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**The impact of the photographer on wilderness appreciation: A  
case study of Ansel Adams**

Haip, Renée Ann, M.L.Arch.

The University of Arizona, 1990

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**THE IMPACT OF THE PHOTOGRAPHER  
ON WILDERNESS APPRECIATION:  
A CASE STUDY OF ANSEL ADAMS**

by  
**Renée Ann Haip**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the  
SCHOOL OF RENEWABLE NATURAL RESOURCES  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
In the Graduate College  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA**

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Dedicated to David and my parents - Ewald and Anna Haip

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Having completed a bachelor's degree in fine arts in 1985, I opted to pursue a graduate degree in landscape architecture. It was not my desire to change fields, but rather to fuse fields. This thesis reflects my interest to integrate photography with landscape issues in a positive and meaningful manner. While many of my fellow undergraduate students and I were very critical of Ansel Adams' work, my graduate studies have brought about a new appreciation of this man and his work.

As I see this thesis as the culmination of my undergraduate work in photography and my graduate work in landscape resources, I would like to thank the many people who have played an instrumental role in my education. My appreciation goes to my instructors in photography and its history - notably David Litschel, Judith Golden, Lew Thomas, and Dr. Keith McElroy. I am particularly indebted to the staff of the Center for Creative Photography for many years of valuable work experience. My special thanks to former director Dr. James Enyeart, director Terence Pitts, archivist Amy Rule and photographer Dianne Nilsen.

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**ABSTRACT**

The life of Ansel Adams is presented as a case study of the photographer's impact on wilderness appreciation. Adams' impacts through his involvement with the Sierra Club, as well as his impacts as an individual, are discussed. Adams' effectiveness in promoting wilderness appreciation is assessed, and implications for contemporary landscape photographers are drawn.

CHAPTER 1  
BACKGROUND

Introduction

Unlike a painting or a literary work, a photograph is perceived as being a mirror of reality. Utilized by the artist, photography can become a powerful tool in calling for the preservation of landscapes. A common example is Ansel Adams' Sierra Nevada: The John Muir Trail (1938), a book that contributed to the establishment in 1939 of a half-million acres of the Kings Canyon region as a national park (Cahn and Ketchum, 1981; Jussim and Lindquist-Cock, 1985).

While the work of Ansel Adams is viewed with skepticism by many contemporary photographers, his success in affecting opinion at both a public and political level is significant and deserving of examination. This thesis presents a case study of Ansel Adams' impact on the growth of wilderness appreciation.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines "wilderness" as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain (Public Law, 88-577)." For the purpose of this thesis the term "wilderness" includes natural areas large and small, officially designated or not.

This research adds new information to the general body of knowledge concerning wilderness perception in America. More specifically, this research helps to fill the gap in knowledge related to the

photographer's role in shaping the perception of wilderness. It also assists in understanding photography's potential in focusing environmental issues. Furthermore, by assessing Adams' impacts in their historical context, the opportunity to build understanding among younger photographers exists. Instead of reacting to and defying tradition, the photographer can search for appropriate solutions to new problems.

The objectives of this research are threefold:

1. To present examples of Ansel Adams' involvement in the preservation efforts for wilderness,
2. To analyze Ansel Adams' effectiveness in promoting wilderness appreciation, and
3. To draw implications for contemporary landscape photographers.

The remainder of this chapter discusses wilderness values, expedition photographs of the western United States, and the western photographic image as art. This provides a foundation for understanding the content of this thesis.

The literature review, Chapter 2, provides discussion on the published work pertaining to the photographer's role in the growth of wilderness appreciation. Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the methods used in this study.

Ansel Adams' early years are described in Chapter 4, which include his introduction to photography, the Sierra Nevada, and the Sierra Club. Chapter 5 discusses his impact through the Sierra Club. In Chapter 6, his impacts as an individual are discussed.

The concluding section, Chapter 7, discusses contemporary trends in landscape photography and outlines implications of this study for contemporary photographers.

#### Wilderness Values that Artists Support and Abet

In 1983, Ansel Adams stated, "We are living through an era that knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing (Russakoff, 1983)." While it is quite simple to look at a forest and define its value in board feet or recreational carrying capacity, the spiritual and heritage values of that forest are seemingly resistant to quantitative methods. These non-quantifiable values have been the focus of artists - writers, painters, and photographers.

In 1898, John Muir, naturalist writer and first leader of the Sierra Club, wrote in the Atlantic:

thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life (Muir, 1898).

In 1960, novelist and university professor Wallace Stegner wrote a statement on the intangible and spiritual values of wilderness (Stegner, 1960), which was inserted into a Wildland Research Center recreation report written for the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission. Stegner stressed the need to preserve wilderness for non-quantifiable values. He wrote:

We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope (Stegner, 1960, p. 197).

As a member and leader of the Sierra Club and as an individual, Ansel Adams expressed his concern for the preservation of wildlands on the basis of their intrinsic values. At the 7th Wilderness Conference in 1961, Adams stated:

The wilderness of our time is not a physical commodity - a resource of materials and money - but a vast symbolic experience of inestimable worth which we cannot afford to limit or destroy. ... Wilderness is more than physical appearance, more than decoration, more than an arena for sport, and more than a proving ground for physical prowess. It must stand as a symbol of qualities beyond the structure of routine life. It competes with no religion; rather, it suggests a new religion, the revelation of which is comprehension of the vast cosmos and the ultimate purpose and validity of life (Adams, 1961a, p. 53).

Such scholars as Hammond and Rolston have also identified and argued for non-quantifiable values for wilderness. Hammond (1985) discussed the heritage value of wilderness. He stressed the importance of wilderness in shaping "national character traits" and the importance of roots to mankind. The philosopher Rolston (1982) examined the wild value of wilderness. Rolston argues that wilderness is not merely a resource but a primal source - a place of "roots, wild neighbors and alien forms." He draws a parallel to national historical parks, calling the wilderness a "genesis park."

These intangible wilderness values have proven difficult to argue in a society which bases much of its decisions on quantitative information. In this regard, artists' images have been and continue to be important in gaining support for the wilderness idea. Working on an emotional and qualitative level, these images have the power to focus attention on and support non-quantifiable values.

### Expedition Photographs of the West

It is important to first distinguish between the perception of a photograph versus the perception of a painting. During the last half of the 19th century, painters such as Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran used large canvases, color and exaggeration in depicting the western landscape. These dramatic images were acknowledged as pictures or representations of a place. Photography, on the other hand, has been perceived as a mirror of reality. Photographs were not seen as artistic interpretations, but rather as factual documents which were both reliable and credible. Herein lies the power of the photograph in affecting perceptions at a personal, social, and political level.

The powers of a photograph lie in its ability to provide credible documentation of features and the ease with which it could be affordably reproduced and distributed to the public. During the 1860s and 1870s, photography became an important tool for the exploration efforts in the West. The U.S. government and railroad companies hired photographers to document the landscape in a way that would help them to determine areas for future locations of human settlements and mining. The photographic technology of this time period, the wet-plate collodion process (glass negatives), was cumbersome and, within the context of expeditions, required the photographer to be strong and steadfast. Celebrated photographers of this tradition are Carleton E. Watkins (Whitney Survey, 1866), Timothy O'Sullivan (Clarence King's 40th Parallel Survey, 1867 and Wheeler Expedition, 1871), William Bell (Wheeler Survey, 1871-72), and William Henry Jackson (Hayden's expeditions, 1870-78).

While these images were initially to serve purposes of scientific documentation for western expansion and exploitation, they also made an impact on preservation efforts for unique landscapes. These images were presented to members of Congress and influential citizens. William Henry Jackson, for example, printed the album Yellowstone Scenic Wonders, which was presented to Congress in support of Hayden's proposal to establish Yellowstone National Park (Rosenblum, 1984). The photographs of Carleton E. Watkins were sent to California Senator John Conness in March of 1864 in support of protection for Yosemite Valley (Cahn and Ketchum, 1981).

It is, furthermore, important to recognize that the influence of these images extended beyond government officials. Expedition photographers often made arrangements with expedition leaders to commercially market their images (Rosenblum, 1984). Scully, et al. (1982) state that one of the first functions of landscape photography "was to bring back evidence of the wonders of the world." The demand for photographs of these distant and grand landscapes made it possible for other landscape photographers such as C. L. Weed to make a viable living. Landscape images were available to the public in a variety of sizes and formats including albums, lantern slides, stereographs and mammoth prints (20 x 24 inches).

The photograph lent credibility to the written description and artistic rendering of curiosities such as the geysers of Yellowstone. Not only did photography provide proof of "grand and fantastic" landscapes, it also provided the general public with affordable "facsimiles" of specific places.

In particular, the stereograph was produced by the millions from the 1850s to the 1870s (B. Newhall, 1964). Reproducing binocular vision, the stereograph when viewed through a stereoscope provided the viewer with a 3-dimensional image which was thought to closely replicate the experience of actually being in that landscape. An interesting illustration of how the stereographic landscape was perceived is found in a San Francisco newspaper. An announcement in the Daily Times of September 15, 1859 read:

Ho! For the Yo-semite Valley  
A Magnificent photographic panorama of the Great Yo Semite Valley ... can now be seen, free of charge, at Vance's Photographic Gallery....

These wonderful views were executed for Mr. V. by C.L. Weed, Esq., whose reputation as one of the best Photographers in the State is a sufficient guarantee that they are excellent specimens of the art. In addition to these, may be seen a large number of finely cut stereoscopic views ... which are not simply pictures, but fac-similies of the spots themselves....

Having the negatives of all the above, duplicates of each can be given at the shortest notice and at the lowest rates (Robertson, 1984, p. 14).

At the gallery, the stereoviews were placed successively in a machine that could be operated by the gallery visitor. In reference to these stereographs the author of the Times article noted:

Every important place about the valley ... is vividly depicted.... The great waterfalls, glistening in the sunlight, are seen leaping out from the crags and hang in mid-air as clearly as if witnessed in nature (Robertson, 1984, p. 14).

The availability of western landscape photographs to the larger public served an important role in establishing an appreciation of and a national pride for America's wild lands. This growing appreciation and awareness of "wilderness" lands helped to set the foundations necessary

to make the "wilderness idea" and subsequent preservation policies possible.

### The Western Photographic Image As Art

The majority of the photographs which have been inherited from the exploration age are objective records of places. In looking at the photographs of Ansel Adams and his contemporaries, it is important to distinguish between the photographer as reporter and the photographer as interpreter or artist. Adams and his contemporaries consciously manipulated the scene before their eyes. Technological innovations in photography gave photographers new and greater latitudes in creating their images. The resultant image depended on decisive choices made by the photographer such as the moment captured in time, the framing, focal length of the lense, exposure, filter, technique in processing the negative, and the interpretation of that negative as a final print.

Photographers such as Ansel Adams and Edward Weston knew their power in creating strong and meaningful images. Their photographs captured the spiritual essence of their subjects, transcending mere physical description. The viewer is presented with the photographer's interpretation. This highly personal and stylized image is the type of photograph that Ansel Adams felt could make the greatest impression on people at an emotional and spiritual level (Adams, 1961a).

CHAPTER 2  
LITERATURE REVIEW

While the role of painters and writers in shaping the perception of American wilderness has frequently been explored, the photographer's role has been largely neglected. Roderick Nash's (1967) classic study Wilderness and the American Mind, for example, offers few references to photographers or the impact of their work.

The published materials concerning the photographer's role in the growth of wilderness appreciation are limited. References to this topic are primarily found within the body of larger works pertaining to wilderness and landscape photography (Cahn and Ketchum, 1981; Graber, 1976; Jussim and Lindquist-Cock, 1985; Nash, 1967; Robertson, 1984; Rosenblum, 1984). In A World History of Photography, Rosenblum (1984) provides a brief but informative overview of 19th century American expedition photographers and the effects of their images on both public and political levels. Rosenblum points out that while these images were initially to serve purposes of scientific documentation for western expansion and exploitation, they also had an impact on preservation efforts for unique landscapes..

Jussim and Lindquist-Cock (1985) provide an interesting discussion regarding the landscape photograph in terms of both its historical use as propaganda and its present-day potential to affect political decisions. As a subtopic of the larger subject, landscape

photography, their discussion provides information on a largely conceptual scale.

American Photographers and the National Parks (Cahn and Ketchum, 1981) was the outgrowth of an exhibition by the same name. The exhibition was researched and assembled by landscape photographer Robert Glenn Ketchum with funding from the National Park Foundation. The book provides an overview of the relationship between landscape photography and the American national park system. While the wilderness idea and the national park idea are not one and the same, they interrelate and at times are not easily separated. Cahn and Ketchum's book is one such case in point. The authors provide numerous examples of how photographers and their photographs have influenced the political system in calling for preservation of wildlands.

In West of Eden, Robertson (1984) discusses photography within the context of art and literature in Yosemite. Utilizing archival sources and restricting his investigations to a site specific scale, Robertson was able to provide a more detailed perspective on the artist and wilderness. The literature discussed thus far makes reference to the photographer as a powerful force in shaping wilderness perception. Yet, it fails to adequately address the topic at a sufficient level of detail.

While literature regarding the photographer's impact on wilderness perception is virtually nonexistent, geographer Linda Graber (1976) provides a useful base from which to design a more comprehensive and detailed study. Within Graber's 1976 thesis, Wilderness as Sacred Space, a small section examining the impact of purist landscape

photography on the public's opinion of wilderness provides important observations. Graber suggests that the photographs of Ansel Adams and his contemporaries set a standard for the wilderness idea, and she provides examples of the Sierra Club's calculated use of these images for propaganda.

### CHAPTER 3

#### METHODOLOGY

##### Archives

For the purpose of answering the research questions regarding Ansel Adams' impact on wilderness appreciation, archival materials serve as the primary source of information. As demonstrated by Martin (1986), archives play a vital role in assessing the impact of individuals. Using archival methods, Martin was able to piece together landscape architect Arthur Carhart's development of the wilderness idea. Archival materials provide insight into past conditions and events. In some cases, archival sources may be the only available information on a subject.

Research on Ansel Adams was undertaken utilizing the Ansel Adams Archive at the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona in Tucson. The Center for Creative Photography, the idea of former University of Arizona president Dr. John P. Schaefer and Ansel Adams, houses the archives of numerous artists. Archives often contain fine prints, work prints, negatives, correspondence, notes, and numerous other documents and artifacts. This type of collection makes it possible to access important materials from which questions can be raised and answered. With permission from the Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust, Ansel Adams' conservation related correspondence was reviewed. This material included correspondence with the National Park Service, members

of Congress, and the Sierra Club. All related manuscripts, panel statements, interviews, and published materials were also reviewed. Especially helpful was a transcript of the University of California's Regional Oral History Office's 1978 interview with Adams (1978). This transcript, "Conversations with Ansel Adams," provides insight into numerous topics relating to Adams' life and interests. Using this broad range of archival information, a rich data base was created. A limitation of the archival method is that someone has made choices as what to deposit and what not to deposit into the archive. Archives are inherently edited.

#### Interviews

A secondary method employed was interviewing. Photographers Philip Hyde and Robert Glenn Ketchum were interviewed using open-ended questions, which allowed for great depth. These interviews were conducted by phone for purposes of economy (Hyde, 1990; Ketchum, 1990).

These photographers were chosen for their own activism in preserving wildlands. Philip Hyde, who calls himself an "environmental photographer," was a student and close associate of Adams. Robert Glenn Ketchum is a younger photographer working to protect the Tongass Forest of Alaska. With an understanding of photography's potential to affect opinion, these two artists provide valuable perspectives which aid in assessing the role of the photographer in addressing contemporary environmental issues.

## CHAPTER 4

## ANSEL ADAMS - BEGINNINGS

Ansel Adams' life story is well documented in numerous books, newspapers, and magazines. Among the published materials by and about Adams are two books which provide reliable accounts of his life (Newhall, 1963; Adams, 1985). In 1963, the Sierra Club published a biography which was intended to be the first of two parts. In this biography, Ansel Adams: The Eloquent Light, his biographer and friend Nancy Newhall chronicled his life from his birth in 1902 to 1938. Newhall's sudden death in July of 1974 accounts for the absence of the second part. In 1985, Little, Brown and Company published Ansel Adams: an Autobiography. Written with Adams' assistant, Mary Street Alinder, this autobiography chronicles his life from birth to death.

Foundations of an Ardent Wilderness Supporter

In the biographical works about Ansel Adams, the foundations of his work as an artist and his beliefs about the importance of natural environments are described. Adams found himself drawn to the natural environment from an early age. Born in 1902, Adams was the only child of an upper middle-class San Francisco family. Growing up on the dunes beyond Golden Gate, memories of his childhood environment remained vivid throughout his life. The dunes, the surf of Baker's Beach, the shores of Lobos Creek, the storm and fogs of the Golden Gate, and the distant view of the Marin County hills were important elements in his childhood.

Adams was known to be an intense child. He disliked school, and behavior problems at school eventually led to his parents' decision to educate Ansel at home under the guidance of his father. His father instructed some subjects; Dr. Herriot, the minister, lawyer, doctor and linguist, tutored Ansel in Greek; and in 1914 Ansel began formal lessons on the piano. Attaining perfection on the piano would become his primary focus of attention until 1930, when Adams decided to dedicate his life to the art of photography. In 1915 Ansel's father gave him a season pass to the Panama-Pacific World's Fair. Daily excursions to explore the exhibits at the exposition constituted his schooling for that year. The exposition undoubtedly provided Ansel with a rich exposure to the latest in technological innovations and artistic expression. The home school environment provided Ansel with a means to explore his interests in an unusually intense fashion and allowed time to explore the subtleties of his childhood landscape.

#### Introduction to the Sierra Nevada and Photography

Adams' first trip into "wilderness" was in 1916 at the age of fourteen when his family took a trip to Yosemite. After Ansel had read Hutchings' In the Heart of the Sierras while in bed with a cold, he eagerly urged his family to take their vacation in Yosemite. Arriving in Yosemite by train, Ansel was given a No. 1 Box Brownie to photograph the first of his yearly trips to the region. Ansel wrote, "From that day in 1916, my life has been colored and modulated by the great earth-gesture of the Sierra (Adams, 1938)." Not only did Adams fall in love with the Sierra, he also became entranced with the photographic medium.

Upon his return to San Francisco, Ansel strove to learn more about photography. His quest for knowledge led him to make arrangements to apprentice with the photo-finisher Frank Dittman of San Francisco. The following year, 1917, Ansel returned to Yosemite with his mother and improved photographic skills.

#### Introduction to the Sierra Club

When Ansel took his first two trips to Yosemite, he was neither aware of conservation concepts nor of Yosemite's need for protection. In 1918, Ansel returned to Yosemite under the supervision of Francis Holman. Holman was a retired mining engineer and Sierra Club member who collected birds for the San Francisco Academy of Sciences. It was Francis Holman who taught Ansel about back country camping and introduced him to other Sierra Club members such as Stephen L. Mather and Francis P. Farquhar (Newhall, 1963). In successive years, "Uncle Frank" would continue to be Ansel's trail companion. Holman collected birds and Adams made photographs.

Ansel's association with the Sierra Club grew. In 1919 Adams heard that the custodian of the Sierra Club's headquarters in Yosemite Valley (LeConte Lodge) was quitting. Hoping to secure the position, Ansel joined the Sierra Club and applied for the job. He was hired, and worked at the lodge for four consecutive seasons (1920-1923) during which he cultivated hundreds of important friendships including William E. Colby, the great leader of the Sierra Club immediately following the death of John Muir. According to Newhall, Adams shyly "received the members of this extraordinary band of conservatives, who came from all

kinds of backgrounds, professions, and trades, and were united only by their love of great wildernesses (Newhall, 1963, p.34)."

## CHAPTER 5

## ANSEL ADAMS' IMPACT THROUGH THE SIERRA CLUB

Adams' association with the Sierra Club began in 1919 and lasted the length of his life. His first one-man exhibition was held at the Sierra Club's headquarters in San Francisco in 1928. Through his association with the Sierra Club, Adams was introduced to the concepts of wilderness and to like-minded friends. It was through the Sierra Club that he and his photographs made their initial contributions to the cause of environmental issues. Adams would serve as a director of the Sierra Club from 1934 to 1971. In 1963, he received the John Muir Award (the Sierra Club's highest award), which "honors a distinguished record of leadership in national or international conservation causes (Sierra Club, 1989, p. 59)." Ansel Adams dedicated his time, his words, his vision, and his reputation to the causes of the club.

The Sierra Club as we know it today has changed in scope since the earlier days. When Adams first joined, the club's membership was small and its scope confined to the mountains and forests of California. Adams joined after the death of John Muir in 1914 and after the long battle to save the Hetch Hetchy Valley within Yosemite National Park was lost.

The Sierra Club was founded in 1892 by a group of twenty-seven San Francisco Bay area residents. This group could best be termed "elitest," consisting of professors from the University of California

and Stanford, a lawyer, an artist, and the writer and naturalist John Muir. Articles of incorporation were drawn up as follows:

To explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast; to publish authentic information concerning them; to enlist the support and cooperation of the people and the government in preserving the forests and other natural features of the Sierra Nevada Mountains (Sierra Club, 1892).

Muir's California was dominated by frontier ethics, causing the lovers of wilderness to look east for support in preserving wildlands. In building support for wildlands, it was felt that the wilderness must be made accessible for urban supporters to visit. Therefore, development, which included road building, was promoted by the Sierra Club of yesteryear as a means to preserve wildlands in the form of national parks (Cohen, 1988).

Michael Cohen's history of the Sierra Club (Cohen, 1988) provides insight to the development and chronology of events pertaining to the Sierra Club. Cohen delineates four distinct "generations" of club leadership and includes Adams in the third generation. The first generation is characterized by the club's first leader, John Muir. It was during Muir's time that the club worked for the creation, development and protection of Yosemite National Park. They were furthermore active in the fate of the entire Sierra Nevada. The club tried to balance the aesthetic and economic sides of conservation. However, in the years of the Hetch-Hetchy battle (1906-1913), the definition of "conservation" became nebulous as great divisions between preservationists and utilitarian conservationists occurred.

The years 1915-1934 constitute the second generation of club leadership and are characterized by leaders William Colby, Francis Farquhar and a group of people interested in outdoor activities. During this time, the Sierra Club maintained close ties with the new National Park Service, created in 1916. Administrators of the National Park Service and the Sierra Club worked cooperatively. Good cooperation was due, in part, to the fact that the National Park Service was founded and developed by three Californians who were all Berkeley graduates and Sierra Club members: Horace Albright, Newton Drury and Stephen Mather. Mather, in fact, was the National Park Service's director (Farquhar, 1972, p. 51).

The Sierra Club was also active in exploring and mapping the Sierra Nevada. Furthermore, the club concentrated on making the mountains accessible by building trails. They played a large role in determining the route of the John Muir Trail and lobbied for its funding. This was the Sierra Club that Adams was introduced to.

#### Sierra Club Outings

The first Sierra Club outing occurred in 1901. Colby was responsible for proposing the annual month-long outing, coined the "High Trip." The outings were intended to provide fellowship and to bring people to the mountains so that they would grow to appreciate the natural landscape. Upon "conversion," these people would work to protect these landscapes through legislation. Through the outings program, Adams himself would become a disciple of wilderness and join the fight to preserve wildlands.

While Adams had responsibilities at the LeConte Lodge, Colby invited him to accompany the club on the first days of their 1923 outing. Adams credits this as his indoctrination to Sierra Club ideals, as well as his introduction to the conservation world (Adams, 1978, p. 594). It was not until 1927 that Adams took part in his first full Sierra Club outing, which journeyed to Sequoia National Park. This trip allowed Adams to build friendships and gave him time to make photographs of the wild places he loved. This outing seemed to further charge his interest in the Sierra Club. That fall, Ansel would spend time at the club's San Francisco office; he became involved and committed to the club's agenda (Adams, 1985).

The 1928 outing was to be held in the Canadian Rockies, and Colby asked Adams to join the trip as official photographer, all expenses paid. Adams accepted and notes that he was rarely required to take specific pictures. The work was self-motivated. In commemoration of the trip, Adams made a portfolio of prints that sold for \$30 to members of the outing. These were a success, and Adams also prepared portfolios for the 1929, 1930, and 1932 High Sierra trips.

In the early thirties, Adams assumed leadership as Assistant Manager in the Sierra Club outings, which earned him a certain notoriety. His job entailed a host of tasks, from selecting the next day's campsite to arranging for the evening entertainment. In his little free time he set out to make photographs (Adams, 1985). Club members of the 1934 outing showed their approval and great appreciation of Adams' leadership by agreeing that a peak in Lyell Meadows be named Mount Ansel Adams (Currier, 1935). While unofficial (natural features

cannot be named after a living person), people did return a week later on July 11, 1934 to hold dedication ceremonies on Mount Ansel Adams' summit (Newhall, 1963, p. 74).

The original goals of the outings as stated by Colby seemed to be accomplished. The outings provided fellowship and drummed up support for wildlands. Unfortunately, the events were not without negative impacts. The club trips generally involved about two hundred participants, fifty helpers, and pack animals. Adams listed pine bough cutting for bedding material, firewood cutting, burying trash and throwing cans down rock crevices to be covered by a rock as common practices. He even mentions the burning of an entire foxtail pine at Moraine Lake (Adams, 1978, pp. 591-593). By the late 1940s, the club began questioning the ecological consequences of the High Trips; by the 1960s, the traditional High Trips were discontinued (Gilliam, 1979, p. 136).

Cohen writes that Ansel Adams, David Brower, Richard Leonard and Bestor Robinson "became prominent in Club outings during the 1930s, and represented the new aesthetic, philosophic, analytic, and practical directions for Club thinking (Cohen, 1988, p. 67)." It is these four men who Cohen identifies as characterizing the third generation of leaders. This generation would formulate new ideas as they reconsidered the club's past policies and attitudes relating to recreation and national parks. Sierra Club outings would be significantly altered to reduce ecological impacts, and the club would play a significant role in the battle to pass and implement a wilderness bill.

Sierra Club Bulletin

If Adams was not known by members through the outings programs, he was widely known through the use of his photographs in the Sierra Club Bulletin. The club began publishing this periodical in 1893. Within its pages, Adams would over the years contribute hundreds of photographs and writings as well. This periodical, as the Sierra Club's voice, reported the accounts of club outings and activities. Furthermore, it served to inform club members of the state of particular environmental issues.

Adams' first photographic contribution to the Sierra Club Bulletin was in 1922 when his photograph of an unnamed rock tower was published with the accompaniment of a mountaineering note (Newhall, 1963, p. 35). In 1928, Adams joined the editorial board in charge of photographs (Adams, 1978, p. 669). Adams, as well as other photographers, granted permission to publish their photographs free of charge. The club had the privilege of publishing quality photographs, while the photographers undoubtedly received free publicity.

Not only did Adams contribute his powerful vision through photographs, he also contributed high quality writing. An excerpt from Adams' description of the 1931 High Trip is written with religious fervor:

No matter how sophisticated you may be, a large granite mountain cannot be denied - it speaks in silence to the very core of your being. There are some that care not to listen but the disciples are drawn to the high altars with magnetic certainty, knowing that a great Presence hovers over the ranges. You felt all this the very first day, for you were within the portals of the temple (Adams, 1932).

Another article by Adams appeared in 1931. Adams had started taking back country winter trips in 1929 for the Yosemite Park and Curry Company, which operates concessions in Yosemite National Park. His job was to capture winter sports activities for publicity purposes. "Ski-Experience" (Adams, 1931a) was written about his 1930 winter trip into the snow-covered Sierra wilderness and included photographs.

Adams also took up advertising space in the Bulletin (Adams, 1931b). His advertisement solicits for buyers of his landscape photographs, as well as for commissioned photographic work. The members of the Sierra Club were not only his friends and associates, but were also a part of his clientele.

Adams' contributions to the Sierra Club Bulletin, both written and photographic, were undoubtedly appreciated. In return, Adams received good press and free publicity. For example, in 1928 Joseph LeConte wrote a review in the Bulletin that highly praised Adams' first portfolio, "Parmelian Prints of the High Sierras." Adams had already acquired a reputation within the ranks of the Sierra Club, as seen in LeConte's statement: "The fact that they are the handiwork of Ansel Adams is sufficient to guarantee their artistic perfection to members of our club (LeConte, 1928, p. 96)."

Of Adams' contributions through the Bulletin, Francis Farquhar wrote that

the reproduction of so many of Ansel Adams' photographs in the Bulletin, and in other publications of the Club, had a wide effect in stimulating public interest in the natural scene. Ansel can dramatize the beauty of the scene and carry it through to the public (Farquhar, 1972, pp. 52-53).

### Sierra Club Board

At the age of 32 (1934), Adams was elected to the Sierra Club Board of Directors. Until that time, Adams' leadership roles had been assisting with the High Trips and chairing the Winter Sports Committee. His chairmanship of the Winter Sports Committee gave him his initial opportunity to have an impact on the Club's policy making process. In late 1930, under Adams' leadership, this committee recommended that the club support a program which would encourage winter trips and expeditions into the back country of the Sierra Nevada. Furthermore, they recommended that the club not support snow sports involving resort facilities (Cohen, 1988, p.78; Sierra Club, 1947).

In his position as a Board Director, Adams had the opportunity to play an important role in guiding club policy for 37 consecutive years. Richard Leonard called Adams "the conscience of the Sierra Club" (Leonard, 1978). Leonard believed Adams to be an absolute purist in the environmental movement. However, within the literature about and by Adams there is much evidence to suggest that Adams' position was not black or white. Cohen's (1988) account of the rerouting of the Tioga Road in Yosemite National Park seems to be an excellent example of Ansel's purism in the 1950s. However, Cohen does not reveal that Adams had earlier pushed for the Minaret Summit Road, which would bisect the John Muir Trail. Adams acknowledged that people exist, and from that perspective, he pushed for a road in the area he believed to be least important. He was interested in "saving the most" or rather the best (Adams, 1978, pp. 598-599).

In reading accounts and correspondence regarding Adams and the Tioga Road during the 1950s, Adams' position was quite purist in the context of this specific site (Adams, 1985, pp. 154-156; Cohen, 1988, pp. 99-100, 134-142). With great emotion, Adams fought the National Park Service's plan to route the road along the polished granite shores of Tenaya Lake. In 1948, Richard Leonard and Adams had proposed an alternate road that would bypass Tenaya Lake. The Sierra Club was slow to act upon the proposal, and construction began before the board met with agreement. At that time, the director of the National Park Service, Conrad Wirth, proposed "Mission 66." This program threatened to bring increasing numbers of people and automobile traffic to the national parks, which would require additional infrastructure.

The Club's own statement of purpose had changed in 1951 to "explore, enjoy, and preserve the Sierra Nevada and other scenic resources of the United States (Cohen, 1988, p. 100)." Emphasis was taken away from "making accessible" as they realized the wilderness could be "loved to death." Ansel's strongest allegiance would always belong to the wilderness lands of Yosemite National Park. The threat of overdevelopment and the desecration of Yosemite's wilderness was of great concern to him.

In a last effort to protect the granite shore of Tenaya Lake, Adams resigned from his position on the Sierra Club board and sent an impassioned July 7, 1958 telegram to Secretary of the Interior, Fred Seaton, Secretary of Commerce, Sinclair Weeks, and director of the National Park Service, Conrad Wirth. Adams wrote:

AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND NOT AS A DIRECTOR OF THE SIERRA CLUB OR AS A TRUSTEE OF TRUSTEES FOR CONSERVATION I WISH TO LODGE A MOST SINCERE AND SEVERE PROTEST AGAINST THE DESECRATION OF TENAYA LAKE AND THE ADJOINING CANYON IN YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK WHICH IS BEING PERPETRATED BY THE RUTHLESS CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW TIOGA ROAD FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE BY THE BUREAU OF PUBLIC ROADS. THE CATASTROPHIC DAMAGE IS ENTIRELY UNNECESSARY AND VIOLATES THE PRINCIPLES EXPRESSED IN THE NATIONAL PARK ORGANIC ACT OF 1916 WHICH IS ACCEPTED BY OUR PEOPLE AS THE BASIS OF PROTECTION OF OUR MAGNIFICENT NATURAL SCENE FOR OUR TIME AND FOR THE TIME TO COME. I CONSIDER THIS DESECRATION AN ACT OF DISREGARD OF THESE BASIC CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES WHICH APPROACHES CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE ON THE PART OF THE BUREAUS CONCERNED. I URGENTLY REQUEST YOU ISSUE AND ORDER IMMEDIATE CESSATION OF WORK ON THE TIOGA ROAD IN THE TENAYA LAKE AREA UNTIL A TRULY COMPETENT GROUP CAN STUDY THE PROBLEMS AND SUGGEST WAYS AND MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING COMPLETION OF THIS PROJECT WITH MINIMUM DAMAGE. I HAVE NEVER OPPOSED APPROPRIATE IMPROVEMENT OF THE TIOGA ROAD BUT IN 40 YEARS' EXPERIENCE IN NATIONAL PARK AND WILDERNESS AREAS I HAVE NEVER WITNESSED SUCH AN INSENSITIVE DISREGARD OF PRIME NATIONAL PARK VALUES (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, p. 251).

Politicians from Washington and from San Francisco's regional office of the Park Service rushed to Yosemite to meet with Adams and Yosemite's superintendent and chief ranger. During this meeting, Adams voiced his concerns. According to Adams, a gentleman's agreement had been secured to route the road away from the granite slopes. To Adams' dismay, the granite slope on the shore of Tenaya Lake was blasted as the route was never changed.

Adams' resignation from the board was not accepted and he continued as a director. His horror over the Tioga Road situation urged him to speak out in defense of wilderness values over human agendas. In the closing lines of a July 1957 letter to Sierra Club president, Harold Bradley, treasurer, Richard Leonard, and executive director, David Brower, Adams wrote:

... I think we must take the attitude that - in the face of the enormous spiritual and inspirational value of the Parks and the wilderness areas - NO bureau, no plan, no established project, no road, no concessionaire, no works of man of any kind has consequential value. We must proceed as if all of these factors did not exist.

They are expendable - the Parks are not... (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, p. 248).

Adams played his role in Sierra Club campaigns. Sometimes he was more involved by way of speaking out, writing, and providing photographs. Other times he simply voted his approval or disapproval. The Sierra Club's board and members diligently worked towards appropriate wilderness legislation through Congress. Adams was satisfied with the 1964 Wilderness Act, but expressed disappointment that the club could not directly negotiate with the United States Forest Service (Adams, 1978, pp. 690, 703). He felt that more could have been accomplished had Brower not alienated the agencies.

In the 1960s, the board pressed Pacific Gas and Electric Company to change their proposed nuclear power plant site at Nipomo Dunes. These dunes had been designated as a future state park. Upon changing the site to Diablo Canyon, some, including Adams, were satisfied, while others began a new fight to save Diablo Canyon (Adams, 1985; Cohen, 1988).

In the February 1967 Sierra Club Bulletin, Adams and William Siri (1967) co-authored an article "In Defense of a Victory: The Nipomo Dunes." Adams voted not to oppose Diablo Canyon, believing this to be cooperation and not compromise (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, pp. 300-302).

Adams desired to retire from his position as director for ten years before he actually retired in 1971. The club had grown from a local, elitist organization dealing with things such as outings, the Bulletin, and the mountains of California to a national, popular organization dealing with such items as a multi-million dollar budget, lawsuits, and nuclear power. Adams felt he did not have the technical expertise to be effective in light of the "new" Sierra Club. Furthermore, Adams was disillusioned with what he termed the "shin-kicking" tactics of the 1960s under David Brower. "Shin-kicking" referred to the breakdown of communications between the club and federal agencies, notably the United States Forest Service. This was largely due to the antagonistic and uncompromising approach of David Brower and his followers (Adams, 1978, p. 596). He remembered with fondness the days of the 1930s and 1940s when club leaders and federal agencies worked cooperatively and respectfully in negotiations (Adams, 1978, pp.712-721).

In 1971 and again in 1974, the board voted unanimously to elect Adams as an honorary vice president of the club. However, in protest to "shin-kicking" tactics, Ansel both times refused the honor. In 1971, he specifically refused the honor due to the election of David Brower as an honorary vice-president. In 1978, hard feelings seemed to have dissipated as Adams accepted his election as an honorary vice-president (Leonard, 1978; Adams, 1978, p.675).

When Adams embarked on his tenure as a director for the Sierra Club, his reputation related largely to Sierra Club members and the art community. At the end of his lengthy tenure on the Board of Directors,

Adams was internationally known on a popular level. Through countless publications and exhibitions, his work had reached people of all walks of life.

Adams' greatest contribution through the Sierra Club must be identified as the effective use of his photographs in drawing political attention to, as well as promoting public appreciation of, America's wilderness lands. According to Adams, his "creative" photographs were not made with the intention of contributing to environmental issues. However, he was certainly pleased when they did make a contribution (Adams, 1985, p. 1).

#### Kings Canyon Campaign

One of the most widely cited examples of Adams' photographs impacting an environmental issue is the campaign for the Kings Canyon National Park (Cahn and Ketchum, 1981; Cohen, 1988; Jussim and Lindquist-Cock, 1985). The campaign for a national park in the southern Sierra was not a new idea. John Muir and Robert Underwood Johnson had previously proposed a national park in the Kings River watershed (Cohen, 1988, p. 6). Colby battled for the national park beginning in 1912. He attained partial success in 1926 and then lobbied for another 14 years for the enlargement of the park. This park was the club's main conservation effort to the year 1940 (Cohen, 1988, p. 34).

Adams took part in the campaign for Kings Canyon National Park in the 1930s (Adams, 1978, 1985; Cahn and Ketchum, 1981; Newhall, 1963). He had the opportunity to explore and photograph the remote Kings Canyon region as the LeContes' guest in 1924 and 1925 and during several Sierra

Club outings in the 1930s. His travels in the area allowed Adams to build a good selection of powerful photographic images that had the ability to move people on both an emotional and aesthetic level.

On a political level, the images that Adams created were recognized to have great value by the Sierra Club Board of Directors. In January of 1936, a conference dealing with the future of state and national parks was held. The Board asked Adams to go to Washington to lobby for the proposed Kings Canyon National Park. Adams accepted the challenge and prepared a portfolio of enlargements. In Washington, Adams spoke with and showcased his photographs to senators and congressmen. He spoke at the conference, which allowed the Sierra Club's position to be heard and provided Adams the opportunity to meet Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes. The attendees of the conference also had the opportunity to see his photographs, as they were displayed on easels outside the conference room.

In 1939, Kings Canyon National Park had still not been designated. Adams' book Sierra Nevada: The John Muir Trail (1938) had recently been completed as a memorial to the son of Sierra Club director Walter Starr. Starr's son Peter had died climbing alone in the Minarets, and it was Starr's wish that the memorial book be of the optimum quality. Produced in a small edition of 500 with tipped in engravings, a copy was sent to Secretary of the Interior Ickes early in 1939. Ickes showed the book to President Roosevelt, who was so impressed with it that Ickes gave him the book. Upon hearing this news, Adams sent Ickes a second copy. Adams' book appears to have won Roosevelt's favor, as he joined Ickes in pressing Congress to pass the bill for Kings Canyon National Park.

Adams certainly cannot be given sole credit in the victory for the national park, but his personal contributions proved to be a great asset to the campaign. His photographs created a powerful base from which he could work. His carefully executed book was received with great enthusiasm by a wide range of people including artists and politicians. Arno Cammerer, Director of the National Park Service, wrote to Adams in December of 1938:

The work of John Muir to bring the wonders of the Sierra Nevada to the attention of the world, so that practical protective measures would be enacted, is fittingly supplemented by the work of your camera (Newhall, 1963, p. 165).

After the national park was established in 1940, Cammerer again wrote to Adams:

I realize that a silent but most effective weapon in the campaign was your own work.... So long as that book is in existence it will go to justifying the park (Newhall, 1963, p. 165).

#### Book Publishing

Adams hoped to reach a broader audience through quality club publications. His suggestions and comments (Cohen, 1988, p. 254) on the dull format of conservation literature seemingly spurred the Sierra Club into its publishing ventures of "exhibit format" books such as This Is the American Earth (Adams and Newhall, 1960) and In Wildness Is the Preservation of the World (Porter, 1962). Graber (1976) suggests that these photographs set a standard for the wilderness idea. In reference to this standard, David Brower wrote of Adams:

As a photographer of great places, he came quickly to discover what did not belong in those places.... He quickly learned to single out the little and big things that eroded the mood (Graber, 1976).

These photographs shaped perceptions by making the viewer believe that if they were to "step into the photograph," this is what the wilderness experience should be. Distributed on a national level, the books found their way to the coffee tables of hundreds of American homes. The books pushed to revise the myths about wilderness and to change public attitudes about wilderness and conservation in general. Other exhibit format books, such as The Last Redwoods (Hyde and Leydet, 1963) and Time and the River Flowing: Grand Canyon (Leydet, 1964) were a part of specific Sierra Club campaigns. Adams' Sierra Nevada: The John Muir Trail (1938) proved how effective a book could be on a political level. Drawing from this knowledge, Brower geared books to support specific Sierra Club battles. These books would entice the viewer with beautiful photographs. Then as one began to read the text, she or he would discover that these beautiful landscapes were threatened, and would be told what to do to help.

This Is the American Earth was the first exhibit format book. This book was derived from the 1955 exhibit of the same title held in the LeConte Lodge. It was through this exhibit that Adams felt he had made his greatest contribution as a member on the Sierra Club board. The government expressed interest in making LeConte Lodge a geologic museum. Adams proposed instead that the Sierra Club create an exhibit which would espouse Sierra Club principles of conservation. He enlisted his friend and fellow conservationist, Nancy Newhall, to help develop the exhibit. Newhall researched the concept and, with assistance from David Brower, designed the exhibit. Newhall utilized photography, writing, and natural objects to bring together the human and natural

elements of conservation. Adams collected the photographs, which included his own work as well as the work of thirty-two other photographers. Produced in two months, this exhibit was so successful that duplicates were produced for national distribution by the Smithsonian Institution and for international distribution by the United States Information Service. The exhibit was shown at such places as the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco and the Museum of Science in Boston (Adams, 1978, pp. 462-471, 711-712).

Following the success of the exhibit, David Brower suggested that they adapt the exhibit for book format. Newhall again was largely responsible for the layout, and expanded the text she had written for the exhibit. Upon completion, this book was given to members of Congress and the Senate, and won critical acclaim for the Club (Adams, 1978, pp. 462-471, 667).

This Is the American Earth became a model for future Sierra Club books and spurred the Club into a tradition of publishing books for the general public. It provided an outlet for publishing the works of Adams and other photographers, such as Philip Hyde and Eliot Porter. Hyde and Porter gained reputations as environmental photographers through their publishing ventures with the club. As Adams could not provide all the photographs for campaigns, the door was opened for new photographers.

The publishing program under David Brower had Adams' strong support in the beginning. Adams defended the program in light of criticism from the Publications Committee chair, August Fruge, in 1963. Fruge's criticism addressed such issues as the role of publishing within the club, subject matter, and the allocation of time and money (Cohen,

1988, pp. 294-297). By 1964, Adams did criticize the publishing program for producing exhibit format books he believed to be inferior in quality (Cohen, 1988, p.346). By 1968, Adams' support for David Brower and the publishing program had diminished (Cohen, 1988, pp. 400-402). Adams was concerned about the publishing program's financial losses, fearing that bankruptcy for the Sierra Club might also spell doom for his own finances as an individual, "legally responsible" director (Cohen, 1988, pp. 410-411).

In retrospect, Adams claimed that the hardbound books were elitist, reaching those already sympathetic to the ideas. He felt paperback books could reach a larger audience and had the possibility of being successful financially (Adams, 1978, p. 667). It must be critically noted, however, that Adams may have initially supported the Club's exhibit format books because they provided an outlet for the publication of his own work with the quality he insisted upon. The Sierra Club printed Adams' work in a number of elegant books such as These We Inherit (1962) and Ansel Adams: The Eloquent Light (1963). His growing fame provided him with many outlets to publish his own work in high quality, "elitist" books without the Sierra Club. In 1976, Adams began an exclusive publishing agreement with the New York Graphic Society, a division of Little, Brown and Company.

Despite Adams' eventual reservations in regard to the book program, it is widely acknowledged that the books did have a great impact (Cohen, 1988; Farquhar, 1979; Graber, 1976). The acceleration of the membership and income via membership dues have been credited to

the publishing program (Cohen, 1988, p. 276). According to Farquhar, the Sierra Club books embellished with the photographs of Adams and other photographers "stimulated the world at large to join the work of preserving our primitive country and to prevent despoilation by modern industry (Farquhar, 1972, p. 52)."

## CHAPTER 6

## ADAMS THE INDIVIDUAL

The impact of Ansel Adams on wilderness appreciation went beyond his involvement in the Sierra Club. This chapter reviews the impact he had as an individual. Adams' work as an individual and as a member of the Sierra Club interrelate and at times are not easily separated. As in the case of the Tioga Road, Adams worked through the Sierra Club at the outset, but in the end, exercised his influence as an individual. As the years progressed, Adams became very well known. His photographic work was celebrated throughout the world, and people cared about how he felt and what he believed.

Adams and the Yosemite Park and Curry Company

Adams devotes a short chapter of his autobiography to the Yosemite Park and Curry Company (YPCC), which is the business that operates concessions in Yosemite National Park (Adams, 1985, pp. 181-191). When Adams was starting out as a photographer, the YPCC was his most important client. Through the YPCC, Adams had the opportunity to make photographs in Yosemite, earning \$10 a day (\$5 a day during the Depression) with all expenses paid.

Adams' first photographic job for the YPCC was in 1929. Don Tressider, President of YPCC, asked Adams if he would photograph winter activities for publicity purposes. The Ahwahnee Hotel had been

completed in 1926, and the concessioners were interested in boosting winter visitation to the park.

Through David Brower's position as publicity manager of YPCC in the 1930s, Brower and Adams became close associates and friends. Published materials produced by the YPCC frequently included photographs produced by Adams. His images were found in advertisements, magazine articles and even on the cover of the Awhanee's dining room menu. While some of the images were drawn from his creative work, many were contracted images with people and activities depicting Yosemite as a playground.

Although Adams made money through the YPCC, he was not afraid to offer criticism. He felt that the people running the concessions and the park were not overly concerned with the park's protection or interpretation, but rather with making money and living comfortably. Concessioners pushed for new scenic roads that would attract more people (Adams, 1978, p. 265). More people meant more business. Adams once made reference to a man in charge of advertising and sales as one who lacked the essential "love and understanding of wilderness and its importance to society (Adams, 1985, p. 187)." He criticized their advertising objectives and the typical curios sold by concessioners.

Adams' involvement with the YPCC went beyond his work as a photographer of the natural scene. From 1929 to 1975, he acted as co-director of the Awhanee Hotel's annual Christmas dinner and theatrical performance. This event was initiated by the YPCC in 1927 to encourage winter visitation to Yosemite Valley. Adams' collaborator was the architect Jeanette Spencer, who suggested that they base the event

on Washington Irving's Christmas Dinner at Bracebridge Hall. The now famous and very popular "Bracebridge Dinner" continues to be held each Christmas as a cherished tradition.

### Best's Studio

Adams married Virginia Best, daughter of painter and YPCC concessioner Harry Best of Best's Studio, in 1928. In 1936, Harry Best died and Virginia became owner of the studio. The inheritance afforded them a place to live in Yosemite, as well as a place to sell Adams' photographic endeavors. Virginia and Ansel Adams found themselves able to provide high quality souvenirs instead of the typical items such as scarves imprinted with "Yosemite National Park." Beginning in 1957, "Special Edition" prints (8 x 10 inch photographic prints of selected Adams negatives printed by his assistant) were offered to the public as a quality souvenir. Best's Studio (renamed Ansel Adams Gallery in 1972) sold and still sells quality books, postcards, notecards, and other souvenirs.

Adams' involvement with the YPCC and Best's Studio gave him a voice in the way Yosemite was presented to the public. The assemblage of consumer products at the Ansel Adams Gallery largely depicts the beauty of Yosemite's wilderness. These photographs do not conjure up memories or expectations of a crowded valley with traffic jams and buildings, but rather of a pristine landscape devoid of any human impacts. His photographs depict the ideal.

### The Social Significance of a Rock

The 1930s marked Adams' first decade fully dedicated to photography. Meeting photographer Paul Strand in 1930 was a turning point in Adams' life. Strand's crisp and beautiful images inspired Adams to turn from the piano and devote his full attention to photography. He realized photography could be as profound and moving as great music. In 1932 Adams and other photographers organized the Group f/64 in opposition to the "fuzzy" images produced by the pictorialist photographers. This group promoted the vision of straight photography, which consisted of crisp, sharp images. This is the vision Adams remained loyal to for the remainder of his life.

The 1930s also marked the beginning of Adams' extensive career of exhibitions in art galleries and museums across the country. Adams' first New York City show was in 1933 at the Delphic Studios; another took place there in 1936 at Alfred Stieglitz's gallery, An American Place.

Although Adams was gaining renown in the art world, the context of his landscape photographs of the 1930s raised considerable criticism. While the Farm Security Administration photographers were documenting the social blight of the Depression, Adams was photographing pristine landscapes. The famous French photographer Cartier-Bresson criticized Adams for photographing rocks, when the world was "going to pieces (Adams, 1978, p. 498)." In 1934 Adams wrote to Edward Weston, who was also accused of this "crime." Adams wrote:

I still believe there is a real social significance in a rock - a more important significance therein than in a line of unemployed. For that opinion I am charged with

inhumanity, unawareness, - I am dead, through, finished, a social liability, one who will be "liquidated" when the "great day" comes. Let it come; I will try to adapt myself. But, Goddamnittohell, I refuse to liquidate myself in advance (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, p. 73)!

It strikes one as ironic that the man who was accused of being "elitist" and "anti-social" would today be lauded as one of the great shakers and movers of a social movement, the environmental movement. Depressions and wars come and go, but the landscape's existence is continuous. A place exists for both social documentary photography and purist landscape photography. Possibly, images of "pristine" natural beauty serve as a relief from the worst of human tragedies.

#### The Mural Project

Adams had good rapport with many of the Secretaries of the Interior, especially Ickes and Udall. His archives at the Center for Creative Photography (CCP) contain correspondence with various individuals within the United States Department of the Interior (USDI) spanning the years 1941 to 1979. Most of the correspondence is with the National Park Service (NPS). The first decade of correspondence relates largely to photography, i.e., projects, suggestions, and permission to use Adams' photographs. For example, Acting Regional Director Herbert Maier in San Francisco had seen a striking panorama of the Alps from the portfolio "Description géométrique détaillée des Alpes Françaises" and suggested that Adams might photograph the Cascades of Washington. The resulting photographs could then be used for publications, for exhibitions and for display in Park Service headquarters and offices (Maier, 1941).

In 1941, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes wrote to Adams asking that he photograph the national parks under sponsorship of the Department of the Interior (Adams, 1985, pp. 187-188, 271-291). Ickes was especially fond of Adams' mural scale work, having himself purchased a large three-panel photograph for the USDI which he displayed in his office. The project Ickes and Adams agreed upon was called the Mural Project. From the negatives produced for this project, Adams was to make mural size enlargements for the USDI's Washington, D.C. offices.

Actual photographic work for this project began in October of 1941. This was an ideal situation for Adams, who was paid to produce his creative photographs while retaining all rights to his negatives. It also provided Adams the opportunity to work seriously in regions away from Yosemite. He photographed in such places as Canyon de Chelly, Mesa Verde, Yellowstone, Rocky Mountain and Glacier National Parks. World War II brought the Mural Project to a close on July 1, 1942, never to be continued.

#### Guggenheim Fellowships

Adams applied for a Guggenheim Fellowship in hopes of continuing his interpretation of the natural scene he had begun under the Mural Project. A fellowship was granted to him in 1946 and renewed in 1948, and Adams again had the opportunity to travel and photograph such prized wildlands as Acadia, Olympic, Great Smoky Mountains, and Hawaii Volcanoes National Parks. The Interior Department cooperated with Adams in providing access and other help with his Guggenheim project. Under the gray summer skies of Alaska in 1948, Adams more clearly defined concepts

relating to wilderness. He was able to see the real value of "true" wilderness devoid of roads, interpretive signs, etc. He wrote:

As I spent the quiet days in the wild regions of Alaska, I clarified my own concepts of re-creation versus recreation. I saw more clearly the value of true wilderness and the dangers of diluting its finest areas with the imposed accessories of civilization. In Alaska I felt the full force of vast space and wildness (Adams, 1985, p. 288).

The Guggenheim Fellowships, like the Mural Project, were very important in allowing Adams to photograph outside of the Sierra Nevada. As Adams' photographs set guidelines for what wilderness should be and how it should look, his photographs could build interest in places not typically associated with wilderness, i.e., the desert regions of Death Valley, Joshua Tree, White Sands and Organ Pipe National Monuments.

With great numbers of outstanding negatives to add to his already significant stock, Adams now had enough material to publish books, produce exhibits, and print for sales for the remainder of his life. His prolific publishing of books and portfolios in the following years further enhanced his reputation.

Adams received a third Guggenheim in 1958, which allowed him to print the backlog of negatives produced during his two initial fellowships. Through this fellowship, his 1963 retrospective exhibition, "The Eloquent Light," was made possible. In 1964, the exhibition was shown at the new galleries of the Interior Department. While Adams could not attend the October 5th opening, he was informed that 700 of the 1,100 people invited came. Among the guests, Secretary of the Interior and Mrs. Udall were mentioned as his strongest "enthusiasts (USDI-NPS, 1964)."

Growing Clout - the 1960s

Adams' immense concern over the fate of Lake Tenaya in the late 1950s seemed to drive him to test his own individual powers as an environmental lobbyist. His desperate and irate July 7, 1958 wire to Washington (quoted on p. 34) produced immediate action. The Tioga Road incident caused Adams to realize he had the reputation and power to make powerful people take action.

Adams' strong convictions to protect the basic values of parks and wilderness areas against ensuing threats spurred him to exercise his power to persuade. Adams felt development was running rampant in wild areas. He saw a need for the passage of new legislation, such as the Wilderness Bill, that would add protection to these areas and secure remnants of true wilderness (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, pp. 244-246).

Undoubtedly, Adams' time had arrived. He was a definite character largely respected by politicians, the art community, and the American public. His ability to affect opinion went beyond the use of his photographs. His opinions were respected and solicited, as he was beginning to take on the status of a folk hero.

Adams was invited to functions pertaining to the environment such as the 1965 White House Conference on Natuaral Beauty, as well as the 1969 Statewide Conference on California's Changing Environment. While the growing demands on Adams' time prevented his attendance at these functions, the invitations illustrate his growing reputation. In 1969, he did except an invitation to dine with the members of the Congressional Subcommittee on Conservation and Natural Resources during their San Francisco meeting (Steele, 1969).

Adams' work was respected even at the level of the office of the President of the United States. The book, A More Beautiful America, was produced by Adams and Newhall (1965) at the request of President and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson. In this book, Adams' photographs were printed with excerpts from President Johnson's speeches (Adams, 1985, p. 344).

The National Park Service not only continued to request the use of Adams' photographs for purposes such as its own publications, but administrators and staff also met with Adams on issues relating to the interpretive program and the quality of publications (Gleason, 1964 and 1966). A letter from the the Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services' chief William Everhart (1965) thanks Adams for a reception at the Adams' home, which related to the interpretive program.

In July of 1959, Adams wrote his friends Olaus Murie (Wilderness Society President) and his wife Margaret expressing his resolution to speak out in defense of the environment on every possible occasion (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, pp. 259-260). Adams was committed to do what he could within his power. He lived up to his resolution, as witnessed in the hundreds of letters written to people in high places, including governors, presidents, senators, and congressmen. These letters express his concerns and beliefs related to general issues such as the national parks, as well as specific issues such as particular road proposals. He also wrote endorsements for political candidates with environmentally compatible policies.

Adams was contacted on a regular basis by people requesting that he express his opinions to specific individuals. For example, on February 17, 1961 Adams received a letter from J.F. Carithers, assistant

editor of National Wildland News. Carithers asked him to write Secretary of the Interior Udall and express his views on a recent Atlantic article written by editor of National Wildland News, Deverau Butcher. Knowing that Udall admired Adams and his work, Carithers felt that Adams had the potential of making a significant impact. Generally, Adams granted requests of this type. On March 2, 1961, Adams received another letter from Carithers thanking Adams for his excellent letter (Carithers, 1961).

Another example of people requesting Adams to exercise his influence involves the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). With the understanding that the head executives of CBS were greatly impressed with Adams and his work, Russ Butcher of the National Audubon Society requested that Adams exercise his influence. Butcher asked Adams to write a letter to the president of CBS requesting that they retelevise the program "Bulldozed America" and give attention to advanced promotion (Butcher, 1966). Adams responded quickly to Butcher's letter of March 28, 1966, writing the requested letter to CBS President Frank Stanton on March 31, 1966 (Adams, 1966b).

The Adams archives also include notes from members of Congress with printed matter related to wilderness issues (Farr, 1968; Neuburger, 1961). Adams often returned notes of thanks and advice (Adams, 1961b).

#### Calls for Public Education and Appreciation

Adams' deep concern for spreading the message of wilderness preservation and environmental quality to the larger public is evidenced in many of his addresses. He addressed this concern at two Wilderness

Conferences (Adams, 1961, 1963), the Governor's Conference on California Beauty (Adams, 1966a), Occidental College's 1967 Commencement (Adams, 1967b), at Yale University's School of Forestry (Adams, 1970), and at the University of California, Berkeley, College of Natural Resources (Adams, 1975).

Adams found the two Wilderness Conferences he attended boring, i.e., sympathetic believers talking to other sympathetic believers (Adams, 1978, p. 683). He served as chairman for a discussion session at the Eighth Biennial Wilderness Conference. In his opening remarks, Adams encouraged the attendees to:

get out into the world and spread this information and this inspiration in the vast areas where it is most deeply needed. We cannot indulge in this personal euphoria of talking over and over with ourselves on things we mutually agree upon. We need the stimulation, but it must carry on out into the world to become truly effective (Adams, 1963, p. 91).

Furthermore, he stated:

We have a tremendous population, millions of people who affect Congressmen and political ideas. And I frankly say I have been around a great deal, and on various levels of culture in this country, and I am not encouraged by the general attitude toward or understanding of the wilderness and nature of the large mass of our people. And this is the field in which we must work for education and the creation of true excitement (Adams, 1963, p.91).

The National Park Service had before this time concentrated on the "pleasuring grounds" aspect of the National Parks, which encouraged commercialization, development and exploitation. The American people were enticed to the national parks with such events as the Firefall in Yosemite. The Firefall, which was not abolished until 1968, consisted

of a huge bonfire being pushed over the edge of Glacier Point, cascading 3,000 feet to the valley below.

The exploitation seen in the parks seemed to reflect an anthropocentric philosophy towards the national parks. Adams desired to reshape these perceptions by focusing on and building understanding of the associated intangible wilderness values. Adams felt strongly that protected natural areas should be called reserves as opposed to parks. He stated:

Park implies recreational characteristics. Point Lobos Reserve defines what it is. It should be Yosemite National Reserve; then you wouldn't have such inducement for entertainment and development (Burris, 1977, p. 39).

Promoting protection rather than exploitation was Adams' goal. His opinions relating to this topic were heard in 1961 by Wallace Stegner, who at the time had been appointed Secretary Udall's special assistant (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, p.274-280), and by Senator Maurine Neuberger (Adams, 1961). In a letter to Neuberger, Adams expressed his feeling that the responsibility of public education in regard to intangible values lies with people who can interpret the natural scene with great excitement and emotion. Since wilderness appreciation is primarily based on emotional, spiritual and inspirational feelings, Adams felt that support could best be gained by creating excitement at the emotional level. Photography, as well as other arts, were suggested as powerful tools which could accomplish this task.

As an artist, Adams recognized the potential of his medium to change public perceptions. His dramatic black and white photographs are not mirrors of reality, but symbols of the deeper values to be found in

nature. Regarding Ansel Adams' work as a photographer, Nancy Newhall wrote:

The spectres of originality or of stereotype do not bother Adams. He approaches the weariest subject of the postcard makers as if only the wind had passed that way before. He knows his power. He knows he can make the commonplace into what only poetry and perhaps religion can explain (Newhall, 1963, p.18).

### Deviations

In general, Adams was quite careful in how his photographs and his reputation were used. Adams did receive considerable criticism for two ventures. In 1969, Hills Brothers printed one of Adams' Yosemite images on their three-pound coffee can. In 1973, Adams cooperated with Nissan Motor Corporation's campaign "Drive a Datsun, Plant a Tree." In the television ad, Adams is shown working with his camera next to a Datsun vehicle on a forest road (Adams really drove a Cadillac). In the commercial he states:

A forest can rebuild itself, but the same type of trees may not grow back. And it takes a long time ... sometimes as long as eighty years. When man gets involved, nature needs a helping hand.... Companies like Datsun, the car company, are paying for thousands of seedlings to be planted in National Forests throughout our country. Through programs like this, we can help nature rebuild... (Adams, 1985, p. 178).

During this campaign, Nissan paid the Forest Service to plant a tree for each time a person test-drove a Datsun. Furthermore, that person received a poster of one of Adams' photographs.

Adams' growing fame and influence seemed to make him evaluate his responsibilities and ethics. In his autobiography, Adams wrote:

Since my participation in the Datsun advertisement over ten years ago, I have not allowed the association of my

photographs with a commercial product. I have been offered extravagant sums of money with the intention that Winter Sunrise be splashed across magazine pages and billboards on behalf of a whiskey. I choose instead to have images reproduced on behalf of the causes I believe in: creative photography and environmental protection (Adams, 1985, p. 361).

While Adams held true to this resolution, it is now the Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust (established in 1975) that has full control over the reproduction rights of Adams' photographs. With Adams' death in 1984, it was these trustees who would control the use of his photographs.

In 1986, Rockwell International ran a series of three ads pairing Yosemite National Park with Tactical Weapons Systems, the Sierra Nevada with the U.S. Air Force B-1B Long-Range Combat Aircraft, and the California redwoods with the space shuttle. These ads ran in four defense and aerospace publications, as well as The National Journal, a political weekly. Utilizing one of Adams' Yosemite photographs on a two-page spread, one ad totes the phrase "Like Yosemite National Park, Tactical Weapons Systems are a national resource" (Rockwell International, 1986). Adams had expressed great concern about the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the dangers of a nuclear war (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, p. 361). In fact, Adams had allowed one of his photographs to be used on the cover of a leaflet entitled "No Time to Lose," which dealt with peace and the disarmament of nuclear weapons. Published by the peace organization, American Friends Service Committee (n.d.), this pamphlet urged citizens to write "today to the President and your Senators and Congressman that you want our Government to reach agreement with the Soviet Union and Great Britain to ban - and to destroy - all nuclear

weapons." Great sums of money must have been involved to induce his trustees to defy Adams' trust.

#### 1970s - Maximizing Effect

In the 1970s, increasing pressures mounted as demands for Adams' time grew. Besides art related projects, Adams received numerous requests related to environmental concerns. Speaking at conferences, granting interviews, sitting on advisory boards, providing photographs, and lending the prestige of his name for fundraising were typical requests made during this time. Furthermore, as environmental issues broadened, there were new concerns to address, such as coastal protection. Adams' 1971 heart attack seemed to force him to deal seriously with the prioritization of his activities.

Adams desired to make scheduling decisions based upon maximum effectiveness. He made two decisions in 1971 that would help him better structure his activities to meet this goal. First, his resignation from the Sierra Club Board of Directors in September 1971 freed up time and gave him greater freedom to speak as an individual. He felt he could accomplish as much, or more, as a regular member of the club (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, p. 312). Essentially, Adams was acknowledging that it was as an individual that he had the potential of producing maximum effect.

The second decision Adams made was to hire William Turnage in 1971 as the manager of the Ansel Adams Gallery in Yosemite Valley. Eventually Turnage became Adams' full-time business manager. Turnage's graduate degrees from Yale University's School of Organization and

Management and School of Forestry and Environmental Sciences made him a truly ideal manager for Adams. Turnage managed Adams' business affairs and provided advice for the prioritization of growing demands and opportunities to the year 1977. Turnage understood how Adams could have the greatest impact on environmental issues.

One of the most important suggestions Turnage made was that Adams make a final deadline for print orders. Setting a price of \$800 for a 16 x 20 inch print, Adams publicly announced he would not be taking orders for public sale past December 31, 1975 (Adams, 1985, p. 362). This decision had two major consequences. First, upon completing these orders, Adams would have considerably more time to pursue new projects. Secondly, the prices for his photographs would escalate to absurd levels in a relatively short period of time, directing even more attention to Adams.

Correspondence of the 1970s suggests that Adams was back to "sitting around the table." He was meeting with people of importance discussing environmental issues. Some of these meetings were informal, while others were highly organized. One of the more interesting meetings was instigated by the National Park Service. This conference-workshop was related to the Clean Air Act Amendments which were enacted on August 7, 1977. Turnage felt that Adams' participation in this conference would be very important (USDI-NPS, 1977).

This clean air conference was held at Adams' Carmel home on October 14, 1977. It brought together seven "authorities" of different disciplines: photographer Ansel Adams, meteorologist Dr. Robert Charlson, environmentalist Dr. Raymond Dasmann, artist Alan Gussow,

educator Dr. John Schaefer, geophysicist Dr. Alan Waggoner, and humanist Willi Unsoeld. The goal of the conference was to clearly define natural area visibility as it relates to Federal Class I Areas such as national parks and national wilderness areas. A byproduct of this gathering was a government pamphlet entitled "Seven Authorities Speak Out on Visibility: Clean Air and Unique Natural Areas" (USDI-NPS, 1978). Adams earned his title as "authority" not through formal education, but through his life's passion of focusing his artistic endeavors on natural landscapes.

Adams' time pressures did not allow him to accept invitations to participate in each conference considered important. However, at times Adams suggested that Turnage be his representative. In 1972, Turnage represented Adams at the Conservation Foundation's Symposium on the National Parks held at Yosemite National Park, as well as the Second World Conference on National Parks held at Grand Teton National Park (Adams, 1972a; 1972b). Adams' confidence in Turnage's ability to represent him gave Adams a "voice" despite the lack of his physical presence.

The relationship between Adams and Turnage was mutually beneficial. Turnage obviously made important contacts which would further his own career, as illustrated by his 1978 appointment as Wilderness Society president. A letter of March 11, 1977 from Adams to Robert L. Herbst, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fisheries, Wildlife and Parks, appears to be written by Turnage and commented upon and signed by Adams. The letter congratulates Herbst on his appointment in the new Carter administration, expresses some ideas and, most importantly, encourages

Herbst to meet with Bill Turnage to discuss "our thoughts, concerns and ideas (Adams, 1977)."

A short note from Herbst to Adams dated March 28, 1977 thanks Adams for the letter and Turnage's visit. Herbst expresses his appreciation for Adams' advice and offer to help "as you are an individual I've greatly admired over the years." Herbst further thanks Adams for the gift of a book, which probably was sent with Turnage (Herbst, 1977).

These examples illustrate how Adams' fame was used for decisive political advantage. The gesture of book giving was not new. It was known that giving a book of beautiful photographs could have an impact, as was illustrated in the case of the Kings Canyon campaign. Art dealer Harry Lunn gave President and Mrs. Ford a copy of Adams' Images 1923-1974 in 1974. The Fords then requested a print of their favorite image. Adams seized the opportunity to personally present the print and meet with the President in January 1975. Accompanied by Turnage, Adams was also able to discuss his ideas for new national park initiatives. Adams had found a friend at the highest U.S. government office (Adams, 1985, pp. 346-347).

With the defeat of President Gerald Ford in the 1976 presidential election, Adams found an even better friend in President Jimmy Carter, who was sympathetic to environmental issues. Adams first met President and Mrs. Carter in late 1979 on commission by the National Portrait Gallery to make the official presidential portrait (the first to ever be done in the photographic medium).

This initial contact led to an immediate and mutual friendship, which even included an invitation to spend Thanksgiving with the Carters

in Georgia (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, p. 356). Adams, furthermore, presented President Carter with his book Yosemite and the Range of Light, and an original photograph (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, p. 357). The choice of photograph, "Mt. McKinley and Wonder Lake, Denali National Park, Alaska, 1948," seemed to be a symbolic gesture in relationship to the current fight for Alaskan wilderness, as well as an appreciative gesture for Carter's support of the needed measures.

In 1980, Carter presented Adams with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. His citation reads:

At one with the power of the American landscape, and renowned for the patient skill and timeless beauty of his work, photographer Ansel Adams has been visionary in his efforts to preserve this country's wild and scenic areas, both on film and on Earth. Drawn to the beauty of nature's monuments, he is regarded by environmentalists as a monument himself, and by photographers as a national institution. It is through his fortitude that so much of America has been saved for future Americans. Jimmy Carter (Adams, 1985, p. 348).

#### Last Efforts - Fighting Reagan and Watt

With increasing health problems, the 1980s found Adams as busy as ever. Three issues seem to dominate his last years on Earth. From 1979 to his death, Adams worked with his executive assistant, Mary Alinder, in documenting his life through the writing of his autobiography. Another prominent issue for Adams was the protection of the Big Sur Coast. Adams served as vice-president of the Big Sur Foundation from its founding in 1977 (Adams, 1985, p. 354). He worked with California Senator Alan Cranston, wrote letters, attended meetings, and took any opportunity he could find to put in a good word for the cause. Cranston

recollected that Adams "did not just talk with politicians, he worked us over; and his enthusiasm overwhelmed us (Cranston, 1984, p. 46)."

Perhaps the most significant opponent Adams took up during his last years was the Administration of President Ronald Reagan. He was dismayed with the defeat of Carter in the 1980 presidential election. The Reagan administration threatened to undermine many of the environmental advances he had supported and worked for during his lifetime. While he disapproved of the President himself, his most notable enemy was Secretary of the Interior, James Watt.

Adams' campaign against Secretary Watt was undertaken with great fervor. He cried the call to battle, urging the American people to "take up arms" in an ideological war against Watt and his supporters. In the closing of a letter to the public published May 3, 1981 in the San Jose Mercury News, Adams wrote:

We are fighting for our life and the future of our descendants. We must stand up and be counted! As a citizen I urge each of us to take on responsibility: write members of Congress, Secretary of the Interior Watt, and President Reagan; write or phone people you know and urge them to do the same. Impress on everyone you can that this is not just an "opinion" problem but the most intense threat we have ever faced to the integrity and future of our land.

I intend to fight this complex "Pearl Harbor" of our American earth to the limit of my abilities. I invite all to join with me to oppose Mr. Watt and his intended rampage. We can work together in clarity, truth, and dignity to protect our irreplaceable heritage.

'A letter a day (from a million people) might keep Watt away (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, p. 368)!'

Adams was also at "war" with Reagan. He wrote public letters to the American people, as well as private letters on a daily basis expressing his great concern regarding the Reagan administration. It

was certainly no secret how he felt. Adams' vocal dislike of the President resulted in a June 1983 invitation to meet with Reagan. Their 55 minute conversation was held on June 30th in Los Angeles. Adams took this opportunity seriously, as he would be the first environmentalist to meet with President Reagan. While Reagan obviously hoped to quiet Adams' bitter criticism, the meeting would give Adams even more ammunition. An interview with Adams by The Washington Post the following morning made front page news on July 3rd and was reproduced internationally (Russakoff, 1983). The article chronicles Adams' recollection of the interview. After Reagan detailed his own environmental accomplishments, Adams delivered a rebuttal detailing his concerns about national parks, wilderness areas, air, water and James Watt. Adams recalled:

With Mr. Reagan, I found him amiable but not very imaginative. He just sat there. He has great ability to maintain a theatrical interest. You may think he's interested, but he may be far off. I had the feeling it was split attention. I got a feeling he doesn't have any fundamental interest or knowledge in the environment as a concept.

I think he works on advice or recommendation. He's almost waiting all the time for human prompt cards. He never came back with a rejoinder like, 'What would you do?' Carter and Ford did that (Russakoff, 1983, p. A6).

The article further remarked that despite Adams' weak heart, he claimed his pacemaker and his fight to stop Reagan and Watt kept him going.

Even after the resignation of Secretary Watt, the "battle" continued. In a letter to Bill Turnage of October 14, 1983, Adams wrote, "I wish I was fifty years younger! But my armor still fits, I can get a fresh plume for my helmet and what blood of Mars I have is still flowing! LET'S GO!!!!!!!!!! A.A. (Alinder and Stillman, p. 386)." Ansel Adams died April 22, 1984, yet at "war" with the nation's President. He

died a man of great power and influence on both a political and public level. He was a man who could make the President squirm.

#### Adams' Impact Continues

At the end of his life, Adams' strongest alliance was with the Wilderness Society. On May 9, 1980, The Wilderness Society created and presented to Adams the first annual Ansel Adams Conservation Award. The Wilderness Society's March 1980 issue of The Living Wilderness was dedicated as a tribute to their valued ally, Ansel Adams. When Adams died, his family suggested the Wilderness Society, as well as the Friends of Photography, to those wishing to make memorial contributions in his name (Foote, 1984).

Today the Wilderness Society yet uses Adams' images and words in their promotional literature. A recent solicitation for memberships centered around the promise of a free gift, Celebrating the American Earth, a "spectacular softbound collection of Ansel Adams' photographs." This booklet is essentially a copy of the Society's March 1990 tribute to Ansel Adams mentioned above. Given a new cover and title, and poorly produced, this booklet is used to entice people to join and support the Wilderness Society. The Wilderness Society, like other environmental organizations, realizes that Adams' name and his work wield great influence in calling people to support environmental causes. The death of Ansel Adams made front page stories all over the nation. He was consistently remembered as both an artist and environmentalist; interpreter and political activist. Paul Richard (1984) called him "the grand old man of the environmental movement." His ashes were scattered

over the mountain that was informally named for him on the 1934 Sierra Club outing (Currier, 1935). Located at the head of the Lyell Fork of the Merced River on the southeast boundary of Yosemite National Park, the mountain was officially dedicated as Mount Ansel Adams in August of 1985 (Anon., 1985).

In the days after Adams' death, members of the House of Representatives and Senate publicly paid tribute to his life's work. Adams' role as activist, as well as his impact on wilderness appreciation, were acknowledged. California Senator Pete Wilson typifies the remarks made. He stated:

Through Ansel Adams' art and advocacy, there has come to be a wide awareness of and keen appreciation for the Western wilderness. That awareness, coupled with Ansel Adams' environmental activism, brought about changes in the Government's attitude toward wilderness. ... Up until the moment he died, Ansel Adams remained active in photography and conservation. He often wrote to me to offer counsel and constructive criticism on environmental issues. I valued his opinion (Wilson, 1984).

Shortly after his death, legislation sponsored by California Senators Alan Cranston and Pete Wilson created the Ansel Adams Wilderness Area between Yosemite National Park and the John Muir Wilderness Area. Congressman Seiberling (1984) stated that "our finest tribute to the vision and genius of Ansel Adams will be to carry on his work of protecting our great natural heritage, revealed in all its mystical beauty by his superb photographic works of art." Senator Bingaman (1984) remarked that Adams "left us not only a treasure of monumental images, but also with the memory of a passion for the preservation of the landscapes he photographed."

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS

Adams' words and images stirred the general public as well as the leaders of the country. His photographs beckoned people to see, experience, and preserve the beauty in nature. These images have been seen in museums across the world and in a vast array of popular publications. His images have also been seen in the context of environmental literature. While the actual photographs are not affordable for the average person (a mural size print of "Moonrise Over Hernandez" sold in 1981 for the highest price ever paid for a photograph - \$71,500), the imagery has been made available through affordable posters and calendars. People's concepts of what wilderness is and how it looks have, in part, been shaped by Ansel Adams.

The art critic Hilton Kramer (1974) called Adams' photographs "trophies from Eden." Adams' landscape photographs elicit strong romantic responses toward nature. People assume that the Yosemite that Adams photographed was undefiled nature. People fail to realize that powerlines, people and trash existed in the Yosemite Valley of the 1920s and 1930s; Adams chose to "edit" out these "undesired" elements. Adams' photographs depict the national parks as today's American people believe them to be - as "wilderness areas." The changing perception of the national parks as "playground" to national parks as wilderness areas can be partially attributed to Adams' photographs. Adams built expectations

in the American people. Through his images, he built support for the idea of "true" wilderness reserves.

Adams first exercised his political voice through his involvement with the Sierra Club. It was through his photographs that his political voice was able to evolve to such a high level of influence. Adams' reverence for nature prompted him to consciously use his work to influence legislators and promote wilderness appreciation. Upon attaining fame at all levels of society, Adams wielded his influence with his spoken and written words as well. Ansel Adams had a great impact on wilderness appreciation and certainly left behind a legacy of activism, as well as art.

The appropriate question is, then, "What implications are there for contemporary landscape photographers?" However, before this question can be answered, Adams' photographic tradition must be set into context.

#### Tradition Continued

Ansel Adams' photographs typify the tradition in photography that became known as the "West Coast tradition" or "Carmel School" of landscape photography. While much of Adams' work had been produced prior to 1950, the tradition continued strong into the fifties and sixties. Many photographers have been trained in the tradition of Adams through both his writings and actual teachings. Ansel Adams had, and still has, a group of devout followers.

Possibly Adams' most interesting former student, from a wilderness perspective, is Philip Hyde. Hyde, like Adams, was born and raised in

San Francisco. Twenty years younger than Adams, he studied under Adams and Minor White from 1947 to 1950 at the California School of Fine Arts. While Hyde's roots are steeped in the traditions of the "West Coast" landscape school, he has gone his own way in many respects. Hyde does not care whether or not he is considered an artist by the art establishment. Essentially, Hyde is an environmentalist armed with a camera. Unlike Adams, Hyde's express purpose in photographing is intricately linked to the defense of wilderness. Adams, on the other hand, did not intentionally make photographs with the purpose of contributing to environmental causes.

Philip Hyde marks the first generation of "environmental photographers." Joining the Sierra Club in 1949, Hyde was one of the first photographers to fill the need Adams saw for effective imagery in environmental literature. Most of the books Hyde has produced have had a decided conservation purpose. The Sierra Club provided the funding for Hyde's 1951 photographs taken at Dinosaur National Monument. A selection of these photographs were used in This is Dinosaur: Echo Park Country and Its Magic Rivers, which was expressly published to aid in the campaign to keep dams out of Dinosaur National Monument (Stegner, 1955).

Along with Adams and Eliot Porter, Hyde was a major contributor to the Exhibit Format Series and other Sierra Club publications. Island in Time (1962), The Last Redwoods (1963), and Time and the River Flowing (1964) are only a few of the great number of books containing his photographs. While Adams often contributed existing images to environmental

causes, he rarely embarked on missions to create new images for a cause. This job was open to newer and younger photographers such as Hyde.

### In Defiance of Tradition

By the mid-1960s, growing cynicism was being expressed in the work of many new photographers. These photographers set themselves in opposition to the "West Coast" landscape tradition. While Adams questioned this cynicism as being unconstructive, the cynicism in part reflects a reaction against the finely crafted, dramatic photograph of nature unsullied that Adams had produced.

Szarkowski (1977) made perceptive comments regarding the success of strategies used to gain support for wilderness:

It was not foreseen that the people, having saved it, would consider it their own, nor that a million pink-cheeked Boy Scouts, greening teenage backpackers, and middle-aged sightseers might, with the best of intentions, destroy a wilderness as surely as the most rapacious of lumbermen, who did his damage quickly and left the land to recover if it could. ... It is difficult today for an ambitious young photographer to photograph a pristine snowcapped mountain without including the parking lot in the foreground as a self-protecting note of irony (Szarkowski, 1977, p. xii).

Szarkowski suggests that Adams' photographs may be "anachronisms," "a souvenir of what was lost."

Two distinct landscape photography genres can be identified which react against the photographic tradition of Ansel Adams and his "followers:" 1) New Topographics, and what shall be termed for the purposes of this thesis 2) Landscape Sarcasm. New Topographic photographers, such as Robert Adams and Lewis Baltz, have turned back to the nineteenth century expedition photographs as a source of inspiration.

These photographs "objectively" document the "new west," the wilderness lost. These images depict man's intrusion on the landscape. Tract housing, industrial developments, and the impressions of tire tracks on the land are typical subjects. The works are titled with scientific coolness as typified by a Lewis Baltz title: "Nevada 33, Looking West, 1977." Neither personal opinion or interpretation are included in the image or the title.

Sarcasm, on the other hand, directly plays off the dramatic photographs associated with Adams. The national park photographs of such photographers as Roger Minick and Ted Orland do not present the viewer with pristine wilderness, but rather draw attention to tourism, crowding, and infrastructure (Cahn and Ketchum, 1981). The landscapes once glorified by Adams now contain people, viewing platforms, tent trailers, garbage cans, and interpretive signs.

### Implications

While the work of Ansel Adams is viewed with skepticism by many contemporary photographers, his work was appropriate, as well as effective, in the context of its time. By understanding Adams in the context of his time, it is possible to search for appropriate solutions to new problems. Implications are identified and discussed below.

#### 1. Knowing the landscape

Adams' early involvement in wildlands protection was limited to a single region. The California landscape, notably the Sierra Nevada, was the focus of his attention. The Sierra Nevada was a childhood landscape for Adams. He spent a great deal of time hiking, exploring

and photographing in Yosemite National Park. Adams was involved in both the social and political activities of the Sierra Club, whose initial purposes were solely dedicated to this region. While his influence and scope broadened to a national level, he loyally kept northern California's issues at the forefront. It was the landscapes of northern California that Adams best understood.

Adams understood the politics of the region; he knew the politicians, the park managers, the park's defenders and most loyal patrons. He worked for the protection of other lands in the region, as illustrated by the campaigns for Kings Canyon National Park, the Nipomo Dunes and Big Sur. His effectiveness was greatest at this regional level.

Adams' ventures outside his home territory (under the Mural Project and Guggenheim Fellowships) produced a vast number of beautiful and moving photographs. The most important results of his travel time were that it broadened the scope of his influence and gave him a greater perspective on the wilderness issue and its importance. While Adams' work in the Southwest built credibility for desert regions, it also illustrates the potential dangers of working in areas not understood by the photographer. This is best illustrated by his 1947 remarks about Organ Pipe and Saguaro National Monuments. Adams was critical of both these national monuments. Of Organ Pipe National Monument he wrote:

Considerably over-rated to my mind. Not sufficiently developed to take advantage of possible high spots. As a national park it is ridiculous. But there is lots of pressure to make it one (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, p. 181).

Of Saguaro National Monument, he wrote: "Should be given back to the

Indians. I got my best Saguaro pictures in Organ Pipe N.M. (Alinder and Stillman, 1988, p. 181)." Adams seemed to be reacting from a pictorial perspective, with total disregard for these unique ecological systems.

This raises the point that, in general, the more understanding the artist has of a landscape, the better he is able to sensitively and responsibly interpret that landscape. Adams' greatest number of successful photographs are of Yosemite National Park. He photographed the changing seasons, the details and vistas. He intimately knew this landscape.

This does not mean that Adams' photographs of other places were not effective, nor that a photographer should only work in his home environment. It does suggest that the better the photographer knows the landscape, the more effective his work as photographer and spokesperson can be. The landscape should, therefore, be approached from a position of knowledge and understanding.

## 2. The implications of publicizing a photograph

When Adams first began making photographs, wilderness had little support from the public. To save wildlands, the Sierra Club embarked on a mission to make the mountains accessible. People came, saw, believed, and became defenders of wilderness. Adams took his photographs to Washington, D.C. to persuade politicians to support a park in the Kings Canyon region. The Sierra Club launched their publishing program at a national level. Through these books, the photographs by Adams and others had a great impact in building appreciation at a popular level. The books also influenced legislation.

Having succeeded in gaining support for wilderness, the pressures on these natural areas have consequently increased. In the early 1960s, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall remarked:

Park and wilderness rationing in this country is not merely a prospect for the remote future but could conceivably become necessary in the years or decades immediately ahead. To get in the car when the mood strikes you and find natural sanctuary from the pressures of modern life - as we do at present - may become a privilege to look back on, in the years to come, as we customarily look back on 'Golden Ages' of the past (Udall, 1963, p. 216).

That time has arrived. The masses desire to see and experience America's "monuments," threatening to destroy the very places they saved. In order to mitigate negative impacts, it has become necessary for many land managers to implement permit systems, which limit the number of visitors. Adams' photographs support the permit system. They build expectations as to what the wilderness experience should be. According to Adams' images, wilderness is not trampled vegetation nor is it large numbers of neon-clad hikers.

There are yet areas worthy of protection. Making beautiful photographs is one way of calling attention to an area. However, in today's context, popularizing an area may not be the best solution. Philip Hyde was criticized for the publicity his 1971 book Slick Rock brought to that area. The purpose of the book was to get three areas added to Canyonlands National Park. Hyde understands that there is a compromise in publishing a beautiful book of photographs. He also realizes that the compromise can somewhat be justified when the area is faced with being lost all together; in fact, one section of the Slick Rock area was threatened by a proposed highway (Hyde, 1990). Robert Ketchum's recent

book The Tongass, Alaska's Vanishing Rain Forest (1987) is another case in point. The Tongass National Forest, a rare and unique ecosystem, is being clearcut by the timber companies. Ketchum's book serves as a political tool to influence legislators in reforming the Tongass Bill. Possibly, the best gauge photographers have in their decision whether or not to publicize a specific area is by assessing the political situation and possible effects of their images, positive and negative.

Perhaps in gaining support for general landscape types (for example, wetlands), the use of photographs in an informative book might be appropriate. As the general idea of saving wild places has been embraced by the public, perhaps it is time to build understanding for landscapes at an ecological systems level. The continued practice of monumentalizing specific sites for publication can very well do more harm than good. This is illustrated by the picturesque Maroon Bells, near Aspen, Colorado. These mountains have received much attention from photographers, including Adams. Often pictured in calendars and promotional literature, this site is inundated with great numbers of "sight-seers." Overuse of this area can be, in part, attributed to published photographs. However, another contributing factor must be identified as the paved road that leads directly to the site.

### 3. In pursuit of protection or exploitation?

The Maroon Bells example raises the question, "Is the photographer in pursuit of protection or exploitation?" Adams' photographs were intensely used by environmental organizations; notably the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society and the National Park Foundation. Environmental literature is literally peppered with the photographs of Ansel Adams.

They were used as illustrations in the Sierra Club Bulletin, as tools for specific political campaigns; they encouraged people to see the beauty in nature and to support preservation of wildlands. Adams' photographs and reputation are still used by environmental organizations, as illustrated by the Wilderness Society's 1990 solicitation for new members. Adams was intimately associated with the protective goals of these organizations.

While Adams' photographs are associated with protection, they have been used for exploitation as illustrated in the Rockwell International advertisement. This raises questions. What does the photographer intend to do with his images? Furthermore, where will they be published or shown, and in what context?

Adams first took photographs without a preconceived agenda. He was simply taking pictures that appealed to him. He soon directed his efforts in photography to producing works of art. He allowed and encouraged his art to be utilized for the issues he believed in.

Today, photographs of wilderness can be worth a great deal of money. According to photographer and environmentalist, Robert Glenn Ketchum (1990), many photographers are in the business of selling "non-contextual scenic pictures to whomever's buying ... and make a lot of money." Ketchum states:

Those kind of pictures have turned America into a series of iconographic real estate land items. It makes us want to run all over the country and see these places like Monument Valley and then we just trample them underfoot because we're in a big hurry to get to where the pictures were made. I think it's the kiss of death. I think it's really problematic for all landscape photographers to deal with it in terms of their business. I'm very cautious about any kind of travel articles that I take, because if

it's for a key magazine like Conde Nast or Outside, it's the kiss of death for the place you do it on and you're no better to me than a real estate salesman (Ketchum, 1990).

Photographers must be responsible for the manner in which their images are used. The environment as an issue is again gaining popularity and contemporary art photographers are looking back to the landscape. The 1989 southwest regional Society for Photographic Education conference was entitled "The Political Landscape." Popularizing an issue is a danger in itself, encouraging people to work from a position of "fad" rather than one of sincere dedication. If the photographer is not truly dedicated to environmental issues, the temptation to capitalize on their work may interfere and conflict with the real issues at hand.

#### 4. Involvement

At "The Political Landscape" conference, Robert Glenn Ketchum exclaimed his amazement "at how uninformed 'we' are." Adams was involved at different levels through a variety of organizations. He not only contributed his photographs, but sat on boards, wrote hundreds of letters, spoke out and allowed his name to be used for issues in which he believed.

Getting involved goes beyond that of "belonging" to "worthy" organizations. It implies that photographers must educate themselves on the issues, so that they are familiar with what they are photographing. They must also be prepared to follow through and remain involved with the effects of their photographs.

### In Conclusion

The legacy of Ansel Adams provides an example of how to effectively merge art and activism. Adams was positive in his attitude. He felt strongly that the response of "NO" should be followed by an alternative (Adams, 1970). Adams believed that art should not only have a positive impact on people's attitudes, but should also play a role in moving people to action. In his closing remarks for a 1967 commencement address at Occidental College, Adams remarked:

If we succeed in establishing ... some moratorium with destiny, if we can truly interpret what we have, as well as what we might lose forever, if we can augment the power of art as a vital factor of our lives, we may prevail in establishing protection for our remaining natural and cultural beauty, and also provide for the repair of damaged lands, environments and people! With this creative protection, conservation takes on an additional dimension (Adams, 1967, p. 11).

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