

**STEWARDS OF TOMORROW:
THE STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION, YOUTH SERVICE,
AND POSTWAR AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTALISM, 1953-1975**

by

Megan Anne Jones

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

Fall 2011

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
ABSTRACT	x

Chapter

1	YOUTH CONSERVATION SERVICE IN THE NATIONAL PARKS AND EXPANDING THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTALISM	1
2	"A PRICELESS HERITAGE BEGINNING TO GO TO HELL": POSTWAR NATIONAL PARKS AND THE STUDENT CONSERVATION PROGRAM SOLUTION	14
	Let's Close the National Parks	17
	Old and New Uses for Youth	30
	Planning the Trial Project, 1954-1957	41
	First Summer in Olympic and Grand Teton National Park, 1957	59
3	"THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND": COMMON GROUND BETWEEN THE GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA AND THE SCA	71
	Garden Club Voluntarism and Youth Service	75
	Connective Roots	80
	Growth Sprouts	89
	Women Scientists	93
	Seeds of Change	101
	Bearing Fruit	117
4	THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATION LEADERS: POSTWAR CONSERVATION EDUCATION AND "QUALITY" SCA STUDENTS	121
	Defining "Quality" Students	124
	Conservation Education and Cultural Anxieties	129
	Divergent Visions	142

Laurance Rockefeller and Outdoor Recreation	147
Select Students for the National Park Service.....	154
5 NATIONAL SERVICE FOR THE "MOTORCYCLE CROWD" AND THE "CONSERVATION CROWD": THE PURPOSES AND PARTICIPANTS OF THE SCA AND YCC	166
Voluntary Service in the SCA	172
National Service	178
Comparisons	182
Problematic Adolescents and the YCC	186
The SCA as Blueprint.....	195
The Motorcycle Crowd and the Conservation Crowd.....	204
6 FROM "IT'S A DUDE RANCH FOR KIDS" TO "IT MADE ME WANT TO SAVE THE WORLD!": SCA STUDENTS INTERPRET THEIR SUMMER EXPERIENCE.....	215
The Significance of Service.....	218
Education and the Environment	229
Work Experience and Future Careers.....	242
Epilogue.....	249
Bibliography	262
Appendix	
A PERMISSION LETTER.....	284
B RELEASE FORM.....	285

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	National Park Service Visitations and Appropriations, 1940-1957	27
Table 2.2	SCA Program Participation Numbers	56
Table 2.3	Number of Women and Men SCA Participants, 1957-1966	57
Table 2.4	Student Participation in 1957 SCP Programs.....	61
Table 3.1	1957-1963 SCA College Women Participant Graduate Degrees by Field	109
Table 4.1	Approximate SCA Expenditures, 1957-1970.....	149
Table 4.2	Rockefeller Philanthropy Donations to SCA, Approximate % of SCA Expenditures	149

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Tourists at Great Smoky Mountain National Park, 1966	25
Figure 3.1	“In the Field with the S.C.P”	99
Figure 3.2	“Miss Johnny Appleseed”	99

ABSTRACT

The early history of the Student Conservation Association (SCA), a youth conservation work-service program founded in 1957, provides a fruitful new perspective on postwar American environmentalism. Even as new environmental concerns and constituencies arose in the 1960s and 1970s, an older concern with conserving natural resources gained new currency with the SCA's arrival. Using newly available SCA archival materials, government documents and reports, contemporary newspaper accounts, oral histories, and internal surveys, this dissertation argues that the search for "stewards of tomorrow" marshaled the power of traditionally privileged groups to protect the nation's public lands, a mission which simultaneously limited and expanded opportunities for youth. The SCA's early history demonstrates that this small organization embodied the complexity of many contemporary social dynamics and intellectual trends. Successive chapters analyze the SCA's emergence in the mid-1950s, its administrative and financial history, recruitment of volunteers and volunteers' experiences in national parks, contrasting philosophies of service formulated by the SCA and the national Youth Conservation Corps, and the impact of conservation work on youthful volunteers.

Indelibly tied to the life of its founder, the organization carried on the traditions of women's voluntary service and ideas about the restorative power of nature while devising original programming that enabled young volunteers, especially young women, to acquire important occupational and educational experiences. In the 1950s and 1960s, the SCA's directors and supporters challenged generally accepted

understandings of women's work, pushing for greater gender equity by obtaining opportunities for talented, ambitious young women interested in conservation and natural science. Working with the Garden Club of America, the SCA created a program that combined conservation education, experiential learning, and occupational exploration.

The role of clubwomen, students, and philanthropists in the rise of modern environmentalism has often been overlooked, and the actions of these individuals complicate the historical narrative by demonstrating that tradition and innovation often went hand in hand. Many 1950s conservationists wished to preserve natural resources, and sought to enlist volunteers who would not only help relieve the burdens placed on the nation's resources, but who would also replace them as the next generation of conservation leaders. This dissertation finds that the SCA, an organization rooted in the traditions of an elite women's club and the assumptions of the privileged classes that supported it, subscribed to an interpretation of "service" that valued unpaid volunteer labor over paid conservation work. This interpretation, which assumed that any monetary value placed on work automatically corrupted such service, stemmed from the voluntary tradition on which the SCA was built. Voluntary service served as a way for the SCA to distinguish itself from other similar programs, such as the Youth Conservation Corps, but it also highlighted the inherently exclusive ideas about who could participate and what constituted service to the nation. Despite such an emphasis on the importance of volunteer work, SCA participants themselves did not find that characteristic particularly important for their overall experience, focusing instead on their heightened awareness about the environment and conservation issues.

Chapter 1

YOUTH CONSERVATION SERVICE IN THE NATIONAL PARKS AND EXPANDING THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTALISM

As I began research for this dissertation, *National Geographic* published an issue that dealt with contemporary threats to park lands, national and global. Essays by John G. Mitchell and David Quammen bore the distressing titles “An Endangered Idea” and “Threatened Sanctuaries.” The cover photograph showed Utah’s Glen Canyon National Recreation Area bathed in hazy sunlight...with three smoke-spewing towers from a local coal-burning power plant in the background, marring the scene. Bold white letters declared these are “Places We Must Save.”¹ The language bore a remarkable resemblance to the words of an article in another magazine, written over fifty years earlier. In 1953, historian and essayist Bernard DeVoto wrote in *Harper’s Magazine* about the threat to the nation’s parks posed by greedy business interests and hapless tourists. “Let’s Close the National Parks,” he recommended, in order to instigate change. DeVoto’s essay shocked Elizabeth Cushman, a twenty year-old Vassar College student, inspiring her to write a senior thesis proposing a solution. A volunteer youth conservation organization, the Student Conservation Association (SCA), emerged from that thesis, and today the organization annually places four thousand interns and volunteers in the nation’s public lands.² As one former SCA

¹ See *National Geographic* 210.4 (October 2006).

² www.thesca.org.

volunteer wrote to Cushman (now Cushman Titus Putnam) in 1981, applauding her work and its “contribution to society,” her own master’s thesis joined many others on the shelf, collecting dust, while Cushman’s became a fully-realized vision.³ The story of how that thesis became a successful program is not as simple as it might appear, however, and an exploration of the SCA’s early history provides opportunities to examine important ideas, people, and events that shaped the tenor of postwar conservation and the larger environmental movement.

The SCA serves as a useful microcosm because its early history highlights aspects of American environmentalism as that complex movement evolved in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s.⁴ In this dissertation, I focus on the SCA as it first began and grew, in order to parse how and why it moved from idea to reality. In doing

³ Nancy (Winkler) Bartlett to Liz Titus, August 10, 1981, FF 22, Box 1, Student Conservation Association Records, CONS242, Conservation Collection, The Denver Public Library [Hereafter SCA DPL].

⁴ Samuel P. Hays and Roderick Nash argued that postwar environmentalism dramatically differed from the earlier efforts of conservationists, both in constituency and agenda. See Samuel P. Hays, with Barbara D. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness & The American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967, 2001). More recently, scholars such as Robert Gottlieb, Adam Rome, Thomas R. Wellock, and Jack E. Davis have complicated that argument and instead see continuity in the development of environmentalism over the twentieth century. See, for example, Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, rev. ed. (1993; Washington: Island Press, 2005); Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Jack E. Davis, “‘Conservation is now a Dead Word’: Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the Transformation of American Environmentalism,” *Environmental History* 8.1 (2003): 53-76; and Thomas R. Wellock, *Preserving the Nation: The Conservation and Environmental Movements, 1870-2000* (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2007). Wellock’s book synthesizes recent scholarship and is a useful reference.

so, I also probe the character of early postwar environmentalism. The Student Conservation Association developed and expanded at the same time as modern environmentalism did; as an organization, it provides a small enough focal point to permit a fruitful discussion of more traditional aspects of the postwar reform movement. Many narratives of environmentalism look at the actions of left-leaning organizations and radical activists, but this dissertation highlights the activity of those occupying the center-right of the political spectrum.⁵ Most histories contain the basic story of Rachel Carson and DDT concerns, highway beautification, wilderness preservation, Earth Day, and federal laws regulating pollution. This dissertation seeks to expand the familiar narrative to include the activities of philanthropists, club women, and students, and their opinions about important conservation issues including recreation, outdoor education, and national park stewardship.⁶ Rather than focusing on the same cast of characters – scientists, writers, government officials, affluent suburbanites – profiled in histories that trace the evolution of postwar environmentalism, I examine the ideas and actions of individuals whose roles have been either overlooked or seen as peripheral. Doing so further illuminates the political and social complexity of the modern environmental movement.

⁵ See, for example, Michael Egan, *Barry Commoner and the Science of Survival: The Remaking of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007) and Andrew G. Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007).

⁶ Adam Rome discusses the overlooked role of liberal intellectuals, middle-class women grassroots activists, and counterculture radicals in the history of 1960s environmentalism. Rome argues, in part, that exploring the roles of these groups breaks the typical dichotomy of interpreting the sixties as split between the New Left and New Right. Adam Rome, “Give Earth a Chance”: The Environmental Movement and the Sixties,” *The Journal of American History* 90.2 (September 2003): 525-554.

Many conservationists active during the decades after World War II approached problems in society, education, and the environment from a conservative perspective, in the sense that they had great interest in preserving the social order and replicating it for the future.⁷ Assessing the ideas and actions of these individuals reveals a few things about traditional conservation groups and their relationship to an expanding environmentalism. The conservationists whose careers I explore here stressed protecting natural resources and providing voluntary labor as a way to relieve the burdens created by an enormous postwar enthusiasm for outdoor recreation. These individuals promoted conservation education and outdoor experience not only as a way to achieve these goals, but also as a remedy for environmental apathy and for social ills that remained perennial concerns. The SCA began as a conservation-oriented organization in the 1950s, but by the 1960s a new focus on “the environment” forced the volunteer program and other conservation groups to adapt while still maintaining traditional conservationist concerns. The time period I consider covers this transitional period, tracing the efforts of old-line conservationists to protect the nation’s natural resources while also seeking to carry on the conservation tradition through support for the SCA.

The mission and history of the Student Conservation Association built on established understandings of nature, but also introduced new ideas and practices into

⁷ Scholars have devoted attention to the rise of conservatism and the New Right in recent years, and environmental historians have followed this trend. See, for example, J. Brooks Flippen, *Conservative Conservationist: Russell E. Train and the Emergence of American Environmentalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); Thomas G. Smith, *Green Republican: John Saylor and the Preservation of America’s Wilderness* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006); reviewed in Robert D. Lifset, “In Search of Republican Environmentalists,” *Reviews in American History* 36.1 (March 2008): 118-126.

the conservation movement. The SCA drew from the long-standing concept of nature study and a belief in the restorative power of nature. Its arrival on the conservation scene in the 1950s, however, changed that model by offering educational and experiential opportunities not previously available, especially to women. The SCA and its backers in philanthropic circles sought to identify potential leaders for the conservation movement, “stewards of tomorrow” who possessed a specific set of characteristics. It did not attempt to address concerns about problematic youth or propose anything that might have changed the social and cultural status quo. In this sense, the SCA supported the establishment in its implied effort to keep power in the hands of the same class of people – those who were white, educated, and privileged. The SCA and fellow proponents of outdoor education, however, promoted a method of instruction that invoked Progressive Era education, drawing inspiration from the work of such visionary educators and nature study advocates as John Dewey, Louis Aggasiz, and Anna Botsford Comstock.⁸ The student volunteer program did not have a formal educational philosophy or system, instead encouraging students to “learn by doing” and form skills through experience in the field. The program also combined a volunteer service program with work in the national parks, an opportunity that had virtually disappeared with the closing down of the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1942, and one that had never existed for women. The SCA especially helped young

⁸ For nature study and progressive education, see Kevin C. Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement: The Forgotten Popularizer of America's Conservation Ethic* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009); Tyree Goodwin Minton, “The History of the Nature-Study Movement and its Role in the Development of Environmental Education” (EdD, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1980); Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, *Teaching Children Science: Hands-On Nature Study in North America, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

women who wished to enter careers in the sciences or in natural resource conservation by providing a select few the chance to gain field experience. While the two founders did not identify as feminists, they did oppose traditions that restricted the careers of talented women and sought to provide opportunities that pressed against traditional understandings of women's work. In so doing, they enabled a select group of college women volunteers to pursue their professional ambitions. Although the SCA drew on enduring concepts about the restorative power of nature and outdoor education, the program introduced new ideas into the broader culture of conservation in the 1950s.⁹

The early history of the SCA serves as a way to expand the narrative of postwar American social history, in part by focusing on the work of conservationists within the larger, evolving environmental movement. This history also adds to the ongoing reexamination of postwar gender roles for white middle and upper class women. The SCA's early history provides a way to combine environmental history with women's and gender history, especially insofar as the volunteer group embodied the methods of organization and the tradition of voluntary service exemplified by women's clubs. Only a few works in either field have explored the gendered ways in which humans observe and interact with the environment.¹⁰ More numerous are works

⁹ Lynn Weiner's work on La Leche League has been very helpful in thinking about the issue of maintaining the same approach within changing contexts: Lynn Y. Weiner, "Reconstructing Motherhood: The La Leche League in Postwar America," *Journal of American History* 80.4 (March 1994): 1357-1381.

¹⁰ A short list of those who have combined both fields includes: Vera Norwood, *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Carolyn Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (New York: Routledge, 1995), Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980); Virginia Scharff, ed. *Seeing Nature Through Gender* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Barbara T. Gates and Ann B. Shteir, eds., *Natural Eloquence: Women*

that employ an ecofeminist, even essentialist, approach, or an approach that looks at women's "contributions" to environmental activism. This dissertation uses none of those analytical avenues. Instead, I prefer the theoretical formulation proposed by Carolyn Merchant. In response to Donald Worster's theory that environmental history should be built on three levels of understanding, Merchant argued that he left out an important fourth level.¹¹ To Worster's three legs of the environmental stool - natural history, modes of production, and human ideas - Merchant added reproduction, both biological and social. Not one of Worster's categories, she noted, dealt with gender analysis. Merchant's framework of social reproduction presses historians to analyze how both men and women sought to influence and control the transmittal of cultural values to the next generation, and to scrutinize the balance of power between men and women.¹² That framework works well with the history of the SCA, which drew inspiration from the long history of women's voluntary service.

Founded by a young woman and supported in its formative years by the venerable Garden Club of America, the program in its early history illustrates the role of women's clubs in providing educational opportunities for young women in the postwar era. As chapter two demonstrates, the SCA played an important role in

Reinscribe Science (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Sherilyn MacGregor, *Beyond Mothering Earth: Ecological Citizenship and the Politics of Care* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006);

¹¹ J.R. McNeill, "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History," *History and Theory* 42.4 (December 2003), 37; Donald Worster, "Doing Environmental History," in Donald Worster, ed. *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

¹² Carolyn Merchant, "Gender and Environmental History," *Journal of American History* 76.4 (March 1990), 1117-1121.

subverting long-held National Park Service officials' notions about women employees and provided college and graduate women the chance to do the work of ranger-naturalists and scientists. Many of these results were unintended consequences. The SCA was not a women's club, though it did draw from that tradition in using voluntarism as a means of action, a method rooted in white upper-class women's culture. As a number of historians have detailed, voluntary women's clubs declined rapidly in membership after 1960, but that does not mean core methods and techniques used by such groups also dissolved.¹³ The tradition of service and female volunteerism has a long history that influenced not only the nature of the SCA and its understood mission, but also its assumptions about privilege, class status, and work.

Elizabeth Cushman both drew upon and altered an older tradition of conservation, one in which established women's clubs were closely involved, and the early history of the SCA provides an opportunity to explore the influence of clubwomen, traditional conservationists, and idealistic young people on postwar environmentalism. Cushman's privileged background indelibly shaped the formation and growth of the SCA, and, in part, she was able to transform her idea from a college thesis into reality because she had the requisite networks necessary to contact the National Park Service, the Garden Club of America, and other key supporters. Cushman played a major role in operating the organization until personal circumstances led her to pass the reins in 1970 to a long-time employee and supervisor of the high school SCA program. Her career with the SCA, which continues to this

¹³ Anne Meis Knupfer and Christine A. Woyshner, eds., *The Educational Work of Women's Organizations, 1890-1960* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

day, marks the organization as unique in that women played such an important role. The great majority of environmental and conservation organizations had men at the helm for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, except for women's clubs with environmental concerns such as the Garden Club of America and the General Federation of Women's Clubs.¹⁴ The goals and assumptions inherent in Cushman's student program not only reflected her status, but also those of the primary supporters of the SCA in its early years; historians frequently characterize these men and women as elites concerned primarily with recreation and resources. The label of elitism frequently applied to conservationists during these years had truth to it, as most focused on issues that directly touched their lifestyle rather than on the environmental problems experienced by those in different socioeconomic categories. Cushman's SCA reflected her concern for national parks, and her solution to the perceived problem of overcrowded, rundown national parks implicitly excluded individuals who lived outside of her stratum of society. Clubwomen, traditional conservationists, and idealistic young people might have helped protect the nation's natural resources and advanced knowledge about the environment, but they did so in such a way that excluded parts of American society.

The conservationists who supported the SCA sought to replicate their ideas and principles for the future, not incorporate new segments of society into their fold or adopt many of the contemporary social justice issues occupying the minds of

¹⁴ Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 281-285; Shana Miriam Cohen, "American Garden Clubs and the Fight for Nature Preservation, 1890-1980" (PhD., University of California, Berkeley, 2005), chapter 5; Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 345.

people of color or the lower classes. The SCA represented the continued presence of a group that had long occupied the corridors of power, and the early history of this program highlights the influence such a group commanded in order to ensure that those who followed them held the same values and ideas. The men and women who worked for the SCA or who supported it did not consciously or explicitly seek to exclude those who differed from them in terms of race, class, or background, but in reality their assumptions and values did exactly that.

The SCA's early focus on altruistic voluntarism, a focus best seen in its organizers' interpretation of the word "service," provides the most telling indication of their class assumptions about the people whom they recruited as participants. Having grown up with the tradition of noblesse oblige, Elizabeth Cushman expected that individuals should act when they saw a niche that needed filling. Cushman's program provided service opportunities to young people, but only those young people who had the ability to forgo wages during the summer. Once similar programs, such as the Youth Conservation Corps, came into existence in the 1970s, Cushman and her coworkers placed increased emphasis on the voluntary (that is, unpaid) nature of the service their program offered. They claimed for their organization a notable status as a leader in the field of youth conservation service and as an identifier of dedicated conservationists. SCA administrators assumed that those who chose to forgo paying jobs for experience with the student program proved their commitment to conservation, as well as their superior moral code. The SCA and its supporters operated within a privileged sphere, in which individuals did not have to make a choice between paid employment and work experience. This aspect of the program's history serves as another way to see the inherent exclusivity of privately-funded clubs

and volunteer organizations that worked to solve perceived problems but often excluded many who might have shown interest in the issue at hand. The Youth Conservation Corps, a federally funded youth conservation program founded in the early 1970s, sponsored work very similar in nature to that done by the SCA high school programs, but since its enrollees were paid, their work was automatically seen by some as less worthy. In reality, the experience and labor of these young people differed very little from that of their SCA counterparts. Rhetoric divided the two programs philosophically, but evidence suggests that the young people who worked for either program emerged with similar sensibilities. Young people formed their own impressions, less influenced by adults than the latter might have wished. The SCA touted itself as a shaper of future leaders, but its programs had more impact on the environmental awareness of its participants than on their chosen career paths.

On its website, the Student Conservation Association maintains that it still works to “[build] the next generation of conservation leaders.”¹⁵ In many ways, the organization stays true to its roots and its heritage, though it has updated its operations, goals, and clientele to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century world. I have chosen not to trace that more recent history, but instead to end my analysis in 1975. My reasons are several. Although I use the program’s early history to discuss many contemporary issues regarding youth and conservation, I do not see the dissertation solely as an organizational history. Studying the SCA serves as a useful tool to explore postwar conservation and environmentalism during the years generally considered as foundational for the emergence of modern environmentalism. In addition, in the 1970s Elizabeth Cushman Titus ceased to be as significant a presence

¹⁵ See <http://thesca.org/about/what-we-do> (accessed 5 September 2011).

as she was in the first twenty years, although she did return to a leadership position in the 1980s. In many ways, this student volunteer program was and still is the “baby” of the woman who first conceptualized the SCA, but after the mid-1970s it began to go the way of many other volunteer and environmental groups, becoming professionalized and shedding much of its amateur nature. The program’s early years are most informative because they highlight the important web of political and social influence that stretched across the twentieth century, exerting significant influence on behalf of conservation efforts both before and after the Second World War. Environmentalism did not spring full-fledged from the first Earth Day, and it is important to acknowledge the varied programs and people that laid the foundation for the explosion of interest which emerged during the 1970s.

Cushman’s idea for a student volunteer corps was innovative, but was one that built on existing traditions and worked within the system, filling an empty niche by marshalling the power and influence of a venerable women’s club, a federal agency, philanthropies, and foundations. In the 1950s, the SCA, as a youth-oriented organization led by young women, was unconventional for its time, though it certainly was not far outside the mainstream. However, by the mid-1970s, the SCA could no longer claim such status, as a number of volunteer, work-service, environmental, or student activist organizations had since come into existence. In the 1970s, the SCA had to work to define and solidify its identity in order for it to maintain its position. The changing tides it experienced during those decades provide a small way of examining fluctuating cultural and social attitudes related to conservation and the land, but also to look at assumptions about gender roles and the way women wielded power and influence in different ways than men.

The Student Conservation Association's small size allows the program to serve as a useful and manageable lens through which to interrogate the nature of volunteer service, the concept tying the health of youth to the natural environment, and the role of social networks in providing opportunity for some young individuals. SCA administrators knew important National Park Service officials, wealthy philanthropists, and influential conservationists, and so the program illuminates the evolution of American environmentalism as that complex movement shifted during the years under consideration. Though eclipsed by other issues, many of the concerns held by these conservationist elites continued, often represented in the SCA's own expressed goals and purposes. The organization's roots in typical 1950s-era conservationism and its maintenance of Cushman's original vision signified that not all changed as a result of 1960s environmentalism; many of the same ideas related to the human-nonhuman relationship formulated in the early twentieth century endured as conservationists sought to transmit long-held values to the next generation of leaders. In providing a unique opportunity for young people interested in conservation and the environment to take part in service activities on behalf of their "national heritage," this student volunteer group worked to preserve "America's Best Idea," as Wallace Stegner so eloquently labeled national parks.

Chapter 2

A “PRICELESS HERITAGE...BEGINNING TO GO TO HELL”: POSTWAR NATIONAL PARKS AND THE STUDENT CONSERVATION PROGRAM SOLUTION

Millions of Americans visited the national parks following the end of World War II, prompting respected writer Bernard DeVoto to bemoan the “cantankerous, crack-brained, tired,” and “bewildered” tourists whose presence strained park facilities, threatening the nation’s “priceless heritage.”¹ Recent Vassar graduates Elizabeth Cushman and Martha Hayne organized a volunteer student program for national parks as a solution to this crisis, gamely declaring that “come hell or high water” they would do their “best to see it through.”² As a result of their dedication, the Student Conservation Program (SCP) placed students in two national parks during the summer of 1957, almost three years after Cushman wrote her senior college thesis proposing such a program. The collaboration among the federal government, nonprofit organizations, and private citizens in preparation for this first summer experiment reveals an important web of political and social influence that stretched across the twentieth century. Many of the same groups that dictated the conservationist agenda in the early twentieth century continued to do so: wealthy philanthropists, elite members of society, garden club members, and government

¹ Bernard DeVoto, “Let’s Close the National Parks,” *Harper’s Magazine* 207 (October 1953), 49-52.

² Elizabeth Cushman to Fred Packard, September 27, 1957, FF 30, Box 2, SCA DPL.

officials. Cushman's idea responded cogently to a contemporary problem, but it took more than pluck and luck to implement her program. Cushman, Hayne, and those who collaborated with them in organizing the program identified themselves as conservationists, a group characterized by the historians Hal Rothman and Stephen Fox as drawn almost exclusively from the white upper-middle and upper classes in the immediate postwar period.³ As Fox noted, relatively few Americans identified as conservationists during the 1940s and 1950s, but those who did exerted influence far beyond their number because "they knew the right people, or at least had gone to their schools."⁴ The early history of the SCP certainly supports that position. Cushman and Hayne's SCP had a foundation built by their connections in government and the nonprofit sector – connections cultivated by their familial and educational networks.

In addition to highlighting the composition of mid-century conservationism and the mechanisms by which these men and women supported this movement, the early history of the SCP also further elaborates upon competing ideas of conservation in the postwar period. The conservationists' internecine struggle reveals the continued complexity of American attitudes toward the non-human environment: whether to err on the side of protection or use. The student program emerged during a national debate, sparked by rising affluence and the concomitant rise in leisure travel, which drew from this philosophical dissonance. Conservationists

³ Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States Since 1945* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), 15-30. Rothman argues that this began to change with the Echo Park controversy in the early 1950s, while Fox contends that the shift to a more democratic base did not occur until the mid-1960s.

⁴ Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 351.

argued about how best to deal with the management and use of the nation's natural resources. Bernard DeVoto's 1953 article in *Harper's Magazine*, quoted above, proposed closing some national parks as a drastic solution for their declining physical facilities. DeVoto's article not only galvanized Cushman, but also prompted a federal response that led, as some scholars have argued, to the coalescing of an expanded environmental movement in the 1960s.⁵ Officials in the National Park Service (NPS), prodded by the tourism and recreation industry, worked to resolve the perceived problem in parks and devised a plan that used millions of dollars to modernize the entire system. The NPS solution, however, angered many individuals who favored wilderness preservation over tourism or expanded recreational use of parks. Although it did not directly influence this contest regarding the best management method for the nation's public lands, the SCP serves as a useful lens through which to examine what exactly "conservation" meant to interested individuals.

In the midst of this discussion addressing the proper management of the national parks, Elizabeth Cushman wrote her Vassar College senior thesis, presenting her own personal take on the national parks conundrum and offering a solution that drew on the voluntarism of students. Cushman's thesis tapped into a number of larger cultural concerns, which partly explains why high-level officials and philanthropists

⁵ Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), ix; Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 3d ed. (1979; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 172-174; Mark Harvey, *Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 157; Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, rev. ed. (1993; Washington: Island Press, 2005), 77-78. An excellent history of the National Park Service's approach to natural resource management is Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks* (1997; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

supported her idea and aided its implementation. Cushman's *au courant* concept also took root because her family's connections allowed her access to networks of wealthy donors and influential park officials. Cushman's social capital, combined with her progressive solution for a current problem and her indefatigable dedication to her vision, enabled this young woman to execute an idea that might otherwise have remained undeveloped.

Let's Close the National Parks

In her thesis, Elizabeth Cushman proposed forming a student volunteer group dedicated to working in the national parks, wherever administrators might need additional personnel.⁶ She drew inspiration for her student conservation corps from two sources: the New Deal-era Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and Bernard DeVoto's jarring article. She cited and referred to both extensively throughout her thesis, using DeVoto's article as the motivation for formulating her plan to use unpaid volunteer labor in the national parks. Cushman based her proposed student corps on the CCC's example, particularly the agency's focus on routine outdoor labor in the state and national parks. In her thesis, she combined references to the example of this historic (and very popular) work program with an idea for addressing a contemporary challenge: the overcrowding and deterioration of the national parks.

Bernard DeVoto often commented on the threatened status of the nation's public lands in his monthly *Harper's* column "The Easy Chair." His articles on conservation issues reached a relatively wide, if highbrow, audience and his thoughts regarding the state of natural resources influenced many readers to pay more attention

⁶ Elizabeth Cushman, "Thesis on a Proposed Student Conservation Corps," (B.A. thesis, Vassar College, December 1954). Copy in author's possession.

to the expanding conservation movement.⁷ Although activists in groups such as the Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society had tried to publicize threats to the integrity of the nation's public lands and wilderness, many ordinary Americans remained oblivious to the groups' concerns and often viewed conservationists disparagingly.⁸ DeVoto's writing helped to shift their perception. Senator Richard Neuberger of Oregon even went so far as to say that DeVoto was the greatest conservationist of the twentieth century, in that he was widely read and respected.⁹ DeVoto addressed natural resource problems found in every part of the country, from the run-down tourist areas of coastal Maine to the controversial Echo Park dam proposal that endangered Colorado's Dinosaur National Monument.¹⁰ The plight of western lands was of particular interest to him, as he had grown up in Utah and viewed "land-grabbers" (e.g. ranchers) as particularly dangerous.

In "Let's Close the National Parks," DeVoto attacked Congress for failing to supply sufficient financial support to the parks. DeVoto wrote his piece after visiting fifteen national parks, ranging from Mesa Verde in Colorado to the Great

⁷ For recent work on DeVoto's conservation journalism, see Bernard DeVoto and Edward K. Muller, ed., *DeVoto's West: History, Conservation, and the Public Good* (Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 2005).

⁸ Harvey, *Wilderness Forever*, 174-75.

⁹ As quoted in Wallace Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair: A Biography of Bernard DeVoto* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), 321.

¹⁰ DeVoto had written on behalf of park protection a few years before his infamous "Let's Close the National Parks" essay, advocating for the protection of Dinosaur National Monument against a proposed dam project on the Colorado River. Dinosaur was saved, but in return environmentalists dropped their opposition to a dam proposal for Glen Canyon downstream; it was flooded instead.

Smokies in Tennessee. According to DeVoto, Congress provided the national parks with insufficient funds in the years immediately following World War II, placing park superintendents in the unenviable position of scraping by with a few employees unable to keep up with basic duties. DeVoto pointed out that the Service's most valuable asset was "the morale of its employees."¹¹ Employee morale rapidly declined in those years, in large part because rangers paid high rents for dilapidated housing and worked long hours to compensate for thinly stretched personnel numbers. The parks themselves had rapidly fallen into disrepair, DeVoto argued, because Congress and the Truman and Eisenhower administrations chose not to allocate the necessary funds for rehabilitation and facilities expansion to accommodate the large number of visitors. Park roads, many built in the 1920s, could not facilitate efficient transportation through park lands. In order to force Congress to act, DeVoto proposed closing four major Western national parks (Yosemite, Yellowstone, Rocky Mountain, and Grand Canyon) and assigning army patrols to safeguard the borders. If that failed to prompt Congress to allocate sufficient funds for proper operation, DeVoto also suggested that other popular parks close, including the Everglades, Zion, Great Smoky Mountains, and Gettysburg. DeVoto hoped his suggestion to shutter parks and hold them sealed "for a more enlightened future" would alarm people, who would flood congressional offices with letters demanding more appropriations.¹² DeVoto

¹¹ DeVoto, "Let's Close the National Parks," 50.

¹² DeVoto, "Let's Close the National Parks," 49-52.
http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/anps/anps_4d.htm (accessed 18 March 2010). DeVoto primarily targeted the "landgrabbers," including ranching and mining interests, who wanted to return federal public lands back to the states. DeVoto supported national parks primarily because of his love of Western landscapes, not because he favored wilderness recreation over wilderness preservation. He viewed the struggle as existing between wilderness lovers and recreation interests on one side,

intentionally shocked his readers, in an attempt to spur them into action.¹³ It is highly improbable that he actually meant what he argued, but his words elicited the desired reaction: renewed activism on behalf of the welfare of the parks.

DeVoto's suggestion to close the parks created such a stir in part because the national parks ranked as top tourist destinations. Before the 1920s and the advent of affordable automobiles, a visit to the national parks was primarily a luxury vacation for the upper classes. With the dramatic plunge in auto prices in the 1920s, the availability of credit, increasing leisure time, and government-funded roads, more and more Americans began driving cross-country to visit the nation's natural wonders.¹⁴ Only slightly dampened by the Second World War, automobile tourism in the parks rose considerably from the 1950s onward.¹⁵ Many an American, beguiled by tourism agencies such as the American Automobile Association (AAA), newsreels, and glossy travel magazines, wished to drive cross-country to view such natural phenomena as Old Faithful in Yellowstone, the rocky coasts of Acadia, or Bridal Veil Falls in Yosemite. Even before DeVoto brought attention to the conditions of parks, tourists directed increasingly bitter complaints about the crowded, run-down conditions of national parks to AAA and travel magazines. One woman compared the floor of the

with timber, ranching, and mining interests on the other. See Mark Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 93-96.

¹³ Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair*, 320.

¹⁴ Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 23-27. See also Marguerite Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Runte, *National Parks*, 158.

Yosemite Valley to rush-hour in Times Square.¹⁶ The titles of other popular magazine articles also reflected a mid-1950s consensus on parks: “The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks,” “We’ve Been Starving Our National Parks,” and “Twenty Four Million Acres of Trouble.”¹⁷ All of these pieces followed DeVoto in describing appalling conditions in the national parks, and urging change and action of some kind. According to the travel magazine *Holiday*, the AAA repeatedly urged the Park Service to improve its facilities and general conditions, in response to numerous complaints filed by its subscribers.¹⁸ Tourist industry groups that held a great stake in the health of national parks and their growing success, especially concession-holders, road builders and tourist agencies, banded together to pressure the National Park Service to upgrade its facilities.¹⁹

Conservationists, many of whom worked for federal agencies dedicated to natural resource management, did not always agree with the emerging consensus on park development. Men and women in The Wilderness Society and other similar organizations emphasized the importance of wilderness protection, expanding the conservationists’ general interwar focus on natural resource and wildlife

¹⁶ Jane T. Johnson (Director, Vocational Bureau, Vassar College) to Elizabeth Cushman, August 27, 1957, FF 8, Box 1, SCA DPL.

¹⁷ Charles Stevenson, “The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks,” *Reader’s Digest* 66 (January 1955), 45-50; “We’ve Been Starving Our National Parks,” *The Saturday Evening Post* 227 (February 12, 1955), 10; Robert M. Yoder, “Twenty Four Million Acres of Trouble,” *The Saturday Evening Post* 227 (July 3, 1954), 32-33.

¹⁸ “National Parks in Danger,” *Holiday* 16 (July 1954), 33

¹⁹ Harvey, *Wilderness Forever*, 156.

management.²⁰ As conservationists' numbers grew during the postwar years, understanding of the environment and its purposes shifted; by the mid-1950s, adherents emphasized population growth, open space preservation, and wilderness preservation as important issues. The growth of outdoor recreation, and the response to such popularity by the government and private interests, in large part drove the postwar focus on wilderness preservation. Members of the Sierra Club and the National Parks Association continued to label themselves conservationists, though they certainly skewed toward the protectionist end of the spectrum in their support of wilderness preservation.²¹ Rather than develop parks and modernize facilities to accommodate visitors, these conservationists suggested limiting access to parks and prohibiting access to millions of acres of wilderness. The debate between wilderness advocates and natural resource managers was not new. But it reemerged in the postwar era, as the National Park Service and the tourism industry contended with conservationists who wished to preserve the natural integrity and ecological health of parks.²²

Public discussion of the purported national parks crisis at times promoted the concerns of protectionist-minded conservationists, often including comments

²⁰ Christopher J. Bosso, *Environment, Inc.: From Grassroots to Beltway* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 27-34.

²¹ Samuel P. Hays, "From Conservation to Environment: Environmental Politics in the United States Since World War II," in *Out of the Woods: Essays in Environmental History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 104-105. As a concept, conservation could have a number of meanings. More historians of the environmental movement now see conservation as part of a larger environmentalism, rather than viewing the conservation movement and environmentalism as separate.

²² Bosso, *Environment, Inc.*, 33.

chiding badly behaved tourists and taking the Park Service to task for “misguided” development policies. In “The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks,” Charles Stevenson, Washington editor of *Reader’s Digest*, combined recreational and protectionist views by pointing to the poor conditions of national parks and arguing that the Park Service should not provide a resort-like atmosphere. Stevenson opened his editorial by warning visitors that their trip was likely to be “fraught with discomfort, disappointment, even danger,” and vividly describing the awful conditions in Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks.²³ Some of these problems stemmed from lack of adequate funding for maintenance and personnel, but many of Stevenson’s concerns came from the actions of visitors themselves. Too few rangers worked in the parks, leading to inadequate policing of the crowds of people. Unmonitored by trained park staff, people behaved in appalling ways, including throwing garbage into geysers and trying to persuade bears into cars for photo-ops (see Figure 2.1).²⁴

In Stevenson’s opinion, the deficient national park conditions resulted not from lack of funding, but from projects that deviated from the original mission of the national parks.²⁵ Stevenson objected to the use of federal funds to pay for “recreational projects, fancy highway programs both inside and outside the park and other items that pervert the true national intention.”²⁶ He urged the Park Service to

²³ Stevenson, “The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks,” 45.

²⁴ “53 Million On The Go,” *Newsweek* 48 (6 August 1956), 64; Stevenson, “The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks,” 46-47.

²⁵ Ronald F. Lee, *Family Tree of the National Park System* (Philadelphia, PA: Eastern National Park & Monument Association, 1972), 17.

²⁶ Stevenson, “The Shocking Truth About Our National Parks,” 46.

return to its original mission and resist over-commercialization, lest the parks “be turned into the equivalent of drive-in movies.”²⁷ Stevenson advocated the return to the original park philosophy, which provided not resorts, but “beautiful retreats where Americans could find the quiet peace and inspiration their pioneer ancestors knew.”²⁸ Stevenson, as well as the Sierra Club’s executive director David Brower and other young members of protection-oriented organizations, implicitly argued for limited access to parks. In their mind, the problem stemmed from sheer numbers overrunning park lands and in turn destroying them – an argument that often drew accusations of elitism.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid, 50.

²⁸ Ibid, 48.

²⁹ Conservationists were often labeled elitist, particularly by those who wished to continue using the natural resources of an area selected for protection in national parks or restricted for the use of upper classes (e.g. sport hunting). For examples from the early twentieth century, see Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), chapter one. In the mid-20th century, wilderness protection advocates generally had the epithet “elitist” directed their way, particularly by those who drew economic value from the land in question. Robert Marshall, one founder of The Wilderness Society, and Howard Zahniser, architect of the Wilderness Bill, often fought off such attacks. See Mark Harvey, *Wilderness Forever*, 62, 152, 188, 246-247. For Marshall, see John P. Herron, *Science and the Social Good: Nature, Culture, and Community, 1865-1965* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), chapter 5.



Figure 2.1 Tourists at Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1966, observing the wildlife. August 1966 Superintendent monthly report, Folder GRSM Pt. 1 1-1-66 to 8-31-66, Box 91, Administrative Files 1949-1971, Records of the National Park Service (RG 79), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD. [Hereafter Admin NARA].

Despite the valuable publicity that protectionist wilderness advocates garnered from these mid-1950s debates, recreational interests generally won out on the issue of park management. Prodded both by DeVoto's columns and by tourism lobbyists, the National Park Service began work revitalizing the national park system in the mid-1950s. Conrad Wirth, Director of the National Park Service (1951-1964), credited DeVoto's article as one of the incentives that prompted them to do something about the poor state of the parks, though he mentioned the article only in passing in his

autobiography.³⁰ Still, by suggesting drastic action and drawing attention to the plight of park managers, DeVoto's armchair conservation activism worked, stimulating various solutions to solve the problem of the parks. One was Wirth's "Mission 66" plan; another was Elizabeth Cushman's proposal for a Student Conservation Corps.

Director Wirth's "Mission 66" was a ten-year plan designed to place the parks back on their feet and running smoothly by the fifty-year anniversary of the National Park Service in 1966. In his plans, Wirth sought to jump-start a park renaissance, overcome the "inroads of neglect," and restore the park system to its pre-war state. Quoting Edmund Burke in saying that it was the duty of generations to leave some things to the unborn, Wirth argued for the "constitutional morality" of preserving the parks for the good of the people.³¹ In his opinion, the Cold War did more damage to the parks than World War II, mainly because Congress did not allocate enough funds to keep pace with the rapidly expanding number of visitors to the parks. (See Table 2.1). Despite the postwar explosion of visitor numbers, appropriation increases remained sluggish. Whereas in 1940, the Park Service received \$1.25 per visitor, in 1946, Congress allocated only 25 cents. And despite a substantially increased allocation, in 1950, the per-visitor amount had climbed to a mere 90 cents. Eroded by post-war inflation, that figure more closely resembled half a dollar. The national parks certainly needed an enormous capital influx if Wirth and his colleagues wished to accommodate tourists.

³⁰ Conrad L. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 234.

³¹ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 242.

Table 2.1 National Park Service Visitation and Appropriations, 1940-1957

NPS Statistics	1940	1945	1946	1950	1955	1957
Visitation	16.7 million	11.7 million	21 million	33 million	50 million	59 million
Appropriations	\$21 million	\$4.7 million	\$5.4 million	\$30 million	\$32 million	\$68 million
Per Capita Spending	\$1.26	\$.40	\$.26	\$.91	\$.64	\$1.15

Source: Dwight F. Rettie, *Our National Park System: Caring for America's Greatest Natural and Historic Treasures* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 251.

As Wirth mulled over the reasons why Congress refused to dramatically increase per-visitor appropriations, he hit on the idea that the parks needed a big, all-encompassing project that could be presented as a whole, rather than asking for money for individual projects, as had been policy. If the Park Service presented one coherent project, he reasoned, Congress could not so easily dismiss it as irrelevant. Most of the complaints filed with individual parks, about seventy percent, dealt with the general condition of the parks and facilities. Therefore, Mission 66 would focus on the parks' operation, maintenance, concessions, and facilities. Wirth's idea proved to be a great success, in part because the issue of park deterioration happened to be on the minds of the increasing number of Americans who deplored the often dirty, rundown conditions found in the most popular parks. After a convincing presentation to the President and his Cabinet, emphasizing in particular the beneficial economic impact of national parks, Wirth and his Park Service colleagues persuaded Eisenhower's administration to support the project. President Eisenhower spoke about the national parks in his

1956 State of the Union speech, something that other presidents had rarely done.³²

Mission 66 received over \$1 billion in appropriations between 1956 and 1966.³³

Mission 66 became a sore point for protectionist-oriented park supporters. A long-serving bureaucrat in the Park Service and a landscape architect by training, Wirth had already faced their skepticism upon his appointment as director, especially because his predecessor, Newton P. Drury, had been both a popular director and an avid protectionist. Wilderness advocates feared that Wirth would concede too much to tourism, as well as to construction, timber, reclamation, and mining interests that itched to get their fingers on land within national park boundaries.³⁴ Their fears seemed fulfilled even before “Mission 66,” when Wirth and the Park Service proposed a system-wide expansion of national parks, primarily focusing on roads, visitor centers, and accommodations. Moreover, Wirth had close connections to certain interest groups, like the AAA and oil companies, and was not afraid to enlist their lobbying abilities to secure federal funds for park road expansion.³⁵ The focus on park development in Mission 66 confirmed wilderness advocates’ worst fears.³⁶ To the chagrin of the so-called “purists,” as Wirth termed them, he and his colleagues planned to update the parks so they would be prepared to handle the projected

³² Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 253.

³³ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 234-256.

³⁴ Rick Hydrick, “The Genesis of National Park Management: John Roberts White and Sequoia National Park, 1920-1947,” *Journal of Forest History* 28.2 (April 1984), 81.

³⁵ Carr, *Mission 66*, 87-88.

³⁶ Runte, *National Parks*, 173.

visitation numbers in 1966, estimated at around 80 million.³⁷ Devereux Butcher of the National Parks Association (NPA), the most vocal critic of Wirth, insisted that the Park Service veered too far away from its originally expansive purpose. Butcher wrote a number of essays attacking Director Wirth's policies, especially his declaration that he had no intention of limiting the number of visitors, as David Brower of the Sierra Club and others had proposed.³⁸

On the surface, Wirth and Butcher had opposing philosophies regarding the use and purpose of parks. However, as environmental historian William Cronon recently commented when speaking of the early 20th-century divide between John Muir and Gifford Pinchot, the philosophies actually represented two sides of one coin.³⁹ Cronon explains that Muir emphasized the sacred in nature and argued for its protection, whereas Pinchot celebrated sustainability and argued that people needed to remain rooted in the material world in such a way as to not destroy nature.⁴⁰ Both viewpoints developed together from the inception of the national park ideal in the late nineteenth century, but the protectionist side became increasingly estranged from the conservation side in the postwar period, gaining power and a distinct identity with the

³⁷ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 261.

³⁸ Harvey, *Wilderness Forever*, 156.

³⁹ For a thorough exploration of this concept and a reinterpretation of conservation, see Charles T. Rubin, ed., *Conservation Reconsidered: Nature, Virtue, and American Liberal Democracy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); "two sides of the same coin" quote p. x.

⁴⁰ William Cronon in "The Greatest Good," episode two "The Last Refuge (1890-1915), *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, DVD. Directed by Ken Burns. Hollywood, CA: PBS Home Video, 2009.

1950 controversy over the Echo Park Dam proposal.⁴¹ The Park Service's mission is emblematic of the intellectual ties between resource management and protection: "to *conserve the scenery* and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein, and to *provide for the enjoyment* of the same and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."⁴² Since its inception in 1916, the National Park Service had dealt uneasily with these two directives – how to deal with the pull between recreation and protection. As the modern, postwar environmentalist movement began to coalesce, that tension intensified as conservationists debated the nature and purpose of the nation's scenic lands and public parks.

Old and New Uses for Youth

Elizabeth Cushman entered the conversation about the future of national parks squarely on the side of the Park Service, with its pragmatic Organic Act mandate that combined use with protection. Her proposal is best viewed in light of the debate over the purpose of national parks and wilderness, specifically whether or not parks should be further developed as tourist destinations. Cushman did not mention overcrowding in a negative light, only that the parks needed sufficiently staffed and updated facilities in order to accommodate visitors. In her thesis epigraph she quoted Park Service critic Butcher, who wrote that "the purpose of national parks...is to protect superb exhibits of undisturbed nature and magnificent primeval scenery" and

⁴¹ Thomas R. Wellock, *Preserving the Nation: The Conservation and Environmental Movements, 1870-2000* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 2007), 144.

⁴² Lee, *Family Tree of the National Park System*, 17. The 1916 Organic Act establishing the National Park Service can be found at: <http://www.nps.gov/legacy/organic-act.htm> (accessed 1 July 2010).

that “all of us...have an obligation to help preserve them unharmed.”⁴³ Cushman wished to help the National Park Service solve its problems, but did not acknowledge the growing disconnect between its policies and those of the private organizations that increasingly emphasized wilderness preservation. Her idea directly responded to the two problems DeVoto highlighted – a lack of personnel and capital. She used Butcher’s language to signify her interest in preserving and protecting nature, but specifically focused her energies on aiding the Park Service in its mission to update park facilities and expand human access to the protected lands.⁴⁴ In her mind, the two sides were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Although conservationist factions increasingly distanced themselves from one another, Cushman’s thinking represented a broader ideology that combined protection and use.

In her thesis, Cushman focused on the lack of “manpower” in the national parks, particularly the shortage of park rangers. In conceptualizing a solution, she drew from her recently acquired knowledge of the Civilian Conservation Corps.⁴⁵ Cushman was not alone in revering the popular New Deal program; in the mid-1950s, many individuals nostalgically remembered the work performed by “CCC boys” and proposed similar programs to solve a variety of social ills. Cushman was impressed by the significant accomplishments of the participants, particularly their role in

⁴³ Cushman, “Thesis on a Proposed Student Conservation Corps,” 2.

⁴⁴ In *Mission 66*, Ethan Carr recently argued that Conrad Wirth and the Park Service wished to preserve park lands by developing certain areas of the national parks and thereby controlling visitor actions and movements, carrying on the philosophy of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and his idea that land is best preserved as carefully designed public parks. Carr, *Mission 66*, 46. It is possible that Cushman’s thinking falls into Carr’s explanation of Wirth’s park philosophy.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam, interview by author, 3-4 May 2006.

improving the nation's public lands. She thought: why not reinstitute the CCC, but use volunteer student labor? DeVoto had mentioned that rangers were often forced to work overtime, performing menial jobs such as cleaning out toilets and campgrounds, for which they received no additional pay. Cushman proposed that college student volunteers step in to fill these gaps, in order to allow rangers to perform their assigned duties. Students would help by "cleaning trails, collecting entrance fees, picking up garbage, taking wood to the camp sites, etc."⁴⁶ In Cushman's opinion, the lack of adequate numbers of staff was the primary problem, particularly in the peak summer months, and she intended her student corps to directly alleviate that shortage. By recruiting volunteers, Cushman's program could provide manual labor to the parks during the months where visitor numbers most threatened the health of national parks.

Elizabeth Cushman's Student Conservation Corps may have drawn intellectual inspiration from the CCC, but it deviated from that example in a number of important ways. Cushman designed her SCC as a volunteer program comprised of private citizens, a very different structure from the federally directed, militaristic, and salaried Civilian Conservation Corps.⁴⁷ The CCC aimed to provide jobs for millions of unemployed men during the 1930s, with a secondary mission of cultivating and improving the nation's public lands for recreation. These young men earned thirty dollars a month, sending all but five dollars home to their families. Cushman's SCC

⁴⁶ Cushman, "Thesis on a Proposed Student Conservation Corps," 12.

⁴⁷ Cornelius M. Maher, "Planting More than Trees: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement, 1929-1942" (PhD diss., New York University, 2001), 91. See also Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

proposed to draw from a very different pool of young people; she intentionally designed a concept which utilized male and female volunteers who surrendered their time for the benefit of themselves, the parks, and the nation – in that order. Her concept was a far cry from President Roosevelt’s CCC, which intended to aid impoverished, malnourished, under-educated young men. Cushman’s program would provide voluntary service opportunities for young people who wished to perform manual labor in national parks. Considering the requirements implicit in her concept, participation would be essentially restricted to financially comfortable college students. Although Cushman used the basic idea of the CCC – the labor of young people in the parks – her corps bore little similarity to the composition of Roosevelt’s “tree army.”

In her thesis, Cushman proposed drawing SCC recruits from college campuses across the nation, using the connections of the non-profit National Parks Association, the National Park Service, and the National Student Association (NSA).⁴⁸ As a volunteer program, the SCC would rely on students to fund their own travels to their assigned parks, and on foundations and private donations to provide the necessary capital to pay for the students’ room and board during their tenure in the parks. Cushman intended the structure of the SCC to be a diffuse federation of college clubs administered by NSA representatives, with a small executive branch consisting

⁴⁸ Cushman, “Thesis on a Proposed Student Conservation Corps,” 19. The NSA (founded 1947) was an important, if small, presence on campuses in the 1950s. The organization promoted a number of liberal reforms, including weakening *in loco parentis* and ending racial discrimination. See Philip G. Altbach, “The National Student Association in the Fifties: Flawed Conscience of the Silent Generation,” *Youth & Society* 5.2 (December 1973): 184-211; Eugene G. Schwartz, ed., *American Students Organize: Founding the National Student Association after World War II* (Westport, Conn.: American Council on Education/Praeger Publishers, 2006).

of a president, a few supporting officers, and a small advisory board. Cushman's emphasis on local groups and a decentralized structure echoed the structure of the Garden Club of America, a conservation-oriented women's club to which her mother and other family members belonged.⁴⁹ The GCA had a grassroots structure in that it emphasized the amateur tradition of voluntarism and usually worked outside the corridors of electoral political power. The GCA, however, frequently collaborated with government officials, often using members' own connections (frequently spousal) to sway legislation and budgetary allocations. This modified grassroots structure was vastly different from the more extensive bureaucracy of the CCC, which paid those enrolled in the program, used military-style organization, and relied on federal funds to sustain its work.⁵⁰ The initial SCC proposal relied exclusively on private funds (although, as we will see below, the question of whether to seek federal funding and the strings attached to such capital became a major issue shaping Cushman's program and its purpose).

The proposed Student Conservation Corps, however, had some important parallels to the New Deal program, particularly in the benefits that accrued to participants and the improvement of public lands. As we shall see, believing that outdoor recreation and human health were closely connected represented an important thread tying postwar environmental thought to the conservation ideas of the earlier twentieth century, and the CCC and SCC represent knots on this intellectual strand. The men of the CCC gained valuable work experience and earned a wage;

⁴⁹ Cushman, "Thesis on a Proposed Student Conservation Corps," 21. See Shana Miriam Cohen, "American Garden Clubs and the Fight for Nature Preservation, 1890-1980" (PhD diss, University of California, Berkeley, 2005), 263-265.

⁵⁰ Maher, "Planting More than Trees," 321-322.

additionally, they participated in required evening educational programs where they learned trade skills, resource management, literacy, and conservation.⁵¹ Neil Maher argues that the CCC program catalyzed modern environmentalist activism by introducing a new group of Americans to conservationist thought and practice, thereby expanding its traditionally elite base to one more democratic in composition.⁵² Cushman's program bore some similarities to the CCC, insofar as she held high educational goals for her program, arguing that it would well serve the students, parks, and the nation. The SCC would teach students about conservation and important outdoor skills. These young people would aid the parks by lightening the workload of the rangers, performing routine duties, and caring for visitors. In so doing, the students' work would allow rangers to devote more time to their core duties of monitoring and managing the parks. Although SCC volunteers would not enlarge the roll of conservationists per se (since many already identified as such and had previous outdoor experience), they would demonstrate to visitors the dedication of youth in support of their revered national parks.

Cushman's use of the CCC as a reference point made logical sense to her, as she knew of its success and popularity. It also was a shrewd connection because the program, twenty years later, still drew much admiration. The CCC had performed work in national parks, national forests, on farm lands and in recreational areas across the nation. It altered the nation's landscape in dramatic ways, including adding 125,000 miles of new roads, eight million square miles of parking, 50,000 acres of

⁵¹ Maher, "Planting More than Trees," 165-175.

⁵² Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 10-12.

new camps, and 28,000 miles of new hiking trails.⁵³ The CCC left behind a vibrant legacy and groups of dedicated alumni, many of whom went into conservation-related careers.⁵⁴ Elizabeth Cushman undoubtedly considered these accomplishments when formulating her plan to help the parks, but likely did not envision that her select group of college students would accomplish as much, nor even attempt to duplicate the sheer enormity of physical change brought about by the CCC men. Her primary purposes lay on a plane different from the merely physical; although concerned with encouraging physical health and improving parks, she also focused on more intangible benefits to participants. The American people as a whole would benefit from the program, she argued, because the SCC would help to restore park facilities to an acceptable condition, preserve natural heritage, and publicize conservation and environmental concerns. By linking the SCC to the legacy of the popular New Deal program, Cushman likely chose, whether consciously or not, to draw upon the CCC's reputation as validation of her program's utility.

The surface similarities between the CCC and Cushman's program, however, do not suffice as an explanation as to why the National Park Service decided to implement the program, nor why non-profit organizations backed the program financially. Cushman proposed her project at the right time to the right people. All parties involved stood to gain from Cushman's idea, which partly explains why the people she enlisted encouraged her to develop a trial project of the Student Conservation Corps. Many individuals, thinking of the CCC and contemporary social issues related to juveniles, likely saw the program as a useful social experiment. More

⁵³ Maher, "Planting More than Trees," 165-175.

⁵⁴ Maher, "Planting More Than Trees," 176-178.

important, though, was the support of certain well-placed individuals. Cushman's ability to gain access to these people and convince them of the merit of her idea, as well as the likelihood that she would successfully carry it out, proved the key component to her success.

A few well-placed individuals immediately reacted to Cushman's idea with great enthusiasm, greasing the wheels for support from both the National Park Service and nonprofit conservationist organizations. Fred Packard, executive secretary of the National Parks Association and a key supporter during the early years of the SCC (renamed Student Conservation Program in 1956), told Cushman that her program should be established by an Act of Congress, adding somewhat hyperbolically that all members would "approve of the idea on the same grounds [as] they approve of mothers."⁵⁵ Packard believed the SCC to be a good idea, and worthy of serious continued support. After meeting Cushman at the first National Watershed Conference held in Washington, D.C. during the fall of 1954, Packard likely gave a copy of her thesis to Park Service director Conrad Wirth.⁵⁶ Packard's assistance to Cushman was one of many cases in which influential men and women utilized their networks on behalf of Cushman and her project.

⁵⁵ Fred Packard to Elizabeth Cushman, February 24, 1956, FF 6, Box 1, SCA DPL.

⁵⁶ Cushman graduated with a degree in geology. She had studied for an interdepartmental conservation major, but had to choose one major if she wished to write a senior thesis. To fulfill her internship requirement for graduation, she worked for William Pynchon of the Upper Hoosac Valley Watershed Association (MA), doing secretarial and publicity work, as well as making business contacts. William Pynchon to Scott Warthin, August 20, 1954, Box 7, Personal Papers of Elizabeth CT Putnam. [Hereafter ECTP]

Director Wirth proved to be a key contact for Cushman because he had held an important position in the CCC administration. Wirth had represented the Department of the Interior on the CCC Advisory Council, directing the CCC program in state parks for the duration of the program's existence. In his memoirs, Wirth stated that the CCC "was the best conservation program this country ever had," and, shortly after its termination, proposed that the federal government sponsor a permanent agency based on the CCC.⁵⁷ Cushman's idea clearly caught Wirth's attention. Her idea would fulfill many of Wirth's goals for such an agency, including drawing attention to conservation problems and educating the nation's youth about conservation. Wirth, however, wished to replicate the military aspects of the CCC, hire only boys and men, and establish a longer term of paid service.⁵⁸ In Wirth's mind, the "underlying principle" of the CCC was to help young men who were in a bad position and to "develop [a] wholesome and patriotic mental attitude in this younger generation."⁵⁹ Cushman's program overlapped in purpose with Wirth's in its emphasis on fostering appropriate attitudes in the younger generation, but her explicit interest in benefits to the individual student, as opposed to their collective impact on society, differentiated her plan from his. Cushman's idea contained the dual purpose of providing help to parks while enhancing student experience and knowledge. Wirth's concerns echoed those of many postwar middle-class white Americans: the rise of juvenile delinquency and the consequently anxious discussion of how to deal with

⁵⁷ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 87, 151-156.

⁵⁸ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 152.

⁵⁹ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*, 87.

troublesome boys.⁶⁰ Despite conceptual differences between the two program proposals, Cushman's overlapped enough with Wirth's to merit his attention and enlist his willingness to endorse it.

Conrad Wirth and Elizabeth Cushman represented only two Americans who viewed the CCC as an excellent model for a youth work group, one that would address both the need for natural resource preservation and concern about the state of youth. Years after the Civilian Conservation Corps closed its last camps in 1942, interest in a permanent agency persisted. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, letters written to federal officials, editorials published in print media, and proposals made in Congress continued to advocate establishing something similar or else suggested resurrecting the CCC itself.⁶¹ Citizens for Conservation, founded in the early 1950s by a group of scientists and conservationists, proposed creating a non-military CCC type organization.⁶² A Michigan resident wrote to President Eisenhower proposing the re-establishment of CCC camps in order to allow youths to help with the deteriorating state of the national parks. He argued that such a program would foster the "moral stability" of young Americans, and provide work experience for many who could not easily obtain entrance into the working world.⁶³ Wirth's ideas corresponded closely to

⁶⁰ See James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁶¹ Senator James E. Murray of Montana and Representative Reva Beck Bosone of Utah proposed similar CCC-inspired programs in 1950. Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota did the same in 1959.

⁶² Clarence Case to Members and Prospective Members of Citizens for Conservation, Inc., September 4, 1954, Conservation Societies Folder, from 1-1-54, Box 32, Admin NARA.

⁶³ Alvin Frays to President Eisenhower, January 9, 1957, Folder Conservation Associations from 1/56 to 12/56, Box 32, Admin NARA.

this particular suggestion. Indeed, the great majority of Americans proposing work camps and CCC clones sought to solve the “problem” of juvenile delinquency. Prompted by increased media coverage of teenage crime and the changing activities of teenagers in the 1950s, Americans experienced a panic about juvenile delinquents far out of proportion to any actual problem.⁶⁴ The idea to revive a CCC type program echoed popular psychology’s argument that exposure to the great outdoors had therapeutic value and could alleviate adolescent angst.⁶⁵

Cushman did not attempt to address this cultural preoccupation with juvenile delinquency. She proposed a corps that would draw from a very different cohort – well-behaved, highly educated young people between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five who might become future leaders and conservationists. Still, the SCC focus on youth tapped into the era’s general concern with young people and their behavior. For that reason, it likely appealed to Conrad Wirth and other officials as a means of instilling wholesome qualities in young people and influencing promising young Americans. Wirth was an early supporter of the SCC, from the time that Cushman’s proposal first crossed his desk.⁶⁶ He applauded her “detailed and potentially valuable study,” and sent her thesis to members of his staff for their evaluation.⁶⁷ Wirth believed a program such as the SCC could aid the Service, as well

⁶⁴ Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage*, 71.

⁶⁵ Michael B. Smith, “‘The Ego Ideal of the Good Camper:’ and the Nature of Summer Camp,” *Environmental History* 11 (January 2006), 86.

⁶⁶ Conrad Wirth to Allston Boyer, February 28, 1957, FF 22, Box 2, SCA DPL. After the first summer program in 1957, Wirth did express some concerns stemming from the amount of work NPS employees devoted to the SCP. The program was revised to shift the burden from the NPS, after which Wirth consistently promoted the program.

⁶⁷ Wirth to Cushman, November 8, 1955, FF 21, Box 2, SCA DPL.

as provide valuable experience to those students who participated in it. Although he did not initially offer financial support, Wirth vocally advocated for the program from the outset. He continued this enthusiasm in later years, as well; a few months following his retirement from the National Park Service in January of 1964, Conrad Wirth agreed to join the newly incorporated Student Conservation Association as one of its directors.⁶⁸ Clearly, Cushman had designed a program that spoke to contemporary concerns and attempted to solve a pressing problem; her acumen, coupled with her social networks, led to the positive responses given by Park Service officials and conservationists.

Planning the Trial Project, 1954-1957

Idealistic college students with ambitious solutions to contemporary crises certainly were not unheard of in the 1950s (nor other decades as well).⁶⁹ What enabled

⁶⁸ SCA Incorporation Materials, June 18, 1964, Book 1, Corporate Logs of the Student Conservation Association, Inc., SCA Headquarters, Charlestown, NH. [Hereafter SCA Corporate Logs.]

⁶⁹ Wendy Kopp's idea Teach for America, though conceptualized almost forty years after Cushman's SCC, has important similarities: origins in a senior thesis written at an elite institution of higher learning, founders with upper-middle/upper class backgrounds, as well as concepts which sought to rectify contemporary problems. The career of Allard Lowenstein, an important leader in the National Student Association, provides another example of student activism in the 1950s. See William Chafe, *Never Stop Running: Allard Lowenstein and the Struggle to Save American Liberalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). For one group of idealistic young women, see, for example, Wini Breines, "The 'Other' Fifties: Beats and Bad Girls," in Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 382-408. Breines' essay profiles young radical women with very different outlooks than those held by Elizabeth Cushman. For an excellent fictional exploration of young idealistic Vassar graduates from an earlier period, see Mary McCarthy, *The Group* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963).

Elizabeth Cushman to move her idea from the pages of a senior thesis to an actual project? To begin with, she had access to a number of important, well-connected people with ties to the Park Service and non-profit conservation organizations, particularly the Garden Club of America. She had, in other words, a great deal of what sociologists term “social capital,” as well as elite class standing and access to family resources. Possession of these assets permitted Cushman to contact powerful individuals and in turn utilize their networks to her benefit.⁷⁰ Many of her contacts came from her family, whose wealth derived from manufacturing and banking interests. Her mother, Elizabeth Alden Robinson, was descended not only from the Samuel Colt family (the gunsmith) but also from a New England patrimony that enabled her to claim membership with the Daughters of the American Revolution, among other high-status organizations. Her father, a World War I veteran and Yale graduate, worked as an industrial engineer for Grumman Aircraft, with a stint at W.A. Harriman & Co., an important banking firm in New York City. Cushman herself had been a debutante in New York City and graduated from Miss Porter’s School (CT) before entering Vassar College, where she participated in the yachting club, athletic

⁷⁰ Pamela Walker Laird, *Pull: Networking and Success since Benjamin Franklin* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2. For more on social capital, see James Farr, “Social Capital: A Conceptual History,” *Political Theory* 32.1 (February 2004): 6-33; Alejandro Portes, “The Two Meanings of Social Capital,” *Sociological Forum* 15.1 (March 2000): 1-12. I use “social capital” to speak about the “networks, norms, and trust” formed between people, focusing primarily on networks. A more expansive definition found in Farr, “Social Capital,” 8-9: “Social capital is complexly conceptualized as the network of associations, activities, or relations that bind people together as a community via certain norms and psychological capacities, notably trust, which are essential for civil society and productive of future collective action or goods, in the manner of other forms of capital.”

association, and outing club.⁷¹ She also belonged to socially prominent organizations, joining the North Country Garden Club and the Colony Club in New York as an adult. Cushman came from a decidedly privileged background, one that played a very important role during the years leading up to the first summer volunteer projects in 1957.

Her family's social capital was evident in the doors that opened to her. After hearing of Elizabeth's senior thesis while it was still in draft stage, cousin "Jerry" (Elizabeth Jarvis Beach Jones), a 1941 graduate of Vassar College, put Cushman in touch with her neighbor Bertha Mather McPherson (Vassar '28), daughter of Stephen Mather, the first National Park Service Director. McPherson in turn directed Cushman to contact her godfather, former Park Service director Horace Albright.⁷² Albright, beloved among Park Service employees, maintained a close

⁷¹ "Elizabeth Cushman Wed in St. James," *New York Times*, June 5, 1960, 88; news clipping profile of Elizabeth Cushman, Box 7, ECTP. Family information of the Beach/Robinson/Cushman family was obtained primarily from *New York Times* social notes. Cushman's parents' wedding announcement can be found in "Ruth O. Kingsbury Engaged to Marry," *New York Times*, 15 January 15, 1928, 36. Her mother's family resided in Hartford, CT and at Heartsease in Newport, RI. Cushman's mother also attended Miss Porter's School, claiming membership in a number of other prestigious clubs, including the Connecticut Society of Daughters of the Colonial Dames of America and the Colony Club of New York. Cushman's father graduated from St. Paul's School in New Hampshire, attended Yale, and claimed membership in the Yale Club and the Union Club, the nation's second oldest club. Her father's brother, Paul Cushman, married Cordelia Hepburn, the daughter of millionaire financier A. Barton Hepburn. Cushman's grandfather, Colonel Charles Leonard Frost Robinson, presided over Colt Firearms. "Col. C.L.F. Robinson Dies on His Yacht," *New York Times*, July 7, 1916, 11.

⁷² In his letter of introduction written for Cushman in 1955, Albright noted that he knew her "through the good office of Mrs. Edward R. McPherson."

personal and working relationship with Conrad Wirth.⁷³ Cushman's access to this network, a combination of wealthy garden club members, Vassar College alumnae, and Park Service officials, stemmed from the intervention of her cousin. Had Cushman simply mailed her thesis to Conrad Wirth, with no help from well positioned connections, it is very possible her thesis would now languish in the same College Park National Archives box as the Michigan man's letter to Eisenhower, proposing yet another program similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Once put in touch with Horace Albright, Cushman visited him in the fall of 1954 while still completing her senior thesis. Albright urged her to pursue her idea by visiting several national parks in the summer of 1955 and presenting her thesis to park superintendents. His letter of introduction and list of recommended park visits boosted her confidence, while providing her with contacts in selected parks.⁷⁴ She pressed ahead with plans for visits to those parks in the summer of 1955, convinced a few important Park Service employees that her idea was worthwhile, and thereby gained support necessary to garner interest from national parks, foundations, and private citizens. Cushman's connections to women's social clubs and university networks proved similarly crucial.⁷⁵ Those connections would continue to play a vital role in sustaining the program, particularly when it came to financial matters.

⁷³ Wirth and Albright corresponded at least once about revitalizing a CCC program, even after the SCP had begun. Clearly, they did not view the student program as completely fulfilling their desire for one that did "real conservation" work. Wirth to Albright, May 14, 1958, Folder Horace Albright Correspondence 1958-1959, Box 2, Records of Conrad Wirth, RG 79 Records of the National Park Service, NARA College Park, MD. [Hereafter Wirth NARA]

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam, interview by author, 3-4 May 2006.

⁷⁵ Laird, *Pull*, 91.

Cushman's summer trip encompassed visits to four parks: Olympic and Mount Rainier National Parks in Washington, and Grand Teton and Yellowstone in Wyoming. She and Albright picked these parks partly for convenience and partly from personal choice; Cushman wished to visit the Tetons again, and she had plans to attend a friend's wedding in the Pacific Northwest that summer. Albright's letter of introduction smoothed the way, asking park officials to consider her ideas and suggestions seriously, and allowing her to speak with people in positions of power.⁷⁶ Prompted by her father, who suggested it might be good to travel with a friend, Cushman sought a companion to accompany her on her Western trip, someone who would be open to camping.⁷⁷ Her Vassar advisor Scott Warthin suggested Marty Hayne (Vassar '54), and wrote to her asking if she might be interested in joining Cushman on her trip. Hayne, a Californian with family roots in New England, shared Cushman's interest in conservation and the outdoors and eagerly accepted the offer.⁷⁸ Although the two women had not known each other during their college years, they got along well. During the next few years, these two women would work closely to develop and administer the first summer projects of the Student Conservation Program (SCP).

⁷⁶ Horace Albright to National Park Superintendents and Rangers, July 7, 1955, SCP Presentation to Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc. October 26, 1956, FF 5, Box 1, SCA DPL.

⁷⁷ ECTP Interview with author, May 3-4, 2006.

⁷⁸ Hayne's mother was Anna Walcott Hayne Likins, daughter of Martha Spellman Eustis and Charles Walcott. Likins, born in Cambridge, MA, attended Bryn Mawr College, married her brother's Harvard classmate, and claimed membership in such clubs as the San Francisco Town and Country Club and Colonial Dames. "Anna Walcott Hayne Likins," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 16, 2005, z-99.

Additional support, advice, and fund-raising on behalf of their program came to Cushman and Hayne from three high ranking conservationists in respected foundations and organizations: George Brewer, Vice President of The Conservation Foundation in New York City; Fairfield Osborn, Jr., author of *Our Plundered Planet* (1948) and president of The Conservation Foundation and New York Zoological Society; and Fred Packard, Executive Secretary of the National Parks Association in Washington, D.C.⁷⁹ Cushman met Fairfield Osborn in the spring of 1954, while accompanying her parents to dinner with friends in New York. The two discussed her interest in conservation, and Osborn suggested that she come find him when finished with her degree. With Osborn's help, she met other young women interested in conservation, including Judy Merck Buechner, who became a long-time donor and collaborator.⁸⁰ Osborn also introduced her to George Brewer and Laurance Rockefeller; Brewer became a vital source of fundraising and Rockefeller contributed both capital and verbal support for many years.⁸¹ These three men helped legitimate the SCP by facilitating sponsorship from their respective organizations (The Conservation Foundation, New York Zoological Society, and National Parks

⁷⁹ Samuel Hays notes that The Conservation Foundation, an offshoot of the NY Zoological Society, had a major influence on environmental affairs during the 1950s and 1960s, and that the National Parks Association played an important role in promoting preservationist ideals during the postwar period. Samuel P. Hays, with Barbara D. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 53, 419-422.

⁸⁰ Judy (Judith) Merck Buechner was the daughter of George W. Merck, president of Merck & Co. pharmaceuticals from 1925-1955. "Judith Merck Married in Jersey," *New York Times* April 8, 1956, 89.

⁸¹ Packard to Harold C. Bryant, May 1, 1956, FF 38, Box 2, SCA DPL.

Association), as well as other groups, including the Sierra Club, the American Conservation Association, and The Wilderness Society. Less tangible assistance came in the form of useful suggestions on how to build a new program and garner financial support. All emphasized persistence - Packard told Cushman and Hayne never to take the first “no” seriously.⁸² These young women learned the skills of development, networking, and politicking from important movers and shakers within the conservationist community.

Armed with Albright’s letter and the knowledge that well-connected conservationists stood behind them, Hayne and Cushman set off in late summer 1955 on a cross-country trip to pitch Cushman’s idea to the national parks’ staffs. The two young women visited the four parks Albright recommended, with promising results. Cushman and Hayne peppered the superintendents, landscape architects, student trainees, biologists, and rangers of these parks with questions ranging from recollections of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the need for personnel and work groups, to the possibility of having young women work in the parks.⁸³ The staffs of several parks “chuckled” upon hearing their proposals, but Superintendent Fred Overly of Olympic National Park and Superintendent Frank Oberhansley of Grand Teton enthusiastically listened to the Cushman and Hayne’s presentation.⁸⁴ After Cushman and Hayne returned East and wrote a formal report, Fred Packard and the

⁸² FF 4, Box 16, SCA DPL.

⁸³ Cushman and Hayne, “A Detailed Study on a Proposed Student Conservation Corps,” September 7, 1955, ECTP.

⁸⁴ “Solutions in Sight: Environment. A Conversation with Liz Titus Putnam,” The InSite, 1997, available at http://www.theinsite.org/solutions/sca_text.html. (Accessed 21 March 2010).

National Parks Association took on the responsibility of directing and sponsoring the newly renamed Student Conservation Program in March of 1956. One month later, Hayne and Cushman traveled west again, with instructions from the NPA to visit colleges and universities in Wyoming and Colorado, speak with faculty and students, and distribute applications for a pilot project to be conducted that summer.

In consulting with faculty members at the institutions they visited, the women encountered support, recommendations – and reservations. Many faculty thought students should earn college credit for a summer’s work in the parks, agreeing that the proposed work projects merited such recognition. Several professors argued that students from the Midwest and East Coast regions might provide a better pool of applicants than those from the West because they would “give their eye-teeth” to work in a Western park, whereas local students either would not be as excited to volunteer in familiar areas or would need to earn money over the summer. These conversations with individuals knowledgeable about regional Western idiosyncrasies provide another window into the inherently exclusive nature of the SCP. One Colorado college department chairman pointed out that Colorado and surrounding states had poorer students who would be financially unable to volunteer for summer work.⁸⁵ This professor’s caveat highlights the particular student profile sought by Cushman and those in the conservationist community who supported her efforts.

Cushman was interested in recruiting a particular cohort of volunteers: those who could afford to eschew summer jobs in favor of volunteering. Though not consciously class-biased, her original idea generally excluded those who did not

⁸⁵ Cushman to Packard, April 11, 1956, FF 6, Box 1, SCA DPL.

attend college, could not afford to travel, and needed summer wages.⁸⁶ Most young people had no opportunity to attend college during the 1950s, though millions of veterans were using G.I. benefits to flood American colleges and universities.⁸⁷ Many more potential undergraduates could not afford to attend institutes of higher learning. Those who did attend college often had to work in the summers to pay for their educations, and so had no opportunity to volunteer for the SCP. College enrollment increased notably during the postwar period, rising from 2.1 million students in 1950, to 2.9 million in 1960, and 7 million in 1970.⁸⁸ Higher education had historically been the purview of well-off students, but expanded in the postwar period due to rising standards of living, the G.I. Bill, and dramatic increases in federal funding for higher education and student loans. Increasingly, colleges opened their doors to a more socioeconomically diverse student population. A great disparity, however, remained

⁸⁶ Cushman proposed her program several years before the 1958 National Defense Education Act, which provided some federal student loans funded by the U.S. Treasury; in 1965, the Higher Education Act expanded these loans and authorized private banks to offer student loans backed by the federal government. These enabled millions of students to attend college who would otherwise be unable to enroll.

⁸⁷ Around 8 million WWII veterans took advantage of GI Bill benefits to further their education in the postwar era. In 1947, fully half of the nation's college students were veterans. See Margaret W. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America Before Affirmative Action, 1940-1972* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 31; Susan Levine, *Degrees of Equality: The American Association of University Women and the Challenge of Twentieth-Century Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 90; Wilson Smith and Thomas Bender, eds., *American Higher Education Transformed, 1940-2005* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 394. (Note: statistics on the exact number of students and the percentage of veterans vary by source.)

⁸⁸ The percentage of adults over 25 who had attained bachelor's degrees or higher was 6% in 1950, 8% in 1960, and 11% in 1970. See Census Questionnaire Content, 1990 CQC-13 at <http://www.census.gov/apsd/cqc/cqc13.pdf>. (Accessed 21 March 2010).

between the percentage of students from poor families who attended college and those from wealthy families.⁸⁹ Cushman's ideas about service and activism reflected her upbringing and voluntarist politics; she endeavored to help a government program by enlisting well-off college students. Her SCP was decidedly different from more radical student activist groups formed in the 1950s and 1960s that challenged the status quo.

Western professors also underscored the possibility of encountering regional political issues when recruiting local students. At the University of Wyoming, a biology professor warned that students from the area might be prejudiced against the program because of bad blood between ranchers and the Park Service. Undoubtedly, he referred to a recent battle over the expansion of Grand Teton National Park, which the Rockefeller family foundation had facilitated through its purchase of millions of dollars worth of private land to add to park holdings.⁹⁰ The professor's warning assuredly suggested to Cushman the ongoing debates regarding public land usage. In this case, conservationists who wished to transfer range lands to national park holdings disagreed with local interests (e.g. ranchers and hunters) that mistrusted the

⁸⁹ Michael Useem and S.M. Miller, "The Upper Class in Higher Education," *Social Policy* (January/February 1977), 28-29. Useem and Miller quote a study that found 24% of men from the nation's poorest families started college, versus 81% from wealthy families. For women, 11% of the poorest started college, versus 76% of affluent women. The study the authors quote surveyed students who finished high school in 1960.

⁹⁰ Robin W. Winks, *Laurance S. Rockefeller: Catalyst for Conservation* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1997), 57. See also Marian Albright Schenck, "One Day on Timbered Island: How the Rockefellers' Visit to Yellowstone Led to Grand Teton National Park," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 57.2 (2007): 22-39, 93-94. The deal was primarily brokered by Laurance's father John D. Rockefeller, Jr., though Laurance served as president of Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., when the newly acquired lands were signed over to the Park Service in 1949. Winks argues that Laurance Rockefeller carried on his father's interests in expanding park lands.

federal government.⁹¹ At Grand Teton, the National Park Service and private interests supporting the Service's mission acted as the more protectionist-minded group, in the sense that it wanted to expand park lands to secure a more aesthetically pleasing, ecologically sound boundary.⁹² Cushman and Hayne did not philosophize at length about the purpose of national park lands, nor did they contend with the politics between the Park Service and the local economic interests with which it dealt. For them, the SCP would simply help the Park Service fulfill its mission to conserve the scenery and provide for its enjoyment by the people.

Following their visits, Cushman and Hayne reported to the Park Service and interested organizations, refining the proposal for a student volunteer group on the basis of their summer 1955 and spring 1956 trips.⁹³ Using Cushman's original proposal and the Cushman/Hayne reports, the National Park Service agreed to a trial run of the Student Conservation Program at Grand Teton National Park during the summer of 1956. The pilot program would recruit ten men for Grand Teton, despite

⁹¹ Winks, *Laurance S. Rockefeller*, 57.

⁹² Ideas about park lands and their purpose continued to shift, reflecting the growing acceptance of the science of ecology since the 1920s and its concept of ecosystems. Rather than solely protecting scenery deemed spectacular enough for federal protection, the Park Service and Congress began working to incorporate surrounding lands to protect entire ecosystems, often overriding local interests which used such land for economic reasons. See Runte, *National Parks*, 48-49; he argues that parks initially comprised lands deemed lacking in any economic value; drawing lines around the bottom of "useless" mountains still allowed local economic interests to continue drawing profit from surrounding areas. The concept of a national park slowly shifted from "monumentalism" to "ecological preserve."

⁹³ Marty Hayne Talbot, "An International Application of SCP Experiment," FF 45, Box 1, SCA DPL.

the Park superintendent's request for thirty-six men and women.⁹⁴ Cushman and Hayne, however, rejected this proposed trial run. Assigning SCP participants to plant trees around Jackson Lake Lodge, as a Park Service official suggested, was not in keeping with their proposal, as the young men would not be relieving rangers of any of their duties. Cushman and Hayne drew the line and cancelled the 1956 summer program.

It was a remarkable move. Certainly, the superintendent of Grand Teton was stunned upon hearing of the young women's decision. Cushman's firm letter to Conrad Wirth stated that serious time limitations precluded the program from running smoothly that summer, although she noted that there were other more compelling reasons for postponing the trial run.⁹⁵ As Cushman explained at the time, she hoped that another year of planning and preparation would attract highly-qualified applicants, especially women, and open the door to other parks, namely Olympic, that had also demonstrated interest in the Student Conservation Program.⁹⁶ It is difficult to over-emphasize the incredulity these men likely experienced as two young twenty-something women refused to carry out a program planned by Park Service officials. Cushman and Hayne believed that their idea had been twisted to assist the

⁹⁴ Packard to Conrad Wirth, February 7, 1956, FF 27, Box 2, SCA DPL. Lon Garrison, a former park superintendent and chief ranger at Grand Teton, agreed with Fred Packard that recruiting ten men would be easiest, from an administrative viewpoint. Garrison appears to have overridden Superintendent Frank Oberhansley's wishes, according to Packard's report of the SCP planning discussion to Conrad Wirth. See Packard to Wirth, February 7, 1956, FF 27, Box 2, SCA DPL.

⁹⁵ Cushman to Wirth, May 14, 1956, Folder SCP Dec. 31, 59, A5435, Box 507, Admin NARA; "A Conversation with Liz Titus Putnam."

⁹⁶ Cushman to Frank Oberhansley, May 11, 1956, FF 18, Box 3, SCA DPL.

concessioners, not the Park Service. The proposed program would provide little benefit to the students, as planting trees would not provide a challenge, nor would it allow them to gain academic credit.⁹⁷ The women's confidence that the Park Service would not completely write off their program, and their ability to stand firm signified strengths gained from their personal resources: class, capital, education, and individual fortitude.

In standing up to Park officials and insisting that the Park Service stick to their original vision as much as possible, the two young women gave themselves time to develop their ideas, find appropriate student volunteers, and prepare for the next summer. Marty Hayne and Liz Cushman diligently worked on their program, earning high praise from their collaborators, one of whom commented that Cushman and Hayne did a "top-flight job" and "have made a major contribution to the cause of conservation on the national scene."⁹⁸ The two women had many obstacles to overcome, however. Officials of the National Park Service did not want to take on the responsibility of directing the SCP and the program's finances, advising that the National Parks Association would be best equipped to build and fund the program. The NPA agreed to continue its sponsorship, an important decision as it allowed all donations to the SCP to be deemed charitable on tax returns. Conrad Wirth noted that the Service would certainly support the program, but could not do so financially, as it focused most of its energies toward fulfilling Mission 66.⁹⁹ The two women worked

⁹⁷ Cushman to Packard, April 11, 1956, FF 6, Box 1, SCA DPL.

⁹⁸ Brewer to Sigurd Olson (NPA President), September 12, 1958, FF 33, Box 3, SCA DPL.

⁹⁹ Conrad Wirth to Allston Boyer, February 28, 1957, FF 22, Box 2, SCA DPL.

under the wing of Fred Packard, who viewed the student program as a direct way the NPA could help the Park Service and recruit young conservationists.¹⁰⁰ Hayne and Cushman did the majority of the work involved in setting up the 1957 program: devising application forms, mailing out applications to colleges and high schools, attending wildlife and wilderness conferences to publicize the SCP, raising funds for the two programs, creating brochures, recruiting supervisors for the programs, and screening applicants.

After cancelling the 1956 program, Cushman and Hayne directly appealed to Olympic National Park superintendent Fred Overly and Grand Teton National Park superintendent Frank Oberhansley, inquiring about what work was actually needed, and what services students could provide. Overly asked for thirty high school-aged boys to work in the park interior, mainly as a maintenance crew for trail repair and backcountry shelter upkeep. He also requested three college or graduate women to work in the newly built Park museum, and three to four “good wildlife college students” to assist the park biologist in field investigations.¹⁰¹ Frank Oberhansley requested fifteen college and graduate-aged men and women to work in the various divisions of the park. For the Olympic program, Superintendent Overly, Fred Packard and SCP camp supervisor Charles Maiden weeded through selected applications forwarded by Cushman and Hayne, choosing those they deemed best and mailing out equipment lists, waivers, instructions, and travel suggestions to the lucky students.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ John C. Miles, *Guardians of the Parks: A History of the National Parks and Conservation Association* (Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 200.

¹⁰¹ Packard to Cushman, November 21, 1956, FF 27, Box 2, SCA DPL.

¹⁰² John Douglas Dolstad, “An Analysis of the Status of a Volunteer Student Conservation Program combining Education and Work Experience in Olympic

Cushman, Hayne, and their colleagues in the NPA and NPS deliberately kept publicity about the program to a minimum, aware that this first summer was an experiment to see if Cushman's idea could actually work and serve its purpose. For the summer projects, SCP administrators drew from 100 completed applications, selecting thirty high school boys and twenty-two college men and women to work for the two parks. Students were drawn from states across the nation, in an effort to provide a geographically diverse group for the volunteers. The program undoubtedly tapped into an existing interest among young people in college and high school, considering that enthusiasm for the program persisted as it grew.

The SCP (rechristened the Student Conservation Association in 1964) remained very small during its first twenty years of operation, a characteristic that helped it by providing a robust esprit de corps and sense of selectivity among the volunteers (See Table 2.2). Although Cushman originally designed the program for college students, in actual practice the programs recruited far more high school volunteers than those in college or graduate school. Many of these young people, mostly teenagers, would later attribute their environmental awareness to their experience with the SCA. Women students were a very small percentage of SCA volunteers; for the first ten years, they comprised only twelve percent of yearly participant numbers. Considering the small number of SCA volunteers, the number of

National Park" (M.Ed., University of Washington, 1960),¹⁰. Selection of appropriate students carried great weight with many SCP sponsors; George Brewer would later write to Laurance Rockefeller about his concerns about shifting program operations and what such change might have on volunteer selection; students had always been "carefully screened by discriminating private persons." Brewer to Rockefeller, October 11, 1960, Folder ACA-SCP 1960-61, Box 16, ACA Grant Files, Rockefeller Archives Center, Tarrytown, NY. [Hereafter ACA RAC]; for further discussion of this, see Chapter Four.

women participating was miniscule (See Table 2.3). The size of the program quite obviously made it a small blip on the national radar during the 1950s and 1960s, and it had minimal visibility in the national consciousness. Even today, the SCA calls itself the “best kept secret in conservation.” One might think that this program had little importance to the wider environmentalism movement, but its early history and the process by which it came into existence suggests otherwise. Though small, the SCA attracted the support of powerful men and women, a testament to both Cushman’s social capital and the appeal of her concept.

Table 2.2. SCA Program Participation Numbers

Year	College / Grad	% of total (college)	High School	Year Total	Year	College / Grad	% of total (college)	High School	Year Total
1957	22	42	31	53	1966	18	20	70	88
1958	16	35	30	46	1967	30	29	73	103
1959	19	39	30	49	1968	42	31	94	136
1960	19	39	30	49	1969	53	32	113	166
1961	15	33	30	45	1970	70	30	165	235
1962	3	9	30	33	1971	58	24	182	240
1963	7	19	30	37	1972	86	26	246	332
1964	4	12	29	33	1973	77	22	277	354
1965	11	17	52	63	1974	103	25	307	410

Source: Appendix B, SCA History, FF 26, Box 1, SCA DPL.

Table 2.3 Number of Women and Men SCA Participants, 1957-1966

	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966
Women	8	6	8	10	5	2	2	2	8	12
Men	45	40	41	39	40	31	35	31	55	76
% Women	15%	13%	16%	20%	11%	6%	5%	6%	13%	14%

As they worked on recruiting and choosing participants for the trial project, funding for the program became the one major obstacle Cushman and Hayne struggled to overcome. The National Park Service refused to provide seed money, instead waiting to see if the project merited financial support. As students were only required to pay for their travel expenses to and from the parks, Cushman and Hayne needed to find enough money to cover volunteers' room, board, and equipment, and pay for supervisors, liability insurance, and other miscellaneous expenses. The total cost for the 1957 program was estimated at \$10,300 (about \$63,800 in 2009 dollars).¹⁰³ Again, Cushman's connections enabled the program to proceed – this time, mentor George Brewer corresponded with philanthropist Laurance Rockefeller, persuading him to make a donation of \$7414 through the Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc., enough to cover the estimated cost of the program at Grand Teton National Park.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Budget Committee Meeting Minutes, January 2, 1957, NPA Minutes, Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, 1957-1958, Box 13, CONS 225 National Parks Conservation Association Records, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO. [Hereafter NPCA DPL]. Samuel H. Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1774 to present," MeasuringWorth, April 2010: <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/> (accessed 3 July 2010). I used the GDP Deflator indicator.

¹⁰⁴ Laurance Rockefeller to Fred Packard, December 12, 1956, Folder 808, Box 87, Cultural Interests series, Record Group 2 Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller (OMR), Rockefeller Family Archives, Rockefeller Archives Center, Tarrytown, NY. [Hereafter OMR RAC].

Very likely, Rockefeller found Cushman's ideas attractive, particularly as he wished to boost educational programs and held a long-running interest in improving national parks. The remainder of the funds came from a number of conservation groups, including the Garden Club of America (GCA), a few of its member organizations, and individuals. By April of 1957, with the help of Fred Packard and others, Cushman and Hayne had managed to raise enough funds for the summer programs.¹⁰⁵

In addition to Rockefeller's donations, the sponsorship of the Garden Club of America proved immensely important. GCA support stemmed from several sources, including Cushman's mother's service as the Conservation Committee chairman of the Bennington (VT) Garden Club, where her daughter had first publicly presented the SCP idea. The Bennington garden club enthusiastically supported Cushman, sending donations and writing letters on her behalf. Over time, an increasing number of GCA clubs reliably donated to the SCP, often keeping the program afloat; the GCA journal often profiled the student volunteer program, calling for member clubs to donate funds and encourage young people to apply. Keenly aware that many members had valuable connections and would appreciate recognition of their generosity, Cushman made sure the GCA name appeared on SCP literature.¹⁰⁶ Cushman's strategy of cultivating GCA support included frequent speeches about the SCP to garden clubs around the nation. The SCP concept fit nicely with the Garden Club of America's long-standing interest in conservation issues, as well as its blossoming concern with other environmental issues including the dangers of DDT,

¹⁰⁵ 1957 Budget, FF 5, Box 7, SCA DPL.

¹⁰⁶ Cushman to Packard, January 12, 1957, FF 8, Box 1, SCA DPL.

highway beautification, and organic gardening.¹⁰⁷ In gaining access to its networks and funding, Cushman tapped into the extensive resources at the disposal of GCA members, many of whom were wealthy society women eager to support conservation education initiatives, particularly those promoted by polished young Vassar graduates.

First Summer in Olympic and Grand Teton National Parks, 1957

To Liz Cushman, Marty Hayne, and the student participants, the initial summer projects were an unqualified success. Park Service officials, however, saw things differently, pointing out that the projects better served the students than the parks.¹⁰⁸ To satisfy Park Service officials and maintain their support, the two women altered the program, shifting its design to focus on providing more aid to parks, rather than foreground student experiences. In the process, Cushman and Hayne agreed to transfer most operational responsibility, specifically supervisory duty, from the Park Service to the National Parks Association. Such flexibility, a strategy used well by SCP administrators over the years, allowed the program to remain in the parks and continue to provide volunteer service.¹⁰⁹

Fifty-three students from sixteen states, aged sixteen to forty-two years, participated in five different SCP groups during the summer of 1957, four at Olympic

¹⁰⁷ For the most in-depth exploration of the GCA and its conservation activities, see Shana Miriam Cohen, “American Garden Clubs and the Fight for Nature Preservation, 1890-1980” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2005). For more on the SCP-GCA connection, see Chapter Three.

¹⁰⁸ “Unqualified success” from Miles, *Guardians of the Parks*, 200.

¹⁰⁹ Programmatic flexibility proved to be a very valuable trait for environmental organizations in the postwar period, as tax codes, legal restrictions, and the political clout of economic interests forced many to work outside the government and appeal directly to the public. Bosso, *Environment, Inc.*, 34-38.

and one at Grand Teton (See Table 2.4). The older students represented twenty-two colleges, including Yale, Princeton, Harvard, Vassar, Middlebury, and the Universities of Michigan, Colorado, and Utah. Several students had already obtained their college degrees; one had graduated twenty years earlier, an indication of the SCP's fluid idea of what constituted a "student." Thirty-one high school boys, three college and graduate women, and three college men comprised the four groups at Olympic National Park, while sixteen college and graduate men and women worked at Grand Teton National Park. Their work ran the gamut from trail maintenance and guided nature walks to museum work and wildlife research.¹¹⁰ By all accounts, the students made a good impression on Park Service staff with whom they worked; Superintendent Oberhansley noted in his official monthly report that "observers of the program have been generous with praise."¹¹¹ Olympic Superintendent Overly exhibited a bit less enthusiasm, noting that the program required a considerable portion of his time.

¹¹⁰ 1957 Complete Report The Summer Trial Projects, FF 1, Box 20, SCA DPL.

¹¹¹ Superintendent Monthly Report July 1957, 8 August 1957, Folder GRTE, from July 1, 1957, pt. 6, Box 201, Admin NARA.

Table 2.4 Student Participation in 1957 SCP Programs

1957 SCP Programs	High School Boys	High School Girls	College/Graduate Men	College/Graduate Women	% of total (women)
Olympic NP	31 (two groups)	0	3	3	8%
Grand Teton NP	0	0	11	5	31%

Source: 1957 Complete Report The Summer Trial Projects, FF 1, Box 20, SCA DPL. High school girls would not participate until 1969.

At Olympic, two groups of fifteen high schools boys worked for three weeks in the backcountry of the park. Under the supervision of a teacher from Olympic College, the boys constructed nature trails, backpacked in the high country, and learned about the natural history of the area.¹¹² Their major accomplishments included gravelling the Hoh Rain Forest Nature Trail and building and clearing two trails along the Elwha River. The three college and graduate men worked with the Park Biologist, keeping track of the park's elk herds. Three college and graduate women lived at the newly opened park museum, organizing the library, drawing maps, and researching a historical exhibit. One of the women, Mary Meagher, a University of Michigan graduate student in game management, conducted a study of the marmot population. All took advantage of their surroundings, hiking extensively through the park.

¹¹² Elizabeth Cushman and Martha Hayne, "The Student Conservation Program: A Worthwhile Summer," *National Parks Magazine* (April-June 1958), 75.

In the Grand Tetons, fifteen men and women lived at Ramshorn Ranch under the supervision of Dr. Harold Bryant and his wife Amy Bryant.¹¹³ Bryant had long played a part in providing educational opportunities in the parks, founding in 1925 the long-running Yosemite Field School for park rangers and naturalists in training. He also served as Superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park from 1941 to 1954, and played a large role in establishing the interpretive division of the Park Service. A friend of Horace Albright, Bryant brought legitimacy to the program in serving as the supervisor of the SCP students. These students had a very different program from those in Olympic National Park, as they rotated among the major divisions of the park for the first three weeks, learning the basics about the Protective, Engineering, Interpretive, and Administrative aspects of the park. Following their orientation to each division, students chose the part of the park in which they wished to work for the remainder of their two-month stay. These students performed a variety of jobs including rolling telephone wire, flagging traffic, conducting nature hikes, surveying park buildings, and helping visitors. The students at Olympic had much less programmatic flexibility and learned less about the operations of the Park Service than did those in the Grand Tetons.

Each SCP group had different experiences, reflecting the availability of resources and needs of the park administration. The character of the programs also differed; in Grand Teton, all participants were college age or older, with one-third of them being women. In Olympic, most were high school boys, with a few college age men and women off doing their own research or work elsewhere in the park. Both

¹¹³ One student had to leave the program after two weeks, to fulfill his service with the U.S. Navy. See Ramshorn Rambler, Box 6, ECTP.

parks, however, provided some type of educational programming, specifically aimed at teaching about conservation broadly conceived.¹¹⁴ At Olympic, the educational program was more informal. Park naturalists gave the boys lessons on plant life, geology, photography, mountaineering, and outdoor living. The participants also carried around a small library on conservation and related topics, for individual reading. The high school program was reminiscent of scout groups, with an emphasis on physical exertion in nature; one boy, in writing up his diary for the summer's report, referred to the group as "woodsmen."¹¹⁵ The majority of students selected had previous outdoors and camping experience.¹¹⁶ Not all were "woodsmen," however; one college man drew repeated complaints from his colleagues due to his lack of practical experience.¹¹⁷ The older students at Olympic had no set program, going to educational slide shows given by park naturalists and speaking with staff about Park Service policies when they could; otherwise, their learning came through work experience in the museum or in the field. The Olympic program certainly exemplified

¹¹⁴ In their evaluation of the summer programs, Cushman and Hayne noted that the educational benefits of all programs should be viewed on a "graduated scale." On one end was the Grand Teton program, a "highly organized, truly dual-accented project," with equal weight given to education and work accomplished. The college and graduate men and women at Olympic represented the other end of the scale, as these programs did not have any educational opportunities planned, other than experience accumulated on the job. See Cushman and Hayne, "Evaluation of the Student Conservation Program," Report #10, p. 3, SCAHQ.

¹¹⁵ Eliot T. Putnam, Jr., "A Diary of the Activities of the First Participants in the Student Conservation Program, 1957," p. 1, Report #10, SCAHQ.

¹¹⁶ Cushman and Hayne, "A Worthwhile Summer," 78.

¹¹⁷ Cushman to Packard, August 10, 1957, Box 6, ECTP.

the idea of experiential education – a “learn by doing” philosophy that became a hallmark of future SCA programs.

The Grand Teton program gave participants, most of whom were older than their Olympic counterparts, more formal learning opportunities, partly due to the park’s proximity to a number of federal agency bureaus and a major university research station. Those at the Tetons had much more opportunity to learn about conservation and biological sciences. A number of scientists resided in the region, often working in and around Jackson Hole, and six of these gave illustrated lectures about their research to students.¹¹⁸ Many college and graduate students considered the Grand Teton program as the most sought-after assignment, partly because, beginning in 1958, it provided scientific experience and resources for college and graduate students at the Jackson Hole Biological Research Station.¹¹⁹ The Grand Teton program also provided a different experience from the Olympic version in that about one-third of the participants were female. The presence of college women, particularly in work largely considered masculine, undoubtedly shaped this part of the program. One complaint Cushman and Hayne lodged against the aborted 1956 program was that it lacked opportunity for women; as Chapter Three elaborates, their concern highlights their refusal to accept certain assumptions about women and work.

¹¹⁸ In 1957, students heard from such esteemed scientists as Olaus Murie (on the Alaskan Brooks Range) and Margaret Altmann (on animal behavior). Students also took field trips with representatives from the Wyoming Fish and Game Service, the Soil Conservation Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. See *The Ramshorn Rambler* (GTNP student yearbook 1957), Box 6, ECTP.

¹¹⁹ E. Cushman Titus to Glenn Gallison, April 25, 1962, FF 1, Box 3, SCA DPL. Cushman Titus married David C. Titus in June, 1960. The University of Wyoming and Fairfield Osborn’s New York Zoological Society both sponsored the JHBRS.

When Cushman and Hayne solicited evaluations from the participants, asking them a number of questions regarding their experiences during the summer, students agreed that the summer had proved “worthwhile.” Their comments revealed, however, that students thought much more about what their summer experience could do for them personally rather than the service they could provide to the National Park Service. In Olympic, the high school boys filled out and returned an extensive survey, generally agreeing that the summer was successful.¹²⁰ Not all wrote that the program lived up to their expectations, listing a variety of reasons from lack of spirituality in the program to dissatisfaction with the tedium of trail work. Many of the boys hoped to meet a more diverse group of students, though their idea of diversity was recruiting boys from all forty-eight states.¹²¹ Mary Meagher reported on the three women volunteers, declaring that each thoroughly enjoyed her summer.¹²² J.C. Eshelman concurred with her assessment, stating that the summer would never be forgotten. The students at Grand Teton National Park worked together to compile a yearbook entitled “Ramshorn Rambler,” in which they included descriptions of their experiences in the park, including their social activities which ranged from ping-pong to square dancing. In all, students responded favorably to the program. The student volunteers all remarked on how their summer experience aided their career aspirations or provided them with useful and interesting training. This observation was particularly true of the high school boys in Olympic National Park. The most explicitly service-oriented question the boys received asked if they felt they were needed or if they felt they

¹²⁰ 15 students participated in the post-program evaluation sent out by the SCP.

¹²¹ Student Evaluations Group II ONP 1957, Box 6, ECTP.

¹²² Mary Meagher, “Report on Group IV’s Activities, ONP,” FF 5, Box 16, SCA DPL.

contributed. All but one of the respondents replied positively. Cushman conceived of her program as a service opportunity for students, but the participants of the first year placed more of an emphasis on their own experiences.¹²³

Concerned with the expense, in time, money, and equipment, the NPS staff expressed much less enthusiasm about the program than did the students, an unsurprising response, considering that students certainly gained more from the first summer. National Park Service officials, though complimenting the program's educational achievements, focused on the economic value of the students' work and the amount of time Park employees devoted to the program. Olympic Park's Fred Overly complained that he and his staff had to give a large amount of time to planning and supervising the program, and concluded that he would no longer allow personnel to educate the boys. Ted Wirth, though opining that the program should continue, wrote that he could not recommend that the NPS financially sponsor the program, as paid employees of the Park Service would perform more work than untrained students.¹²⁴ Frank Oberhansley echoed Overly and Wirth's concerns about the inordinate amount of work required by park staff. He urged the SCP to determine its true objectives; whether it should focus on volunteer work for the park or on the intangible benefits afforded the student. Oberhansley emphasized that the students gained valuable experience, recommending that the program continue, but only if it focused on student benefit, rather than benefits to the park.¹²⁵ After reviewing the

¹²³ For more on the comparison of administrator and participant expectation and goals, see chapter five.

¹²⁴ Ted Wirth, "Report on SCP," (attached to letter Oberhansley to Packard, August 20, 1957), FF 19, Box 3, SCA DPL.

¹²⁵ Oberhansley to Packard, August 20, 1957, FF 19, Box 3, SCA DPL.

summer's reports, Director Conrad Wirth concluded that the program did not have sufficient merit to continue.¹²⁶

Responding to the summer's relatively successful experiment and the reactions from the Park Service officials who worked with the students, Cushman, Hayne, and their collaborators began to discuss and delineate new goals for the program. Originally, the program aimed to provide volunteer work to the Park Service and offer a "pleasant," "worthwhile," and "educational" summer for the students.¹²⁷ After consideration, SCP administrators chose to focus more on persuading these students to consider careers with the Park Service and, more generally, in conservation fields. The official first year report, written by Hayne and Cushman, stated that recruitment for the park service remained a secondary aim, but that the summer's program had convinced a number of students to pursue careers with the Park Service. Later, in writing a publicity article for the National Parks Association's *National Parks Magazine*, Hayne and Cushman wrote that "one purpose" of the SCP was prepare students for future employment and encourage them to consider the Park Service for their careers.¹²⁸ This wording signaled a rhetorical shift in emphasis, likely an effort to appeal for continued Park Service support. Cushman slightly altered her idea of an altruistic summer experience to include more explicit benefits to the Park Service and conservation careers in general, again demonstrating that, over time, her idea for a student volunteer corps underwent a process of negotiation and change.

¹²⁶ Dolstad, "An Analysis of the Status of a Volunteer Student Conservation Program," 15.

¹²⁷ Cushman to Students of SCP at GTNP, August 12, 1957, Box 7, ECTP.

¹²⁸ Cushman and Hayne, "A Worthwhile Summer," 78.

Programmatic adjustment after any pilot project is to be expected, and the SCP was no exception.

Despite Park Service staff's reservations and especially the negative response of Director Conrad Wirth, Cushman, Hayne, and their supporters believed that their experiment deserved another chance and they set about securing it. Incorporating many of the suggestions given to them by students and park staff, Cushman and Hayne altered the program as well as their language, relieving the Park Service of any extra work or responsibility. Their efforts to accommodate Park Service concerns were sufficient enough for Director Wirth to consent for a 1958 program. For that summer, the National Parks Association hired private citizens as supervisors for the SCP programs in both parks, took over management of SCP finances, continued appeals for donations, and took out liability insurance for students. The 1958 pilot project accrued even more accolades than the first summer, convincing the Park Service and Director Wirth that the SCP was certainly worth the effort. Cushman's and Hayne's willingness to go along with the process of negotiation and shift their goals and intended benefits to reflect the desires of students and the Park Service enabled them to continue the student volunteer corps. Flexibility and perseverance, perhaps more than anything else, proved the key organizational (and personal) traits that allowed the two women to succeed.

Cushman's idea came to fruition in three years, facilitated by her deep commitment to it, her social connections, and the unrelenting time and labor that she and Hayne devoted to developing the pilot projects. Tracing the genesis of the Student Conservation Program and its evolution illuminates the importance of social capital in

gaining access to politically powerful individuals. Though Cushman's idea had merit in and of itself, as many people commented, her advantageous familial and educational affiliations played a vital role in garnering financial backing and the support of important people. Cushman utilized networks of wealthy individuals, influential clubs, and important organizations to build a program she and others deemed beneficial for the parks and for the students who participated. This process highlights the use of networks to "pursue shared objectives."¹²⁹

During the mid-1950s, as Cushman formulated her response to DeVoto's jeremiad, the generally unified conservation movement visibly splintered over the best way to manage the public's lands. Some swayed toward the protectionist end and advocated for restricted use, whereas others enthusiastically encouraged the public's interest in national parks through modernized park facilities. The National Park Service mission, which included the mandate to both conserve the scenery for future generations and provide for public enjoyment of said scenery, embodied the full meaning of conservation. The contemporary conservation movement had always contained a complex mixture of ideological factions, and the Student Conservation Program highlights another aspect of this movement, with its emphasis on experiential learning outdoors and youthful connections to mainline conservation organizations. Many narratives of postwar environmentalism repeat the now-familiar story of the growing power of the Sierra Club in the 1950s, the explosion of interest in ecology after Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* hit bookshelves in 1962, and the enthusiasm surrounding Earth Day in 1970. Inserting the SCP into this history allows for an

¹²⁹ Jason Kaufman, "Three Views of Associationalism in 19th-Century America: An Empirical Examination," *American Journal of Sociology* 104.5 (1999): 1305.

expanded story that incorporates the efforts of philanthropists, women, and young people into the current narrative. As historian Adam Rome has argued for a later decade, including such groups into the history of environmentalism alters historians' narrative of the trajectory of postwar environmental concerns.¹³⁰

The overall composition of modern environmentalism certainly shifted as the main issues evolved and its core base dramatically expanded, engulfing conservation as the movement grew in the 1960s. It is important to recognize, however, that the web of social networks which exerted so much influence on behalf of conservation issues before World War II continued to do so as the twentieth century progressed. The early SCP's history demonstrates that wealthy and well-positioned individuals in the federal government and private organizations continued to find ways to accomplish their goals. Ties to the distinguished Garden Club of America proved to be vital, in more ways than one, and served as an enduring scaffold for the fledgling volunteer program.

¹³⁰ Adam Rome, "'Give Earth a Chance': The Environmental Movement and the Sixties," *The Journal of American History* 90.2 (September 2003): 525-554. Rome focuses on the work of liberals, women's club members, and student activists in catalyzing the modern version of environmentalism.

Chapter 3

“THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND”: COMMON GROUND BETWEEN THE SCA AND THE GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA

In a 1960 issue of the Garden Club of America (GCA) journal, the chair of the GCA National Parks Committee began her profile of the Student Conservation Program by quoting a few stanzas of Woody Guthrie’s folk song “This Land is Your Land.” Liz Cushman and Marty Hayne sang that tune, along with Cole Porter’s “Don’t Fence Me In,” as they drove through Western states during the mid-1950s in search of support for Cushman’s volunteer program.¹ Using Guthrie’s lyrics as inspiration to “follow in [their] footsteps...along that ribbon of highway,” several GCA members visited the three parks in which the Student Conservation Program operated during the summer of 1960.² These women applauded the conservation work done by SCA students in Grand Teton and Olympic National Parks and Cedar Breaks National Monument. The Garden Club of America, staunch supporters of the student volunteer group from its inception, stood behind the program as it expanded into new national parks and forests and recruited an increasing number of high school, college, and graduate students. The GCA chose to support the program partly because of shared

¹ Marty Hayne Talbot, interview with author, 30 March 2009.

² Mrs. A. Lewis Bentley, “This is Your Land,” *GCA Bulletin* 48.6 (November 1960), 110-112. Bentley described the SCP programs in Grand Teton and Olympic National Parks and Cedar Breaks National Monument. The Student Conservation Association was incorporated in 1964. For the sake of clarity I will only refer to the organization as the SCA from this point on.

patrimony and background with the two young women who set up the program, particularly Elizabeth Cushman. The GCA and SCA also had common ground between them, although, emerging as they did from very different political and cultural circumstances, the women's club and youth service group certainly had many differences. Both, however, focused on conservation education and utilized voluntarism to accomplish their goal of fostering environmental awareness. This common ground, combined with Cushman and Hayne's social capital, explains why this powerful women's club chose to spend time, energy, and money on a small student volunteer program.

The GCA had long been interested in education and the environment; Liz Cushman's project tapped into that interest while combining youth and volunteer service in a way that appealed to garden club women.³ But the SCA also provided important career and experiential learning opportunities to participants, especially women scientists and conservationists like those whose careers the GCA supported with fellowship opportunities. Moreover, by specifically recruiting women and placing them in non-traditional positions, the SCA challenged prevailing notions regarding women employees in the Park Service. The two groups found common ground in volunteerism, conservation education, and the promotion of opportunities for women scientists and professionals. As did many women's clubs and professional organizations in the 1950s and early 1960s, both the SCA and the GCA worked to improve the educational and professional experience available to college-educated and scientifically oriented young women.

³ Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam, interview with author, May 3-4, 2006.

To argue that the GCA and SCA enhanced the careers of young women interested in pursuing non-traditional careers as scientists or Park Service employees is not to suggest, however, that members of either group identified as feminists. They did not. During the 1950s, even radical activist women, such as members of the Congress of American Women, did not use the term for themselves, so closely was it associated with the National Woman's Party and reviled in the popular press. Still, a few women exploring career options outside of traditional female occupations (nursing, teaching, secretarial work) found in the GCA and SCA organizational support for their ambitions. This women's club and the student volunteer program demonstrated tactics similar to those used by women in such groups as the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the League of Women Voters, and the Business and Professional Women's Club, all of which promoted equal opportunity and leadership roles for women in higher education, the workforce, and public office.⁴ Those ambitious, highly educated women who traveled avenues provided by the GCA and SCA questioned the Cold War ideal of femininity through their actions. Indeed, a tension existed in the collective consciousness between women's "traditional" gender roles and a desire for equal opportunity in the public realm; this tension was fueled in part by 1950s social trends in women's employment patterns and public visibility, as well as by seemingly contradictory media portrayals of women.⁵ Supporters and

⁴ Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues, 1945-1968* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 50-51, 138; Susan Levine, *Degrees of Equality: The American Association of University Women and the Challenge of Twentieth-Century Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 5-6.

⁵ Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," *Journal of American History* 79.4 (March 1993): 1458; Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: the American Women's*

participants in the student volunteer program did internalize many of the decade's ideas regarding careers and choices available to women. However, it is important to recognize that these women considered themselves fully capable of performing jobs from which women had been previously barred or entering careers that historically discriminated against them. Scholars have spent many years complicating and undermining the simplistic portrayal of white middle-class women as "happy housewives" in the 1950s and early 1960s, and my analysis of the SCA is part of that effort.⁶

Drawing from their own experiences in education and the workplace, the GCA and SCA directors felt it imperative to press for change and provide fair access and equal opportunity to highly qualified women.⁷ Cushman, Hayne, and their GCA

Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 12-13.

⁶ One early collection of essays to question this historiographical trend is Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

⁷ The National Manpower Commission's publication of *Womanpower*, published in 1957, noted that women were an underutilized resource, and therefore should be encouraged to enter the workforce in greater numbers. However, it unequivocally assumed that men were the primary breadwinners. It did very little to actually foster and build women's careers, especially in the sciences. See Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 211. The President's Commission on the Status of Women (1961) has frequently been cited as reinvigorating the women's rights movement and heightening national consciousness of discrimination against women, by drawing attention to the situation of women and creating a network of activists. After the government dragged its feet over enforcement of Title VII and the Equal Pay Bill, many of these same PCSW women formed NOW. Younger women's groups drew much support from these older women and built on what they had already accomplished. The same can be said for the GCA and SCP; the younger women used the GCA networks already in place, building on what came before. See Rupp, *Survival in the Doldrums*, 4, 49, 57, 167-72; and Nancy

supporters did not advocate for women's rights or a feminist agenda, but they did press for a shift in the understanding of women's abilities in scientific and conservation work. In a sense, this approach can be read as feminist in orientation, though in a very restricted way. Elizabeth Cushman and Martha Hayne, both graduates of women's colleges and familiar with women's success in single-sex education, advocated for fair access and a chance for their educational and sociocultural peers to enter nontraditional careers. Cushman and Hayne did not accept the idea that women lacked the capacity for some male-dominated occupations, and saw the SCA as an opportunity for exceptional young women to gain a worthwhile experience in the sciences and natural resource management. Despite the decidedly apolitical stance of the two founders, a good number of women translated their SCA volunteer experience into substantive careers. A direct correlation between the SCA and a future career did not always exist, but the sum of women's experiences often led to jobs in natural resources or the sciences. The SCA and its women's club supporters began to break down institutional and conceptual barriers, if in limited ways.

Garden Club Voluntarism and Youth Service

The collaboration between the Student Conservation Association and the Garden Club of America exemplified the continued importance in the post-war era of women's voluntarism on behalf of the environment. Clubwomen first began working for conservation-related measures in the city beautification and civic improvement

MacLean, *The American Women's Movement, 1945-2000* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009), 16, 20.

leagues of the Progressive Era.⁸ In some ways, the SCA can be seen as an heir to those groups, in terms of purpose, participants, and membership. Cushman's student program recruited volunteers to act on behalf of environmental issues. Both the GCA and SCA had elite roots, and for its first years the SCA maintained an almost exclusive connection with and focus on upper and middle class patrons and participants. Cushman and her supporters garnered useful knowledge and beneficial contacts from the GCA, and the SCA has maintained its connection to the garden club for the entirety of its history, to the present day.

The Student Conservation Association shared common ground with the Garden Club, though the terrain that the GCA occupied had emerged from a different historical context and formed a dissimilar footprint. The GCA, organized in 1913, had overlapping concerns with other Progressive Era organizations, such as the General Federation of Women's Clubs and the male-led American Civic Association, but, unlike them, the GCA had focused solely on conservation issues from the outset.⁹ Its stated goals dealt with fostering the knowledge and love of amateur gardening, sharing

⁸ On Progressive Era women's clubs advocating on behalf of the environment (broadly construed), see Priscilla G. Massmann, "A Neglected Partnership: The General Federation of Women's Clubs and the Conservation Movement, 1890-1920" (PhD diss, University of Connecticut, 1997); Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, rev. ed. (1993; Washington: Island Press, 2005), chapter 6; Vera Norwood, *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Carolyn Merchant, "Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement," *Environmental Review* 8.1 (Spring 1984), 57-85. For women in municipal reform and sanitary conditions, see for example Maureen A. Flanagan, "The City Profitable, the City Livable: Environmental Policy, Gender, and Power in Chicago in the 1910s," *Journal of Urban History* 22.2 (January 1996): 163-190.

⁹ Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice*, rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 37.

the advantages of association, aiding in the protection of native birds and plants, and promoting civic improvement.¹⁰ Garden clubs generally pursued non-controversial projects, as compared to some of the more overtly political and reformist women's clubs and organizations of the early twentieth century.¹¹ The GCA's mission of education, beautification, and environmental concern changed very little through the two world wars and into the postwar period. Beginning in the 1920s, the group formed committees dedicated to tracking conservation-related legislation at both the state and national level, and by the 1940s had acquired some political power and a reputation for influencing members of Congress.¹² Given its tradition of working for the conservation of the environment through "influence, publicity," and "education," the GCA's support for the new SCA represented continuity, not striking change.¹³

From the outset, the Garden Club of America saw its mission in terms of providing educational and aesthetic services to members' communities, on a volunteer basis. Local clubs often campaigned for conservation projects in state and federal legislatures. In general, though, garden clubs took an understated approach to voluntary service, one that reflected the predominant attitudes of the founding era in the history of women's clubs. They believed that women's club members should serve

¹⁰ Marjorie Gibbon Battles and Catherine Colt Dickey, *Fifty Blooming Years* (New York: The Garden Club of America, 1963), 18.

¹¹ Examples include the Women's Trade Union League, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and the National Association of Colored Women.

¹² Shana Miriam Cohen, "American Garden Clubs and the Fight for Nature Preservation, 1890-1980" (PhD diss, University of California, Berkeley, 2005), 179-184; Battles and Dickey, *Fifty Blooming Years*, 29, 57-63.

¹³ Battles and Dickey, *Fifty Blooming Years*, 62-63.

their communities without fanfare or remuneration.¹⁴ As a product of the Progressive Era, the GCA brought together white, largely upper-class women who could afford to cultivate elaborate gardens and who took it upon themselves to edify their communities aesthetically. The GCA maintained its original mission, one circumscribed by traditional femininity and an accepted understanding of garden club women as strictly amateurs, despite the undeniable scientific and organizational expertise of many GCA leaders. By the 1950s, when the SCA came on the scene, the Garden Clubs were focusing on contemporary environmental issues, such as fighting billboard proliferation and supporting Rachel Carson's efforts to publicize the dangers of the pesticide DDT. Though it adopted new issues, the GCA retained its older concept of voluntarism and community service.

That concept dovetailed well with the idea behind the Student Conservation Association, as conceptualized by Elizabeth Cushman in her senior thesis. In proposing a program that asked students to volunteer their summers and provide labor to a federal agency that needed personnel, Cushman entered a long tradition of citizens creating public-private partnerships with government agencies.¹⁵

¹⁴ Cohen, "American Garden Clubs," 12, 290-296. A variety of women formed voluntary associations for a variety of reasons: to provide social services, to promote an agenda, to enter political discussions and shape public policy, etc. Women did not necessarily choose to provide volunteer services over paid labor; before women had access to occupations they often devoted their skills and talents toward furthering change through voluntary organizations. See Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers Inc., 1980); Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

¹⁵ For one history of the evolution of the American non-profit sector and its long collaboration with the state, see Peter Dobkin Hall, *Inventing the Nonprofit Sector*,

One can certainly interpret her efforts as similar to those undertaken by women activists in the Progressive Era, who collaborated with men in power to solve the ills of an industrialized, urbanized society. Cushman proposed to work with the National Park Service to provide volunteer aid to national parks, seen as natural palliatives to the fast-paced modern life.¹⁶ Rather than entering a garden club or joining a fraternal organizations and contributing funds, young people could instead give their time to work outdoors, gain experience, and see part of the nation. The actual physical presence and work of students constituted the major difference between the GCA style of voluntarism for the environment and that of the SCA. The first GCA article about the SCA enthused that “youth [had found] a way” to combine service and experiential education for both the greater and individual good.¹⁷ This new “way” allowed students to directly contribute and participate, rather than effect change through intermediaries. The SCA reflected the contemporary desire of some young Americans to volunteer for the environment, an opportunity that did not really exist in the 1950s. The student program did not just follow in the footsteps of the GCA, but it certainly

and Other Essays on Philanthropy, Voluntarism, and Nonprofit Organizations (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

¹⁶ A number of scholars have linked turn-of-the-20th century concerns about urbanization and industrialization to similar anxiety in the postwar period; this concept is often labeled “antimodernism,” though a few have argued that these ideas are better labeled “countermodern.” See chapter three for further discussion and references.

¹⁷ Mrs. LeRoy (Edna Ames) Clark, “Youth Finds a Way,” *GCA Bulletin* 45.1 (January 1957), 77-78. This is not to say that individuals did not use voluntary associations to further their own careers or advance their own agendas; many certainly did so, particularly in protection of the middle class during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

utilized avenues opened by these women. Analyzing how the program garnered the club's support illuminates the importance of individual networks in facilitating this connection and enabling such youth service.

Connective Roots

The relationship between the student volunteer group and the venerable women's club began in Cushman's own home, when her mother, Elizabeth Robinson Cushman, asked Liz Cushman and Marty Hayne to give a presentation about the SCA to the Bennington (VT) Garden Club in the fall of 1956. The elder Cushman wished to provide a new topic for conversation at the club meeting, noting that members had tired of her talks on pollution and would welcome hearing about youth in the national parks. The student program sparked enormous interest in the Bennington club, with the president inviting Cushman and Hayne to her house after their presentation in order to telephone Edna Clark (Mrs. LeRoy), chair of the GCA National Parks Committee, and inform her of their program.¹⁸ Clark was also impressed and invited Liz Cushman and Marty Hayne to attend the National Parks Committee meeting the following day at the Colony Club in New York City.¹⁹ The next day, with Cushman and Hayne in attendance after taking an overnight bus from Vermont, the Parks Committee voted to sponsor the program; the GCA Executive Committee, meeting at the same time, also chose to do so. Advised by Fred Packard at the NPA, Cushman

¹⁸ The GCA National Parks Committee was formed in 1934, and kept track of federal legislation on the funding, care, and creation of national parks. Wendy Murphy, "In Furor Hortensis," *American Heritage* 29.5 (1978); Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice*, 36-40.

¹⁹ See SCA History, Appendix J, "SCA and Garden Club of America," FF 26, Box 1, SCA DPL.

and Hayne had been looking for conservation groups to endorse and sponsor the program beyond the sponsorship of the National Parks Association.²⁰ The GCA provided crucial financial and moral support, enabling the student volunteer program to expand and recruit students to work in an increasing number of participant parks.

Only twenty-three at the time, the two young women went from presenting their program to a familiar group of women to speaking with the leadership of a venerable women's organization – overnight. Cushman and Hayne had already dealt with Park Service professionals and conservation organization officials, and developed the requisite skills of presentation, communication, and persuasion necessary to gain institutional and financial support. These young women, particularly Cushman, probably learned many of these skills from their own mothers, both of whom played important roles in their communities and local clubs. Education at elite schools helped as well, with many of these women likely attending the same schools; Clark's successor Grace Hendrick Phillips (Mrs. Neill) and Cushman were alumnae of the same Connecticut prep school.²¹ Familiarity with organizational culture and language undoubtedly went a long way in communicating effectively with potential donors and supporters, and such was the case with the GCA and its support of the SCA. Additionally, the National Parks Committee had a twenty-year-long history of tracking and supporting the national parks, and, considering the speed with which it

²⁰ As recounted by Elizabeth C.T. Putnam, interview with author, May 3-4, 2006.

²¹ Grace Hendrick attended Miss Porter's School and Bryn Mawr College. "Her Dogs Invited to Her Wedding," *New York Times* June 13, 1924, 19. She wrote for the *New York Times* from 1935 to 1937 and served as an executive of the Red Cross during WWII.

decided to lend support, it is clear that the Committee responded with alacrity to Cushman's idea of providing direct aid through student volunteer work.²²

A handful of GCA national officers provided invaluable support and advice to Cushman and her colleagues in the SCA: Edna Ames (Mrs. LeRoy) Clark, Grace Hendrick (Mrs. Neill) Phillips, and Hilda Grosh (Mrs. A. Lewis) Bentley chief among them. These women served as the chairs of the GCA Conservation or National Parks Committees, and considered the SCA a highly worthwhile project. Clark reminisced about Elizabeth Cushman and Marty Hayne's first visit to the Executive Committee to SCA participants in the 1959 SCA newsletter *Conservational Conversation*, noting that the National Parks Committee immediately recognized the possibilities inherent in Cushman's idea.²³ By 1963, the National Parks Committee had determined that supporting the SCA and increasing knowledge of national parks constituted the two most important issues it needed to address.²⁴ The close partnership with the student volunteer group existed in part because of Cushman's family connections to the garden clubs, but also because it resembled the GCA's long-standing efforts for conservation education.

²² The GCA strongly supported national parks; its National Parks Committee formed specifically to help preserve the redwoods of California, and what would later become Redwood National and State Park. The GCA spend forty-one years and \$1.5 million purchasing land for this park. Battles and Dickey, *Fifty Blooming Years*, 62; GCA *Bulletin* 60.5 (1972), 41. Other parks created with the help of GCA or individual garden club members were Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde.

²³ Edna Clark, *Conservational Conversation*, no. 1, May 1959, n.p.; Bound Copy of Newsletter 1959-1968, FF 30, Box 6, SCA DPL.

²⁴ Mrs. Neill Phillips, "National Parks," *Bulletin* 51.3 (May 1963), 46.

Conservation education had long been a priority for the GCA by the time Liz Cushman began writing her thesis in the fall of 1954, and the student program upheld the GCA tradition of combining education and environmental concerns. Club historians Marjorie Battles and Catherine Dickey, writing for the club's fifty-year anniversary, declared that "education was the banner, the public schools were the target" during the interwar years.²⁵ In the 1920s, the GCA's Conservation Committee began to promote conservation education in schools, through educational pamphlets, teacher scholarships, and school programs. The committee organized "Conservation Week" in New Jersey, a school program that every state eventually adopted.²⁶ In 1950, the GCA released a book that compiled questions about conservation from clubs and answers solicited from prominent experts in the field. In it, the book's editor

²⁵ Battles and Dickey, *Fifty Blooming Years*, 57-58. For the history of conservation education during this period, see Robert Steele Funderburk, *The History of Conservation Education in the United States* (Nashville, Tennessee: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1948), chapter 4. Educators focused on public schools because private school already incorporated some kind of nature study (converted to more specific conservation education in the 1920s). Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 86-90.

²⁶ In 1935, the National Educational Association's Educational Policies Commission agreed with the GCA and other groups who emphasized the importance of conservation education by stating: "Forests, soils, grasslands, water, minerals, oils, fish, game, and scenic beauty are among the rich natural endowments of the area of the North American continent covered by the United States. Realization of the basic importance of these resources, determination to utilize them for the common good through long range planning, and general knowledge of appropriate remedial and preventative conservation procedures are among the marks of an educated citizen. Since future welfare and safety depend on those things, the schools may well assume considerable responsibility for checking the ravages upon the heritage of the nation made by ignorance, indifference, carelessness, and unbridled selfishness." Noel McInnes and Don Albrecht, eds., *What Makes Education Environmental?* (Louisville: Environmental Educators Inc. and Data Courier Inc., 1975), 9.

Arthur Carhart, a well-known conservationist writer, argued that garden club members were uniquely qualified to understand the scope of conservation due to their horticultural experience and the microcosmic nature of a garden.²⁷ Perhaps inspired by the successful conservation handbook for adults, in 1952 one GCA member began assembling educational packets for teachers, to teach school children the basics of conservation. The educational packet, titled “The World Around You,” went through several revisions and, by 1970, the GCA was sending out thousands of copies each month.²⁸ In 1972, the packet included teaching lessons on a variety of topics including bird-watching, toxic substances, public lands, the Endangered Species Act, Clean Air Act, recycling, gardening, terrariums, and soil conservation.²⁹ The GCA undoubtedly played an important role in furthering conservation education; Battles and Dickey quoted former Park Service director Newton B. Drury, who applauded clubwomen for their work on behalf of the parks and conservation and declared that he knew of no more effective work in the field of conservation than that done by the GCA committees.³⁰ The GCA explicitly linked conservation efforts and education, and Cushman’s emphasis on the same link predisposed the GCA to support her program.

After the GCA chose to sponsor the student program, Cushman and Hayne began traveling to clubs to educate garden club members about it by giving

²⁷ Arthur H. Carhart, ed., *Conservation, Please! Questions and Answers on Conservation Topics* (New York: The Garden Club of America, 1950), 12.

²⁸ GCA *Bulletin* 58.2 (1970), 61.

²⁹ “The World Around You: Environmental Education Packet” (New York: The Garden Club of America, Inc., 1972).

³⁰ Battles and Dickey, *Fifty Blooming Years*, 63.

talks, often with illustrative slides. In 1957 and 1958, they gave presentations to garden clubs in Vermont, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and other Mid-Atlantic states. Such talks became quite a common occurrence in garden clubs around the nation, particularly as former SCA students began representing the program to local clubs. After a few years, the GCA decided it was worthwhile to provide travel funds for Liz Cushman (Titus after her marriage in 1960), believing that the more clubs she visited, the better.³¹ The talks proved so popular that Cushman Titus's garden club decided to fund the production of a formal slide program with synchronized audio recording and make it available for clubs to borrow.³² In Cushman Titus's view, the production of such a slide program would aid the SCA in publicity efforts.³³ Creators aimed the slide show at informing other garden clubs of the program, as well as high school students who might not otherwise hear about the SCA.

GCA supporters obviously viewed the student program in a positive light, considering the publicity and capital they provided. Hilda Bentley, chair of the National Parks Committee after Edna Clark, believed that the SCA served as an excellent way to demonstrate the GCA's interest in promoting the nation's parks.³⁴ The ability of Cushman and SCA representatives to access club and conservation

³¹ Hilda Bentley to Glenn Gallison, April 2, 1962, FF 1, Box 3, SCA DPL. Cushman married David Titus in June 1960. "Elizabeth Cushman Wed in St. James" *New York Times*, 5 June 1960, 88. From now on, I will refer to her as "Cushman Titus," unless specifically speaking about her comments or actions before 1960.

³² North Country Garden Club report, October 2, 1968, FF 38, Box 3, SCA DPL.

³³ SCA President's Interim Report for Executive Committee Meeting, September 10, 1968, Book 1, Corporate Logs, SCA HQ.

³⁴ Bentley (Mrs. A. Lewis) to E.T. Scoyen, December 24, 1959, Garden Club Folders, Corr. Folder 1/1/58, Box 36, Admin NARA.

networks nationwide proved crucial to the volunteer program as it strove to build name recognition and solicit operational funds. However, the networks Cushman Titus had access to probably did not take her far outside of familiar social circles. Garden club members had a particular reputation: *The New Yorker* cartoonist Helen Hokinson affectionately lampooned similar society women for decades, portraying them as plump, ditzy, well-meaning dowagers.³⁵ GCA members began disassociating themselves from such caricatures in the postwar period; in 1965 Oregon governor Mark Hatfield observed to an audience assembled to hear him speak that they bore little resemblance to the garden-club stereotype of “women with camel’s hair coats [holding] a nickel-plated trowel, pointing out to the gardener where something should be planted.”³⁶ Both perceptions, however, obscure the reality of garden clubs; Hokinson embellished and Hatfield minimized the profiles of garden club members. Many women did have enormous fortunes, and all did actual work with their garden soil. SCA supporter Grace Phillips, for example, mixed with the elite of New York society and was listed on the city’s Social Register.³⁷ Undoubtedly a number of white middle-class women claimed membership in the Garden Club of America, but the club’s inconvenient meeting times and participation requirements for members likely turned away many women who needed to work outside the home or care for children – and so precluded millions of women who entered (or continued in) the workforce

³⁵ See, for example, Hokinson’s cartoons in *There Are Ladies Present* (E.P. Dutton & Co. 1952).

³⁶ Gov. Mark O. Hatfield (OR), West Coast Forum speaker, *Bulletin* 53.3 (1965), 8.

³⁷ “Grace Hendrick Eustis Phillips, Society Writer in Capital, Dead,” *New York Times* May 25, 1966, 47.

during the 1950s and 1960s.³⁸ While Cushman Titus devoted much energy to publicizing the SCA through GCA clubs, her message reached only those who had access to such circles.

Garden club members responded enthusiastically to the student volunteer program, providing both donations and suggestions for new SCA volunteers. One member in Denver applauded the program, noting that her son came home “more interested in his own country, more resourceful, happy, healthy, and completely enthusiastic.”³⁹ Her support of the program, with knowledge of it gained through her son’s personal experience in Olympic National Park, helped convince other members of the program’s merit. These members in turn persuaded their clubs to financially support the SCA; a number of garden clubs provided funds, beginning with two in 1957 and increasing to 110 clubs nationally (of 172) in 1966.⁴⁰ Quite a few individual GCA members donated lump sums to the SCA, a particular help during the years before its incorporation in 1964. Cushman Titus recognized the social stature held by the Garden Club of America and the importance of recognizing their valuable support; she requested that SCA brochures highlight the GCA’s hearty endorsement of the program, to both please and thank the organization for the publicity it provided.⁴¹

³⁸ In the early 1970s, the GCA made efforts to recruit younger members; some comments made at the 1974 annual meeting by young members reveal that many of their peers viewed the club as an outdated group that just demanded “another pound of flesh.” See Annual Meeting, Council of Presidents minutes, *Bulletin* 62.3 (1974), 91-98.

³⁹ Mrs. Stanley H. Johnson, “Student Conservation Program in Olympic National Park,” *Bulletin* 47.1 (January 1959), 69-71.

⁴⁰ Margaret Douglas Medal Award report, *Bulletin* 54.4 (July 1966), 63.

⁴¹ Cushman to Packard, January 12, 1957, FF 28, Box 2, SCA DPL.

Clubs also played a role in recruiting students for the program; again, the students selected by GCA members would have been from a particular socioeconomic class – definitely not juvenile delinquents from the wrong side of the tracks. In these early years, the program’s exclusivity limited access to the benefits provided through SCA experience to a narrow range of youths. Various garden clubs recommended high school boys to the SCA program, with some writing to Liz Cushman Titus as to how to go about choosing a boy to recommend for SCA participation. Cushman Titus advised that the club review publicity literature and ask Scout masters or teachers to choose a deserving candidate. After the “winning boy” had been chosen, Cushman Titus would send an application to that person, stating that any boy recommended by a garden club would very likely be chosen for the program. GCA members wrote on behalf of teenaged boys; girls were not permitted to participate in the high school program, typically centered on trail work, until 1969. Members of the SCA selection committee (the directors, supervisors, and park superintendents) had the final say for participant selection, and it is probable that any boy recommended by a garden club (possibly a child of a member) would have some preference, considering the immense amount of support provided by the GCA.⁴² The relationship between the student conservation program and the women’s club was mutually beneficial in that the student program garnered the support of a respected organization and learned of promising volunteers, and the women’s club expanded upon its long-standing program of conservation education.

⁴² Cushman to Mrs. Arnold Shoop of Little Garden Club of Rye, March 25, 1958, FF 33, Box 3, SCA DPL. Cushman Titus alludes to the practice of giving students higher ratings due to their political connections or their relation to potential supporters in a 1962 letter. See Titus to Mr. and Mrs. John Dolstad, February 2, 1962, FF 47, Box 2, SCA DPL.

Growth Sprouts

In addition to spreading the word about the SCA to clubs via talks and direct connections, the GCA advertised the program in its bimonthly *Bulletin*. Its first profile of the program came in January of 1957, with Edna Clark's article "Youth Finds a Way." The *Bulletin* had a range of articles on gardening, environmental issues, and current legislation of interest, as well as frequent reports by its more active committees, the National Parks Committee being one of them. Between 1957 and 1970, contributors wrote nine substantive articles about the program and GCA editors made occasional reference to the SCA as well.⁴³ The GCA president mentioned the program in her annual January message to members in 1961 and 1962, and the National Parks Committee included funding requests in several issues. By no means did the SCA constitute the GCA's only educational endeavor; the club continued distributing its conservation education packet, providing financial support for Audubon teacher camps, and supporting educational initiatives aimed at elementary children. But, as many GCA leaders noted, and as indicated by the number of clubs that chose to donate, the SCA became a very important addition to the GCA's long-standing mission to educate young people about conservation.

The effort to provide educational opportunities for a few young women represented another interest shared by the GCA and the SCA. The garden club

⁴³ Mrs. LeRoy Clark, "Youth Finds a Way," *Bulletin* 45.1 (1957), 77-78; Mrs. Stanley Johnson, "Student Conservation Program in Olympic National Park," *Bulletin* 47.1 (1959), 69-71; Mrs. A. Lewis Bentley, "This is Your Land," *Bulletin* 48.6 (1960), 110-112; Elizabeth Titus, "The SCP of the NPS," *Bulletin* 50.1 (1962), 67; Marc G. Sauvion, "A Chance of a Lifetime," *Bulletin* 52.1 (1964), 65-67; Mrs. Neill Phillips, "The SCP," *Bulletin* 53.2 (1965), 61-63; Mrs. Stephen C.L. Delano, "Student Conservation Program," *Bulletin* 54.2 (1966), 69-70; Mrs. Stephen C.L. Delano, National Parks Committee report, *Bulletin* 56.4 (1968), 60-61; Christina Macy, "A Summer with the SCA," *Bulletin* 58.1 (1970), 45-46.

provided fellowships supporting young women who wished to pursue higher education in horticulture or related subjects and sent them abroad to study; fellows were expected to enter a professional career. By contrast, the SCA recruited young women for practical experience with the Park Service. In the process, some of those participants performed field research – the sort of hands-on opportunity women often had difficulty obtaining. In this fashion, the SCA promoted more non-traditional educational opportunities for its volunteers than did the GCA for its scholarship recipients. The SCA had less specific intentions for professional career development; Cushman Titus and Marty Hayne (Talbot) simply wished to allow women to have some opportunity for experiential education.⁴⁴ In practice, however, both the GCA and SCA programs gave its women participants real experience that often translated into solid professional careers. The GCA and SCA had different intentions (as did its scholars and volunteers) but the opportunities provided had very similar outcomes: both fulfilled the educational and experiential needs of young women.

The efforts of the GCA and SCA to aid women scholars and scientists resembled those made by the American Association of University Women during the postwar period. The AAUW established a preeminent fellowship program during these years to help women scholars enter higher education and fund their research, at a time when the percentage of college women, and especially women graduate students, was plummeting as the G.I. Bill and preferential treatment of veterans limited the

⁴⁴ Marty Hayne married wildlife ecologist Lee Talbot in May 1959. Shortly after their marriage, the Talbots went to Africa to conduct field research, and Marty ceased to play a significant role in the operation of the SCA. She would later join the Board of the SCA. Ailene Kane, a 1958 participant, took Hayne's place as Liz Cushman's co-director.

opportunities available to women.⁴⁵ Although neither the GCA and AAUW members nor the student volunteer program coordinators viewed themselves as feminists, they still, as Susan Levine put it, “worked consistently in the name of equity and respect for women’s intellectual potential.”⁴⁶

The Interchange Fellowship in Horticulture was the GCA’s primary initiative aimed at supporting young women in higher education. The brainchild of a California garden club, the fellowship program was originated in 1948. The national GCA took over sponsorship of the fellowship in 1952.⁴⁷ The program exchanged two graduate students between the United States and the United Kingdom on a rotating basis. Recipients were required to have completed college degrees and hold career aspirations in professional horticulture, or related disciplines such as botany and landscape architecture.⁴⁸ Originally intended for young women, the Interchange

⁴⁵ The total number of women students went up, but the number of men rose faster, and so the percentage of women declined. Levine, *Degrees of Equality*, 83, 90-98; Margaret W. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America Before Affirmative Action, 1940-1972* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), chapter four. The AAUW gave only nine fellowships in 1940, but awarded seventy-four in 1960 and 107 in 1963.

⁴⁶ Levine, *Degrees of Equality*, 96. Dorothy Sue Cobble’s work *The Other Women’s Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) labels women in labor unions as feminist, even though they did not take the term themselves. Cobble considered her subjects “labor feminists” “because they recognized that women suffer disadvantages due to their sex and because they sought to eliminate sex-based disadvantages.” Cobble, 3.

⁴⁷ The original scholarship is now called the RHS McLaren Horticultural Scholarship/GCA Interchange Fellowship.
<http://www.gcamerica.org/scholarship/gcainterchange.html>. (accessed 12 June 10 2010).

⁴⁸ “Careers and Contributions,” Garden Club of America *Bulletin*, 43.1 (January 1955), 9-13.

Fellowship was opened to men in horticulture-related fields by the British organizers.⁴⁹ Still, GCA materials emphasized that the Interchange Fellowship provided opportunities to American and British “girls.”⁵⁰ In one 1965 *Bulletin* issue, editors noted that these women had studied for advanced degrees, taught university courses, and worked as researchers and research assistants in higher education and industry.⁵¹ The American garden clubs specifically wished to provide young women with educational opportunities, and the fellowships they granted made a difference; a number of fellowship recipients earned doctoral degrees, taught at universities, and worked in research labs.

Even before establishing the fellowship, GCA members had a long tradition of international connections via horticulture, as many of them traveled abroad quite frequently.⁵² One of the earliest such connections was with the English-Speaking Union (ESU), which helped coordinate the Interchange Fellowship after the end of the Second World War. The English-Speaking Union, founded shortly after the First World War by Irish aristocrat and imperialist Sir Evelyn Wrench, aimed to

⁴⁹ GCA *Bulletin* 52.1 (January 1964), 13.

⁵⁰ Battles and Dickey, *Fifty Blooming Years*, 48.

⁵¹ The GCA *Bulletin* listed updates on the sixteen fellowship recipients in 1965. The American students were: Amelie Blyth, PhD in Botany (Univ. of California, Davis, 1957); Shirley Cotter Tucker, PhD in Botany (Univ. of California, Davis, 1956); Christine Howson Roth (Vassar alum), Public Health Research Institute of the City of New York; Shirley Cooper (BA, Univ. of Georgia), landscape architect; Mary Alice Fisher (BA, Drew University), Bryce Institute of Plant Research; Elsie Louise Williams Shoemaker (Goucher College, worked as part of research team funded by NSF Fellowship); Fred Wesley Freeman, PhD in Forestry (Michigan State University, 1963).

⁵² Battles and Dickey, *Fifty Blooming Years*, 49-52.

solidify connections among the United Kingdom, the United States, and the “white Commonwealth” – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa – though its stated mission aimed to link all English-speaking peoples around the world. The ESU and its American branch promoted international fellowships, exchanges, lectures, and social events. The organization reflected popular Anglo-Saxonism and ideas of white racial superiority found in the writings of Theodore Roosevelt, Cecil Rhodes, and Winston Churchill.⁵³ Although the GCA did not have the same focus as the ESU, its connection to the group certainly highlights the privileged, racially homogenous social stratum inhabited by the GCA and its members.

Women Scientists

Although a very small number of women received fellowships for advanced study from the Garden Club of America, their need for such support reflected the wider situation of women in the sciences, as well as cultural assumptions about women scientists. In the postwar period, women in all the sciences experienced marginalization and discrimination, particularly those wishing to enter the “harder” sciences like physics and engineering.⁵⁴ The image of the scientist and the use of “he”

⁵³ Alex May, “Wrench, Sir (John) Evelyn Leslie (1882-1966),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37031> (accessed 12 June 2010). On Theodore Roosevelt’s concept of American racial superiority and its ties to British/German ancestry, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 178-184. For Churchill’s “English-speaking peoples” concept and a brief history of the English-Speaking Union, see John Ramsden, *Man of the Century: Winston Churchill and His Legend Since 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), xvi-xviii, 327-331.

⁵⁴ Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America Before Affirmative Action*, xvi-xviii, 350.

to refer to practitioners, along with institutional bias, discouraged many women from entering such professions and limited those who persisted to entry-level positions.⁵⁵ In the “softer” sciences, such as botany, women experienced fewer obstacles, largely because these sub-fields had been socially constructed as “feminine.”⁵⁶ Women were entering the sciences in record numbers, but were concentrating in such “woman-friendly” specialties as developmental psychology, nutrition, and the biosciences. Aspiring scientists usually found themselves with little institutional support in graduate school, few (if any) women mentors, and upon completing their degrees, offers only of low-paying, entry-level positions.⁵⁷ In the 1950s and 1960s, women scientists, although earning a record number of graduate degrees, remained marginalized. In the mid-1950s, women botanists comprised only fourteen percent of full-time professionals in that field, and earned about ten percent of total degrees in botany – for physics and engineering, the numbers were lower. The number of women scientists did grow during this period (though their percentage fell), but most of these women worked in “feminine” fields such as home economics, the social sciences,

⁵⁵ See Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America Before Affirmative Action*; Laura Micheletti Puaca, “A New National Defense: Feminism, Education, and the Quest for ‘Scientific Brainpower,’ 1940-1965” (PhD diss, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2007); Sevan G. Terzian, “Science World, High School Girls, and the Prospect of Scientific Careers, 1957-1963,” *History of Education Quarterly* 46.1 (2006): 73-99; Kim Tolley, *The Science Education of American Girls* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003).

⁵⁶ See Norwood, *Made From This Earth*, xvi, chapters 1-4; Barbara T. Gates and Ann B. Shteir, eds., *Natural Eloquence: Women Reinscribe Science* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Susan Schrepfer, *Nature’s Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 52, 85-86.

⁵⁷ Norwood, *Made From this Earth*, xvii, 47; Tolley, *The Science Education of American Girls*, 209-216; Rossiter, *Women Scientists*, chapters 4, 5, 6.

psychology, and the biosciences.⁵⁸ As Margaret Rossiter wrote, women scientists working during the 1950s and 1960s remained largely invisible to the general public, to other scientists, and to each other.⁵⁹ This situation is indicative of contradictory contemporary attitudes, which encouraged young women to enter the workforce and yet maintained institutional discrimination that discouraged many from actually doing so.⁶⁰

The Cold War, by fostering an arms race and a race for scientific pre-eminence, created the context in which these aspiring scientists experienced contradictory messages. On the one hand, Americans became more concerned with the waste of “womanpower” in the workplace, particularly after the publication of the National Manpower Council’s report *Womanpower* in 1957, which noted the “waste of human abilities” due to the lack of adequate usage of women workers. On the other hand, it reaffirmed the traditional idea that men should be the primary breadwinners.⁶¹ Women encountered these ambivalent and often contradictory signals from government officials, media advertisers, and high school guidance counselors alike; a “postwar schizophrenia” about women pervaded the media, conveying “conflicting constructions of femininity” that often encouraged workforce participation in the same sentence that contained praise for traditional domesticity.⁶² Responding to the calls to

⁵⁸ Rossiter, *Women Scientists*, 81.

⁵⁹ Rossiter, *Women Scientists*, 304.

⁶⁰ Rossiter, *Women Scientists*, 81, 101, 304.

⁶¹ National Manpower Council, *Womanpower* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 7; Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*, 211.

⁶² “Postwar schizophrenia” from Susan Douglas and “conflicting constructions” from Jackie Byars, as quoted in Joanne Meyerowitz, “Rewriting Postwar Women’s History,

serve their nation, young women began altering their career aspirations, but found images of successful scientists – perfectly coiffed, attractive women with spotless homes populated by happy spouses and children – intimidating and very often illusory.⁶³ To deal with the contradiction, women and men often used traditional images to ease the idea of women scientists carefully into the public realm.⁶⁴ As the word “scientist” generally brought to mind “abstruse and socially awkward” men in the 1950s, the use of images of attractive young women in lab coats who boasted of domestic success likely seemed less threatening than those of “plain, stocky” and unfeminine Soviet women scientists.⁶⁵ Some American women might have successful careers as scientists, but they would not be considered fulfilled if they lacked an attractive physical appearance and conventionally domestic personal life. Although often saddled with traditional expectations, women in the public eye nonetheless gained recognition and positive coverage of their activism, work, and civic participation. As Joanne Meyerowitz argued, “allusions to femininity and domesticity

1945-1960,” in Nancy A. Hewitt, ed., *A Companion to American Women’s History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2002), 392; Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique,” 1455-1482. For the emphasis on domesticity during the Cold War, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

⁶³ Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994), 23; Sevan G. Terzian, “Science World,” 88, 92.

⁶⁴ Laura Micheletti Puaca, “Cold War Women: Professional Guidance, National Defense, and the Society of Women Engineers, 1950-1960,” in Anne Meis Knupfer and Christine A. Woyshner, eds., *The Educational Work of Women’s Organizations, 1890-1960* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 72.

⁶⁵ Terzian, “Science World,” 75; Rossiter, *Women Scientists*, 64-65. For an example of how Soviet women were portrayed in the media, see J. Edgar Hoover, “A View of Reality,” *General Federation Clubwoman* (May-June 1961), 12-13, 22, 34.

probably helped legitimate women's public achievements."⁶⁶ Betty Friedan's "feminine mystique" coexisted with praise for successful independent women.

SCA women volunteering in the early 1960s encountered these contradictory messages while working as scientists and ranger-naturalists. In their language and actions they embodied the inconsistencies of the era; they were creatures of their time who simultaneously embraced domestic imagery and worked in nontraditional careers. Media portrayals of SCA women echoed typical print coverage of women scientists and professionals, in that some reference to domesticity was generally added along with information regarding the women's nontraditional work.⁶⁷ Volunteers were photographed while performing some kind of physical or scientific activity, and appeared as attractive, well-dressed individuals who combined favorable mention of domestic chores with discussions of their scientific work. In a *National Parks Magazine* article on the first two women volunteers at Cedar Breaks National Monument in 1960, the author noted that these students took weather measurements (Fig. 2.1), operated the museum, gave interpretive talks, typed and filed, laid out trails, and collected specimens. The article also noted that the young women cooked their own meals, believing that "the housekeeping was a valuable experience."⁶⁸ In an *American Forests* article on Kaye Christopher, a volunteer in 1962, also at Cedar Breaks, the male author noted her appearance, describing her as "dark, pretty, and

⁶⁶ Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique," 1460.

⁶⁷ Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America*, 42.

⁶⁸ "In the Field with the S.C.P." *National Parks Magazine* 34.155 (November 1960), 14.

feminine.” (Fig. 2.2)⁶⁹ Christopher had earned New York certification as a tree farmer while a high school student and received numerous scholarships to Syracuse University (she had wished to study forestry at Cornell but was rejected due to the fact she was a woman). In describing her work with her family’s Christmas tree farm, the author quoted Christopher to the effect that tree equipment was not much harder to use than a vacuum cleaner. The author’s implication was clear: a woman could perform such work and yet remain feminine. Similar language had been used during World War II to describe women’s work in factories constructing war materials, such as comparing using a drill press to squeezing an orange or operating an egg beater.⁷⁰ These women performed jobs outside the “norm” for women, but still rhetorically tied their work to postwar domestic ideals.

⁶⁹ Creighton Peet, “Miss Johnny Appleseed,” *American Forests* 68 (August 1962), 16-17, 42-43.

⁷⁰ Ruth Milkman, “Gender at Work: The Sexual Division of Labor during World War II,” in Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron DeHart, eds., *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 470.



Figs. 3.1. and 3.2. Fig 3.1. from “In the Field with the S.C.P.” *National Parks Magazine* 34.155 (November 1960), 14; Fig. 3.2 from “Miss Johnny Appleseed” *American Forests* 68 (August 1962), 16. On left, Margot Schmidt and Peggy Thompson at Cedar Breaks National Monument; on right, Kaye Christopher at home in New York State.

SCA women volunteers, all of whom were either college or graduate students until 1969, pushed two different boundaries at once; they proposed to enter the “masculine” realm of the National Park Service, and they often sought to gain scientific field experience.⁷¹ SCA administrators, Liz Cushman Titus included,

⁷¹ In her book on women in the national parks, Polly Kaufman frequently references the “male-oriented” culture of the National Park Service, stemming in part from its roots in the cavalry divisions assigned to protect the first national park, Yellowstone.

encountered resistance when setting up accommodations and programs for women. The women students themselves occasionally encountered obstacles and skepticism, too, during their summer experience and in their career paths. Although most of these SCA women studied the biosciences, such as the “feminine” discipline of botany, they still ran up against many of the barriers Margaret Rossiter detailed so closely in her work on women scientists. Graduate school for women in the sciences was not a welcoming place.⁷² For example, Kaye Christopher MacInnes, who studied for a doctorate in botany at a Canadian university in the 1960s, overcame many impediments during her entire time in higher education. MacInnes noted that her department chair acted like an “English hen” when she requested permission to study arctic plants, as women did not generally conduct field work for advanced degrees, particularly in northern Canada. MacInnes commented that “every step of the way” in her education she experienced resistance to her plan as she often sought to do things “females didn’t initially do,” and so had to find ways around the system. Many other women scientists did the same, often devising their own fields of study or maneuvering their careers to create a niche within their scientific discipline.⁷³ Women scholars supported by the GCA fellowship probably had similar experiences,

See Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice*, xxxiv-xxxv, 77-82, 86-87, 121-126. Even in 1978, one woman Park Service superintendent, when asked whether the Service remained male-oriented, emphatically agreed with that characterization, calling it a gross “understatement.” Janet Chess Wolf, interview with Dorothy Boyle Huyck, April 13, 1978, Dorothy Boyle Huyck Oral Interviews, Oral History Collection, Anderson Library (attic), Library of Harpers Ferry National Historic Park, WV.

⁷² Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America*, 66-76.

⁷³ Kaye Christopher MacInnes, interview with author, September 15, 2008; Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America*, 99-103.

considering that landscape architecture and horticulture had “feminine” characteristics similar to botany. Volunteering with the SCA to perform field research and work as park naturalists in the 1950s and 1960s undoubtedly enabled a small group of women to acquire invaluable experience and contacts that often later led to employment with the national parks, or opened doors that might have otherwise remained closed. Supported by the GCA, the student group introduced new opportunities to some college and graduate women interested in pursuing careers in the national parks or in the sciences.

Seeds of Change

The SCA quietly began to break down barriers simply by placing women volunteers in a domain almost universally acknowledged as masculine. During the planning stages of the SCA, Liz Cushman and Marty Hayne made a concerted effort to include women students in the ranks of SCA volunteers, going so far as to question park officials about their refusal to allow high-school girls into the program. In park official’s minds, girls “couldn’t, wouldn’t, and shouldn’t” work in the parks.⁷⁴ Neither woman claimed to be a “feminist,” not surprising as the term generally elicited derision at the time. Indeed, Cushman’s original idea for women volunteers in the parks and the actions of some of the women SCA participants reflected common cultural assumptions about work women should perform. In her thesis, Cushman suggested that women students serve as fee collectors welcoming visitors to the parks, as babysitters for children, or as helpers who would clean campgrounds.⁷⁵ Today,

⁷⁴ Elizabeth C.T. Putnam, interview with author, 3 May 2006.

⁷⁵ Elizabeth Cushman, “Thesis on a Proposed Student Conservation Corps,” (BA, Vassar College, 1955), 3, 13.

when speaking about their experiences, both women say their aims for the program were educational and service-oriented, rather than focused on breaking down barriers for women. Marty Hayne Talbot, when asked about the opportunities the SCA provided women, commented that she and Liz were not “women’s activists or bra-burners” but focused on educating students and helping the parks.⁷⁶ Cushman Titus (now Putnam) stated that she and Talbot, though disappointed that high school girls would not be given the opportunity to participate, decided to not push the issue and go along with the park officials.⁷⁷ These two women might not interpret their actions as “feminist” today, but they charted out different careers for themselves and other young women, and facilitated futures often very different from those of their mothers. Their approach might have been grounded in a non-partisan, feminized voluntary tradition, but the realities of women’s lives and experiences in the postwar era persuaded them to work for change. As many historians have noted, women like Cushman Titus and Hayne Talbot, who advocated for recognition of talented women in the postwar period, laid important foundations upon which institutional and cultural change could be built, beginning in the 1960s.⁷⁸ By questioning the logic of excluding women from

⁷⁶ Elli Caldwell, '06, SCA Staff, “Voices from the Past: An Interview with Marty Talbot,” <http://thesca.org/hands-on/2007/02/voices-past-interview-marty-talbot>. (accessed 11 January 2010). Talbot used the same phrase (“bra-burner”) in my interview with her, stating that she and Liz did not feel they were actively working to help women. Marty Hayne Talbot, interview with author, 30 March 2009. Her recent comments could be seen as retrospectively-edited memories, considering “bra-burning” became associated with feminist action after Talbot had ended her active role in the SCA.

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Cushman Titus was divorced from her first husband in 1965; she married Bruce Putnam in 1992. Today, she goes by Elizabeth Titus Putnam.

⁷⁸ See Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (1989; New York: Free Press, 1997), 261.

work in the national parks, they were part of the groundswell of women who challenged the status quo. In doing so, these women subverted and circumvented policies that generally restricted women.

In the mid-1950s, when Liz Cushman and Marty Hayne proposed using both women and men students as volunteers, the National Park Service had a fairly rigid policy against hiring women in field positions, particularly as rangers. Because Cushman and Hayne's preparatory research showed that personnel attitudes toward women in the parks had begun to shift slightly, they pointedly asked about the possibility of having women participate in Cushman's Student Conservation Corps when they made their first western tour in 1955. Park Service employees had widely varied responses to the idea of women serving and working in the parks; some laughed at the idea of a woman wearing a ranger hat, whereas some supporters saw this as a great opportunity for female conservationists and scientists.⁷⁹ Others protested that accepting "girls" could never work, as they would cause too many problems, among them requiring that men behave chivalrously.⁸⁰ A number of men said that women could be useful (as typists, naturalists, and hostesses) and a few remembered the success of women ranger-naturalists hired during the 1920s. Men of the Park Service did not take a unitary position on the issue; some viewed women guides as a novelty

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam, interview by author, 3-4 May 2006.

⁸⁰ NPS Historian Roy Appleman, referring to Rockefeller Center guides and the idea that women served as natural hostesses, believed they would serve as excellent interpreters. Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: History Division, National Park Service, 1986), 73-74.

(and potential inconvenience) and another recognized the value of women employees.⁸¹

For the first summer's program in Olympic National Park, Cushman and Hayne persuaded Superintendent Overly to accept three women college and graduate students, despite his reluctance due to "lack of accommodation and facilities for them."⁸² Overly's excuse had a long history, going back to the 1920s. As Polly Kaufman explains, the Park Service actually had a more open policy regarding women in the Service during World War I and into the 1920s, hiring the first woman ranger in 1918. However, this situation changed when a Department of Interior inspector found five women working with a title of ranger-naturalist in Yellowstone National Park in 1926, under the supervision of Horace Albright. Male ranger-naturalists felt threatened by their female counterparts, and, coupled with the desire to professionalize the field of interpretation, succeeded in pushing out women from the position of ranger-naturalist.⁸³ This decision reflected a common pattern in the early years of new

⁸¹ Melvin J. Weig, Superintendent of Edison National Historic Site, expressed amazement that the Service treated the idea of women as guides as new, citing a long history of women interpreters in the Service. See Hillary Tolson to Washington Office and All Field Offices, January 21, 1963, Dorothy Boyle Huyck Collection (unsorted), Anderson Library (basement), NPS History Collection, Harpers Ferry, WV. For one NPS attitude toward women employees, see Rogers Young, "Ladies Who Wear the Uniform of the National Park Service" *Planning and Civic Comment* 28.1 (March 1962), 1-5. Young noted that many Receptionist and Guide jobs might become more available for women, who did not necessarily have professional training and were not burdened with ambitions to "further their careers," as were men.

⁸² Overly to Packard, August 23, 1957, FF 49, Box 17, SCA DPL.

⁸³ Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice*, 80-81. Kaufman built her book in part from the sources found in the Dorothy Boyle Huyck Collection in the Anderson Library of Harpers Ferry National Historic Park, WV.

programs or initiatives, when efforts to professionalize meant pushing out women.⁸⁴ Albright, who promoted using women as naturalists and had appointed ten by the mid-1920s, was forced to cease hiring women and adopt the excuse that the Park Service could not hire women due to “lack of appropriate accommodations.”⁸⁵ The use of that phrase to exclude women in field positions continued into the 1970s, although a few women, primarily archaeologists in Southwestern parks, maintained employment with the Park Service after the 1930s.⁸⁶ The most prominent woman employee during these years, Jean McWhirt Pinkley, gained and maintained her position because of her relationship to Park Service men and her extraordinary skill – an example of another pattern, in which women who wished to gain access to nontraditional occupations needed talents above and beyond those required of men.⁸⁷ By proposing the use of

⁸⁴ This situation bears a remarkable resemblance to the exclusion of women from the sciences, particularly science education, at the turn of the twentieth century; see Gates and Shteir, eds., *Natural Eloquence*; Tolley, *The Science Education of American Girls*, chapter 8. Margaret Rossiter has also shown that universities viewed educational progress as firing the “old girls” and reinstating nepotism clauses, which conspired to exclude and discriminate against women scientific professionals in the 1950s and 1960s. Rossiter, *Women Scientists*, xv-xvii.

⁸⁵ Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice*, 65-73, 77-81.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 83. All women hired by southwestern parks in the 1930s-1960s period had some kind of Park Service connection. Southwestern universities also trained a number of women in archaeology during this period, and many of these women had more expertise than male rangers.

⁸⁷ Chester A. Thomas, “Jean McWhirt Pinkley,” *American Antiquity* 34.4 (October 1969), 471-473. Pinkley served as an archaeologist at Mesa Verde National Park (CO) from 1939 until 1969, the year of her death. Pinkley's father-in-law held a high position with the Park Service, and she was hired after her husband died during WWII. Thomas' obituary of Pinkley noted that “so well did she perform her work that she was selected over a number of qualified men.”

women students in parks, and not limiting their activities to typing, Cushman Titus and Hayne pressed the Park Service to shift its policy regarding women.

Though Hayne and Cushman Titus did not consider themselves feminists of any kind, they indeed helped break down barriers to women by providing access to field research experience and professional contacts within the Park Service. Their work echoed the actions taken by many white middle and upper class women to demonstrate leadership abilities and competence in the professions, and those who advocated for equal access in the postwar period after encountering resistance – much like women in the League of Women Voters, the AAUW, and similar women's groups.⁸⁸ Cushman Titus and Hayne did not challenge the status quo with a conscious agenda to change it, but rather did so because they believed highly educated women like themselves deserved equal opportunity. The women college participants they recruited had the most to gain from their experiences during the summer, particularly those women who wished to go into conservation-related or scientific careers, or work for the Park Service. In providing young women scientists with access and opportunity, the SCA contributed to the breaking down of barriers to women's scientific careers in the postwar period. Shaped by the changing social context and their own background, the two SCA founders sought to change the system by pushing the boundaries that had traditionally restricted them. Cushman Titus and Hayne were not part of the women's rights movement, but in their understanding of women's abilities they questioned existing assumptions.

Undoubtedly, Cushman Titus and Hayne's efforts to provide access for young women enabled a large percentage of SCA participants to gain important

⁸⁸ Rupp and Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums*, 49, 57.

experience as they built their careers. Eight SCA women served the Park Service during the summer of 1957, one of whom went on to become the first woman Park Service wildlife biologist. [Margaret] Mary Meagher, who studied marmot populations at Olympic National Park during the summer of 1957, earned a PhD in zoology from the University of California, Berkeley in 1970. She began her long career in the Park Service at Yellowstone in 1959, serving under the title of museum curator because the Park Service did not formally list science positions available to women.⁸⁹ Nearly half of the women who participated in the early years went on to gain advanced degrees. At least seventeen who participated in the first seven years of the SCA (of 41 total women participants, or 42%) went on to earn masters or doctoral degrees in the sciences, including one woman who earned a PhD from the University of Chicago, on a National Science Foundation scholarship.⁹⁰ (See Table 3.1) Most

⁸⁹ Ibid, 169.

⁹⁰ Mary Meagher, PhD in Wildlife Biology (GTNP '57); Ailene Kane Rogers, MS in Botany (GTNP '58); Alice Crawford Nicolson, MS in Biology, (GTNP '58); Barbara Hart Decker, MS in Physiology (GTNP '59); Loline Hathaway, PhD in Biology (GTNP '59); Elizabeth Venrick, PhD in Oceanography (GTNP '60); Mary Ellen Bruhn, MS in Biology (GTNP '60); Emily Shirley, PhD in Zoology (GTNP '60); Masha Etkin, PhD in Biology (GTNP '60); Helen Gill Sellin, PhD in Biochemistry (GTNP '60); Patricia Kern Holmgren, PhD in Zoology (GTNP '61); Nancy Winkler Bartlett, MS in Physical Education and Recreation (Cedar Breaks National Monument '61); Kaye Christopher MacInnes, PhD in Botany (CBNM '62); Eloise Hill Carlton, PhD in Geology, NDEA Fellow (CBNM '63); Carol Jean Ehlers, PhD in History (Research grant '63). Women who participated in SCA after 1963, earning advanced degrees: Denise Van Hemert, MS in Marine Biology (Acadia '65-'67), Elizabeth McClain, PhD in Biology (GTNP '66). Others who earned advanced degrees, according to the SCA newsletter: Catharine White, MS in Botany (GTNP '61); Toni Lincks Taylor, MS in Zoology (GTNP '60). Field clusters: biosciences (biology, botany, zoology, physiology), 14; geosciences (oceanography, geology), 2; social sciences (recreation, history), 2. More women may have earned degrees, but these names are the only ones that appear in the WorldCat database, as authors of master's theses or doctoral dissertations. Common names or name change due to marriage also

SCA women volunteered at Grand Teton or Cedar Breaks, where they constituted a critical mass of SCA volunteers. (see Tables 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 in Chapter Two). SCA women overwhelmingly studied the biosciences (14 of 17), with the majority choosing to enter the disciplines of biology, botany, or zoology. The SCA also aided young women interested in working for the Park Service; two years after the first women SCA students worked in Grand Teton National Park, Superintendent Oberhansley hired two of them back as seasonal naturalists, while one former SCA woman began work as a ranger-naturalist in Washington, D.C. Clearly, some young women viewed the SCA as a valuable way to gain knowledge about their chosen career paths. Their motivation for applying to the program might not have been a conscious attempt to thwart existing attitudes and policy, but the SCA certainly provided concrete experience and a way around traditional barriers.

might prevent identification. Specialties approximated when not specified in WorldCat or Dissertation Abstracts.

Table 3.1 1957-1963 SCA College Women Participant Graduate Degrees by Field

Year Participated	Degree Field	Master's	Doctoral	Cumulative Total
1957	Wildlife Biology	0	1	1
1958	Biology Botany	2	0	3
1959	Biology Physiology	1	1 (Biology)	5
1960	Biology Biochemistry Oceanography Zoology	2 (Biology, Zoology)	4 (one PhD for each field)	11
1961	Botany Phys. Education Taxonomy	2	1 (Taxonomy)	14
1962	Botany	0	1	15
1963	Geology History	0	2	17

Fewer SCA women who volunteered after the mid-1960s later pursued advanced degrees – indicating that, as the 1960s wore on and more opportunities opened to women due in part to the Equal Pay Act, Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill, and the EEOC's 1968 ruling on sex-segregated advertisements, young women scientists might have had other opportunities and gone elsewhere to gain field experience. The SCA, therefore, provided a useful alternative path for some young women before the federal government began chipping away at sex discrimination in the workplace, years before affirmative action. Public reaction to the volunteer work of SCA women reveals that others viewed the SCA as a great opportunity to further careers and provide a place where they could practice their expertise. One woman's graduate professor wrote on her behalf in 1961, asking that she be considered for a position with the SCA even though he had no knowledge of the program. He stated

that this student's "ONE" (emphasis his) field of choice was the conservation of natural resources, and that due to her sex, she had difficulty finding a job in that field.⁹¹ Others who had finished their studies and did not have the opportunity to volunteer envied the young women their experience in conservation; one New Jersey woman wrote a letter to the editor of the *National Parks Magazine* cheering on these women conservationists and envying their opportunity, noting that she had only negative replies after inquiring about jobs that would use her degree in wildlife conservation.⁹² Members of the public who knew of the SCA absolutely saw it as a way for young women interested in science, conservation, and national parks to gain invaluable experience.

The remarks made by the New Jersey reader allude to a limitation of the SCA; since it was a volunteer program, only those able to afford a summer without pay, and with no personal ties restricting mobility, could apply for the SCA. The program provided opportunities for women scientists, but only certain individuals could take advantage of them; women who needed to work for pay or had other obligations could not participate. Additionally, many of the SCA positions women took were available only because men could gain better paying jobs elsewhere and did not necessarily need the experience the SCA could provide. Liz Cushman Titus and

⁹¹ Philip J. Sawyer (associate professor of zoology, University of New Hampshire) on behalf of Judith Perley, April 26, 1961, FF 43, Box 2, SCA DPL. Perley was not accepted to the Jackson Hole Biological Research Station program, because, according to the director, the Station could not "accommodate women" due to lack of appropriate housing facilities. L. Floyd Clarke (JHBRS director and professor of zoology at the University of Wyoming) to Liz Cushman Titus, March 13, 1963, FF 39, Box 17, SCA DPL.

⁹² Letters to the Editor, Mrs. Trudy Tennant (Windsor, NJ), *National Parks Magazine* 32.134 (July-September 1958), 139.

Marty Hayne never set a requirement for the number of women participants they wished to enroll, although the acknowledged availability of more well-qualified women than men implicitly aided their cause of promoting opportunities for women. The supervisor of the Grand Teton students, Harold Bryant, noted in his 1957 report that college women applicants outshone men, and Cushman echoed this observation a few years later. The original plan for the Grand Teton projects called for four women participants, but due to a lack of qualified male applicants, one more woman was added. In addition, one man had to drop out of the program due to being called to duty by the Navy. In her final report for that summer, Cushman noted that outstanding women applicants had been in more supply than men, because of the draft and the fact that men could find well paid jobs during the summers.⁹³ Women, exempt from the draft and with less access to well-paid jobs, particularly of a scientific nature, constituted a large pool of highly qualified applicants. Since Cushman and Hayne, both graduates of a women's college, recruited partly by sending out applications and information to the contacts in their address books, it is not surprising that they knew a number of women like themselves interested in conservation work. Across the nation, the number of women in colleges rose steadily during the twentieth century, including the percentage of students who wished to enter the scientific professions. The SCA, in offering positions for women college- and graduate students in the parks, provided a unique, if limited, opportunity for aspiring scientists and park employees.

Although the SCA provided important experience for women, many followed the norm of women in graduate school or in the professions and dropped out or curtailed their original aspirations. The SCA newsletter alumnae notes show that

⁹³ "Report #10 for Donors and Supporters" p. 2, SCA HQ.

some young women began graduate studies and later followed another path. Often, these women married and had children; at this time, it was extremely difficult for women, particularly educated white women, to combine family and career and they often felt they had to choose between the two. At least nine women, in addition to the seventeen who did complete their degrees, participated in the SCA during the 1950s and 1960s, began graduate studies, and did not complete their intended course of study.⁹⁴ The comments of one doctoral candidate in botany illustrate the tension between potential careers and private life faced by many women who studied science. Ann Henrickson, a 1959 SCA participant and Mount Holyoke graduate, received a GCA scholarship dedicated to a SCA student studying botany. She thanked the sponsoring club after her summer of research, noting that the experience had changed her life. Henrickson, in the midst of studying for a PhD in plant ecology at the University of Minnesota, worked with a University of Wyoming professor, Dr. Charles Laing, on alpine ecosystem studies that summer. Henrickson noted humorously that Laing thought so highly of her that he asked her to marry him; she

⁹⁴ Judy Sweetser (GTNP '57), studied for masters in geography; Edith Eilander (GTNP '57), took graduate courses in unspecified field; Nancy Lehman (GTNP '59), studied for masters in botany; Joan Evers (GTNP '59), studied for masters in biology; Marda West (GTNP '59), studied for masters in botany; Susan Koelle (GTNP '60), studied for MFA; Mary Anna Adams (Acadia '63), studied graduate biology, worked for Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research; Margaret Betts (Acadia '64), took graduate courses in unspecified field; Jane Peterson (GTNP '66), studied graduate level anatomy. Joan Ericksen (ONP '57) noted that she chose to become a teacher rather than a geologist because she wished to find a job near her husband's station assignment. Ailene Rogers, Alice Crawford, Barbara Hart all noted they ceased working when they had children. See bound newsletter *Conservational Conversation*, FF 30, Box 6, SCA DPL.

agreed, and, in her words, became his “permanent assistant.”⁹⁵ Henrickson passed her preliminary PhD exams, but did not finish her degree. Her choice to become a research assistant rather than an independent researcher probably stemmed from any number of reasons; her experience followed the common pattern of women during this period, many of whom dropped out of graduate school. As many contemporaries might have said, Henrickson earned her “Mrs.” degree; in the 1950s, Cornell University awarded “Ph.T” (putting hubby through) degrees to women who gave up their research and took jobs to support their husbands.⁹⁶ Margaret Rossiter has shown that the general atmosphere for women scientists in higher education was not hospitable; women had to persevere to complete their studies, and many became research assistants in order to simply remain in academia. Young women also internalized much of the rhetoric that emphasized domesticity and felt they chose to focus on family rather than career, rather than recognizing institutional discrimination and sexism that constrained their choices. Both reasons likely combined to convince this talented woman scientist that she must choose between career and family, while her husband faced no such choice. The SCA enabled some women to challenge the norm, but it still was a product of its time, as were those who volunteered.

Even during their summer with the SCA, women experienced work-related differential treatment in their assigned duties and in attitudes toward their potential futures with the Park Service. Women and men found themselves in work assignments seen as appropriate for each group. The three women (students in botany,

⁹⁵ Ann Henrickson to Garden Club of Allegheny County (PA), September 22, 1959, FF 6, Box 3, SCA DPL.

⁹⁶ Rossiter, *Women Scientists*, 76.

geology, and game management) stationed at Olympic National Park during the first summer lived and worked in the museum, and were assigned curatorial and secretarial duties deemed appropriate for women. Mary Meagher, however, successfully conducted a population study of marmots. The college men (students in biology, bacteriology, and wildlife management) conducted their work in the backcountry, following elk herds. The high school boys cut and improved nature trails. At Grand Teton in 1957, the five women rotated among all the departments including the maintenance-oriented Protective Division. The students' yearbook entries contain a few revealing incidents that highlighted the unusual presence of women working in the national parks and the ideas about what constituted women's work. During one weekend, a few of the students encountered a fire and helped rangers put it out, some of whom expressed surprise that "two girls [were] among the impromptu 'Smoke Jumpers.'"⁹⁷ No women were allowed to flag traffic around construction after one woman student had trouble directing visitors. Despite his previous objection to women serving as ranger-naturalists, Supervisor Bryant noted in his report that "college women participants quickly proved that they can be as useful and produce as much work as college men."⁹⁸ Although the women were somewhat restricted in the work they could do, and the work assigned to them tended to be less physically demanding than that given to men, women SCA students nonetheless proved the ability of women to perform work required of national park employees.

The SCA women certainly did not immediately, or directly, shift Park Service policy regarding women employees in the field; policy would continue to

⁹⁷ *The Ramshorn Rambler* (GTNP student yearbook 1957), Box 6, ECTP.

⁹⁸ Kaufman, 74; Dr. Harold Bryant's Report 1957, FF 22, Box 18, SCA DPL.

dictate “that women cannot be employed in certain jobs, such as Park Ranger, or Seasonal Park Ranger, in which the employee is subject to be called to fight fires, take part in rescue operations, or do other strenuous or hazardous work.”⁹⁹ The policy remained despite the fact that many women, particularly ranger wives, had to perform exactly those duties when their husbands were away.¹⁰⁰ However, some SCA women began whittling away at long-standing barriers; the SCA newsletter announced that “the gals are coming through” in noting that several women volunteers from 1957 had obtained seasonal naturalist positions. Shirley Woodcox and Sharon Townley gained positions as seasonal naturalists at Grand Teton National Park for the summer of 1958. These women likely would not have been able to secure positions had they not already proven their abilities through their summer with the SCA. They only obtained seasonal positions and not permanent assignments, but their employment signaled a shift in Park Service policy.

The SCA continued to provide women the opportunity to prove themselves to the National Park Service.¹⁰¹ Fred Packard repeatedly demonstrated a keen interest in having women work for the Park Service, stating that a number of excellent women were graduating from college, many of whom should work for the

⁹⁹ Rogers W. Young, “Ladies Who Wear the Uniform of the National Park Service,” *Planning and Civic Comment* 28.1 (March 1962): 1. Young quoted the policy as it was reiterated in 1960.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, Margaret Becker Merrill, *Bears in My Kitchen* (McGraw-Hill, 1956); Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice*, chapter four “Park Service Wives.” *National Parks Magazine* included a few stories by park ranger wives in the 1950s.

¹⁰¹ “Report #10 for Donors and Supporters, “The Summer Trial Projects Student Conservation Program 1957” p. 2, SCAHQ.

Service.¹⁰² Packard, a long-time collaborator and friend of conservationist (and former suffragist) Rosalie Edge, saw the program as an excellent way to break down the “man’s world attitude” that pervaded the Park Service. Following the first summer of the trial project, Packard wrote to Oberhansley urging him to continue using women SCA volunteers, as they could demonstrate the abilities of women as ranger naturalists and perhaps “open the doors for later employment of women” in the Park Service.¹⁰³ Packard believed that women college graduates had the experience and ability to work for the Park Service, and that the Service missed out on a “real opportunity” by not tapping them for ranger-naturalist and other positions that dealt with the public.¹⁰⁴ He urged Oberhansley and Overly, as well as other Park staff, to give women the opportunity to work in non-traditional positions. Park officials generally agreed that the women students had done well; Ted Wirth, landscape architect at Grand Teton, said that “the women students have proved that they are more than capable of fitting into the organization and contributing much.”¹⁰⁵ Their opinions reflected a wider shift in cultural assumptions about women in the workplace. The Park Service began hiring women in uniformed field positions beginning in the early 1960s, “rediscovering”

¹⁰² Fred Packard, Progress Report on Student Conservation Program, June 28, 1957, NPA Minutes, Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, 1957-1958, Box 13, NPCA DPL.

¹⁰³ Packard to Oberhansley, January 27, 1958, FF 24, Box 2, SCA DPL.

¹⁰⁴ Fred Packard, Progress Report on Student Conservation Program, June 28, 1957, NPA Minutes, Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, 1957-1958, Box 13, NPCA DPL.

¹⁰⁵ Ted Wirth, “Report on SCP,” (attached to letter Oberhansley to Packard, August 20, 1957), FF 19, Box 3, SCA DPL.

them as useful in certain position, particularly as ranger-naturalists and ranger-historians.¹⁰⁶

The SCA undoubtedly helped the Park Service along in its reassessment of uniformed women. In 1958, one SCA woman, wearing the SCA badge, a khaki uniform and working in the Grand Teton Interpretive Division, reported that the public showed great interest in her and other SCA students. She noted that they were “intrigued by the idea of Rangerettes,” and that women especially demonstrated curiosity, requesting information about the program and the National Parks Association. Many simply commented “Aren’t you lucky?”¹⁰⁷

Bearing Fruit

The volunteer program envisioned by Liz Cushman, though not intentionally feminist, made inroads against ingrained discriminatory policies regarding women in the Park Service. The SCA provided openings to women scientists who fought for recognition, institutional support, and field experience during an era in which women struggled to gain professional equity, and, after the first SCA women successfully volunteered their time and expertise, the Park Service began recruiting women as ranger-naturalists and interpreters in the 1960s. Park Service directors Conrad Wirth and George Hartzog, both enthusiastic supporters of its programs, played an important role in promoting the volunteer group throughout the park system. Hartzog, who met Liz Cushman and Marty Hayne during their first tour of Western parks in 1956, modeled his Volunteers in the Parks (begun 1970) on the

¹⁰⁶ Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice*, 121.

¹⁰⁷ Student Evaluations 1958, p. 6, FF 26, Box 18, SCA DPL. Smith replaced Packard as executive director of the National Parks Association on August 1, 1958.

SCA, as he believed the program worked very well.¹⁰⁸ The Park Service started assigning women to trail crews in the mid-1970s, after the SCA and the Youth Conservation Corps demonstrated that women could indeed perform such labor. No “smoking gun” exists pointing directly from the SCA to altered Park policy, but Park officials undoubtedly remembered and noted the presence of college and graduate women in khaki uniforms, with the arrowhead-shaped SCA patch on their arms.

Although Cushman Titus and Hayne did not see themselves as feminists or barrier-breakers when they shaped the volunteer student program, they did embrace ideas that indicated their belief that some women could handle and excel at field work in the national parks and in the sciences. Their conception of women’s abilities challenged the generally held contemporary view of women’s roles in the Park Service, which were usually as wives and helpmates. The mindset of providing well-educated, talented women with an opportunity to further their career resembled initiatives undertaken by other women’s organizations, though Cushman Titus and Hayne wished to act on behalf of the cream of the crop in terms of educated women. The two SCA founders’ attitudes partly illustrate what Susan Levine calls the “ebb and flow of feminism,” on the rise in the 1950s as various groups of Americans responded to the changing political, social, and cultural milieu.¹⁰⁹ Cushman Titus and Hayne, forming the SCA during the same years when prominent women’s rights

¹⁰⁸ Hartzog had been assistant superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park in 1956, and spoke with the two women as they toured the four national parks recommended by Horace Albright to assess the viability of Cushman Titus’s idea. Hartzog later wrote to Cushman Titus that he “hoped she wouldn’t mind” that he “lifted” her idea to create the Volunteers in Parks program. “History of SCP 1957-1997,” p. 25, FF 1, Box 26, SCA DPL.

¹⁰⁹ Levine, *Degrees of Equality*, 3.

activists such as Esther Peterson and Pauli Murray fought discrimination and exclusion, represent another small piece of the history of feminism in that they too found their personal experience (and those of fellow young women) repudiating the received wisdom about femininity – and sought to push against those restrictions.

The relationship between the Garden Club of America and the Student Conservation Association grew from shared common ground and overlapping interests in women's educational opportunities, and a mutual desire to emphasize voluntarism. The venerable, well-established voluntary tradition, as represented here by the women's club and elaborated on by the student group, often limited participation. The early SCA precluded access for students outside of the exclusive social circle inhabited by garden club women or for those deemed troublesome, and excluded students who could not volunteer, usually for financial reasons. Those women whom the SCA sponsored during its early years represented a highly qualified, ambitious group; the opportunity it provided aided only a few, though the SCA gave real, valuable experience that many of its female volunteers later translated into professional careers. Volunteering, as always, proved a double-edged sword, by providing access for some and not others. Nevertheless, cooperation between the two groups flourished and contributed to the wider social shift in attitudes about women, the workforce, and gender expectations.

The GCA and SCA also shared an interest in conservation education, a descendant of turn-of-the-century nature study; for the GCA, the focus on educating young people about the environment represented a major thread of continuity from its earliest years. This interest, particularly the GCA's focus on teaching children, reflected an older understanding of women's voluntary roles in the community. The

history of this educational movement and the postwar version of conservation education further illuminates some of the themes already discussed, namely the nature of voluntarism and service, and the type of student sought by the SCA and its collaborators. In the next chapter, an examination of the conservation education rhetoric used by individuals further demonstrates the singular nature of this program. Cushman and Hayne sang the tune “This Land is Your Land,” but their young program gave only a select few the opportunity to experience the golden valley and redwood forests Guthrie celebrated.

Chapter 4

THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATION LEADERS: POSTWAR CONSERVATION EDUCATION AND “QUALITY” SCA STUDENTS

“Life would be intolerable if I could not visit woods and mountains at short intervals. I have got to have the sight of clear running water and the sound of running water. I have got to get to places where the sky-shine of cities does not dim the stars, where you can smell land and foliage, grasses and marshes, forest duff and hot underbrush turning cool. Most of all, I have to learn again what quiet is. I believe that our culture is more likely to perish from noise than from radioactive fallout.” Bernard DeVoto ¹

DeVoto, who inspired Elizabeth Cushman Titus as a young college student, expressed a sentiment common among conservationists during the postwar period. Fear of the atomic bomb and fear of humanity losing its connection to nature combined to create an atmosphere of anxiety for some conservationists, a feeling often mirrored in the broader American culture of Cold War paranoia. DeVoto’s expressive language also evoked an older idea about the complicated relationship between urban residents and non-urban spaces – that of the Arcadian myth. Historian Peter Schmitt located Arcadia “somewhere on the urban fringe, easily accessible and mildly wild.” Nature study, the reform movement that promoted the idea humans should intentionally learn about nature and spend time in it, was one led by “teachers and preachers, birdwatchers, socialites, scout leaders, city-planners, and inarticulate commuters,” and sought to infuse a natural spirituality into the harried life of urban

¹ As quoted in “53 Million on the Go,” *Newsweek* 48 (6 August 1956), 69.

Americans.² Arcadia bore a close similarity to John Muir's wilderness cult and had many similar proponents; both ideas claimed support primarily from white middle or upper class urban dwellers. The same class of individuals continued to maintain such interest in the postwar period, combining an emphasis on sustainability with spirituality.³ One way conservationists sought to preserve human affinity for nature and concern for its wellbeing was through conservation education, an iteration of nature study. Cushman Titus's SCA married outdoor conservation education and youth recreation with a focus on creating an efficient, well-oiled national park system. Her purposeful blend reflected continually evolving ideas about conservation, and the SCA serves as an example of the continued presence of older conservationism amid the rise of a new postwar environmental movement. However, the SCA retained its conservative philosophy, both in terms of environmental thought and its emphasis on voluntarism, as new ideas about the human relationship to the world emerged along with 1960s radicalism. The SCA might have been innovative when founded, but did not hold its cutting edge as newer groups and ideologies emerged.

Elizabeth Cushman Titus's student conservation program redesigned a New Deal youth work program as a solution for an ongoing natural resource problem. Her service program, similar in many ways to conservation education programs and

² Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), xvii.

³ Finis Dunaway argues for continuity between pre- and post-WWII environmentalism, by examining the sublime and spirituality present in print media covering non-human environments. Finis Dunaway, *Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Thomas Robertson, "'Questions of Seeing': Images and the Cultures of Environmental Reform" *American Quarterly* 59.1 (March 2007), 239-247.

recreation philosophies conceptually rooted in the Progressive Era, also reflected a persistent fascination with the (presumed) power of outdoor experience to shape young people, particularly young men. SCA administrators and their federal and philanthropic collaborators mirrored the ideas of earlier conservationists in extolling nature's power and its role in preparing American youth for life. Schmitt's Arcadian myth endured and, influenced at this point by Cold War culture, echoed prescriptive ideas common to Progressive Era reformers.⁴ Conservation education (and its predecessor, nature study) sought to construct the appropriate relationship between young Americans and their natural environment and continued to attract many proponents in the postwar era.⁵ For a certain segment of the population, conservation education served as a way to perpetuate a version of the Arcadian ideal, tinged with an emphasis on wilderness, ensuring the maintenance of a particular environmental mindset.

Seen as the best and the brightest of their generation, the youth chosen for the Student Conservation Association were viewed as potential leaders of the future conservation movement. The SCA and its supporters, however, wished to maintain a movement of a particular kind – it certainly would not have much in common with the New Left and counterculture groups emerging in the 1960s, and their emphasis on

⁴ See Schmitt, *Back to Nature*, 77-79; John P. Herron, *Science and the Social Good: Nature, Culture, and Community, 1865-1965* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), chapter five; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness & The American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967, 2001), chapter nine "The Wilderness Cult."

⁵ For a discussion of the ties between environmentalism, conservationist thought, and cultural anxiety, see Susan R. Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2005), part three.

challenging the status quo.⁶ The SCA, as it was called following incorporation in 1964, aimed to educate “quality” students about traditional conservation issues and hoped to convince many to enter professional careers in related occupations. Aided by powerful interests in the nonprofit sector as well as in the federal government, Cushman Titus and her colleagues selected “talented” high school and college students to work in the parks. For the public agency and private nonprofit organizations involved with promoting and sustaining the student volunteer program, the prospect of developing future leaders and “quality” citizens versed in conservationism lay at the heart of their financial and verbal support. These men and women, representing old-line conservation groups, wished to foster young leaders who would maintain the social order as well as their vision of conservation. Conservation education served as the method by which they would train “stewards of tomorrow”; these “stewards,” however, had to fit a particular mold.

Defining “Quality” Students

Successful SCA applicants had certain characteristics that distinguished them as promising young people with leadership potential. SCA administrators, Park Service officials, and conservationists familiar with the program concurred on the basic profile of a SCA participant, and agreed that careful selection remained crucial to the program’s success.⁷ In her original thesis, Elizabeth Cushman noted the

⁶ See Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, rev. ed. (1993; Washington: Island Press, 2005), chapter three “The Sixties Rebellion.”

⁷ George Brewer to Cushman (?), May 25, 1955, cited in Suggestions for SCC from Reports 2 & 4, FF 18, Box 3, SCA DPL.

importance of strict participant selection, with the goal of recruiting “able, willing, and cooperative” students.⁸ Various attributes characterized the ideal candidate: “top caliber,” “energetic,” “enthusiastic,” “eager,” “intelligent,” “well rounded,” and in possession of “high ideals.” A supervisor commented that the SCA aimed for “across the board, confident, capable, All-American kids,” though on occasion kids who “didn’t fit in” and were not “cut out” for the program slipped through the selection process.⁹ One unsuccessful SCA participant “looked like a juvenile delinquent,” smoked, and wrote poorly.¹⁰ Another, despite excellent references, relevant work experience, and previous volunteer service with the American Friends Service Committee, still prompted eligibility questions in 1959 because he sported a beard.¹¹ The SCA emphasized the clean-cut appearance of Park Rangers and the wholesome image of white, middle-class “All-Americans.” Many of these participants came with impressive résumés, and included a number who were explorer scouts and presidents of school and religious societies.¹² Students dressing like Marlon Brando, with the

⁸ Elizabeth Cushman, “Thesis on a Proposed Student Conservation Corps,” (Vassar College, 1954), 21.

⁹ SCA Supervisors’ Meeting, October 5, 1974, (Folder SCA 1975 Complete File, Box 6), SCA DPL.

¹⁰ Cushman Titus to Brewer, May 11, 1961, FF 36, Box 2, SCA DPL.

¹¹ Cushman Titus to Bryan Harry (Park naturalist at Grand Teton National Park), April 1, 1959, FF 27, Box 17, SCA DPL.

¹² Elizabeth Cushman and Martha Hayne, “The Student Conservation Program: A Worthwhile Summer,” *National Parks Magazine*, 32.133 (April-June 1958), 74-78. For a history of teen culture in the 1950s and 1960s, see Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), chapters 7-14.

attitude of James Dean and the rebelliousness of Beatnik girls, would never make the cut. Appearance and attitude mattered a great deal.

The application itself illuminates the specific skill set the SCA selection committee looked for in a successful applicant. It requested information on earned college credit, park of choice, height, weight, siblings, academic history, proposed occupation, honors, extracurricular activities, hobbies, memberships, occupational experiences, and special skills ranging from mechanics and plumbing to camping, first aid, horseback riding, nature study, and singing. The application of 1966 (from which these categories were taken) also asked about membership in anarchic organizations, a possible reference to the McCarran Act and other anticommunist efforts of the federal government.¹³ Recruiting “All-American” volunteers who were later found to harbor affinities to subversive groups would damage the viability and reputation of the student group. The extensive application also asked *why* the student wished to participate, a crucial question that long-time SCA high school group leader Jack Dolstad considered most important. He instructed supervisors to pay particular attention to the answer; in his mind, the SCA looked most for “future conservationists who are articulate.”¹⁴ More experience and education would bump students up the hierarchy of acceptable applicants.

¹³ The McCarran Act was largely dismantled by the early 1960s, in part because it had served its purpose as a tool for eliminating alleged Communist sympathizers from the government. Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1998), 294-298.

¹⁴ Dolstad to Clay and Fay Rennie (ONP Supervisors), n.d. (1965), attached to letter to E. Titus, March 18, 1965, FF 48, Box 2, SCA DPL.

The SCA's search for "serious, top caliber" students with "high potential" and a "desire to be of public service" echoed the quest for qualified Peace Corps Volunteers.¹⁵ Park Service official Daniel Beard recognized the similarity, noting that the SCA was "very much in keeping with the spirit of the...foreign voluntary Youth Corps idea [proposed] by President Kennedy."¹⁶ Peace Corps director Sargent Shriver looked for "cream-of-the-crop, talented, fit, well-adjusted and devoted American men and women."¹⁷ Several former SCA participants went on to participate in the Peace Corps and VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), evidence that the service programs had similarities with the student volunteer group.¹⁸ The Peace Corps volunteer closely resembled the Student Conservation Association participant of the early years, in background, socioeconomic status, appearance, education, experience, and world-view.¹⁹

Only certain students could qualify to participate in the program and contribute volunteer service to the parks; Cushman Titus's vision for a "selective"

¹⁵ For an example of correspondence addressing the ideal SCA candidate, see Packard to Huyler Held, September 2, 1958, FF 32, Box 2, SCA DPL.

¹⁶ Beard to Regional Directors, Regions 1-5, March 7, 1961, FF 13, Box 1, SCA DPL.

¹⁷ Shriver to President Kennedy, August 1, 1961, as quoted in Gerard T. Rice, *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 143, 325 n. 3.

¹⁸ Approximately ten SCA students participated in the Peace Corps between 1961 and 1968. At least one SCA student volunteered for VISTA, and another for CARE. The SCA undoubtedly drew from a cohort of service-minded students.

¹⁹ For a recent sociological study of volunteers and the motivation behind volunteering, see Marc A. Musick and John Wilson, *Volunteers: A Social Profile* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).

independent student volunteer corps contained an inherent restriction.²⁰ She implicitly excluded all those juveniles who caused such public consternation in the 1950s, emphasizing in her senior thesis that participation in the student volunteer corps should be perceived as an honor.²¹ In step with her vision, the selection committee (including Cushman Titus herself) omitted from consideration those students who lacked the necessary physical qualifications, outdoor experience, personal references, personality traits, or academic success.²² Cushman Titus and her colleagues, lacking the requisite personnel and capital to support a large program, chose to limit publicity to publication of a few articles and directly mail applications to selected schools, thereby limiting the number of students familiar with the SCA. Students whose parents did not read conservation magazines or who attended schools not chosen to receive materials, those from underprivileged and/or non-white families, or those who moved in different social circles than Cushman Titus and her collaborators had little opportunity to hear about the SCA in its early years.²³ The early SCA, supported by

²⁰ Term “selective” found in a number of places: e.g., Elizabeth Titus, “The SCA of the NPS,” *Garden Club of America Bulletin*, 50.1 (January 1962): 67; Preliminary Report 1957, page 9, FF 1, Box 20, SCA DPL.

²¹ For a general discussion of juvenile delinquency, see James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). For a contemporary evaluation of juvenile delinquents and its social, cultural, and economic roots, see Sheldon Glueck and Eleanor Glueck, “White Delinquents in the Core City: As Boys and Men,” *Social Science* 45.2 (1970): 67-81.

²² Applicants could be disqualified because of physical attributes like obesity and flat feet - see Titus to Representative Richard L. Roudebush (IN-R), June 3, 1966, FF 45, Box 1, SCA DPL; for mental problems – see Titus to Gallison, April 19, 1962, FF 1, Box 3, SCA DPL. The 1966 application can be found in FF 31, Box 16, SCA DPL.

²³ The vast majority of SCA participants during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were white, though the SCA did begin recruiting minorities and underprivileged students in

old-line conservation organizations and a major federal agency, sought to create a group of young Americans who would effectively replace the old guard.

Conservation Education and Cultural Anxieties

The “quality” SCA volunteers, educated about conservation by Park Service officials and conservationists in cooperating organizations, fulfilled their elders’ desires for the preservation of conservationism by forming a cadre of potential young leaders. These volunteers also ensured the continuance of some cultural assumptions associated with the early twentieth century, notably the concept that outdoor activity in some way preserved the human character. Although the postwar focus on the importance of nature did not directly echo earlier concern for the enervating effects of industrialized urban life, it did reflect anxiety for the effects of science and progress. Such concern persuaded many Americans to look anew at the usefulness of the United States’ natural resources.

In the 1950s, a greater number and variety of Americans began to demonstrate interest in conservation and environmental issues, a change driven in part by the same technological and cultural anxieties that were compelling conservationists to emphasize education and outdoor experience. Historians debate the reasons why so many Americans became interested in environmental concerns after WWII; one points to “professionalism and issues of human survival” whereas another argues modern environmentalism stemmed from a desire to protect amenities, fueled by grassroots

earnest in the 1960s. Some underprivileged white students from the Port Angeles area, south of Seattle, had participated in the high school work groups from the outset. The program remained generally homogeneous in terms of race and socioeconomic status, as far as can be determined. Student application data, including family income, has been restricted by the Denver Public Library until the year 2054.

activism.²⁴ The emphasis on human survival (physical, mental, and spiritual) and the importance of wilderness (or nature in general) to facilitate such preservation fits this particular story more accurately than a focus on quality-of-life issues. Cold War fears about nuclear war and Communist threats, both global and domestic, remained paramount in the 1950s and 1960s, not truly subsiding until the 1970s; this combination of phenomena led to fears about the physical and mental health of Americans.²⁵ Conservation education served as one method by which some Americans expressed, consciously or otherwise, their personal anxieties.

Any discussion of appropriate methods of education can function as a way to more closely examine broader cultural issues. Postwar anxiety for the health and security of Americans and the promotion of strong families as a bulwark against Soviet threats contributed to an emphasis on solid, rigorous education as a way to protect the United States. One approach advocated a return to “traditional” education and increased support of math and science curricula through legislation such as the National Defense Education Act of 1958.²⁶ Additionally, many individuals in the nonprofit sector and in education pressed for more conservation education projects as a way to teach children about the importance of natural resources and the connection such resources had to national defense and cultural survival. One Arizonan responded

²⁴ Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars: Mountains*, 283 n. 12; Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-40.

²⁵ Paul Boyer, “From Activism to Apathy: The American People and Nuclear Weapons, 1963-1980,” *Journal of American History* 70.4 (March 1984): 821-844.

²⁶ For Cold War education, see Andrew Hartman, *Education and the Cold War: The Battle for the American School* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

to Cold War anxiety by arguing that natural resource conservation and human conservation went hand in hand, citing “human conservation” as “defending nature to protect the future of humanity.”²⁷ Generally, the term “human conservation” in this context meant preserving humanity as it currently existed, by tying it to nature; or, the idea that humans constituted a resource, a notion similar to the “manpower” terminology also used during this period. For many individuals concerned with the direction of the nation and the future of its resources, conservation education promised to ensure that American youth would develop healthy, patriotic social attitudes and, in turn, value and protect nature.²⁸

Mid-century conservation organizations continually refined what they meant by “conservation education”; such fascination with appropriate methodology represented part of a longer history of outdoor education and nature study in American culture. Education scholars divide the various educational programs related to nature study into three main groups: nature education, conservation education, and outdoor education.²⁹ Generally, conservation education taught a utilitarian resource

²⁷ Quoted in Erik Loomis, “Let’s Save Nature: Laurens Bolles and Environmentalism in the Early Cold War,” paper presented at 2009 American Society for Environmental History annual meeting, Tallahassee, FL. My thanks to the author for generously sharing his work.

²⁸ A long tradition connecting nature to American culture and democratic ideals exists, going back to Thomas Jefferson. For a classic exploration of this, see Nash, *Wilderness & The American Mind*. The famous 1893 thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner connected wilderness to American virtues, and has been the bugbear of Western historians ever since. See Patricia Nelson Limerick’s essay “Turnerians All” in Limerick, *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 141-165.

²⁹ William M. Hammerman, ed., *Fifty Years of Resident Outdoor Education 1930-1980: Its Impact on American Education* (Martinsville, Indiana: American Camping Association, 1980), 85; also, Noel McInnis and Don Albrecht, eds., *What Makes*

management philosophy, whereas nature education (or nature-study) typically focused on natural history and direct observation outdoors. Teachers and reformers used outdoor education as a pedagogical tool. Strains of all these educational philosophies continued throughout the twentieth century, evidenced by the persistent emphasis of conservationists on teaching ordinary Americans, particularly those in urban areas, about the significance of natural resources and the importance of wilderness and outdoor experience to mental and physical health. Emerging in the late 1960s, environmental education represented the most recent incarnation of these educational concerns and philosophies.³⁰ Though each used different methods and materials, all versions of this educational movement connected youth and nature. Conservation education in the early postwar period combined both an emphasis on resource management and a focus on the intangible effects of nature on humanity, particularly young people.

Founded in 1948, The Conservation Foundation represented one prominent example of this movement. Among its founders were the well-known conservationists Fairfield Osborn, Laurance Rockefeller, and George Brewer, all of whom agreed that there was an urgent need for a coordinated conservation education

Education Environmental? (Louisville: Environmental Educators, Inc. and Data Courier, Inc., 1975).

³⁰ The “biophilia hypothesis,” theorized by eminent biologist E.O. Wilson and popularized by Richard Louv in his book about “nature-deficit disorder” in children, is a more recent iteration of the supposed connection between humans and nature. Tyree Goodwin Minton, “The History of the Nature-Study Movement and its Role in the Development of Environmental Education” (EdD, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1980). The most recent examination of the nature study movement is Kevin C. Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement: The Forgotten Popularizer of America’s Conservation Ethic* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

program, one that had not been met by any private organization or public agency up to that point.³¹ The Conservation Foundation's mission was to develop recommendations for wide-ranging educational programs, sponsor research, and produce reports on population and natural resource issues.³² The support Cushman Titus received from the Foundation and especially from Osborn, Rockefeller and Brewer at the beginning of her efforts for the student corps proved critical to her success. Despite The Conservation Foundation's policy against making seed money grants, it made an exception for Elizabeth Cushman Titus's student volunteer group. The Foundation's vice-president, George Brewer, coordinated small donations for the SCA, and provided immense help in fund-raising. Brewer had a well-defined philosophy of education, framing the Foundation's educational program around efforts to inform the public about growing imbalances between "people and resources," and "the implications this held for the future." In his mind, this situation "should be understood by as many people as possible – particularly by the next generation of Americans upon whose comprehension and judgment the future social, economic and spiritual tone of our culture will depend." ³³ Brewer justified the Foundation's support for the SCA by emphasizing the four things "going for it: "youth, education, heritage of national parks, and word of mouth."³⁴ He likely chose to support the Student

³¹ E.B. Young memo, March 21, 1947, RG 2 OMR Cultural Interests Box 104, F. 942, RAC.

³² Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 74. Gottlieb cites The Conservation Foundation as one of the most influential conservation organizations in the immediate postwar period.

³³ George Brewer memo, "The Foundation's Educational Program," n.d., Folder 945, Box 105, RG 2 OMR RAC.

³⁴ Brewer to Sigurd Olson, September 12, 1958, RG 2 Box 77, F. 735, RAC.

Conservation Association because it fulfilled his desire to educate the younger generation of Americans about potentially crucial cultural and resource issues.

Other individuals also invested their hopes in the SCA's educational programs, believing the program would be valuable in recruiting, instructing, indoctrinating, and training young women and men. Park Service supporters such as Fred Packard evinced a primary interest in "indoctrinating" students about Park Service philosophy and principles.³⁵ In his view, the SCA contributed as much to youth education as to natural resource conservation.³⁶ Park Service official Hillary Tolson thought that it was the conservation education possibilities present in the SCA that led individuals around the country to support it.³⁷ In 1962, President Kennedy's Interior Secretary, Stewart Udall, called the SCA one of the most "qualitative" programs existing in park education and interpretation.³⁸ Cushman Titus's own garden club, the North Country Garden Club of Long Island, paid for the production of an SCA slide show, because members believed in "the utmost importance" of teaching youth about conservation and "its importance to the preservation of our natural resources." Club women labeled SCA students the potential "stewards of tomorrow."³⁹

³⁵ Fred Packard to Huyler Held, September 2, 1958, FF 32, Box 2, SCA DPL.

³⁶ Packard to Rockefeller, March 12, 1958, RG 2 OMR Cultural Interests Box 87, F. 808, RAC.

³⁷ Tolson to Harlan Brumsted, April 7, 1961, Folder ACA-SCA 1960-61, Box 16, ACA Grant Files, RAC.

³⁸ Udall to Rockefeller, December 3, 1962, Folder SCA Inc General Correspondence 1965-66, Box 16, ACA Grant Files, RAC.

³⁹ Report, North Country Garden Club of Long Island, October 22, 1968, FF 38, Box 3, SCA DPL.

In other words, influential, often wealthy, conservationists supported the SCA not only because of Cushman Titus's own personal connections, but also because the student program promised to fulfill their shared desire to shape future conservation leaders and youth in general. In backing the SCA, conservation-minded supporters differed substantially from other middle to upper class suburban/urban Americans, whose concerns ranged from a somewhat irrational obsession with juvenile delinquency to a legitimate worry about providing educational opportunities for all young people. Conservationists who supported the SCA were not worried about youth per se, particularly the youth the SCA recruited, but about a future social order that might lack an important emphasis on conservation. For them, youth provided the answer. For others, young people were the problem. Juvenile delinquency concerns also spoke to a wider anxiety about "reproduction of the social order"; adults projected their worry for the future onto the younger generation.⁴⁰ Emerging in this time of underlying social tension and anxiety, the SCA served an important purpose as it allowed nonprofit groups to focus on promising young Americans, and momentarily ignore the many "crises" battling for public attention.⁴¹ In selecting student participants for the summer programs, Cushman Titus, her colleagues, and sponsoring

⁴⁰ Charles R. Acland, *Youth, Murder, Spectacle: The Cultural Politics of "Youth in Crisis"* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 7-12.

⁴¹ Judith Sealander, *Private Wealth & Public Life: Foundation Philanthropy and the Reshaping of American Social Policy from the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 80. Sealander argues that many crises identified by philanthropy became the basis for public policy initiatives. Though Sealander does not address the postwar era, I would argue that foundations like The Conservation Foundation and other Rockefeller philanthropies saw a lack of conservation education as another crisis (and a solution for one as well), if one less pressing than others.

nonprofits sought to reward excellent students with a volunteer summer in the parks, as well as shape them into useful citizens. Their idea of conservation education, and of the use of nature as a tool to shape young people, dramatically differed from that held by other conservation-education proponents – largely because of the type of individual on whom they focused.

The intellectual connection between outdoor experience, nature education, and healthy youth originated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with thinkers as diverse as philosopher William James, naturalist Liberty Hyde Bailey, and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. formulating such ideas.⁴² In the Progressive Era, Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, and others linked conservation and outdoor education to the prosperity and health of both the nation and its people, viewing healthy bodies as the root of a healthy economy; to accomplish this, they promoted outdoor exercise and nature study.⁴³ As Pinchot opined while expressing the economically efficient version of conservation, a direct tie linked the “conservation of

⁴² Sealander, *Private Wealth & Public Life*, 82; Terence Young, “Modern Urban Parks,” *Geographical Review* 85.4 (October 1995): 535-551. On Bailey, see Ben A. Minteer, *The Landscape of Reform: Civic Pragmatism and Environmental Thought in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2006). For William James, see Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001). For Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., see Susan Klaus, *Modern Arcadia: Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and the Plan for Forest Hills Garden* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002).

⁴³ William E. Marsden, “‘Conservation education’ and the foundations of national prosperity: comparative perspectives from early twentieth-century North America and Britain,” *History of Education [Great Britain]* 27.3 (1998): 345-362; Gray Brechin, “Conserving The Race: Natural Aristocracies, Eugenics, and the U.S. Conservation Movement,” *Antipode* 28.3 (1996): 229-245; Susan R. Schrepfer, *The Fight to Save the Redwoods: A History of Environmental Reform, 1917-1978* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 41-45.

health with the conservation of wealth”; conserving the “manpower” of the nation would help continue its progress.⁴⁴ A few linked the “conservation of humans” with the “conservation of other members of the environment”; one example of such a linkage made was that between humans and the majestic redwoods of the California coast.⁴⁵ Others promoted the preservation (or improvement) of the human race through programs that emphasized positive eugenics; the Children’s Bureau 1920s contest “Fitter Families for Future Firesides,” in which judges and physicians awarded the healthiest family a blue ribbon, was just such an initiative.⁴⁶ The idealization of rural life and the promotion of nature study in schools were also linked to the effort to Americanize immigrant children.⁴⁷ Outdoor education and conservation education through such movements as the Country Life Movement, nature study, and vocational education offer additional evidence for interest in tying human and natural health. These myriad examples indicate the sheer malleability of the perceived connection between human and non-human nature, and demonstrate how philanthropists, officials, and educators might exploit that intellectual thread to fulfill any number of agendas.

⁴⁴ Michael J. Lansing, “‘Salvaging the Man Power of America’: Conservation, Manhood, and Disabled Veterans during World War I,” *Environmental History* 14 (January 2009): 35.

⁴⁵ Schrepfer, *The Fight to Save the Redwoods*, 43-44

⁴⁶ Laura L. Lovett, *Conceiving the Future: Pronatalism, Reproduction, and the Family in the United States, 1890-1938* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), chapter 6.

⁴⁷ As described in Bernard Mergen, “Children and Nature in History,” *Environmental History* 8.4 (2003): 643-669; Sarah Burns, “Barefoot Boys and Other Country Children: Sentiment and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century American Art,” *American Art Journal* 20.1 (1988): 25-50.

Those agendas included formulating an anti-modern response to the second industrial revolution and the closing of the frontier.⁴⁸ Summer camps formed at the turn of the century to combat the deleterious effects of civilization, particularly for boys and men, reflected a similar concern. Progressive era educators, notably William James's student G. Stanley Hall, believed that each individual "recapitulated" the evolution of the human species. Adolescents, in this case boys, relived the "savage" stage of human civilization, and therefore needed the opportunity to act like savages in nature in order to continue their progression from primitive child to civilized man.⁴⁹ The Woodcraft Indians and Boy Scouts enacted Hall's ideas, as did the George Junior Republic and other Progressive-Era undertakings. Interest in

⁴⁸ Benjamin Johnson, "Wilderness Parks and Their Discontents," in Michael Lewis, ed., *American Wilderness: A New History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 113. Andrew G. Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 15-26. For antimodernism in environmental thinking, see Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 108-117, 352-355; T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). Lears' explanation of antimodernism: "By exalting 'authentic' experience as an end in itself, antimodern impulses reinforced the shift from a Protestant ethos of salvation through self-denial to a therapeutic ideal of self-fulfillment in this world through exuberant health and intense experience." Lears, *No Place of Grace*, xvi. Kirk describes the antimodernist sentiment of postwar period as technophobic and anxious about decreasing contact with nature; one strand of environmentalism, however, embraced technology. Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 26-31.

⁴⁹ Kevin C. Armitage, "'The Child Is Born a Naturalist': Nature Study, Woodcraft Indians, and the Theory of Recapitulation," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 6.1 (January 2007): 69-70. For further explanation of recapitulation theory and G. Stanley Hall, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

sending young people to summer camps remained strong throughout the century; in the 1960s and 1970s an increasingly dark view of human society convinced more and more people that nature had curative properties for a splintered, overly civilized society.⁵⁰ The perceived link between outdoor activity and an individual's health, therefore, remained a driving force behind postwar promotion of outdoor recreation and nature study, re-imagined by some as conservation education.⁵¹

By the mid-twentieth century, however, beliefs about the role of nature in facilitating the health of some youth had shifted. During the Progressive Era, nature had served as a place in which children and adolescents could act out their savage natures in order to prepare for civilized life. By the 1950s, nature became a place to send “troubled” young men who already acted savagely in their overcivilized urban environments. Rather than serving as a space in which boys could behave savagely in preparation for their civilized life, nature became seen as a place to send (urban) delinquents so that they might shed their criminal tendencies.⁵² Although Progressive

⁵⁰ Michael B. Smith, ““The Ego Ideal of the Good Camper” and the Nature of Summer Camp,” *Environmental History* 11.1 (January 2006): 85-90.

⁵¹ Kevin C. Armitage, “Knowing Nature: Nature Study and American Life, 1873-1923” (PhD diss, University of Kansas, 2004), 219. Camping easily falls into this discussion of nature and youth, but I wish to avoid that expansive topic and focus solely on educational conservation programs. For a recent study of camping, see Leslie Paris, *Children's Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp* (New York: New York University Press, 2008). Many different groups, including Communists, formed their own camps to inculcate values into children, as did “typical” summer camps. See Abigail A. Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890-1960* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxv-xxvi.

⁵² Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*, 186-194. Outdoor rehabilitation for boys/men in conservation camps has often been viewed as an effective form of therapy; see for example *Youth Conservation Corps and Youth Public Service Program; Report of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate, Eighty-Seventh*

Era ideas about children's natural savagery bore small connection to postwar conceptions of how to end juvenile delinquency, the intellectual connection between nature and human health remained. Commentators continued to see nature and wilderness as curatives for social problems, particularly those related to a certain segment of youth. Some continued to view conservation education and outdoor experiences as appropriate methods both to fix maladjusted youth and to educate future leaders.

In the 1950s and 1960s, individuals concerned with the place of conservation education in the lives of children advertised their alarm about youth and proposed solutions in magazines targeted at people already interested in environmental issues: *Audubon*, *National Parks Magazine*, *American Forests*, *The Living Wilderness*, *Nature Magazine*, and *Recreation*. These men and women saw conservation education as a solution for a variety of problems ranging from troublesome inner city teens to an alarming lack of natural knowledge among schoolchildren. Some authors blamed lack of appropriate training for teachers as the root of the problem.⁵³ Others tied together thermonuclear war and misuse of natural resources as evidence that Americans lacked reverence for nature; conservation was a

Congress, First Session on S.404, Together with Minority and Individual Views (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 17. Many of these camps still exist, often with religious philosophies: Mountain Homes Youth Ranch and Bethel Boys Academy are just two examples. For a journalist's exposé of this phenomenon, see Jon Krakauer, "Loving Them to Death," *Outside* (October 1995): http://outside.away.com/outside/magazine/1095/10f_deth.html (Accessed 7 April 2010).

⁵³ Roberts Mann, "The bottleneck in conservation education is Teacher Training," *Nature Magazine* 49 (February 1956): 94-96+.

way to reverse these threats.⁵⁴ Conservation education provided a way to soothe “disturbed, hostile...children who hate,” as one author characterized inner-city adolescents.⁵⁵ For many educators and conservationists, conservation education seemed the catch-all cure for many problems. But it could also be framed as a positive program for nurturing the next generation of conservation leaders. The SCA garnered as much support as it did precisely because it represented a positive iteration of the conservation education blueprint. In the face of dire warnings about nuclear war, hostile children, and environmental destruction, the SCA appealed to officials and philanthropists as a way to cultivate and reward motivated, successful young Americans.

The SCA recruited students who caused no public dismay, and who were nothing like the juvenile delinquent profile. Olympic National Park superintendent Fred Overly, who helped shape the program for the first summer, explicitly stated that the student volunteer program selected students on the complete opposite side of the “scale” from juvenile delinquents.⁵⁶ For SCA recruits, nature was to be both an attraction and a constructive shaping force. Jack and Enid Dolstad, supervisors of the Olympic National Park high school work programs from 1958 to 1970, repeatedly extolled the virtues of the program and its effect on high-school age boys, particularly

⁵⁴ Joseph J. Shomon, “Four Critical Needs in Conservation Education,” *Audubon* 63 (November 1961): 336-337.

⁵⁵ Irene Moore, “Teaching Conservation in the City,” *American Forests* 72 (October 1966): 23-25.

⁵⁶ Marty Hayne/Fred Overly discussion notes, July 24, 1957, FF 49, Box 17, SCA DPL.

by instilling a new sense of independence and self-esteem.⁵⁷ NPA President Sigurd Olson said that “no one [could] question the worthwhileness of the SCA and its tremendous impact on the spirits, minds, and bodies of young men.”⁵⁸ Their language echoed contemporary psychological theories that considered the influence of the natural environment on mental and physical health, as well as reiterating older ideas about the transformative power of nature. As Susan Schrepfer argues, conservationists in particular drew inspiration from popular psychological theories and their “association of development, environment, and personality.”⁵⁹ Unlike those who wished to place troubled young people in nature for their own good, SCA supporters took a positive approach. Cushman Titus and her colleagues sought to tap into a reservoir of talented youth, provide exposure to “nature,” and form the next generation of conservation leaders.

Divergent Visions

Because the SCA recruited only those students who were unlikely to cause trouble, the problems it addressed were those of the parks, not of the volunteers. To be sure, SCA officials and their collaborators spoke of providing a transformative wilderness experience (for high school boys), but they focused on how the students’

⁵⁷ Supervisors Report for Olympic National Park 1963, FF 25, Box 16, SCA DPL. Jack Dolstad worked full-time as an administrator for the Seattle Public Schools. His wife Enid, a graduate of Stanford, worked at home with their children and became his co-supervisor for the SCA work groups.

⁵⁸ Olson to Cushman Titus, March 8, 1958, in John Douglas Dolstad, “An Analysis of the Status of a Volunteer Student Conservation Program combining Education and Work Experience in Olympic National Park” (M.Ed., University of Washington, 1960), 92.

⁵⁹ Schrepfer, *Nature’s Altars*, 182-195.

experiences heightened their knowledge, skill, and employability. SCA organizers projected no sense of anxiety about the state of youth, unlike others who promoted education and the outdoors as therapeutic solutions to social problems. Perhaps because of this dissimilarity between the SCA and other educational programs aimed at teaching conservation, Cushman Titus and her colleagues described and promoted their program as a nontraditional course in conservation education. However, it also followed a tradition in educational reform by heeding Liberty Hyde Bailey's famous dictum in sending students to work outside rather than study books. The SCA idea of conservation connected volunteers to the older idea of "wise use" though it diverged from the more recent focus on formal conservation education in schools.⁶⁰

Elizabeth Cushman Titus, in close collaboration with fellow Vassar graduate Marty Hayne Talbot and National Parks Association official Fred Packard, promoted a novel vision of conservation education for youth that diverged from that of mainstream conservation organizations and educational programs. This philosophical divide stemmed from the five primary purposes of the SCA: to help the National Park Service, to benefit students, to expose excellent students to career possibilities in the NPS and/or conservation agencies, to develop conservation leaders, and to increase general appreciation of the great outdoors. These goals reflected the essentially positive, idealistic tone of the program. The SCA was not intended to rehabilitate delinquents for the benefit of society, nor did it have the strong antimodern feeling found in some older camping and scouting organizations.⁶¹ The optimistic, idealistic

⁶⁰ Robert Steele Funderburk, *The History of Conservation Education in the United States* (Nashville, Tennessee: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1948), 37.

⁶¹ James Morton Turner argues that the wilderness values of postwar America, primarily those arising in the 1970s, had little to do with the anti-modernism found in

program recruited the best and the brightest to build up a cohort of experienced conservationists versed in national park philosophy to protect the nation's natural heritage, but it did not do so with the pessimism and fear found in some other calls for conservation education.

The youth program's vision, target audience, and methodology, however, conflicted with the ideas of the National Parks Association (NPA), the organizational home for the SCA in the first five years of its existence. A prominent conservation organization founded in 1919, the NPA dedicated itself to protecting the national parks and promoting park philosophy.⁶² Initially, executive Secretary Fred Packard

early twentieth century recreational movements because individuals relied on technology to help them experience nature. See Turner, "From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America," *Environmental History* 7.3 (July 2002): 462-484. Kirk argues similarly in *Counterculture Green*; many postwar environmentalists were not technophobic, as were many turn of the century antimodernists. Jennifer Price argues that the best term for this group is "counter-modern," meaning that individuals wished to escape modern life for a time, not reject it altogether. See Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 109, 119, 123, 137, 162, 242-243.

⁶² The NPA was founded as a private citizens' organization intended to help promote the new park system. It had a tumultuous relationship with the Park Service, as it usually supported "preservationist" concerns and tried to limit development in the parks. First Park Service Director Stephen Mather hired his friend Robert Sterling Yard to publicize the park system, and paid Yard out of his own pocket to avoid any interference from Congress. Yard, after experiencing problems with other Park Service officials and Congressional members opposed to his educational programs, collaborated with over seventy other scientists, businessmen, and educators to form the original NPA in 1919. During the 1950s and 1960s, the NPA operated as a non-profit organization with an executive director and board of trustees. It claimed about 15,000 members in 1960, only slightly less than the Sierra Club. Christopher J. Bosso, *Environment, Inc.: From Grassroots to Beltway* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 28-29, 54.

and President Sigurd Olson heartily supported Titus's idea for a student educational work group, believing that her program helped to fill a vast hole in the NPA's educational programming. They devoted countless hours to promoting the SCA and enlisting other conservation organizations to fund the Program. After disagreements emerged regarding the direction of the NPA's educational mission in the late 1950s, however, the group's initial enthusiasm for the SCA faded as its Board now asserted that the NPA should simply replace the SCA. It could, the Board argued, offer a "better" educational program.⁶³ Like other major conservation organizations, the National Parks Association had experienced a dramatic increase in its membership during the 1950s, an increase driven in part by the explosion of tourism in the national parks and public concern about preserving the parks' scenery.⁶⁴ NPA trustees urged the organization to take advantage of growing enthusiasm and dedicate itself to

⁶³ Minutes Meeting Executive Committee, June 23, 1959, NPA Meeting Minutes Board of Trustees, April 1, 1959-December 31, 1959, Box 14, NPCA DPL. The quote is from comments made by Board member (and first Park Service historian) B.Floyd Flickinger at the 23 June 1959 meeting.

⁶⁴ John C. Miles, *Guardians of the Parks: A History of the National Parks and Conservation Association* (Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis/NPCA, 1995), 204. For the linkage between the rise in tourism and concurrent rise in membership numbers, see, for example, Mark Harvey, "Loving the Wild in Postwar America," in Michael Lewis, ed., *American Wilderness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 193. Membership increased across the board for all major conservation organizations from 1950 to 1960: from 5,400 to 15,000 for the NPA, 7,000 to 16,000 for the Sierra Club, 5,000 to 10,000 for the Wilderness Society, and 17,000 to 32,000 for the National Audubon Society. Total membership in the main organizations (Sierra Club, National Audubon Society, NPA, Izaak Walton League, The Wilderness Society, and National Wildlife Federation) increased from 74,400 to 124,500 members between 1950 and 1960. Obviously, this was a very small percentage of the total American population, which totaled over 175 million in 1960. It does, however, indicate a rising interest in environmentalism during the postwar period. See Bosso, *Environment, Inc.*, 35.

formulating an ambitious educational program, with a primary focus on reaching a wide national audience and establishing the NPA as the leader in park education.⁶⁵ The Student Conservation Association, aimed at a small, particular set of young people, did not fit that vision.

In deciding to end the group's connection with the student volunteer program in November of 1960, the NPA trustees concluded that the SCA did not reach enough people to make a difference in public understanding about conservation, and that it did not contribute to the NPA's work as park watch-dog.⁶⁶ In addition, Anthony Wayne Smith, NPA Executive Secretary after Packard left in the fall of 1958, wished to reach more mature audiences, believing the message the NPA needed to spread required mature minds capable of comprehending the problems at hand.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the SCA continued to enjoy the support of Park Service officials, philanthropists, and clubwomen. These women and men guided Cushman Titus's student volunteer group through the next five unstable years, finding it of great value as a program that attracted exceptional, talented young Americans. One influential

⁶⁵ Minutes Meeting Executive Committee, June 23, 1959, NPA Minutes Board of Trustees Executive Committee, April 1, 1959-December 31, 1959, Box 14, NPCA DPL; Memo to Executive Committee, NPA Proposals for a National Park Association Educational Program, Minutes, Meeting Executive Committee January 29, 1959, NPA Minutes Board of Trustees Executive Committee, April 1, 1958-April 31, 1959, Box 14, NPCA DPL.

⁶⁶ The student program served as one of the NPA's primary educational programs – and had been one of the NPA's strongest claims for tax-exempt status as an educational organization. When legal counsel considered its journal *National Parks Magazine* an educational undertaking in the spring of 1960, the NPA no longer had to keep on the SCA for tax purposes.

⁶⁷ Smith to Monroe Bush (Old Dominion Foundation), February 13, 1959, Folder 15 Education Program Correspondence, memos 1959-1961, Box 45, NPCA DPL.

contributor and supporter was Laurance Spelman Rockefeller, who supported the SCA not only for its educational purposes, but also for its recreational focus.

Laurance Rockefeller and Outdoor Recreation

Laurance Rockefeller was the third son of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and an early supporter of the SCA who donated significant funds and promoted the SCA both to fellow conservationists and to important politicians, including Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall. Rockefeller supported conservation by contributing millions of dollars to the national park system, purchasing land for parks and promoting a national recreation policy. Although conservation and management of natural resources remained one of Rockefeller's primary concerns, he also demonstrated keen interest in education and the future of America, particularly in the face of what he perceived as a growing Communist threat.⁶⁸ Historian Robin Winks characterized Rockefeller as a "catalyst for conservation," an influential person who disbursed money and institutional support to causes he deemed worthy. Rockefeller's emphasis on providing seed money as a method of attracting other sponsors to a program played a role in his choice to provide funds for the SCA; his strategy certainly worked, in that

⁶⁸ Rockefeller Brothers Fund, *Prospect for America: the Rockefeller Panel Reports* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961). Assembled in 1956, the Special Studies Project of RBF sought to define major problems and opportunities that the U.S. would face in the upcoming decades, clarify national purposes and objectives, and develop appropriate principles to support these objectives. Laurance Rockefeller's introduction placed these concerns squarely in the context of the Communist challenge, seen as directly threatening democratic civilizations. *Prospect for America*, xvi.

his funds helped sustain the program for a number of years and his connections opened up more funding opportunities for the student program.⁶⁹

Laurance Rockefeller was the primary benefactor of the SCA, donating, on average, one-third of the SCA operating costs for ten years. (See Tables 4.1 and 4.2) Rockefeller became acquainted with the SCA through Fairfield Osborn and Horace Albright, two men who played an instrumental role in helping Elizabeth Cushman Titus plan and develop her idea. Albright and Osborn mentored Rockefeller as a conservationist, and their mutual support of Cushman Titus and the SCA undoubtedly led the younger man to view the small student program in a favorable light.⁷⁰ When Osborn approached the Rockefeller Brothers Fund administrators in 1956 to see if they might contribute money to the student program, he introduced Laurance Rockefeller to Cushman Titus's idea.⁷¹ Rockefeller felt it was a worthwhile cause. As time progressed, his donations decreased as a percentage of the overall SCA operating costs – consistent with his philosophy of providing seed money rather than the full cost of operation. Rockefeller probably viewed the Student Conservation Association and its driven founder as a welcome counterpoint to what many liberal intellectuals saw as widespread cultural complacency and political apathy in American culture.⁷² The program also attracted ambitious, idealistic young men and women

⁶⁹ Robin W. Winks, *Laurance S. Rockefeller: Catalyst for Conservation* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1997), 16-17, 29.

⁷⁰ Winks, *Laurance S. Rockefeller*, 41.

⁷¹ Fred Packard to Harold Bryant, May 1, 1956, FF 38, Box 2, SCA DPL.

⁷² For an article that points to the important role of liberal intellectuals (including Rockefeller), students, and women in the rise of the environmental movement, see Adam Rome, ““Give Earth a Chance”: The Environmental Movement and the

eager to sustain what he viewed as part of the nation's important heritage. The trial projects of the first summer drew high praise from leaders and participants of the program, Park Service officials, and foundational supporters, a key result that kept Rockefeller interested.

Table 4.1 Approximate SCA Expenditures, 1957-1970

1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963
\$10,000	\$11,400	\$17,300	\$24,300	\$15,600	\$10,100	\$8,700
1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
\$6,400	\$24,900	\$24,900	\$45,750	\$75,500	\$83,000	\$152,500

(Expenditure amounts are approximations made from scanty, often contradictory financial documents found in the Student Conservation Association papers held by the Denver Public Library. Reliable financial records only available from 1965 on, after the SCA became incorporated.)

Table 4.2 Rockefeller philanthropy donations to SCA, approximate % of SCA expenditures

1957	1959	1960	1961	1964	1965	1966	1968	1969	1970
\$7414	\$8000	\$10,000	\$4000	\$5000	\$5000	\$5000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
75%	46%	41%	25%	78%	20%	20%	13%	12%	6.5%

(The primary Rockefeller philanthropies that donated to SCA were the American Conservation Association, The Conservation Foundation, and Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc.)

Laurance Rockefeller remained a reliable, powerful supporter of the Student Conservation Association, though the documentary record sheds no light on

Sixties,” *The Journal of American History* 90.2 (September 2003): 525-554. For postwar apathy of the middle class, see Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

the exact reasons for his support. He likely did not fully realize the extent or scope of the program as he often focused solely on the high school program for teenage boys when discussing the SCA, omitting the programs for college and graduate students. Rockefeller was active in many different conservation organizations and committees during his lifetime, and it is understandable that he would not be fully versed in the details of this small program.⁷³ He wrote letters and took action in support of the SCA, at times intervening when the situation proved dire for the existence of the student volunteer program. Rockefeller obviously felt the program did some good, going so far as to recommend the program as a possible summer activity for a colleague's son.⁷⁴ For Rockefeller, the purpose of the student program was to build interest in Park Service careers and related conservation work among participants.⁷⁵

Like many other conservationists of the time, Rockefeller linked conservation of natural resources to human conservation – in the sense that using land set aside for public use could aid in the maintenance of human health.⁷⁶ As we have

⁷³ Rockefeller contributed either to the foundation or maintenance of a number of conservation organizations, including the American Conservation Association (1958), the National Recreation and Parks Association (1965), The Conservation Foundation, The National Park Foundation, Resources for the Future, Inc., the American Committee for International Wildlife Protection, the Woodstock Foundation, and the Historic Hudson Valley. Winks, *Laurance S. Rockefeller*, 196-197.

⁷⁴ Rockefeller to Alfred Hayes, October 23, 1959, Folder 735, Box 77, RG 2 OMR Cultural Interests Series, RAC. Hayes was President of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York at the time; yet another prestigious connection made on behalf of SCA due to personal and professional networks.

⁷⁵ Rockefeller to Members of Executive Committee, ACA, March 6, 1964, Folder SCA Inc. General Correspondence, 1965-66, Box 16, ACA Grant Files, RAC.

⁷⁶ See Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*, 186-194.

seen, conservation education constituted one method of maintaining such health; outdoor recreation comprised another. Outdoor recreation, as defined by contemporary experts, combined natural resources and human health, tying recreation to earlier conservation education and nature study movements.⁷⁷ Outdoor recreation constituted one of the major concerns of conservationists during the 1950s and early 1960s, many of whom tied such activity to social issues – much like the link between conservation education and juvenile delinquency.⁷⁸ Rockefeller played an important role in the recreation movement of the postwar period, chairing President Eisenhower's Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC). This blue-ribbon commission studied American recreational needs and wants, assessed the available recreational resources, and recommended policies to help meet the needs of the millions who pursued outdoor experiences. Rockefeller also helped form recreation-related groups like the National Recreation and Parks Association, an organization that merged five

⁷⁷ For a history of recreation, see C. Michael Hall and Stephen J. Page, *The Geography of Tourism and Recreation: Environment, Place, and Space* 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁷⁸ Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 125-128; Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence*, 54, 115-117. Rome's footnotes contain many excellent contemporary sources that referred to the connection between outdoor recreation and broader anxiety about social issues. He quotes Walter A. Tucker, editor of *The Crisis in Open Land* (Wheeling, WV: American Institute of Park Executives, 1959), who wrote about increased leisure time and its danger: "Here is one of the knottiest social problems of our age. How shall we dispose of these mounting surpluses of idle time? It must be employed in ways that will help promote the general welfare. Otherwise the dead weight will begin to pull us down. If it can not be used constructively, it must inevitably be used destructively. The devil can find work for idle hands and idle minds in more ways than our ancestors imagined were possible."

older recreation and park groups.⁷⁹ In the minds of recreation proponents, Americans needed education in the “enlightened interpretation and sensitive understanding of the meaning, scope, purposes, and dividends of recreation.”⁸⁰ Recreation was not merely leisure; it carried immense importance.

Rockefeller’s leadership of several federal commissions including ORRRC and President Johnson’s Citizens’ Advisory Committee on Recreation and Natural Beauty, as well as his close relationship to federal agencies like the National Park Service, serve as an example of the expanding link between the nonprofit sector and the federal government, of particular importance and growing strength after 1960.⁸¹ Private philanthropies and charitable organizations had become involved with policy making and education during the Progressive Era, carrying such activity forward into the postwar period, though encountering some countervailing pressure in the 1950s and 1960s from individuals suspicious of philanthropic power. Rural education, health reform, and organized recreation constituted only a few of the

⁷⁹ James H. Evans, “A Service to the American People,” *Parks & Recreation* 1 (February 1966): 137, 179

⁸⁰ As opined by G. Ott Romney, former BYU football coach and national director of the Works Progress Administration’s recreation section; quoted in Evans, “A Service to the American People,” 137.

⁸¹ Peter Dobkin Hall, *Inventing the Nonprofit Sector, and Other Essays on Philanthropy, Voluntarism, and Nonprofit Organizations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 10, 13; Robert H. Bremner, *American Philanthropy*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 185, 201-205; Lester M. Salamon, “Government and the Voluntary Sector in an Era of Retrenchment: The American Experience,” *Journal of Intergroup Relations* 14.3 (1986): 3-20. For an explanation of Rockefeller’s ties to the NPS, mainly through his purchase and donation of millions of dollars worth of land for inclusion in the park system, see Winks, *Laurance S. Rockefeller*, 115.

cultural and social issues undertaken by major philanthropies established by John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and Olivia Sage.⁸² Laurance Rockefeller, more than any of his siblings, continued his family's long-standing interest in conservation and educational programs.

At the White House Conference on Natural Beauty in 1965, conference chair Rockefeller echoed nature-study advocate Liberty Hyde Bailey when he lamented that most Americans needed to be taught about nature in the classroom, rather than experiencing it for themselves outside. In his mind, young people “must have as much opportunity as possible to live and to experience beauty in their formal education,” as appreciation and care for natural beauty reveals “national character.” Quoting Thoreau’s idea that the appreciation of beauty measured a society’s moral tenor, Rockefeller argued that the “perception of beauty and action to preserve and create it are a fundamental test of a great society.” Elite interests continued to define beauty and identify appropriate action aimed at preserving such qualities, though in just a few years environmental concerns would encompass much more than aesthetics and recreation. Rockefeller and co-commission members believed that conservation education would achieve those ends, and in so doing, create “a great society.”⁸³ Rockefeller and other SCA supporters held lofty ideals and hopes for the student program; the National Park Service, however, had more pragmatic interests in the volunteer group.

⁸² Sealander, *Private Wealth & Public Life*, 12-14.

⁸³ *Beauty for America: Proceedings of the White House Conference on Natural Beauty* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 20-21.

Select Students for the National Park Service

Park Service administrators agreed that carefully selected SCA students would become great assets to society in the future. The Service also had more self-interested motives, aiming to recruit a cohort of young conservation leaders to fill personnel slots. NPA and Park Service officials certainly thought along the same lines as Cushman Titus regarding the ideal student to recruit. Packard wrote that the “caliber” of the first year students seemed very high, comparing their status with that of the “non-selective” Civilian Conservation Corps, which had still managed to provide an excellent pool of future Park Service employees.⁸⁴ Packard focused on the excellence of the students and the function the SCA could serve in shaping future leaders. He wished to provide opportunity for students who “exhibit[ed] exceptional qualities of leadership, intelligence, enthusiasm, and a desire to be of public service.” Such students needed to gain practical experience in order to determine their desired career paths and develop their talents for a particular career. The Student Conservation Association allowed students to learn primarily in informal settings on the job, supplementing their formal schooling with exposure to the “world around them.”⁸⁵ Park Service Director Wirth applauded the program, later writing that he believed “strongly in the values of the SCA,” “primarily because of its benefits to the teenagers who participate.”⁸⁶ In 1961, Daniel Beard, Chief of the NPS Interpretive Division, noted that students were carefully screened and voiced his certainty that those selected

⁸⁴ Packard to Wirth, September 20, 1957, FF 22, Box 2, SCA DPL.

⁸⁵ Fred Packard to Huyler Held, September 2, 1958, FF 32, Box 2, SCA DPL.

⁸⁶ Wirth to Paul Mellon, May 13, 1970, Folder ACA-SCA, Inc. '67-'71, Box 16, ACA Grant Files, RAC.

“would become community and national leaders later in their lives.”⁸⁷ The relationship between the SCA and the NPS benefited both parties in that students gained experience and the Park Service had a chance to recruit top candidates.

The partnership between the Student Conservation Association and the National Park Service grew closer under the successive administrations of Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson, a connection that prompted discussion of the exact relationship between the volunteer group and the federal government. President Kennedy’s focus on service and the role individuals could fill for their nation enabled Park Service officials and SCA administrators to highlight the program’s similarity to other service initiatives and the SCA’s reflection of Kennedy’s vision for a new frontier. In the 1960s, the Park Service began to funnel more and more money to the Student Conservation Program and SCA, Inc., incorporated in 1964 to operate the student program. President Johnson, and particularly Lady Bird Johnson, had great interest in promoting a conservationist agenda, making beautification and outdoor recreation a high priority - and made increased spending available for such causes. Cushman Titus and her colleagues contemplated petitioning Congress and the Park Service to make the student group a government program. This ongoing discussion about the future of the SCA further illuminates the evolution of public-private partnerships and serves as an example of the transition from government leadership of the conservation agenda in the 1920s and 1930s to that of private environmental groups of the 1970s and later.⁸⁸ Most believed, however, that the unique public-

⁸⁷ Daniel Beard to Regional Directors, Regions 1-5, March 7, 1961, FF 13, Box 1, SCA DPL.

⁸⁸ My thanks to Neil Maher for elucidating this point. Conservation leaders in the first half of the twentieth century were primarily amateurs or government officials; after

private partnership forged through the years enabled the program to achieve its successful status, a feat neither the private organizations nor the federal government could have done alone.

The running debate about whether to fold the SCA into the federal Park Service revolved around administrative concerns and Cushman Titus's fears about the negative implication of ties to the federal government, particularly interference with student selection. This concern highlights the great importance SCA administrators and Park Service collaborators placed on the type of student they recruited; rather than bow to potential government demands for a more open selection process, they sought to protect their own definition of "quality" volunteers. In 1957, Olympic National Park superintendent Fred Overly discussed with Marty Hayne possible problems that might arise if the SCA became a government program. A major concern noted first during their discussion and one that repeatedly surfaced dealt with the issues of Congressional interference and any governmental red-tape that might creep in to SCA operations.⁸⁹ SCA administrators feared that the SCA might be required to show "favoritism for congressmen's sons" and have restrictions (or requirements) placed on its selection process.⁹⁰ For that reason, Cushman Titus recommended that the SCA remain funded by private donors, in order to avoid pressure from members of

World War II, many were professional conservationists working outside the federal government, or were grassroots activists. For discussion of the professionalization of the environmental movement, see Bosso, *Environment, Inc.*, e.g. 8-11, 33-46; for a discussion of the amateur tradition, see Fox, *The American Conservation Movement*, 333-357.

⁸⁹ Dan Beard to Jack Dolstad, February 23, 1962, FF 47, Box 2, SCA DPL.

⁹⁰ Complete Report 1957 Trial Projects, Preliminary Report, p. 9, FF 1, Box 20, SCA DPL.

Congress on student selection and to teach students “a rounded aspect of conservation” uninfluenced by politics.⁹¹ Though the SCA wished to help the Park Service, and by extension the federal government, program administrators wished to maintain control over the choice of those who participated.

Other government officials agreed with Overly’s assessment that the SCA could never fit into other government operations without altering its purpose and method. A personnel officer for the Park Service made the excellent point that the SCA very easily proved itself a worthwhile program when *not* supported by taxpayer money, but that the same conclusion could not be reached if the SCA became a Park Service activity. If the Park Service took over the SCA, it would install the program system-wide, with far greater administrative problems than a private sponsor would face.⁹² In addition, the Park Service would need to dramatically change the program to comply with civil service laws that required examinations of potential employees and the privileging of veterans under the Veterans Preference Act of 1944. Participant selection would no longer remain specific to need, nor could it remain selective. To maintain its original vision, the SCA had to continue as a private enterprise.

Others pointed out that private sponsorship and funding had certain advantages over federal sponsorship. Sharon Francis, ghost writer for Secretary Udall and a friend of Marty Hayne, contended that the Student Conservation Association had “distinctive” and “praiseworthy” components that could only continue as long as the group drew its support mainly from private funds. In Francis’s opinion, the

⁹¹ Titus to Dan Beard, July 19, 1961, FF 2, Box 18, SCA DPL.

⁹² Ramsdell to Beard and Doerr, October 12, 1959, Folder SCA Dec. 31, 59, A5435, Box 507, Admin NARA.

cooperation between the federal government and private citizens “achieve[d] something that neither could do alone.”⁹³ In remaining outside the federal system with its (perceived) restrictive Civil Service requirements and hiring protocols, the SCA could remain as selective as it wished and need not fear Congressional oversight or public scrutiny. Francis disagreed with Cushman Titus’s characterization of civil service requirements as mere “red tape,” noting that these were “honest qualifications” aimed at providing a more level playing field. However, in Francis’s eyes the blend of public-private sponsorship proved to be a great boon to this program, as it could rely on support and funding from both sectors.

Overly’s advice also touched on class issues inherent in the SCA selection process. If the SCA became a government program, it would have to deal with public criticism about student selection, particularly the public’s presumptive conclusion that a federally supported SCA provided opportunities only to those who could afford to participate. He noted that if the government sponsored the SCA, taxpayers would be loath to pay for a free summer for kids who could afford to forgo a summer job; in order to forestall such accusations, he suggested that the majority of participants come from communities near to the park they would serve.⁹⁴ Overly also suggested that the public would raise severe criticisms if a taxpayer-funded SCA rejected their children. Even as a private program run largely by donations, the SCA received correspondence from angry parents who demanded an explanation for their child’s rejection, with a

⁹³ Francis to Titus, February 6, 1963, FF 13, Box 1, SCA DPL. Sharon Francis’s husband Harry Francis would later become Executive Director of the SCA, from 1976 to 1989.

⁹⁴ Discussion notes, Hayne and Overly, July 24, 1957, FF 49, Box 17, SCA DPL.

few even threatening legal action.⁹⁵ The SCA rejected no student because of his or her socioeconomic status, though a number declined to volunteer with the student program because they needed to earn money. However, its assumptions about what constituted “quality” applicants precluded many who might have participated, particularly if the program paid a wage. The great majority of early students even gave up paying jobs in order to volunteer, another indication that these individuals had no pressing need for financial benefit.⁹⁶ In the early years of the Program, the majority of students who participated noted they could have had paying jobs over the summer but opted to volunteer for the Park Service and gain experience. For these students, either they clearly had no need for the money, or the experience gained proved priceless.

The Student Conservation Program never lacked for qualified students interested in volunteering for the summer, though numbers fell during the early 1960s as the program administrators and supporters sought a stable organizational home following the dissolution of ties with the National Parks Association. Relative to open positions, the student program received large numbers of applicants, most of whom were well-qualified; one source hyperbolically claimed that about 90% of all

⁹⁵ See letters in FF 41, Box 3, SCA DPL.

⁹⁶ For example, one woman student declined participation in 1961 because she could not find a paying job for the fall, the assumption being that she would have to work in the summer. Cushman Titus to Oberhansley, May 29, 1961, FF 20, Box 3, SCA DPL. Cushman Titus and Hayne claimed in their 1958 report that 75% of students participating in SCA that summer could have had paying jobs ranging from \$42-\$192 per week but gave them up to participate in SCA. Cushman Titus and Hayne said the same in the 1959 report, with slightly fewer students claiming the same lack of need for paid summer work. Memo Cushman Titus, Hayne to A.W. Smith, October 15, 1958, FF 33, Box 2, SCA DPL.

applicants between 1957 and 1970 had to be rejected.⁹⁷ In actuality, the SCA had about one position for every four applicants.⁹⁸ Many students who wished to participate in the program, therefore, did not have a chance to do so. High school camp supervisor Jack Dolstad, who served as co-executive director from 1970 to 1975, noted with regret the lack of similar opportunities available to youth, but remained wary of instituting an “administrative[ly] top heavy, quantitative program” like the much larger Boy Scouts. As chapter five discusses, eventually other opportunities arose for those not fortunate enough to gain access to the SCA roster; a comparison between those opportunities and those of the SCA provides further illumination of what sort of student the SCA wanted. The small, “qualitative” programmatic structure employed by Cushman Titus and her colleagues enabled them to continue their practice of selecting exactly the students they and the Park Service wanted.⁹⁹

Rockefeller and Interior Department officials concurred with the NPA and Park Service, recommending that the program remain private to maintain its selectivity. These men felt the SCA focus on “quality” students should be preserved, and took steps to ensure that the program retained its form. Laurance Rockefeller remained highly interested in the program, and in 1962 wrote to Secretary of the

⁹⁷ “History and Need for the SCA,” n.d., (1969/1970), Folder ACA-SCA, Inc., Box 16, ACA Grand Files, RAC. These statistics may be inaccurate before 1965; this source groups applications for the 1957-1965 seasons together as one, with a range of 400-800 applications submitted per year.

⁹⁸ For four-to-one ratio citation, see “The Student Conservation Association: A Brief History, 1957-1997”, p. 19, 30, FF 26, Box 1, SCA DPL,

⁹⁹ Dolstad to Dan Beard, February 8, 1962, Folder Student Conservation 1-1-62 pt. 1, A5435, Box 507, Admin NARA.

Interior Stewart Udall urging continued support of the SCA. Udall replied that his office had seriously considered asking Congress for special authorization to operate the program, but doubted it would pass as Congress was currently considering Kennedy's Youth Conservation Corps and might view the SCA as an unnecessary redundancy. Udall "unequivocal[ly]" opposed changing the SCA format to reflect federal employment standards; in his opinion, the "inspired, high standards" of the philanthropic community that supported the SCA provided the "spark of excellence" that characterized the program.¹⁰⁰ Udall believed that the SCA broadened student attitudes toward the environment and developed them as citizens, results he viewed as worth the full cost of the program.¹⁰¹ In this, he echoed other proponents of conservation education who focused on educating the public about nature's importance and its ability to shape responsible members of society. Udall and SCA supporters, however, had a very particular subset of the public in mind, in forgoing the possibility of more stable financial footing for continued control over who gained admittance to the program.

Despite the decision to retain the SCA's character as a private organization, the group still benefited from federal officials who managed to obtain indirect financial support for its programs. The NPS, viewing the SCA as an excellent public relations initiative, as well as one that brought in promising young people, provided vital capital to operate SCA programs in the parks. Park Service director Conrad Wirth wrote that he thought the program had "convincingly demonstrated its

¹⁰⁰ Udall to Rockefeller, December 3, 1962, Folder SCA Inc. General Correspondence 1965-66, Box 16, ACA RAC.

¹⁰¹ Udall to Brewer, February 13, 1963, Folder SCA 1-1-62 pt. 1, Box 507, Admin NARA.

worth” and was “accepted unanimously and enthusiastically within the NPS as a conservation-education vehicle with great promise.”¹⁰² In 1961, the Park Service began funneling matching funds to the parks in which the SCA operated; in 1964, it allowed the SCA to set up headquarters at the Sagamore Hill National Historic Site on Long Island, near Cushman Titus’s residence.¹⁰³ In 1963, Interior Secretary Stewart Udall allocated up to \$15,000 in federal funds to help pay SCA expenses in the field.¹⁰⁴ Laurance Rockefeller and Conrad Wirth, hired by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund after his retirement from the Park Service in 1961, used their political leverage to obtain more financial support for the SCA. In 1964, Wirth persuaded Representative Mike Kirwan, chair of the House Appropriations Committee, to enter a line item in the Park Service budget, allowing the Service to spend up to \$25,000 to match funds donated by private citizens and foundations.¹⁰⁵ On instruction from Udall, newly appointed Park Service director George Hartzog argued for Park Service funds to support the SCA in Congressional hearings.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, the Park Service and

¹⁰² Conrad Wirth, n.d., FF 13, Box 7, SCA DPL.

¹⁰³ March, April 1962 Superintendent Monthly reports, Folder 1/1/62 to 12/31/62 OLYM Part 8 A2823, Box 267, Admin NARA. Sagamore Hill was the home of Theodore Roosevelt.

¹⁰⁴ Udall to Brewer, February 13, 1963, Folder SCA Inc. General Correspondence 1965-66, Box 16, ACA RAC. Udall noted that the \$15,000 made available for the SCA had been appropriated for park protection, maintenance, development, and interpretive purposes, and “by relating these purposes to the work done by the students, the parks can indirectly support the SCP.”

¹⁰⁵ Brewer to Paul Judge, July 10, 1964, FF 27, Box 18, SCA DPL. Kirwan, (D-OH), is widely considered one of the most powerful Democrats on the issue of conservation during the mid-20th century.

¹⁰⁶ House Subcommittee Hearings – Committee of Appropriations, 88th Congress, February 18, 1964, Folder Historical Papers-SCA, Box 5, SCA DPL.

government officials saw the program as a useful recipient of federal funds and helped keep the program afloat.

The federal financial support Wirth, Udall and Rockefeller obtained for the SCA's use apparently sparked little reflection about whether using federal funds but rejecting federal oversight or requirements for hiring might be inappropriate. The Park Service did not wish to, in the words of Udall, "dilut[e] the leadership qualifications of the program's participants," meaning that in the eyes of this federal agency the SCA served its interests best as a private organization that avoided civil service requirements and any possible "dilution" that might accompany a more democratic admission processes.¹⁰⁷ Rockefeller and the Park Service viewed the SCA as a way to locate "quality" students whom they could train as potential future leaders of conservationism.

The Student Conservation Association provided a select number of students with experience outdoors, with an eye toward developing future leaders of conservation. In the midst of SCA efforts to shape the stewards of tomorrow, cultural critics anxious about the state of the American populace continued to view outdoor recreation and conservation education as activities vitally important to the physical and mental health of youth. SCA volunteers did not fit the personality profile of young Americans who sparked (or channeled) such anxious concern for the future, but rather served as the mirror opposite. Its status as a group which attracted (and selected) only stellar young Americans enticed federal employees, conservationists, and influential

¹⁰⁷ Udall to Brewer, December 3, 1962, Folder SCP 1-1-62 pt. 1, Box 507, RG 79 Admin NARA.

philanthropists to support it, likely because they saw the SCA as a conduit through which to funnel the generation of leaders who would follow them. As explained in chapter two, a number of Americans promoted the idea of encouraging young people to serve the nation by reinstituting a CCC-type program. For many reasons, including President Eisenhower's emphasis on a balanced budget and objections by labor unions, the federal government could and would not institute such programs until it did so in the early 1970s with the establishment of the Youth Conservation Corps. The SCA employed a public-nonprofit partnership to enact just such a program and, for some, fulfilled recreational and educational goals. In so doing, the SCA perpetuated, in some ways, both the character and mission of old-line conservation organizations.

The enduring support for the SCA, as well as other recreation and conservation education programs, illuminates a persistent cultural concern regarding youth and the environment, one that continues to this day. A cultural anxiety for the health of Americans and, for youth, proper preparation for the future lay at the root of all these issues. Conservationists often used language tying conservation education for youth to the future prosperity and health of the nation. Harvey Broome, president of The Wilderness Society, noted to a group of teachers at the Conservation Education Association conference in 1963 that, "as educators in the field of conservation you are in occupations critical to a sane and beneficent future."¹⁰⁸ Despite the fact that the Student Conservation Association did not echo these specific anxieties, the history of

¹⁰⁸ Harvey Broome, "Broome Addresses Educators," *The Living Wilderness* 84 (August 1963): 45-47. Broome served as a director for the Student Conservation Association until his death in 1968. His wife Anne wrote to Cushman Titus after the SCA made a resolution honoring him, saying that Broome supported the SCA "because he approved your idea of encouraging young people to become interested in conservation." Anne Broome to Liz [Titus], June 21, 1968, FF 11, Box 2, SCA DPL.

its place in the collection of conservation education efforts demonstrates the persistent concern of philanthropists, educators, and policy makers for the welfare of certain segments of the American populace, who focused on a very different segment of youth than did the SCA.

Individuals with a stake in the SCA viewed the composition of its participant pool as vitally important since these young women and men might replace them as conservationist leaders. Examining the reasons and methods by which Laurance Rockefeller and fellow conservationists in the Park Service and Department of the Interior aided the growth of the Student Conservation Association uncovers the motivations and biases held by these men and women. Only selectively chosen students with impeccable educational and sociocultural backgrounds could truly serve as “stewards of tomorrow.” Supporters of the SCA also considered the service given by these volunteers as superior in nature to paid work, an issue explored in the next chapter. Those young people who might want to participate in like-minded programs but did not have the opportunity to do so with the SCA would soon have access to another federal program, however, one that copied the SCA in a number of ways.

Chapter 5

PARALLEL TRADITIONS IN THE YCC AND SCA: THE MEANING OF SERVICE FOR THE “MOTORCYCLE CROWD” AND THE “CONSERVATION CROWD”

During his 1970 campaign, Washington Senator Henry Jackson’s re-election committee released a pamphlet extolling his role in the recent passage of a bill establishing the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). In bold-face type, the lead page read: “There’ll be thousands of young people working in our forests next summer. Because Senator Jackson had an idea.”¹ The pamphlet went on to explain that Jackson had proposed the YCC program out of concern for bored, potentially destructive, urban teenagers who lacked summer employment, as well as for the lack of “manpower” and funds available to keep national parks and forests in “first-class condition.” The YCC would solve two problems at once, by providing young men and women aged 15 to 18 with paid work in the nation’s public lands. Jackson played a pivotal role in obtaining federal support for the YCC, but he did not originate the idea of young people working in the forests. In part, Senator Jackson’s Youth Conservation Corps followed the format and drew from the experience of a longer tradition of national service and youth conservation camps, a tradition from which the SCA also drew inspiration. Jackson’s re-election pamphlet was an appropriate visual image for the ongoing dialogue between the SCA and the legislators who supported a YCC, by

¹ Pamphlet, Citizens for Senator Henry M. Jackson, n.d., FF 9, Box 3, SCA DPL [CONS 242, Records of the Student Conservation Association, Denver Public Library, Denver, CO].

depicting the Senator, clad in a lumberjack shirt, speaking with Jack Dolstad as the two supervised SCA high school volunteers carrying a log. The image did not, however, indicate how the two men represented vastly different conceptions about the nature and meaning of such work.

The two youth conservation work initiatives embodied considerably divergent interpretations of the “service” provided by teenage participants, a contrast that reveals the class-based assumptions of those who orchestrated both programs. This dissimilarity stemmed in part from different underpinnings, as the SCA had been designed as a volunteer service program and the YCC as a paid work program. The SCA and YCC, both of which sought to provide outdoor educational work experience for young people, also dramatically differed in the type of young person the program aimed to serve. One SCA supervisor’s characterization of SCA participants as a “conservation crowd” whereas the YCC attracted a “motorcycle crowd” signifies the very different understanding of “service” inherent in the programs. The volunteer program and the federal initiative appeared very similar on the surface, but closer inspection reveals different assumptions about the nature of “service” and the distinct traditions from which these definitions of “service” emerged. YCC enrollees might do very similar work as SCA high school volunteers, but in the minds of SCA conservationists, the work done by SCA students had greater import.

The language of service used by proponents of the SCA and YCC illustrates the targeted SCA mission of fostering leadership potential as compared with the more expansive, democratic idea of the YCC. The SCA was less egalitarian than the federal initiative, recruiting a highly selective group of participants and invoking a “purer” form of voluntarism while at the same time establishing itself as the authority

on youth conservation work-service programs. In the minds of SCA administrators, the crucial distinction between the YCC and SCA lay in the issue of wages. YCC enrollees earned minimum wage, whereas the SCA volunteers gained no monetary benefit, save for some assistance for the travel and living expenses of college and graduate volunteers.² For the SCA, the altruism of “select” students merited more attention and applause than the quotidian needs of regular teens. The YCC had obvious economic advantages over the SCA, in that the YCC provided youngsters interested in conservation work the opportunity to earn a wage. This distinction meant that the programs usually drew clientele from different socioeconomic brackets. The young people who chose to volunteer and saw their time with the SCA as “not just another job” were largely those who could afford unpaid service; in the minds of SCA staff, their dedication marked them as potential leadership material.³ Interestingly enough, although the YCC paid its enrollees, most of them did not list earning a wage as the top reason why they enjoyed the program.⁴ Both the YCC and the SCA sought to provide a summer of service to interested young people; the reactions of participants in both programs did not dramatically differ from each other. It was the

² The SCA provided all room, board, and equipment for student participants. All students had to supply transportation to and from the program, though they could request some aid if financial need was proven. In later years, the SCA supplied college interns with a living stipend, with which they paid their own room and board.

³ SCA Annual Report 1975, SCA HQ;

⁴ In a 1973 study of participant experience during the first summer, researchers found that enrollees listed the following as their top three aspects of the program: working and living outdoors, participating in physical activity, and seeing new places. John C. Scott, B.L. Driver, and Robert W. Marans, *Toward Environmental Understanding: An Evaluation of the 1972 Youth Conservation Corps* (Ann Arbor: Survey Research Center/Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1973), 33-35.

rhetoric used by proponents of each group, as well as the scope of each program, that served as the greatest distinguishing factors, not the actual experiences or work of young participants.

Comparing the two programs illuminates what “service” meant to various people familiar with the YCC and SCA, including government officials, administrators, students, supporters, and donors. Individuals defined service in a variety of ways, though at the core lay the notion that people sacrificed something, usually time and energy, for the benefit of the greater good. For the SCA, “service” meant altruistic action specific to the women’s voluntary tradition, and for the YCC, “service” meant completing paid work on behalf of the greater public good, drawing from a tradition of national service. The SCA’s character was much more closely tied to its identification as a volunteer organization, whereas the YCC had a much looser identity, as a work program, unemployment solution, and environmental education project. Considering its organizational roots in the women’s club culture of voluntarism, the SCA definition of the term “service” can be read as gendered feminine, whereas the YCC emphasized a more masculine interpretation. A long history of unpaid labor by privileged women, particularly in reform work, influenced the SCA understanding of “service,” while the YCC, as a federal initiative conceived in part as an employment solution for youth, explicitly drew on a military-inspired tradition. Although the two groups did very similar work in the nation’s parks and forests, in many ways they came from disparate intellectual traditions that influenced their distinctly different conceptions of “service.”

Both the YCC and SCA fit into a larger narrative about national service programs and their potential utility for training particular segments of the American

populace. This concept attracted the attention of a number of policymakers and educators in the 1960s and 1970s, as anxiety about youth culture blended with a tumultuous economic and political situation. The Civilian Conservation Corps and other earlier iterations of national service programs inspired the YCC and SCA, but the SCA's roots in a voluntary tradition and its organizational goals set it apart from other initiatives. Unlike the YCC, the Student Conservation Association was not a "national service" program as it was a private non-profit group only indirectly supported by federal funds, and it did not seek to address employment or behavioral issues as did many other service programs.⁵ When Elizabeth Cushman Titus proposed the SCA, she undoubtedly saw her program as part of a contemporaneous discussion about youth service, including "universal military service" for men, but she specifically formulated it for student volunteers who would altruistically serve rather than earn a living while performing public works projects.

National service programs have long been seen as a way to use youth to solve problems, or, depending on the context, solve problems caused by youth. Senator Jackson proposed the YCC during a time when the term "service" would have brought to mind a number of versions, from military service in Vietnam to civilian federal programs such as the Peace Corps or Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). The idea of national service remains relevant to this day, as seen with the expansion of AmeriCorps and other community service programs with the recent passage by the 111th Congress of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act.⁶ The

⁵ Morris Janowitz, "National Service and the Welfare-Warfare State," *Social Service Review* 57.4 (December 1983), 539.

⁶ The final version of the bill passed the Senate on March 31, 2009. It expanded AmeriCorps from 75,000 to a quarter million spots and began new volunteer

concept of national service has always specifically aimed to develop young people, as concern about volatile youth has echoed across disciplines and generations. As we have seen, conservationists and educators worried about the state of youth in the 1940s and 1950s proposed conservation education and recreational programs as remedies for specific deficiencies; national service programs in later decades attempted to do the same, although the context had changed.

Individuals who proposed or ran national service projects during the 1960s and 1970s often seemed preoccupied with questions of forming citizens and tackling social and economic problems. But neither the SCA volunteers nor the YCC enrollees shared their attitudes or ideas. The participants in the student volunteer program and the youth work project had similar experiences and espoused similar ideas about the environment, partly because both programs attracted young people with preexisting interest in environmental conservation. Yet despite the similarity, the administrators of the YCC and SCA focused on their contrasting interpretations of “service” and the moral meaning of unpaid versus paid work. In their minds, the YCC enrollees, a paid “motorcycle crowd,” would act as foot soldiers for conservation, whereas the SCA volunteers would serve as the leaders of a future conservation movement. Class assumptions divided the two camps, even though the young people of the YCC and SCA were very similar in that they gave what they could for the greater good.

initiatives in healthcare, education, renewable energy and veterans affairs, committing over \$6 billion to the programs for a five year period. David Herszenhorn, “National Service Corps Set to Become Law,” *New York Times*, March 31, 2009; Herszenhorn, “House Passes Expansion of Programs for Service,” *New York Times*, March 19, 2009, A14.

Voluntary Service in the SCA

The SCA subscribed to a philosophy of service that originated in its founder's own background. Elizabeth Cushman Titus characterized her upbringing as one that emphasized a "can-do" attitude of voluntarism and service; if something needed to be done, you did it.⁷ Part of her rationale for proposing the SCA was to give young people the chance to "give of themselves," an opportunity she found lacking in the 1950s.⁸ Exploring the meaning of "service" as Cushman Titus and SCA colleagues used the word reveals their cultural and social assumptions about the value and meaning of volunteer work by polished students. The definition of the term "service," as verbalized by individuals familiar with the program, shifted over time and in response to other variables. This flexibility served as one of the main reasons that the SCA proved so long-lived; Cushman Titus and her colleagues designed the program to respond to contemporary events, attracting both private sector and governmental support. Cushman Titus might not have found suitable volunteer programs in the 1950s, but that situation changed after the start of various service initiatives in the 1960s and 1970s. The SCA's adaptive strategy, namely its focus on voluntarism, enabled the program to grow and thrive even as new organizations took up their idea of public service to the national parks and forests.

The importance of being a volunteer was a consistent value expressed by SCA administrators. But, as we have seen, they defined their ideal volunteer rather narrowly and practiced preferential selection methods, only accepting students who fit their clearly delineated definition of a young person deserving of a summer's work in

⁷ ETP interview with author, May 6, 2006.

⁸ ETP interview, December 1997, http://www.theinsite.org/solutions/sca_alias.html [accessed 26 July 2010].

the parks. The SCA's general mission aimed to provide service by doing work that might otherwise have gone unperformed, with the secondary goal of providing benefits to the participants. The program contained elements of two versions of nineteenth-century associationalism as described by Jason Kaufman: one characterized by "beneficent" communal activity undertaken by voluntary societies in lieu of the state, and the other as a "special interest group mobilized around the particularistic goals of its members."⁹ The SCA, organized by a small group of people with very specific interests in and ideas about youth and nature, provided aid to parks that the government could not (or would not) immediately supply. The SCA administrators indeed had altruistic motives, genuinely attempting to provide service opportunities to young women and men; intangible benefits would accrue along with concrete experiential learning. They garnered support from a variety of individuals not only for virtuous reasons, however, but also because their program fulfilled specific educational and cultural goals and enabled the national parks to take advantage of the unpaid labor of available volunteers. The Student Conservation Association provided opportunities for altruistic young people, but it also served to realize the goals of interested parties.

The SCA brand of voluntarism echoed the public-private partnership model devised in the nineteenth century.¹⁰ The work organized by the youth service

⁹ Jason Kaufman, "Three Views of Associationalism in 19th-Century America: An Empirical Examination," *American Journal of Sociology* 104.5 (1999)1296, 1301, 1304.

¹⁰ For further discussion of the history of public-private partnerships, see Robert H. Bremner, *American Philanthropy*, 2d ed. (1960; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Peter Dobkin Hall, *Inventing the Nonprofit Sector, and Other Essays on Philanthropy, Voluntarism, and Nonprofit Organizations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); and Judith Sealander, *Private Wealth & Public Life:*

organization also resembled the type of unremunerated work undertaken by many women in reform societies and clubs of that same era. The roots of the SCA's definition of service lay in the traditional voluntary spirit of women's clubs and their ideology of femininity, in which women "selflessly" gave of their time for beneficent volunteer work. As they could not directly influence policy, women would also work to persuade their male relatives to fund particular projects. A "lady" never expected payment for this service, as such action came to define her as a proper middle and upper class American woman. This idea, that women's domestically-related work comprised their identity and should not be considered work per se, also emerged during the nineteenth century. As scholars such as Jeanne Boydston have argued, the work women did both in and out of the house lost its measurable economic value during the shift to industrial capitalism. As women and men became associated with "separate spheres," women's work served to identify them as women and therefore needed no payment. Anne Firor Scott and Nancy Cott, among others, have shown that women's benevolent societies allowed them to assemble, create bonds, and act outside of the home, but, unlike men's philanthropic activities which bolstered business connections, benevolent societies constituted women's sole career.¹¹ As women entered the political sphere in the nineteenth century, they more often than not

Foundation Philanthropy and the Reshaping of American Social Policy from the Progressive Era to the New Deal (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

¹¹ Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 24; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977, 1997).

translated that domesticity into their ideas of how and why they acted outside the four walls of their home. The SCA insistence that its volunteers remain unpaid, and the moral assumptions behind such unremunerated labor, directly echoed an earlier understanding of work construed as feminine in nature. As many women's clubs and voluntary organizations survived into the twentieth century, they carried with them this original definition and understanding of "service." The SCA drew from this intellectual milieu because it built on the networks of long-established conservation groups and women's clubs. The SCA's identity during its first twenty years of existence clearly echoed a traditionally feminine understanding of voluntarism.

Scholars have recently revisited the history and theory of the American voluntary spirit, so memorably described by Alexis de Tocqueville in the nineteenth century. Prompted by the research of women's historians, and Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000), which argued in part that the social breakdown felt by Americans in the 1990s stemmed from lagging voluntary service and action, sociologists and historians have probed the impact of voluntary organizations on individuals and communities across the lines of race, class, and gender.¹² Historians skeptical of the general praise heaped on voluntary organizations as progenitors of democracy are re-evaluating the "form and character" of such organizations, exploring the nature of voluntary organizations. Depending on the organization under consideration, scholars find that some can be exclusionary and discriminatory, while others foster hope and encourage increased participatory democratic action.¹³ More

¹² Robyn Muncy, "Disconnecting: Social and Civic Life in America Since 1965," *Reviews in American History* 29.1 (2001), 141-149.

¹³ Elisabeth Clemens, "The Alchemy of Organization: From Participation to Preferences," *Sociological Forum* 19.2 (2004): 323-338.

often than not, however, voluntary organizations, by definition, exclude individuals in order to self-define and promote a discrete agenda, primarily to the benefit of their group.¹⁴ The SCA certainly fit the profile, encompassing the exclusivity of many associations while promoting beneficial action.

The primary definition of “service” employed by the SCA was one that specifically emphasized student contributions to the public good, and the nation overall, through unpaid work in conservation. In the early years, the SCA identified assisting the National Park Service through the work of volunteer students as its primary aim, and, secondarily, providing “an interesting, educational, pleasant, and worthwhile summer” for students.¹⁵ Participants echoed this mission statement, declaring after the first summer that the SCA experience now meant to them “a summer of service to the American public.”¹⁶ Fred Packard used the term “public service” to describe the student activities in a letter to a potential donor.¹⁷ The emphasis in early years lay on the receiving end of the relationship, with service to the public seen as the most important piece. Students were volunteering their time, but the SCA did not dwell on the student’s service or identity as a volunteer. Considering the obstacles SCA administrators met with during the first few years, it is understandable that they would focus on the benefits to cooperating groups, particularly the National Park Service, in order to prove the program’s worth.

¹⁴ Kaufman, “Three Views of Associationalism,” 1301, 1337, 1340.

¹⁵ Cushman Titus to SCP Students at Grand Teton National Park, August 12, 1957, Box 7, Personal Papers of ECTP.

¹⁶ SCP Steering Council to Parents of Members of SCP, August 23, 1957, FF 10, Box 1, SCA DPL.

¹⁷ Fred Packard to Huyler Held, September 2, 1958, FF 32, Box 2, SCA DPL.

As time went on, however, the word “volunteer” became a crucial aspect of this definition of service, and SCA administrators more frequently labeled the program as a “volunteer conservation-education work program,” particularly with the advent of other volunteer service programs in the 1960s.¹⁸ When some suggested that participants pay a fee in order to bolster the program’s finances, John Doerr, superintendent of Olympic National Park, demurred, noting that such a move might “affect the boys’ attitude toward the voluntary contribution of their work.”¹⁹ Doerr’s statement implied that paid service or a fee for participation would dilute the purity of the volunteer spirit and the integrity of the original SCA idea. In 1969, an internal document noted that the SCA aimed to offer “concerned and dedicated young people” the chance to serve, noting that “many of today’s youth are demanding the opportunity to achieve the fullness of life by doing strenuous public work as volunteers.” The program allowed young people to “channel their energies into purposeful work for the public good.”²⁰ The SCA tried to remain relevant to youth by providing activist students the chance to become involved in public life. In part to tap the contemporary activist spirit, the SCA emphasized the *volunteer* nature of its public service, increasingly relying on this aspect to further define its identity in the midst of other national service program initiatives. Still, although the SCA constituted the first volunteer conservation service program for young Americans, it was by no means the first to propose work service for youth on behalf of the greater good. The concept had much deeper roots.

¹⁸ Ailene Kane and Barbara Hart, SCP Evaluation 1960, December 1, 1960, SCA HQ.

¹⁹ Doerr to Gordon Meade, May 26, 1961, FF 43, Box 2, SCA DPL.

²⁰ Report p. 3, FF 40, Box 16, SCA DPL.

National Service

Scholars usually credit educational psychologist William James's 1910 essay "The Moral Equivalent of War" with initiating a long-running discussion of the uses and purposes of youth service to the United States.²¹ Most discussions of non-military national service begin with reference to James's idea.²² James proposed conscripting young men to "fight Nature" through various kinds of manual labor; his proposal also offered the added bonus of knocking the "childishness" out of American boys, so that they returned to society "with healthier sympathies and soberer ideas."²³ James's language reflected the concerns of other Progressive Era educators, notably James's student G. Stanley Hall and President Theodore Roosevelt, about the utility of

²¹ Williamson Evers states that the "national service" idea originated in Britain during World War I. Williamson M. Evers, ed., *National Service Pro & Con* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), xx. Briton Alec Dickson did formulate similar ideas of service during the interwar period, and went on to found the Voluntary Service Organization (1956) and the Community Service Volunteers (1962). American delegations were dispatched by JFK in 1960 to visit the VSO and speak with Dickson about service ideas; VSO, translated into American context, became the Peace Corps in the U.S. Alec Dickson, *A Chance to Serve*, ed. Mora Dickson (London: Dobson Books Ltd, 1976), 105-106. For more on the national service idea, see: Donald Eberly and Michael Sherraden, eds., *The Moral Equivalent of War? A Study of Non-Military Service in Nine Nations* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990); Morris Janowitz, "National Service and the Welfare-Warfare State," *Social Service Review* 57.4 (December 1983): 525-544; Michael W. Sherraden and Donald J. Eberly, eds., *National Service: Social, Economic and Military Impacts* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982).

²² Eberly and Sherraden, eds., *The Moral Equivalent of War?*, 115.

²³ William James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," *Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* 22 (May 1910): 291-294. For the relation of the James essay to the CCC, see Cornelius M. Maher, "Planting More Than Trees: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement, 1929-1942" (PhD diss., New York University, 2001), chapter 1.

outdoor experiences for adolescent development.²⁴ James's idea that work outdoors honed boys into their appropriate identities as proper American men presaged what many conservationists later thought about the connection between youth and nature. The idea that outdoor experience served as a sort of crucible in which the next generation of Americans would be shaped compelled educators, legislators, and cultural commentators to promote service to the nation as a constructive solution to a variety of problems.

James's essay set the overtly masculine tone that many national service programs would later voice, and the comments he made about the importance of outdoor work reflected the contemporary focus on definitions of masculinity.²⁵ James, a pacifist, mocked those who argued that eradicating war would leave a "world of clerks and teachers...and feminism unabashed," but he did agree that the existence of "ideals of hardihood" were vital to the health and survival of a nation. Rather than maintaining armed conflict to sustain such ideals, however, James proposed to preserve the "higher aspects of militaristic sentiment" by having nations conscript young men to do necessary manual labor around the country. James understood national service to entail conscripted service to the state in the interest of the public

²⁴ Kevin C. Armitage, "'The Child Is Born a Naturalist': Nature Study, Woodcraft Indians, and the Theory of Recapitulation," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 6.1 (January 2007): 43-70; Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

²⁵ For recent works examining masculinity and the military, see Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

good. Because James's idea sought to be the moral equivalent of military service, women could never fit into that paradigm. Their role lay in a different arena entirely. James's concept of national service had an explicitly masculine overtone, one that assumed that women could not serve the public good in such a fashion. Women could work to enact reform and improve the nation's fortunes, but only in maternal roles as found in women's clubs, educational groups, or similar feminine spheres.

James's essay on "the moral equivalent of war" did not immediately inspire the creation of programs based on the national service idea. Franklin Roosevelt arguably created the most famous program drawn from the original concept, first as a state-wide program during his tenure as governor of New York in the 1920s. Roosevelt's later program gained much more support and recognition; the Civilian Conservation Corps became the first national service program, as well as the first to combine youth and outdoor work on a large scale.²⁶ The history of the CCC has been thoroughly explored, including an assessment of the program as an example of national service.²⁷ During the Great Depression, some advocates proposed a universal government service program for youth, in part to offset the persistent problem of underemployment for those between 16 and 24 years of age, and the lack of sufficient vocational training for those out of school.²⁸ Following the end of the CCC in 1942,

²⁶ Eberly and Sherraden, eds., *The Moral Equivalent of War?*, 115.

²⁷ See Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Melissa Bass, "The Politics and "Civics" of National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 2004).

²⁸ Lewis L. Lorwin, *Youth Work Programs: Problems and Policies* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1941), 7-9, 39, 146.

many Americans proposed similar national service programs, both military and non-military, but none really came into being until the 1960s and 1970s. Individuals proposed national service programs as a solution for any number of problems; these programs, though, had different intentions. Some sought to use youth to solve problems, while others tried to solve a problem caused by youth.

Early national service programs served and recruited young men only, not young women. James's essay specifically referred to men, and Roosevelt's work program, organized like an army and partially operated by the War Department, recruited only men.²⁹ The work expected of participants in these programs and the public service they provided did not fit contemporary ideas of women's proper roles. In real life, women often performed the same labor undertaken by men – farming, chopping trees, constructing buildings, putting out fires – but general cultural expectations ignored such reality or only considered it acceptable under abnormal circumstances, such as war. Early twentieth century cultural expectations required that ideal American women obtain training in the domestic arts, not technical skills. In later decades, women began to realize that the reality of their existence did not fit with the cultural ideas of their proper roles, and began advocating for change. The SCA grew during these same years, and, as we have seen, certainly drew from these experiences in its own formation. The concept of voluntary service, with its gendered and class assumptions, infused the mission of the student volunteer group and significantly shaped its understanding of “service”; whereas the masculine, militaristic concepts of earlier national service programs influenced discussion about the federal

²⁹ The CCC excluded women from its rolls, despite the efforts of some American women, including Eleanor Roosevelt, to include them. Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 80-82.

youth conservation initiative. The YCC and SCA looked very similar to casual observers of their respective programs while its participants were in action, but the two initiatives were rooted in very different traditions of service. Although the SCA was not a national service program, it operated at the same time as a number of individuals proposed other service projects and its experience informed those who ultimately brought the YCC to fruition. The SCA constituted an important piece of the discussion about national service during decades following its inception, despite its roots in a different tradition of service.

Comparisons

SCA administrators, proponents, and volunteers all supported the idea of a Youth Conservation Corps for a number of reasons, including the desire to hold up the SCA as a leader in the field of conservation, and out of recognition that as a volunteer program it could never accept every young American who wished to work in the parks. The ongoing conversations between SCA administrators and their collaboration with the YCC's architects demonstrate that the leaders of the volunteer group understood their concept of service to be truly distinct from that espoused by national service proponents and implied by Jackson and his Congressional colleagues. Comparing the two programs with each other and with contemporary initiatives highlights the assumptions contained within the SCA's definition of service and its focus on volunteer action. Despite surface similarities, the SCA and other youth service initiatives represented separate organizational and conceptual traditions.

Both youth programs benefitted from having high-profile advocates: for the YCC, Senator Jackson (and earlier, Senator Hubert Humphrey), and for the SCA, Laurance Rockefeller, National Park Service officials, and garden club members. The

tie to powerful advocates, particularly those who were elected officials, could be either a blessing or a curse, as the history of other national service programs demonstrates. The CCC, the Peace Corps, and VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) had very close ties to the presidents who supported the initiatives - a very useful situation when the political winds blew in the right direction.³⁰ A strong president (Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson) could throw significant weight behind initial legislation and funding, but as the election cycle moved on and different circumstances ensued, inevitably these same programs came under fire precisely because of their connection to such leaders.³¹ The Youth Conservation Corps, tied primarily to Senator Jackson and his colleague Rep. Lloyd Meeds, did not have the benefit of presidential support; indeed, the Nixon administration opposed the Youth Conservation Corps. Part of the reason the YCC took so long to find sufficient Congressional support stemmed from the lack of presidential support. The SCA, as a private nonprofit organization, encountered few of the political or financial problems experienced by federal national service programs. Therein lay one of its strengths, and a powerful explanation for its survival. Cushman Titus proposed the SCA in part as a reaction to a perceived crisis in the national parks, but also to fill a niche, as she saw no other appropriate programs available for volunteer students. Her small program had a more generalized intent and goal than other youth service programs, enabling it to remain responsive and flexible. Its small size also permitted it to “fly under the radar,” so to speak. Granting the SCA several thousand dollars per year in federal matching funds differed dramatically from

³⁰ Bass, “The Politics and ‘Civics’ of National Service,” 163.

³¹ Bass, “The Politics and ‘Civics’ of National Service,” 320-331.

spending millions on a new program. As a private entity cooperating with public agencies, the SCA also could rely on funding sources outside the government purview, as well as sidestep bureaucratic requirements.

By the 1970s, the YCC and SCA were only two of many other private and public youth service programs that dealt with conservation work. After the national success of the CCC, many states and local municipalities formed camps that drew on aspects of the CCC model. The National Park Service had a student trainee program of its own, and in 1970, began its own volunteer service program for people of all ages, called Volunteers in the Parks (VIP). The Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) and Job Corps, both products of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, also had some positions dedicated to conservation. The NYC targeted “disadvantaged, out-of-work and usually out-of-school youth,” and the Job Corps served unemployed young men and women aged 14 to 22 years of age. Senator Jackson wished to focus specifically on teenagers and hoped to avoid replicating the manpower programs implemented in the 1960s. As Jackson noted in his Senate testimony introducing the YCC, only 600 of the NYC’s 364,000 slots available in 1968 were dedicated to conservation work; the Job Corps had about 6,000 that year (of 33,000 positions) similarly earmarked.³² Jackson’s idea for a YCC was much larger – to have another “tree army,” like Roosevelt’s in the 1930s. In contrast, the SCA sought to form leaders for the

³² “Hearings before the Select Subcommittee on Labor of the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, Ninety-First Congress, First Session on H.R. 11145 To Establish a Youth Conservation Corps,” U.S. Government Printing Office, (22-23 October 1969), 5; “Hearing before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, United States Senate, Ninety-Second Congress, First Session on S.2454 Youth Conservation Corps Act of 1970,” U.S. Government Printing Office, (14 October 1971), 32.

conservation movement and provide educational opportunity for outstanding students; to continue with the martial analogy, the volunteer program wished to create an elite officer corps, not an army of thousands. The two programs' goals had immense differences in terms of scale.

Service programs attracted a great number of potential participants, but, as one contemporary study also noted, an "elite sub-group" of the youth population tended to join service programs, while federal employment programs aimed at cohort of youth more interested in job training and employment.³³ This distinction became much more visible in the 1960s, after Presidents Kennedy and Johnson proposed the Peace Corps and VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), youth service programs dedicated to fighting poverty internationally and domestically.³⁴ As Melissa Bass explains, VISTA (and the Peace Corps) relied on the idea of personal sacrifice in service to the nation, rather than the economic reciprocity between enrollee and government found in the Civilian Conservation Corps.³⁵ In addition, the young men and women who volunteered for service in the Peace Corps and VISTA represented a different group of individuals from those Jackson's YCC originally planned to help, as these volunteers by and large came into the programs as idealistic, highly motivated, middle and upper-class college-educated young people. SCA volunteers had much more in common with Peace Corps and VISTA volunteers than with the potential

³³ *Youth and the Needs of the Nation: Report of the Committee for the Study of National Service* (Washington, D.C.: The Potomac Institute, Inc., 1979), 74.

³⁴ T. Zane Reeves, *The Politics of the Peace Corps and VISTA* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1988), 15.

³⁵ Bass, "The Politics and 'Civics' of National Service," 154.

juvenile delinquents intended for the YCC, despite the similar work done by the two youth conservation groups. Like the SCA, the Peace Corps and VISTA saw certain young Americans as the solution, rather than the cause of social problems. As originally envisaged, the YCC sought to provide youth with an economic opportunity to stop them from being a problem. Potential YCC enrollees would not come from elite society; rather, the program architects sought to recruit potentially troublesome urban youth, and provide them with jobs to, in the words of Senator Jackson, “take them off the street and out in the open.”³⁶ Although the federal program did not actually become an anti-juvenile delinquency tool, preliminary discussion about the YCC tapped into long-standing concerns about youthful behavior and appropriate methods previously undertaken to control young people deemed at-risk.

Problematic Adolescents and the YCC

At the time that members of Congress debated, passed, and expanded the Youth Conservation Corps, the “myth” that young Americans constituted “social dynamite” dominated many public discussions regarding the youth of the nation.³⁷ Fear of riots and a general alarm at the apparent predominance of “dangerous,

³⁶ Jackson spoke of his idea for the YCC in a February 19, 1976 TV interview with Bill Anderson. A 1971 video shows enrollee Cheryl Cisco voicing her opinion of the program’s importance, and footage of enrollees working. Cisco later testified before Congress on behalf of the YCC legislation. University of Washington Libraries, The Senator Henry M. Jackson Web Portal, Moving Images, “Environment” and “Interviews” clips. http://www.lib.washington.edu/specialcoll/portals/pnw/Jackson/4-Digital_Resources/3-Moving_Images/MovingImages.html. [accessed 26 July 2010]

³⁷ Michael Sherraden, “Youth Participation in America,” in Donald J. Eberly, ed., *National Youth Service: A Democratic Institution for the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: National Service Secretariat, 1991), 21-22.

unemployed, urban youths” prompted public policy makers to address a seeming crisis by formulating various work and manpower training programs.³⁸ Because unemployment among young people, particularly in communities of color, remained extremely high, many government officials and politicians proposed public works programs as a remedy.³⁹ The infamous riots in Los Angeles and Detroit, student takeovers of colleges, widely publicized protest marches and general unrest added to the ever-evolving discussion about juvenile delinquency. Such dramatic action, especially by groups such as Students for a Democratic Society, women’s liberation, and urban minorities, convinced many policy makers that something needed to be done to save what they viewed as a disillusioned, rebellious generation of American youth. Young Americans active in such groups were negotiating their world and demanding a “more significant role in decision-making in society”; they were not simply forming and embracing a new youth culture, but were coming to grips with the fact “that the country in which they thought they lived - peaceful, generous, honorable - did not exist and never had.”⁴⁰ Not all young members of counterculture groups

³⁸ Sherraden in Eberly, ed., *National Youth Service*, 21-22..

³⁹ As Rep. Lloyd Meeds noted while speaking about YCC in the House, unemployment remained a huge problem. Statistics cited in his 1972 testimony: unemployment among all 16-19 year at 21.8%; among non-white men, it was 41%; and among non-white women, it was 51%. “Hearings before the Select Subcommittee on Labor of the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Session, on H.R. 10456, and Related Bills, To Amend the Youth Conservation Corps Act of 1970,” U.S. Government Printing Office, (24-25 May 1972), 3.

⁴⁰ Foreword by Leonard S. Cottrell, Jr., in Donald J. Eberly, ed., *National Service: A Report of a Conference* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1968), v; Marilyn B. Young, foreword in Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle, eds., *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.

consciously critiqued the United States, nor did the majority of youth riot or protest. Those who did, however, constituted a critical mass of youth and caused enough disorder to draw worried attention from their elders; as we have seen, this was not the first time an older generation of Americans expressed concern for the nation's youth.

As the national context changed, ideas about youth service, its goals, and purposes also changed. Policy makers, social psychologists, and government experts focused most of their attention on urban and disadvantaged youth (read: people of color) as a potentially dangerous population that deserved grave consideration.

Discussants assembled at a national service conference sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation in the spring of 1967 noted with alarm the need for policies to address the problems caused by the nearly twenty million young people who were “giving our society an acute case of economic, social, political, and moral indigestion.”⁴¹ In the view of conference attendees, voluntary action served an important purpose in addressing social ills, but often failed to fully address contemporary problems.⁴²

Government programs could be seen as one way to solve the “youth problem”; one brief *New York Times* column on the YCC noted that federal government programs, such as the Neighborhood Youth Corps, sought to prevent disorder in the streets by

⁴¹ Eberly, ed., *National Service*, v. The definition of “national service” accepted by the conference attendees: “National service as a concept embraces the belief that an opportunity should be given every young person to serve his country in a manner consistent with the needs of the nation - recognizing national defense as the first priority - and consistent with the education and interests of those participating, without infringing on the personal or economic welfare of others but contributing to the liberty and well-being of all.” Eberly, ed. *National Service*, 6.

⁴² Eberly, ed., *National Service*, 8.

having urban youth “cool it” in federal employment programs.⁴³ The YCC’s arrival also closely followed the release of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner Commission) report in March 1968, which recommended that the Johnson administration dramatically expand training and employment programs for underemployed youth in order to eradicate urban poverty.⁴⁴ Some YCC proponents responded to these recommendations by stating that they wished to employ otherwise idle teenagers and prevent further urban problems. Although the YCC aimed to address economic problems by forming a national service program, with related social goals of exposing young people to those of different backgrounds, in their minds it would also serve as another avenue to manage the youth population by funneling young Americans into a work/education program deemed beneficial to them. Supporters of the YCC used the rhetoric of unemployment and angry youth to gain political support, but in reality the pilot YCC projects went on to enroll a diverse selection of students, many of whom resembled SCA students in academic achievement and preexisting environmental interest.

The Youth Conservation Corps, as conceived by Senator Henry Jackson, had generally painted outlines that became fully detailed as his colleagues in the Senate and House debated the exact nature of the program. In his opening statement to a Congressional hearing on the Youth Conservation Corps, Jackson targeted not only

⁴³ “Y.C.C. for the Seventies,” *New York Times* June 24, 1970, 46. The “cool it” quote comes from the Kerner Commission, a phrase “counter-rioters” used to calm down rioting youth in Detroit during the summer of 1967.
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6545/> (accessed 5 March 2011).

⁴⁴ Charles A. Quattlebaum, *Youth Conservation Corps; a pilot program proposed in H.R. 15361 and H.R. 15362, 91st Congress; a report* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 10-11.

“underprivileged” youths and “school dropouts,” but also the “average teenager” who had little opportunity to find employment during summer vacations. In his view, the YCC should attack the *root* of the juvenile delinquency problem and act as a preventative measure, by getting idle kids off the streets and into work programs aimed at improving the nation’s public lands.⁴⁵ He noted that the YCC provided an “ideal marriage of idle youngsters in cities and a big job to do in the public lands.”⁴⁶ Other YCC supporters also emphatically noted that the program should not be considered part of any manpower training program, like the ballyhooed Job Corps, but one with the more general goals of “learning how to use and protect the natural environment, completion of conservation work projects, acquisition of self-dignity and self-discipline, and improvement of cultural communication between youth from different backgrounds.”⁴⁷ Legislators promoting a YCC had to find a way to balance a desire to prevent delinquency and also have a corps of young people with a good reputation, both for future recruits and also out of consideration for local communities in which these young people would serve and live.⁴⁸ In the end, the YCC focused less on juvenile delinquents and more on seeking a representative selection of all Americans for its pilot projects. YCC proponents might have used politically

⁴⁵ Youth Conservation Corps, S. 1076, 91st Congress, 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (February 19, 1969), 3713.

⁴⁶ Senator Henry M. Jackson, “Conservation at Work,” *Western Farmer* (Sept/Oct. 1969), 4.

⁴⁷ David E. Nye, *The History of the Youth Conservation Corps* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Human Resource Programs, 1980), 30.

⁴⁸ Quattlebaum, *Youth Conservation Corps and Youth Public Service Program*, 17.

expedient rhetoric that fed off of contemporary concerns for threatening groups of youth, but they quickly realized that in order to gain the support of local communities and garner praise for the YCC, the program needed to recruit reasonably upstanding young citizens.

Nevertheless, there was a continued emphasis on providing solutions for juvenile delinquency in YCC legislation; that theme came from its longer history in the Congress, as well as from the experience of the two senators who served as the bill's primary sponsors. Senator Hubert Humphrey had proposed a Youth Conservation Corps in 1959, ten years before Jackson did so. Humphrey explained the rationale for his YCC in an article published by *Harper's Magazine*, entitled "A Plan to Save Trees, Land, and Boys."⁴⁹ He explicitly wished to resurrect the CCC as a way to preserve human resources, by preventing juvenile delinquency through recruitment of boys and young men to perform necessary conservation work in the nation's forests. Humphrey's version embraced contemporary gender assumptions, emphasizing that only boys could perform such work. Jackson used similar language about the usefulness of a YCC when introducing his version, but his proposal differed dramatically in that it welcomed both young women and men of all "racial classifications," reflecting changes that resulted from the civil and women's rights movements as well as legal changes stemming from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the work of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.⁵⁰ In ten years, a significant cultural shift had occurred. Jackson welcomed teenagers from all

⁴⁹ Hubert H. Humphrey, "A Plan to Save Trees, Land, and Boys," *Harper's* 218 (January 1959): 53-57.

⁵⁰ U.S. Senate, "Youth Conservation Corps – Conference Report," Congressional Record, 91st Congress, 2nd session, 5 August 1970, 116: 27428.

socioeconomic backgrounds, arguing that everyone should have access to summer employment and develop an understanding of the irreplaceable nature of national parks and forests.

Jackson drew inspiration not only from Humphrey's original bill, but also from a proven track record of successful outdoor work programs aimed specifically at juvenile delinquents. Preparatory research done for the 1959 version of the YCC bill found a number of examples of state and local governments operating versions of delinquent forest camps or "workreation" camps for young boys.⁵¹ Thirteen states, including California, Michigan, and New York, used "delinquent forestry camp" programs, often operated by state welfare departments or divisions of youth services. Such camps sent young men aged anywhere from 14 to 24 years of age into state forests and parks to do manual labor improving the land; their supporters believed that such programs rehabilitated juvenile offenders and taught good work habits. Jackson's version of the YCC also drew in part from a juvenile delinquent rehabilitation program in his home state of Washington, the Washington Youth Development and Conservation Corps. Founded in 1961, the program was designed for young men "labeled incorrigible, delinquent, school dropout, and slow to learn."⁵² Paid for by the state and run by the state Parks and Recreation Department, the CCC-inspired program aimed to help boys coming primarily from prevocational schools to learn good work habits and social skills. Participants in Congressional discussions of the proposed YCC noted that the federal government would be expanding a type of

⁵¹ See Exhibit B, 86th Congress, 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 105.2 (January 29, 1959), 1389-1391.

⁵² Janice Krenmayr, "The Youth Development and Conservation Corps Restores Hope for 'Hopeless' Youth," *Seattle Times* (June 29, 1969), 10-11.

program already undertaken on the state and local level; such a movement from state sponsorship to federal followed a common pattern where legislation and programs initiated by state governments were later adopted by federal authorities.⁵³

Despite discussions in Congress and Senator Jackson's rhetoric tying the YCC to contemporary juvenile delinquency concerns, the youth corps did not become a method for delinquency prevention. As a few of Senator Jackson and Representative Meeds's colleagues pointed out during the Congressional debate, the selection process would eliminate juvenile delinquents altogether. The YCC pilot projects (1971-1973) required that high school teachers and principals vet prospective participants; students considered juvenile delinquents would hardly be selected. Rep. Meeds heard anecdotally that the students selected for the YCC tended to be teachers' kids, outgoing students, and those already enrolled in environmental courses – in other words, the polar opposites of juvenile delinquents.⁵⁴ In addition, the plan to include youth from all social and economic backgrounds would further decrease the numbers of delinquent participants. One of the social scientists hired to assess the impact of the program noted that students were self-selected and had great interest in the environment. Jackson's conception that the YCC would help prevent juvenile delinquency did not hold up, when compared to some expert opinions about the age at which adolescents developed delinquent behavior. Harvard criminologists Eleanor and Sheldon Glueck noted in a study that a great majority of their subjects who later

⁵³ See, for example, Kirstin Downey, *The Woman Behind the New Deal: The Life of Frances Perkins, FDR's Secretary of Labor and His Moral Conscience* (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2009).

⁵⁴ Meeds, "Hearings before the Select Subcommittee on Labor," 3.

became delinquents showed such tendencies by age eleven.⁵⁵ The YCC, aimed at youths aged 15-18, would reach its audience too late. Although the YCC did not and could not truly address the social concerns of the many individuals who proposed national service as a solution to the contemporary “youth problem,” its pilot programs did succeed in fulfilling Senator Jackson’s desire to offer summer employment to a broad cross-section of youth. The YCC might not have stemmed what many saw as a tide of unruly youth, but it did provide many young people interested in the environment a chance to work and learn outdoors.

Unlike the Youth Conservation Corps, the SCA never attempted to justify itself on grounds of tackling juvenile delinquency. Nor did it seek to address other pressing social and economic issues of its era, such as economic inequality. Congressional discussion about the YCC did address contemporary concerns for youth and sought to fulfill a broader mission than did the SCA. Senator Jackson drew on the experience and expertise of preexisting work-service delinquent camps as well as from Humphrey’s earlier YCC work, but he also drew on the successful track record of the respected (and respectable) Student Conservation Association. Jackson and his colleagues might have absorbed and echoed contemporary rhetoric about socially maladjusted youth, but the YCC itself never became a tool to combat juvenile delinquency. In the end, the program recruited enrollees who had much more in common with the SCA volunteers than with juvenile delinquents, a development that prompted some internal discussion within the SCA.

⁵⁵ Sheldon Glueck and Eleanor Glueck, “White Delinquents in the Core City: As Boys and Men,” *Social Science* 45.2 (1970): 69. The arguments made by the Gluecks were based on a thirteen year (1950-1963) field study of young white boys from Boston.

The SCA as Blueprint

From the outset, Cushman Titus and her colleagues had debated the merits of folding the student volunteer corps into a federal program or agency. Ultimately, SCA founders and supporters chose not to advocate for federal oversight because they wished to maintain control over the nature of the program and the type of participant recruited. Once the YCC entered the picture as another conservation service program and possible SCA competitor, the SCA adapted its organizational purpose by strongly emphasizing its dedication to volunteer work, thereby asserting that unpaid service was superior to paid service. SCA administrators and supervisors also began to note the differences in background between their volunteers and YCC enrollees, as another way to differentiate between the programs. The SCA might have played a role in helping bring the YCC into existence by lending its expertise and support for Humphrey's and Jackson's proposals, but its operators insisted that only the SCA offered truly altruistic aid. This delineation also implied that SCA volunteers possessed superior dedication to conservation work, meriting more attention from the current leadership in federal agencies and private organizations concerned with conservation.

SCA personnel emphasized that the two service programs served different categories of young people; in their minds, the SCA fostered exceptional future leaders while the YCC served less exemplary segments of the youth population. In 1962, while Congress was considering Kennedy's version of the YCC as part of a larger National Service program, Liz Cushman Titus pointedly noted that several young men who had been denied entrance to SCA due to personal problems and mediocre records would be fine candidates for the proposed YCC.⁵⁶ Jack Dolstad

⁵⁶ Titus to Glenn Gallison, April 19, 1962, FF 1, Box 3, SCA DPL.

applauded Cushman Titus's work, writing that her idea was "catching fire" in his home state of Washington, with the passage of a state Youth Conservation Corps in 1961. It was his hope that the YCC would be kept on a "high level," however, and not solely recruit boys with troubled pasts.⁵⁷ Dolstad clearly wanted Washington's YCC to follow the SCA's example, not that of previous "workcreation" camps. George Brewer, a crucial part of the early SCA team, had definite ideas opposing any blending of the SCA into a federal program aimed at juvenile delinquents. His opinion, voiced in 1962 to Interior Secretary Udall, illuminates the exact differences he saw in philosophy of purpose between the SCA and YCC, as well as his understanding of what "service" actually meant.

I have heard it suggested that if the Congress enacts legislation establishing a Youth Conservation Corps there would be no need to continue this [SCA] Program. I wholly disagree with this thought: the present Program has quite different objectives which are specifically related to the activities and philosophy of the National Park Service...In my view, it should always be a limited enterprise composed of very high quality students and the number of students in any one area should be small enough to preserve the intimate touch between them and the Park personnel which has proved so rewarding in the past.⁵⁸

In emphasizing the unique cooperative opportunities that the SCA provided for both students and the National Park Service, Brewer endorsed Cushman Titus's vision for her program and its "high quality" participants; he rejected any effort to fold it into the proposed YCC. To create a large-scale program that admitted a great variety of youth (as the YCC would) would alter the purpose and dilute the effectiveness of the SCA.

⁵⁷ Dolstad to Titus, April 17, 1961, FF 45, Box 2, SCA DPL.

⁵⁸ Brewer to Stewart Udall, March 29, 1962, FF 36, Box 2, SCA DPL.

Cushman Titus and Brewer's high standards for participants influenced their attitudes toward other youth service programs with similar missions, which sought to recruit a broader variety of participants.

As administrators of the Student Conservation Association assisted Jackson's efforts to enact YCC legislation, they had to clarify the relationship between the SCA and federal government in their own minds. Once the YCC program became a reality, the SCA leadership had to further define the group's identity and relationship with other similar programs, both state-run and privately-sponsored. SCA executive director Elizabeth Cushman Titus and primary SCA camp supervisor Jack Dolstad remained keenly interested in discussions regarding other service programs, keeping an eye on both Humphrey's and Jackson's proposed legislation, and applauding Kennedy's idea for a Peace Corps. For each iteration of the Youth Conservation Corps bill, SCA and National Park Service personnel contemplated how the SCA might capitalize on the growing interest in youth work/service programs and gain further federal support, while preserving the SCA's autonomy. In 1958, Cushman Titus wrote that the student program might serve as a clearinghouse for such a government program.⁵⁹ The following year, she wrote to Humphrey, offering her expertise and suggesting they meet to discuss the proposed YCC.⁶⁰ Throughout the 1960s, Jack Dolstad periodically wrote to Senator Jackson informing him of the SCA and its

⁵⁹ Cushman Titus (Titus) to George Brewer, June 18, 1958, FF 10, Box 1, SCA DPL.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Cushman Titus (Titus) to Humphrey, February 2, 1959, unsorted papers, Box 7, ECTP. [Personal Papers of Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam].

success, urging him to find federal funding for the program.⁶¹ Jackson replied positively to Dolstad's letters, noting his great respect for the work done by the SCA and offering to aid the volunteer group if it ever needed additional support beyond his endorsement.⁶² As depicted in his 1970 re-election campaign pamphlet, Jackson visited an SCA high school work camp in Olympic National Park to see the SCA projects in action; he later used his experience with them to lend further credibility to his YCC bill. The SCA tried to remain part of the national service conversation and situate itself within the expanding cast of programs aimed at providing service opportunities, especially those focused on conservation. In so doing, SCA administrators solidified their focus on cultivating a small program dedicated to shaping the next generation of conservation leaders.

The SCA's unique position as the sole privately-operated youth conservation service program provided Sen. Jackson and Rep. Meeds with a vital example of a successful, long-running youth service program they could use to promote a YCC. At Congressional hearings, Jackson and Meeds enlisted Elizabeth Cushman Titus, Jack Dolstad, and a few SCA volunteers to testify in support of the Youth Conservation Corps. Drawing from his experience with successful work operations and his own personal observation of the program's efficacy, Dolstad opined that the volunteer groups he led and the proposed YCC work groups had similar general aims: to assist the National Park Service and other public land agencies by doing conservation work, benefit students through field experience, and re-create

⁶¹ Gerald C. DiCerbo, "Legislative History of the Youth Conservation Corps," *Journal of Forest History* (January 1988), 24; Jackson to Dolstad, June 3, 1964, FF 48, Box 2, SCA DPL.

⁶² Jackson to Dolstad, March 5, 1973, FF 9, Box 3, SCA DPL.

reverence for the land.⁶³ In speaking about SCA work, Dolstad referred to the character-shaping goals of Outward Bound, suggesting that “our program does the same thing, only our main thrust is in giving service to society by doing constructive work and through the constructive work the individual improves.”⁶⁴ Dolstad downplayed the differences between the SCA and YCC for the benefit of his Congressional audience, claiming that the only aspects that differentiated the SCA from the YCC were the slight age difference for recruits and the fact that YCC enrollees received a salary. Among the reasons for the SCA’s success, he included the innate desire of young people to be useful, the size of work groups, and the variety of work planned. In its trial form as approved by Congress, the YCC largely copied the SCA high school work group structure, attempting to replicate the success the private program had in managing teens in wilderness camps.⁶⁵ Throughout the 1970s, the SCA actually had contracts to run several YCC projects each year, giving administrators a chance to assess SCA work programs in a different context. They chose to further flesh out one of the organization’s secondary goals, that of providing assistance in the creation of similar conservation projects. Its role as a blueprint for the YCC also prompted internal discussion about the future direction of the SCA,

⁶³ “Hearings before the Select Subcommittee on Labor of the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, Ninety-First Congress, First Session on H.R. 11145 To Establish a Youth Conservation Corps,” U.S. Government Printing Office, (22-23 October 1969), 48-49.

⁶⁴ “Hearings before the Select Subcommittee on Labor” (1969), 60-61. Dolstad actually said Upward Bound, but probably meant Outward Bound. Upward Bound came out of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and targeted teens from low income families who wished to become the first in their family to attend college.

⁶⁵ “Hearings before the Select Subcommittee on Labor of the Committee on Education and Labor, (1969), 49.

especially when it became obvious that juvenile delinquents were not the true target audience of the YCC.

Because SCA directors believed that the YCC potentially threatened the existence of the Student Conservation Association, they worked behind the scenes to reassess and solidify their goals for the SCA in light of Jackson's legislation. Jack Dolstad in particular feared the potential loss of federal financial support, though he testified in Congress that he would gladly lose his job to see opportunities the YCC provided to many more young people than could the SCA.⁶⁶ To prevent the loss of financial assistance due to a perceived duplication of services, SCA representatives and supporters in the Park Service made sure to draw distinctions between the purposes of the YCC and SCA, as well as to emphasize programmatic differences. In doing so, they focused primarily on the lack of remuneration SCA volunteers received (YCC enrollees were paid) and different selection procedures, as well the altruistic orientation of the volunteer program and its status as a tax-exempt non-profit educational organization. In 1971, Board member Carl Buchheister, president emeritus of the National Audubon Society, applauded the SCA spirit, noting that he was most impressed by the attitude of the students who saw their job "principally as an opportunity to do something for someone else rather than for their own benefit."⁶⁷ The following year, the SCA Board reiterated that in recruiting donor funds,

⁶⁶ Dolstad testimony, Select Subcommittee on Labor, U.S. Congressional Hearing on H.R. 14897, 1974, FF 35, Box 1, SCA DPL.

⁶⁷ Annual Meeting of Members, November 9, 1971, Book 2, Corporate Logs of SCA, SCA HQ.

“volunteer service ought to be stressed.”⁶⁸ The Board also emphasized its desire to obtain more than half of the SCA’s operating funds from “private sources,” due to its belief in the “value of volunteerism.”⁶⁹ Clearly, these men and women wished to emphasize the superior nature of unpaid voluntary action over the numerous paid work service programs competing for public attention. Dolstad might have emphasized the common ground shared by the SCA and the YCC when testifying before Congress, but he and his SCA colleagues made sure to stress dissimilarity when speaking internally and to members of the public interested in the SCA.

The contrast that Dolstad and others drew between unpaid and paid voluntary action highlighted the class assumptions at the root of the SCA’s identity. As noted earlier, Cushman Titus and those conservationists who supported her idea initially came from similar backgrounds: highly educated, upper class white men and women who had the time and wherewithal to dedicate hours, or entire careers, to work on behalf of conservation. Many of them did not make a living from their conservationist activity, though some did, usually as government employees or as writers. Those who volunteered their time to work on behalf of conservation before the 1960s generally identified as sportsmen, garden club members, wilderness enthusiasts, or similar special interest groups. Such men and women relied on the outdoors as a place for recreation and rejuvenation – they did not rely on it for their livelihood.⁷⁰ As historians of the environmental movement have noted, most of these

⁶⁸ Executive Committee Meeting, November 8, 1972, Book 2, Corporate Logs of SCA, SCA HQ.

⁶⁹ Early Report 1974, September 19, 1974, FF 18, Box 2, SCA DPL.

⁷⁰ Peter J. Schmitt’s *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969) is an excellent exploration of the origins of the

people generally fit a traditional profile of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant privilege.⁷¹ Not until the late 1950s did the conservation movement draw upon a larger, more economically and socially democratic base.⁷² This subsection of Americans saw voluntary action on behalf of reform efforts as more noble than any paid service, believing that only the truly dedicated would serve in such a manner. As stated earlier, this type of service also had deep roots in nineteenth-century women's voluntary action, and as such imbued volunteer work with a feminized tone. SCA administrators did not seem to recognize that many young people who had an interest in conservation and the environment could not afford to volunteer and would require payment for their work.

The growing interest in youth conservation work led SCA board members in the early 1970s to emphasize the program's originality and to establish themselves as authorities on the topic. At an annual members' meeting in 1971, board member Michael Brewer counseled the SCA to undergo a "good, tough-minded evaluation" in response to the growing number of youth work programs.⁷³ Brewer noted that while

idea that nature served as a restorative, rather than something that needed to be tamed for American progress.

⁷¹ Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 351; Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States Since 1945* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), chapter one.

⁷² Some argue that the expansion of the conservation movement began earlier; see for example Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal*; Maher argues that the CCC and its media exposure set the stage for a more democratic environmental movement, beginning in the 1930s.

⁷³ Minutes Annual Meeting of Members, November 9, 1971, Book 2 Corporate Logs, SCA HQ.

the goal of the early SCA was to “offer a worthwhile opportunity to students,” the contemporary goals of the SCA should be to touch more on developing “knowledge about the operation of youth work-education programs and to be instrumental in forming a cadre of people trained to be leaders for larger government projects.”⁷⁴ Several years later, an SCA pamphlet noted the program’s goal of “serving as a model and stimulus for other groups to join in the common effort needed to arrest and reverse the tide of environmental deterioration.”⁷⁵ Later in that same report, the author noted that, despite the number of similar youth work and volunteer programs working for the parks and forests, the SCA remained unique as it alone provided a comprehensive program that combined volunteerism, personal growth, interpersonal relationships, hard work, outdoor living, and conservation and environmental education. The SCA also gained recognition from some high-level groups, including the President’s Council on Environmental Quality, which in 1975 gave the SCA credit “for having pioneered the concept of non-governmental endeavors to involve youth and volunteers with the protection of our national heritage.”⁷⁶ The SCA grew rapidly in the 1970s, both in terms of volunteer numbers and the parks and forests to which it sent students.

⁷⁴ Annual Report, Executive Committee Meeting, November 8, 1972, Book 2 Corporate Logs, SCA HQ.

⁷⁵ “Student Conservationists: A Unique Opportunity for Volunteers,” Files of SCA, SCA HQ.

⁷⁶ Minutes Annual Meeting of Members, April 23, 1975, FF 47, Box 3, SCA DPL. Russell Train, the chairperson of the Council on Environmental Quality, knew and worked closely with Laurance Rockefeller and succeeded Fairfield Osborn at the Conservation Foundation. The SCA, as we have seen, had strong connections to both Rockefeller and Osborn. These connections undoubtedly explain why the CEQ had knowledge of the SCA. Robin W. Winks, *Laurance S. Rockefeller: Catalyst for Conservation* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1997), 44, 155.

Its survival depended in large part on its identity as an organization that recruited volunteers who had leadership potential, rather than as a clearinghouse for young people who sought a paid summer of work in the parks. The SCA's focus on volunteerism might have implied that its participants provided morally superior service, but in actuality the experiences and reactions of both YCC and SCA teens proved to be quite similar.

The Motorcycle Crowd and the Conservation Crowd

The young women and men who participated in the SCA and YCC during the early years of the YCC all expressed similar interest in the environment, although they generally came from different backgrounds. The SCA might have sought altruistic individuals who wished to work in the outdoors, but it could not accommodate all young Americans who demonstrated interest in outdoor conservation. The YCC's wider net could serve a much larger group of volunteers. The YCC's enrollees represented a far more diverse cross-section of American youth than did those of the SCA. Still, the YCC enrollee held much in common with the SCA volunteer in terms of environmental consciousness and enthusiasm for outdoor experience; a visitor to a YCC work site and an SCA high school site likely would have seen very little visible difference between the work performed at each location. Because the two groups essentially served young people from different socioeconomic backgrounds and voiced different philosophies of service, there was room for both in the arena of conservation.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ The YCC still exists today, but has gone through many cycles of government support. It had the greatest publicity and support during the 1970s, peaking in 1978 with a \$60 million operational budget and nearly 40,000 enrollees. Once the Reagan

Both programs tapped into great interest among young Americans for outdoor conservation work. The YCC pilot program proved so popular that only two percent of over 120,000 applicants could be selected to participate in 1971, the first year.⁷⁸ Selection of YCC enrollees during the first three years relied upon high school students learning about the YCC from guidance counselors and teachers; students selected likely had good academic and behavioral records.⁷⁹ The program also blended young people from all economic and racial backgrounds, something that the SCA had begun to attempt in the late 1960s, when it sought in earnest to recruit students of color, though without much success. The YCC had significantly more success than the SCA in enrolling a cross-section of the population, recruiting larger numbers of girls (37% of enrollees) and members of minority groups (17%) into the first pilot program.⁸⁰ Regardless of gender or racial identification, enrollees generally

administration began, the budget was gutted. Many states have since initiated YCC programs of their own.

⁷⁸ Jackson to Dolstad, March 5, 1973, FF 9, Box 3, SCA DPL; DiCerbo, "Legislative History of the Youth Conservation Corps," 27.

⁷⁹ "Hearings before the Select Subcommittee on Labor of the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Session, on H.R. 10456, and Related Bills, To Amend the Youth Conservation Corps Act of 1970," U.S. Government Printing Office, (24-25 May 1972), 89.

⁸⁰ Robert W. Marans, B.L. Driver, and John C. Scott, *Youth and the Environment: An Evaluation of the 1971 Youth Conservation Corps* (The University of Michigan: Survey Research Center Institute for Social Research, 1972), II-2. In 1970, the SCA recruited just seven students considered to stem from minority backgrounds, out of 235 total volunteers (approximately 3%). The SCA began recruiting minority students in 1967, and received a grant from the Ford Foundation to help it do so. Between 1967 and 1974, the SCA recruited 90 minority students out of a total of 1,976 volunteers (4.5%). See Table 1.2. for yearly participation numbers in the SCA. For statistics and information on the minority students recruited by SCA during this period, see FF 11-13, Box 3, SCA DPL. My observations about the demographics of SCA volunteers are

came from the solid middle or upper-middle classes; the average enrollee came from a family with a median income of \$11,500, about two thousand dollars higher than the reported median income of all U.S. families in the 1970 census.⁸¹ The YCC assembled 2,400 teenagers for the first year, a considerably larger group that the SCA had ever recruited since its origin.

The vast majority of young people participating in the YCC pilot projects exhibited great concern for conservation issues and interest in doing what they could to preserve the environment - as did SCA students. The social scientists who conducted a 1972 study of the YCC made the point that these self-selected, recruiter-screened young people likely had very different attitudes and values from the general American population.⁸² Still, the different socioeconomic background of recruits in the two programs is evident in the comments of Kelly Smith. Smith was a 1973 YCC enrollee from the Cascades region who later worked for the SCA as a supervisor for a joint YCC-SCA camp at Yellowstone. He notes that although he joined the YCC primarily for the experience, “being a poor kid, I found it helpful to have a paycheck at the end of the summer.” Smith had high school friends who participated in the SCA

impressionistic, as SCA application materials, which hold information about family income, are restricted from researcher use until 2054. Any numbers I quote are those compiled from manuscript material open to the public

⁸¹ Marans, et al, *Youth and the Environment*, II-2. In the 1972 evaluation, *Toward Environmental Understanding*, p. 9, the authors say that the US median income of families led by persons 35-55 years old was more than the median income of YCC enrollee parents. Narrower statistical group are likely the root of the disparity; the 1970 census statistics used did not specify age of heads of family.

⁸² Scott, Driver, and Marans, *Toward Environmental Understanding*, xii.

during the summer of 1973, who came from wealthier families “that could afford plane tickets and volunteer time.”⁸³

Others also noticed the differences between the participants in the Youth Conservation Corps and Student Conservation Association. Extant records and comments from those involved with both groups point to social and behavioral differences that might stem from particular economic and social backgrounds. SCA supervisors who worked with YCC youngsters in joint camps commented that they were a bit rougher around the edges than SCA students. These supervisors reported that both groups worked equally as hard and accomplished just as much work, highly rating YCC participants though noting that, in comparison with SCA volunteers, YCC enrollees proved to be a little less “interesting” and bit more difficult to manage.⁸⁴ Supervisors debated which group – the “conservation crowd” or the “motorcycle crowd” – most needed conservation experience. One advocated focusing solely on the middle and upper class students so that conservationists would have a reservoir of informed students; in this particular supervisor’s opinion, lower class teens might just “sit and do nothing,” as their interest lay more in social justice issues. This comment clearly indicates that the SCA continued its firm focus on forming conservation leaders from a particular segment of society, rather than incorporating individuals from different backgrounds, who might not possess the same priorities as conservationists.⁸⁵

⁸³ Kelly Smith, email message in author’s possession, 19 March 2009.

⁸⁴ FF 47, Box 3, SCA DPL.

⁸⁵ Minutes Supervisors Meeting, 5 October 1974, FF 20, Box 2, SCA DPL. SCA supervisors, in this instance at least, seemed to conflate lower class and minority students.

Both the YCC and SCA sought to provide experiential education outdoors and familiarize participants with environmental issues, though the two groups possessed different ideas about the type of educational endeavor best undertaken. Despite the different approaches undertaken by respective supervisors, high school SCA volunteers and YCC enrollees differed little in their environmental awareness. The YCC emphasized specialized educational programs, complete with standardized tests at the beginning and end of the program, whereas the SCA stressed experiential learning and general wilderness living. The YCC provided enrollees with formal lessons in ecology, natural resource management, and, in Senator Jackson's words, "other principles which would give them a greater appreciation and understanding of our Nation's great natural resources and the necessity for preserving and maintaining this great national heritage."⁸⁶ In addition to earning some money and occupying their time, teens learned about ecology and resource management, and developed an appreciation for the intangible benefits of outdoor living.⁸⁷ The social scientists hired to evaluate the first two years of the program estimated that the 1972 enrollees learned about the equivalent of a full year of high school science during their summer work program.⁸⁸ Jackson emphasized the need for such learning and outdoor exposure while promoting the YCC, since, in his mind, the program rested on the "fundamental concept" that humanity and nature could not be treated separately, and that "nature

⁸⁶ Humphrey, "A Plan to Save Tree, Land, and Boys," 57; Youth Conservation Corps Act of 1969, S. 1076, *Congressional Record*, 91st Congress, 1st sess., 115 (18 February 1969), 3713-4.

⁸⁷ Youth Conservation Corps S. 1076, 91st Congress, 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (February 18, 1969), 3711-3714.

⁸⁸ Nye, *The History of the Youth Conservation Corps*, 38.

lacks meaning without man...and man's life, to be meaningful, requires contact and exposure to nature."⁸⁹ As a whole, YCC enrollees concurred with Jackson's understanding of nature's importance, interpreting their experience as transformative.

When young enrollees and their supervisors testified before a Congressional reviewing committee about their experiences, they applauded the program and the opportunities it provided. One enrollee affirmed that "a lot of people didn't believe such a place existed where there was no prejudice, and they want to go and see what it is really like. A lot did, believe me. It seemed like a fantasy land, and they are dying to get there."⁹⁰ One female YCC leader remarked that enrollees did not "associate our paychecks with our jobs," viewing their summer work more as a "personal commitment." She noted that "the money that we get, small as it may be, really does not have much to do with it...we really do not want a pay increase because then it would become a money thing, and we really do not want that."⁹¹ Her comments provide an interesting counterpoint to the SCA's assertion that YCC enrollees placed little value in their conservation work and were more interested in the money. This woman's interpretation of service, like that of other YCC enrollees, differed from the SCA because she viewed payment as an acceptable component. Enrollees testified that their environmental consciousness expanded after exposure to environmental educational materials and training; one girl stated that "now I am about 1,000 times

⁸⁹ Jackson's address at Camp Wood, in Monongahela National Forest, 92nd Congress, 1st sess., *Congressional Record* (July 23, 1971), 27007.

⁹⁰ Nye, *The History of the Youth Conservation Corps*, 31.

⁹¹ Comments of Dottie Perks, Group Leader, YCC Harper's Ferry, Hearing before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, (25 July 1973), 29. Enrollees earned minimum wage.

more ecologically concerned, and knowledgeable than I was.”⁹² The YCC also aided teens in a more general sense by providing self-confidence; one girl commented that the program gave her happiness as well as direction and a purpose.⁹³

Young women and men who participated in the Youth Conservation Corps during its three pilot years believed that the program expanded their knowledge and had an effect on their sensitivity to environmental issues. Considering that most of these enrollees had previous exposure to outdoor living and had pre-existing interest in the environment (88% in 1972), it appears that the YCC did little to expand the base of Americans interested in environmental issues. On the other hand, thousands of young Americans participating in joint educational and experiential learning across the country undoubtedly did something to the nation’s collective awareness of environmental issues, particularly in the years immediately following the first Earth Day. SCA administrators might not have considered YCC enrollee work as equivalent to that performed by the SCA volunteers, but they could not argue with the fact that the YCC experienced great success in enabling tens of thousands of young people interested in environmental work to experience a summer in the nation’s parks and forests.

The emphasis the SCA placed on the volunteer nature of its service meant that the program had to remain a non-profit organization in order to retain its distinct identity. By stressing the special qualities of unpaid voluntary service, SCA administrators continually distinguished the program from other contemporary youth

⁹² Hearing before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, (25 July 1973), 81.

⁹³ Hearing before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, (25 July 1973), 84.

service initiatives, particularly the Youth Conservation Corps. Liz Cushman Titus's SCA and Jackson's YCC drew from the Civilian Conservation Corps; all three programs envisioned young people serving the nation. But "service" had different meanings; it could be either purely voluntary service or paid service rendered for the betterment of natural resources. When Cushman Titus and her collaborators sought to keep their program small and strictly voluntary, they suggested that paid service would somehow diminish the purity of the sacrifice participants made; it was an assumption rooted in the particular socioeconomic and cultural milieu to which Cushman Titus and many of her collaborators belonged. The fact that YCC enrollees earned minimum wage during their summers did not affect their own opinion about the work's value, and probably meant little to those who read about the program in the newspaper. But to those in the SCA, payment created a clear delineation between the type of work service provided by the two conservation youth groups.⁹⁴ As Jack and Enid Dolstad wrote in 1973, after taking over the reins of SCA leadership from Cushman Titus in 1970, SCA volunteers worked "as a labor of love, undistracted by wages, bring[ing] dedicated enthusiasm to their tasks and gain[ing] immense inner satisfaction."⁹⁵ In their interpretation, the SCA prepared select, dedicated young women and men for future leadership, whereas the YCC merely provided paid work experience and basic environmental education to a wide variety of teens who were

⁹⁴ The *New York Times* printed several articles per year about the YCC, generally detailing the composition of the upcoming Corps. See, for example, "Conservation Corps Mixes Study and Work," *New York Times*, August 16, 1975, p. 52. That year, teens earned \$2.20 per hour, slightly over the minimum wage.

⁹⁵ Jack and Enid Dolstad to Senator Jackson, January 29, 1973, FF 9, Box 3, SCA DPL.

unlikely to pursue careers in conservation. The SCA used its definition of service as a tool to set itself apart as a leadership program, implying that the YCC's enrollees' service to conservation merited less acclaim due to the monetary value placed on their work.

Whereas the SCA drew on a feminized voluntary tradition, the YCC came out of a tradition of masculine national service, and its architects understood the program as a CCC-like undertaking providing employment and beneficial experience to American teenagers. Enrollees would serve the nation by doing conservation work, but also by earning a wage and staying out of trouble. In practice, the YCC hewed much closer to the CCC ideal and national service than did the SCA, even though Cushman Titus had explicitly drawn inspiration from the Depression-era program in writing her thesis. In terms of sheer impact on the national consciousness, the YCC also made a dramatically larger impression. The YCC reached a significantly larger number of teenagers: in 1975, the SCA recruited 450 college and high school students to volunteer in forty-two parks and forests with a \$375,000 budget, while the YCC enrolled nearly 13,000 teenagers in 450 camps with a \$13.24 million budget.⁹⁶ In terms of scale, the two programs operated on very different planes. Still, as the emergence of the YCC during the 1970s demonstrated, there was room for both on the national scene. Cushman Titus's original vision retained its appeal in that altered landscape.

The Student Conservation Association and the Youth Conservation Corps might have understood the term "service" and construed the work of participants

⁹⁶ SCA Annual Report 1975, SCA HQ or FF 53, Box 1 SCA DPL; Nye, *The History of the Youth Conservation Corps*, 81-82.

differently, but the experiential effect of the programs on the young men and women who volunteered or enrolled varied little in actuality. It is unclear how much either the YCC or SCA participants consciously thought about the nature of their “service,” but both groups undoubtedly viewed their summer experience as worthwhile. YCC enrollees expressed wonder at the natural environment in which they found themselves and eager interest in the work and learning opportunities made available to them. The program allowed young Americans interested in the environment to act on their passions; inasmuch as the YCC came into existence after Earth Day and started sending teens into the woods during the rapid growth of the modern environmental movement, the program certainly had its share of young idealists. The Congressional testimony given by one young woman participant of the 1972 pilot project perhaps best expressed the desire of many young Americans to help the environment:

I think one thing that struck me is you hear a lot about ecology and pollution and “let’s do something about it” and you always get out with your sticks and picket signs and, you know, get out on the streets and say, “let’s get rid of pollution,” but that’s not the way to get rid of it. A lot of kids...say, “Let’s go and get where the action is and get in with the crowd.” They...made fun at me when I got back because they thought it was a “kiddy camp” but [as I] explained, “to get out and do something about the environment and the pollution problem” is where the action is.⁹⁷

These words echo what many young SCA volunteers also thought. SCA administrators might view their contributions as morally superior to the work done by

⁹⁷ Statement of Monica L. Bowersox, “Hearings before the Select Subcommittee on Labor of the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Session, on H.R. 10456, and Related Bills, To Amend the Youth Conservation Corps Act of 1970,” U.S. Government Printing Office, (24-25 May 1972), 61.

YCC enrollees, but both groups of young people had markedly similar reactions to their summer experience.

The SCA emphasized the importance of unpaid service rendered by “quality” young Americans, and to this day views such service as vital to its mission of creating conservation leaders. The SCA continues to pay the expenses associated with all its projects, as it did from the outset. Certain volunteers are also eligible for student loan forgiveness through joint AmeriCorps projects. Internships, with living stipends and housing allowances, provide valuable experience to young people interested in pursuing careers in natural resource conservation. The organization carefully notes these monetary benefits for participants, however, never referring to these financial advantages as a primary reason for service with the SCA. The current practice of many other occupational sectors (particularly finance) that provide unpaid internship opportunity to young people, simultaneously excluding individuals who cannot afford an unpaid summer job, echoes the service attitude of the SCA. The link between unpaid volunteer service and true dedication to an occupation persists, despite the logical fallacies and class assumptions underlying such a conceptual connection. As the female YCC leader’s comments above indicate, payment for work does not equal mercenary motivation. Her dedication to conservation work and related environmental values were no less than those exhibited by SCA volunteers.

Chapter 6

FROM “IT’S A DUDE RANCH FOR KIDS” TO “IT MADE ME WANT TO SAVE THE WORLD!”: SCA STUDENTS INTERPRET THEIR SUMMER EXPERIENCE

In the newly launched *Backpacker* magazine, sixteen-year old Tarla Nanavati wrote of her boredom with babysitting, playing tennis, and swimming during the summer months. Nanavati felt she did not contribute to her community and sought to find a volunteer opportunity that allowed her to act on an interest in the “current environmental status of the world.” After reading about the Student Conservation Association in a booklet published by the Commission on Voluntary Services and Action, she applied to the program and, upon acceptance, worked in Mount Rainier National Park for several weeks during the summer of 1973.¹ Nanavati represented one of hundreds who wished to, as one commentator put it, “do something to save the environment” in the early 1970s; the SCA provided “such volunteers from all over the nation” the opportunity to perform “the endless task of maintaining the backcountry of our public lands.”² The SCA recruited young men and women who wished to volunteer, learn, and work on behalf of the nation’s parks and forests; many later commented on the program’s effectiveness in heightening their environmental

¹ Tarla Nanavati, “My SCA Trip,” *Backpacker* 2 (1974), 38-39; Bud Morris, “Proving Her Thesis,” *Backpacker* 2 (1974), 37-38, 87. *Backpacker* published its first issue in the spring of 1973.

² Emilie Martin, “Student Volunteers in the National Parks and Forests,” *National Parks & Conservation Magazine* 47.2 (February 1973): 24-27.

awareness. These participants viewed the program as a valuable work and educational experience, expressed positive immediate reactions to such experiences, and, after a time, wrote program assessments tempered by maturity and retrospection. Tarla Nanavati and her fellow SCA volunteers voiced their own opinions regarding the impact the program had on them as individuals and conservationists, and emphasized the programmatic aspect most important to them. As we have seen, however, these volunteers fit a particular mold and their interpretation of the organization's goals and purposes did not stray far from the core values first expressed by Elizabeth Cushman Titus and her colleagues. SCA administrators might organize the program, collaborate with parks, and choose the volunteers, but the volunteers ultimately interpreted their experience and derived what they wished from the main aspects of the program.

The SCA focused primarily on volunteer service, conservation education, and occupational exploration. However useful to some, this mission proved increasingly conservative in the 1960s and early 1970s in the sense that it did not incorporate most of the issues emphasized by an insurgent environmentalist movement. The young people who chose to volunteer were not those individuals who joined radical organizations like Greenpeace or Earth First!, nor did the organization condone radical action or absorb contemporary issues. The SCA neither recruited such activist students nor appealed to those young men and women who wished to address issues of pollution, toxic substances, nuclear energy, or environmental justice. Instead, the volunteer organization recruited "potential leaders" who demonstrated an interest in traditional conservation issues and environmental protection. To educate these "future conservationists," the SCA structured projects rather loosely and planned an informal educational component, allowing students, supervisors, and park officials to

shape their local projects.³ The program aimed, in the words of one SCA participant, to make young people “see rather than just look” at the parks and forests, and comprehend the importance of “the sacred trust that we all have inherited.”⁴ General appreciation of the nation’s natural landscapes remained at the core of SCA conservation philosophy. It also sought to introduce volunteers to the actual practice of conservation and to the culture of the National Park Service, in hopes that many of these young people would enter related careers. The SCA certainly fulfilled these goals. Participants often mentioned the program’s impact on their awareness of the environment, and the SCA played a role in persuading many volunteers to later pursue seasonal or permanent careers with the National Park Service or similar agencies. The “esprit de corps” fostered by the program remained a powerful force, and by 1975 a very high percentage (42%) of all alumni donated to the SCA in hopes that it would influence others as much as it did them.⁵ In addition to maintaining its organizational flexibility and independence from external oversight, the SCA perpetuated itself by recruiting young people who espoused the organization’s continuing values.

SCA volunteers clearly chose to participate primarily for the valuable experiences (educational, occupational, or existential) they would accumulate during their “worthwhile summer in the parks”; their primary motivation for volunteering

³ Jack Dolstad used the phrase “future conservationists” in the mid-1960s. Dolstad to Clay and Fay Rennie (n.d.), FF 48, Box 2, SCA DPL.

⁴ Quoted in Mrs. Stephen C.L. Delano, National Parks Committee Report, GCA *Bulletin* 54.2 (March 1966), 69.

⁵ “Esprit de corps” used in Jack and Enid Dolstad’s Personal Report to the Executive Committee, November 1975, FF 47, Box 3, SCA DPL. The 1974 survey found that 42% of all SCA alumni donated to the program. See Elizabeth Layne’s statistics, FF 11-13, Box 3, SCA DPL.

was self-improvement and personal interest.⁶ Elizabeth Cushman Titus expected that students would accrue many benefits from volunteering during their summer vacation, namely “learning how to play their part as citizens” while “doing work of inestimable value” to their country and gaining knowledge of “conservation and its true meaning.”⁷ Administrators of the SCA stressed service and leadership, particularly in correspondence with sponsors and donors; voluntarism constituted a crucial part of the SCA identity, due to its founder’s own legacy and out of necessity to protect its unique status and attract funding. SCA volunteers, however, usually eschewed discussion of what the service aspect meant to them. Participants stated many reasons why they joined the program and why they thought it worthwhile, but few mentioned “service.” Despite the great emphasis placed on the nature of student voluntarism, the SCA made a much greater impression on the environmental consciousness and career development of young people.

The Significance of Service

As we have seen, the rhetoric of service employed by the SCA addressed the program’s original goals and functioned as a way for the organization to

⁶ I derive my interpretation of student opinions from a variety of documents, primarily an extensive survey sent out in December 1974, the SCA newsletter “Conservation Conversation,” participant letters, and evaluations of the program held in the Denver Public Library. Many students did not write comments or letters and the 1974 survey reached less than half of all previous SCA participants, so this interpretation is necessarily incomplete. For an excellent sociological study of volunteers and their motivations, see Marc A. Musick and John Wilson, *Volunteers: A Social Profile* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 54-64.

⁷ Elizabeth Cushman Titus, “Thesis on a Proposed Student Conservation Corps,” (B.A. thesis, Vassar College, 1954), 13.

distinguish itself when similar programs emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. In the mid-1970s, the organization declared itself “a unique opportunity for volunteers,” arguing that no one else offered “at one and the same time, a comprehensive program that offers so many opportunities,” including “personal growth,” “hard work,” and “conservation and environmental education.”⁸ The popularity of outdoor education programs grew as the SCA did; Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), similar in several ways to the SCA, formed in the early 1960s.⁹ Other programs came very close to replicating the SCA program, especially the National Park Service’s Volunteers-in-Parks (VIP) program. With such new programs, both private and public, threatening to encroach on the SCA’s established niche, the leadership worked to further define its character and aims. An emphasis on altruism helped the SCA distinguish itself, but this aspect appears to have drawn most of its support from the top tiers of the organization, not the actual participants.

SCA administrators focused on identifying the leaders of tomorrow, those who would continue the stewardship of the national parks and public lands after the current conservationist leadership passed the torch. Cushman Titus and her colleagues believed that the volunteer service aspect of the program would act as a filter in order to identify, encourage, and motivate these future stewards. As an internal report indicated, this “special character” of unpaid service assumed that students did not

⁸ “Student Conservationists: A Unique Opportunity for Volunteers,” published 1974/1975, n.p. SCA HQ.

⁹ Outward Bound was founded by German educator Kurt Hahn and British businessman Sir Lawrence Holt in the United Kingdom in 1941, originally to teach nautical survival skills to young sailors. Outward Bound began giving wilderness education trips in the U.S. in 1961. NOLS was founded in 1965 by mountaineer Paul Petzoldt, a former member of the Army’s 10th Mountain Division.

approach their participation in the program as “just another job.”¹⁰ In SCA administrators’ minds, this assumed selflessness signified that such a person would become an appropriate leader for the future conservationist movement. However, SCA participants themselves rarely connected their volunteer service with either their future plans or viewed it as a feature which shaped their career trajectory. Service meant much to the SCA administrators, but participants themselves did not appear to view their voluntarism as equally important.

In written evaluations of the program and its purpose, SCA participants rarely discussed service and its meaning. Students largely omitted an examination of their own service, despite having devoted many hours to unpaid hard work. Such silence could mean that the character of their service had little immediate impact on young people, or they all agreed with the SCA leadership’s emphasis on the importance of voluntarism and so felt such discussion did not merit further attention. Considering the demographic that the SCA recruited during its first twenty years, the latter is probably the most logical explanation. These participants were likely from families where volunteer work was a common undertaking, although we have seen comments that indicate the unpaid nature of the program acted as a barrier to some interested parties. The early evaluations participants filled out at summer’s end asked general questions about the summer experience, including whether or not the program lived up to students’ expectations and if they would encourage friends to participate. Service-related questions asked students to assess aid they provided to the Park Service and predict their future capacity for making “a contribution to [their]

¹⁰ “Student Conservationists: A Unique Opportunity for Volunteers,” published 1974/1975, n.p. SCA HQ

community involving outdoor or conservation education” by leading hikes, joining the local Sierra Club branch, or performing similar (voluntary) activities. The SCA did not ask these young women and men to explain their understanding of what “service” personally meant or judge the program’s impact on their leadership potential. Such hypothetical questions would have required knowledge of the future and incredible powers of self-assessment. As a result, participants’ responses focused specifically on their summer experience.

The passage of time and accumulated life experiences, however, prompted SCA women and men to view their “worthwhile summer” in a different light. A comparison between what participants initially wrote and their responses to a 1974 SCA-sponsored retrospective survey highlights the impact of time and experience on what individuals remembered about their summer with the SCA.¹¹ The 1974 survey revealed that the program had complex effects on participant lifestyles, worldviews, and career paths, something that many alumni mentioned in their own letters to SCA headquarters. The survey itself provides important clues about the organization’s

¹¹An extensive survey conducted in 1974 among all current and past SCA participants asked individuals to detail their current and past activities on behalf of environmental/conservation issues, describe their current occupation, as well as their activist and leisure activities related to environmental issues. It also requested that participants evaluate the impact of the SCA on their career, lifestyle, knowledge of related issues, and the various aspects of the SCA program. The questionnaire was designed by Elizabeth Layne, a consultant hired by the SCA to evaluate the program. Layne worked as a field editor for *Audubon Magazine*. See FF 11-14, Box 3 and FF 1-10, Box 19, SCA DPL. The majority of questionnaires came from those who participated in later years, largely because the number of participants ballooned in the late 1960s. Additionally, the addresses the SCA lost track of likely came from those who participated in the first seven years, before the SCA became incorporated and when it moved several times. Very probably, my data is skewed more toward what younger participants thought, not those who had participated in the early years..

values in the mid-1970s, particularly the focus on volunteer service and community action on behalf of the environment. Most considered the volunteer aspect of the program to be of substantial significance, though few elaborated on that assessment. A plurality thought volunteering performed an important function in their overall SCA experience; 46% of respondents rated the volunteer aspect as essential. An articulate minority, however, did not deem volunteering an important part of the program.¹² This overwhelmingly positive response might have been a function of the 1974 questionnaire design; the service question suggested that the “volunteer service” aspect necessarily constituted a vital part of the program, perhaps leading many to agree who might otherwise would never considered their volunteer service worth assessment. The SCA devoted a conscious focus to its volunteer nature during Congressional discussion of the YCC, which explains why the survey emphasized volunteer service much more than did earlier form evaluations.

Those who directly commented about the service aspect of their summer in the 1974 retrospective survey had very divergent opinions, either viewing their voluntarism as extremely crucial or decidedly unimportant.¹³ Individuals on one side of the spectrum applauded altruistic motivations, whereas the other criticized or downplayed such activity. A number of participants wrote that volunteering for the

¹² About 800 (of 2472 total participants, 32%) returned questionnaires on time. 293 people considered the volunteer aspect essential; number of responses who rated volunteering on a descending scale of importance: 169, 98, 32, 40 (or, 27%, 15%, 6%, 6%). Twelve percent of respondents rated volunteering as relatively unimportant or completely unimportant to their experience.

¹³ Many chose not to add further comments to the volunteer question: “Do you believe the aspect of volunteer service to have been a quality which was essential/unimportant to your SCA experience?”

SCA played a very important role in inspiring personal interest in environmental issues, and many continued volunteering for organizations associated with the outdoors or advocated for environmental issues after their SCA assignment.¹⁴ An SCA participant from 1972 noted the importance of altruistic motives in volunteering, particularly as it impressed park visitors once they discovered “you were working for minimal support in something you believed in.”¹⁵ Some respondents touched on the issue of remuneration, or lack thereof. Critics of the program usually focused on this issue; one participant quipped that she would only recommend the program if a person had an interest in working, but demonstrated no interest in money.¹⁶ A few responded that they would recommend that students look at the SCA, but only “if they can afford to volunteer.”¹⁷ Former participants from all years voiced negative and positive opinions; it is likely socioeconomic status or personal experience strongly influenced those who decided to write further comments on their questionnaire.

Women in particular held emphatic views about the value of volunteer service. Considering the timing, in the midst of the “second-wave” feminist movement, the survey likely hit nerves already touched by national discussion about

¹⁴ Questionnaire from Radcliffe graduate and biology teacher, Active College Women 1957-62, FF 7, Box 19, SCA DPL. A junior college student in the early 1970s wrote that the SCA inspired her to join the “save the whales” campaign. Questionnaire from Marin College student, Active Women 1973-1974, FF 1, Box 19, SCA DPL.

¹⁵ Questionnaire from Penn State graduate in biology, Active College Women 1968-1972, FF 7, Box 19, SCA DPL.

¹⁶ Questionnaire from University of Missouri graduate in history, College Women, 1968-1972, FF 7, Box 19, SCA DPL.

¹⁷ Questionnaire from science editor, Duke University doctoral candidate, Active College Women 1957-1961, FF 7, Box 19, SCA DPL.

of women's work and women's rights. Because women only had access to the college-level projects until 1969, a very small number of women from the early years wrote responses and letters touching on the issue of volunteer service. In general, those who viewed the volunteer aspect as decidedly unimportant were the early participants who studied scientific fields as undergraduate or graduate students, and who went on to pursue professional careers. On the other hand, those women who unequivocally argued for the vital and indispensable nature of volunteer service identified themselves as housewives or teachers. I hesitate to read too much into this dichotomy, considering the tiny sample size, but one could certainly argue that these few comments bolster the argument that some young women viewed or remembered the early SCA projects as a way to gain valuable occupational experience, regardless of the monetary sacrifice required. Those who saw volunteer service as vital had not participated for career advancement, and saw volunteer work as an expectation for women of their socioeconomic status. Male participants (the great majority of whom were white, as were women) also had a variety of responses to the volunteer service question, but none of them reacted strongly to this aspect. Men had little reason to think about volunteering as either a benefit or impediment to their careers or ambitions, as they did not have to deal with the same societal expectations as women.

Evidence suggests that women who participated later on, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, did not view the SCA experience as quite so helpful for their careers, in part because some viewed the SCA recruitment method as restrictive. During that era, SCA advertisements for positions continued to specify men or women applicants for each park, though some did advertise positions for either sex. Most younger women who participated after 1969 were still in college, and the majority of them

studied the sciences and hoped to pursue professional careers. The context had changed, with the advent of the EEOC and rules on sex-segregated advertisements. Ambitious women no longer looked to the SCA to further their careers, as exemplified by the comments made by one 1972 participant. This woman, who had earned a degree in biology and worked for the Food and Drug Administration when she submitted her survey, argued that the SCA should be providing greater opportunity for women, as many of the positions most interesting to her were only open to men. The SCA had responded to her request to open up all positions to women by saying that the organization could not antagonize superintendents – a familiar argument. She viewed this position as specious, since, in her words, “well, it just so happens the federal government is one of the leaders in equal employment opportunity.”¹⁸ Women had to continually fight against sex discrimination and persistent cultural attitudes about women’s work in the 1970s, and the experience of women in the SCA was no exception. By the 1970s, the SCA had become conservative on gender equity, especially when compared to its leading edge role in the 1950s. Voluntary service with the SCA provided an avenue for some to advance their careers in the 1950s, but not the 1970s.

The political context in which young people such as Tarla Nanavati volunteered was very different from that of the mid-1950s when Cushman Titus first undertook the program. After the social upheaval of the 1960s, the rise of many protest movements, and the increasing visibility and changing focus of modern environmentalism, the SCA’s version of civic activism and its goal of forming leaders

¹⁸ Questionnaire from Federal Drug Administration biologist, Active College Women 1968-1972, FF 7, Box 19, SCA DPL.

often appeared conservative and ineffective to many of a younger generation. The SCA wished to shape “stewards of tomorrow,” but the “tomorrow” of the mid-1970s held markedly different concerns and circumstances. The student volunteer group was more relevant to the conservation movement as a whole in the 1950s, but was less so when this movement became enveloped by the new environmentalism in the 1960s.

As more environmental concerns became national political issues, some questioned this apolitical approach and argued for more pointed activism. Uncritical voluntarism did not meet the expectations of radicals, reformers, leftists, and other progressives whose voices grew louder in the 1960s in demanding immediate change. At least one employee wished that the SCA would go beyond its strictly voluntary nature, and he was probably not alone. Geoffrey Foote, supervisor to the 1969 high school girls program in Merck Forest (VT), argued that the SCA should begin teaching students “the skills to create change and stop the catastrophic environmental course.” For Foote, these skills involved the ability “to communicate, to organize and act,” and the capacity to “fight industry, government, bureaucracy and power for their survival.” Foote commented, quite sharply, that “conservation and environmental quality are no longer a hobby or a nice subject for those of us that are fortunate enough to be able to visit a forest preserve.”¹⁹ This supervisor espoused ideas that were probably far more radical than those of other SCA administrators. His language certainly sounded similar to the New Left and counterculture versions of environmentalism present during the late 1960s. Millions of young Americans dabbled in some way with the new environmentalism at this time; over one million read about

¹⁹ Geoffrey G. Foote, M.F. I and M.F. II 1969 Report, FF 34, Box 13, SCA DPL. Foote graduated from the University of Montana in 1965.

alternative technology in the *Whole Earth Catalog* and over four million subscribed to underground newspapers, which played a significant role in popularizing ecological concepts.²⁰ Foote and others likely wished that the SCA would take a more proactive approach to improving the environment, rather than simply working within the existing system and sending young volunteers to work on trails or assist rangers.

Elizabeth Cushman Titus might have hoped to keep the student volunteer program aloof from political agendas and political affiliations, but from the beginning the Student Conservation Association could not avoid all such involvement. Its relationship with the National Park Service and other federal agencies necessarily enmeshed it in policy issues related to public lands. Wilderness preservation, appropriate recreation and responsible backcountry usage predominated as wider issues in which SCA participants and administrators became at least peripherally involved right from the outset. In 1956, co-director Marty Hayne received a letter from a discontented local Sierra Club representative criticizing the proposed program's decision to work in Olympic National Park, then under the management of a superintendent who permitted salvage logging operations in the protected forests.²¹ In 1958, one of the SCA high school groups had the opportunity to take part in a hike led by Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, aimed at raising public awareness of a proposed road along the Olympic ocean strip in that national park.²² Two years

²⁰ Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, rev. ed. (1993; Washington: Island Press, 2005), 141-142.

²¹ Pat Goldsworthy to Marty Hayne, October 10, 1956, FF 6, Box 1, SCA DPL.

²² For Douglas' activist tactics, see Adam M. Sowards, "William O. Douglas's Wilderness Politics: Public Protest and Committees of Correspondence in the Pacific Northwest," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 37.1 (2006): 21-42. For an account of the hike, see Grant Conway, "Hiking the Wild Olympic Shoreline," *National Parks*

later, college and graduate students would help Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission chair Laurance Rockefeller run the commission's annual meeting in Grand Teton National Park.²³ Some students testified on behalf of the Wilderness Bill hearings in Congress, though the Park Service demonstrated resistance to such legislation; bill architect Howard Zahniser had a hand in arranging the Douglas hike and supported the student volunteer program.²⁴ Considering the relatively small size of the conservationist community at the end of the 1950s and early 1960s, the convergence of SCA programs and participants with significant policy issues and players is not surprising. These interactions demonstrated that the SCA and its volunteers could not avoid politically controversial subjects. As environmental issues became increasingly politicized in the 1960s, beginning with Rachel Carson's influential *Silent Spring*, the SCA, like many other traditional conservation organizations, found it more difficult to remain completely outside public discussion and debate and remain relevant.

The reputation of the SCA among young people looking for innovative ways to confront contemporary environmental concerns may have declined in the 1970s, particularly with the rise of many more environmentally focused groups.

Magazine 33.136 (January 1959), 6-9. Conway had hiked the C&O Canal Path with Justice Douglas in 1954, in an effort to "dramatize the need to preserve parks against ill-planned road construction."

²³ Barbara Hart and Ailene Kane, 1960 Student Conservation Program Evaluation Report, FF 27, Box 18, SCA DPL.

²⁴ Enid Dolstad, "The SCP at the 95," p. 12, FF 28, Box 22, SCA DPL; Mark Harvey, *Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 198-205; Packard to Cushman Titus and Hayne, July 9, 1958, FF 31-33, Box 2, SCA DPL.

Participants from all years, especially women, had differing opinions about the relative significance of the service aspect of the program, certainly not agreeing en masse with the administration regarding the perceived value of such voluntarism. However, the great majority of SCA participants during the first eighteen years of program operation did agree on one thing – that the organization did much to heighten awareness about conservation and general environmentalism. By sending hundreds of young people to public lands across the nation, the SCA gave many individuals the opportunity to live in national parks and forests, learn firsthand the work undertaken in such places, and ponder the significance of environmental issues.

Education and the Environment

Elizabeth Cushman Titus's initial expectation that her program would "be of great value" to students focused on the hope that they would receive a "broader education." She specified no particular learning objectives, materials, or procedures; the student program began as an experiential outdoor education program and continued as such. The educational program for the first summer in 1957 provides an example of the relatively unstructured nature of the SCA's educational plan. For the students at the Grand Teton program, lectures on various flora and fauna of the area (provided by well-known scientists including Olaus Murie and Margaret Altmann) and field trips led by various land agencies comprised their educational opportunities. A few students also had the chance to work as research assistants at a nearby research station run by the University of Wyoming. The high school boys in Olympic National Park had the experience of their supervisors from which to learn as well as lectures from Park Service employees and conservationists passing through the area. Cushman Titus's experiential education plan foreshadowed the rise of environmental education

and the increasing popularity of outdoor education programs, and as we have seen, many similar groups looked to the SCA's innovative program for inspiration. As the SCA added other parks and program variations to its repertoire through the 1960s and early 1970s, it did not substantially alter its unstructured approach to education and emphasis on the "learn by doing" philosophy.²⁵ Participants reflecting on their experience viewed their time with the SCA as highly educational, despite the lack of structure. Some noted that they came to their assignments with significant knowledge already in place, but in looking back on their experience, the great majority considered it worthwhile and enlightening.

Identification and familiarity with the concept "conservation" constituted a large part of the educational aspect of the SCA programs. Participants interpreted the meaning of that word for themselves, and their definitions, which changed over time, were indicative of the overall sea change occurring in the wider environmental movement. In the early postwar period, old-line organizations like the Sierra Club and Izaak Walton League largely constituted the environmental movement, but that rapidly changed in the 1960s. Conservationists, with their focus on wilderness preservation and parks, became just one part of an enlarged environmentalism. SCA volunteers and administrators generally espoused the traditional philosophy of "wise use" conservation, famously associated with Gifford Pinchot.²⁶ "Wise use" conservation itself had multiple meanings, however, and

²⁵ KM [Ken McIntosh] Comments, 1958 Student Evaluations, p. 15, FF 2, Box 20, SCA DPL.

²⁶ See 1958 Complete Report, FF 2, Box 20, SCA DPL. Participants used the phrase "wise use conservation" during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, though the phrase appeared most frequently in the 1950s. The 1958 report noted that high school boys "were under the impression that preservation of wilderness is the main aim of

changed over time, ranging from Progressive Era utilitarianism to a protectionist philosophy influenced by the science of ecology. In 1960, SCA high school supervisor Jack Dolstad wrote that “conservation” no longer strictly meant good management of natural resources, as it did during the Progressive Era, but combined natural protection with proper scenic usage.²⁷ Eleven years later, one participant wrote human impact almost completely out of his/her definition, writing that conservation meant “non-use...in such a way as to have the least possible desecrating effect on the ecosystems of nature.”²⁸ “Conservation” became personalized by SCA participants and those entering the wider movement, and many used the term to describe any segment of the new environmentalism.²⁹

The SCA grew during a time of rapid change in environmental thinking and dramatic expansion of the demographic of individuals interested in such issues. The traditional white middle- and upper-class urban base of early postwar

conservation, rather than the wise use of all natural resources of which wilderness is one.” See 1958 Complete Report, p. 7, FF 2, Box 20, SCA DPL

²⁷ John Douglas Dolstad, “An Analysis of the Status of a Volunteer Student Conservation Program combining Education and Work Experience in Olympic National Park” (M.Ed., University of Washington, 1960), 5.

²⁸ Student comment, Zion National Park, 1971 College Evaluations, FF 32, Box 18, SCA DPL.

²⁹ Samuel Hays notes that protectionist concerns arose again in the post-WWII period to compete with conservation, and those who thought of themselves as conservationists struggled to redefine the word outside the “realm of efficient management.” Even after “environment” entered the popular lexicon, conservationists continued to label themselves as such. See Samuel P. Hays, “From Conservation to Environment: Environmental Politics in the United States Since World War II,” in *Out of the Woods: Essays in Environmental History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 101-104.

conservationism expanded to include suburban families concerned about sewage systems, minority communities organizing against pollution, and, perhaps most pertinently, young people challenging established modes of thinking.³⁰ “Wise use conservation,” in its original efficiency-oriented goal, predominated in the 1950s. Ideas regarding human control of nature began to shift in the postwar period, however, due in part to adverse, anxious reaction to the atomic bomb and a burgeoning skepticism among some toward the dangers of science, especially after Carson’s famous book about DDT was published in 1962.³¹ As conservationists and citizens began to protest and question human control of nature – exemplified by their disapproval of continued dam building in the West and the Park Service’s Mission 66 – many advocated for the creation of federally-protected wilderness areas.³² SCA volunteers in the 1960s viewed wilderness as a “necessity” and a “precious possession,” echoing the Wilderness Act’s author Howard Zahniser, who criticized

³⁰ Hal Rothman characterizes mid-century conservationists as primarily elite white urbanites. Rothman, *Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States Since 1945* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), 15-17.

³¹ See Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light*; Mark Fiege, “The Atomic Scientists, the Sense of Wonder, and the Bomb,” *Environmental History* 12 (July 2007): 578-613. This mindset represented only one portion of the American populace, of course; a great number of others continued to encourage economic exploitation of resources and unlimited growth – illustrated by suburban sprawl, automobile ownership, and expanding consumerism. For suburban expansion and its role in inspiring the environmental movement, see Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³² Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 76; Harvey, *Wilderness Forever*; Michael Lewis, ed., *American Wilderness: A New History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), chapter 11; Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?*.

what he viewed as an overemphasis on “wise use” conservation.³³ “Conservation” certainly came to mean something different by the early 1970s; one student wrote that the term meant “maintaining the balance of nature through the constant effort of appreciating and conserving each part of the natural environment,” a definition infused with the new science of ecology and its emphasis on ecosystem equilibrium.³⁴ Along with a new understanding of conservation came an entirely new group of people interested in environmental issues, many because their livelihoods depended on rethinking established methods or because they viewed direct action as the only way to stave off disaster.

Evidence suggests that SCA students did not closely resemble the new environmental activists, rather continuing to look, sound, and act like the old-line conservationists the SCA intended that they should replace. Still, many likely were influenced by their generation’s focus on environmentalism, the new emphasis on alternative ways of thinking and living, and scientific advances. In the pages of a new environmental education journal, educators and conservationists expressed uneasy concerns about the role of young people in this shifting environmentalist movement, feeling that the younger generation gave their elders short shrift. Older conservationists especially bristled when the news media characterized the environmental movement as entirely new after the groundswell of activism

³³ “necessity”: John Minnich to Roland Wauer (Park Naturalist, Zion National Park), August 29, 1963, FF 18, Box 18, SCA DPL; “precious possession”: Pam Pockwood to Alfred Knopf (SCA Donor), August 13, 1969, FF 39, Box 3, SCA DPL; Harvey, *Wilderness Forever*, 127.

³⁴ 1970 SCA Preliminary Report, SCA HQ.

surrounding Earth Day.³⁵ In 1970, one writer on the “new conservationist” detailed how a younger, more radical cohort brought pollution and population issues to the forefront of the conservationist cause, to the detriment of older issues including wilderness preservation and open space. These young conservationists identified more with the “Indian” than the “pioneer,” he argued, learned from the *Whole Earth Catalog* rather than the Bible, and listened to rock music while reading underground newspapers. Instead of talking about “conservation,” youths spoke of the environment and ecology, as well as a desire to recruit “activist students, dropouts, blacks, and labor groups” to the environmental movement.³⁶ Another contributor complained that young conservationists wished to branch out on their own, rather than cooperating with established organizations; this tactic angered older conservationists who had for years attempted to recruit students only to find, at that point, they did not “give a damn.”³⁷ Increasingly, old-line conservation organizations realized they needed to move with the changing tide, and many did. The SCA also incorporated new ideas, notably its emphasis on Leave No Trace in backcountry trips.³⁸

³⁵ Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 148-158. For the importance of Earth Day, see Adam Rome, “The Genius of Earth Day,” *Environmental History* 15.2 (April 2010), 194-205. Rome will soon publish a book on Earth Day with Hill and Wang.

³⁶ Kenneth R. Bowling, “The New Conservationist,” *Journal of Environmental Education* 1.3 (Spring 1970), 78-79.

³⁷ Ed Chaney, “Bridging the Generation Gap in Conservation,” *Journal of Environmental Education* 2.4 (Summer 1971), n.p.

³⁸ See James Morton Turner, “From Woodcraft to “Leave No Trace”: Wilderness, Consumerism and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America,” *Environmental History* 7.3 (July 2002): 462-484.

SCA volunteers might not have resembled the “new conservationists” but they did absorb the language of their time and found contemporary issues compelling. College and graduate students naturally had different interpretations of “conservation” than their counterparts in the high school program, but both age groups demonstrated environmental knowledge reflective of their time. One important influence on student thought in general was the rise of ecology in the public consciousness and its increasing popularity in higher education.³⁹ Ecology as a discipline became more widely accepted in resource management agencies after the 1920s, championed by Aldo Leopold in the Forest Service. The general public, particularly those who did not follow the conservationist literature, had little knowledge of that “home-grown” branch of science until the 1960s.⁴⁰ However, students during the early years of the SCA programs certainly had an awareness of ecology, and many of them would go on to complete advanced degrees in related disciplines. One male student from the 1957 Grand Teton program, who later entered a PhD program in botany at the University of Wisconsin, noted that his experience in the West enabled him to more fully understand the local “ecological problems.”⁴¹ SCA students often came to the program with an

³⁹ For a history of ecology and ecological thinking, see Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: The Roots of Ecology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), and Sharon Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology, 1890-2000* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

⁴⁰ See Thomas R. Dunlap, *Saving America's Wildlife: Ecology and the American Mind, 1850-1990* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 71-79; historian of science Sharon Kingsland argues that ecology as a scientific discipline developed in the United States, and gained prominence in the 1950s.

⁴¹ Fred Swan in Barbara Hart and Ailene Kane, 1960 Student Conservation Program Evaluation Report, FF 27, Box 18, SCA DPL. Swan earned a master's in botany.

understanding of science and conservation issues, but all left with deepened insight and tangible experience.

Later in the SCA program history, evaluations not only asked students how the program shaped their understanding of the environment, but how they could change the current situation. Such inquiry into volunteers' potential civic activism or political involvement reflected at least some acknowledgement of the increasing public interest in environmental activism. In 1971, one volunteer responded that he could "write a book" about the subject, listing suggestions that indicated his familiarity with environmental issues of the day, including mention of "non-polluting detergents," a concern that arose among suburbanites in the late 1960s when detergent suds began emerging from their septic tanks and leaching into the water supply.⁴² Another student answered that she would have fewer children or adopt, again referencing a popular issue, in this case the specter of overpopulation fueled by Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968).⁴³ SCA participants' language reflected the ever-changing context and concerns of modern environmentalism, indicating that at least the students had familiarity with the issue of the moment. Students entered the SCA already possessing environmental knowledge, but many left acknowledging that their knowledge significantly deepened.

The verb "learn" appears frequently in student accounts written shortly after their summer with the SCA, demonstrating that the program had some immediate efficacy in providing experiential educational opportunities. Many commented on the

⁴² See Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*, chapter 3.

⁴³ Student comments can be found under Rocky Mountain National Park and Pea Ridge National Military Park comments (1971) in FF 32, Box 18, SCA DPL.

amount of information learned by conversations with conservation professionals in and out of the Park Service, as well as simple on-the-job experience. A few early SCA volunteers had familiarity with older educational philosophies as related to nature, education, and practical experience; in a recent interview, one former participant quoted Harvard natural scientist Louis Agassiz's famous line "study nature, not books," while another wrote in 1958 that he approved of John Dewey's educational philosophy to "learn by doing."⁴⁴ The philosophical spirit of Dewey and Agassiz informed the SCA's approach to conservation education, in that the program emphasized practical experience, field research, and informal learning.⁴⁵ The majority of students found this method beneficial, though some commented that they occasionally wished for more formal education.⁴⁶ Still, most found the loosely-structured nature of the program, with its emphasis on experiential learning, highly effective.

Students' immediate responses expressed in letters and program evaluations dealt with the amount of information they learned about conservation

⁴⁴ MacInnes, Kaye Christopher, (Cedar Breaks 1962), interview by author. Telephone, September 15, 2008; KM [Ken McIntosh] Comments, 1958 Student Evaluations, p. 15, FF 2, Box 20, SCA DPL.

⁴⁵ See Kevin C. Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement: The Forgotten Popularizer of America's Conservation Ethic* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009); Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, "Nature, Not Books: Scientists and the Origins of the Nature Study Movement in the 1890s," *Isis* 96.3 (September 2005), 324-352. Cornell horticulturist Liberty Hyde Bailey echoed and built upon Agassiz's idea, acting as one of the foremost nature study proponents at the turn of the twentieth century.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Layne's 1974 survey collated answers to the question asking students to evaluate the effectiveness of the conservation-education component of the program. Number of responses, on a five point scale from strong to weak: 169, 225, 152, 68, 28.

generally and, more specifically, about their park and its location. In the 1950s, students noted they had “learned many things about nature” and their experience made them aware of “the necessity for and problems of conservation on a large scale.”⁴⁷ Participants of the 1960s noted the program taught them much about the “national park idea...of preservation of the natural scene for the enjoyment of future generations” and “ecology and forestry and the ocean; about the Park Service and the people in it; about [the park] itself.”⁴⁸ One student commented he had “derived an unaccountable amount from this experience,” and another declared that her “summer experience has been as important to my education as any college year.”⁴⁹ In the years shortly before and after Earth Day 1970, students continued to highlight the role of the SCA summer experience in broadening their understanding of conservation and ecological issues. One woman said the program “amended and congealed” her ideas as a “future biologist, conservationist, and citizen;” another said “giving nature walks and evening talks” constituted part of her “phenomenal learning experience.”⁵⁰ A North Cascades National Park volunteer in 1972 noted that she had an “educational

⁴⁷ MB Comments, Student Evaluations Group II, ONP 1957, Box 6, Personal Papers of Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam, Vermont. [Hereafter ECTP]; Student Comments 1958 Complete Report [page], FF 2, Box 20, SCA DPL.

⁴⁸ John Minnich to Roland Wauer (Park Naturalist, Zion National Park), August 29, 1963, FF 18, Box 18, SCA DPL; Margaret Betts Evaluation, August 30, 1964, Acadia National Park, FF 27, Box 16, SCA DPL.

⁴⁹ Peter Stowe, September 3, 1964, Acadia National Park, FF 27, Box 16, SCA DPL; Barbara Leslie, College and Graduate Park Assistant comments, Report 1966, FF 28, Box 18, SCA DPL.

⁵⁰ Linda S. Havighurst to Liz Titus, July 28, 1969, FF 39, Box 3, SCA DPL; Paula Ponte to Titus, July 27, 1969, FF 39, Box 3, SCA DPL.

and thoroughly enjoyable experience,” and that her knowledge would prove very useful as she pursued a career as an “Ecologist.”⁵¹ The language participants used might vary, but, by and large, students’ initial response was that they found the summer educational in one way or another.

In looking back over their experiences, program alumni often focused on the role of the program in raising their awareness of conservation and environmental problems, providing insight to such issues, and increasing their connection to nature. The program design and the character of student volunteers lent themselves to such heightened awareness. Stephen Kellert’s study of wilderness experience found that the SCA’s particular blend of work projects and educational opportunities had proven very effective in influencing the “environmental knowledge and behavior” of youth.⁵² Participants from all years used the terms “aware” and “insight,” illustrating that both younger and older volunteers labeled their experience with similar language. A General Electric employee wrote that although he no longer remained involved in environmental issues, despite having worked several summers for the National Park

⁵¹ Joni Keating to SCA, January 5, 1972, FF 45, Box 16, SCA DPL.

⁵² Social ecologist Stephen R. Kellert, a frequent collaborator with E.O. Wilson on the biophilia hypothesis, performed a comparative study measuring the impact of wilderness experience on participants of the SCA, Outward Bound, and the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS). The respondents to Kellert’s retrospective survey, numbering 500 between all three groups, volunteered between the years 1978 and 1998. Stephen R. Kellert, “A National Study of Outdoor Wilderness Experience,” National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Report, (September 1998), 174. A version of the report can be found at <http://www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/kellert.complete.text.pdf> (accessed 29 July 2010).

Service, the “SCA gave [him] an awareness & insight” not previously held.⁵³ A Coast Guard sailor echoed the sentiment, responding that the program “made [him] more aware of nature” and sparked an interest in backpacking and mountaineering.⁵⁴ A Williams College graduate in American Civilization and Environmental Studies wrote that she “continually reflects” on what she learned interacting with the public.⁵⁵ SCA participants felt that the program benefitted them educationally, but the words used immediately after their experience and those utilized after a number of years had passed differed. Initial reactions generally revolved around the amount of practical information learned about conservation issues, people, and parks, whereas in later years many commented on the impact their experience had on their wider worldview.

Many of those who responded to the 1974 survey and highlighted their heightened awareness of conservation issues did *not* pursue careers with the Park Service or the biosciences. The majority of these respondents were men, whose occupations covered a wide range of careers including law, firefighting, engineering, pharmaceuticals, art, dentistry, medicine, and journalism. Female SCA volunteers, on the other hand, identified a very limited range of occupations. One could explain this disparity by arguing that men had access to a much greater variety of careers than did women in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. Most of the male participants during the early years were of high school age, whereas the majority of women were of college

⁵³ Questionnaire from GE manager, Cal State Fresno degree in business administration, Active High School Men 1957-1961, FF 1, Box 19, SCA DPL.

⁵⁴ Questionnaire from USCG boatswain’s mate, South Dakota State degree in wildlife management, Active High School Men, 1962-1967, FF 1, Box 19, SCA DPL.

⁵⁵ Questionnaire from Williams graduate, Active College Women, 1968-1972, FF 7, Box 19, SCA DPL.

age and likely had a better grasp on their desired career path.⁵⁶ However, given that many young women demonstrated great interest in pursuing careers in science and conservation during these years and the presence of continued obstacles to their ambitions, one could instead argue that the SCA attracted women who possessed greater commitment and interest than their male counterparts. Men could find many different avenues to careers in the sciences and conservation if they so wished, but women could not easily do so. The SCA provided young women with a great opportunity, though it reached only a tiny segment of the population and limited access to a select few. Arguably, the early SCA had a much greater impact on its female volunteers than its male participants. Although SCA participants as a whole did not all pursue careers in conservation or the sciences, the great majority did indicate that the program significantly influenced their environmental consciousness. As one SCA administrator argued in a letter responding to early Park Service queries regarding the program's effectiveness in recruiting future employees, "conservation" could "correlate to almost everything."⁵⁷ The SCA experience influenced what students thought over the long run, rather than directly shaping their chosen career path.

⁵⁶ By 1975, 653 college/graduate students and 1,819 high school students had participated in the SCA programs. High school girls began participating in 1969. Documentary evidence and anecdotes note that the average acceptance rate for students applying to the SCA during this period was between 25% and 33%, depending on the year. See, for example, Emilie Martin, "Student Volunteers in the National Parks and Forests," *National Parks & Conservation Magazine* 47.2 (February 1973): 24-27.

⁵⁷ SCP Statistics, Response to NPS November 1, 1962, FF 28, Box 18, SCA DPL.

Work Experience and Future Careers

Recruiting future employees of the National Park Service and similar agencies constituted the third main objective of the SCA, and the program provided a way for a number of young women and men to gain valuable experience that later helped them obtain such positions. A number of students explicitly thought about their futures when applying to the program and used it to explore possible career paths with the Park Service or in conservation generally. The majority of these volunteers already had an interest in this field, however, so the SCA did not convert individuals to conservation who had other occupational interests. In reports to cooperating agencies and organizations, SCA administrators highlighted the fact that a number of volunteers worked as seasonal or permanent Park Service employees. As with the other two main aspects of the program, time played a role in how students assessed its impact on their careers; in this case, students had more certainty about the impact of the program immediately after their summer experience, but, following the accumulation of time and experience, equivocated on the program's precise occupational effects.

SCA administrators emphasized the number of students who expressed interest in pursuing careers with the National Park Service or another public land agency, especially during the first years of its operation. The 1958 and 1959 summer reports written by Liz Cushman Titus and her colleagues stated that forty and fifty percent (respectively) of participants wrote of such interest and enthusiasm.⁵⁸ In 1960, directors Ailene Kane and Barbara Hart noted the continued expressed interest of students to follow such career paths, stating that many had entered conservation

⁵⁸ See 1958 Complete Report, FF 2, Box 20, SCA DPL and Cushman Titus, Kane to A.W. Smith, November 23, 1959, FF 34, Box 45, NPCA.

related careers “as a direct result of their Program participation.”⁵⁹ SCA program evaluations from at least the first five years specifically asked students to consider these careers, which might partly explain the high number of students who wrote of their enthusiasm for conservation work. SCA collaborators hoped to mold volunteers into future leaders of the conservation movement, which, in their minds, included the National Park Service. The Park Service certainly welcomed this connection: one NPS official contacted the Grand Tetons superintendent after the second summer, requesting that he provide the director’s office with names of those SCA students who might be “potentially high-grade candidates” for future employment.⁶⁰ The Park Service’s demonstrable enthusiasm for recruiting SCA participants encouraged administrators to maintain good relations with its chief cooperating agency through such connections, particularly considering the Service’s initially cool reaction to the student program.

Throughout the first eighteen summers, students’ immediate reactions demonstrate that many found the prospect of a Park Service career intriguing and welcomed conversations with foresters and Park rangers as a way to explore such possibilities. One woman enthusiastically noted that her experience encouraged her to “blaze the way” for other women and pursue a career as a ranger-naturalist.⁶¹ Another

⁵⁹ Barbara Hart and Ailene Kane, 1960 Student Conservation Program Evaluation Report, FF 27, Box 18, SCA DPL.

⁶⁰ Jackson Price to Frank Oberhansley, October 17, 1958, Folder SCP Dec. 31, 59, A5435, Box 507, Admin NARA.

⁶¹ Student evaluations [Ellen Moyer], Folder 1958 Complete Report, FF 2, Box 20, SCA DPL. The following year, Moyer would work as a ranger-naturalist in Washington, D.C.

volunteer wrote in 1960 that she had the chance for a “salaried job” but turned it down to work with the Park Service, declaring that her SCA experience proved “much more valuable than money.”⁶² In 1966, a high school boy praised the program’s impact on his “ambition to work in conservation.”⁶³ Many students, particularly those who volunteered in later years, demonstrated continued interest in environmental issues but indicated that they wished to translate that concern into careers not traditionally associated with conservation. For example, one young man who volunteered in 1972 felt that his SCA experience had undoubtedly influenced his future plans, but he wished to continue his education and pursue a career as a professional photographer.⁶⁴ About two hundred individuals (8% of total SCA alumni by 1974) found some work with the Park Service, Forest Service, and similar agencies, an indication that the program succeeded in providing young people with “internship” experience that led to jobs.⁶⁵ Most chose not pursue careers as rangers or foresters, but the great majority of participants graduated with degrees in the natural sciences and many became either

⁶² [Margot Schmidt, unidentified] in Barbara Hart and Ailene Kane, 1960 Student Conservation Program Evaluation Report, p. 16, FF 27, Box 18, SCA DPL. Schmidt’s father actually worked for the Park Service.

⁶³ Hannan [boy], High School Age Wilderness Program Group Report 1966, FF 46, Box 1, SCA DPL.

⁶⁴ Tony Lara, Merck Forest II 1972 Evaluation, FF 34, Box 17, SCA DPL.

⁶⁵ Results of the 1974 survey indicate that 8% of total SCA volunteers (200 survey respondents) had indicated they had at one point held positions with the National Park Service, the Forest Service, the Youth Conservation Corps, or state and local natural areas. The survey found that 70% of college and graduate students had backgrounds in the natural sciences; biologists and teachers predominated as the most common professions held by former participants.

biologists or teachers. The SCA had some indisputable influence on the future careers of its volunteers.

A few entered careers with the National Park Service, particularly those who volunteered during the first summers. Mary Meagher, a 1957 participant, became the first woman wildlife biologist with a PhD to work for the NPS, and John Stockert, a 1958 volunteer, became a career Service employee.⁶⁶ As detailed in chapter two, college and graduate women in particular volunteered in large part to gain valuable experience that might serve them in well in future attempts to enter graduate school or the research sciences. Meagher noted in her 1974 questionnaire that her “field research experience” constituted the greatest benefit from her summer work. She also noted that she had already tried gaining employment with the National Park Service, but that feat proved difficult for women in the mid-1950s. For her, at least, the SCA provided a “useful start as no jobs were offered.”⁶⁷ Experience working with the Park Service could also convince some not to seek full-time careers; in 1971, a volunteer at Acadia wrote that, after realizing naturalists primarily worked as interpreters, she decided to pursue a career as a research scientist and only work as a seasonal

⁶⁶ Meagher volunteered at Olympic National Park in 1957; Yellowstone National Park hired her as a museum curator two years later. Meagher later became the expert on Yellowstone bison, earning a PhD from Berkeley in 1970. Stockert volunteered at Grand Teton in 1958; two years after, he wrote that the experience and contacts he gained through his summer SCA experience proved invaluable in getting him a seasonal and then permanent position with the Park Service. See Kane/Hart evaluation 1960, FF 27, Box 18, SCA DPL. For Meagher, see Rogers W. Young, “Ladies Who Wear the Uniform of the National Park Service,” *Planning and Civic Comment* 28.1 (March 1962): 1-5, and Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman’s Voice*, rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 169.

⁶⁷ Questionnaire from biologist, PhD in zoology, Berkeley [Mary Meagher – unidentified], Active College Women 1957-1961, FF 7, Box 19, SCA DPL.

naturalist with the Park Service during the summer.⁶⁸ The SCA experience shaped the career aspirations of its volunteers through the course of the summer, regardless of whether they actually pursued seasonal or full-time careers with the Service or chose another direction.

After time and further reflection, the majority of participants who responded to the 1974 survey viewed their SCA experience as serving a beneficial role in shaping their career plans, but many qualified their assessment of the SCA's exact influence by rolling the program into their wider experience.⁶⁹ Few former participants, with the exception of the group referenced above, found that their SCA experience wholly influenced their career path. As one biologist who volunteered in the first five years commented, "all experiences have influence over one's life," though the SCA certainly "reinforced [his] desire to do conservation work."⁷⁰ An attorney who volunteered in the mid-1960s noted that the SCA had a "strong influence" on his choice to work on environmental problems for his career, though another man noted that one needed to recognize that most individuals who chose to volunteer were already "conservation minded" prior to volunteering with SCA.⁷¹ The comments made by SCA participants from the early 1970s often echoed those made

⁶⁸ 1971 College Evaluations, FF 32, Box 18, SCA DPL.

⁶⁹ SCP Newsletter, FF 1, Box 10, SCA DPL. 65% of 1974 survey respondents noted that the SCA had impacted their career choice.

⁷⁰ Questionnaire from biologist, PhD in Zoology, University of London, Active College Men 1957-1961, FF 1, Box 19, SCA DPL.

⁷¹ Questionnaire from U.S. Department of the Interior attorney, Active High School Men 1962-67, FF 1, Box 19, SCA DPL; Questionnaire from biology teacher/Environmental Education degree University of Washington, Active College Men 1957-1961, FF 9, Box 19, SCA DPL.

by the young men and women who volunteered in the late 1950s; a Middlebury student said he had developed an interest in working for the Park Service as a result of his experience, and a recent college graduate with a degree in biology said her work at Acadia National Park persuaded her to pursue a career in environmental education.⁷² Student observations demonstrate a general trend in that the majority initially voiced great enthusiasm for a future career in conservation or with the National Park Service, whereas those with more experience thought the SCA played a role in their career path, but one that was indefinable.

The SCA program had complex effects on the lives of the participants, inspiring some to pursue careers with the Park Service and reaffirming a long-held environmental consciousness in others. Generally, the program wished to provide students a chance to serve while working in the national parks and learning about conservation. Students emphasized the aspect of the program most beneficial to them, though some thought all three primary goals affected them in some way. SCA volunteers all had a similar concern for the environment, a desire to work in the national parks and learn more about conservation issues, and an ability to volunteer for the summer. Participants interpreted the SCA program for themselves, shaping their experiential summer to fit their own needs. Nearly one hundred percent of former participants noted they would recommend the program to others, even those individuals who had criticisms of the program. Tarla Nanavati, a novice in terms of outdoor experience, viewed her time in the woods learning how to use a pulaski and

⁷² Questionnaire from Middlebury student in geology, Active College Men 1973-1974, FF 7, Box 19, SCA DPL; Questionnaire from sales clerk, Earlham College graduate, Active College Women 1973-1974, FF 6, Box 19, SCA DPL.

distinguish between firs and cedars as a “beautiful dream.” The SCA program filled a niche for the hundreds of young women and men who wanted to experience work in the outdoors and play a role, however small, in preserving national parks.

Epilogue

TENDING THE FLAME

In June 1975, the SCA published its newsletter with the caption “Jack and Enid Dolstad Retire: An SCA Era Ends.”¹ That title encapsulates not only the end of the Dolstads’ co-directorship of the SCA (they would continue on as advisors to the Northwest programs), but also an end to the essentially amateur nature of the program. In the 1950s, Elizabeth Cushman and several other young women ran the program, with the help of philanthropists in non-profit conservation organizations and the partnership of professional conservationists in federal agencies. This situation changed significantly beginning in the 1970s when the SCA, along with other traditional conservation organizations, became increasingly professionalized in its organizational structure and strategy - a trend the Dolstads noted with disapproval in their departing report.² Despite this shift, the volunteer group has maintained its dedication to the core ideals of the program, service and education, as they were originally envisioned by Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam. Titus Putnam still plays an important role as the Founding President, visiting volunteers in the field, making speeches, and accepting awards recognizing her for her contribution to conservation and the national parks.³

¹ SCA Newsletter, June 1975, FF 1, Box 10, SCA DPL.

² Personal Report to the Executive Committee, November 1975, FF 47, Box 3, SCA DPL.

³ Liz Cushman Titus married Bruce Putnam in 1992. Titus Putnam has been awarded the GCA’s Margaret Douglas Medal, the Distinguished Service Award from the

The contemporary SCA, however, has a number of characteristics that set it apart from the organization Titus Putnam originally conceived.

The SCA has survived for over fifty years with one of its founders still closely involved. For an organization that started as an idea in a college thesis, both aspects are notable. In that time, the organization has experienced many difficulties including transiency and near insolvency. As Marty Hayne and Liz Cushman worked on the program during the first few years, they shuttled materials between National Park Association headquarters in Washington D.C., Cushman's family apartment at Beekman Place in New York, and Hayne's friend's house in Georgetown.

Incorporation in New York State during June of 1964 gave the organization non-profit status and stability, as well as a board of trustees. After incorporation, the SCA moved its headquarters to Long Island, near Cushman Titus's home. That year, she became the President and executive secretary, the only salaried SCA position. Cushman Titus continued to direct and manage the program until the spring of 1970, when she decided to move to Arizona with her young daughter. The Dolstads, who had acted as the SCA high school group supervisors in Olympic National Park since 1958, filled her position as co-directors. Until their "retirement" from SCA operations in 1975, the SCA headquarters operated out of the Dolstads' hometown of Vashon, Washington. Henry Francis Jr., whose wife Sharon Francis worked as Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall's special assistant in the 1960s, came to the SCA in 1976 as its new

Department of the Interior, the President's Volunteer Action Award, the Chevron Texaco Conservation Award, the Rachel Carson Leadership Award, the Society of Women Geographers Outstanding Achievement Award, the Cornelius Amory Pugsley Medal, and the Presidential Citizens Medal.

Executive Director and moved SCA headquarters to Charleston, New Hampshire, where it still remains.

Harry Francis brought a new outlook to the program, one unaffected by much familiarity or past history with the SCA. His career with the SCA, lasting from 1976 to 1988, significantly changed the organization, dramatically expanding its operations and incorporating a number of new initiatives to expand the traditional high school work groups and college assistant programs. Francis had previously worked as the Secretary of Environmental Affairs in Massachusetts, and before that had administered programs for the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C. He came to the executive directorship of the SCA with a very different work experience from that of Liz Cushman Titus and the Dolstads.⁴ Francis initiated a number of programs aimed at broadening the base of SCA recruits, including an Urban Youth Program (now called the Conservation Leadership Corps) specifically targeting students of color. Francis thought that “virtually an entire segment of [the] population was not being given the chance to experience an environment away from asphalt and concrete and to become more aware of their own potential.”⁵ Under his leadership, the SCA also began to shift more emphasis and personnel to the Conservation Assistant program for college students, rather than the High School Work Groups which had constituted the bulk of the SCA projects under the leadership of Cushman Titus and the Dolstads.⁶ Francis also oversaw a dramatic expansion in the number of volunteers

⁴ SCA Annual Report 1975, SCA HQ.

⁵ Bruce Putnam, “The Student Conservation Association: A Brief History, 1957-1997” FF 26, Box 1, SCA DPL.

⁶ Appendix B, Program Participation Levels, 1957-1997, SCA History, FF 26, Box 1, SCA DPL.

placed in the nation's public lands. By the early 1980s, the SCA's budget had surpassed \$1 million and the group had placed one thousand students per year in nearly 200 different park and forest areas around the nation.⁷ In 1988, the SCA began a successful three-year program in response to devastating fires in Yellowstone, the Greater Yellowstone Recovery Corps, which brought the organization much needed capital and heightened publicity. From that point on, the SCA has been on solid financial footing, expanding its list of partnering organizations and agencies as well as the number of volunteers placed each year, now numbering over three thousand.

Rapid expansion in the 1980s brought financial difficulty and nearly closed down the SCA for good. This instability prompted Liz Cushman Titus to question Harry Francis, particularly on the rapid growth of the program.⁸ Cushman Titus had stayed out of the picture during the 1970s, occupied with her life in Arizona. In the early 1980s, for the 25th anniversary of the SCA, she began to play an increasingly public role as the Founding President. As part of this position, she undertook a tour of the program operations during the summer of 1983, fulfilling her duties as President, which she understood to entail "public relations and fund raising." Cushman Titus attended conferences, visited student projects in action, spoke at garden club meetings, and cultivated potential donors. She would continue in much the same vein from that point on, and now serves as the *grande dame* of the SCA. Senior executives of the organization still refer to her vision when speaking about the program and its mission; CEO and President Dale Penny recently said that the nature

⁷ Appendix C, SCA History Year by Year Highlights, FF 26, Box 1, SCA DPL.

⁸ Henry Francis to Cushman Titus, July 26, 1982, FF 21, Box 1, SCA DPL.

of the SCA is an extension of its founder's personality.⁹ Unlike its original format, however, the contemporary organization is highly professional in its leadership and operations, in consonance with the trend of environmental organizations to shed their amateur character.

The Dolstads had noted in their 1975 departing report that they hoped the SCA would resist the push to become a "high-powered," "centralized" operation like Outward Bound, with professional supervisors who were highly trained in wilderness skills, but who considered their positions as "just a job."¹⁰ The Dolstads wished to see the SCA continue its tradition of hiring married couples as supervisors for the high school groups, as well as recruiting SCA alumni to work in the offices as program coordinators. Clearly, the Dolstads wished to keep the SCA a "family affair" in more ways than one. The student volunteer organization maintained an amateur character under Cushman Titus and the Dolstads, in the sense that it resisted hiring trained conservationists or wilderness experts for the sake of professionalizing the organization, focusing instead on finding individuals who fit their concept of leadership, in addition to possessing experience with camping and backcountry work. The first SCA employee with significant Park Service experience was hired in 1978, over twenty years after the first students volunteered in Olympic and Grand Teton National Parks.

In many ways, during its first twenty years the SCA was a classic conservation organization in that it matched the socioeconomic and ethnocultural

⁹ Dale Penny, interview with author, 1 May 2006.

¹⁰ Personal Report to the Executive Committee, November 1975, FF 47, Box 3, SCA DPL.

profile of old-line organizations like the Sierra Club. As modern environmentalism evolved, enveloping traditional conservation groups, the latter began incorporating contemporary issues into their missions in an effort to maintain their relevance and attract new demographics to support their base. Part of that shift entailed recruiting skilled managers and organizers, moving from the kind of leadership common to conservation organizations before the 1970s. Historian Stephen Fox characterized that style as “amateur,” since most conservationists saw their work on behalf of the environment as an avocation, and derived their income from another source. Fox lauded the “amateur” leaders of conservation, viewing those individuals as the heart and soul of the movement, whereas bureaucracy and elections restricted the “professional” conservationists in the Park Service and other government agencies.¹¹ Amateurs, in Fox’s view, pushed the conservation movement in ways that professionals could not. This is true, but the nature of conservation organizations before the 1960s necessarily excluded many Americans who did not resemble the leadership. Conservationists often pushed out existing cultures and peoples in an effort to impose their ideas about land management and regulation, as was the case for people like the Havasupai of the Grand Canyon and year-round residents of the Adirondacks.¹² The conservation movement was distinctly undemocratic until the 1960s, when more and more individuals became interested in environmental issues

¹¹ Fox, *The American Conservation Movement*, 333-335.

¹² See Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

that threatened their health and livelihoods.¹³ The SCA, an integral part of postwar conservation as it attracted a number of influential conservationists who supported its efforts, was a product of its time. However, as we have seen, the SCA was nothing if not flexible, and that capacity for adaptation proved the key to its survival.¹⁴

The Student Conservation Association celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2007, and in preparation for that milestone the organization underwent a strategic planning process to help it remain relevant into the twenty-first century. When I interviewed three senior executives the year before that anniversary, they all spoke of forming the next generation of conservation leaders and maintaining the values first espoused by Liz Titus Putnam. Rather than solely focusing on backcountry projects and conservation internships as had been the case for previous decades, however, the current SCA leadership wishes to bring conservation to the people by initiating educational undertakings in rural and urban communities. This recognition is an important shift, one that emphasizes community development and collaboration over the more traditional conservationist efforts at protecting and preserving public lands far away from the areas in which most people lived. Such an initiative ties

¹³ Some historians have worked to expand the history of the conservation movement in the United States, pushing the definition of conservation and enlarging the narrative about the movement by including groups like sportsmen and farmers, who also acted to conserve and protect the land. For a synthesis of this new work, see Thomas Wellock, *Preserving the Nation: The Conservation and Environmental Movements, 1870-2000* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2007), chapter one and bibliographic essay. I focus on the leadership of the conservation movement.

¹⁴ Bosso, *Environment, Inc.*, 10-11.

conservation directly to everyday life, rather than maintaining it as an unrelated, abstract issue.¹⁵

Other major conservation organizations that formed before the 1970s have undergone the reevaluation and recalibration necessary for continued survival.¹⁶ Not only did old-line conservation organizations have to appeal to a new audience, they had to survive the pressure of an increasingly hostile policy world and remake themselves into an effective advocacy bloc. The 1980s have often been portrayed as a time when environmentalism came under fire, with the deep cuts in services initiated by the Reagan administration and the beginning of a “backlash” against environmentalism with movements like the Sagebrush Rebellion.¹⁷ The pressure placed on groups during this decade forced them to look for additional memberships and find ways to appeal to a mass audience – a silver lining that has made the environmental movement even broader than it had previously been. Today, environmental groups of all kinds co-exist and “green” initiatives have a broad appeal.

In the midst of this, the SCA adheres to its identity as a volunteer organization that the first placed students in the field to work for conservation. Other student-focused environmental groups have come into existence since the 1950s, including conservation work groups like the YCC and the Young Adult Conservation

¹⁵ Interviews conducted with Dale Penny (CEO and President), Valerie Bailey (Vice President of Strategic Planning and Development), and Scott Weaver (Senior Vice President for Government and Agency Affairs), 1-2 May 2006. Penny arrived at SCA in 1997, and both Bailey (then Shand) and Weaver began in 1978.

¹⁶ See Bosso, *Environment, Inc.*, chapter six.

¹⁷ See James Morton Turner, “The Specter of Environmentalism: Wilderness, Environmental Politics, and the Evolution of the New Right,” *Journal of American History* 96.1 (June 2009), 123-148.

Corps (disbanded in the 1980s). Today, according to the Corps Network, 158 different service and conservation corps operate throughout the United States, collectively placing over a quarter of a million youth each year.¹⁸ Many draw a direct line back to the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps. More activist student groups also began working for change, including groups such as the Student Environmental Action Coalition, or SEAC ("seek"), founded in 1988 initially as an effort by university students to coordinate environmental action nationwide.¹⁹ The SCA, with its established ties to federal land agencies and a long history of partnerships with non-profit organizations, plays an important role in the niche it carved for itself, and continues to shape it in response to the shifting context.

Elizabeth Cushman conceptualized her student volunteer group during a crucial period of time, when the leaders of the postwar conservation movement found themselves in the midst of major social, economic, and political changes nationwide. The 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s brought new challenges to these leaders, and they clung to what they knew while also trying to navigate the changing tides. As we have seen, Cushman drew on the history of a popular New Deal program as inspiration for her student corps, using a historically popular program to solve what many viewed as a pressing problem. Her proposal also drew on long-standing concepts which connected service to the formation of healthy Americans, and viewed exposure to nature as a critical way to accomplish such citizen-shaping. These beliefs had roots in

¹⁸ See www.corpsnetwork.org for more information. Many of the reasons cited for support of the YCC in the 1970s are echoed on the Corps Network website, especially the high rates of unemployment for young people.

¹⁹ See www.seac.org/history/ for more information; Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 394-398.

the nineteenth century, when the United States underwent rapid industrialization and urbanization. The SCA's brand of service also evoked a women's culture of voluntarism. Environmentalism, as defined by Robert Gottlieb, emerged from this nineteenth-century paradigm shift, when people attempted to cope with rapidly changing ways of life and maintain what they saw as the rugged individualistic nature of a democratic America.²⁰ In many ways, the early discussions about the SCA and its relevance echoed these ideas, though the group was shaped by the contemporary context.

The early history of the SCA provides a lens through which one can examine ideas about the relationship between youth, service, and the non-human world during the postwar period. The continued existence of old-line conservationist groups after WWII ensured that many concerns that arose during the Progressive Era remained to influence how young generations viewed the appropriate relationship between people and the land. Indeed, men and women who supported the fledgling SCA wished to form a "new generation of conservation leaders," as they still do today. Since the 1960s the tenor of environmentalism has shifted, however, and now focuses on toxic substances, pollution and issues often related to work and production rather than consumption and leisure. Still, echoes of earlier ideas persist, especially with continued emphasis on preserving wilderness areas and parks, as well as concern for the health of youth and the appropriate formation of Americans. E.O Wilson's

²⁰ Gottlieb argues that environmentalism is the "core concept of a complex of social movements that first appeared in response to the urban and industrial changes accelerating with the rapid urbanization, industrialization, and closing of the frontier that launched the Progressive Era in the 1890s." Those social movements have evolved into a number of different interest groups, with "mainstream" and "alternative" environmental groups. Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 36.

Biophilia (1984), Elizabeth Gilbert's *The Last American Man* (2002), and Richard Louv's *Last Child In the Woods* (2005) are just a few recent books, scholarly or not, that argue for an inherent connection between humans and the non-human world, as well as for the uniquely American emphasis on finding one's true self while away from city lights, whacking one's way through the underbrush and gazing at the stars from a mountain trail.

The SCA might have drawn from long-standing concepts about youth service, nature study, and voluntarism, but the young women who led the organization during its infancy played a small part in challenging to the postwar domestic ideal and restrictions against women in nontraditional careers. The SCA, heavily influenced by the Garden Club of America, used the structure of voluntary organizations reminiscent of women's clubs, but did so in such a way as to challenge the gender norms of its day. The volunteer group undertook no radical action but it did push against boundaries out of recognition that cultural assumptions about women did not match reality. For decades, white middle and upper class women had worked on behalf of environmental issues and wielded political power through back channels, often with very different agendas and methods than their male counterparts in government.²¹ In the postwar era, women like Liz Cushman continued to work on behalf of the environment with the support of women's clubs, utilizing voluntarism to accomplish

²¹ See Carolyn Merchant, "Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement, 1900-1916," *Environmental Review* 8.1 (Spring 1984), 57-85; Phil Brown and Faith I.T. Ferguson, "Making a Big Stink: Women's Work, Women's Relationships, and Toxic Waste Activism," *Gender and Society* 9.2 (April 1995): 145-172; Maureen A. Flanagan, "The City Profitable, the City Livable: Environmental Policy, Gender, and Power in Chicago in the 1910s," *Journal of Urban History* 22.2 (January 1996): 163-190.

their goals. These young women began, however, to see that what had been acceptable in previous decades did not seem quite so reasonable, and so pushed for equal access and opportunity for women with similar cultural and educational backgrounds.

Volunteering limited the opportunities for women in that they did not have access to paid positions, but it still opened doors otherwise shut. This is only part of the SCA story, but an important one as it reveals the continued action undertaken by women to protect and conserve the environment and the ways in which this particular effort undermined postwar gender norms.

The Student Conservation Association blended student volunteer work with experiential education in an innovative way, a *modus operandi* copied many times since in a number of different forms. In partnering with federal agencies, non-profit philanthropies, and foundations, the organization accomplished what none of these groups could do alone. It made a significant impact on the lives of those who volunteered with the program over the past fifty years, indicated by its records and by social ecologist Stephen Kellert's study comparing the effectiveness of the SCA, Outward Bound, and NOLS. A product of its founder's socioeconomic status and cultural background, as well as the general milieu in which mid-century conservationists operated, the SCA restricted access to its ranks (consciously or not), and so serves as another cautionary example of the limits of voluntarism. In permitting access to some, it limited it for others. The contemporary SCA has done much to rectify that blind spot, in response to cultural changes occurring in recent decades. Though it adheres to the core ideas of its founder, it has incorporated strands of the new environmentalism into its identity in such a way as to honor its origins and remain relevant to today's youth.

In her Vermont farmhouse, Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam's numerous awards and citations from universities, federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations cover one corridor wall. Those tangible artifacts demonstrate her role in U.S. conservation over the past half-century. The place of honor is occupied by a crisp brown ranger hat worn by all those employed by the National Park Service. When I asked Putnam why she so prominently displayed this hat, she grinned and said that it was given to her in recognition for her service on behalf of the national parks. She then told me about a Park Service employee who once said, when questioned about the possibility of allowing women to serve as rangers, that women could and would never wear park ranger hats. Up until the mid-twentieth century, the idea of a woman ranger, with the brown hat as a symbol of authority, was thoroughly inconceivable to many leaders in conservation agencies and organizations. Putnam takes a certain pleasure in owning this hat, as it proves wrong the sentiment that women could never serve the national parks in a hands-on capacity, and as official representatives of this federal agency. Those who scoffed at Putnam as a young woman in the 1950s never could have fathomed the work this indomitable person accomplished in making it possible for thousands of young women and men to work in the nation's public lands and learn about the environment.

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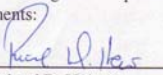
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Appendix A
PERMISSION LETTER

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD ACTION	
University of Delaware Newark, DE 19716	
Protocol title:	Women in U.S. Conservation
Principal investigator(s):	Megan Jones; History
HSRB number:	HS 06-274
Type of review:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Expedited <input type="checkbox"/> Full Board
<p>The Human Subjects Review Board has reviewed the above-referenced protocol with respect to (1) the rights and welfare of the subjects; (2) the appropriateness of the methods to be used to secure informed consent; and (3) the risks and potential benefits of the investigation, and has taken the following action:</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Approved without reservation</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved as revised on original document.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Disapproved for reasons noted below</p>	
Approval date:	April 27, 2006
Approval period:	12 months
Expiration date:	April 26, 2007
Submittal date for continuing review:	March 22, 2007
<p>Changes in the protocol must be approved in advance by the HSRB.</p>	
Comments:	
	Date <u>4/27/06</u>
<p>Dr. Richard D. Holsten Associate Provost for Research, Chairman, Human Subjects Review Board 210 Hulliher Hall 302-831-2136, fax: 302-831-2828, rho1sten@udel.edu Cc: Anne Boylan; History</p>	

Appendix B
RELEASE FORM

Release Form
Oral History Interview

To Elizabeth Titus Putnam:

Because of your involvement in the history of the Student Conservation Association (SCA), I would like to invite you to take part in an oral history interview, the content of which would be used in my dissertation research. I am broadly interested in the history and experiences of women in U.S. conservation, and believe that your thoughts would be highly enlightening and useful to my scholarship. This interview is purely voluntary, and therefore I ask for your permission to quote you and otherwise use materials from this interview in my research. Please take note that my research may be published at a later date, and therefore I also ask for your permission to quote you and otherwise use this interview in any publication. I will provide you with a copy of the oral history transcript for verification. Prior to the publication of any part of the interview or content from copied manuscript materials, I will provide you or your representative with copies for your review.

In the interview, I will ask you questions about your life and experiences with the SCA, with questions generally pertaining to the first decade or so of the existence of the SCA.

For example: "What inspired you to write your senior thesis on the SCC?"

"Did you work with other student organizations?"

"Which individuals were most helpful to you in forming your ideas and why?"

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this oral history component of my dissertation. I will gladly provide you with a written transcript of this interview if you desire, and ask for your verification of information.

Sincerely,

Megan Jones
Department of History

University of Delaware

I agree to all of the above and give my permission for Megan Jones to use this interview in her research:

Release Form
Oral History Interview

To _____:

Because of your involvement in the history of the Student Conservation Association (SCA) and/or the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), I would like to invite you to take part in an oral history interview, the content of which would be used in my dissertation research. I am broadly interested in the history and experiences of women in U.S. conservation, and more specifically in the experiences of youth who served in the SCA and/or YCC. I believe that your thoughts would be highly enlightening and useful to my scholarship. This interview is purely voluntary, and therefore I ask for your permission to quote you and otherwise use materials from this interview in my research. Please take note that my research may be published at a later date, and therefore I also ask for your permission to quote you and otherwise use this interview in any publication.

In the interview, I will ask you questions about your life and experiences with the SCA and/or YCC. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this oral history component of my dissertation. I will gladly provide you with a written transcript of this interview if you desire, and ask for your verification of information obtained in this interview.

Sincerely,

Megan Jones
Department of History
University of Delaware

I agree to all of the above and give my permission for Megan Jones to use this interview in her research:
