very physical advantage. We didn't do too much; we were not accustomed to hard work of picking up prunes, and carrying boxes and so forth.

R. Lage: What time of the year do you harvest prunes?

Christy: This was August through October--until the beginning of October, really. Some of us were in on walnut picking later, but the school was in session at that time of course, so they couldn't have the high school to live in. The high school there had magnificent grounds behind it, a football field, and, around the football field, a thick growth of pines and bushes and so forth. Ideal camping. So the men had the front part of the high school grounds, and the women had the back part of it. The showers were available, and down the road was a religious society's camp which we had as a commissary. And believe me, the main thing about running a harvest camp is to see that there is always a cook.

R. Lage: Who was your cook? It varied?

Christy: Charlotte Mauk was one of them--one of the directors. Charlotte Mauk gave a great deal of time up there. I can still see Charlotte--a big, heavy woman--coming out at dinnertime and saying to the assembled crowd, "Breakfast will be served at 7:00, family style." She was good. Then Tillie [Matilda] Smedburg was a great person for cooking too. She would come up there and set a huge stew to cooking. Weekends, she would take.

R. Lage: Were there some other activities that the Sierra Club members engaged in?

Christy: That is the only one that I know of, but there probably were. I know that there was a good deal done down south, but what there was, I don't know. Oh, everybody had things that they did. For example, I did quite a lot of work at the San Francisco General Hospital as a nurse's aide there, one day a week. For a year or more I would go over there. I learned a great deal. But that was not Sierra Club. And there was a tremendous outburst of relief and joy when the club could function again after the war.

R. Lage: There were a number of men, Sierra Club members, that went off to war.



Christy: Indeed there were.

R. Lage: Were there any Sierra Club women in the armed forces?

Christy: I don't know. Others would know much better. I was not in touch with the club so much individually. I know that we had several very sad losses, but on the whole the group came back after the war, after experiences chiefly in Italy and even further off. Dick Leonard was part of the outfit that was in Burma during the war.

#### Building an Adequate Bay Chapter

R. Lage: It was during the 1940s, then, that you became quite involved with the San Francisco Bay Chapter activities?

Christy: At that time, yes. There was for many years after that, though, considerable difficulty in getting an adequate San Francisco Bay Chapter. Most of the really capable outstanding people would gravitate to club positions, which were so connected with the San Francisco office. The Bay Chapter had no office of its own for many years. Then it got a room next to the Sierra Club office in the Mills Tower, a distance from the club office down the corridor, so at least it could have its own records and its chapter meeting separate from the club. It was only until quite recently, in the seventies, that the chapter moved over across the bay to Oakland, and it still is there.

R. Lage: What were some of the activities of the Bay Chapter in those early days? Was it mainly social or recreational or was it conservation?

Christy: A main activity was the local walks program. Now local walks were handled by the Bay Chapter, and the schedule was published every three months and contained a walk or perhaps two outings every weekend, especially oriented for the chapter people, and mostly in Marin County. For four or five years after the war, there was nothing but Marin County to walk in, and then interest began to build up through the regional parks here in the East Bay. But the chapter always suffered from a lack of walking country around here.

- Christy: So many people on the chapter list (everybody automatically belongs to the chapter in which they live), were simply oriented to the once-a-year high trip with the Sierra Club, and they were not interested in the local things. So there was rather a division and not a very good feeling at times between them [the chapter and the club]. The chapter felt squeezed for space, and for money, and for general interest. You see they would take all our best people away for the club committees! Well, that would happen naturally, in the same locality.
- R. Lage: You mention that local walks seemed to be the primary interest in the initial days?
- Christy: Yes, there was very little of the social life. Los Angeles was much more oriented to social life because they had a hut in the hills that was the center of their local walks and of their chapter. Here there was no such meeting place. Most of us would belong to other clubs at that time, as well as the Sierra Club, and many of the Sierra Club members could be found at Alpine Lodge and other sociable places like that. The sociable part of it was the weekend car camping trips, where you took a group of people, perhaps with a central commissary, off to the woods somewhere. Russian River was quite a popular place then. There there would be a meeting in the evening at some school or nearby hall, and maybe there would be some country dancing afterwards.
- R. Lage: When would you say that the Bay Chapter began to take on more conservation-oriented interests?
- Christy: That was connected with the fact that, at first, all of conservation nationwide--clubwide--came through the one conservation committee of the Sierra Club. I belonged to that for a number of years. Arthur Blake was the chairman of that conservation committee of the Sierra Club for many years. Everything came through there. Everybody came to the conservation committee meetings who was interested. It became quite large. I think the most interesting part of my life was connected with that nationwide interest. Then it got too big, and there were regional conservation committees. Not regional as you know them now, but other chapters began to undertake the work around their chapters, so that they became regional in nature and we no longer got everything from the Northwest and everything from Los Angeles coming right through one committee. But that didn't last very long after the war.

R. Lage: And you said too that the Bay Chapter seemed to play rather an important role in developing many of the club leaders?

Christy: Yes. For example, Dr. Wayburn. Edgar Wayburn was on the executive committee of the chapter and was chapter chairman before he was on the board of the club on which he now sits. Yes, it was a good proving ground, education ground, for those who had a larger scale of interests.

Club Membership Policies: Conflicts over Screening of Applicants

R. Lage: I would like to talk to you if we may a little bit about club membership policy in those days. What do you recall?

Christy: When I joined there was but one sponsor needed for membership. Then it became two, and for many years there were two sponsors required for every member. The membership committee of the chapters looked over those, just to see that everything was all right. It always was, but that was the way it was set up, to have two sponsors. Well, when the club practically exploded in membership, it was obvious that would not be the way to build a large club, and gradually membership blanks began to be put into the Bulletin and mailed into the club, and the officers of the club would sign the required sponsorship. That obviously was a ludicrous position, and it was dropped gradually. They were very glad indeed to have the members come in; the sponsorship requirement had to be properly dropped, as membership grew.

R. Lage: Now let's see if I understood you correctly. Were you suggesting that the chapter was sort of a screening committee for members whose names were then forwarded to the club offices?

Christy: Membership in general had been the business of the chapters from the time that the first chapters began. Nothing came through the club office unless it was completed first by the chapters. That is probably where certain difficulties arose there, that many people were insistent upon the letter of the law on sponsorship--that new members must be sponsored by persons within the club and in good standing.

R. Lage: What would you say chapter offices looked for in an individual who initiated an interest in becoming a member of the Sierra Club?

Christy: Well, by the time I got interested in such things as membership, it was almost impossible to refuse a member. There wasn't enough time; there were so many members! Which is of course what the club wanted--needed--this tremendous influx of members. If they want to drop out later, well, that is up to them.

R. Lage: So the formal requirements were that, initially at least, you had to be sponsored by one person and later on by two persons. Were there any informal policies that you are aware of?

Christy: No, there was nothing but that. Just that written effort.

R. Lage: Do you recall that there were a number of controversies surrounding membership policies?

Christy: Yes. The membership committee at the time of most of the problems I think, was under Mr. Cunningham's chairmanship, and then briefly under mine. Most of the problems originated because people were concerned that the club was becoming so cosmopolitan that there wasn't enough chance to get to know the incoming members. That was really the basis of it. I think there was very little in the way of hard feelings, of prejudice there. It was a concern for the club as much as anything, though it took the form unfortunately of objections to the method in which membership was carried out. That is rather hazy--long ago, and it has not been the club habit to dwell on the type of problems they had in the past.

R. Lage: We have had a number of others who have been interviewed, and they had commented on, for example, the Angeles Chapter's somewhat restrictive screening. It has been recorded in the Bulletin also, as a matter of fact, that Ansel Adams for one was particularly upset with the Angeles Chapter.

Christy: Yes, I know that a few people were. I would just as soon not preserve that feeling. I doubt it is more than fleeting.

R. Lage: Then of course too, with regard to membership policies, there was the loyalty oath controversy.

Christy: That was quite different. It touched everybody and divided the club quite seriously into those who thought, "Why not go along with it?" and others who thought that it was demeaning to the individual. My own feeling was that I had taken an oath of loyalty to the United States when I became a citizen, which was during the World War, and that should be enough. There was no need to repeat. Many others thought differently, and there was hard feeling at that time. It was a carryover from the weariness of war.

R. Lage: To the best of your recollection, where was this idea for loyalty oaths initiated? Was it here, in the club offices in San Francisco or the Bay Chapter, or did it come out of some of the members of the Angeles Chapter?

Christy: My feeling is that it come up from Los Angeles, but I think there were definitely persons here who agreed with their stand there. There was very little prejudice, if you call it prejudice, if that if the form that it took, in the Bay Area.

R. Lage: Preliminary to our discussion of those topics that we would be covering in the interview, you had mentioned something about a rift involving some members who were Jewish--who weren't members, but were individuals who wished to become members. What do you recall?

Christy: It was my recollection that it was very unimportant, but a noisy prejudice against what you might call cliqueness--the tendency of certain groups to become enclosed within themselves and not feel a part of the larger groups. Most people particularly wanted to keep the Sierra Club a world-wide interest rather than going into groups here that would be restrictive perhaps of their own membership. That is all that come to my attention.

R. Lage: You were following Edward Cunningham as chairman of the Bay Chapter membership committee?

Christy: No, it was the club membership committee chairman. The club membership committee consisted of a chairman appointed by the directors, plus the chairman of every chapter's membership committee. The chapter membership committee was solely involved in bringing in more members, that was their business. They would have get-togethers, social affairs, and so forth. But as a committee, I can't remember that during my two years of chairmanship of the club committee that there ever was a meeting of that committee, because there was no need to be--they were scattered in every chapter. We did correspond, and I remember that I had to ask the opinion of every chapter's membership committee upon a certain problem that come up, and I have forgotten entirely what the problem was.

R. Lage: How long did you hold that office?

Christy: Two to three years, I think--possibly three.

R. Lage: Yes, the record shows that you were chairman from about 1949 to 1953, so it was a bit longer--around four years perhaps, three or four years. Do you recall anything of what your charge was at the time, other than as you just mentioned to try to recruit new members?

Christy: No, there was no charge on the membership committee at all. Except to get the opinions, the general feeling of other membership committees, there was nothing to do.

R. Lage: Were there any new policies instituted?

Christy: No, there were no new policies at that time that I can recall. There was a general loosening of membership requirements, or sponsorship requirements. Any member would do for a sponsor. Many people isolated through the states, who did not know any other member of the Sierra Club, sent in their applications hopefully and were promptly befriended by somebody in the club office.

R. Lage: I see. That is the way that was handled, if someone was from out of state, not knowing a member?

Christy: That is when the club began to grow. There was a time when I joined that it was perfectly possible to know all the members of the club, most of which lived around the Bay Area.

R. Lage: And the Angeles Chapter was actually the first chapter of the club, wasn't it?

Christy: Yes, it was. I think the Angeles Chapter[1911] came just before the formation of the San Francisco Bay Chapter[1924]. Many years later[1954], the Northwest Chapter consented to come in as a chapter provided there were no social activities up there. They were afraid that the social activities, even meetings, of a Sierra Club Chapter there would breach the membership and the activities of the clubs already there. They were very pleased to have the help of the Sierra Club through the chapter that might be formed there, provided that conservation was their sole business. That was quite understood. More than understood, it was well talked about.

R. Lage: Do you recall some of the people in the Northwest who were interested in the formation of the chapter?

Christy: Emily Haig was one of them. She was a grand person and did a great deal for the chapter up there as well as for the Sierra Club in general. But they had the Mountaineers there and the Mazamas. They were two quite powerful groups, and they have always spearheaded the conservation up there.

## II TIMES OF GROWTH AND CHANGES--THE 1950S AND 1960S

[Interview 2: June 5, 1979]##

Burgeoning Membership

R. Lage: The date today is June 5, 1979, and this is our second Sierra Club interview with Cicely Christy. We have certainly had a long hiatus since our first interview. Am I speaking loud enough for you?

Christy: Yes, unless there is noise outside.

R. Lage: I want to say that I am very pleased to be back talking with you again. Perhaps we can resume by discussing the club of the 1950s and 60s. Those two decades appear to have been a time of growth for the club in several aspects. There were many chapters founded, including the first out-of-state, the Atlantic Chapter[1950], and the membership growth made some tremendous gains during that time. The club's interests broadened in scope to include population, pesticides, pollution, etc. I wanted to ask you, at that time, what did you think of the changes which were taking place?

Christy: They happened so quickly that we didn't think about them. The applications for membership were coming in so fast that the office was simply swamped. The rest of us didn't really know what was happening because we weren't there. Virginia Ferguson and the bookkeeper, whose name escapes me at the moment, were nearly driven crazy by the amount of work that was coming into the office. At one time one of the organizers of the club asked to look over the plan of action of the club--the business plan, to see whether we were doing the best we could with the things that we were handling. A representative came into the office and found that the bookkeeper had a shoebox stuffed with checks which she had not had the time to take to the bank! That gives you a

Christy: picture of the office--it was really swamped! It was a very difficult time for the directors. They kept on bringing in somebody they thought could handle the whole thing, organize the whole thing. Two or three attempts were made, vainly. We were simply swamped with growth.

R. Lage: Do you recall, was there any sense of excitement about the broadening of the frontiers and the growth?

Christy: There was great excitement about the conservation projects which were causing the growth. That was the time of the Dinosaur battle, and Point Reyes came into it later. I think that very few of the membership, very few, realized how much the club had grown. It grew by chapters. In this chapter we were conscious of it because it grew tremendously in that time, but the other smaller chapters kept getting more people and getting more people, but not so obviously as those who knew what was going on around the central office here, in this chapter.

R. Lage: Do you recall any strong feelings of regret about the expansion among the older club members?

Christy: I don't personally, and I don't remember that anybody actually protested. Of course many people think that a small club has as much power as a big one, but on the other hand once having started the growth, one couldn't stop it. It had reached a momentum of its own, and Dave Brower's push (I wouldn't say "push," but he was on the end of the pull that was bringing people in)...

R. Lage: What I was thinking of here was that there were probably some members who used the club as sort of an intimate hiking club, and they were perhaps saddened as they saw how the club was becoming a strong nationwide environmental group.

Christy: I think that they simply got absorbed and went on doing exactly what they had been doing before. I know that one leader remarked, as the club began to grow, that a certain group which was meeting for dinner in San Francisco disliked change and didn't want to change their place of meeting or the method of the meeting. He said, "You and I know that these people will go on meeting at that particular cafeteria for all time[laughter]; the changes in the club don't touch them!"

R. Lage: Was there a turning point that you would single out for these new developments in the club? Was there one single event, would you say, that would account for these changes?



Christy: The Dinosaur campaign, definitely, because that brought the club into nationwide and congressional notice. Dave Brower came back to a board meeting once and described the congressman who said that his mail used to come in packets (hand packets) and now it was coming in sacks!

The Conservation Committee and Its Chairmen, Blake and Brower

R. Lage: Yes, I can imagine! How involved were you in the Dinosaur campaign?

Christy: I was a member of the club conservation committee. You must realize that at that time, and until the chapters grew very much larger, there was only one conservation committee in the club; it was the conservation committee. They met either at the club office or at some home. Dick Leonard's house I remember particularly, because an emergency meeting was called after some particular decision was taken in Washington that was very unfavorable. There was a round-robin telephone call, and everybody sat on the floor (there was a huge crowd), and planned the fight against this particular thing.

R. Lage: You as a matter of fact were a member of both the Bay Chapter's conservation committee, as well as the club's conservation committee.

Christy: There was no chapter conservation committee at that time. [pause] Well, that is incorrect. There were conservation groups in the chapters which were in charge of small local things, but the conservation committee of the club had an agenda which covered all of the club, all of the areas, which were not very many at that time.

R. Lage: You also served as the Yodeler's [newsletter of the San Francisco Bay Chapter] first conservation editor for more than twenty-five years.

Christy: That is correct, and at the time I began to write as a conservation correspondent for the Yodeler, there was only this one committee. Arthur Blake was one of the figures in the club at that time who was deeply into conservation. A rather morose, but very practical man--elderly,

Christy: not too polished, very sincere, and very earnest in conservation in general. He was the one who first appointed me to the conservation committee of the club. He was chairman at that time, and he said to me one day, "I'm putting you on the committee." It pleased me very much. I had been interested in it, and I had been listening in on it, and Arthur Blake guided it for many years.

R. Lage: Was Arthur Blake very effective in that role, would you say?

Christy: Effective in an organizing way, and in interest and in keeping the records, but not charismatic as Dave[Brower] who came in at that time and began to be thoroughly enthusiastic, and infectiously enthusiastic, and started really the blossoming of the club at that time.

R. Lage: You mentioned Dinosaur and that campaign. What was the most memorable thing that you can recall about that campaign? Does something stand out?

Christy: Well, it went on a long time. I think you would have to turn to history for the detail of that, and the dates. My most memorable memory is what I have just described--an emergency meeting at Dick Leonard's house where we all sat on the floor and discussed what to do next. This is really where work gets done. Of course, there were very few members of the conservation committee who were outside this area at that time. In fact, there were very few members! You have to remember that the size of the club, the effective size of the club, was very small, and it was very local--very much around here, and in southern California too; there was a group there which was very enthusiastic, very helpful.

R. Lage: When you said the effective size of the club, you are referring to those who were involved in working on club issues, club matters?

Christy: Yes, I am thinking almost solely of the conservation work of the club. Oh, there were very many other aspects of the club, but its continuity depends on the conservation work that is being done.

The Birth and Coming of Age of the Sierra Club Council

R. Lage: Now the [Sierra Club] Council was also established during this period, wasn't it? [1956]

Christy: Yes, slightly after. It was established when the chapters began to grow so big that they had no real communication with the central club. They had already outgrown the area of the state. They couldn't attend board meetings. It used to be a free-for-all to attend board meetings. The large rooms in the hotels used to be full of members. Well, you can't go on indefinitely with that, with a huge club.

Lewis Clark's brother, Nathan, was the sparkplug behind the council. It was his idea, worked out with others of course, and he presented it to a board meeting. There was a great deal of discussion about it, and it dropped for a while and then it went on again because it was a sensible idea. Gradually he and others persuaded the board of directors to make themselves a council, by which I mean to collect people for the council whom they thought would be effective in doing the spadework of the club. So much does not have to come to the board, so there now is a list of those things which chapters are supposed to do for themselves, and the council has gradually taken over coordinating those matters. The board doesn't consider many of those things now; they just don't come to it.

The council, of course, is going through the same trouble that the club had--it is getting too big, because necessarily there had to be a representative from each chapter, and as the chapters grew there were more and more representatives, and certain committees had to be on the council in order to have a balanced view. I know that I was on it as the chairman of the committee on committees, because I knew almost everything that was going on in the club at that time and was useful to the council people who had come up to San Francisco, maybe two or three times a year only, in order to do all of the council business.

R. Lage: Would you say that the board took the council seriously?

Christy: Oh, indeed they did. But they took some time doing it. I have to tell you this, because the complaint, if it could be called that, within the council was that the board would say,

Christy: "Now, council, do this, and you will take over this." And then the board would go ahead cheerfully and do it all themselves! They were so used to doing it of course; it took quite some time, and it took a rather firm council chairman--Kathy Jackson and Ned Robinson were deep in this-- to bring gently to the board the fact that it was the council's business to do this, and they could be left alone with it! Gradually it became a habit to turn certain things, especially those things that affected the chapters, over to the council and forget about it.

R. Lage: Is Ned Robinson Bestor Robinson's son?

Christy: Yes.

R. Lage: And was the council in a position to make recommendations on some matters to the board?

Christy: Yes, indeed. They left conservation alone entirely; that is not their business, but the method of holding elections, finance, practically anything except conservation, would go through the council and the board would get a line on it from that. They may not always follow the council by all means.

R. Lage: Would it be an accurate description to say that the council was actually the various chapters' voice in the club's activities?

Christy: You are quite correct. That is what it was meant for, and that is what it still is, though it is becoming unwieldly now, and there is still much talk about what to do in order to keep the council within numerical bounds.

R. Lage: Can you recall specifically what some of the concerns of the chapters were at that time? Do you have any recollection?

Christy: No, they were small matters-- They were important at the time; I didn't register them for the future.

R. Lage: Does anything stand out in your mind in the way of accomplishments by the council during that period?

Christy: Yes, indeed, they relieved the board of a great deal of hard work.

R. Lage: You mentioned Kathy Jackson. Kathy was the first council chairman?

Christy: That is correct, yes. And I think Ned Robinson was the first secretary or the first vice-chairman; that can be best looked up in the list.

R. Lage: I think you are quite right. And they were very effective?

Christy: Oh yes. Kathy was a very personable person, and she had the council very much to heart. She just lived for it, and she was rather emotional but perhaps that was a good thing at that time. She got it off to a start whereby the council members really took a pride in themselves and what they were doing. And while they could help the board, the difficulties sometimes came because the board would act on a certain thing, as I have hinted before, that they had delegated to the council and then forget about it entirely and failed to tell the council what they were doing!

That would be amusing now; it was rather a thorn in the side at first. Both Kathy Jackson and Ned Robinson were very patient. Each of them had an entree to the board, and a good deal of careful talking went on so that the council eventually got what it was supposed to do. I was secretary of the council for one year and was on one of the first executive committees of the council. So I was in on the beginning, and you can be quite sure the beginning was very small indeed, very trivial little things. Now they have taken over so much of the chapter organization, and the formation and approval of new chapters. That is their business, the chapters.

#### Chairing the Committee on Committees

R. Lage: You reported to the council, you mentioned, as the representative from the committee on committees? You were chairman of this committee on committees?

Christy: Yes.

R. Lage: What was the committee about? Tell me about that.

Christy: That committee was formed before the council was thought of. I think it was Dave Brower's idea, although Dick Leonard was enthusiastic about it and asked me to be the chairman. The board's idea was that this committee should provide good committee members for the various committees that the club

Christy: had--the conservation committee, winter sports committee, anything else. It would be a reservoir of suggestions as to whom could do committee work. Well, it took me a very short time to find out two things. First of all, the committees of the Sierra Club were far too numerous to be influenced by a central reservoir of names or suggestions, and the second one was that they were perfectly capable of doing it themselves. They knew the people who were interested in their particular line, and there was no reason at all to go to any central committee, except on rare occasions when it was a new committee, and they didn't quite know who was interested in that committee.

The committee on committees really became a kind of ombudsman. It collected the ideas of people who wanted them presented but didn't quite know how to go about it, or objections that arise in the course of things and in general need to be talked over and fed back to the board sometime to see if they ring a bell there; and that is about all it was. It kept me in touch wonderfully with the club, but I don't think it did the club a very great deal of good. They didn't need it. Oh, they would come back occasionally, but it was good to have a committee on committees to be, for example, on the council because one knew what was going on in the club.

#### Dave Brower: A Characterization

R. Lage: You mentioned Dave Brower earlier and his infectious leadership, but I have a recollection that he had some difficulties with the council, did he not?

Christy: He had difficulties with everybody at that time, but not especially with the council that I remember. His difficulties were with the board and with the financial control of the club, because his love for conservation and the outdoors blinded him, to a certain extent, to the fact that one has to have some money in one's pocket; his idea was to use whatever money there was available and keep nothing for tomorrow. This is not quite the way it should be expressed--that is rather a raw way of expressing it--but it was finally I think money, more than anything else, that caused the trouble.

R. Lage: Did you know Dave as a young man?

Christy: No.

R. Lage: Did he work well with volunteers?

Christy: He was so heart and soul in the preservation of the wilderness and the outdoors that he enthused anybody who talked with him, and he has a marvelous gift of creating. Writing, words and pictures--anything that would present the wilderness and nature in the way it should be enthused about. That is an awkward expression!

R. Lage: No, that gives, I think, a good view of him. But what sort of a person was he? Was he very intense at the time that you had contact with him?

Christy: He seemed to somebody who didn't know him, in fact to someone who knew him only slightly, very shy. Very slow to create friendship, and I think it was nothing more than shyness. Maybe stiffness would be the impression on the outsider.

R. Lage: Can you tell us anything about his relationship with the board of directors beyond what you alluded to a few months ago? Was it a good relationship at one time?

Christy: Yes, it started as a very good relationship. It simply suffered from overproduction, overenthusiasm, whereas a great many of the board felt that foundations for the future were just as important as an important battle today. It is almost impossible to go into personal relations because they change and are reflected by such little things. I think Dave had a hard time realizing that some of us loved him very much and were very hopeful that the large number in the club who were enthusiastic for both sides were neutral in fact in the various quarrels that went on. I think he had a hard time realizing that.

R. Lage: Were you implying earlier that his primary difficulty with the board was that he extended the club financially?

Christy: That is correct.

R. Lage: What about his position on issues--his uncompromising nature? Was that the bone of contention?

Christy: Oh it always is. An uncompromising nature is a nature that a conservationist has to have, or get nothing left.

##

- Christy: Dave did not hold with compromising any situation. Eventually one has to--that was the position of the others, that you are not going to get perfection, or exactly what you want. And yet you also have to remember that in many cases in conservation battles you win all, or lose all. That's all I can say about it. Some battles will leave a large part untouched and sacrifice a small part, but, as in the case of Glen Canyon, you either have it or you don't have it. It is gone now.
- R. Lage: How would you assess Dave's contributions to the club? In the areas of publication--
- Christy: About seventy-five percent of what the club is now is due to Dave. I am just glad he was able to find outside interests which were along the same lines, which are going very well. There is lots of room for conservationists.
- R. Lage: Did you consider him an able administrator?
- Christy: I don't know what he is now; maybe he has good sense and delegated it to somebody else. With the Sierra Club at that moment, he didn't have time to be administrative.
- R. Lage. I wonder if you have any thoughts on why so many of the chapter leaders opposed Dave so strongly?
- Christy: I think perhaps that they had their eye on tomorrow, and a sound financial basis. Tomorrow is with us now, and we are glad indeed to have the basic financial support that the club has.
- R. Lage: Do you think there was one primary reason for his old and close friends finally opposing him and working for his ouster?
- Christy: That gets into a very personal and unhappy situation that I am not competent to speak about. It is very difficult indeed to try to be neutral with an enthusiastic friend.
- R. Lage: I imagine those were very trying times for Dave's friends?
- Christy: Yes, it certainly was. It was also a very trying time for Dave. I am glad the relationship between Dave and the club has come back to some normalness now. I was very happy indeed to see him get the club's highest award[the John Muir Award], which was certainly due.



The Point Reyes Campaign, 1960s

- R. Lage: Now, I want to try to get for a moment to some of your observations and your work and involvement with the various conservation campaigns during the fifties and sixties, because you were extremely active at that time.
- Christy: Active in writing about them. I was never too active at presenting myself at meetings, or hearings, or speaking in public. That did not turn out to be my line at all because I very quickly found that I could not hear very well. Still, as you know, I am still unable to hear a speaker, but reading the details and selecting the fine points--the important points of pro and con on what the club could do, and what had been done, and what was threatening the particular piece of wilderness that we were interested in, or the particular pollution of the air, etc. that could be set down in easily understandable written form--that is what I have tried to do in the Yodeler until two or three years ago. Calculating one day, I figured I must have written certainly over 100,000 words for the club! I hope it did some good!
- R. Lage: Oh, I am certain it did. What were some of the more memorable campaigns that you personally were involved in?
- Christy: The thing that I was really enthusiastic about personally, and was very happy that I could take part in, was the preservation of Point Reyes. At some time, at a date I have forgotten, the National Park Service sent an exploring group through the states to see if they could check on unspoiled areas which might possibly be useful as national park land. They came eventually to the West Coast, and they went all over Point Reyes, and they came out so enthusiastic, "You have here an extraordinary value within a very short distance of your metropolitan area. Go after it!"

Most of Point Reyes, those of us who had been out there knew, was private land. Some of it was being cut for timber, most of it was farms, but it was almost untouched. The private land was strictly private, and stayed that way. I don't think that more than a dozen people could get onto the big north beach each year, for example. You had to walk through the farms or from way down off the beach, and here was this enormous beach which you could see from the point looking backwards. One of the most inspiring sights in the world! Straight as a die for several miles--gorgeous surf, and nobody on it. Just dunes and farms back of it. Well, that is gradually coming into use now.

Christy: I was fortunate when the National Park Service was first considering Point Reyes [early 1960s] that I had the chance to go in a car, with some of the National Park Service people (four or five men) over the southern end of Point Reyes. I had never been there, and I doubt if many others around the Bay Area had really been there. It was strictly private land, but I was just floored at how beautiful it was. It was gorgeous. English park-like land, great oak trees standing in the grass. Down at the Lake Ranch there were three quite good-sized lakes. We didn't go on the beach, but we knew very well that that was good, and in general it was an exceptional ride. I don't think we saw anybody but ourselves for hours.

It was about time that somebody said that land should really be for the benefit of the huge area which is going to grow and grow in population. So that came up for discussion at a board meeting and the board said, "This is local. This is the Bay Chapter's province." So the Bay Chapter people began to work on it, and with the help of Doris and Dick Leonard and Dave Brower, and Laurel Reynolds, a famous wildlife photographer who had done many wildlife pictures, a film was set up to show the world what Point Reyes was like. Laurel Reynolds did a wonderful job of photographing out there, all the way through. She got entree to all the places and went through and took beautiful pictures, mostly of the beach. Dave Brower saw it. He had the film in his possession for a day or two after Laurel had finished it, and Dave really took it apart and put it together and made a beautiful thing out of it. Doris Leonard was enthusiastic and said, "You should see what Dave has done with the film."

We had a private showing, and it was the kind of film that made one all enthusiastic to go out and preserve this piece of land. Unfortunately Laurel Reynolds did not approve of the handling of her film--it had been cut up and rearranged--and she placed a hold on it which delayed that film for a long time before it could be shown to the public. Eventually somebody got them together, and most of the nice bits that Dave had done, particularly a very fine ending to the film, were Dave's production. But it was a long time in going out. I don't know whether it made much difference, but once out it was seen throughout the area, and the enthusiasm for Point Reyes came after that.

Christy: Meanwhile, of course, we were doing what we could with the Yodeler, which was not a large circulation but at least was in touch with outside sources to describe what it was like. I am very sorry to think about this now, because of the sad end of the Drake legend, but I wrote a beautiful editorial which described how the Sierra Club would put that sixpence back into the Plate of Brasse where the hole was, where the English sixpence had once been, and that we would buy Point Reyes with it. Well, that wouldn't have done now, since the Plate of Brasse is very much discredited![laughter]\*

R. Lage: Yes, apparently it is!

Christy: However, it would have worked then. It was a good campaign, and I enjoyed that. [Point Reyes National Seashore established 1962]

#### Conservation, Business, and Politics

R. Lage: Have you ever been in campaigns where the club's position has been opposed by business interests?

Christy: Well, yes, but I have not taken active part in that beyond writing about it. You mean things like the Dow Chemical plant? What the Sierra Club could do in those campaigns and what it did very effectively in that and some other stories was to make quite clear to the public some of the things that were not admitted in print about the area-- what was proposed to do and whether the business interests would commit themselves to preserving certain things or would slide over it with soft words, which has been known to be done, and then renege on it later. I think public education is very important. For example, in that Dow Chemical [controversy in the late 1970s over establishing a chemical plant on the Delta] people said it cost the area an enormous benefit when Dow moved the plant somewhere else, but it was not generally known that Dow Chemical refused to wait for its permits and started excavation and leveling of land. It diverted a stream and, I understand, though I did not see myself, that it spoiled a small marsh up there. All without permit and without interest in going ahead at all; they just assumed they would get a permit. More than that I can't tell you about that particular area. This is all what I have read later. At that time I was not writing in the Yodeler at all, so I was not following up on that. You have to be very careful to follow up exactly.

---

\* A plate of brass, claiming the land for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, discovered on Drake's Beach at Point Reyes, and for many years believed to have been left by Sir Francis Drake. It has since been proved a fake.

R. Lage: How about PG&E? and lumber interests?

Christy: PG&E's interests were across the Sierra Club's problems, in the nuclear field, and they were very bitterly fought at times by some of the Sierra Club personalities. At the Bodega Head affair the conservationists, not necessarily the Sierra Club, were able to demonstrate that the earthquake fault was just too much for them to put a plant there. The question on Diablo starts a way back, when Kathy Jackson was trying to save the Nipomo Dunes, which are south of the area where they eventually put the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. The sand dunes were large and expansive there, and people are very apt to think that they are no good at all, so PG&E had the idea of building the unit down on the sand dunes. Well, Kathy Jackson and others were able to bring to the government planners the fact that those sand dunes afforded summer and Sunday's recreation for hundreds of thousands of people. They kept a tally of those people who went, and that was sufficient to impress the authorities that those sand dunes were really worth keeping as recreation areas, and they now are. [Diablo Canyon was offered as an alternative site to Nipomo for the nuclear power plant.]

Well, you can't have everything. The Diablo Canyon was a lovely stretch of coast, and while it may remain lovely, nobody is going to enjoy it particularly now. Of course, there is also the problem of inland transportation of current, that is very landscape-damaging. One can't have everything. Whether the Diablo unit will ever be in action, nobody knows yet. They keep on finding the whole coast is a matter of earthquake faults. Wherever you dig is an earthquake fault!

R. Lage: Yes. Do you think that the club should take into account the needs and the interests of business in developing its positions on environmental issues?

Christy: Some industry of course. We have to live, we have to eat, we have to get automobiles. It is a very very difficult and sad position sometimes--to choose what to give up of necessity, and what you will keep and refuse to let people exploit. Exploiting does not always mean--it is not always a bad word. It just means develop sometimes, and a number of people have come into California during the last twenty years--well, that speaks for itself. They have to go somewhere, they have to do something.

R. Lage: That brings up another question I have too. Would you have any thoughts on what the club's role should be with regard to broader environmental issues of urban problems, the energy problem, overpopulation?

Christy: All I can do is quote John Muir that if you take up one thing you find it hitched to the whole universe. I think that the club can leave urban things to other groups, who are more likely to be interested in the urban things than they are in the outdoor natural things. I think that the Sierra Club's main objective in life, and the thing that they can do best for this country, is the preserving of open spaces and the good air that will keep the open spaces. If you get air pollution you will find that your pine trees in the Sierra are suffering--well, there is not much good in preserving the pine trees in the Sierra if you can't reduce pollution on the coast. You have to pay attention to everything.

R. Lage: If you were forced to select one most effective strategy in waging campaigns--conservation campaigns--what would you select as the most effective type of strategy?

Christy: This is very uncertain ground for me, because I am not particularly into the modern way of handling the Sierra Club, but I think that the contact between the Sierra Club and Congress or the legislature is probably the most important that there is. We must try to keep the legislature and the congressmen informed as to what is going on.

R. Lage: What do you feel about the power of the postage stamp?

Christy: It includes that, and it includes money for representatives to stay there and walk up and down the corridors and explain. Lobbying to a certain degree, certainly. You can't help that. The life of a congressman is a very hard life, I think. The amount that they have to absorb in facts, and determining what people want.

R. Lage: From your vantage point, what sort of a relationship has the club had with other governmental agencies, apart from the legislature?

Christy: I don't think I can answer that because I think it has to be answered in the club office or amongst the board. Now, I am having the fifth member of the executive committee of the club to dinner tomorrow night--I can ask your question then!

- R. Lage: As a very active conservationist and environmentalist for many years, how do think you were viewed by your neighbors? How do you think they looked upon you? Of course being a Berkeley resident, I would say that--
- Christy: Well, you get a very warm reception, very ready to listen to you.
- R. Lage: But even so in Berkeley, we have those who might look upon conservationists as meddlers?
- Christy: Oh yes.
- R. Lage: Have you ever experienced that sort of thing?
- Christy: I don't think so personally. I read of it. Much more important as a lead weight on the conservationists is indifference. You may hear that this or that wood is in danger, or this and that coast is going to be built on, but life is so full for them that they are going to forget it.
- R. Lage: Well, if not you personally, how do you think the conservationist is viewed in general throughout the country?
- Christy: Oh, it varies from one day to the next. It goes from A to Z very quickly, according to what the newspaper headlines say usually. On the whole this area is fairly perceptive to conservation ideas.
- R. Lage: Now we have seen bumper stickers for example with slogans such as "Sierra Club Go Home."
- Christy: [laughter] There always will be, and that is a little more outspoken than most of us were used to in the old days, but no doubt it was there. But you have to remember that it is only the effective person who is opposed.
- R. Lage: Sierra Clubbers have been charged as being a group of elitists.
- Christy: Oh yes, that I think that probably has always been--butterfly hunters, bird watchers, and so forth. I think that that again goes in a sort of ratio with overcrowding. If people don't like to consider conservation items--if they themselves are crowded--they are concerned about what affects them at the moment.

## III COMRADES AND COMMITMENTS IN THE SIERRA CLUB

[Interview 3: March 31, 1982] ##

Women in the Club

A. Lage: I asked you about women in the Sierra Club.

Christy: They were most welcome and they did wonderful work, let's say we did. On the whole, the positions of chairmen have gone to men until a few years ago, and then people like Helen Burke came in.

A. Lage: Why do you suppose the positions went to men? Did the women want to be chairmen and weren't elected?

Christy: Practically nobody ever wants to be chairman, but they were quite willing and quite able to take the responsibility. They didn't go running to the men for advice.

A. Lage: Do you think there was a tendency for the men to step into the top positions?

Christy: Yes, I think the tendency was there, in the minds of those voting. It was just a holdover from the time when they automatically voted for men many years ago.

A. Lage: Were women on the executive committee?

Christy: Oh yes.

A. Lage: But then the executive committee would choose a man to chair?

Christy: They would put up several people for their elections; on the whole the men got elected a little bit better than the women. Then it was a question of who had taken the most responsibility and had the most experience in the chapter. They would be almost automatically the chairman.

A. Lage: What role did women have then?

Christy: Oh, the committee work, the social work entirely--well, no, not entirely, there was a very fair division of labor on the whole.

A. Lage: That's interesting because especially on the board of directors, you didn't find many women until the seventies.

Christy: That's right, exactly. It was just reflected in each chapter I think. I think people grew out of that rather deep laid, not exactly prejudiced, but just habits of thought.

A. Lage: You had mentioned Ed Bennett as being sort of a mainstay of the chapter.

Christy: With our finances. He has been chapter chairman, but you find year after year, he would be reelected as treasurer. He seems to be able to keep the figures in his mind and see to it that the figures are presented as they should be.

A. Lage: Has he put a great deal of time into it, would you say? Does it require a lot of his time?

Christy: Yes, an enormous amount of time. He's retired now, so he's still doing it.

#### Conservation Correspondent for the Yodeler

A. Lage: We had asked you about the Yodeler. You worked on the Yodeler for a number of years.

Christy: Yes, but when I left it had changed quite a bit. I don't know the history of that beyond the time that I worked with it. I didn't work with the layout or what it should have, solely with the conservation side.

A. Lage: Who were editors that you worked under? Were you ever editor yourself?

Christy: No, I'm no editor. At the very beginning, let's see, Barbara Bedayn was, I think the first. Then it came on to Charlotte, and there was a long time when Charlotte Mauk was the editor. Then you'll just have to look it up. There were



- Christy: several, about two years at a time perhaps, three years at the most. Then it got too heavy, and so they turned it over to somebody else.
- A. Lage: What was your job on the Yodeler for so many years?
- Christy: To present an article, usually about a thousand words, whenever there was a Yodeler. I would take it to the editor the night before the Yodeler was set up. Mostly it involved reading the conservation news and attending the conservation meetings, which was really what got me out of it, because I could no longer hear what was going on in the meetings. So that stopped that.
- A. Lage: So you reported the conservation news?
- Christy: Yes, an informal title was conservation editor. There was never such a title created, and I don't know that there is now; I don't think there is. Helen Burke more or less took over those articles.
- A. Lage: Did you try to present both sides of an issue or did that not seem important?
- Christy: Oh, yes. But of course we did emphasize our own side, but we did have to present the other. Yes that's correct, I did certainly consider it a responsibility of all of us to present both sides, so that we couldn't be suddenly worked into a corner by a good argument on the other side. Because there are good arguments on both sides.
- A. Lage: Certainly, there always are. Did you attempt to get the viewpoint of opponents?
- Christy: Well, it was usually so obvious. All you had to read was the newspapers to get the other side. Rather, what you would get in the newspapers was the already habit-formed side of a question. Ours was the other side. But it can be very complicated indeed, water supply and that kind of thing, it can become extremely difficult. You want both sides.
- A. Lage: Did you have to do a lot of research to get the facts or attending the meetings was sufficient?
- Christy: Read as much as I could, attend as much as I could, get it from anybody and everybody, listen to the conversation that's going on in the committee meetings.

A. Lage: Did you find yourself most often in agreement with the official club position?

Christy: Oh yes, I go along with the conservation side very thoroughly. I don't recall any time when I thought that they were making a mistake.

Recollections of Charlotte Mauk

A. Lage: Would this be a good time to talk about some of the people in the club that you remember?

Christy: Well, [pause] Charlotte Mauk would be the most outstanding in my mind. She was a personification of the best of the high trip, which really founded the Sierra Club and set its policies, and its interests.

A. Lage: When you say the best of the high trips, how did she personify the best of the high trips?

Christy: You always had Charlotte in commissary. Her business was to know where everything in the commissary was. If they wanted pepper, she knew which box it was in; if they wanted something else, well, that mule had that box. That was her business. She was a very slow hiker, and yet usually she would be last out of camp, and she would somehow be there before dinner.

A. Lage: Was she in charge of organizing the preparation of the meal?

Christy: No. Well, she did make wonderful pies. A certain day that Charlotte would be in camp, we'd all be camping, a day out, and she would get her hands deep in the flour, and there would be wonderful pies. But she knew more than anybody else, I think, about the history of both the club and the mountains in relation to each other.

A. Lage: We wanted to tape her, and she said no, she would do it herself. She was going to talk into the tape recorder on her own, and she never did it. I feel we lost an awful lot.

Christy: That was too bad, she should have lived another ten, fifteen years. When they had to clear out her house there were stacks of unopened Wilderness magazines that she never got

Christy: around to reading. She was a grand person to camp with. I went with the club in a very wet weekend in spring. It was so wet that the rest of the club decided to go home. Charlotte looked up, and she said, "It's getting colder, let's stay." Well, pretty soon the fog lifted a little bit, and we could see snow on the high peaks of Yosemite all around, and it turned out the most gorgeous sun-lit evening. We were happy we stayed.

A. Lage: Was that a chapter outing?

Christy: Yes, well, the chapter becomes the club in that area you see. All the people who went on that trip were from this neighborhood--Bay Chapter and Loma Prieta people as well.

A. Lage: Was this a high trip?

Christy: No, it was not the high trip; it was a weekend, a spring weekend trip. We had the primitive camp, so that the people who were not quite so used to camping would come, but they looked with a rather jaundiced eye at the weather.

That reminds me of another little thing about Charlotte. On that trip we stopped to buy supplies on the way up, and she bought a good-sized pot roast. When we got to camp she pulled out her pressure cooker, put it on the little stove, and we had a fine pot roast. On time too.

#### Personal Qualities of Club Leaders

A. Lage: You wanted to talk about Anne Van Tyne.

Christy: Yes, she stayed with me in my house several times, and I still have two nice little egg cosies that she knitted for me. At that time and for many years after, they lived in a trailer down south and they went everywhere. Anne is a keen thinker and a very sharp intellect and wasted no nonsense on anything. She did a great deal of good in the council.

A. Lage: She's still active in it.

Christy: Oh yes, she's still active.

A. Lage: I was amazed to find out that she was in her seventies; she seems much younger.

Christy: Yes she's slim and small and that type often carries through-- doesn't have extra pounds to carry around. She was not very well for a good deal of the time, but she recovered.

A. Lage: You have some comments about Harold Crowe?

Christy: Yes he was the personality at the base camps, not leader of the whole camp because Oliver Kehrlein took that (Oliver was a special character too). Harold could hold the group together. His dry humor and his suggestions on what to do and not to do enroute were very witty.

A. Lage: You said something about his talks on wilderness manners.

Christy: Wilderness manners, that's it. People would accept things from him that they wouldn't accept if you were to set out to give advice.

A. Lage: Because of his good sense of humor?

Christy: Oh wonderful. A sort of dry humor, deliberate in speech, with very carefully chosen words. Everybody loved his stories at the campfire.

A. Lage: Would you have some characterization of Dick and Doris Leonard? I know you've been good friends with them for years.

Christy: I think they are an ideal couple. Dick is very quiet, looks very inoffensive, but he's a very definite type of person, very strictly ethical. A discussion of who pays on the automotive trips interested me; he said, "I want to be sure that whether I go in somebody else's car, or in my own, it's going to come out the same."

Doris is a rather lighter, jollier type, quick at speech, a very keen conservationist. She's done wonders; be sure to get her experience in the last few years.

A. Lage: Is there anyone else on this list that you would want to characterize, that you may have had some personal involvement with?

Christy: There are things that I might remember about them, but would not be really connected with club things, just personal things, as I knew them. I think that they represent some of the most reliable and widely interesting characters that the club could have had. They were splendid people.

A. Lage: Sometimes these personal comments do relate because they tell us what kind of leaders came to the club; so even if they're personal reminiscences--

Christy: You mean these people [on the list provided]?

A. Lage: Or someone else; this was just a suggested list.

Christy: I think we got as fine a sample of American well-educated and patriotic people who loved the country and loved to preserve what there was in it as you could have found anywhere. In the years when the club began to grow, the leaders came in and taught people from all over, and they were willing to take the outstanding position of speaking out for the things that they wanted. They started chapters everywhere. Have you ever seen the list of our present chapters?

A. Lage: It's amazing, fifty-three or four chapters now.

Christy: Oh yes. Now some of those chapters are resting on their laurels. Chapters do at times, and then there'll be a splurge of interest, with the result that a small chapter will suddenly blossom to tackle a large problem in its neighborhood, and that chapter will grow. Then there'll be a lull for a while. I can look through the list and see where they're resting.

A. Lage: It's bound to happen.

Christy: Ethel Rose Taylor, she was a standing member of all high trips. She was a grand camper and taught me how to build a bathtub with a circle of stones and a waterproof. She loved sleeping on rocks, and when we came into camp, so sure as went up to the women's camp, we'd see a pile of rocks and somebody would say, "Ethel Rose rocks." They were flat to sleep on. She made the most delicious tea, also, had it waiting for us at times after a long hike. Unfortunately the wood in the Sierra has given out so badly that that is a thing of the past, in most camps. So we were very fortunate.

She is still around, and she comes to the Oakland Community Concerts. I saw her the other day in the bus going to the concert. We had a good time together.

Inspiration of the High Sierra Outings

Christy: I was fortunate to go on prewar high trips when we would travel on the John Muir Trail for days without seeing anybody.

A. Lage: Did you notice quite a change after the war?

Christy: I didn't get back on the John Muir Trail much, though I did slightly. I went a good deal on base camp trips on the east side. There it was new country and we went into places that had not been camped in before. After the war it was a great joy to get back there. We'd been waiting four years for a chance to get into the mountains again. Most of these people, leaders back from the war, were so pleased that the first year for the high trip around Mount Whitney, we had to have three sessions, three two-week sessions. We were so anxious to get everybody in.

After that I went on base camp trips. I was not quite in such good condition. But I'm glad I was able to go on that first post-war high trip.

A. Lage: So, you went on two before the war and then one after?

Christy: I went on two after the war.

A. Lage: Then base camp.

Christy: I went on seven base camps altogether.

A. Lage: Did these experiences you had on the outings relate to your interests in what you did for conservation, when you came back? Was that what started it for you?

Christy: Of course, it gave a point to it, a reason for it. It slanted my thinking. I was very new to this country, you see, so I hadn't grown up with any ideas, and everything was very, very new. I realized that those mountains up there are some of the most precious things that we have in this country.

A. Lage: Were there high trip leaders in particular who would point this out or, was it just your experience?

Christy: No, nobody pointed it out. That dates from Mr. Colby who said, "Just take them there; you don't need to say a word." He was quite right.

I'm glad I knew Mr. Colby briefly. He was a grand soul until he got talking and went on and on and on.

A. Lage: Nobody's admitted that yet.

Christy: You might say that he had the gift of gab, certainly, on occasion when he was asked to talk. Because his reminiscences of John Muir himself were just priceless; nobody else could give them.

A. Lage: Were a lot of your friends Sierra Club members?

Christy: Yes they were. I got a great deal of interest through the natural science section and through the high trip connections.

A. Lage: What was the natural science section?

Christy: The natural science section was a chapter section. It had been founded by John Howell and associates connected with the Academy of Sciences, in Golden Gate Park. It was a group which got together; they had a special table at the annual dinner decorated with all sorts of strange natural science things, shells, skins, all sorts of things. They had monthly meetings for many years in which they learned natural science things. They had good speakers. It was never a very large section, but we went on many nice weekend trips. I don't think the section is in existence now, not as I knew it probably. It had an annual gathering together, an annual dinner of its own. But the last two years, that's not been held. Many of us have scattered.

I spent last weekend with one of the members in Pacific Grove. She's now in a retirement home down there, and she was very active in the natural science section. She still is, but it isn't that section or any, she's just active.

A. Lage: Who was that?

Christy: That would be Neva Snell; she's well-known in the natural science group.

A. Lage: You gave so much of yourself to the Sierra Club--a lot of your time, a lot of your concern. Can you explain why?

Christy: Well, I don't know that I actually spent so much in time and talents. The outlet was the writing, which required knowledge from all parts. I just had the general feeling as I looked over the country that a little more Sierra Club would be well worthwhile.

Transcribers: Ramona Wascher, Ilanna Yuditsky  
Final Typist: John McPherson



## TAPE GUIDE -- Cecily Christy

Interview I: August 24, 1978	1
tape 1, side A	1
tape 1, side B	9
Interview 2: June 5, 1979	17
tape 2, side A	17
tape 2, side B	25
Interview III: March 31, 1982	33
tape 3, side A	33

## INDEX -- Cecily Christy

Adams, Ansel, 14

Bennett, Edward, 34  
Blake, Arthur, 19-20  
Brower, David, 19, 20, 24-26, 28  
Burke, Helen, 33, 35

Clark, Nathan, 21  
Clyde, Norman, 5-6  
Colby, William E., 41  
conservation. See environmental protection; Sierra Club, committees,  
conservation  
Crowe, Harold, 38  
Cunningham, Edward, 14, 15

Diablo Canyon power plant, 30  
Dinosaur National Monument, 18-20  
Dow-Chemical Company, 29

environmental protection, 31-32  
education, 35  
personal motivation for, 3-4, 32, 40-42

Ferguson, Virginia, 9, 17

Haig, Emily, 16  
high trips. See Sierra Club outings program  
Horsfall, Ethel Rose Taylor, 7, 39  
Howell, John, 41

Jackson, Kathleen, 22-23, 30

Leonard, Doris, 38  
Leonard, Richard M., 19, 38

Mauk, Charlotte, 10, 34, 36-37  
 Mejia, Inez, 7

Nipomo Dunes, 30

Pacific Gas and Electric Company, 30  
 Parsons, Harriet, 4, 5  
 Point Reyes National Seashore, 27-29

Reynolds, Laurel, 28  
 Robinson, Ned, 22, 23

San Francisco Bay Chapter, Sierra Club  
 conservation, 28  
 leaders, 13, 33-34  
 outings, 11  
 World War II work, 8-10

Sierra Club  
 Board of Directors, 21-23  
 chapters, 39  
 Angeles, 8, 14-16  
 Pacific Northwest, 16  
 San Francisco Bay. See San Francisco Bay Chapter, Sierra Club

committees  
 conservation, 12, 19  
 on committees, 23-24  
 membership, 13-16

industry, relations with, 29-30  
 internal affairs, 1950s, 18, 21-23, 24  
 internal affairs, 1960s, 24-26

membership  
 composition of, 6-7, 32, 38  
 growth, 17-18  
 policies, 13-16

outings program  
 personal experiences, 4-7, 36-37, 40  
 purposes, 40-41  
 women in, 7, 33-34

Sierra Club Council, 21-23, 24  
 Smedburg, Matilda, 10

United States National Park Service, 27-28

Van Tyne, Anne, 37-38

Wayburn, Edgar, 13  
World War II harvest camps, 8-10

Yodeler, 8, 19, 27, 34-36

Sierra Club Oral History Project

Wanda B. Goody

A HIKER'S VIEW OF THE EARLY SIERRA CLUB

An Interview Conducted by  
Garth Tissol  
in 1979

Underwritten by  
The National Endowment for the Humanities

Sierra Club History Committee  
1982

Sierra Club Oral History Project

Copyright © 1982 by Sierra Club, San Francisco, California  
All rights reserved

TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Wanda Goody

INTRODUCTION by Marjorie Goody	i
INTERVIEW HISTORY	ii
I EARLY RECOLLECTIONS	1
Peripatetic Childhood in the West	1
Joining the Sierra Club at the Pan Pacific Exposition, 1915	4
II SIERRA CLUB LOCAL ACTIVITIES, 1915-1929	7
Leading Local Walks	7
Women's Role: Parties and Hikes	8
Producing the Local Walks Schedule, 1920s	9
First Bay Chapter Executive Committee	11
Other Bay Area Outdoor Clubs: Tamalpais, West Point, Contra Costa Hills	12
III HIKES AND HIGH TRIPS	15
Hiking Alone in Yosemite, 1916	15
Climbing Mount Shasta, 1923	16
Remembering Club Leaders and High Trippers	19
TAPE GUIDE	22
INDEX	23





## INTRODUCTION

I have always thought of myself as a sort of Sierra Club "by-product" since my parents and almost all of their friends met through the club. I always enjoyed hearing my mother tell of all the fun they had during the twenties when the club members would meet at the ferry boat, cross over to Marin together, and then continue on the train to the hike departure point. After a day of hiking, they would party all the way back on train and ferry. No wonder there were so many club marriages in the twenties!

I remember how much my parents loved the out-of-doors, particularly the high country. They spent their honeymoon and their vacations camping. My earliest memories were of being carried on my father's backpack out on the trails. When mother was seventy-two she went on a picnic to Angel Island with the Contra Costa Hills Club. When she came home she told me she was quite disappointed because she said, "You know there were over a hundred people, and I could only find seven people to play baseball with!" At seventy-six she took an eight day raft trip with the Sierra Club down the Glen Canyon.

When my mother joined the West Point Club on Mt. Tamalpais about 1957, she would go up every weekend, rain or shine. If she didn't have a ride, she would take the bus and hike in from Pan Toll. I remember her at the age of ninety trudging off in the rain with her knapsack and hiking clothes to catch the bus for a weekend at West Point. She said, "You probably think I'm crazy going off in the rain like this, but I just love it up there on the mountain!"

For her ninetieth birthday, the West Point Club gave her a testimonial dinner that over sixty people attended. It was very heart-warming to hear their loving tributes to her. They spoke of her service to the club, her delightful humor, her ability to get along well with all ages, and her skill at beating them at Scrabble and Spite and Malice. They culminated the evening by presenting her with a pearl necklace and a plaque which read:

In appreciation for her many contributions to the Club, her love for the Mountain, and her gift of friendship to all who know her, the Board of Directors of the West Point Club presents this certificate to Wanda Goody on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday, November 26, 1976.

My mother continued to attend the monthly Sierra Club dinners in San Francisco until she moved to Salem Lutheran Home in Oakland in 1980. Although she is no longer hiking, she took up a new hobby two years ago and is now known at ninety-five as "The Dancing Lady of Salem Lutheran Home"!

Marjorie Goody  
Daughter

March 25, 1982  
San Bruno, California

## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Wanda Goody, born in 1886 and a member of the Sierra Club since 1915, was especially active in the club in the 1920s as a leader in the local walks program in the San Francisco Bay Area. She led many hikes from 1919-1929, and served on the local walks committee first of the Sierra Club and later of the club's San Francisco Bay Chapter after its foundation in 1924. She also served on the Bay Chapter's first Executive Committee. After 1929 she continued to hike with the club but no longer as a leader. In later years she was active in the Tamalpais Conservation Club and the West Point Club.

At the time of the following interview, in 1979, Mrs. Goody was ninety-two; most of the events discussed took her back over fifty years into the past. During the interview her memory sometimes worked in fits and starts, and one recollection would sometimes displace another in mid-sentence as she tried to recover events and impressions so far back. Her lively enthusiasm and affection for the club and its members remains undimmed.

Mrs. Goody's daughter, Marjorie Goody, reviewed the transcript of the interview and made a few corrections and additions (in brackets) based on her knowledge of her mother's experiences.

Garth Tissol  
Interviewer

31 March 1982



I EARLY RECOLLECTIONS  
 [Interview 1: February 2, 1979]##

Peripatetic Childhood in the West

Tissol: First, a few questions about your early life and background. Where were your parents born?

Goody: My father was Polish, my mother was German. I was born in Poland, and my parents emigrated to Canada when I was one year old; and they moved further west till they got to Vancouver. The first I remember life at all was when I was about four or five years old; my father had a little farm in Shasta County. Whether he bought it or how, that I don't know, but I know he had a farm in Shasta County. When I was six years old--I could play with some of the farmers' young children--I can remember them having a little party, about six or seven of them; and I couldn't speak a word of English up to that point.

Tissol: You spoke what language?

Goody: German. I had a brother. Then, they moved to California.

Tissol: They were in Canada first, right?

Goody: Canada first, and Vancouver; of course, that's Canada. I don't know if they got to Vancouver; that's not important. First I know, we were on a ranch, and there was a little creek there, an interesting creek for children.

Tissol: And that was Shasta County.

Goody: That was Shasta County. Every day I could look up Mount Shasta

Tissol: Did you grow up there?

---

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 22.

Goody: No, we didn't. My father was a person who couldn't get along with people, and he didn't have much success in life, and usually had to go--he was very clever at farming, orchards, and so forth. We'd go to live in a place where we were there a year or two years or three years, but never more than that, because he was quarrelsome--he was too smart for his own good, in other words. He knew everything, and so he couldn't get along with them--so he never owned any property.

Tissol: What other places in California did you live in?

Goody: Novato--I was twelve years old in Novato--and just off of San Jose, other places, Santa Cruz, Watsonville, and Novato, yes, Novato. When I was about fifteen my mother and I moved to San Francisco; and my dad would be on this farm here or over some other place, but it was just one thing after another. It was very unsatisfactory, because us two children, we had to accept that that was what he was like.

Tissol: So 1915 was when you moved to San Francisco?

Goody: Oh, no, I came here in 1899.

Tissol: What year were you born?

Goody: I was born in 1886

Tissol: What was your maiden name?

Goody: Bernhard. My father had a Polish name, and when I went to school at the age of six--this was in Santa Cruz then--they couldn't pronounce his name. So my mother decided--well, they both decided that they'd go by the name of Bernhard, which is her name.

Tissol: What was your father's name?

Goody: Nowacki [pronounced "Novotsky"], That isn't so hard for us to say nowadays, you know; but they called it Milwaukee and all kinds of things back then.

Tissol: Did you hike much as a child?

Goody: Yes, I loved the out-of-doors.

Tissol: Did you camp with your family at all?

- Goody: No, we didn't do that. When my father--when I got to be--my brother's three years younger--she wanted to come to San Francisco, because it just didn't work out--He was a big, handsome man. Well, that's that.
- Tissol: Where did you go to school?
- Goody: What is that town on the route from San Jose to Oakland? I can get the map and get it for you [Mission San Jose].
- Tissol: Perhaps afterward. Did you start school when you were living in Shasta County?
- Goody: Yes, that was when I couldn't speak English, and my first attempt was with the children, you see. But we soon left there; I don't remember the details; he got a job somewhere else.
- Tissol: How long did you go to school?
- Goody: Up to two months [of the ninth grade] in San Rafael High School.
- Tissol: Did you receive religious instruction when you were a child?
- Goody: My father was Catholic, but he never practiced it. My mother was Lutheran; in Poland, I guess while I was under one year old, they--she christened me in the Catholic Church. She had to make a promise to the authorities. But I didn't go into the Catholic Church. [No, Wanda did spend three months in a convent thinking she might be a nun--M. Goody].
- Tissol: What sorts of occupations have you had since school?
- Goody: At the age of fifteen--we were living in San Francisco--I went to Heald's College. They were in existence at that time; that was just about the year 1900. I went to Heald's, and I was there two months; I learned shorthand and some arithmetic, typing; and I got a job right away. It was with a concern that represented on the Pacific Coast, tanneries. There were just two men, two brothers, and me; they had a bookkeeper; but I got the bookkeeper's job in later years. I was with them for fifty-six years [At first she was with A.J. and J.R. Cook. Later, about 1926, she joined Nelson Roney Co., also a leather tanner's agent and became their bookkeeper, office manager, and partner. She worked a total of fifty-six years--M. Goody].

Tissol: Did you do anything after that period?

Goody: Not very much.

Tissol: Where have you lived during your adult life?

Goody: Always in San Francisco. From the time we came here until now.

Joining the Sierra Club at the Pan Pacific Exposition, 1915

Tissol: When did you join the Sierra Club?

Goody: 1915, in the Sierra Club's special office on the grounds, down at the Marina, of the [Pan Pacific] Exposition. I went through that. I went there every day. My boss gave me a season ticket for the whole time; I could just go in without having to pay for it.

Tissol: Did the Sierra Club have a booth or table at the Exposition?

Goody: Yes, it did.

Tissol: And that's where you became a member?

Goody: Yes, I signed up with the Sierra Club at that time.

Tissol: Do you recall what things about the Sierra Club prompted you to join?

Goody: I was an out-of-doors lover. My father was a great hiker; and my father was one of the personal bodyguards of the Kaiser. He was a tall man, six feet-four, handsome, and so forth. He was with the Kaiser, a bodyguard. And he came to a special garden-city, I'll call it; most of it was owned, in Germany, by the Kaiser, Kaiser Wilhelm; and that's how my mother met him. She lived in this town.

Tissol: So your father was a great hiker?

Goody: Oh yes.

Tissol: So it's partly through his influence that you became interested in the out-of-doors?

Goody: Yes, no doubt.



- Tissol: At the time that you joined the Sierra Club, what characteristics of the club most drew people to join?
- Goody: There are a few of my friends living yet; one is three years older than I, joined the same day with me. Her name's Carolyn Nelson.
- Tissol: Did these people join because they were interested in hiking? In conservation? In the social activities of the club?
- Goody: Hiking; it was a social proposition. But we were trained, you know: to pay dues, and--to have parties. We had a lot of parties; we just loaded a group, say thirty people. There were a great many--about six thousand members [actually about two thousand--Ed.] at the time I joined, and do you know where it is today? It's way beyond a hundred and thirty-five thousand. I think it's already reached two hundred thousand.
- Tissol: Yes, I believe it has. Did you know people in the club before you joined?
- Goody: No, I was very interested in my job, and I liked to play the piano.
- Tissol: So did you first hear about the club at the Exposition?
- Goody: Yes, you might say that. It really took hold there. The purpose of their being there was that they wanted to get membership. There were only about two thousand members at that time.
- Tissol: But you had heard about the club before that?
- Goody: Oh, I guess so.
- Tissol: You've been a member of the club for many years. Do you think that the club has changed its focus over the years?
- Goody: They need money, and money, and money! [laughter]
- Tissol: But do you think that the nature of the club is the same today as it was then?
- Goody: Yes, yes. You know, I don't go with them anymore, because during the war, 1939, when we got in the Second World War, a group of us hikers--I know every one of them, who are still living--a group of maybe twenty people asked the water company

Goody: in Marin County for the club to take over the old way-station, which is where we are, there on the mountain, where travelers from San Francisco, with horses and wagons--a road went over the mountain and past this wayside station where you could stay overnight. We still have people come and stay overnight.

Tissol: What is the way-station called?

Goody: West Point. My husband and I didn't join at that time because we had a place in Marin County, a nice little place, and we just went there weekends. Then I didn't go out with the Sierra Club anymore. I joined the West Point Club.

Tissol: We'll return to the West Point Club in a little while. You were most active in the Sierra Club before that time, right?

Goody: Yes, most active between 1915 and 1929.

Tissol: When was your daughter born?

Goody: Either '28 or '29 [1929].

## II SIERRA CLUB LOCAL ACTIVITIES, 1915-1929

### Leading Local Walks

Tissol: You were very active on the local walks committee, weren't you?--

Goody: Yes.

Tissol: --both the Sierra Club's Local Walks Committee and the Bay Chapter's after the Bay Chapter was formed in 1924. As I remember you led a lot of hikes in those days, as I see from hiking schedules.

Goody: I was doing that for five or six years.

Tissol: Do you recall how you happened to take up leading hikes?

Goody: No, I don't recall it, but I took over when somebody else-- yes, and I did it all myself. We had two thousand, three thousand, four thousand--memberships were growing. It wasn't such a heavy load, but still--making that list was--seeing that the members lead hikes on the weekends, you see.

Tissol: You were involved in organizing that?

Goody: Yes.

Tissol: Do you recall what was the first hike that you led?

Goody: No, I don't recall that. It was before I was even put on the schedule, for the purpose of arranging--I'd just go hiking: get on the ferryboat and join the crowd. And they put me on the executive committee.

Women's Role: Parties and Hikes

Tissol: I notice in the schedules that many hikes in that period were led by women. In the club as a whole, what sorts of activities were women most prominent in?

Goody: Leading the hikes, that's all.

Tissol: Not other things as well?

Goody: We didn't have too many parties--we had parties every Sunday night when we'd come back from the hike, and then somebody would start up and have a party during the week, and go to dinner in Chinatown or wherever else, a French restaurant, or something.

Tissol: So women were involved in the social activities and in lots of the hikes?

Goody: Yes.

Tissol: Did the club encourage women to hold positions of leadership and prominence if they wanted to?

Goody: No, I don't think so.

Tissol: Do you consider yourself to have been more physically active during that period than other women in the Sierra Club, or as active as they?

Goody: They were all pretty active. We were all of an age that--we just had fun. I want to tell you about the baseball games we used to have up in the hills. We always site out a place to eat where there's enough room to play one-hole catch. They always--now I'm going to brag--they always called for me first--that would be my position--because I could reach like this [demonstration]. "Wanda! Wanda!"--that was settled, and then they'd go on and find some more people, the second and third and fourth.

Tissol: On these local walks that you were involved in then, were there some other memorable things that went on, memorable hikes or favorite places that you would go to?

Goody: We all took them seriously, and loved to get on the ferryboat in the morning at 8:15, and get on the train on the other side--choo, choo, choo--it made a racket. No walk was too long; we were very healthy people.

Tissol: What were some of the places that you would go to?

Goody: The mountain play, once a year--and that area,

##

Tissol: You met your husband in the Sierra Club. Through what activities did you meet him?

Goody: He was an avid hiker. He was a Britisher; he had gone through the war with Canada and came here. He loved to hike.

Tissol: So you met him through the hikes?

Goody: Yes.

Tissol: What was his name?

Goody: Kenneth Goody.

Tissol: What was his occupation?

Goody: Salesman.

Tissol: What were his interests in the club? You mentioned hiking; did he have other interests and activities in the club?

Goody: He loved to hike, and he was the only one who carried a cane; he had to be British or die. He was real British.

Tissol: When did you marry?

Goody: 1927.

Tissol: What sorts of Sierra Club social activities did you participate in?

Goody: We liked to go to Sunday night dinners, and sometimes we'd have a theater-party, not much that way. We always liked to dance. We always wanted to go where we could dance: eat and dance.

Producing the Local Walks Schedule, 1920s

Tissol: Do you recall in what period you were working on the local walks schedule?

Goody: Around 1920.

Tissol: And some time thereafter?

Goody: Yes.

Tissol: What were your tasks in producing the schedule?

Goody: I'd tell the people that when they wanted to lead a hike to let me know.

Tissol: Then what would you do?

Goody: Say that they were ready, or they'd come running to me and say, "Put me down for so and so." I had good success that way because I also--years after--when I joined the West Point Club, they put me on their schedule. I trained those people. That was not for hiking, that was for staying over night and parties. And two people every weekend would have to stay and sell our refreshments, or lead a party, always two people, and I soon got them on the way--"When you get the urge, come and tell me which month you want and which weekend you want." It worked beautifully, and I did it for--when we had a business meeting of the present regime about six months ago--

Tissol: This is of the West Point Club?

Goody: The West Point Club. Because I had charge of that--bringing two people--it was a bi-monthly proposition. Our president was making his speech to this gathering, the annual gathering. And he says, "Wanda, who has been taking care of the schedule for three or four years--" and I burst out and said, "Twenty years!" and they clapped and clapped and clapped: three different orgies of clapping. This just happened six months ago. I had trained them to come within every month to tell me when they were ready to take it. You don't mind my feeling proud of that; I'm just telling you how we lived up there.

Tissol: I'd like to ask you some questions about the West Point Club a little later. But for now, you mentioned last time we met that when you were in Los Angeles you were asked about doing a schedule.

Goody: Yes, they put me on. They had a [large group] of people, and they asked me to do it! I didn't know the names of more than ten people, I couldn't get over that. They had big dinners there. The principal occupation down there seems to be to go to Friday night dinner. Don't tell them I told you so! That really took me by surprise, because I only knew a few people there I'd met on the club high trips from year to year.

Tissol: That must have been soon after you moved to Los Angeles?

Goody: Yes. I lived there for four years [1954-1957].

#### First Bay Chapter Executive Committee

Tissol: Do you have some recollections about the establishment of the San Francisco Bay Chapter which was founded in 1924, when you were very active in the Sierra Club? Why was the chapter founded? Why did people want a local chapter of the club?

Goody: Everything was being taken care of from San Francisco, I believe. The Los Angeles Chapter was a follow-up after a period of time. Then it [the Bay Chapter], got bigger and bigger, and then they went over to Oakland. They still have the Oakland place, I don't know about the politics of that.

Tissol: The local walks program was taken over by the Bay Chapter when you were involved with it. Do you recall whether the chapter had conservation activities as well as hiking activities?

Goody: I don't know. We hikers never paid very much attention. They left that to the people on committees, and they could read about it.

Tissol: You mentioned being on the executive committee. The Bay Chapter's first executive committee had these members: W.J. Aschenbrenner, Wanda Bernhard, S.M. Haslett, Sr., Orwell Logan, Carolyn Nelson, C.O. Saldal. Do you remember what your tasks were on that committee?

Goody: I was most concerned about going hiking on the weekends and taking care of my people, I don't think I made any particular suggestions or speeches. I listened. And then I'd go ahead and get my people on the trail. Those men--Aschenbrenner, and all of them--were very devoted to the Sierra Club, very devoted. We all were. It was a wonderful thing. We all loved it. Aschenbrenner! They're gone now.

Other Bay Area Outdoor Clubs: Tamalpais, West Point,  
Contra Costa Hills

- Tissol: Let me ask you a few questions about other conservation and outdoor organizations that you are a member of. When did you join the Tamalpais Conservation Club?
- Goody: No, I just don't remember. It was organized, I think, in 1912. I was president of that for two years.
- Tissol: What were your activities in the Tamalpais Conservation Club?
- Goody: To be the president, and we didn't have too much activities; there were no hikers; none of that concern. The purpose of the Tamalpais Conservation Club--we had a man that we paid-- he's still doing it too--paid a monthly salary to see to it that the trails were kept up. Any trail-work that was done, he got his people together, and he did that work.
- Tissol: The Tamalpais Conservation Club's newsletter suggests that they are involved in various conservation issues; as I remember they were involved in the issue of protection of Point Reyes. Do you remember anything about that?
- Goody: No.
- Tissol: Did the Tamalpais Conservation Club and the Sierra Club ever work together on particular issues?
- Goody: Not much.
- Tissol: Who makes up the membership of the Tamalpais Conservation Club?
- Goody: Anybody who loves the mountain [Mount Tamalpais, Marin County]; it's only five dollars a year.
- Tissol: So it's mostly people in the local area?
- Goody: Yes, and they have a new board every year; they get together and talk about things, the tradition in the mountain, and so forth. Everybody belongs to it just because they do things to keep up the mountain; trails and things. Sometimes they thought they were buying a piece of property, but it didn't materialize: \$80,000 for a piece of property near Muir Woods, across the road from Muir Woods. There was a big fight about that. I was not the president anymore. The new president she had quite a busy time working on this, whether we could



Goody: buy that piece of property. I wasn't attending the meetings by that time. I got out of that, because it was a very difficult thing. I was invited to go up to Sacramento to work on that proposition; the new president asked me to come along, but I had nothing much to say about it, because it turned up in her regime.

Tissol: Do you remember similar things that the Tamalpais Conservation Club was doing--like attempting to protect pieces of land?

Goody: No, we hikers just thought about the hikes; we had no meetings about it; the president and vice-president and so forth, they did all the work, and we just saw to it that we got there every weekend.

Tissol: Are you talking now about the Sierra Club or the Tamalpais Conservation Club?

Goody: The Sierra Club.

Tissol: Let me ask you a few questions about the West Point Club, which you are involved in now.

Goody: Yes.

Tissol: What are its purposes?

Goody: Sociability.

Tissol: Who makes up its membership?

Goody: They have to apply for membership, and have references. Up to the present regime they had limited us to 250 members; we couldn't take care of any more. We didn't want to have any more members because we just had thirty-one beds.

Tissol: So does the West Point Club have a building?

Goody: You haven't been up there? It's the only building on the mountain, except where the officers [meaning the radar station] are.

Tissol: Does the West Point Club own this lodge?

Goody: No, we pay rent to the water company, Marin Water District.

Tissol: On the questionnaire, you mentioned that you had some activities with the Contra Costa Hills Club. What is it?

- Goody: A social club. I don't know whether they have any meetings in regard to the goings on. It's more of a social club.
- Tissol: Do they have hikes?
- Goody: Oh yes. They're a very nice club, very devoted club, just like we used to be in the old days in the 1920s--very social.
- Tissol: Would you say the West Point Club is similar in that regard?
- Goody: The West Point Club just does not have the hikes. You hike as an individual, but there is no hiking proposition in it. We maintain it for the sociability, and we make a lot of people mad because they want to join and they can't--can't make the grade. I never had anything to do with that; that was a special committee, of course. All I did was make the list of people to come overnight.
- Tissol: To return to the Sierra Club, you mentioned that you were not a leader in conservation work. How did ordinary members participate in the conservation work of the club during the period that you were active? Would the leaders ask you to write letters, as when Kings Canyon National Park was being established?
- Goody: Oh, I guess so.
- Tissol: What would ordinary members do?
- Goody: Send money. They were always calling for money.
- Tissol: Do you remember ever having written to your congressman about a conservation issue?
- Goody: I don't think I have. I got so involved with the West Point Club, and I didn't pay so much attention--I get the Sierra Club's literature.

##

## III HIKES AND HIGH TRIPS

Hiking Alone in Yosemite, 1916

Tissol: Let's talk for a while about your hiking experiences. Do you recall when you first went hiking in the Sierra?

Goody: It likely was 1916. I'm not sure it was, but I'm thinking it was. I think I was so interested that I--what I did I'll tell you in a few words. I took a trip by myself. I got to Yosemite, and I wasn't afraid of anything; I'm surprised now that I went alone, but I did. And expected to see people there, which I did. And then somebody in the department there said, "Why don't you go up to the [Tuolumne Meadows]?" I said, "The Sierra Club is up there in the mountains?" She said, "Oh yes; you go up there." I had nobody [to go with] for that [hike], but I just wanted to go where the Sierra Club was. She said, "They'll find a sleeping bag for you." They had animals with them: horses and mules. And so I started on that trip, from Yosemite up that place where you go there--I went all the way on foot, alone; never had seen it before, and followed the trail; and about four o'clock in the afternoon I finally reached two or three men who were doing road work there. It was about four o'clock already, and I still had to go another two miles; and I made it, all alone in the wilderness. Wonderful! Just wonderful! If you've done it you know, it's a wonderful experience. I had to just trundle along, and find my way.

Tissol: Where was the end of the trip?

Goody: Where the Sierra Club had the springs [Soda Springs]--in the Tuolumne Meadows.

Tissol: How long did that trip take?

Goody: It was two weeks.

Tissol: You were up at Tuolumne Meadows for two weeks?

Goody: Yes.

Tissol: What had you been planning to do in Yosemite when you were there?

Goody: I was going to see these falls, and those falls, and these peaks, and so forth. I'd done a lot of hiking here, and I just gave in. I can't imagine why I went alone, but I did.

Tissol: Do you remember who it was who encouraged you to take that hike?

Goody: No, somebody in the restaurant there. I got to talking to them.

Tissol: You mentioned in the questionnaire that you made the same trip again in 1921. Was that trip by yourself also?

Goody: No, I would have been with the club. The '22 trip was one they had two hundred and fifty people on the trip, and all those animals that had to be fed and watched; but they never took so many again. But then I had all these new friends I'd made in the Sierra Club; we were a cluster of our own. We had parties where we sang suitable songs, and we could offer that at the fireside on high trips; that was in 1922. Now we've got that settled.

Tissol: Do you remember where that trip was?

Goody: I know where it was, but I can't remember the name [Mount Whitney and Vidette Meadows--M. Goody]. You seem to be enjoying these hikes as much as I do.

#### Climbing Mount Shasta, 1923

Tissol: Oh, it's wonderful to hear you tell these stories. What do you recall about your hike on Mount Shasta in 1923?

Goody: That was a glorious thing. I'm getting really homesick. Do you know about the underground waters? At the roots of the mountain? Gushing water. That's one of the things you remember about Shasta; the great amount of that ebbs out of there, from under the earth. The experience in short was this:

Goody: We were gone two weeks, and for the first whole week, we had to stay around below 8000 feet, because we had to get acclimated to the 15,000. On the morning that we were to leave, we had a cup of coffee at three o'clock in the morning. Not all of them stayed, about thirty-seven of us. I don't remember what those did that didn't go with us.

I walked alone; we walked at our own speed; I'd be here somebody would be here--and they all walked alone, so the trip was by myself--I could see them, but they were not walking together as a group. They took their own stride. We came to a spot where it was just that level [demonstration] for quite a long way, solid snow. Two or three of the fellows that were there dug steps in the snow. I finally got up to the half-way point where I could stay for an hour or so at seven o'clock: at three o'clock we left, and I got up there by seven, and then I had to rest. Then I walked this way, back of the mountain, to the top of the mountain, through snow. Finally got to the place: there was nothing there but a rock-formation that you could step up about six feet high, and all this is snow, for a whole mile or more, just solid snow. I stood on that. I did it all myself.

Tissol: That was the very top?

Goody: The very top. We just took it in as everyday stuff. When I think of it now, it was a wonderful feeling. And then we walked back the same--oh, we did one thing--we couldn't go down those steps, it would be impossible, we had to go where we could skid just a little here, and skid here, because it's so dangerous.

Tissol: Are there other memorable hikes and high trips that you were on?

Goody: Yes, I went on the one further south; it is the second mountain in California. I can't think of it; it's out of Fresno [Mount Whitney]. I went on that. That was one of going in between mountains, and trying to find our way, just like tunnels, going up. And I did that alone: nobody close at all; we always spread out. Any number of us went up there; sat there for a long time.

Tissol: Other memorable experiences?

Goody: Everything was memorable. Everybody just loved it. Firesides.

- Tissol: Were you involved in the organization and planning of high trips as well as local walks?
- Goody: No.
- Tissol: When did you last go on a hike?
- Goody: It was not so long ago. I took my daughter, Marjorie. We came back in the worst rainstorm: I was just soaked. Ethel Rose Taylor Horsfall was with me, too. She was an annual goer on the trips. It must have been after 1953, because I was a widow after that. Ethel Rose Taylor Horsfall and I were good chums. My daughter was about thirty-two years old[1962--M. Goody].
- Tissol: What is it that you find most satisfying and enjoyable about wilderness?
- Goody: Just walking and seeing the different sights, getting up on a peak and looking over the country, just looking at things. A long distance before you get to the point where we're going to camp here; we were all ready to climb way, way up like that picture [of a packtrain on Kearsarge Pass, drawn for Mrs. Goody by a young fellow Sierran on a high trip in the late forties]. I showed you where the donkeys were coming up; it takes three or four hours before you get to a peak and stop.
- Tissol: Do you have favorite places?
- Goody: They were all my favorite places.
- Tissol: Has any reading that you have done influenced your attitudes toward wilderness?
- Goody: No, I can't recall it.
- Tissol: I noticed that on the bookshelf you have John Muir's works. Did you read them in the old days?
- Goody: I guess I did, yes. I'm not too much of a reader; I'm not a fast reader in the first place; some people can read awfully fast and get it; I read every word; so I can't brag about my--when I was a child, a school girl, I read Walter Scott, every Walter Scott, all that was English that was famous, or at least stories; but I'm too slow for a reader.

Remembering Club Leaders and High Trippers

Tissol: When I spoke to you last time you said that you had some recollections of Sierra Club leaders. What sorts of things do you remember about these people, for example, Will Colby?

Goody: Will Colby. He was a wonderful, masterful person.

Tissol: What sorts of dealings did you have with him? Would he go on the hikes?

Goody: No, he didn't hike at the time I knew him; he was past that. He would be right there; had some kind of a funny hat, we all enjoyed. He just sat and rested; then he'd always make a speech: golden voice. A very fine gentleman; two sons were with him.

Joseph LeConte: He died before my time, but I knew his daughters: I think there were two girls; one of them I knew on the hikes.

Clair Tappaan: He was the one that always sat in his chair; he never changed because he was rather an invalid. He was the life of the party at the firesides.

Ansel Adams was kind of a character.

Francis Farquhar: You know he died just a few weeks ago, Francis Farquhar; he went blind many years ago. He was very active in San Francisco; I'd see him on Montgomery Street.

Tissol: Do you have stories about him?

Goody: No. He was with us on high trips. I'd see him then every year when I'd go to the Sierra Club dinners, the big Sierra Club dinners, the annuals.

Edgar Wayburn: Oh yes, he just lives three blocks away from here. He's a doctor, and he is very active.

Tissol: Would he go on trips and so on?

Goody: I don't remember seeing him on the trips, but I've seen him at our monthly dinners. We have monthly dinners over here on Seventh Avenue.

Tissol: With the Sierra Club?

Goody: Yes, the Sierra Club. It's a Sierra Club group; of course they bring their friends. Sometimes he makes speeches; he went to Alaska; his wife, too; she's very active. Those dinners are on the third Thursday of every month. While they attract Sierra Club people, they have no connection with Sierra Club business. Nobody makes any money on that; it's the restaurateur, he makes a flat price for a dinner. We have two hundred every time.

Tissol: So you still go to those?

Goody: I go to those, yes. So I see any number of my past friends.

Tissol: Mr. Wayburn was involved to some extent with the Tamalpais Conservation Club, wasn't he?

Goody: I don't know that he is connected with it. At heart, he's a Sierra Club man.

Tissol: Any additional stories about Sierra Club leaders?

Goody: There's an interesting thing: one year--it might have been 1922 or 23--we used to have an annual dance, and get a big hall. We had fourteen pairs of dancers that had gotten married in that year out of the club. That's how interested we were! I thought that was an interesting thing. There they were, fourteen couples.

##

I can't think of the names, but I could find them out by asking certain members. One was a man who only recently died at that. Here we are in '79, and we're going back to the twenties. He was on every high trip. He always made it a point to shoot rattlesnakes. Sometimes he made a mistake, and he shot a non-dangerous snake--I forget the name, but it's common, about that long [demonstration] snake. He'd always go shoot them, because he didn't want them to get mixed up with the hikers' bedrooms, to have a snake around. And I told you about the fellow who was so hungry he couldn't get enough to eat; he'd come sneak from behind through his legs there and sneak a chunk of beef or something. A few of us noticed it and laughed about it, two or three of us. We didn't make any big thing at all. That's what he did. He got so fat at the end of the month! We all noticed it; we knew why.



Goody: If you do want good stories, why haven't they told you about Ethel Rose Taylor [Horsfall]? She was invariably on the trips. She might know the name of this man who would shoot the rattlesnakes. She and I got lost one night and they didn't find us till it was twelve o'clock. But we just laughed; we sat there. I let her sleep half an hour; then she'd wake me up--They finally found us; it was the blackest night of the year. It was black as coal. We were a mile and a half away from the track.\* Ethel Rose was a great lover of the high trips.

Let me see if I have anything else here. Anything else there I've already told you.

---

\* Note: They were in their mid-seventies, at the time. The mules had kicked the "ducks" off its trail so they turned left instead of right. When they didn't arrive at camp by 9p.m., the leaders went out searching for them. They found the two ladies at midnight, sitting at a campfire they had started, boiling water in a billy can. Mother promptly invited them to have tea! They didn't get back to camp until 4a.m. The next morning mother and Ethel Rose were up early ready for the day!--M. Goody.

Transcriber: Garth Tissol  
Final Typist: John McPherson

## TAPE GUIDE -- Wanda Goody

Date of Interview: February 2, 1979

tape 1, side A

1

tape 1, side B

9

tape 2, side A

15

tape 2, side B

20

## INDEX -- Wanda Goody

Aschenbrenner, W.J., 11

Colby, William E., 19  
 Contra Costa Hills Club, 13-14

Horsfall, Ethel Rose Taylor, 18, 21

Mount Shasta, 1, 16-17

Nelson, Carolyn, 5

Pan Pacific Exposition, 1915, 4

Sierra Club

  chapters

    Angeles, 10-11

    San Francisco Bay, 7, 11

  membership

    reasons for joining, 4-5

  outings

    high trip, 15-17, 20-21

    local walks, 7-10

  purposes and goals, 5

  women in, 8

Tamalpais Conservation Club, 12-13

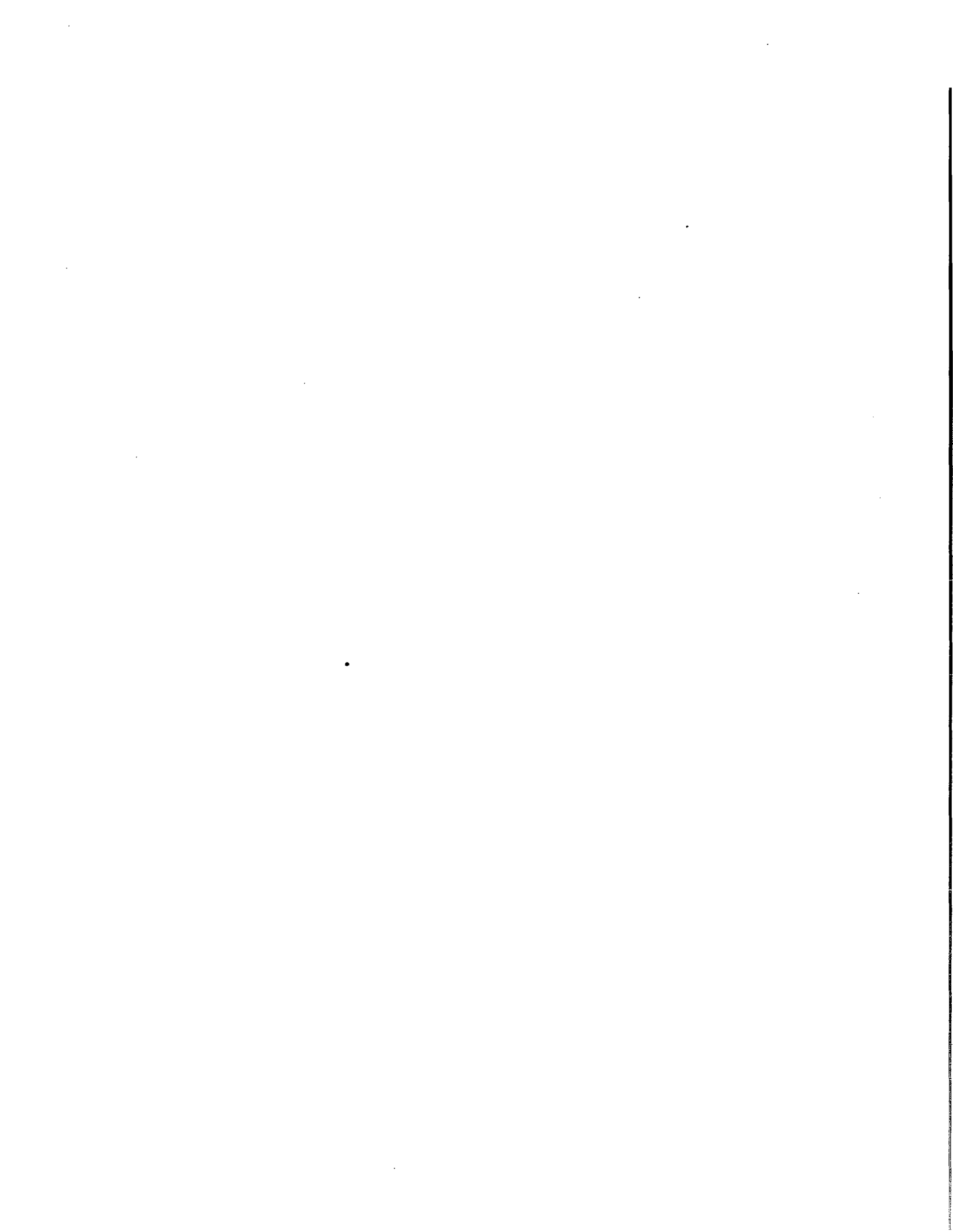
Tappaan, Clair, 19

Wayburn, Edgar, 19-20

West Point Club, 6, 10, 13-14

Yosemite National Park

  personal experiences, 15-16



Sierra Club Oral History Project

Ethel Rose Taylor Horsfall

ON THE TRAIL WITH THE SIERRA CLUB, 1920s-1960s

An Interview Conducted by  
George Baranowski  
in 1979

Underwritten by  
The National Endowment for the Humanities

Sierra Club History Committee  
1982

Sierra Club Oral History Project

Copyright © 1982 by Sierra Club, San Francisco, California  
All rights reserved

TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Ethel Rose Taylor Horsfall

INTRODUCTION by Joanne Taylor	i
INTERVIEW HISTORY	iii
I YOUTH IN IOWA AND TEACHING CAREER	1
Education, Family, and Home Life	1
Teaching English to Immigrants	2
II SIERRA CLUB HIGH TRIPS, 1922-1960s	4
Joining the Sierra Club: Hiking and Companionship	4
Camaraderie at Camp and on the Trail	6
The Daily Schedule	8
Review of Sierra Club Personalities	11
The High Trip Roster: A Social Mix	14
III THE SIERRA CLUB: CHANGE AND CONSTANCY	16
The Club's Current Size and Environmental Stance	16
The Ultimate Gift: Benefits of Sierra Club Membership	17
INDEX	19





## INTRODUCTION

Two major interests always come to mind when I think of my aunt, Ethel Rose Taylor Horsfall: her avid devotion to hiking and to "her" mountains, and her pleasure in foreign friends and foreign travel.

Born and raised in Sioux City, Iowa, she attended the University of Wisconsin as did her brothers. Shortly after World War I, she, her mother and one brother came to California and established a home in the Berkeley hills.

For many years Ethel Rose taught in the Oakland schools. Primarily, she helped foreign-born adults prepare for and gain their citizenship. On a sabbatical leave in the mid-1930's, she had the unusual and fantastic opportunity to take a trip around the world visiting families and friends of many of her students. Lifelong friendships developed on this trip. With one of these families, she has since celebrated several birthdays in Bangkok, Thailand.

As a member of P.E.O., a woman's educational and social organization, she has been particularly involved with its International Peace Scholarship program. This fund provides aid to foreign graduate students. The only requirement is that they return home and, hopefully, be able to make a contribution to their own country. Through these IPS girls and Ethel Rose's many friends, other members of our family and their friends have had much added pleasure at home and on their own travels.

Just when her interest in hiking and the mountains started, I don't know. I do know that my grandmother, Mother Rose, was active in Yosemite Valley with the National Park Service and their work with the Yosemite Indians in the 1920's and 1930's. About this time Mother Rose took three of her grandchildren, (me and two others) to the Valley for an entire summer and Ethel Rose gave each of us our first hiking outfit. A few years later she gave the three of us our first Sierra Club high trip, a full month in the mountains. For me these experiences led to several more high trips and base camp trips and a lifelong interest in natural history.

Ethel Rose has always been a very active and vivacious person. For many years she was a familiar figure hiking from her home in Berkeley to the "top of Marin", a street that goes directly to the top of the Berkeley hills. Even today she walks one to two miles daily. At a later stage in life than most, she learned to swim and went regularly as long as her health permitted it.

Her continued physical activity and her continuous worldwide correspondence certainly keep her young in spirit and vitality.

Joanne Taylor  
Walnut Creek, California  
March 1982

## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Ethel Rose Taylor Horsfall was interviewed for the Sierra Club History Committee in April, 1979, in her apartment in the St. Paul's Towers, a gracious retirement home in Oakland, California. George Baranowski, a volunteer interviewer for the History Committee, and Ethel Rose established an immediate rapport. After lunching together in the Towers' dining room, they compared their respective experiences in the High Sierra--his as a young man in his twenties and hers looking back at the age of ninety-one over more than thirty high trips with the Sierra Club.

A warm, outgoing person with remarkable physical and mental agility, Ethel Rose (her preferred title--"We were all on a first name basis") recalls the social aspects of the club's outings: the impromptu tea parties and the candy pack train; the campfires with entertainment by camper-artists, authors, musicians, and accomplished storytellers; and the philosophical discussions on the mountaintops.

Her words recreate the sense of camaraderie and social cohesiveness fostered by the annual high trips--feelings that shaped the much smaller and more "club-like" Sierra Club of the 1920s and 1930s. The fun-loving club portrayed here, it should be remembered, was also the crucible which captured the loyalties and fired the love for nature of the new generation of Sierra Clubbers--creating leaders such as Dick Leonard and David Brower, who would lead the club to national prominence in the environmental movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

In March 1982, at the age of ninety-three, Ethel Rose reviewed the transcript of her interview with great care and attention to detail. Her schoolteacher's eye caught and corrected every error of punctuation or syntax, while displaying an understanding of the need to retain the conversational quality of the interview. In the end, she was pleased with the succinctness and accuracy of her portrayal.

Ann Lage, Cochair  
Sierra Club History Committee

8 March 1982  
Oakland, California



## I YOUTH IN IOWA AND TEACHING CAREER

[Date of Interview: 22 April 1979]

Education, Family, and Home Life

George Baranowski: Mrs. Horsfall, could you give me some information on your early background; your education, and family life?

Ethel Rose Taylor Horsfall: I was born in Sioux City, Iowa, in 1888. My early education was of course in the elementary and high schools. Then I attended the University of Wisconsin, from which instruction I received my two degrees; Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts.

George: In what field were you studying?

Ethel Rose: I was particularly interested in languages; I majored in German and minored in both French and English.

George: Could you give me some information on your home life; for example, on your parents or your brothers or sisters?

Ethel Rose: My parents [Henry J. Taylor and Rose Schuster Taylor] were both graduates of the University of Wisconsin. Perhaps that is the reason why my three brothers and I all went back to Madison for our degrees. We weren't asked to, but we just naturally went there.

Ethel Rose: Our home life was a happy home life. Our parents had both been teachers, although our father went into the law. Mother believed that children should have plenty of outdoor life and go barefoot in the summer time. She taught us until each of us was ready for the fourth grade. That meant that summers we could go barefoot, even in the city, and have such a good time.

George: Do you mean that your mother taught you from grades one to three?

Ethel Rose: Yes, she taught each of us until he was ready for the fourth grade.

George: Was this common in those days, or was this something your mother decided to do?

Ethel Rose: No, it was just something that my mother decided to do--I don't believe there were hooky cops in those days. She was a teacher and highly respected in the area, and I doubt if anybody ever minded that she had her way. She also gave us German. (I wanted to be sure to mention that.)

George: It's interesting that you would bring up the University of Wisconsin, because John Muir also attended the University of Wisconsin.

Ethel Rose: Yes, indeed he did and we have a knoll there called Muir Knoll.

George: I don't believe he received a degree; he simply took courses and then dropped out, travelled and came to California.

Ethel Rose: That is correct. He did not take a degree. You know, my mother was born and reared on a Wisconsin farm. Not too far away from the Schuster farm was the Muir farm; mother used to hear about this remarkable young man. I rather think she went to a country fair and saw his bed--the one that was able to dump him out of bed in the morning.

#### Teaching English to Immigrants

George: What did you do in your adult life as far as careers or jobs are concerned?

Ethel Rose: I was a teacher for thirty years. My special field was adult education. I did teach three years out of California, but the other twenty-seven years were in Oakland. I had as students

Ethel Rose: men and women from all over the world, ages eighteen to eighty. It was a challenging, interesting position, and I never went to my job with unwilling feet. Sometimes I worked both day and night.

I taught English and prepared candidates for the American citizenship examination in the courts. I had a great deal of freedom making out my own program, which was never questioned. I made calls all over the neighborhood among the families and places of business and I interested shy women in coming with their preschool children to school. I had a babysitter for the little ones.

Those were very interesting days; I had no disciplinary problems whatsoever. The only difficulty I had was with those who tended to interrupt; for you will realize that some had had practically no education in their countries. Some were illiterate, some could not speak any English. Then there were those that were highly educated--like the Russian priest, the Jewish rabbi, a Russian countess, a Polish teacher.

George: So you had a very wide variety of people in your classes?

Ethel Rose: Indeed I did. I had the garbageman, the sea captain's wife, the waitress, the streetcar operator--even two teachers. Yes indeed, it was humanity; I found people interesting, and that they had something to give. They really had affection to give, and an appreciation of the services that they were given in the school. Not only did I lead them in the classroom, but I organized excursions taking them to city hall, Alameda courthouse, and to Sacramento--everything but to Washington to visit Congress.

George: It sounds like you're interested in helping people.

Ethel Rose: Yes, and a great deal of that stems from the home in which I was brought up.

## II SIERRA CLUB HIGH TRIPS, 1922-1960s

Joining The Sierra Club: Hiking and Companionship

- George: Let's move on to matters concerning the Sierra Club, and your involvement with it. Basically, what were the reasons for your joining the Sierra Club?
- Ethel Rose: Well, for one thing, when I knew in 1921 that I was going from Iowa, my home, to California, I wanted to put on slacks and go walking. Our mother had had us walk; that was nothing new to me. But to hike in the mountains--that was going to be something great.
- George: So you had an interest in walking and the outdoors even before you came to California?
- Ethel Rose: In walking in the outdoors and putting on slacks--yes.
- George: Just a basic old country girl at heart?
- Ethel Rose: No, a city girl at heart! A good camper, but not a good country girl. [laughter] I wouldn't have ever wanted to live on a farm.
- George: I guess you can be both a city girl and an outdoors person as well.
- Ethel Rose: You can be a city girl and a camper without any trouble. You can be a good camper.
- George: Do you think your interests were more geared toward the recreational aspects of the club as opposed to the social aspects? Were you basically in the club to participate in these high trips or were you active in a social manner? Or possibly were the two combined?
- Ethel Rose: I'm quite sure that I went into the club because of my interest in what the club had to offer as an outdoor organization. But I found that it was a place to meet pleasant acquaintances and friends.
- George: Did you find out about the club in Iowa or after you came here to the Bay Area?
- Ethel Rose: I rather think that I heard about the Sierra Club after I



- Ethel Rose: arrived here. I wanted to walk and I think someone said, "I know of a club and I know a man who is in the club." I got started, and, I think, hiked faithfully on their Sunday trips for about five years. I came in 1921 to California, and in 1922 I had my first high trip.
- George: So, basically your areas of interest in the club were walking and taking not only high trips during the summer but also Sunday hikes to various areas here in the Bay Area?
- Ethel Rose: Yes, and the good companionship, of course. That was a fringe benefit.
- George: In our previous conversation you stated that you had been on roughly thirty-five high trips.
- Ethel Rose: I can't count exactly, but I would say that was a pretty good estimate--possibly thirty at the least. I used to count the years that I didn't go, and then I knew how many trips I had made. You see, I started in 1922 and even went in either the late sixties or early seventies. I went on a base camp trip as an octogenarian and stayed a month.
- George: My hat's off to you--that's terrific.
- Ethel Rose: Speaking of hats, you know, I was known for my big ones.
- George: We'll get to that at a later part of the interview. Could you give me some information on the format of these trips? I read some of the stories and accounts of these trips. Could you give your impression, or your ideas on how the trips were formed? I know they were basically situated around a base camp. What were other activities that were done from this base camp?
- Ethel Rose: No, I think you're misinformed. A base camp is a trip all its own. I used to go on the high trips which were four weeks in length, and we moved from place to place. Sometimes we had what we called a one-night stand. Sometimes we stayed three or four days. But we moved for the whole four weeks. Practically everybody in the party came for the full four weeks.
- George: So you didn't simply make a base camp in a particular drainage area on a basin and then stay there to take day trips--it was a constantly moving trip?
- Ethel Rose: You've analyzed the base camp. Now about the high trip, if I understand your question correctly. When I went in the twenties, we sometimes had as many as 300, counting the members of the staff. We had Dan Tachet as our cook. At the campfire we had a jingle

Ethel Rose: about Dan Tachet and his hot dogs.\* We had a section assigned for the girls when we reached camp. Then there were sections for the marrieds and the men.

We got used to the routine very quickly. There was a weighing of our bags--and don't you be a half a pound over. If Mr. Olcott Haskell weighed your bag, and he weighed the bags for many years, he would say, "Don't you have a sweater you could take out? You're half a pound over."

George: How much weight were you allowed?

Ethel Rose: I think in the twenties it was thirty-five pounds--if I remember correctly. But later when bags were lighter, and there were new equipment, new inventions and improvements, the weight was cut down.

George: Of course this didn't include food. This was strictly your own personal belongings--clothing, sleeping bag, boots.

Ethel Rose: Exactly.

#### Camaraderie at Camp and on the Trail

George: Do you have any particular memories from the various high trips?

Ethel Rose: Of course! My mind and heart are just simply full of them.

George: Perhaps you could elucidate, and give me the ones that seem to be the most important to you.

Ethel Rose: Of course, the campfires were delightful events [where] there was a great deal of talent displayed. There were musical people who could arrange a chorus, and there were leaders who could conduct the singing of songs composed by members, and other songs that were well known. There were plays, short dramas and colorful acts.

---

\*"Our Dan Tachet is a darn good cook. He makes things taste better than they look. His hot dogs come from the frying pan, Shouting three cheers for dear old Dan."

Ethel Rose: There was one member of the party by the name of Elsie Bell Earnshaw. She came from Los Angeles. She was connected with I. Magnin. Year after year after year Elsie Bell would put on fashion shows. We would contribute our beautiful silk bandannas to her; she would have a rope around her campsite and she would hang up all those donations from us. She could dress an entire wedding party. I remember when she dressed one of the girls as a bride--she's Mrs. Bestor Robinson today. We had the bride and the bridal attendants, and they walked down the mountainside perfectly, beautifully attired, and Elsie Bell commented. She did that for us year after year after year.

There were very clever members who did all sorts of things. We would perhaps have two scientists who would discuss geology and maybe an optometrist [who] would tell us how good it was for eyes to be in the mountains, and that we should use them for looking at heights and turning our heads and so on.

George: Good for your neck muscles, too.

Ethel Rose: Probably so. There were all sorts of talents displayed. The campfires were delightful, and we all went and enjoyed them.

Other interesting events that stand out: the tea parties! There were those who carried little teakettles wrapped in a bandanna, dangling in a little bundle from the knapsack. On the trail these men and women who had the little teakettles would make tea, and as you came hiking along you'd hear them go, "Come and have a cup of tea!" They were delightful events of the hikes. We also had the candy pack train--that's what Judge [Clair] Tappaan called it. Either your family or your friends would send you goodies after you'd been out perhaps about two weeks. Then there would be stylish tea parties, which were invitational affairs. You'd put on your best bandanna.

George: How were these candy packs sent to you?

Ethel Rose: We could receive mail, and whenever the packers went out with the mules, you knew they would bring us back our mail. When they came with the candy pack train, believe me, that was an exciting thing.

George: It seems like things haven't changed much in the mountains. When I go backpacking now we seem to do very frivolous and crazy things.

Ethel Rose: Of course every year on the high trip there was the bandanna show--that was the social highlight. We got out our very best bandannas, many of which we didn't wear to campfires.

Ethel Rose: People brought bandannas that they had acquired in Europe and various places in the world. These would flutter, and we would have special refreshments and a delightful time. It was the social event, and you didn't miss it.

#### The Daily Schedule

George: I'd like to discuss the day-to-day activities in camp. You'd mentioned earlier that you had some very interesting anecdotes concerning this. Please feel free to comment on these activities.

Ethel Rose: This really is a very great pleasure for me. You know, the calls came at 4:00 a.m. and 4:30 a.m.--very often. Now, we'd hear that call, "Everybody get up, get up, get up, get up!" The girls would answer from the camp, "We're up, we're up, we're up, we're up!" It was a great pleasure to take an icy dip in the purling stream.

George: At that early time in the morning?

Ethel Rose: At that early time in the morning. One year I never missed a dip, no matter what time we were called. Then roll up your luggage, get your dunnage bag in, and then eat your breakfast. I believe we had gotten our lunch the night before, and as soon as possible off we would be on the trail.

I think I mentioned before that we would have the tea parties on the trail. We would eat our lunches. We used to have hardtack and cheese, chocolate and dried fruit, and lemon powder for lemonade. On the trail we didn't have to hike in company; we could go along alone. People were so kindly to one another on the trail. "Come and have a cup of tea with us." We'd go down by the waterside and join a group for tea and for lunch.

George: What did you wear on the trail?

Ethel Rose: In the first years, we had slacks or jodhpurs, and the blouses with long sleeves and big hats with brims to protect our faces. I don't remember so much about how the men dressed. I don't even remember whether or not they wore hats. They must have worn--oh yes!--they used to come with their bandannas. But it was a while before the girls put on shorts.

George: In photos I've seen of various high trips, it seems like people are really overdressed--at least in comparison to what I wear. When I go backpacking, I like to wear as little as possible because I find it's really warm up in the mountains. If I wear long sleeves and long pants, I'm just roasting.

Ethel Rose: We wore our hats and our sweaters. To go back to the hiking--some people would get in very early before their dunnage bags had come. Others of us would be very much later. Then we would be assigned to the girls' quarters, the married quarters, or the men's quarters. I had my favorite foundation--a big, flat sunkissed rock. I never used a mattress except when I went camping in England once. I used to put a tarp over me. Nowadays, many take tents, but no tent for me.

We'd get freshened up for dinner. We were hearty eaters; there would be two lines with the food; the same for each line. The soup would be served separately. There would be two volunteers to serve the soup and other volunteers from the members of the party for serving all of the other food. Some of those younger boys serving soup would say, "Come and get your soup! Soup's ready!"

After dinner we'd prepare for the campfire. That really was an event--comfortable and cozy and warm and very entertaining, with very, very clever people to entertain. Now if we had a day in camp, often small informal parties were organized. If you had goodies from the candy pack train and could take them along, that was just great. We'd have ever so many delightful little short trips. If we were in camp for several days, then trips would be organized with leaders to take you out, perhaps on a mountain climb or for some special hike over trailless areas--that sort of thing. It was really a busy schedule, but one could be lazy on a lay-over day.

George: And you'd keep it up for a month?

Ethel Rose: Oh yes. And then of course, you had to wash. You had to wash and dry--that was something else. Oh those socks!

We had some very interesting trips, on which I went. I had never done any knapsacking. One time a trip was organized--I believe it was to a place called Paradise, if I remember correctly. We carried our beds, and our food was carried for us. That was a very, very interesting trip to me, especially carrying my bed. Another time we carried our beds when we went over Muir Pass. We had to ford a stream--I remember that well. I think we must have been helping a pack train out.

George: If I could talk about Muir Pass--when you were there was there a hut on Muir Pass?

Ethel Rose: George, I helped carry the stones for that hut!

George: That hut has saved me twice in rainstorms. Whenever I cross Muir Pass, it's always raining. I must thank you for doing that because you saved me a couple of times.

Ethel Rose: Well, it was very interesting to get to the pass and move the stones because there was going to be a hut.

George: But the hut was not actually built then?

Ethel Rose: No, but I have gone over Muir Pass a number of times and I have been in the hut. Once I stayed all night on the top of the pass. It was a long, long trip and some of us just stayed for pleasure.

George: That area is one of the most desolate areas I can think of in the entire Sierra. It's beautiful.

Ethel Rose: I didn't mention that we used to read good things and have interesting discussions. One time we had a discussion--oh, I wish I could remember the title. Not "What is the most important thing in the world", but it was a very interesting question that was put to a little group. Leland Curtis acted as moderator. You know you can have very interesting discussions on the top of a mountain, if you had strength left, or on the trail at lunch time.

George: You know, for some reason when I go hiking I find a similar thing is true...something about the setting and the fact that you're isolated. It's perfect for these discussions.

Ethel Rose: I believe I remember the question we discussed. "What is humanity's greatest need today?"

George: Do you recall when this was, what time period?

Ethel Rose: No, but it was a high trip, and Leland Curtis conducted the discussion. We didn't care anything about the news particularly on the high trips, but occasionally there was someone who would get the news, and then he would give us a talk and even keep us up on the comics.

George: Do you have any areas of the Sierra that are favorite places that really hold a very close place in your heart?

Ethel Rose: Yes, but I'm not a map reader, and I can no longer tell you where they are located.

I had an interesting experience. When I first started on the trips, I wore long hair. I camped one time on a rock with a rock right near me. Several years later when I came back to my own private campsite, the little hairpins were under the rock. By then I'd had my hair bobbed, I suppose.

#### Review of Sierra Club Personalities

George: Could you elaborate on some of the more interesting, famous, or now-famous personalities in the Sierra Club that you either met or got to know during the high trips?

Ethel Rose: I would like to mention Leland Curtis, the artist who painted in tempera. He came year after year. He exhibited his paintings done on the trip and sold them to us at very reasonable prices. He was a delightful member of the trip--a clever mountaineer who was always gracious and kindly on the trip. If you happened to meet him on the trail, you could walk along and be with him and his other companions for a while.

If there was a botanist on the trip, maybe there would be a showing of flowers. People gave of their talent. Then we had an author--I'm sorry I've forgotten her name-- and a minister. Sometimes we would have an artist and one time [as] I told you, I think, when we were visiting before, we expected to meet President Harding--but that did not work out.

George: I recall that. I believe he died then, didn't he? You were expecting to meet him at Yosemite.

Ethel Rose: Of course Mr. [William E.] Colby was an outstanding man, for his organization of the high trips and the carrying out of the plans. He was a wonderful mountaineer, and he always impressed upon us that we were taken to the mountains in order that we might do something to conserve for those coming after us. I must tell you that there was under Mr. Colby always a John Muir night that was very interesting because, of course, Mr. Colby had know John Muir personally. He was not the only one in the party who had know John Muir, but he was perhaps the best qualified to speak about him.

George: I wish I could have known people who had known Muir or--it's impossible--had known Muir myself. That's only a dream that will never be satisfied.

So there was the notion or the ethic of going to the mountains to learn to appreciate them, and also [of] bringing back to the city and to your job some understanding of furthering a conservation movement?

Ethel Rose: That's right. Then Judge Tappaan assisted Mr. Colby. He was a delightful personality and something of a comedian. He could be very, very entertaining. He's the man that gave the name to the candy pack train, for example. He could put things into a light vein.

Of course, Francis Farquhar was an outstanding member of the parties. He was exceedingly knowledgeable as to the place names. Marjory Farquhar was an excellent mountaineer. People entered into the high trips and tried to do their parts. People would help in the commissary. They would lead outings if we were in camp for a day or two. If there was tragedy, the men were ready to assist.

Bill Horsfall was a man who was exceedingly well known on the high trips. He was one of the most useful members of the party that Mr. Colby, I think, ever had. In emergency, he could go cross-country and find the body if that was necessary--and once it was. He was an excellent rope climber and a man who enjoyed the mountains.

George: Would you care to discuss any other people in particular?

Ethel Rose: I'm so glad that you reminded me of Ansel Adams, whom I've known since he was a bachelor. Yes, Ansel used to come on the trips, and then he came after he married.

Ansel was something of a comedian. He could talk delightfully, and he was a very clever mountaineer. He took a party up a mountain one time; I think they said, "That ought to be called Mount Ansel Adams." I doubt if it legally was, but...

George: I believe there is a peak named for him in Yosemite.

Ethel Rose: Is there? He was an exceedingly versatile person. He was musical, and of course he became a famous photographer. Then you have the name, haven't you, of Phil Bernays. He was the president of the club, I believe, at one time. Ralph Arthur Chase used to come on the trips and enjoyed them very much. He brought some of his family. Ernest Dawson brought several



- Ethel Rose: of his children. He was an excellent mountaineer and a delightful companion. People seemed to have time for each other, and there wasn't really a class distinction.
- George: Things were on a very equal basis.
- Ethel Rose: Oh yes indeed!
- George: It sounds like there was a very definite spirit of cooperation among all people on these trips.
- Ethel Rose: Oh yes indeed. I think it was a very fine idea to have young people take those trips, because I'm sure it helped them to grow up.
- George: Did you find that [many] young people who were on those trips became more active Sierra Club members--and possibly Sierra Club leaders?
- Ethel Rose: Well, the man that dug the pits and did the cooking became a psychiatrist, Dr. Paul Kaufman. No task was too menial for the leaders or the members of the party. We were all on a first name basis--except we always said "Mr. Colby". We called Judge Tappaan 'Tap'.
- George: It sounds like Mr. Colby was a very revered member of these outings.
- Ethel Rose: You had to have a good deal of respect for his ability, his insight, and his idea of looking forward to conserving the wilderness.
- George: He was a lawyer, wasn't he?
- Ethel Rose: Yes, he was.
- George: How about Cedric Wright?
- Ethel Rose: Yes, Cedric Wright was a violinist, and he used to play his instrument on the trips. But Cedric was not at all above helping in the commissary--I've seen him carry a heavy, heavy pot. I think somebody said, "Well, he isn't fussy about his hands." He gave of his talent in music, he assisted in the commissary, and he was full of jokes. He loved to play jokes--jokes on people. We had a lost and found department where some man's alarm clock [laughter] would be found--he hadn't lost it at all. Cedric perhaps had put it in to the lost and found--that sort of thing.

Ethel Rose: He would play interesting jokes. One time he picked up the litter in the men's camp--bits of this and that--and roped it in and just had to have a sign "Found in the men's camp". There wasn't very much [litter], I'll have to say in the men's behalf. But at least it called the attention of the members to the fact that you really shouldn't leave any sign of where you camped.

The High Trip Roster: A Social Mix

George: And that's a very good method of doing it--it sounds like it worked. Could you give me some information on the socio-economic background of people on these high trips and the people in the Sierra Club in general? What were their backgrounds, in terms of education, employment, things like this?

Ethel Rose: Yes, of course I can. I remember one girl was a table waitress, and men were professors. I don't know that we cared too much about the backgrounds.

George: One charge that has been often levelled at the conservation movement--groups like the Sierra Club, Audubon Society and Friends of the Earth--is that they're elitist and composed almost strictly of upper middle class or upper class people who are not really speaking for society as a whole. I was trying to see if this charge could be levelled against the Sierra Club membership in the earlier days, say, the twenties or thirties when you were going quite often on these trips.

Ethel Rose: What you say is news to me. We had a woman, I remember, who was a doctor of medicine. Of course there were many teachers and women who came in with their husbands. Maybe they brought children.

George: On these trips did you find many people who were carpenters or truck drivers--more from the blue collar strata of society?

Ethel Rose: I don't believe I can really answer that off-hand. We were, as I said, Bill, Ethel, and Cedric and his daughter, and so on. Anyone would do whatever he could do to help another person.

George: So, even if there were social differences, it sounds like they were cast aside and were not really considered important. On these trips you were strictly on a first name basis, and you were without any kind of awareness of class background?

Ethel Rose: That's right. Sometimes we had guests--I think from out of the country. Of course we met very, very interesting people, and after the high trip was over there would be a high trip reunion, or you could have a party of your own. It was a wonderful place in which to make friends and have a social life when the high trip was not in session.

George: So the friendships that were first formed on high trips were maintained in later years.

Ethel Rose: Some of them, yes. Yes, indeed.

George: I think at this point we'll take a short break.

We're back in Mrs. Horsfall's apartment. She has just taken me upstairs to the roof where I've realized what a fine hiker she must have been because, even at the age of ninety, she walks circles around me. I had a hard time keeping up with her, and I'm a physically fit young man of twenty-seven. I must give Mrs. Horsfall credit for still being very limber of leg.

## III THE SIERRA CLUB: CHANGE AND CONSTANCY

The Club's Current Size and Environmental Stance

- George: Perhaps you could discuss the activities of the Sierra Club now, in 1979, and the differences, if there are any, that you can perceive between the Sierra Club that you knew back in the twenties and thirties, and the Sierra Club as it exists today.
- Ethel Rose: Of course, the club was very much smaller when I became a member. We cared very, very much about our Sunday hikes, about the high trips, and later about the base camps and the other trips. What I notice now is that there is much emphasis on the part of the young people, and the older ones too, on conservation. People are aware of the need to preserve the beautiful wilderness areas for those who are to follow us. Of course, the club has gained greatly in size.
- George: I believe now it's almost 200,000 members.
- Ethel Rose: I think you're right.
- George: And now I know it's very definitely spread throughout the United States in terms of members. I'm not certain if there are chapters in various countries, but the club's concerns now embrace a more worldwide outlook.
- Ethel Rose: A change that I know now is that many, many people are willing to volunteer and give of their time; literally give themselves to protect the wilderness.
- George: I think a lot of it has to come from a grass-roots volunteer basis because there is no money in it--very definitely. But the interests who are against wilderness and preservation do have money and time, so it must come from volunteer sources.
- Ethel Rose: It's interesting that now the club needs money so very badly. Our life membership fee was small, our dues were small and there was a great deal of social life among us.
- George: What about the need to preserve wilderness and to foster a conservation ethic? For example, are there certain areas of interest where you can see a definite need for more energy to be expended by the Sierra Club, or by other environmental groups, in terms of preserving our quality of life and wilderness?

Ethel Rose: I don't really feel qualified to speak on that. You see, it's a number of years since I've been in the mountains with the club, and I don't get to the annual dinners anymore. I have The Yodeler, their magazine.

George: Do you think the club should continue to try to increase its membership and to continue to be an active force? Do you think they have enough power and strength now?

Ethel Rose: I really don't speak on that subject with a great deal of authority. It's more an emotional feeling. Enlarge the membership--yes, by all means!

The Ultimate Gift: Benefits of Sierra Club Membership

Ethel Rose: I might tell you that I took a nephew and two nieces one time on the high trip for four weeks. They were eighteen and nineteen years old; two girls and one boy. That was a wonderful experience for those three. The young man climbed the Black Kaweah. He's a fine young man of course; he's a man in business today. One of the girls [Joanne Taylor] became a very enthusiastic club member. She used to be a head of the club dinners in the Berkeley area. She's very interested in nature. She became a teacher. The other girl was able to contribute at the campfires with her voice and her dramatic ability; later she became a university professor. I felt that my money was well-spent.

When I took my nephew and nieces, I really didn't flutter over them; I often think of that first night when I didn't tell them how to fix their beds, or where to put them. I would hear a friend say, "I'll help you with your beds." [laughter] I was so careful not to be a fluttering aunt.

I must say that the social life afforded me by the Sierra Club meant a very great deal to me. I came out here, as I told you, in '21; I didn't have my teaching work out here for several years. It meant a great deal to me to make contacts with men and women who were interested in fresh air and hiking and maybe having dinner together when the trip was over.

Of course, the mountains gave you an enlargement of your horizon, and as you say, deep thoughts and thoughts that you would share with others rather freely.

George: People seem to let down their barriers and the barricades around them. They become a little more open. It's a very nice feeling.

Ethel Rose: Well, I have to pay tribute again to the leaders who would do anything for our comfort and pleasure.

George: It sounds like their efforts were not wasted because you obviously have benefitted quite a bit from the trips.

Ethel Rose: It's helped me to keep fit and to stay mentally alert.

George: I would have to agree.

Ethel Rose: Thank you.

Transcriber: George Baranowski  
Final Typist: Stacey Cook

## INDEX -- Ethel Rose Taylor Horsfall

Adams, Ansel, 12

Colby, William E., 11, 12, 13  
Curtis, Leland, 10, 11

Earnshaw, Elsie Bell, 7

Haskell, Olcott, 6  
high trips. See Sierra Club outings program  
Horsfall, William [Bill], 12

Muir Pass, 9-10

Sierra Club,  
membership,  
    composition of, 7, 11-14  
    reason for joining, 4-5  
outings program,  
    high trip, 4-14, 17-18  
    base camp, 5  
    purposes, 11-12  
    purposes and goals, 16-17  
Sierra Nevada, personal experiences in, 4-11

Tachet, Dan, 4-5  
Tappaan, Clair, 6, 11  
Taylor, Rose Schuster, 1-2

Wright, Cedric, 13-14





Sierra Club Oral History Project

Harriet T. Parsons

A HALF-CENTURY OF SIERRA CLUB INVOLVEMENT

An Interview Conducted by  
Ann Lage  
in 1979

Underwritten by  
The National Endowment for the Humanities

Sierra Club History Committee  
1981

Sierra Club Oral History Project

TABLE OF CONTENTS -- Harriet Parsons

INTRODUCTION	i
INTERVIEW HISTORY	ii
I FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND MENTORS IN THE MOUNTAINS	1
Family Influences	1
First Sierra Club Outing, 1927	2
Car Camping in Baja with Ernest Dawson, 1928	4
Politics in Club and Camp, 1930s	5
Bishop Parsons: Religious and Social Leader	6
II EARLY CLIMBING AND SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS	9
On Ice and Rock with the Mountaineers, 1931 to 1935	9
Women in Climbing	11
The 1927 High Trip	12
Memorable Companions on the Early Outings: Clyde, Earnshaw, Colby	14
III ROCK CLIMBERS, THE <u>YODELER</u> , AND THE SIERRA CLUB BOARD	18
Fouding the <u>Yodeler</u>	18
Climber-Conservationists	19
Wartime Club Leaders: Huber, Colby, Farquhar	20
Charlotte Mauk Remembered	21
Post-war Leaders: Brower, Leonard, Clark, Robinson	23
Membership Policies and Tensions with the Southern California Chapter	24
IV THE <u>SIERRA CLUB BULLETIN</u> EDITORIAL BOARD, 1939-1964	28
Role of the Editorial Board	28
Two <u>Bulletin</u> Editors: Farquhar and Brower	29
The <u>Brower</u> Controversy: Finances or Conflicting Goals?	32
Balkanization of the Sierra Club, 1970s	33
Personal Meaning of Wilderness	34
APPENDIX A	
Women Mountaineers, an interview by Lynn Thomas	36
APPENDIX B	
Early <u>Yodeler</u>	40
TAPE GUIDE	46
INDEX	47



## INTRODUCTION -- Harriet Parsons

Harriet Parsons and I grew up in Berkeley together, but as we went to different schools and she went east to college at Wellesley while I went to the University of California at Berkeley, we really did not get to know each other well until a High Trip in the Sierra--1939 I think it was. I came in the last two weeks, not knowing anyone, but soon got acquainted with Harriet, and I remember some lovely camps together, especially at Bench Lake where our camp was on an island, or perhaps the end of a long peninsula, isolated from everyone else out in the middle of the lake. Since then, I have had the privilege of knowing her more and more.

After graduation from college Harriet took courses at the University in Berkeley in landscaping, then later in 1931 moved to Seattle where she became a successful landscape gardener. Seattle was also an area where a great deal of climbing, both rock and ice, was easily available, and Harriet joined the Mountaineers and received her training in climbing.

On the death of her mother in 1935, however, she returned to San Francisco to live with and keep house for her father, Bishop Parsons, an outstanding liberal both in the field of religion and social awareness. At the same time she was able to work at several jobs with landscape architects, and finally a part-time job with David Magee whose bookstore on Post Street was famous for its rare books and first editions, as well as current literature. She was there for twenty-three years, 1942-1964--a most enjoyable job I am sure with the literate and thoroughly amusing Magees. Later, on retirement of her father, he and she moved to the lovely flat on Broderick Street that Harriet still occupies.

In addition to her involvement with the Sierra Club and her love of climbing, she has traveled a great deal in Europe, especially in Greece where her older brother had been an archeologist with the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. In fact early in her climbing career, she climbed Mount Olympus--abode of the Greek gods in a very seldom visited (by the tourist) area of northern Greece. She has an extensive library on all things Greek--travel books as well as the great Greek writers, and has visited and lived in tiny villages on Crete and elsewhere with her friend and traveling companion, Lucy French. She and Lucy had a trip around the world when they spent much time in Japan and the Far East, and later a sojourn in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) and finally back to Egypt, the Mediterranean, and the isles of Greece.

For several years, as a volunteer, I worked with Harriet in the Sierra Club Library. It was a most enjoyable experience for me, and made me realize more clearly what a valuable and loyal member the Sierra Club has in Harriet Parsons.

Helen LeConte  
March, 1980

## INTERVIEW HISTORY -- Harriet Parsons

As a fellow member of the Sierra Club History Committee, I had known Harriet Parsons since 1970 and had found her clear memories and perceptive comments on club leaders of the early days a compelling reason to explore her reminiscences further in an oral history interview. Our long planned interview finally took place in her San Francisco apartment on April 2, 1979.

With Harriet's quiet ways and innate modesty, her many outstanding contributions to the Sierra Club tend to escape notice. She came to the club in 1927, interested in the summer outing to the Sierra, and became an avid rock and ice climber in the 1930s. In 1939 she began her volunteer work on the Sierra Club Bulletin, serving on the editorial board until 1963 and as associate editor from 1942-1954. Her talents as a writer are evident in the two articles she wrote for the Bulletin (June, 1939, and December, 1945), as well as the innumerable book reviews throughout these years bearing the initials HTP. Additional hours of service were contributed as she took a major responsibility for editing the bimonthly Bulletin issues for many years.

A less visible, but no less important, contribution to the Sierra Club has been Harriet's devoted labors for the club library. Serving with the Library Committee for many years before a paid staff person was hired to tend the growing collection of books, documents, journals, and visual arts, Harriet has worked to catalogue and shelve, plan acquisitions, and arrange displays for the club library since the 1940s. She still works in the Colby library weekly, providing the volunteer-power to assist the professional librarian in accomplishing her tasks.

Harriet's interview is particularly interesting, then, for its insights into the makings of a committed Sierra Club volunteer, as well as for its characterizations of Sierra Club leaders and mountaineers such as Ernest Dawson, Charlotte Mauk, and Norman Clyde. Of additional interest are Harriet's comments on women and mountaineering, made during an interview with Lynn Thomas in 1978 [Appendix A]. Ms. Thomas spoke with Harriet at the suggestion of the History Committee to gather background material for her book on women backpackers; she has kindly allowed us to include her interview here.

The interview was reviewed for accuracy by Miss Parsons and only minor editorial changes were made. The tapes are available at The Bancroft Library.

Ann Lage  
Interviewer/Editor  
April 1981

## I FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND MENTORS IN THE MOUNTAINS

[Date of Interview: 2 April 1979]##

Family Influences

Lage: We are talking with Harriet Parsons about her experiences with the Sierra Club. My name is Ann Lage, representing the History Committee. Good morning Harriet. We want to start by getting some idea about your early life and how you developed your interest in the out-of-doors.

Parsons: I don't know whether the fact that I was born the year of the first Sierra Club High Trip might have had something to do with it. My father [Edward L. Parsons] was on the first High Trip in 1901 to Tuolumne Meadows.

Lage: And you were born that year?

Parsons: I was born that fall. Mother didn't go on the trip, possibly because I was on the way, I'm not sure. I don't think they thought about mother going on them much. Anyway, Father went and had a marvelous time. He went with Professor Henry R. Fairclough of Stanford who had written him--I did have the letter but can't find it anywhere--saying: "Dear Parsons, How about this for a vacation this summer?" Father was a young minister in San Mateo, and Professor Fairclough was a classics professor at Stanford.

So they went off on the High Trip, and Father said it was a wonderful trip. John Muir came in to see them all and looked over the beauty of everything. Father quoted a rather exuberant poem (maybe

---

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page

Parsons: from the Bible) which I wish I could remember. Father was a young romantic, and he quoted about something that would have created all this marvelous mountain land, probably the Lord through thunder and lightning. John Muir, although he was a good religious person, said "It was glaciers" (just like that). "It was glaciers that did it."

Lage: That is a marvelous story.

Parsons: Father always walked, always hiked, up to the very last; he had to have his walk after he came home from work.

Lage: He didn't continue with the High Trips?

Parsons: He never went on another High Trip, but he continued to be a member and he was a member until he died. And not a life member either. He paid every year!

Lage: Was he active in the club at all?

Parsons: No. When we went off in the summer time, we went up to Fallen Leaf Lake, and sometimes we went up into the Santa Cruz Mountains. We always went on walks together, the family. Mother was very interested in birds and flowers. Father was interested but couldn't see the birds because he was too nearsighted, and I never could follow them either because I was nearsighted, but we learned a lot as a family about the plants and nature. It really was nothing at all exciting; we didn't go up and camp in the Sierra as a family, but we did do a lot of outdoor activities together.

Lage: Why do you think you didn't start going on the High Trips as a family? Was there any discussion of it at all?

Parsons: I don't know. They were busy. When I was very little we moved to Berkeley and I grew up there. Father was rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church. I think they were just too busy. Mother was raising a family, and they just didn't do it. But my brother always went off camping with his friends into the Berkeley hills and other places, and I always wanted him to take me too, but he wouldn't. I was just a year younger than he. He was a nice person, and he always said he would, but he never did.

#### First Sierra Club Outing, 1927

Parsons: I always liked the idea of mountains and things, and I was dying to climb Everest, the Matterhorn and everything else. But I never went on a Sierra Club trip until 1927, because I thought, "All those



Parsons: people? I couldn't bear it." A very good friend of mine, Ruth Younger, who is Ruth Benner, Mrs. Ted Benner, was a member. She and her mother had been on the High Trip the year before, and she said, "Really it's lots of fun and you must go." She persuaded me to go, and we went in 1927.

Lage: And did you find that there were too many people?

Parsons: No. I discovered that people went off on their own. The fast ones went ahead, the medium ones were behind. You could go cross-country if you wanted to, with some other people. It was just awfully good, and awfully good education. It really was great because in the first place, one of the things I discovered was that I could talk to people that I didn't know. I was quite shy. When I signed up to go, I went not as a member but as a member of my father's family, and I said to Mildred Weber who was the secretary then, "All those people I don't know. I will be sort of scared because I am bashful." She said, "Forget it. Speak to anybody, and they will speak to you. Don't worry about it."

Lage: So you found it was not particularly upsetting?

Parsons: Oh, no. It was wonderful. I absolutely loved it, and I think I can almost remember that trip better than any other trip I went on, because everything was so new and marvelous. Mr. Ernest Dawson was along, and he always took the novices under his wing. If they had a desire to climb any mountains, he would take them. We wouldn't dare go with any of the other people who really knew about climbing, but he would take us up and show us it was very simple to climb a mountain. He was really remarkable. He was deaf as a post, and he liked to take us out and have lunch out from camp. He always sat us near a waterfall, and we couldn't understand, because he was so deaf, how he could hear if the waterfall was going.

Lage: How old a man was he at that time--do you remember?

Parsons: He must have been maybe in his forties or fifties.

Lage: Are his children about your age?

Parsons: No. They are much younger than I am. Glen was just a youngster. He may have been on that trip, but I am not sure. I think he possibly was.

Car Camping in Baja with Ernest Dawson, 1928

- Parsons: The next year in the spring of 1928, a friend from Berkeley and I joined the Sierra Club camping trip down to Baja California. We went in the Dawsons' car, driven by Mr. Dawson's brother. There were the two children, Glenn and Fern, who were just kids, and Mr. Dawson and his brother, whose name I can't remember, and my friend Helen Carr, who became Mrs. Walter Tittle (she was never a member of the Sierra Club, I believe). We had a marvelous time. There were about three or four other cars, and each car was independent. We had all our food; we did our cooking right there. We always had a dry camp, and we went about 300 miles down below the border.
- Lage: Was this an Angeles Chapter, or Southern California Chapter, trip?
- Parsons: It was a southern California group that would go off, a car camping group. We didn't do any climbing; we just had an interesting time.
- Lage: I guess Ernest Dawson is famous for introducing a lot of people to the outdoors and the club down south.
- Parsons: Yes. It was a great experience. I killed a rattlesnake with a machete that I took. [laughter] I had talked with the father of one of my Berkeley friends, who had been in Baja California and knew all about it, and he said you must have a machete to cut away all those cactus and kill any snakes that may bother you. So he got me a large machete [gestures to show size] which I gave away later.
- Lage: Was it actually this big? Three feet?
- Parsons: Oh, it was a big machete. Yes, and a scabbard too. I loved it because I have always loved knives and that kind of thing. I am not very blood thirsty but I have always liked it. So I went along, and we didn't really have to cut much cactus away, although at that time, in 1928, the road was full of ruts. You ran along the ruts, and the high middle part of the road would have scraped any new car today.
- Lage: How did you kill the rattlesnake?
- Parsons: It was lying in the road, and I think it was a very lowdown thing to do, because I thought, "Oh, I must kill a rattlesnake." Feeling very brave, I got out with my machete. It was lying across the road, and I think it was just asleep there on the road. It stirred, but it didn't coil.
- Lage: So it really wasn't necessary?

Parsons: It would have been if I had pestered it at all, but I was so scared. I just whammed it at the back of its neck. It did some wriggling, and then I took it along and we buried its head, with the fangs and the poison. I skinned it that night at the campfire, because we were going to have it for breakfast, which would have been very nice, but I got so jittery about skinning it there by the campfire (there was a man in the group who told me how to do it). When I finally got it done, I just couldn't bear it and I threw it into the fire. I was so annoyed at myself for doing that. All that evening and night, after I lay in bed I kept thinking about Rikki-Tikki-Tavi and the cobra, and the cobra's wife coming back, and I kept wondering if his wife would come into the tent and bite me! This was awfully silly and non-intelligent, but I just got the creeps about it that night!

Lage: Did you throw the skin away also?

Parsons: I brought the skin home and had it cured, and I had it hanging on my wall for years. I finally gave it to a young cousin who was thrilled by it, and he had it hanging in his room I think for years also.

Lage: That's quite a story.

Parsons: Then Glen wanted to kill the next, so he had a chance with my machete. Nowadays we would have left the snakes to live their lives. It was really kind of amusing, but that was my experience with Mr. Dawson. He was always so kind and good. He was a great person.

#### Politics in Club and Camp, 1930s

Lage: Frequently when there is mention of Ernest Dawson, they say he was a fine man, except for his politics!

Parsons: Oh, yes, he was supposed to be very "red."

Lage: Did his politics come out at all on the trips?

Parsons: No. I don't think he was a card carrying--what do you say--Communist, but--well, I am fairly liberal myself so it didn't bother me, but he would say once in a while that things could be bettered if it was a socialistic government. I agreed with him, in many ways. I didn't agree with him completely, but we didn't really have much discussion.

Lage: It wasn't a major point, but it came up?

Parsons: No it wasn't at all. It was the outdoors we were interested in when we were together.

It is true, I think, that a great many people on the board were conservatives and die-hard Republicans, fine men.

Lage: How did they feel about Ernest Dawson?

Parsons: I think a great many of them felt he went a little too far probably, but I never heard them discuss it.

Lage: You think he was accepted as a full-fledged compatriot?

Parsons: Oh my goodness yes. They knew really what a good person he was. He wasn't planning to go out and knock down the government, or do anything stupid like that. I don't think they held it too much against him. They just thought it was a little short-sighted on his part probably.

Lage: You do have the impression that the board, at that time at least, was quite conservative?

Parsons: I am sure they all were. There was Duncan McDuffie, and there was Francis Farquhar, who was a good Republican. I voted for Norman Thomas the first few times that I ever voted, so you can see that I was more of the other direction, but it didn't come up, that kind of thing. Politics didn't enter into the board that I can recall.

Lage: I can see it wouldn't be that necessary.

Parsons: I don't think it mattered to people. That wasn't their interest, the only interest in whether it was a Republican or Democratic government in Washington at the time, was which was the better party to help save our mountains and our wild places. I think that is the thing they had in mind more than the other.

Lage: At least when they came together in this sense?

Parsons: Yes, at least when they came together. They didn't always agree as to the way of doing it. Well, who does?

Bishop Parsons: Religious and Social Leader

Lage: Let's go back just for a moment and tell me a little more about your father and his career, to get a little background. He was quite a distinguished person.

Parsons: He was the rector [of the Episcopal Church] down in Menlo Park when he first came out to the West. He came out to the West because he had TB. He came to Colorado first, and then to California because the altitude was too high in Colorado, and here he got over it. He was rector there at a little church in Menlo Park and then in San Mateo. He was still in Menlo Park when he married my mother, who was from New Haven, Connecticut. He met her in the East, and they were married in 1897. They were in San Mateo for a few years, and both my brother and I were born there. Then we went to Berkeley where he was rector of Saint Mark's until he became bishop coadjutor of the Diocese of California, which doesn't mean much to some people.

Lage: Now, I am not sure I know what coadjutor is.

Parsons: Coadjutor is assistant bishop, who will succeed the present bishop. Bishop Nichols was the bishop at that time, and he needed help. So he asked for a coadjutor. Father was elected coadjutor in 1919. In 1924 Bishop Nichols died, and father became the full bishop and carried on until he needed a coadjutor later on.

Lage: So he was bishop for how many years?

Parsons: He was bishop for about fifteen years, 1924 to the end of 1940, when he retired at the age of seventy-two. Then he was quite active after that. In 1924 we moved here to San Francisco. He did some writing, and he did some teaching over at the divinity school in Berkeley.

Lage: Now, he was quite a liberal man politically also?

Parsons: He was very liberal. Some of the people in the diocese thought he went too far.

Lage: Was this in terms of social interest in helping poor people, or what kinds of liberal politics?

Parsons: He was standing up for a lot of people that they thought were reds. Father was very keen on civil liberties. He was chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union for a good many years, and he didn't always agree with everything that the ACLU decided on, but generally speaking he did. He felt that they helped out in a great many ways for civil rights. I thought sometimes he might have even joined too many things to help out. At one point, in Life or Look or one of the other magazines, he was listed with a whole lot of other people that were called fellow travelers. The headline at the top said, "Fellow Travelers or Dupes?"

Lage: Was this brought up in the late forties?

Parsons: I really don't remember when it was. Would it have been in the thirties or in the McCarthy era?

Lage: That would be later, the late forties or early fifties.

Parsons: Was that the McCarthy era? Everything sort of slides into each other now!

Lage: Was he concerned with issues like labor?

Parsons: He was always a friend of labor. He didn't always agree with the unions as he thought they were beginning to get too strong, a good many of them, but he felt that they were very important people when they came in at the beginning. And things like that disturbed people. He was a good friend of Harry Bridges, and during the general strike, which I believe was in 1934 here in the city, father helped a lot with the negotiating down on the waterfront. People appreciated that. In fact, in Grace Cathedral there is a stained glass window where they have various people shown, and over the name PARSONS, there is father with the Ferry Building back of him, which is to suggest that he had been around on the waterfront in the thirties when that strike went on.

But I was up in Seattle at that time, so I missed it. I was climbing mountains and having fun.

## II EARLY CLIMBING AND SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS

On Ice and Rock with the Mountaineers, 1931 to 1935

Lage: And that is when, you said, you got your first training in technical rock climbing?

Parsons: Yes. With the Mountaineers in Seattle.

Lage: How did you get in touch with the Mountaineers? You were working there?

Parsons: Well, I knew they were there. I went up to Seattle to get a job right in the middle of the depression in 1931, which was stupid of me, but I did anyway, and I got odds and ends of jobs. I worked in a nursery part of the time, and things like that. The family were very kind. When I didn't have a job they would help me, but things were less expensive in those days. I could get by with less and I worked for a nursery off and on. Then in my last year or so, I worked for Butler Sturtevant, who was a landscape architect with an office up there as well as down here, and I helped in his office there when he was gone.

I had never been to Seattle. I just saw it on the map, and it looked like a marvelous location, all that water and all those mountains all around, so I went up there. I think I went a little ahead to sort of case the joint. I went up on the train with some friends who were going to go boating there. Then I stayed around a day or so to see what was going on. I didn't get much encouragement. My family was going on up to Alaska on the Inland Passage route in August 1931 and I joined them on that. After I came on back here, I decided anyway to go back to Seattle because it was such an alluring place! I knew about the Mountaineers, so right away I got in touch with them. Two weeks after I was there, in the fall of 1931 I went on the first weekend trip with them up to their Snoqualmie Lodge.

Lage: Was it a similar group to the Sierra Club?

Parsons: Yes. It is an outing club. It had climbing and skiing. It didn't work as hard on conservation then as it does now, but it is a good group. It had about 7000 members when I was there.

Lage: I am sure it has grown, but not as much as the Sierra Club.

Parsons: Oh, it has grown terrifically. But it was a wonderful organization, as far as I was concerned. I just lived for the weekends that I could get off and go up into the Cascades.

Lage: You did some ice climbing too?

Parsons: Of course there is a certain amount of snow. There are so many snow covered mountains. The very first summer I was up there in 1932 I went on my first outing trip with them. We were gone for a couple of weeks, and we went to climb the Guardians of the Columbia, which were Mount St. Helens, Mount Adams and Mount Hood. So that gave me the practice on the snow climbing, and I got to know some of the people very well that way too.

Lage: What kind of technique did they use? Were they more advanced than what the Sierra Club was using at that time?

Parsons: You had an ice axe or an alpenstock. I had an alpenstock to start with, and then graduated later to an ice axe. But everybody carried some sort of an alpenstock or an ice axe, because you glissaded down the snow when you came off the mountains, and sometimes you glissaded on your feet, and sometimes on your seat! You would put little patches on the back of your pants so they wouldn't wear them through to a hole. I can see now some of them sewing on something before we went up Saint Helens so that we could slide down without ruining our pants! [laughs] It was a good experience.

Later on they had a young man named Wolf Bauer, a young German, who started climbing lessons in the Mountaineers, and we took these. We learned the technique on paper, and then we went out and practiced it.

Lage: Was this rope climbing?

Parsons: This was climbing with ropes, and rappelling and all that. We practiced on a nearby little mountain, Mount Si. And we would go up to Snoqualmie Lodge and practice from there.

Lage: Were those new techniques, at least in the West?

Parsons: I think it was in 1931 that the rope was brought out in the Sierra Club. It was Robert Underhill who brought it out on the Sierra Club trip that I was on in 1931. I went on the 1931 High Trip, but



Parsons: I didn't get a chance at the learning rope techniques. I wasn't that far advanced. I was just a novice. They weren't taking anybody that didn't know anything, but that was when it started in the Sierra Club. And then by the time I got home again to stay, in 1935, the rock climbing group had begun. Dick Leonard had started the Cragmont Climbing Club and this became the Rock Climbing Section of the Sierra Club. I went out and played around with them after I got home. But I had gotten a good background up in the Cascades.

### Women in Climbing

Lage: Tell me something about, particularly, women in climbing.

Parsons: There always had been women in climbing. And as far as I can see they are just as good as the men, in many ways, and apparently they are proving themselves now.

Lage: Were there a lot of women climbers?

Parsons: It seemed to me there were as many women as men. I am not sure about that. I can remember certain ones. Helen LeConte climbed a little bit when I first came back, but then she wasn't doing so much of the climbing then. She said she was going arty rather than hearty! But Marj [Farquhar] was climbing, and Charlotte Mauk was climbing and going out with the Rock Climbing Section. The rock climbers would go out climbing, and then we would always go somebody's house and have supper Sunday night somewhere. We would pick up food on the way back.

Usually it was over on the other side of the bay, but we climbed over on the Miraloma Rocks here in the city several times, and I think that is the first time I remember seeing the Bedayans. This is quite early along when I first got back and started going with them. Torcom and Raffi Bedayan were climbing on Miraloma, and I remember they were having a bet on whether they were going to get across the "shaky leg ledge" on that rock. If they made it, they won an ice cream cone or something big like that!

Lage: Were the women who climbed in any way different from the ordinary women you knew who didn't climb? Were they more independent or more daring?

Parsons: I don't know.

Lage: Was it considered a little eccentric for a woman to climb?

Parsons: No, not eccentric. But people were sort of surprised sometimes when they heard that I climbed mountains: "Oh, goodness, do you?" But those were people maybe whose activities were not that type.

Lage: It wasn't such a daring thing for a young woman to do?

Parsons: No, it really wasn't. I don't think it was. My family was very pleased that I liked to climb. They thought it was great!

Lage: You didn't pick up any feeling that some people considered it unfeminine or not proper?

Parsons: No. I never ran into anybody that thought that kind of thing. Why would they?

Lage: Our perception today is that women were much more restricted in the past, and so I am trying to verify this.

Parsons: It seems to me that I have just been lucky, because I don't think in the Sierra Club they ever restricted them! Women just climbed. There were a lot of women climbers in the Sierra Club. There was a group of physical ed people at Cal--Caroline Coleman and Eleanor Bartlett, and Mary Alvarez, then Marj Farquhar, Doris Leonard, to mention a few, and Annie Nilsson. Annie never did so much rock climbing, but she was a skier. She did a lot of skiing and she still skis and so does Einar. [See Appendix A for further thoughts on women climbers.]

#### The 1927 High Trip##

Lage: Let's discuss the outings further. Did you have a feeling at all of a more serious purpose to the outings? Of introducing people to the conservation angle?

Parsons: Not at first. I went just for the joy of being out there in the mountains and climbing.

Lage: And was there anything in the camp programs that taught conservation?

Parsons: They would tell about it a bit--but I think we all knew about it. We didn't need to have it pushed into us, or anything. If there was any special problem that might have come up, I don't really remember much about their talking it over.

Lage: Did you ever remember going on any outings, say, in the Kings Canyon region, and discussing the campaign for a national park there?

Parsons: No, I don't.

Lage: Because that was one of the campaigns in the early years, throughout the thirties, I guess.

Parsons: Yes. It was before I started going on the trips I think. It was in the early thirties.

Lage: Well, first the Sequoia enlargement was an issue, and then Kings Canyon.

Parsons: We were in Sequoia on the 1927 trip, and Stephen Mather came out and talked to the group. We came out from the trip and gathered around there in the main part of Sequoia National Park, and he was there and telling about it, but, I don't really remember very definitely about it. Sequoia was completed, you see. They had gotten the enlarged park and that was it.

Lage: But you don't recall anything to do with Kings Canyon?

Parsons: I never did anything about it, no.

Lage: Tell me about some of the memories of that first trip in 1927. It was to the southern Sierra? The trip was to Kings Canyon?

Parsons: Let me get the Bulletin article on that trip. It was written by Jessie M. Whitehead.\* She was the daughter of Professor Whitehead, the great philosopher. She was English, and she was just an amazing person. Stuttered like anything. Had never been up in the mountains before. She became a marvelous climber and she just did everything, and she climbed with Miriam Underhill later on, and wrote up an article that came in National Geographic I think, "Easy Day for a Lady."

Lage: Was she living in England?

Parsons: No she wasn't. I think her father was professor at Harvard.

Lage: I wonder how she happened to come out for the trip?

Parsons: She heard about it. Lots of easterners came out for the trip, quite a few people. We had a geologist from Vassar; he came time after time. He was an awfully nice man--I don't remember what his name was.

---

\*"With the Sierra Club in 1927," Sierra Club Bulletin, February, 1928.

Parsons: The most shocking thing that happened on that trip was that a young man and his sister were on for the first time, and he went to climb the Black Kaweah and he was killed.

Lage: He tried to climb it alone?

Parsons: Alone. He was warned. At campfire, Mr. Colby, who was the leader, would tell where we were going and what there was about the area around. He warned everybody about the Black Kaweah, and said, "Now, nobody is to try that alone because it is a very difficult mountain." But the young man went to bed early so he could climb it, and he didn't hear the warning. He went off early before anybody knew. When he didn't come back, they sent out a search party. Norman Clyde was along. Eventually they found him. He had fallen.

Lage: Now, how did that affect the outing?

Parsons: Well, it affected it in that it shocked us and saddened us, and we felt very sorry for the girl, the young sister. She was taken out the next day, along with his body. It really was a tragic business--tragic.

##

Memorable Companions on the Early Outings: Clyde, Earnshaw, Colby

Lage: Tell me a little bit about Norman Clyde.

Parsons: The first time I ever saw him was on my first High Trip. He came into the trip, and here he came along, and it was a pack! And there was a man there too! And somebody said, "Here comes the pack that walks like a man." [laughter] He was a very interesting person, because he seemed so stolid, but he was a marvelous climber, and a remarkable scholar. The first time I climbed a minor Minaret, I went up with him and two or three other people. Another time I climbed Mount Humphreys. He went up another way with some of the men who were climbing a more difficult way, and I was going up with two women on my rope the regular way, and somebody said, "Harriet, Norman is calling for you!" I thought, "Oh, good, how important I feel; he wants me to help them get up." I got to the edge of the cliff there, and he said, "Get my camera and take a picture!" [laughter] So I got the camera and I took a picture, but I didn't know how to work his camera. Later on I asked him how they came out, and he said they didn't.

I never saw him just sitting up. He was either standing or he was lying. He would even lie down when he was eating. That's why Norman was able to do things. He knew how to relax. He completely relaxed when he was not walking or standing.

Parsons: They had him over to the Bedayans a few years ago and got a recording--a tape on him. I think the tape was resurrected somewhere. Dave [Brower] knew where it was. He was asked about his different climbs. Many climbers ascending what they thought was an unclimbed peak would find Norman's name already there.

Lage: Was he helpful and communicative?

Parsons: Oh, yes. He was always very pleasant. He wasn't a great talker, you know, a strong, silent man. A great big man. You have seen his book haven't you? He wrote remarkably well. You know what kind of a person he was. He was a character all right, a real character.

Lage: The pack that walks like a man--I like that.

##

Parsons: I think it was on the first High Trip where we met Elsie Bell Earnshaw, who you probably heard of. She was a great character from southern California. She would latch onto somebody and do things for them, just the way Ernest Dawson did, only she was almost too helpful, but I was very fond of her.

Lage: Is she the one with the fancy bandana?

Parsons: Yes, she always had fancy bandanas. She worked for I. Magnin! She probably always ran the bandana show because she was from the ladies garment department, you see. I think she drove some people crazy, but she really was a wonderful person in many ways. I was very fond of her. She was a very close friend of Mrs. Huber's who was called "Pocas." I would see her when she would come up and visit her. She loved it abroad and she would go abroad on freighters and off by herself. She went all around the Greek Islands and would get off at Mykonos. Here were all these young people, and she would say she would like to have a place to spend the night, and a whole group of them would take her to a home that would take her in that night, and she would be wined and dined. She could do things--you know, enter into something like that. And then she went to Majorca, Spain, and that is where she ended her days. I would hear about her through Pocas. Mrs. Huber really took care of all her business.

Lage: Is there anyone else you can think of that you would like to talk about who was especially memorable on the outings?

Parsons: Of course, Mr. Colby. I had a great admiration for Mr. Colby, who ran the outings, and I admired him from afar. On the first trip, Henry, his son, was in commissary. Camping with Ruth and me (Ruth Younger) and Kathryn Cox, there was also Ruth Hunter, who

Parsons: later became Mrs. Henry Colby. She had come out to be at the wedding of an old friend of hers in Berkeley--Kay Stratton. She was sticking around there, and they thought she had better get off and see some of the mountains, so she came on the High Trip with one set of underwear! [laughter] They got her outfitted in a hurry and off she came. So she was under our wing. The four of us were so different, but we did fine. Henry had met her, so they would get together in the evening and play cards and I would say, "I don't want to play cards. I want to go and listen to your father at campfire!" He had heard him enough! He didn't want to be bothered! So they would be relaxing and playing cards in the tent. As I remember we had quite a bit of rain and I think we had put up a lean-to of some sort, but I always wanted to go and hear what Mr. Colby had to say.

Lage: What kinds of things would he talk about?

Parsons: He would talk about the mountains. He would tell us about where we were going the next day, and what to look out for, and warn us about. I remember when we were going along the Big Arroyo he warned us that one of the most dangerous things was to step on a pebble on a smooth rock that would throw you. And that is what happened to one girl on a trip he told us about. He said this girl was just running along the rock, it was so easy, and she stepped on this pebble and it threw her right down the Big Arroyo. So things like that were fascinating to hear!

Lage: To be prepared for the next day!

Parsons: It was really funny, the four of us camping together. Ruth and I were more or less 'medium' tidy, not particularly tidy. Our beds were ordinary. And I can remember Elsie Bell coming along and saying, "Well, I certainly can tell who camps where." Here was Ruth Hunter just a wodge--a mess with her sleeping bag. She would go off and not pay any attention, and Kathryn Cox, who was from a Navy family--neat as a pin, you know, all ship-shape. That was the Navy and in between were these two ordinary people. It was awfully funny. We climbed Mount Whitney on that trip too. That was a great, great experience.

Lage: Was Marj Farquhar along on that trip?

Parsons: No she wasn't. She hadn't yet been on a High Trip. Her first High Trip was 1929. I was going to go on the '29 trip, but I couldn't go because I had a low grade fever of some sort. Nobody knew what it was, but they said I couldn't go up in the mountains. I had told Marj all about everything, and she couldn't understand why she was to take any extra bandanas. I said to take a pretty bandana for the bandana show. "What would that be for?" Marj thought that was the silliest thing to do.

Parsons: There was a "Baby High Trip" in 1928 when the club went to Canada. Stuart Ward of the Commonwealth Club arranged for a trip, mostly Sierra Club people, for a couple of weeks on a High Trip, and our feet were absolutely walked off our legs! He had a schedule, and we were supposed to keep to that schedule--snow, rain, anything! Like the Post Office Department!

### III ROCK CLIMBERS, THE YODELER, AND THE SIERRA CLUB BOARD

#### Founding the Yodeler

- Lage: Let's talk a little more about the Rock Climbing Section. You mentioned the Yodeler and how it sort of grew out of the Rock Climbing Section.
- Parsons: Well, it grew out of it only because the rock climbers were interested. They knew the Mugelnoos published in southern California by the rock climbers and skiers. Nathan Clark, I think, was on the Mugelnoos, and so probably Lewis [Clark] had heard about it through them. Lewis said it was a good idea to have a newsletter, so some of us got together, and I can remember our talking about it. Then it ended up that the rock climbers really did it [first issue, 1938].
- Lage: Who sort of got them off the ground? Did you work on the Yodeler?
- Parsons: I worked for years on the Yodeler. We would go down wherever it was in the evening, and we would work like dogs to get the thing done by midnight. Barbara Bedayn, who was Barbara Norris, served as editor, I recollect. She lived in San Mateo. She taught down there, and she would rush off about twelve o'clock to get the last train back to San Mateo. There was a group of us who worked and got it out. Dave Brower had a lot to do with it. He was the editor, I think, for a while.
- Lage: What purpose would you say the Yodeler had?
- Parsons: To tell people what was going on, like the Yodeler now. It was to tell how things were going on up at Clair Tappaan Lodge, reminding people of any special outing or something, what people were doing, little incidental things. People would write up trips they had gone on--maybe weekend trips or skiing trips, things like that, and reminders. It went into a certain amount of conservation, but it was mostly activities.



Lage: Did Charlotte Mauk work on that?

Parsons: Indeed she did. Yes, in fact she was practically the editor, and I think after a while she edited it, and then she went off. One time she and Dorothy Varian, who was Dorothy Hill, went off to Alaska, and I did the Yodeler for the time they were gone. But we had a group who would come in. We would work on the whole thing--type out the articles, take the articles we had been sent, and then lay it out, and then it would all be mimeographed.

Lage: Was it sent to chapter members, or to people who subscribed?

Parsons: I think we sent it to chapter members. It was the San Francisco Chapter. It was really the chapter organ.\*

#### Climber-Conservationists

Lage: It is interesting to me that so many of the club's leaders came out of the Rock Climbing Section. They practically furnished all the leadership for the club. Can you think of any reason why this would be?

Parsons: No, except that they were active, I guess, I don't know. Not all of them though. There was Dick Leonard of course, and Raffi is quite active in so many things, Lewis Clark, and many others.

Lage: When you look at the Board of Directors, say in the early fifties, they were almost all climbers, with just one or two exceptions.

Parsons: They were, just about all of them. Well, I think because they really knew the mountains. They knew it better than almost anybody in many ways.

Lage: It seems, like you say, that there wasn't a lot of emphasis on conservation when you were doing the activities, and yet somehow, these activities developed an interest in conservation?

Parsons: Yes, yes. That is what John Muir meant when he wanted people to get out in the mountains and see what it was like out there, so people would then work towards saving it.

---

\*See Appendix B for early Yodeler edition.

Parsons: Charlotte was always very intelligent about things. She would look ahead, and she was very definite about things. She was a very good board member. I never thought of ever bringing anything up at board meetings. I didn't have the imagination to bring anything before the board. Francis Farquhar once handed me a little slip of something, and he said, "Bring this up and make a motion." Well, it was the first time I had seen it, and I was a greenhorn on the board. I don't know why my name was put on. You know, my name was put on and I was never asked if I would be willing to run--never was asked! Ever! And everybody else was always asked--but I never was asked, they just put my name--

Lage: Maybe they knew you would say no, and they wanted you.

Parsons: It could have been, I don't know. I would have of course said no! I never was any good on the board. Anyway, so I brought this motion up. I can't even remember what it was, but it was all right, I was perfectly willing to sponsor it, as it were. Well, Charlotte came in one day and had all these little typewritten things for every member to bring up the subject of the club's purposes. The "render accessible" part of the club's purposes was what Charlotte was taking exception to, because it was beginning to be rendered accessible to too many people. She felt that we should take that part out of our by-laws. She brought it up, and they discussed it, and I think that they did take that out--the "render accessible."

Lage: Was this while you were on the board? .

Parsons: Yes.

Lage: I hadn't realized that Charlotte Mauk was the one that brought that up.

Parsons: Yes, she thought of it, and realized that it was getting to be a threat.

Lage: And this was as far back as the late or middle forties?

Parsons: Yes, while I was still on the board, and I got off soon as the people came back from the war. It must have been 1946.

I guess she had realized that people were beginning to come back and were treading things down a lot.

Wartime Club Leaders: McDuffie, Huber, Colby, Farquhar

Lage: You say you don't remember anything about those years on the board. Do you remember anything about the way meetings were run, or the kind of things they would discuss?

Parsons: I think Mr. McDuffie was president a good bit of the time I was there. Stanley Jones was president one year, I think.

Lage: I think he was Vice-President.

Parsons: Vice-President. But Duncan McDuffie was president I believe during the war times, because it was these older men who really stayed on to take the place of the boys who had gone overseas. What was your question?

Lage: What types of things would they consider at the board meetings, and how were they run?

Parsons: They were run very parliamentarily, very properly. Mr. Huber must have been the treasurer, and Mr. Colby the secretary, as he was for many, many years. They all had the good of the mountains at heart, the good of the wild areas. We would bring up anything that had to be considered. I don't remember anything special about that time.

Lage: These were all pretty well established gentlemen who were on the board?

Parsons: Oh, definitely. You see, they all could afford to be on the board and stay on the board, because they were well known in their particular field too, like Francis Farquhar. I think he probably was the one that got me on the board. He got me on the editorial board and all that, and was a very good friend. I think he sort of nudged me into doing things that I wouldn't have done otherwise!

Lage: Good for him!

Parsons: And then Marj of course became a member of the board later on.

#### Charlotte Mauk Remembered

Lage: When you were on the board, was Charlotte Mauk the only other woman?

Parsons: Yes.

Lage: And she was quite an active board member?

Parsons: She was very active, very good, and then she continued. She was very well known too because she went on all the High Trips, and was on commissary and did the cooking--a lot of that. She was really in charge of the commissary on most of the High Trips, and it was remarkable how she did it because she was very heavy. Did you know her?

Lage: I knew her just when she was on the history committee, before she died.

Parsons: Oh, yes--of course she was, wasn't she?

Lage: But I hadn't realized that she had been heavy as a young person.

Parsons: Yes, she had been heavy for years. The one time she got less heavy she went to Alaska on that trip, and came back looking quite svelte. She had no problems, no worries. According to a psychologist friend of ours who was a Sierra Club member, some people when they worry get thin (me) and other people when they worry get fat. That was Charlotte. It was psychological to a certain extent. We always said it was glands with Charlotte, but she was a remarkable person, very bright--boy, was she bright. She had a clear head, and she was very good.

Lage: Did she tend to get concerned and worry about things?

Parsons: Well, you wouldn't know it. I think it was just inside herself. I don't think it was obvious. She always seemed very placid.

Lage: But she was active and climbed.

Parsons: Oh, yes. She didn't do a great deal of difficult rock climbing, because she wasn't built to do it, but she would hike. The last few years on the High Trips, she would hike along the trail. She would maybe be the last one in, but she would just go slowly along and would get there. And she loved it. She just absolutely adored it. She was never happier than when she was out in the mountains.

Lage: I wish we could have interviewed her. You know she wouldn't let herself be interviewed. She was going to give her own recollections into the microphone, but she never did. And you know she would have been terrific.

Parsons: Oh, it would have been marvelous; she should have done it, but would keep putting things off. She never got around to doing this and that and the other thing.

Lage: We are all like that.

Parsons: After she died, which was very sad--she had leukemia--in her house were all these papers and things that she had been going to work on. I think she kept her photographs, her slides in good order. That is one thing she did keep in good order. I went on a backpacking trip with her once and Mary Sarvis (she was the psychologist I told you about). The three of us went off to Yosemite. We camped over night in the Valley, and Charlotte had to get something done, for the Bulletin. This was a last minute thing, you see, to finish up.

Parsons: Before she went she had to get this done to mail, to go to the Bulletin. That always was delayed too, and Dave Brower was very slow in getting it out on time ever--he was bad that way! But I guess maybe all geniuses are! Charlotte was sitting at the typewriter under the trees at Yosemite typing away. We had wanted to get going before it got too hot to get up into Little Yosemite to camp for the night. Well, we didn't get off until early in the afternoon.

Lage: But did she get her article off?

Parsons: Oh, she got it done, yes, and got it off. But I thought, really, that was typical of Charlotte! She just didn't get these things done. Anyway, so we went off on this trip and we had a marvelous few days up in Little Yosemite and beyond.

Post-war Leaders: Brower, Leonard, Clark, Robinson##

Lage: Was there a dramatic change on the Sierra Club board after the war, with a lot of the young men coming back?

Parsons: The young men came back from the war, Dick Leonard, and Dave Brower, and Bestor Robinson. Dick Leonard and Dave Brower are younger than I am, and Bestor and Lewis Clark are closer to my age. They were all doing something in the war. You have read the articles that were gathered together about the news from abroad. Charlotte edited their letters and told about the different letters from the various members from all around the world.

Lage: I know Dave Brower talks about the mountain troops in his interviews; it is very interesting.

Parsons: It is; oh, it is. Bestor was always inclined towards being a little bit more lenient towards these government agencies and big business. He was a lawyer, and he would see their point of view, and try to get the club not to be quite so adamant about things.

Lage: More of a compromiser?

Parsons: Yes. And of course Leonard and Brower, both were--especially Brower--very definitely agin things like the "Nukes", which aren't we all? Good gracious! [This interview was shortly after the Three Mile Island incident.] This ought to show that these people are--well, it always makes me think of little boys with the chemistry set for Christmas, and they don't know when they are going to blow up the family. They think they know all about it, but they don't. Stop talking that way Harriet now! [laughter]

Lage: Were you on the board when Colby resigned? Or do you know anything about why he resigned as secretary?

Parsons: No, I don't. When did he resign?

Lage: In 1946, about the time that you were leaving.

Parsons: I don't remember anything except he had been on for twenty-five years or more.

Lage: Were you aware of a change in the club, when this young dynamic group came back from the war?

Parsons: We didn't think much about it. We just thought it was time some of the old people got off. They had done an awfully good job, and it was time they had a chance not to! I don't think anybody thought--at least I certainly never thought, to my remembrance--that they were trying to change everything, that things would be different.

#### Membership Policies and Tensions with the Southern California Chapter

Lage: Let me ask you something about the membership policies of the club. I know some of our interviews mention a problem in southern California.

Parsons: There was a time in southern California when they would screen everybody. They wanted to be very sure. Up here we kept saying, "Southern California--why don't they make their own club if they are going to be like that?" They can just go off and be themselves and have their own "snooty" club!

Lage: So you were aware of what was going on?

Parsons: We were very much aware that they were being very narrow-minded about membership. I think they were wanting to be sure they didn't get any reds in, any communists. I don't know whether anything ever came up about color discrimination.

Lage: I think it did later, 1959 or '60.

Parsons: It probably did, but did it come up on the board? I remember somebody asking me, not too many years ago, if there was any feeling about it. She said, "I have a very nice friend who is black, who would make a nice member." I think we have some black members. There has never been any push to get them though, which I think is too bad. We should. I remember on a Yosemite Camp trip in 1958 we saw a group of boys, one of them was black, climbing up near Vogelsang Pass.

- Parsons: They were climbing there, and we thought, they are so lithe, some of these blacks. They are so built that they should be awfully good climbers, because they are so agile. He was going well up on the cliffside there. We wondered if he was a member of the Sierra Club.
- Lage: So you aren't aware of anything coming up in northern California?
- Parsons: No. I don't think there would be any discrimination. I think we have some Japanese.
- Lage: Oh, I think now it is pretty well settled, but I wondered in the late forties or fifties.
- Parsons: Well, my memory has gone blank now. I remember discussing it with people once in a while, and never coming to any decision about doing anything about it.
- Lage: You mean about trying to reform? Or trying to do something with southern--
- Parsons: Wondering about why we didn't have any blacks, but never doing anything about it.
- Lage: So there was no feeling that there should be an active recruitment, but as far as you know, there was no objection?
- Parsons: As far as I know it never came up to be an objection, but it may have been, because the last number of years I haven't been in with all that went on.
- Lage: I don't think it has been an issue for a number of years now, but I was just thinking about the earlier period.
- Parsons: I don't think it came up.
- Lage: But in southern California, you were aware of it.
- Parsons: We were aware of it, but I don't know that it was the color line.
- Lage: Sometimes it was just social acceptance?
- Parsons: Yes, it was just social acceptance. Yes, they wanted to be sure that they were people that they would like.
- Lage: Was there sort of a feeling of conflict between the north and south, do you think?
- Parsons: Yes, I think so. We liked some of the members, in fact lots of the members, but we always had the feeling that they were a little stuffy.

Lage: It is interesting, because a couple of southern Californians, in their interviews, will refer to the northerners as being "snooty" or "cliquish."

Parsons: Or cliquish! [laughs]

Lage: Was that something you were aware of?

Parsons: No, I wasn't aware of that. I know that the southerners sort of kept to themselves to a certain extent, but it seemed to me we knew some of the southerners. I never knew them as well as the northerners, except for Elsie Bell!

Lage: She knew everyone!

Parsons: She knew everybody. But I think that on the Sierra Club High Trips, there were apt to be little cliques. In any big group you find it. Call them cliques and you make it sound snooty, but you just realize that people who liked each other stuck with each other. There would be a group of women who practically always camped together and more or less camped away from the rest of the place. I can't remember who they were--Madi Bacon was one of them--but they were good climbers and good members. They didn't avoid the other people or anything. We just took everybody as they came along I guess more or less, but didn't bother with people that we weren't particularly interested in, as you do in any big group.

Lage: It sounds very natural to me. Apparently some of them took offense.

Parsons: Do you think so? It is normal to do that. I think that we hesitated maybe to--well, you see, I can't tell because I still, even though I am not as shy as I was, I still am not quite a hail-fellow-well-met person, and it takes me longer to perhaps get to know people. Not so long now--I can barge in now without thinking. Not the way I used to be. Now let me think about that a minute. No--I think that it is not so much cliques as just your own group.

Lage: You weren't even aware that they were taking offense?

Parsons: There was one thing that always bothered me a little bit. You weren't supposed to be friendly with the packers. I never could quite understand it, and I never went into it with the older people, but they would say, "That girl now. She is going over and spending the evening at the packer's camp, and she really shouldn't. Somebody should tell her about that." And I think I once said, "Why shouldn't she?" And they said, "Well, it is much better policy not to get involved with the packers!" I never did find out really. I know that one girl went on a trip with my niece, and Betsy told me afterwards that she went over and was much criticized because she became



Parsons: friends with some of the packers. I said, "Why didn't the older people, the older women who were disturbed about it, go and talk to her about it?" But apparently they didn't, and so it made it a little difficult at one time, but that kind of thing went on a bit. I really don't know why the policy was that you weren't supposed to play around with the packers. Maybe it was just as well. There would always be a packers' evening, and they would come over and sing to us, or something like that some night. And they were always very friendly. But they were a different breed. That is where your snootishness comes in!

Lage: One of them was Ike Livermore; he should have fit in pretty well.

Parsons: Well, he was the head of them. He was the boss, the bossman of the packers at that time, but his men, I guess. Yes, he was accepted because he was one of us. [laughter]

IV THE SIERRA CLUB BULLETIN EDITORIAL BOARD, 1939-1964Role of the Editorial Board

- Lage: Let's turn now to your work on the Bulletin, the editorial board. You were on the editorial board (I have my notes here) from 1939 to 1963 or 1964, and associate editor from 1942 to 1955.
- Parsons: Well, I guess that is probably right.
- Lage: Now tell me a little about the editorial board. What was its role; how did it work with the editor?
- Parsons: We had to get out the Annual every year, which was the magazine. It was the magazine format. Then we had the bimonthly, which was just a little two-or four-page newsletter, which came out twice a month with the current things that went on. I had charge of that at some time, maybe Francis was away. He worked on getting articles for the annual, and I did a good bit about the bimonthly, and when people were away, I got some of the big bugs or former presidents to write a little editorial at the beginning.
- Lage: Was this during the war?
- Parsons: During the war, or maybe before or after--when would it have been?
- Lage: You started as associate editor in 1942.
- Parsons: When Dave was back I didn't have to do the bimonthly, I think. John and Vivian Schagen got onto it, and were on the editorial board. Vivian was on first, and then John helped too and became a member of the board. They were very good. They did a lot of work--very intelligent proofreading and setting it up too, a good bit at some time. They also worked on the annual Bulletin, when Fred Grunsky was the editor and August Frugè was chairman.
- Lage: Was that later, after Brower became Executive Director?

Parsons: That was about 1955.

Lage: Didn't you say that at one point you more or less were in charge of the bimonthly? Or you and the committee?

Parsons: Yes, and the committee too. But it wasn't very much to get out.

Lage: Was that mainly conservation news?

Parsons: Yes, it had conservation news in it. It was not like the Yodeler, you see. The Yodeler was current; it was family stuff around the bay. The bimonthly was for everywhere and everybody, and it was conservation news. I remember one time we had good news and bad news opposite each other--what was happening in certain national parks, and what wasn't happening!

Lage: Was there an effort to get people to write their congressmen?

Parsons: Oh, yes. But we couldn't do much about that. I remember once writing something up in the Yodeler, or was it the bimonthly? Harold Bradley was very anxious not to get the road put through Tioga Pass, and I went to the meeting and wrote it up in the bimonthly. I got sat on by Mr. Colby or Mr. McDuffie, who said, "We are tax free; we can't tell people to write their Congressmen." I did, and I was told I shouldn't have done it because we were politicking. We were lobbying, you see, and we couldn't have our tax-free status if we did that.

Lage: So that was a concern?

Parsons: So I made a mistake and put it in print. It was all right for Harold Bradley to stand up and tell us to do it in a meeting, but not to get it down in print.

Lage: I think as time went on they got more and more ways of suggesting that you write your Congressman.

Parsons: And then, you see, then we were no longer tax free.

Two Bulletin Editors: Farquhar and Brower

Lage: How was working with Mr. Farquhar? I am trying to get a comparison between the styles of Mr. Farquhar and Dave Brower as Bulletin editors.

Parsons: It was quite different, of course. Francis was a very good editor. He got out these Sierra Club Bulletins for twenty-five years, and he was a good editor because he had a feeling for what would be an

Parsons: interesting article, and what should be in what and what shouldn't be. He had a good editorial board, and he got them to work. I think Dave was inclined a little bit more to go on his own to a certain extent, and not as easy to work for as Francis, but more exciting!

Lage: I have heard people say he wasn't easy to work for.

Parsons: You never knew what he was going to be doing, and he didn't. He was going to get something done, an article done. He was another of these procrastinators, and he just didn't get them done. And we would go wild. Gus Frugè was almost as bad. He never could get the Bulletin out on time either. I think Francis was the only one who ever got it out on time!

Lage: When Brower took over the Bulletin in 1946--

Parsons: Yes, he took over the Bulletin then. He was associate editor when he came back from the war, and when Francis retired as Bulletin editor, Dave was the editor until after he became executive director.

Lage: Were there any changes in content at that time? Was there any discussion about it?

Parsons: He decided to have a more interesting cover--of course I loved the old dull thing.

Lage: And of course the larger format.

Parsons: We had the bright cover first, and then came the larger format, and I was annoyed at that because it didn't fit on my shelf at all. It still doesn't--it fits like this [sideways]! But he said that everything should be bigger now; every magazine was getting larger.

Lage: Was his idea to appeal to more people at that time?

Parsons: I think he thought more people would like it better. If it was larger you could have pictures, and photographs would come out better, maybe larger, more interesting, more colorful.

Lage: Did the rest of the board go along with him on that?

Parsons: Oh, yes, they went along. They usually went along. [laughter] I don't know whether we were sheep or not, but we got persuaded. He just thought it was a good idea, and I think a majority of the board probably thought that it would be better.

Lage: Was he difficult to work with?

Parsons: No. He was fun to work with. He was always very good and an interesting person, and I have always been terribly fond of David. When the big ruckus came, I couldn't help loving Dave still, although I didn't approve of what he did! But I could see how the directors felt about it, that he had kind of taken the bit in his teeth and had gone ahead without consulting them, and really gone too far.

Lage: Would you have predicted that? You knew him when he was quite young.

Parsons: I didn't know him as young as I thought I did. I thought I knew him when he was seventeen, but he told me later that he was in his twenties when I met him up in Yosemite the first time. No, I wouldn't have known that. I wouldn't have predicted that, except that I think I always had a feeling that he wasn't, well, money wasn't important to him. The goal was the important thing, but how you got to it didn't matter so much. It is all right when it was his own money I guess, but when it's the club's money, that's what threw Ansel [Adams] and a few other people and made them feel the way they did about it, which I can understand.

Lage: Was that a difficult time for you? You knew so many of the club leaders personally.

Parsons: I think it was. I always felt very sad, because the Leonards were such close friends of the Browsers. I guess they are back friends again, and I think Ansel has been willing to speak to Dave again. But I always felt very badly that there was such strong feeling on the two sides. There still is, I think, in a good many ways. I am sorry about it, because there is so much good in all of them, and Dave really had so much to offer. But he has barged ahead with Friends of the Earth, and he certainly has gone places. Still in the red though. They are in the red just like everybody else! Just like the Sierra Club.

Lage: A lot of the ideas that were considered so far out when he brought them up are now acceptable.

Parsons: Yes. Of course, he started the large format books, which were an expensive thing to put out, but they have gone merrily on. I started to get them when they first came out, but when they kept coming so fast, I gave up. I didn't know where to put them, for one thing! They are beautiful books, and Friends of the Earth has published some very fine books too. Dave is a publisher at heart, I think, He wanted to get things into print, because he worked for the UC Press, you see, and he really had publishing in his blood. And writing--he is a good writer.

Lage: Did you sense that as he worked on the Bulletin? That this was really his forte.

Parsons: I wouldn't have said that this was entirely his forte, but he was good at it. He was just good. He knew it, and being on the University of California Press, he knew about it, he knew how to do it, and as I say, he was a good writer. He always wrote well, and interestingly. I think Ken, his son, is following in his footsteps in being a good writer.

The Brower Controversy--Finances or Conflicting Goals?

Lage: Did you feel during the Brower controversy that the key thing was the conflict about finances?

Parsons: Yes.

Lage: Or did you feel that also there were conflicting goals; for instance, you mentioned Bestor Robinson was more of a compromiser. Do you think that type of conflict, between compromisers and more aggressive conservationists, was important?

Parsons: I think it would have been all right if he hadn't been thoughtless about the finances. I think he went overboard. He was too free with going ahead and doing things on his own without consulting the board of directors. Maybe it was coming to a climax, but I think what brought it to the climax was this big, elaborate ad in the newspaper that--what was it about now?

Lage: The Earth National Park?

Parsons: Yes. It was something that should not have been done in the first place, because it was too expensive, and the directors should have been given a chance to say no, but he went ahead and did it. And that was the kind of a thing that they really couldn't take any longer.

Lage: Did you get any sense that, say, Ansel Adams or Leonard objected to some of Dave's conservation ideas or goals?

Parsons: Oh no, they all felt the same way as Dave did about those, but it was the way he did it, the way he went ahead. Yes, they felt just the same way about the goals I think, and just as strongly as Dave did, but they would have been a little more cautious about trying to put it through with the club's money. That is the way I look at it. I don't know whether I am right but that is the way I feel, that it was purely, mostly that.

Balkanization of the Sierra Club, 1970s

Lage: And how do you feel about the club now? And the direction it is taking?

Parsons: [laughing] I wish it weren't so big.

Lage: Do you think something has been lost by the tremendous expansion?

Parsons: I think a lot has been lost because we are bits and pieces doing things. Working in the Sierra Club Library occasionally as I do, seeing all these newsletters that come in from all these new chapters, and new chapters and new groups popping up all the time, it is a very difficult thing to be able to keep the club going on the way it was, as a unit. I don't see how it can be because every one of these chapters has its own problem, its own problems in its own area. To have its Mother Hen kind of trying to watch over the whole thing--it is pretty difficult.

Lage: Somebody referred to it as the "balkanization" of the Sierra Club.

Parsons: That is a good term, yes it is. It is pretty much that way because we don't all speak the same language! Certainly it is hard for me to understand Ted Snyder, the president!

Lage: He has a delightful accent! Do you think that wilderness has as much place in the club as it did at one time?

Parsons: I think it has even more so. I think people are becoming more understanding of the fact that we haven't much left, and it is harder and harder to cope with all these problems that come in and these great business things that come in and want to take over, and there is always a fight. Well, think of the fight we have, just the difficulties of the coastal area. You can't blame the people who have bought land along there who want to build a little house. You can't blame them for feeling badly if they are going to be told they can't build, but, good gracious, we can't have no coast left for the people. That is only one of the few wilderness concerns right now.

Lage: Do you think the club attends as much to wilderness as it should?

Parsons: It seems to me it does. It is working even harder because more people are understanding the situation. A lot of them didn't--they were too far afield, and now the very fact that we have so many--confusing as it is to have so many groups and chapters--they all know more about it all and more and more join, and the more that join, the more likely they are likely to write.

- Lage: Some people have a real sense of loss, which is understandable, because the club has grown.
- Parsons: It is a loss in just the fact that it is no longer a personal club. I am glad that I can go down and be in the library once a week and get a feeling of some of the old club down there. Not at all like it; I don't know any of the people around.
- Lage: But I think the fact that you go keeps you in touch. If everybody did a little volunteering--
- Parsons: It keeps me a little knowing what is going on to a certain extent, and the meetings they have! Ye Gods! Staff meetings, conservation meetings. Last Wednesday I was down and I heard this awful rock music going on somewhere, and I couldn't imagine what it was. I went around behind and found they were having a conservation group meeting in one of the rooms back in the library there.

Personal Meaning of Wilderness##

- Lage: In a personal way, could you comment on what the outdoors has meant to you?
- Parsons: Well, it is my favorite part of the world.
- Lage: Has it really been a significant part of your life?
- Parsons: Oh, definitely! I just feel badly that I can't be out in it more. I think, ye Gods, I am sticking home this weekend--what am I sticking home for?
- Lage: Do you read any of the wilderness philosophers, like Aldo Leopold or Thoreau?
- Parsons: I like to read those. I like to read things like that. I read books, or nature books, mountaineering books and other books.
- Lage: Was that type of reading part of your early childhood at all? You say your father was a romantic.
- Parsons: We were an academic family. We always had lots of books, and we always had some of John Muir's books. Father gave The Mountains of California to my mother at some time or other.
- Lage: So that had some influence on you?
- Parsons: I am sure it must have.



Lage: Was your father's approach to wilderness religious at all?

Parsons: He was a philosopher; he was a philosophical sort of a person and a very religious person, but not an outspokenly religious person. We seldom discussed religion. He never tried to tell me the way I should go and all that, but he just expected me to go the right way! And he was a very tolerant person, but he was not what people would call an evangelist.

Lage: There was no connection between nature and religion?

Parsons: I think he always had the feeling that they had a lot to do with each other, that nature and the mountains and the outdoors were an indication of the Lord, his work, his creation. I know that Father would have felt that way--that it was thanks to the Lord that we have all this beautiful world. I have grown up to feel the same way, that I really am grateful that I was born into this world, and that it is as beautiful as it is.

Lage: As much as we have left.

Parsons: Yes, we still have quite a bit left if we don't ever give up!

## V APPENDIX A

Women Mountaineers, an interview by Lynn Thomas, 1978

Parsons: I haven't been on a backpacking trip for many years. The last Sierra Club trip was 1959. In '54 and '55 I was on the Tetons, and naturally we carried our gear up and bivouacked overnight before we climbed. In '54 we were about 300 feet from the top when it began to sleet and thunder and lightning. I was never more scared in my life. Lightning was hitting the top of the mountain. The leader said we couldn't go to the top, so we worked our way over to one side and did quite a long rappel. We got part way down, then we had to bivouac the night again. Next morning we started on back to camp. Dave Brower was down there as leader. People in camp had seen the lightning strike and were quite frightened about what might have happened to us. The camp was behind a small ridge. Dave watched as one by one we came over that ridge. There should have been seven, but only six came over the ridge. His heart sank. But one of the boys had gone off to take a picture.

The next year we went back--a small group. Went in by horseback to the lower part of the Wind River. There were about six of us. Then we went over and joined the Sierra Club and climbed the Grand Teton, and got up the thing after all. That was very pleasant.

I always said, well, that's my swan song. I was only in my fifties then. It was the last really important mountain that I climbed.

Thomas: What benefits have you derived from being active in the outdoors?

Parsons: My health. I am really lucky. When I see some of my friends--

Thomas: Do you feel your activity in the outdoors has helped you remain healthy?

Parsons: Definitely! I try to keep active, to walk a little every day, even if I only walk a mile. My niece, Betsy, has said to me, "I'm convinced that the reason you and all your friends are so healthy

Parsons: is because you exercised all your life." So she's jogging and running. I think it's perfectly true, because I do try to do a lot of outdoor work.

The last two years I haven't been as physically active as I used to be. Oh, I get my little walk in, but I haven't done a lot of hiking. I simply haven't had time.

Thomas: What's the longest walk you've taken recently?

Parsons: Walking with Marjory Farquhar last summer. We did a little climbing of Echo Peak--a scramble--then we took another walk to a lake. Oh, it must have been five to seven miles. But my legs got tired, I must admit. Echo is where I've had my outdoor exercise. I was glad I could still scramble up Echo Peak and pull myself up rocks. This hike went cross country part of the time.

Thomas: Who were your companions?

Parsons: Annie and Einar Nilsson and Helena Thacher that time, who all are a few years younger than I. But we're all elderlies, really.

Thomas: How old were you when you began going out into the outdoors and doing rock climbing?

Parsons: My family always were interested in the outdoors. In the summer we would go off to Santa Cruz mountains, or up to Fallen Leaf Lake. We always went on hikes. I climbed Pyramid Peak when I was in my teens. I never did any serious rock climbing until I got acquainted with the Sierra Club. My first Sierra Club trip was in '27.

Mr. Ernest Dawson, who later was president of the Sierra Club, was a darling little man who took all us greenhorns up mountains. We didn't climb with ropes, but we climbed all sorts of mountains. He said if you can get up a mountain you can always get off a mountain. He was really very kind to us. It made me want to do more. I had always wanted to. A year before I was in Europe with my aunts and saw some people going off with their ice axes to climb mountains in Switzerland. I just felt, "Oh, if I could only do that!" I really wanted to. So eventually I went up to Seattle. There I joined the Mountaineers and did a great deal of climbing up there. I climbed most of the snow peaks around there. We had a rock climbing course and learned how to use a rope. We would go off quite often to climb a peak, and spend the night before out. We would have to take our gear. That was in the thirties, and I was in my thirties.

I came back here, and then there was the war. We didn't do that much. Before we were in the war I did go on a Sierra Club trip to northern Yosemite. We'd take a night or so off from the main group

Parsons: and carry our packs then. I would always moan and groan because it was so heavy. I really don't carry a lot of stuff very easily, but I love it--even if it's misery I love it!

Thomas: What do you love about it?

Parsons: Just being out and doing it and being able to do it--even if it's hard work. You feel so good when you take the pack off!

I try not to think about how old I am, because what's the point. If I can do everything I want to do, that's the main thing. Once in a while, when you're as old as I am, you get tired sooner, and you say to yourself "to heck with it." But I don't feel any different. I really don't. Maybe I'm more willing to not do something that a few years ago I wouldn't have been happy not doing. But that's one of the good things about it; you don't feel so terribly if you can't do something.

Thomas: How did you start rock climbing?

Parsons: I began rock climbing in my thirties. Women were into rock climbing then. I remember going to Yosemite when I was about fifteen and hiking with firends to Glacier Point, on the Ledge Trail--which is closed now. Coming down that trail was an elderly French lady with a long, full black dress with a stick in her hand. That was 1917! Women were all over the mountains even then.

Thomas: What were people's reaction; did you experience any prejudice?

Parsons: None. The only time anyone was ever surprised was a young couple here who told me they were going off into the mountains, and I offered to loan them my ice axe. She told me she never got over that--my offering them an ice axe. They didn't know I climbed. That was the only surprise. People have always been a little impressed I think, I guess because I don't look like an outdoor person. My shoulders are so small--that's why I can't carry packs ver comfortably. But I love sleeping on the ground, I love carrying a pack when I can stop every now and then, and I sure love walking without a pack. I just love walking. I don't care if I have a destination or not. I prefer walking up in the hills, but if I can't get up in the hills I'll go anywhere.

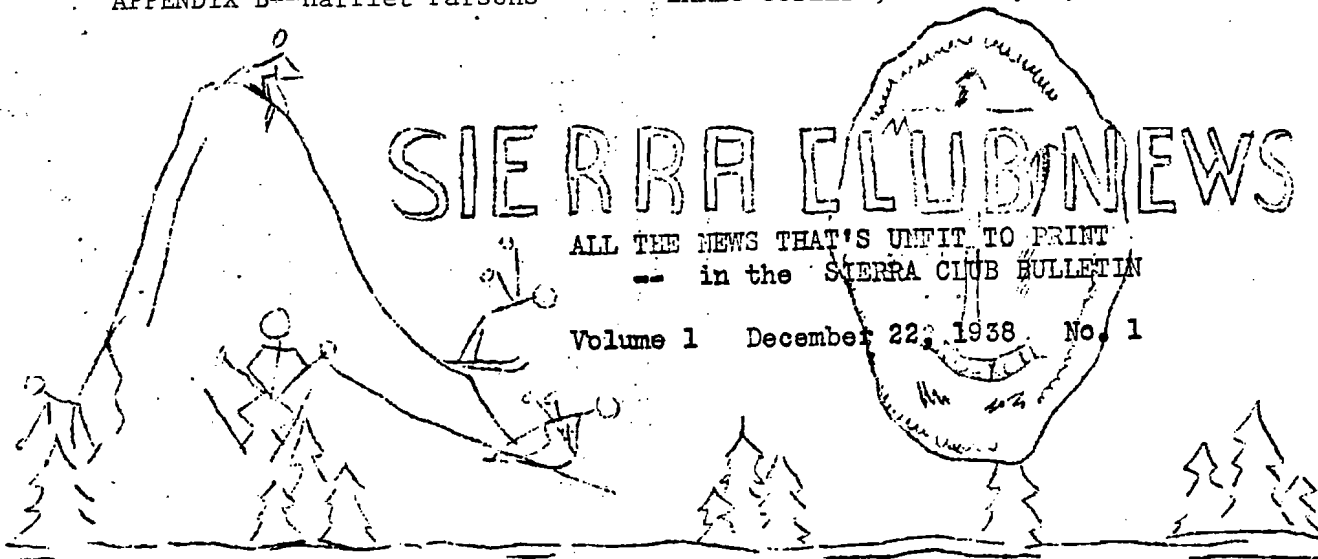
Thomas: Do you see differences between your women friends who are involved in the outdoors and those who are not?

Parsons: Yes. I have the feeling that the non-outdoor types aren't as active as they might be. I think of the women involved in the Canon Kip Community Center, I'm almost the oldest one, but all the others have something the matter with them. They're crocks. I don't

Parsons: think they've ever been very well. But they're not outdoor people. I don't think the people who have not lived with the outdoors the way I have and my special friends have, are as healthy. These people also don't have as much positive energy. I must say, though, that they have a lot of guts. They keep on going. They have an inner drive that makes them do things even when they aren't feeling well.

Thomas: It sounds as if by being with and in the outdoors you make life easier for yourself somehow.

Parsons: I think so. I couldn't live without the outdoors. It's life. It's the only thing in life, really. If I were pent up and couldn't get out I don't know what I'd do. I'd have to have a little window box and work at that!



IS THIS OUR NEW HEADING? NO -- RELAX -- IT'S OUR OLD ONE. OUR VERY FIRST.  
DO YOU REMEMBER? -- VOLUME I, NUMBER 1.

AND NOW, WITH THIS ISSUE, YODELER'S TENTH YEAR BEGINS -- VOLUME X, NUMBER 1. TO ENRICH THIS NOTABLE NUMBER, WE HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE IN LOCATING A FEW OF THE OLD PIONEERS ON THIS PAPER AND HAVE PROCURED SOME REMINISCENCES. HERE THEY ARE:

MEMOIRS: THE OLD GREY EDITOR  
by Dave Brower

The Yodeler hasn't changed much, even though controversies no longer rage about the relative merits of christie and telemark. It still carries on its original Mugelnoos-inspired mission of presenting Club news in mimeographed form to Chapter members--in an informal style that the Bulletin, with its high cost and world-wide circulation, cannot duplicate.

But those who work on the Yodeler have changed; perhaps a few of them have aged appreciably in the course of ten years. The Yodeleditor emeritus, having changed from the pandemonium of putting Yodelers to bed to the pandemonium of putting one- and three-year-olds to bed--as well as the Sierra Club Bulletin--still regards the Yellow Sheet as a most useful publication, and wishes the Yodeler, its crew and its readers many more pleasant years of Yodelers--all as good as Volumes III through IX have been.

(Ex-editor's note: It was much easier to write copy for Volume I--no three-year-old Brower was on hand to ask "Who said you could play with that typewriter?", or to rejoin while being held at arm's length, "But you can't think about anything!")

YODELER'S FIRST DECADE: A GLANCE BACK  
by Barbara Norris Bedayn

It was born just ten years ago, in Raffi Bedayn's fertile brain, and was nurtured on mulled cider and fudge bars, as the Publications Committee of the Sierra Club Rock Climbing Section met before Barbara Norris' fireplace to start action on Raffi's suggestion that the RCS have a newsheet.

Those present were: Raffi, Johnny Dyer, Louise Hewlett, Dick Johnson, Rus Lindsey, Barbara Norris (Bedayn), Harriet Parsons, Hazel Westphal (Schumacher), and Dave Brower. Between bites and gulps, Dave was handed the job of editor, and promptly passed a resolution to print "all the news unfit for publication in the Sierra Club Bulletin."

The first issue was a brave but not beautiful start, with what looked like a grinning skull on the first page turning out to be the Sierra Club seal. A free week end at Clair Tappaan Lodge was promised as a prize for naming the new newsheet. The next issue carried the heading, "Sierra Club Yodeler", the prize name submitted by Charlotte Mauk.

Even in that first issue Art Blake had an article on conservation, with a note from the editor, "We hope to hear more from Art, a long-active and (cont. over)

SIERRA CLUB YODELER

A semi-monthly publication of the San Francisco Bay Chapter. Address all communications to: Yodeleditor, Sierra Club, 1050 Mills Tower, San Francisco 4

Subscription: \$1.00 per year (20 issues)

Yodeler Staff

Vivian Schagen, Editor

Kenneth Adam	Helen Perry
Elsa Bailey	Helen Rudy
Cicely Christy	Bob Russell
Dick Dilley	John P. Schagen
Jean Gilfillan	Margaret Shaub
Harriet Parsons	Pearl Sigrand

Next Deadline:

Monday, January 19, 1948, 6 PM

---

Volume X, Number 1                      January 5, 1948

---

AS WE WERE

The scene opens in the Sierra Club office any "Yodeler night" during the first year:

Tis 7:00 PM, and all through the room the Yodeler comes out with a whish and a boom! The copy is spread on the table-- a sight!--in hopes that it can be assembled that night.....and so on.....

The staff gathers, pencils are found and lost, people come and people go. There is perpetual motion--buzz buzz buzz. Watch these Yodelerstaffers a few minutes, and you will see how they got the Yodeler out in the early days, in one night.

Make-up Department Barby hands page 5 to the stencil cutters, adds an Ed.note to an Ed.note, shifts the make-up of page 2 (after all she only has three hands!) and suggests that it's high time for the "Wake of the Hob Nails" to be in. Yodeleditor Dave, musing over his next quip about the telemark, absentmindedly blue pencils his own masterpiece and has to type it over. Poet Charlotte emerges from the depths of the storage closet with one of her immortal "pomes" to fill in that extra space. Dodo comes down off the ladder in the other closet, where she has fled to write up Loma Prieta Pratin's without being stepped on. Norden News is hurriedly assembled; Bulletin Board is ransacked for important announcements; roving reporters jot down their last minute impressions of the trip they were, or were not, on; "Where is Wake of Hobs?"; Torc and Jack (The Slug) appear with super cartoons for those extra spaces.

Typewriters clack, the floor is deep in

YODELEARS HEAR--

--of the marriage of Anna Greco and Peter Kehrlein, son of Director Oliver Kehrlein.

--that Mr. and Mrs. William H. Toby, parents of Les, Fred, Dan, Max and Arthur, celebrated their golden wedding anniversary on Christmas Day--a very happy occasion.

--with great joy, through the December 13 Up Rope, that our old friend Jam-Crack Joe who mysteriously disappeared some years ago (see S.C.B. October 1944) survived his famous ascent, and has appeared again. Herb Conn tells all about it in a new saga called "The Return of Jam-Crack Joe".

--of the arrival of Jean Melba, daughter of Lillian (Ball) and Clinton Beebe, on New Years Day. Lillian writes; "Hey, isn't this some sort of a record? Jean arrived on her Dad's birthday to match sister Karen's arrival in 1946 on brother Chris' birthday. Four people in one family with but two birthdates but none of them twins!"

--that Harriet Parsons, whose "As We Were" appears on this page, holds the unique position of being the only one of the original staff who has carried through with the Yodeler for all of its nine volumes. And none of the Yodeleditors could have carried through without her!

---

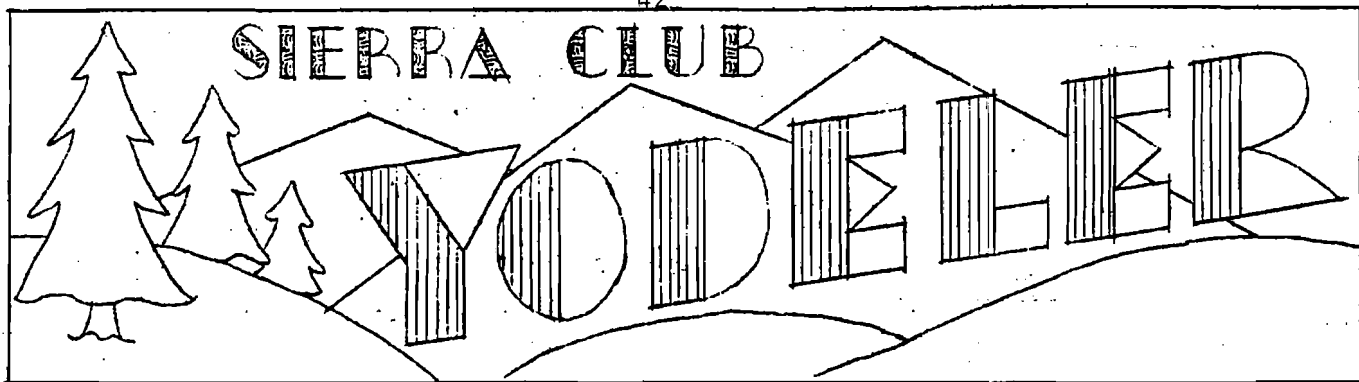
waste paper, page after page is handed to the stencil cutters. "Hob Nails" comes in. Tongues hang out.

Then lo! Raffi re-appears with a jug of cider. Tongues go back in, along with the cider, and start wagging again. A pause. 9 PM, or was it 10? A rush of cold air, and Johnny Dyer, the Goose Gutters, the Four Horsemen, and others, dash in to grab the completed stencils and hurl them into the mimeograph machine. Time tears on. It may be midnight when stencil cutters and editorial staff leave. But the thump of the mimeograph machine goes on. And as the pages are finished this late shift of youthful diehards assembles the sheets, folds, stuffs, and mails the Yodeler at around 2 AM. And some of you got it in the mail on Tuesday!

Do you remember?

Yes, those were the days! The pre-adolescent years when we were all ten years younger! Ah Youth!

--Harriet Parsons



HOW THE YODELER WAS NAMED

Have you ever wondered, in case you are one of our newer readers, how the Yodeler got its name? Barbara Bedáyn's article on our feature page of this issue mentions the name contest which was held after the first issue of the "Sierra Club News." After the winning name, submitted by Charlotte Mauk, was chosen, Dick Leonard wrote: "I vote for Charlotte's YODELER. It is short, expressive of a blatant (!) newsheet, cherished in thought by all groups in the Club, and reasonably symbolic of the high mountain ideals of the group. We could have thrilling contests to choose the Honorary Editor, who would be the best yodeler of the 3500 yodelers in the Club. Even I might be persuaded to enter my unique repertoire, enhanced by my beautiful voice."

That yodeling contest was never held! Editor Brower wrote: "As to Dick's proposed Honorary Editor contest, we carry no dead weight on the staff. (Even the staff must subscribe.) Anyhow, the best yodeler in the Club is already with us. (?)"

And we're all still yodeling.

SKI FIRST AID REFRESHER COURSE

Ski Patrol members wishing to reinstate their expired First Aid cards will have the opportunity to do so this winter.

According to Bestor Robinson, the 8-hour refresher course may have the content determined by the needs of the class, and the instruction may be given by qualified Red Cross instructors or any doctor. It is therefore suggested that those wishing to reinstate their cards do it the easy way by making arrangements with the doctors at Clair Tappaam Lodge to hold seminar classes in the evenings. A record of class hours will be kept, and renewed cards will be issued upon completion of the course.

USE OF MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Have you sometimes wondered what to do with your membership card? Here's a tip. If you go to Tappaan Lodge take your card with you and be prepared to show it. With the heavy demand for reservations (despite some damp weather) the Clair Tappaan Lodge Committee issues the following caution about membership privileges:

The use of Club membership cards for the purpose of obtaining reservations for non-members masquerading as members is unfair to other Club members. Any persons involved in such abuse of membership privileges will be subject to suspension of lodge privileges. --L.F. Clark

WOW

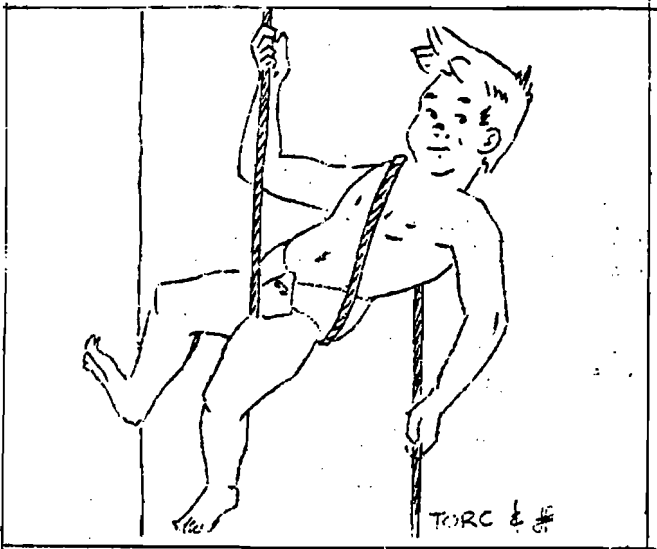
W	Oscar Cook will show his fine	W	
W	pictures and tell of the 1947	W	
W	summer trip to the spectacular	W	
W		W	
W	MOUNT WADDINGTON COUNTRY	W	
W	in	W	
W	British Columbia	W	
W	TUESDAY, JANUARY 20	8 PM	W
W	Frederick Burk Auditorium	W	
W	San Francisco State College	W	
W	Hermann and Market Sts., San Francisco	W	

WOW

AH--MECHANIZED CLIMBING!

Club Secretary Dick Leonard recently lectured on Safety in Mountaineering to the Society of Safety Engineers of the California Industrial Accident Commission. The interested and inquisitive engineers learned something about safeguarding men who fall from bridges, towers, etc. And Dick learned about the new piton gun, which fires pitons directly into solid concrete, granite, or what have you. The gadget weighs only four pounds. Will this speed the next ascent of the Lost Arrow?





informed conservationist." It is good to know that Editor Brower's hopes have been realized.

Louise (Hildebrand) Klein was reporting on ski fashions, stating firmly, "Ski boots are not 'cute'," to the edification of those learning the exciting new sport. A week end at Norden cost about \$2, with Clair Tappaan Lodge sprouting a new ski-barium, men's dormitory, mattresses (oh, luxury!), and a ski-tow. Zeke and Snuffy feuded and tested corn squeezins during 1939, as they made caustic comment on Club activities. Editor Brower carried on his anti-telemark campaign, while Einar Nilsson, Milt Hildebrand, and Norman Clyde jumped joyfully into the argument. Bill Horsfall was inventing climbing gadgets and Bestor Robinson designed a one-man tent. Jack Riegelhuth was illustrating the Yellow Sheet with his cartoons of "Thank God" handholds or Charlotte's feather-light biscuits flying out of Peter Grubb Hut's oven chanting, "Ah'm wait'n' fo' ma honey!"

Barbara Norris took over from Dave as editor and during that era the pun was stronger than the (s)word, as the spelling was occasionally unusual. World War II was beginning to reduce the Yodeler staff. The September 8, 1942 issue carried two pages of names of Sierra Club members already in the armed forces: Al Gerould, Torc Bedayan, Lewis Clark, Pat Goldsworthy, Bessie Lawrence, Les Toby, Randy May, Robin Hansen, Fred Kelley, and others well known to Yodeler pages.

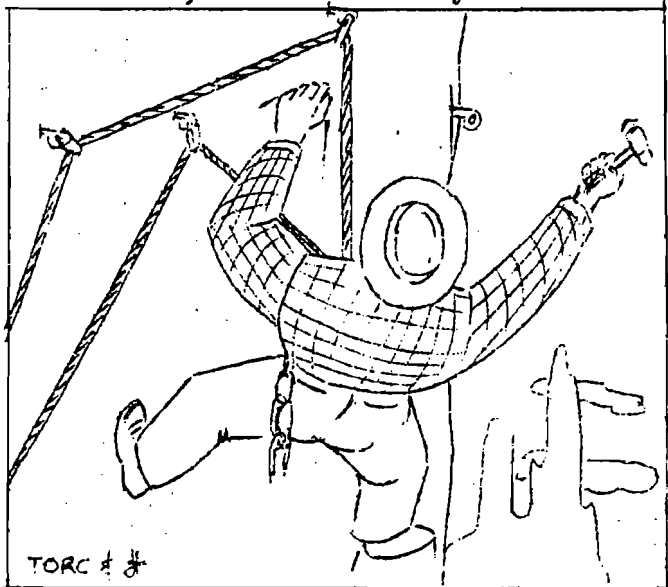
Charlotte Mauk assumed the editorship next "while Barbara gasped for air." Her first issue carried a full page plea for keeping the war-traveling members informed of Club activities through the Yodeler. Under Charlotte's tireless and skillful handling the Yodeler continued

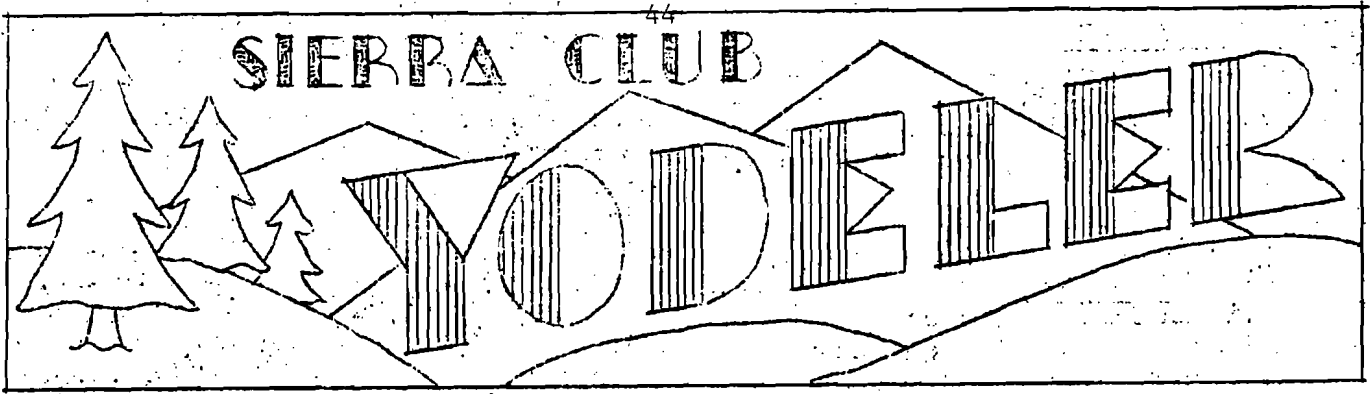
to print the Club news in spite of diminishing help, as more members enlisted in the services.

During the next three years the Yodeler acted as a clearing house for letters coming in from S.C. members all over the world. Bessie Lawrence wrote from Africa of violets and champagne; Ike Livermore of donkeys from the "Atlantic Fleet". Harold Dondero was finding the Alaskan winds enough to make ski lifts unnecessary. Paul Schagen balanced tea and scones while discussing Bach, in England. Dick Leonard was living in a basha in India. Raffi, Dave, and Milt wrote of winter in the Italian Alps.

By 1946 the yellow pages had lost their foreign flavor and were reporting such normal activities as Torc, Robin, and Fritz back at climbing in Yosemite, Lewis visiting Nate in Los Angeles, and Raffi getting mountain jackets for Club members. In June of 1946, Charlotte relinquished her responsibilities on the Yodeler staff, and by January 1947 Vivian Schagen had been argued into the editorship. There is little need to point out that 1947 was a well-reported year, for the memory of it is fresh in our minds. In this year came the San Geronio and Olympic National Park campaigns to protect fast disappearing wilderness areas, the wedding of Dorothy Hill and Russ Varian, the "Fall of the Arrow", Marjory and Cy's wedding, and "the most successful annual chapter meeting in members' recollections" at West Point Inn--all typical news, eagerly read by the Yodeler's more than 700 subscribers.

What strides this ten-year-old brain-child of Raffi's has taken, and what a wealth of activity it has reported. We look for even greater development in its next decade, the adolescent years!





Vol. X

January 19, 1948

Number 2

### CONSERVATION COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

Although somewhat depleted by the too well known unknown virus, the Conservation Committee nevertheless managed to put in a good evening's work at its first meeting in 1948. Here's what went on:

Half a dozen or more Butano Associates came with Frances Dieterich, the chairman, to report on plans for saving the Butano Redwoods. Bert Werder, fire warden of San Mateo County, and an ardent fighter for Butano, expatiated enthusiastically on how he would like to go south and tell the people of Los Angeles what a marvelous forest it is, and how those trees are just as important to Los Angeles as to San Mateo County. "Look out Bert," said Art Blake, "You'll have Los Angeles moving its city limits up to include the Butano!" "I don't care," answered Bert. "Let 'em do it if it'll save the Butano Forest—they can move in, lock, stock, and barrel, if by doing so they keep the ax from those trees!"

\* \* \*

And speaking of Butano—this is a long way ahead—but Hermann Horn called our attention to the joint trip of Loma Prieta and Bay Chapters to the Butano, the third Sunday in May. And May, Bert Werder tells us, is the blooming month for the rhododendrons in those redwoods. A good time for those who don't know the region to find out why so many people are so excited about saving it.

\* \* \*

San Jacinto popped up again. A news story has it that the tramway is finally to be built up the mountain. Material, especially steel, being so hard to get, the chances are it can't be done right away.

\* \* \*

Jackson Hole—the bills to abolish the Monument have not yet passed. They have been blocked each time so far and are now waiting for vote on the debate calendar.

The committee heard from Ray Stone of the California State Horsemen's Association, of the progress which has been made on the California Riding and Hiking Trails. This association and others hope for a 3,000-mile continuous master-loop trail, which will traverse the length and breadth of California:

\* \* \*

Many letters have been received, asking what the club is doing on the acquisition of the South Calaveras Grove and adjacent lands, for a State Park. At the next meeting there will be a report on the current status of this.

\* \* \*

Cicely Christy is working on the committee's card index of organizations. She plans to work in the club office every fourth Monday in the month, and would welcome assistance in typing cards, and helping in other ways. Better check with her before going down there.

\* \* \*

Reports on Olympic National Park are that there is nothing immediate, but we stand by our original position—that there should be no suggestion of boundary change.

\* \* \*

It has been said that every member of the Sierra Club is a potential member of the Conservation Committee. You can help by keeping on the alert; if you hear of any disturbing threat, however slight it may seem, notify Art Blake, the chairman. Any relevant news item you read in the paper which the committee might have overlooked, send along. The more the committee knows of what is going on, the more useful it can be.

MORE MAIL

Yodeleditor:

Re the Handbook--we were asked to offer suggestions (yes I know the Editorial Board doesn't promise to follow them all--and I know the Editor won't follow this one!) and I should like to take exception to two things on page 64. First, the words of the original Sierra Club Song as written by A. H. Allen in 1915 are not given in the handbook correctly, therefore it should not be so stated. The correct words can be found in the Sierra Club Song Book for 1916. Someone has changed "Sierra Club hikers" to "Sierra Campers" which sounds too terribly sedentary for a High Trip song.

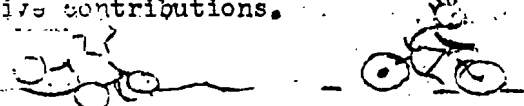
Where does the Editor get his authority for the statement "As far as can be determined, it was intended that they (the words) be sung to the melody of the Whiffenpoof Song?" and "is now accurately and popularly known again..." Can anyone definitely prove that it was at any time sung to that particular Yale version of the melody? The 1916 Sierra Club Song Book states "To be sung to the tune of Kipling's 'Gentleman Rankers'". I am sure that there are many who feel as I do, that the melody as interpreted by the Yale Glee Club is not the version which fits a hiking song. For one thing--do we want to be continually reminded (for what else comes to our mind at that mournful refrain?) of poor little lambs who have lost their way? Sierra Club members? Oh, no!!

Does anyone else feel the way I do? If not, I'll say no more--but I don't think I'm the only one. I should like to remain anonymous, but as that is impossible--my feelings on this subject are too well known--I shall sign myself as I have before,

Yours anti-whiffenpoofly,  
Aunt Whiffenpoof Parsons

DAISY, DAISY!

What gives on the bicycles?? We read about all the trips planned but nary a word about the results. Let us in on the news--the YODELER is always glad to receive contributions.



\*\*\*\*\*  
\* ADD-LIBBING \*

Renewed interest in Library Committee activities is beginning to pay dividends.

Good turnouts at recent Tuesday evening meetings have made it possible for the Committee to undertake the ambitious job of classifying and shelving all pamphlet material by subject matter. Included in the crew who have helped with this and other recent Committee meeting work are:

Diana Bell, Evelyn Gombert, Bessie Lawrence, Virginia Ward, Sam French, Alice Higgins, Frances Blake, Lloyd Demrick, Al Glenn, Blanche Clear, Helen Roets, Louise Tillmanshofer, Herman Ast, Rosalie Wolf, Barbara Weiler, Mary Rixford, Helen Waterman, Rita Wieland, Bill Sattler, Mae Moran, and Fred Laurence.

TUESDAY TABLE TALK

At the first full-fledged Tuesday dinner of the New Year, Ted Grubb showed his Kodachromes of the John Muir trail to an enthusiastic audience.

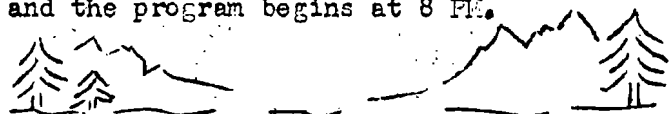
Also there was considerable discussion about plans for the future. A new committee was appointed; each member of it will serve as chairman and be responsible for one month's programs. We can be assured of an interesting evening for the first dinner under the new committee (Tuesday, January 27) as Portia Bradley will be arranging the program.

Other committee members are: Alice Abeel, Mary Herman, Amy Deeter, Madeline Spain, Hilary Crawford, Mabel and Cecil Earle, and Corwin and Sydney Hansen. We'll be seeing you Tuesdays!

PICTURES OF THE OLYMPICS

On Thursday, January 29, see "The Web of the Living Wilderness" at the Westlake Auditorium, 2629 Harrison Street, Oakland. This is a color film by Lois and Herb Crisler, depicting their life deep in the interior of the Olympics. It shows the rugged wilderness beyond the trails, and how the Crislers lived through the seasons in a tiny cabin on Hurricane Mountain.

The film is presented under the auspices of the Oakland Forum. Admission is 60¢, and the program begins at 8 PM.



## TAPE GUIDE -- Harriet Parsons

Date of Interview: 2 April 1979

tape 1, side A

1

tape 1, side B

12

insert from tape 2, side A

14

resume tape 1, side B

15

tape 2, side A

23

tape 2, side B

34

## INDEX -- Harriet Parsons

Adams, Ansel, 31

Baja California, personal experiences, 4-5  
 Bauer, Wolf, 10  
 Brower, David R., 18, 23, 28-32, 36

Clyde, Norman, 14-15  
 Colby, Henry, 15-16  
 Colby, William E., 14, 15-16, 24

Dawson, Ernest, 3-6, 37

Earnshaw, Elsie Bell, 15  
 environmental protection:  
   issues, 33  
   personal motivations for, 19  
 Episcopal Church, Diocese of California, 7-8

Farquhar, Francis, 21, 29-30  
 Farquhar, Marjory, 11, 12, 37  
 Frugè, August, 30

LeConte, Helen, 11  
 Livermore, Norman (Ike), 27

Mauk, Charlotte, 19, 20, 21-23  
 mountaineering, 9-11, 36-38  
   women in, 11-12, 38-39  
 Mountaineers (club), 9-10  
 Muir, John, 1-2

nature, attitudes toward, 1-2, 34-35

Parsons, Edward L. (Episcopal bishop), 1-2, 6-8, 35

Robinson, Bestor, 23

Schagen, John and Vivian, 28

Sierra Club:

Board of Directors, 19-21

chapters, Southern California (Angeles), 24-26

San Francisco. See Yodeler

internal affairs, 31-34

membership, composition of, 5-6, 24-27

outings program, 1-3, 12-17

tax status, 29

women in, 12

Sierra Club Bulletin, 28-32

Whitehead, Jessie M., 13-14

women. See mountaineering, women in

Yodeler, 18-19, 29

Ann Lage

- 1963: B.A., history, honors graduate, University of California, Berkeley
- 1965: M.A., history, University of California, Berkeley
- 1966: Post-graduate studies, American history; Junior College Teaching Credential, history, University of California, Berkeley
- 1970-1974: Interviewer/member, Sierra Club History Committee
- 1974-Present: Coordinator/Editor, Sierra Club Oral History Project  
Coordinator, Sierra Club Archives Development Project  
Liaison, Sierra Club Archives, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley  
Research Consultant, conservation history, Sierra Club
- 1978-Present: Co-Chairman, Sierra Club History Committee
- 1976-Present: Interviewer/Editor, conservation affairs, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley

