

**"There is [still] just one hope . . ."**  
**Memory as Inspiration in Advocating**  
**Wilderness and Wildness**  
**By Ed Zahniser**

A Brown-bag Lunch Talk by Ed Zahniser  
to the Staff of the Wilderness Society  
900 Seventeenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006  
February 15, 2000

Time as an arrow has not been invented here yet. Time is not an arrow here. Time is not an arrow hurtling along an inevitable trajectory with the neo-Darwinian myth of social progress as its arrowhead. No. Time is like a spiral. And yes, the tradition you and I are so much a part of in this room has been here on Turtle Island since the beginning of time. See, the beginning of time is right down there - see it? It's not far down- right there! On the spiral. We'll be there shortly.

Think of spiral time like this Slinky toy. Pass it around. Get a feel for spiral time. That funky gap in this slinky, where the spiral got sprung, well, maybe that's the atomic bomb, Hiroshima, Nagasaki. "We can't talk about atoms anymore because atom means indivisible and we have split it." [Jeanette Winterson] We can talk about wilderness and wildness, about perpetuity.

You can hear the beginning of time in our stories we tell. . . Listen. . . The alphabet is not invented yet. Our words are still like things. Our words still point to real things in the world of sense and feelings. We still enjoy reciprocity with the sensuous world [David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*].

Trust me. I am telling you a story. [Jeanette Winterson]

Isaac Newton visualized time like that arrow hurtling towards its target. But Albert Einstein saw time as a river, moving forward but also bowed, curved, sometimes subterranean, not ending but pouring itself into some vaster sea. [Jeanette Winterson]

Traditional cultures are cultures that have lived long enough to earn the description. Say what you want about the art of geomancy and feng shui, but for thousands of years they kept the Chinese from building on perfectly good farmland. [E.N. Anderson *Ecologies of the Heart*] Without wilderness and wildness preserved in perpetuity, how can American culture live to become a traditional culture?

Let's enter the world of spiral time. Bring your bag lunch. Travel light. Leave no trace. Come on.

From Abraham the patriarch to Moses the prophet was 800 years. From Moses to Jesus the Christ was 1,200 years. From the Christ to Crazy Horse the Oglala Sioux and Henry David Thoreau was 1,850 years. From Crazy Horse and Henry Thoreau to Benton MacKaye and Robert Marshall, was some 40 years. My father Howard Zahniser knew Bob Marshall, and my siblings and I all knew Benton MacKaye, and when Benton MacKaye was a child he met a man who'd once gone fishing with Henry Thoreau. And now

you and I are here in spiral time. The beginning of our wilderness conservation history is just . . . right down here. All we must do is remember. Remember.

When the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber wrote out his profoundly relational view of human life in 1923 he included our I-Thou relationship with nature. Deep subjectivity with the more-than-human world was not invented by deep ecology. Time is like a spiral. "We are not more elegant or eloquent than our ancestors." [Barry Lopez, speaking to the "Fire and Grit" Orion Society Conference, 1999]

Listen, can you hear it? When we who profess the life of Jesus celebrate the Eucharist, the so-called Last Supper, there at our communal table we also enact remembrance of the foundational, community-forming, 40-year wilderness wandering of the Hebrew Exodus experience. We were not meant to slave forever in Pharaoh's brickyard. [Randall Tremba, sermon, 1999] Listen, down there, on the spiral, amazing, you can even hear some of the first astute wilderness management.

YHWH, The Unpronounceable, El Shaddai, God-of-the-Mountain Almighty, fed a nation for 40 years of wilderness wandering on manna and migratory quail. Now Manna does not mean bread. Manna is exclamatory. Manna exclaims "What is it!" Manna, a flaky dough-like substance when dried. It formed naturally like dew. As good as a bag lunch. Travel light. Leave no trace. Manna and quail. Come on.

What was it!- that Martin Buber heard down there on our spiral? YHWH, The Unpronounceable, El Shaddai, God-of-the-Mountain Almighty also told the Israelites: On the sixth day you will gather a double portion of manna and quail, but on the seventh day you will not gather them. Why? Because the land also deserves its sabbath rest, too. The land was not meant to slave forever in Pharaoh's brickyard.

Remember, remember . . . Today-4,000 years since Moses-three yearly Jewish festivals still remember, remember the wilderness of Exodus. Time is a spiral. And Louis Marshall, the father of the great Wilderness Society organizer Robert Marshall, was the great champion of Jewish civil liberties and minority rights wherever threatened. And Louis Marshall voted "yes" in 1894 for the "forever-wild" clause in New York State's Constitution, the clause Howard Zahniser cited in 1946 as a possible model for a national system of statutory protection for wilderness. And at the 1915 New York State Constitutional Convention, Louis Marshall successfully led the floor fight to keep that "forever wild" clause in place. Remember, remember: Bob Marshall was a second-generation wilderness advocate.

The world contains many things that exist but cannot be collected and put someplace - the set of complex numbers, gravity, dreams, wildness, maybe wilderness even. [Jack Turner, *The Abstract Wild*] Because beauty hovers still . . . without a dollar sign. Because . . . The land was not meant to slave forever in Pharaoh's brickyard.

If your emotional life had the luxury of critiquing your rational life, it would

say "Hah! That's only superstition!" Time is a spiral. It's your lunch time now, but Columbus has not yet set sail from Palos, in southern Spain on his first Atlantic crossing.

Trust me. I am telling you a story.

I'm not sure how to tell you this part, but you are like the leader of our community, or maybe like a combination of shaman and chief. We call your name "Wilderness Advocate" - maybe you laugh. But we have no alphabet and our words have no things for "Professional Environmentalist." Here's what I think is happening now: you have great responsibility in our community-but no authority. You have the greatest responsibility in our community-but no authority except how compelling your advocacy is. We will accept that from you. But you must choose this role.

Before the European contact, in certain north-coast California Indian groups the community leader enjoyed no power or authority except his or her ability to cajole the community into right action and right livelihood. Mostly this was accomplished by early morning roving pep talks before other members of the community were up and about. You can call this "advocacy."

Trust me. I am telling you a story. [Jeanette Winterson]

Right now it's your turn to speak. And this is your voice as an advocate. Listen to your voice on the spiral of time:

Sleeper, awake! [Ephesians 5.14 NRSV] It is a new day here on the Earth. Life is beautiful again, magnificent, sweet. Don't, please, be greedy today. I tell you, nothing that breathes air is alone in the world. We are all in this together. Don't take more than you can eat. Sleeper, awake! Do you remember salmon harvest? Wasn't it beautiful how the fat from Ocean's store of food swam upstream to share itself with us as sweet-fleshed fish? Expect something great like that. Remember when Whale washed up on our beach, and she fed us all winter. Wasn't that a gift? I urge you to remember that. Sleeper, awake! We want no one marginalized, not even wild Earth itself. Yes, this is who we really are - what we choose to remember. Sleeper, awake! Remember, remember. \* \* \* \*

The shaman's job is to keep the balance between the human community and the more-than-human world [David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*], what we have called "nature." Wilderness advocacy - for nature yet about culture- is our new shamanism. Advocating keeping that balance.

If the human people of the world were drawn to the accurate scale of our relative consumption of resources, we Americans would be as big as sperm whales. Each of us would more than fill this conference room. [Bill McKibben, *The Age of Missing Information*] Advocating wilderness and wildness - for nature yet about culture - is our new shamanism. Advocating keeping that balance.

What have we lost in this hemisphere since the European contact? . . . whole communities of people, plants, and animals. We lost languages,

epistemologies, books, ceremonies, systems of logic and metaphysics. How can one compare intimacy with the facets of this knowledge to the possession of gold? How could we have squandered such wisdom in that search, that rush for gold? [Barry Lopez, *The Rediscovery of America*]

"To acknowledge our interdependence is simply a good and wise habit of mind." [Barry Lopez] "To know wilderness is to know a profound humility," my father wrote, "to recognize one's littleness, to sense dependence and interdependence, indebtedness, and responsibility." Not a bad operator's manual for wilderness advocacy, either.

"Civilization is before all, the will to live in common." [José Ortega y Gasset]

"I wonder if the ground has anything to say?" asked Young Chief in 1855, "I wonder if the ground is listening to what is said."

The Old Testament Hebrew verb we translate as "to know" was often used in a sexual context. It is not about facts but about connections. Knowledge not as accumulation but as charge and discharge. A release of energy from one site to another. Not some hoard of certainties. Not a bug collection. Not taxonomy but a release of energy, the dance. To find the lines of thought that still transmit. . . . What is the separateness of things when the current that flows each to each is live? It is the livingness I want. Not mummification. Livingness. [Jeannette Winterson] A living wilderness, wildness.

He remembers a Nunamiut man in Alaska. He asked him what he did when he went into a foreign landscape. The man said, "I listen." [Barry Lopez]

"We are part of the wildness of the universe," my father wrote. "That is our nature. Our noblest, happiest character develops with the influence of wildness."

He remembers a Koyukon Athapaskan man, who spoke sternly after a friend innocently remarked how intelligent people were: "Every animal knows way more than you do." [Barry Lopez] He remembers the Koyukon elder who told the anthropologist Richard Nelson, "The bear can way out-mind you." [Richard Nelson, speech to the "Fire and Grit" Conference of the Orion Society, 1999]

To enquire after this knowledge, to be intimate with the land like this is to enclose it in the same moral universe we occupy, to include it in the meaning of the word community. [Barry Lopez]

"We're here to disappear [so] let's be as vivid and generous as we can." [Anne Waldman] Sleeper, awake!

To know . . . is not about facts but about connections. What the Wilderness Society brought to the conservation movement in the 1940s and 1950s was an ecological view of the world. Practically put, that meant that all problems were aspects of a larger problem. [Stephen Fox, *John Muir and His Legacy*] It also meant cooperating with conservationists and other civic-minded folk who share the will to live in common.

How about this: In his one lifetime of thinking and writing, Aldo Leopold took how we think about nature from seeing so-called "game management" as an extension of industrial livestock husbandry, all the way to articulating a land ethic, whose ethical viewpoint holds the potential of our someday giving wildness, for example, legal standing in court. Isn't that amazing? This is part of our wilderness movement heritage.

"The strands are all there: to the memory nothing is ever really lost." [Eudora Welty]

Leopold thought and observed his way from Newton's time arrow, to Einstein's curved space/time, and then to a circling back . . . to . . . yes, to spiral time-all in one lifetime. Yet Leopold, like Martin Buber 25 years before him, advocated a thinking community, not the isolated, self-contained, individualistic thinking of those who would still put Descartes before the horse! Imagine a commons of the mind! "We are not more elegant or eloquent than our ancestors." [Barry Lopez]

One of my father's culture heroes was the 18th-century poet and engraver William Blake. Blake thought the human-welfare-crushing down sides to the industrial scientific revolution witnessed to hyper-rationalism, to Reason gotten way out of balance with the body, emotions, and imagination. In Blake's Book of Urizen, the character Urizen personifies Reason. Urizen sins so grievously Satan binds him. As Allen Ginsberg says, "Blake illustrated Urizen bound in the heavy fishnet of his own thought-forms." [Allen Ginsberg. Your Reason and Blake's System]

Now, here's the clincher: an old word for a fish-net is trammel. Where have you heard that before? As un-trammeled in the Wilderness Act. No wonder the subtitle of the film "Wild By Law" is "The Wilderness Act and the Redefinition of Progress." "A wilderness . . . is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled . . ." This, too, is part of our wilderness movement history. The role of the shaman - your role in our community -is - Sleeper, awake! - advocating keeping that balance . . . The strands are all there: to the memory nothing is ever really lost.

William Blake's most recent biographer Peter Ackroyd says that "For Blake, words were objects carved out of metal." Zahnie would have shouted approval. Frustrated in drafting the wilderness bill at one point, he told George Marshall: "If I had to do this again, I would much prefer to state all this in iambic rhyming couplets or even in [a] sequence of sonnets. . ." And Henry Thoreau said words are "the choicest of relics . . . carved out of the breath of life itself." Words are all up and down time's spiral. The root of our word humility is shared by the word humus, the soil. In the Genesis story the Hebrew roots of our words for man, woman, and soil also are closely related. Humus, humility, soil as earth. Man, woman, ground, ground of being . . . Carve your words for wilderness and wildness out of metal. Carve them out of the breath of life itself.

Humus, human, man, woman, soil, Blake, industrial revolution, redefining Progress . . . Wilderness and the Wilderness Act do not exist outside

community. Instead, they invite us two-leggeds to re-join our true community, or what the Book of Job calls "the circle" that YHWH, The Unpronounceable, "drew on the face of the deep." Try hearing this humbling question put this way: "Job, where were you when I drew a bio-sphere on the face of the deep?" We tend to see the Wilderness Act as our great accomplishment of the wilderness movement. And it is. Oh, it is - for there was no environmental movement, even by 1964. But how did Senator Hubert H. Humphrey see it?

For Humphrey the Wilderness Act was only a piece - an important piece - of his 1950s agenda of social legislation in his Democratic Party's activist wing. The Great Society program of 1964 to 1968 really was Humphrey's 1950s agenda finally come to fruition. Ironically, President Lyndon B. Johnson took the credit, not his Vice President Humphrey. Wilderness and wildness and the Wilderness Act are not at society's periphery. They are part of a great society holistically construed. That's what our Wilderness Society founders declared right from the very start: Wilderness is not a luxury. And, we need wilderness in a fundamental way.

"Memory is the thread on which the beads of a person are strung," said Ralph Waldo Emerson. "And memory is necessary to moral action." The Muses, said poet Ezra Pound, "The Muses are daughters of Memory" [Ezra Pound, Cantos, 74] . . . the goddess Memory, whose name in Greek is Mnemosyne. The Muses, that is, our inspiration . . . our inspiration is the offspring of Memory.

What does it mean to preserve biodiversity? He remembers standing, as a boy, on a riverbar in the Sheenjek River, in the Brooks Range, in Alaska, in 1961, with Olaus Murie, making a cast of a wolf track pressed into gray glacial silt like . . . an object carved out of metal. Suddenly the rain stopped. The mosquitos flew into action. Olaus, hatless and thin of hair, with a gray mix of mud and plaster of Paris all over his hands, began gently, gently brushing the mosquitos off his head, so as not to injure them. And the boy thought, "So this is what it means, 'untrammled-" Biodiversity is a shorthand word for "the whole community of life on Earth." This, too, is part of our wilderness preservation history.

Biodiversity records how life arrived at itself. Biodiversity plots the path to who we are. Species and individuals, we are motile memory having lunch today. The planet put in remembrance of itself. At Dinosaur National Monument there are plants adapted to live only on soils of exposed strata of one specific geological formation laid down by ancient seas eons before the dinosaurs arose. Time is a spiral. Biodiversity. Remember. . . Noah took two of each creature aboard the Ark, even those then thought ritually unclean. Biodiversity, the whole community of life on Earth."

"America needs grizzly bears within its heartland," David Quammen says: "When the grizzly disappears . . . an ocean of forgetting will drown us all." An ocean of forgetting. Traditional cultures are cultures that have lived long enough to earn the description. Advocating wilderness and wildness is a radical act of remembering. . . of remembering our own roots, even - lest "an ocean of forgetting drown us all." The Muses spring from Memory.

"The day is almost upon us when a pack train must wind its way up a graveled highway and turn out its bell mare in the pasture of a summer hotel. When that day comes the pack train will be dead, the diamond hitch will be merely a rope, and Kit Carson and Jim Bridger will be names in a history lesson." That's Aldo Leopold, being quoted by Robert Marshall in 1930.

"Of the myriad manifestations of beauty, only natural phenomena like the wilderness are detached from all temporal relationship." That's Robert Marshall himself. A startling thought from a compulsive peak-bagger, huh? ". . . only natural phenomena like the wilderness are detached from all temporal relationship." Time is a spiral we can enter both at the level of wilderness and of the advocacy of wilderness and wildness.

Remember the wild corridors. Benton MacKaye's idea for an Appalachian Trail was not merely for a recreational hiking trail. MacKaye called for a great wilderness belt to keep the values of the primitive and primeval accessible to the metropolitan core. This wilderness belt would also help contain what MacKaye alternately called - this was in 1921 - "the metropolitan invasion" or "the iron glacier." You and I know it as suburban sprawl and now exurban sprawl. This too is our conservation history. Make no small plans.

Remember the Wildlands Project. A legislative proposal my father and Benton MacKaye floated in 1946 called for a Federal Wildlands Project, "To establish a national system of wildland belts . . ." with special attention to river corridors. Make no small plans. This too is our conservation history.

Remember the grass roots, as you just did in honoring the Howards and Kim Crumbo in the Southwest. The founders and early nucleus of the Wilderness Society were a grass roots. Robert Marshall drummed them one by one out of the continent's woodwork in the 1920s and 1930s. Robert Marshall traveled around the country for the old U.S. Indian Service and for the U.S. Forest Service, like a combination chief and shaman, cajoling grass roots loners into a community of advocacy. Here Aldo Leopold had been in Arizona at the grass roots trying to save the Gila wilderness pretty much on his own. Here were Sigurd and Elizabeth Olson and Ernest Oberholtzer up in Minnesota at the grass roots trying to save the great Quetico-Superior border lakes country. Here were Benton MacKaye and Harvey and Anne Broom and Bernie and Miriam Frank down in Tennessee trying to save the Smokies from roads. Here were Irving and Nell Clark, and John and Polly Dyer at the grass roots off in Washington State trying to save the wild Olympic Peninsula and the North Cascades. Here were Olaus and Mardy Murie at the grass roots in Jackson Hole studying the elk but worried sick about trying to get a great national wilderness wildlife refuge in the Arctic. Here was accountant Harold "Andy" Anderson, yes, at the grass roots with a hiking-trail club, right here in Washington, D.C., worried about skyline drives wiping out wilderness. Robert Marshall found them, one by one. Marshall found a young Adirondack wilderness champion Paul Schaefer with a camera atop Mount Marcy in the early 1930s. Robert Marshall's grass roots band - and you are their offspring and next of kin. "The Muses are daughter of Memory." Remember the grass roots, for although these grass roots grew a national organization, the Wilderness Society you now are,

they never lost touch with those conservation struggles Bob Marshall gathered them from one by one and two by two.

You are the inheritors, not just of 70 years of wilderness advocacy but of 7,000 years of reverence for life, of all those before you who have spoken "I-Thou" to nature, who whispered "I-Thou" under the spell of the sensuous.

One day Harold "Andy" Anderson told Bob Marshall: we ought to have an organization of eastern hiking clubs to try to save some wilderness in the East. So some of Marshall's grassroots band met - during a trip to inspect a national park road-building project. Benton MacKaye called all such meetings "wilderness pow-wow's." Marshall deliberated and decided, no, not an eastern organization; we must be a national organization. And so, now, here, you are.

Make no small plans. Wilderness and wildness are not yet nearly a tithe of our land use, perhaps the ten percent that might please the One who told the Exodus wilderness wanderers the land was not meant to be a slave forever in Pharaoh's brickyard. Make no small plans. The Wilderness Act both redefined progress and furthered how the Echo Park victory had begun a re-valuing of the American West. Make no small plans. The Wilderness Act redefined progress in line with Thoreau's startling assertion that ". . . in Wildness is the preservation of the World." Thoreau uses world in its Greek sense, Kosmos, meaning not only World but also Order, Beauty, Pattern. "I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness . . ." Thoreau wrote. Wildness is the individual's wellspring for the social conscience declared in Thoreau's essay "Resistance to Civil Government" - opposing slavery and the war with Mexico - which inspired Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. This too is part of our conservation history.

". . . the preservation of a few samples of undeveloped territory is one of the most clamant issues before us today. Just a few years more hesitation and the only trace of that wilderness which has exerted such a foundational influence in molding American character will lie in the musty pages of pioneer books and the mumbled memories of tottering antiquarians. To avoid this catastrophe demands immediate action." Robert Marshall, 1930. ["The Problem of the Wilderness"]

Isn't "the freedom of the wilderness" that Bob Marshall preached really the freedom of the wilderness to be itself? Untrammelled? The freedom to be its self-willed-ness, which is how Thoreau etymologized wilderness. Isn't this what wilderness management must be about today? My father wrote that we need "to secure the preservation of some areas that are so managed as to be left unmanaged. . ." And isn't wilderness management an important part of the real work of wilderness preservation right now? Robert Marshall called for it in the southern Sierra in 1937-that issue was to distribute the wilderness use. Wilderness management was an attitude of citizenship Robert Marshall learned from how his father Louis Marshall had watchdogged state management of the Adirondack Forest Preserve. Only astute wilderness management can keep the perpetuity in wilderness preservation. Only astute wilderness management can keep the forever in

wilderness forever.

The great Roman poet Horace died four years before Jesus was born. In the recent David Ferry translations of the Odes, Book Three, Horace records:

Today I have finished a work outlasting bronze  
And the pyramids of ancient royal kings.  
The North Wind raging cannot scatter it  
Nor can the rain obliterate this work,  
Nor can the years, nor can the ages passing.  
Some part of me will live and not be given  
Over into the hands of the death goddess.

The Wilderness Act was crafted by the wilderness preservation community in the 1950s to be "a work outlasting bronze." And that's your legacy! "It is a bold thing," my father wrote in 1961, "for a human being, who lives on the earth but a few score years at most, to presume upon the eternal and covet perpetuity for any of his undertakings . . . to project into the eternity of the future some of that precious unspoiled ecological inheritance that has come to us out of the eternity of the past." The Wilderness Act was meant to be "a work outlasting bronze . . ." Hear the hope in that - to presume upon the eternal and covet perpetuity . . . !"

At the 1998 Northwest Parks and Wilderness Conference in Seattle Doug Scott said the early Wilderness Society nucleus made key policy decisions in the late 1930s and early 1940s. One: Wilderness is a natural resource in itself. Two: We need wilderness in a fundamental way. Three: Wilderness is imperiled and disappearing-and there is an element of crisis about this. Four: It has to be saved. And five: When we save wilderness we are not saving it as a luxury but in perpetuity. ". . . a work outlasting bronze."

T. H. Watkins, your good friend Tom Watkins, has said my father's major contribution with the Living Wilderness magazine was to fashion its news section as a clearing house for the entire conservation movement, construed in its largest and broadest social sense. Indeed, crucial political clout in the defeat of the Echo Park dam proposal in 1955 would come from the activist women of the National Council of State Garden Clubs and from women's clubs, whose conservation stands The Living Wilderness had been faithfully reporting for many years.

"It is hardly possible," Doug Scott wrote back in 1974, observing the 10th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, "for today's newer recruits to the wilderness cause to realize the magnitude of the conservationists' victory in defeating the Echo Park Dam. . . . For most of the campaign, Zahnle, Fred Packard, Dave Brower and the other key leaders were the sole staff members of their respective organizations." [Doug Scott, manuscript, 1974]

"There is just one hope of repulsing the tyrannical ambition of civilization to conquer every niche on the whole earth. That hope is the organization of spirited people who will fight for the freedom of the wilderness." That's Bob Marshall speaking, in 1930. You now are that one hope. You are still our one hope, and on behalf of the tradition and our great cloud of witnesses, I thank you for what you do and for what you will do. And I invite you now to break the seal on your paper there, to open it up, and, if you will, to write in your name below my father's name in the right-hand column. Time is a spiral, and

the Muses are the daughters of Memory. Ah, wilderness!

Note on sources: British novelist and writer Jeanette Winterson is the author of several novels, including *The Passion*, *Gut Symmetries*, *Art & Lies*, *Boating for Beginners*, and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*; short stories; and essays, including *Art Objects*. The materials quoted or paraphrased here are drawn from several of her books. The conservation papers of Louis Marshall are collected in *Louis Marshall: Champion of Liberty*, edited by the poet Charles Reznikoff.