

**"WILDERNESS: ENLARGING THE BOUNDARIES
OF THE COMMUNITY**

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First off thank you. It is very gratifying both to me and to other members of my family, to have this invitation to think about our common future by looking at formative things in the past. I would like to begin with a bit of biography, not because that's how we naturally talk about a person, in this case Howard Zahniser, also my father, but because some stories will illuminate character traits influential in successful pursuit of the Wilderness Act of 1964. And I believe these same traits can be influential for successful wilderness rangers this summer.

Howard Zahniser was born in the Allegheny Mountains area of western Pennsylvania, to an essentially unsalaried evangelical Christian minister and his wife. For much of his childhood his parents did not live on the money economy. Does that sound familiar to a seasonal ranger? Perhaps. But that's not a character trait I meant! Zahnise, as friends would call him, had poor eye sight. Finally, getting glasses, he jumped fences and ran across fields, glorying in the revelation of what had been out there all along. An elementary school teacher interested him in the Junior Audubon Society and prompted his lifelong delight in birds.

Zahnise would brag that he graduated in the top ten of his high school class, and just as quickly say that was how many students were in his graduating class. As a teenager he developed an inflammatory bone disease known as osteomyelitis. At the time--about 1923--it was considered a 50 percent fatal disease. He arrived at a small midwestern church college using both crutches and a wheel chair, the latter mostly so he could still play basketball. Not knowing whether he would live to graduate, Zahnise took only the courses that most interested him. At the end of four years he was still alive but had taken very few required courses. He had to spend a fifth year being an upperclass freshman of sorts. Ever after he boasted that he had crammed four years of college into five. Zahnise possessed a disarming sense of humor that he often employed to defuse conflict or break deadlocks.

When his college philosophy professor asked him how his final course paper on his personal philosophy was going--it was due in a week or so--Zahnise replied that he had thought a lot about it and concluded that he didn't really have a philosophy, but he thought he was developing one. The professor, amused--and also knowing Zahnise's coursework--said in that case he needn't write the paper anyway. Receiving an honorary doctor of letters from the same college in the

late 1950's, Zahnier told the convocation he was so far behind in his correspondence that the degree should be called a doctor of postcards.

My grandfather's journal of the year of his death shows that in the first quarter of the year that he died my grandfather made more than 200 pastoral calls. In orthodox Christian theology, we are all sinners. A church is not a museum of saints but a hospital for sinners. A pastoral call never takes no for an answer. It may table the motion, but it never takes no for an answer. And because we are therefore all in the same theological canoe, you do not personalize whatever disagreement separates you from the Other. We can only all be redeemed together, even if it takes an eternity, so we live in hope, a hope that is eschatological, that is, the hope extends to the end time.

Zahnier was not himself an orthodox Christian, but he transferred traits of his upbringing to his work for wilderness. He became a lobbyist more allied in technique to a pastoral counselor than to today's technocrat. He projected an end-times hope that we would all one day take this wonderful step--this creation of a National Wilderness Preservation System--together. He never attacked the opponent as a person. His archest wilderness bill opponent was Colorado Congressman and House Interior Committee Chairman Wayne M. Aspinall, and Zahnier and Aspinall became genuine friends. They were friends despite the fact that Aspinall repeatedly violated House rules to block passage of the wilderness bill, and despite the fact that Zahnier raised Cain in Aspinall's Congressional district.

Stewart Udall said Aspinall had all the characteristics-- both good and bad--of a hedgehog and that Aspinall was the last of the Congressional committee chairmen to run his committee as though only his vote counted. Still, the adversaries respected each other as friends. Zahnier's college chum and lifelong associate Paul Oehser wrote in Backpacker magazine: "Even his adversaries in the wilderness cause (I don't think he had any enemies) grew to respect and love him. He was persuasive but never caustic or vindictive. . . And this was the backbone of his integrity and effectiveness."

All of the many references in Zahnier's wilderness writings, speeches, and hearing testimony, references to enduring, to perpetuity, and to the eternity of the future testify to this hope that we are all a part of . . . but that is larger than us. That this morning you have the job description of wilderness rangers testifies to the viability of such a hope. My father would be ecstatic.

I hope that you can attach yourself to such a hope this summer and beyond. For such a hope remains the antidote to a cynicism that otherwise leaves us feeling disenfranchised and powerless. And I want to suggest that this overarching hope today is the wilderness of this Earth itself, seen in even more inclusive, planetary terms than Howard Zahniser ever hoped to see it in. I would like to suggest that--but not yet.

It was as a journalist and writer that Howard Zahniser went to Washington, D.C. in 1930 at the urging of a college chum to take a job as an editor with

Department of Commerce. He worked for the U.S. Biological Survey there, what is now the Fish and Wildlife Service. He took inspection trips to wildlife refuges. His interests in literature and nature grew more entwined. He became books editor of Nature Magazine, later absorbed by what is now Natural History. He became chief of information and publications for the Bureau of Plant Industry of the Department of Agriculture.

He was mentored, as we would say today, by cultural anthropologist Edward Preble, for whom I am named. He was drawn into the still then very small circle of wilderness activists who had first formed the Wilderness Society in 1935 and decided to take it public just prior to the death of its driving force, Robert Marshall, at age 38 in 1939. The founders were foresters Robert Marshall, Aldo Leopold, Bernard Frank, and Benton MacKaye; landscape architect Ernest Oberholzer; accountant Harold Anderson; lawyer Harvey Broome; and publicist Robert Sterling Yard.

Next to them, Zahnle felt like a very ordinary person, a government writer and editor. But this was 1945, remember. None of these persons were then famous. Not even Marshall, now dead six years, whose Alaska book Arctic Village had been a Literary Guild selection. Benton MacKaye was the grand old man of the bunch; Harvard, Class of 1899, founder of the Appalachian Trail. But the war had brought the Trail project to a dead halt. MacKaye was just the quirky author of a low-selling book on a new something he called regional planning, The New Exploration, published in 1928. It would be a quarter of a century later that some of these people would become famous. Earth Day made them famous, the Earth Day they helped bring on.

Zahnle came to the Wilderness Society in 1945 after the death of Robert Sterling Yard, who had functioned as its entire staff and edited its occasional magazine, The Living Wilderness. Yard's job was split between the bedroll biologist Olaus Murie, who became director working out of Moose, Wyoming, and Zahnle, who became executive secretary and editor of the magazine, working out of a Washington, D.C. apartment building with half-time clerical help. That, my friends, was the awesomely powerful environmental group, the Wilderness Society, in 1945. There were probably fewer than 500 members nationwide.

There were few members but a new realization. The Wilderness Society must build bridges with other public lands advocates to broaden the base for pursuit of wilderness protection. You have seen and heard in the "Wild By Law" video how the Wilderness Society and Sierra Club, led by Zahnle and Dave Brower, respectively, formed the nucleus of the coalition that blossomed into the Dinosaur National Monument victory. I grew up to a phone ringing at dinner time in our East Coast home in Hyattsville, Md. "Edward," my father would say, "would you answer that?" Invariably it was Dave Brower on the West Coast, having beaten back Sierra Club and California issues for the day. By 3:30 p.m. California time, Brower was now ready to turn his attention to wilderness bill issues. Talk of wilderness bill politics and strategy would ensue. My father's dinner started to grow cold and went back in the oven.

The job of building bridges of cooperation for wilderness will never be done.

It will be an important task this summer, in small ways and in large, on the wilderness that you oversee. Aldo Leopold would have couched this extremely important outreach effort not in political but in ecological terms. Leopold would think of it as further widening the boundaries of the community. As you continue this great tradition this summer in your own wilderness work, remember that you, too, are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses. When you work to expand the boundaries of the community of advocates for wilderness, you may often be in the minority, but you are never alone.

And if you feel a bit naive at times, you also have a great cloud of witnesses, among them Howard Zahniser. The best way to picture his naivete in 1955 and 1956 is to say that in the summer of 1956 our family went on an extended wilderness trip. We were gone all of July and August and were late back for school in September. (I was so late for school starting that the principal let me choose my sixth grade teacher.) In all that time of wilderness family camping I slept in a bed bed only five times. My mother cooked so many meals over an open campfire that summer that she still looks to me like a wilderness-cooking Mother Teresa of Calcutta. My father evidently had this brilliant idea that the wilderness legislation would buzz through Congress, and he would sit back on his laurels and write a best-selling book on family camping in the great wildernesses of North America. We visited the Adirondacks in the East, the Boundary Waters canoe area, the Cloud Peak Primitive Area in Wyoming's Bighorn Mountains, Grand Teton's Alaska Basin, the Bob Marshall Wilderness in Montana, and the Glacier Peak Wilderness in the North Cascades. We wilderness-traveled by foot and horseback and canoe, and we car camped in endless federal, state, and sometimes local parks between them, guided by a Triple AAA triptik book. We all had to keep daily diaries for our father's grand book project.

Naive? The first wilderness bill was politically green behind the ears. It took eight years of hammering and compromising to forge socially viable legislation. But who knows, without the naivete, these rag-tag conservationists might never have worked up the nerve to take the first step. Zahniser died with the book contract in force. He never wrote anything but letters to the publisher to keep the contract alive. Just days before he died in May 1964, Zahniser wrote to his friend and Adirondack conservationist Paul Schaefer that it somehow didn't look like there would be a post-Wilderness Bill period of writing. Indeed, there was not.

After that great 1956 trip, my brothers and sisters and I were experienced firsthand spokespersons for wilderness. Accordingly, my father put us to work. Since there were four of us and our mother did not work outside the house, my father's job was to get us kids out of the house on Saturdays. Earlier, we would go hiking on the C&O Canal or visit the National Gallery of Art or the Corcoran Art Gallery in Washington. The guards knew us and would let us four kids take turns pushing each other around in the gallery's wheelchairs. Now we also spent some Saturdays in the House and Senate office buildings. On Saturdays many western congressmen, unable to travel home for the weekend, were

in their offices. And more, they lacked their weekday staff protection. I spent many a childhood Saturday taking my part of a hallway and seeking office entry. I was armed with wilderness bill leaflets and ready to meet the challenge: "Well, tell me sonny, have you ever been to a wilderness?" Boy, was that the wrong question to ask! I was primed as a TV evangelist.

Except for the lack of pay, I probably was an improperly unregistered lobbyist. I like to think we made a difference. This was fifteen years before Earth Day, you know. A bunch of young people working Congress with wilderness tales and leaflets in the 1950's. Several years earlier, my sister, Esther, had gotten her picture in the Washington Star newspaper for being the youngest person ever to testify before a Senate committee. She had been downtown at our aunt's apartment--our father's Wilderness Society office was in the same building. Rather than return to the office for Ester, Zahnle took her to the hearing. There Sen. Estes Kefauver asked her if she'd ever been to a wilderness. This was before the 1956 family trip, but the committee still got an earful. As kids we were protected from excess pride in the light of such activities by the normal rigors of childhood. When you had to say in elementary school what it was that your parents did for work--remember, this was the 1950s--how could you explain what a conservationist was? I usually ended up saying "my father works on a magazine."

In fact, Howard Zahniser was a writer and reader. He made more trips to secondhand bookstores in any year than to wildernesses in his lifetime. He was such a book junkie that as a kid I got free books in several Washington, D.C. secondhand bookstores. The store owners were buying my silence so my dad would shop longer. A good secondhand bookstore opened up within walking distance of our house when I was a teenager. My father and I went there every Wednesday night. We called it prayer meeting.

Conservation was driven by writers early in this century. In a recent Wilderness magazine article, Charles E. Little lamented this displacement of writers in the conservation movement by technocrats. With a few exceptions, Little maintains that "these days the literary tradition in environmental writing is unfree, unnatural, dried-up-writing in the manner of the timid bureaucrat or the academic in the bureaucrat's employ." In short, Little says, "The object is to be boring, and without affect, lest the promotion not come through, the research grant fail to materialize."

Charles Little then contrasts this with writers following Henry David Thoreau's lead, "Peattie and Krutch and Teale and Bromfield and Eiseley and Stegner and Dubos and Carson and Leopold and Abbey. Books by these authors, and perhaps a few more, brought about a policy revolution a quarter century ago: the clean air and water acts, the Wilderness Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act, and the epochal Environmental Policy Act itself. This was the tangible result of a raised environmental consciousness engendered by books written with freedom and passion." Little laments the fact that "Crewcut engineers, plus lawyers, bureaucrats, and people with PhDs in technical disciplines, moved in on the environmental movement, created in substantial

part by writers, and . . . [reduced] the literature of conservation to technical reports of interest only to themselves." Dave Brower went to the Sierra Club's executive job from the University of California Press. At least five of the eight founders of the Wilderness Society wrote at least one book. All eight wrote magazine articles.

Zahnie was not only a writer but a reader immersed in the great literature of Dante, Blake, The Book of Job, and Henry David Thoreau. The fabric file cabinets I mention in the "Wild By Law" video--my father's large-pocketed suits so suited to a lobbyist--usually carried a Thoreau book and a Dante or Blake along with other wilderness propaganda. Here is how Dante's masterwork The Divine Comedy opens:

Midway in our life's journey, I went astray
from the straight road and woke to find myself
alone in a dark wood. How shall I say
what wood that was! I never saw so drear,
so rank, so arduous a wilderness!

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Looked at as the life challenge of the wilderness bill task, I can see my father's identification with those opening verses. Dante, along with Blake, and the Job material, and Thoreau, presents a self immersed in a great journey of life that will reach far beyond the limited self to the cosmos at large. Job, for example, endures the dark terror of God with patience and humility. In the end, his humility restores him to far greater stature. Again, Dante, Blake, the author of Job, and Thoreau enlarge, in Leopold's sense, the boundaries of the community. This is the task of wilderness rangers as it is the task of all stewards of wilderness.

Writing informed Zahnie's wilderness work. Paul Oehser characterized his speeches as "masterpieces of conviction and logic mixed with humor." Zahnie's literary interests fed his interest in words that I believe shows in the Wilderness Act's definition of wilderness. During the wilderness bill years my sister Karen had a teddy bear that my father variously nicknamed "Wilderness Bill" or "Gladly, the Cross-eyed Bear." The nicknaming reveals the love for word-play so influential in his choice of the word untrammelled in the official definition of wilderness. Wilderness Bill is an obvious nickname. The other moniker parodies an evangelical Christian gospel son, "Gladly, the Cross I'd Bear." As an informal definition, Zahnie often joked that wilderness was where the hand of man had never set foot.

Choosing a definition for wilderness was fraught with potential pitfalls. Too solid a description, as of specific real estate, for example, would provide ammunition for eventual exclusions. I think Zahnie took his formative clue from the word wilderness itself. In countless speeches and hearing testimonies he reiterated that the word wilderness ends in -ness and therefore connotes a quality. The Federal definition, then, should not quantify

wilderness. After a long search he fastened on the word untrammled. As though to prove how unlikely a defining word it is, many subsequent writers on wilderness, even in scholarly settings, have quoted the Wilderness Act definition as saying "untrampled."

It is amazing that he got away with such a qualitative--you could say, "imprecise"--word. Here, from the same Webster's Third New International Dictionary that he used, is the definition of untrammled. "1 : not confined or limited : not hindered . . . 2 being free and easy." We have 95 million acres of something that imprecise?

In fact we do. The genius of the choice became clear in the 1970s battle for Eastern National Forest wilderness. In the East you had national parks and forests on lands now recovered from being rooted, grazed, farmed, deforested, eroded, and generally scarified. Pristine? No. Virgin? Hardly. But Congress, guided by the Wilderness Act definition, brought them into the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Zahnie fed himself with literature. He kept current with nature writing through his continuing role as books editor of Nature Magazine. He wrote the conservation section for the Encyclopedia Britannica Yearbook series. It remains important to feed our heads with works that reach beyond the limited self to enlarge the boundaries of the community.

What neither Muir, nor Leopold, nor Marshall, nor Zahniser knew in advance was that enlarging the boundaries of the community would work best with recreationists. Muir endlessly cajoled people to experience wilderness firsthand. Leopold and Marshall firmly believed that if people experienced the freedom of the wilderness they would then fight to protect it. Both the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society sponsored expedition-scale wilderness trip programs to get groups of people into the wilderness.

The fundamental issue of recreation for wilderness is probably population pressure, an ethical and moral issue that will not go away. Aldo Leopold touched on the recreation issue in "Wilderness As a Land Laboratory," in the July 1941 Living Wilderness magazine. "All wilderness areas, no matter how small or imperfect, have a large value to land-science," he said. "The important thing is to realize that recreation is not their only or even their principal utility." Leopold here recognized the danger of justifying wilderness on the basis of recreation, which he had done earlier by using a minority-rights argument. Recall that, by the mid-1950's, "outdoor recreation" was the catch-phrase by which federal land agencies were competing with each other for constituencies and Congressional appropriations.

The close of the 1941 statement by Leopold that I just quoted suggests that he did not foresee the magnitude of the recreation problem you may face in your wilderness this summer. Leopold writes: "In fact, the boundary between recreation and science, like the boundaries between park and forest, animal and plant, tame and wild, exists only in the imperfections of the human mind." But the recreation pressure problem will not disappear this summer as an

"imperfection of the human mind." As the wilderness bill moved toward becoming law, neither its backers nor its detractors could read recreation's voluminous writing on the wall. And this despite the fact that Congress delayed action on wilderness legislation in the late 1950s and early 1960s in deference to the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission report, the ORRRC report.

As late as 1962, when I bought one, the Kelty pack was the only rational backpack to buy in the U.S.--I paid \$26 new, including extra pockets! Earlier, when we had gotten too sophisticated for Army surplus equipment, we started buying European camping equipment through a Canadian outlet. REI in Seattle was still a rock climbers' co-op in the early 1960s. Then, in the backpack-a-go-go 1970s, Kelty would be sold to a Wall Street company. Wilderness use burgeoned. And now, today, the membership of REI would populate a good-sized (and very well dressed) nation.

Backpacking was a growth industry by the mid-1970s. And the opponents of the wilderness designations still shouted "elitism!" I wish I had an answer about the recreation pressure on wilderness. I've seen 10-foot-deep trail gullies in subalpine wilderness. You've probably seen worse. I don't have an answer. I hope you work on some answers, and that they still somehow manage to enlarge the boundaries of the community. If they do, they also will further--you will further--the enduring legacy of John Muir and Aldo Leopold and Howard Zahniser.

As early as 1955, Zahniser wrote in a speech to a national parks and open spaces conferences: "It is characteristic of wilderness to impress its visitors with their relationship to other forms of life, and to afford those who linger an intimation of the interdependence of all life." We could just stick the word rangers after wilderness--It is characteristic of wilderness rangers to impress visitors with their relationship to other forms of life--and Zahniser's speech would be part of your job description, huh? "In the wilderness," Zahniser continued, "it is thus possible to sense most keenly our human membership in the whole community of life on the Earth. And in this possibility is perhaps one explanation for our modern deep-seated need for wilderness."

Our topic this morning may turn out to have been a global inclusiveness, a global inclusiveness that begins with you on these western forests this summer. John Hay implies that the "great message" of wilderness is inclusion and that wilderness makes a great statement of "the total involvement of life." Without wilderness, says Hay, we lose not only "incomparable species but the foundation of shared existence." The whole of life is the source of life.

We are talking about thinking globally and acting locally as a wilderness ranger. Later in life you can look back on this summer and tell your grandchildren you were wilderness rangers just out to save the world. To do so we may have to learn to see the forest in each tree and ourselves in the overall forest organism. Ralph Waldo Emerson once caught Henry Thoreau doing just that in Emerson's own woodlot. Emerson knew he wasn't clever enough to do it. Thoreau was. Emerson confided to his journal in January 1858:

"I found Henry yesterday in my woods. He thought nothing to be hoped from you,

if this bit of mould under your feet was not sweeter to you to eat than any other in this world, or in any world. We talked of willow. He says 'tis impossible to tell when they push the bud (which so marks the arrival of spring) out of its dark scales. It is done and doing all winter. It is begun the previous autumn. It seems one steady push from autumn to spring."

I contend that wilderness is that "one steady push from autumn to spring." Wilderness is not merely designated areas or designated study areas. The Wilderness Act and its National Wilderness Preservation System have rather saved enough samples of wilderness for sufficient time for us to begin to appreciate what even this morning is still so rapidly disappearing.

We may be coming full circle in western society to a secularized notion of the Biblical wilderness experience. The tribe of Israel wandered for 40 years in the wilderness to work out the twin notions of a nationhood for former slaves and a monotheism not limited by geography. Forty years is five times longer than the direct push for the Wilderness Act took. We urgently need a similar wilderness experience today with an even larger vision, a vision of the Earth as global home of truly interdependent, inherently valuable--and valued--species.

I would like to hazard heresy this morning by suggesting that biodiversity and wilderness may prove to be synonyms. John Hay suggests in his book The Immortal Wilderness that wilderness is not simply an officially designated area, but that is the very texture of our true, natural lives, the whole, interpenetrating system of things. Hay calls wilderness "the earth's immortal genius." The poet Gary Snyder says the same in slightly different words in his book The Practice of the Wild. "A ghost wilderness hovers around the entire planet," Snyder says. "The world is watching: one cannot walk through a meadow or forest without a ripple of report spreading out from one's passage. . . . Every creature knows when a hawk is cruising or a human strolling. The information passed through the system is intelligence." You get the idea that the system itself is wilderness.

So, wilderness and biodiversity may be synonyms. . . .if we are willing to include ourselves intimately within both concepts. We humans are many. We are many and different. We must achieve a respect for these differences as heightened interest and not as threats. This is cultural pluralism. Wilderness advocacy and cultural pluralism call for humanly uncharacteristic humility. I believe they also point in the same direction. Wilderness leads us as setting, context, environment; cultural pluralism leads us as sociological beings, fellow and sister travelers in our cosmically orbiting canoe. Together they promise an ecosystem that features no outsiders, an Earth community so widened as to be bounded only by gravity.

The root meaning of the word ecology, is literally "earth house hold." We will be members of that Earth household, earth householders taking our instructions from wilderness, "the earth's immortal genius." There is a statement in the Hindu spiritual tradition about the householder stage of human life that hints that this will not be easy. Hindus call this stage "householder yoga." And

they say: householder yoga is the most difficult yoga of all. We are in this stage right now for the planet, or else.

You are the wilderness ranger this summer, the local vanguard of global householding. You are John or Jane the Baptist, wilderness prophet, where baptism implies not an historical doctrine, but its own root meaning of "immersion." You have the whole of summer to immerse yourself in the totality of this wilderness that is the immortal genius of our planet. I earnestly hope that you both work there and return with a vision that truly enlarges the boundaries of the community. Our earth house hold is desperately seeking collective identity, desperately seeking a workably inclusive us-ness that transcends not only family, nation, and ethnicity, but also species.

But above all, you have a wild summer out in the wilderness. I envy you. So, too, would Howard Zahniser and a veritable cloud of wilderness witnesses who have gone before you. They will be with you still, this summer, in your generation's struggle to steward the ever fragile freedom of the wilderness.