

Those Intangible Things

This talk, which Sigurd F. Olson gave early in 1954 at the Izaak Walton League of America's national convention in Chicago, was his first attempt to discuss in detail the concept of "intangible values." It was a topic he came back to again and again, and in his later years he rewrote parts of this speech for his 1976 book, Reflections From the North Country.

To talk about those intangible things is difficult because they are hard to define, explain, or measure. You can measure soil and you can measure water and trees, but it is very difficult to measure intangible values.

Before I begin to talk about intangible values, let us try to define, if we can, what they are. Intangible values are those which stir the emotions, that influence our happiness and contentment, values that make life worth living. They are all tied up with the idea of the good life. Sometimes I wonder if we actually know what the good life means. But this we know—that whatever it is, the intangible values are so important that without them life loses its meaning.

We talk about the practical considerations of conservation, and they are important, too. We know that we cannot embark on any conservation program entirely on theory. Back of all concrete considerations, however, are always other factors which we call the intangibles. They are what give substance to the practical; they provide the reasons for everything we do. Their values are so involved and integrated in all conservation work that it is impossible to separate them.

There is no question about the intangible values of works of art. We have always recognized them. I was over in the Art Institute yesterday morning and saw a woman standing engrossed before a great painting. She stood there in reverence, her head bowed. I looked at her closely and in her eyes was a strange, happy light.

What was she getting out of that picture? She was certainly not interpreting it in terms of the canvas that was there, the beautiful frame, or the amount of oil and pigment that artist had used. She was catching something which inspired her as it has inspired many others. She was enjoying the intangible values in

that particular work of art. Ask her what it was she saw and she might not be able to tell you, but it did affect her deeply, and that was all that mattered.

Is it possible to explain the intangible values in a beautiful piece of music? As you listen perhaps to a Beethoven sonata, can you explain exactly what it does to you? There too are intangible values.

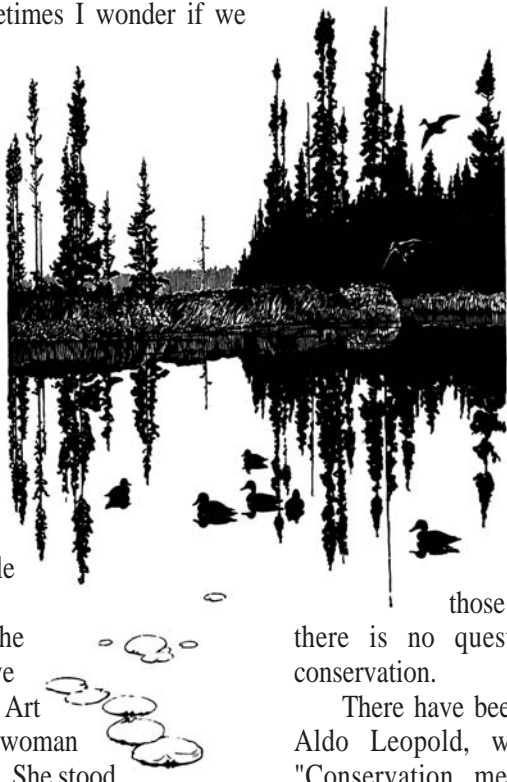
Do you know why you like a particular poem? What do William Cullen Bryant's lines do to you:

*Whither, 'midst falling dew
 While glow the heavens with the last
 steps of day...*

What do those lines from "To a Waterfowl" do to you duck hunters? I know what they do to me. They are far more than just words printed on a piece of paper. They embody sunsets on the marshes, the whisper of wings, and many things that others do not know. Bryant caught something in those lines, something which you know and I know, the intangible values of ducks against the sky.

There is no question in our minds of those values inherent in works of art and I believe there is no question as to the intangibles involved in conservation.

There have been a great many definitions of conservation. Aldo Leopold, whom you all know and revere, said, "Conservation means the development of an ecological conscience." I am not going to try and explain fully what is meant by an ecological conscience, for it would take a long time and there are men sitting on either side of me who are probably much better prepared to discuss that with you. But what I think he meant was that unless man develops a feeling for his environment and understands it; unless he becomes at one with it



A Point of Reflection

In our busy, modern lives we have a lot of points to remember. There are talking points, bullet points, power points, and brownie points. We have to define our points, refine our points, sharpen our points, defend our points, advance our points, and—oh yes, try to get the time to make “just one more point.”

It can be wearisome.

At the Listening Point Foundation we try to be mostly about a different sort of point—a pine-clad, glaciated finger of rock reaching out into the coldwater depths of a lake at the edge of a vast wilderness. This particular point is a part of a sprawling latticework of lakes, streams, waterfalls, and rapids, blue and silver gems of water woven into the green, forested fabric of a land we call the NorthWoods. The Quetico-Superior. The Canoe Country.

Sigurd Olson named the place Listening Point, because, he said, it is only when one comes quietly and gently to such a place, ready to listen and pay attention, that it begins to reveal its truths and the depth of all its meanings and values. To Sig Olson, the Point symbolized and epitomized all of the northern wilderness he loved so well; but more than that, all wild and natural “listening places” the world over, wherever they might be found.

Today, perhaps, we need such places and such attitudes more than ever, for life can so easily become and remain a maelstrom, an unrelenting, unending pursuit of important, vital, tangible tasks, projects, and agendas. And all of them require our constant attention. This is true of individuals, and it is also true of groups. Even Foundations.

The Listening Point Foundation is engaged in important work, with vital, tangible results. This past year saw the fulfillment of a grant to repair the crumbling stonework of the old cabin's foundation. We have successfully embarked on the creation of a Maintenance Endowment Fund, to ensure the preservation and health of the Point and the cabin far into the future. There are several new publishing projects to help keep Sigurd Olson's marvelous literary legacy alive and relevant. There is a website and online gift shop, an important new development program, photo archiving, the annual Sig Olson Birthday

Luncheon, and a host of other activities. And, all through the year, there are hundreds of visitor trips to Listening Point, guided mostly by Chuck Wick and Alanna Dore.

And it is there, on the Point perhaps, where something happens. When someone says, with tears in their eyes, “This is a pilgrimage for me.” Or that it is an experience they've been dreaming of for years. When they put their hand on a pine, or a boulder, perhaps remembering a favorite passage from “Listening Point” or “The Singing Wilderness.” Or it might happen when we get a letter or an email saying how much Sigurd Olson's writing still means to someone, or that they've just discovered it, and something has stirred in their soul. It is then that the essential meaning of it all becomes clear once more. As Sig said, behind the tangible things—all the important, vital tasks and pursuits of life—lies something more important, the Intangibles.

He wrote, “If it was only a matter of saving representative areas, I would have given up my interest long ago, and a lot of people would surely have given up theirs. Without the recognition that there is something deeper behind all this, there would have been no sustained efforts to preserve natural areas anywhere.”

The reason that what we do at LPF is important is not because we say that it is, or because it looks good on a report or in a newsletter, but because we try to remember that it is a manifestation of, and a connection to, something more important. Perhaps a newsletter or a book or a trip to the Point, or even the smiling thought of the Point and of its old cabin, or the thought of where your own Listening Point might be, perhaps such things give a moment of pause. Of peace. Of reflection. Maybe they lead to a remembrance of a night-chorus of loons, or the morning aria of a white-throated sparrow. Of the golden glory of a sunset or the fragrance of a cedar frond tossed onto a campfire. Of the intangible values that make life itself worthwhile. That make our work worthwhile.

Thank you friends, for your interest in and support of the Listening Point Foundation, in all its work, work that we care about deeply. And maybe once in awhile you can pause, take a breath, maybe even smile, and reflect on a rocky point in a North Woods lake and all it means, on a man who loved it and wrote about it, and on the value of intangible things. ●

—Douglas Wood



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Welcome to the Board

Larry Dolphin has been director/naturalist at the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center for over 20 years. He enjoys birdwatching, fishing, teaching, running, folk music, canoeing, reading, and cross-country skiing. Larry is an active member in the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America and Austin Audubon. He shares many common interests with his wife of over 30 years, Nancy. They have two adult children, Amber and Ben, who both enjoy the outdoors. Larry has a B.S. and M.S. degree from the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point in Natural Resources, Biology, and Environmental Education. "I am quite fortunate in that I am been able to live what I love," he says.



Tim Barzen grew up in a suburb of Minneapolis inspired by a father who loved hunting, fishing and any other excuse to be outdoors. Since the age of five, he spent two weeks every summer on Burntside Lake. "To me, these vacations were the highlight of the year," he says. "Burntside, was a place where I had the freedom to explore, observe and soak in the sights, smells and sounds of Sig's hallowed land. I was aware of Sig Olsen during those early years but not too terribly interested in his writings because I was too busy enjoying my own experiences."

As a youth, Tim was able to tag along with his father who took customers into Canada on fishing trips during the summer months. "Without being aware of the connection, I was, on numerous occasions, able to explore a part of the Arctic that Sig referenced in some of his books," he says.

"Being a Navy pilot for seven years and flying for a major airline for over 30 years gave me the opportunity to travel much of the world. Although I was fortunate enough to see some incredible countryside as the result of my travels my reference always seemed to be Sig's world. I was always drawn back to the country that was the subject of Sig's writings."

Paula King has a built-in connection to the Listening Point Foundation—her grandmother Christine was a sister of Sigurd Olson's wife Elizabeth Uhrenholdt. Paula's daughter Libby is named after Aunt Elizabeth, and was born on April 4th, which also is Sig's birthday.

"My favorite wilderness activity is hiking; I have had many peak experiences walking in silence on well worn mountain trails," Paula says. "I always think of Sig while outdoors, and I hope to further his wilderness legacy through creative initiatives that make evident that wilderness matters and why."

Paula's professional background includes work in academe and executive leadership in the corporate sector. She has written about public policy innovation, policy entrepreneurs and changing large scale systems. Her recent research and academic interests are in sustainability, environmental ethics and sustainable business. She lives in Minneapolis with her husband Steven and their two dogs. Daughter Libby lives in San Francisco, where she leads green initiatives at the firm where she works. ●



newsworthy!

A matter of great consequence looms over the forested shores, communities and economy of northeast Minnesota, and that is the question of whether a new hard-rock mining operation should proceed as proposed.

As with all such decisions, questions of values are integrally involved, and therefore passionate feelings are stirred. One need not be an out-of-work bread-winner or a concerned community leader to empathize deeply with individuals, families, and towns of the Arrowhead. The prospect of solid, good-paying jobs sounds like the answer to many a fervent prayer. Many of our friends and neighbors in the North Country are hurting, and have been for some time.

Yet the catastrophic Gulf oil spill is a humbling and terrifying reminder that "just the one" miscalculation or accident, the one-in-a-thousand, is the only one needed to compromise or even destroy a fragile and irreplaceable ecosystem. In this case it is an ecosystem of northern wetlands that is, itself, the foundation of vital economic activity and a way of life—an almost sacred trust to many who live there and to tens of thousands who make pilgrimages every year.

It is impossible to discount either one set of values or the other. Jobs are essential, families are in need; yet the environmental track record of this sort of mining operation elsewhere is far from reassuring. Many relevant issues need to be weighed, among them the safety of the tailings basins, possible ground water contamination and adequate

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NEWS & UPDATES

This and That...

Sig Olson's Wilderness Moments, our educational outreach project, has come to fruition. The booklet was published this spring and has been sent out to our pilot study camps for use this summer. The program includes *The Wilderness World of Sigurd Olson* dvd, discussion questions for trip leaders and a 30-page booklet with selected SFO writings. Points to Ponder and activities are also part of the book's content. These booklets will be shared with young campers, hikers, and canoeists throughout the summer. A follow-up survey will be conducted at the end of the summer and the information gathered will be considered when planning the full scale program for next year. The pilot project was funded by a very generous donation from our long time supporter Donna Arbaugh. Thank you Donna.

A **stonework** project was undertaken at the cabin to restore the rock façade on the foundation and repair the fireplace hearth inside. Tim Sundquist, Walt Plude and Chuck Wick were willing helpers on the project. The weather cooperated, the work went smoothly, all Department of Interior guidelines were followed (as the cabin is on the National Register of Historic Places) and Mike Braun, local stone mason, did an excellent job. The work was completed earlier than expected and all things are almost back to normal. This project was financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.

The **annual spring LPF luncheon** in St. Paul was a resounding success. More than 100 attendees, Don Shelby as the keystone speaker and a silent auction all combined to make the day one of the best luncheons we have ever had. Thank you to one and all who helped make this event such a success. Next's year's luncheon is already in the works—April 2, 2011 at the Town & Country Club of St. Paul—mark your calendars.

An **LPF Board Retreat** was held in Ely at the Mary Brown Environmental Center May 1 & 2. The full Board was in attendance spending one and a half days working on LPF's Strategic Plan for the next three years. It was a very productive and high energy meeting putting many exciting new objectives in place for 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Don't forget the annual Blueberry Arts Festival in Ely, July 23-25. LPF has an information booth and we are always looking for volunteers! Please call 218-365-7890 if you are interested in helping out.



Hearth rocks were labeled to ensure exact replacement position.



Mike, Walt and Chuck work on the foundation facade.



The LPF Board of Directors, at their recent retreat

newsworthy!

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financial assurance for clean-up. We weigh the possible long-term losses against the short-term gains of economic development, enhanced employment opportunities and increased tax revenues.

Depending on one's position, it is either good news or bad that the approval of one such project may lead to

many others.

As an educational foundation, the LPF has a policy not to take advocacy positions in such public policy debates, but this in no way implies that we think the matter unimportant—quite the contrary. We therefore urge our readers to inform themselves as fully as possible on the issues and values involved in this vital discussion and to make their own informed judgments. Many good sources

of information are available, including but not limited to the following web sites:

polymetmining.com
ibtimes.com
workingminnesota.org
preciouswaters.org
northstar.sierraclub.org
dnr.state.mn.us
minnesota.publicradio.org
wcco.com

Intangible Things *(Continued from page 1)*

and realizes his stewardship; unless he appreciates all of the intangible values embraced in his environment, he does not and cannot understand the basic need for conservation.

I think of [Louis] Bromfield's brief definition: "Conservation is living in harmony with the land." More simply, he was saying what Leopold said. What is meant by "in harmony with the land"? Certainly not the creation of dust storms, or gullies, or mining the soil. In harmony with the land means living the good life on the land.

I ran across a definition not long ago which points up particularly what I am trying to say. I like and I think you will too, and I want you to remember it because it ties together all the other definitions I know and gives substance to the idea of intangible values. It was Paul Sears of Yale who said, "Conservation is a point of view and involves the whole concept of freedom, dignity, and the American spirit."

A beautiful thing to say, and something that will be repeated for generations to come. Conservation is a point of view. It is a philosophy and a way of life.

What do we mean by our way of life? How many of us know what the good life is? Generations of Americans have enjoyed this thing we call the good life. In fact we have taken it for granted as part of our due without ever trying to define it or wonder where it came from. This much we know-that the good life is one of plenty, of breathing space and freedom, and for Americans it means the out of doors. If the open country was taken away from us and the kind of outdoors we know, would we still be living the good life?

Is our country heading toward a state of mechanized civilization where the good life as we understand it is going to disappear? Are we going to mistreat our natural resources to the point where it is no longer possible to enjoy the kind of good life we have imagined was ours forever?

I flew over the city of New York the other day. For some reason the plane circled over the miles and miles of tenements and slums that is Brooklyn. As we circled I looked down and wondered about the good life, thought of the children down there who never saw grass or trees or clean running water. I wondered what they thought about the good life and if they knew what it was?

I also saw Central Park that day, a little green oasis far below, surrounded by the roaring, bustling city of New York. That little natural area was worth uncounted millions of dollars, but then I knew its intangible values to the people of the city were far more important than any others. Here was a sanctuary of the spirit in the midst of one of the greatest industrialized cities of the world.

How is all of this involved with the conservation of our natural resources? What does it actually have to do with the practical problems of soil and water and living things? You have

heard much about soil at this convention, and I am not going to enlarge on the subject. I merely want to quote Sterling North, who said, "Every time you see a dust cloud or a muddy stream, a field scoured by erosion or a channel choked with silt, you are witnessing the passing of American democracy." I would have added to that statement five words-"and our way of life."

More and more we are talking about the relationship of natural resources and their conservation with our way of life. One of our great historians, in describing the migration of races from east to west, said, "In dust and rubble along those great migration lanes are the palaces, pyramids, and temples of the past."

Old civilizations can be traced along those lanes where man was on the search for food. What happened to those ancient peoples? They mistreated the land, their forests, and their waters, and thereby lost their way of life. They failed to recognize the intangibles before it was too late.

It is easier for me to think of the intangibles with respect to water than most other resources, for I've always lived close to it. When I say "water" I instinctively think of my own country, the Quetico-Superior and the wilderness canoe country of the international border. What is the importance of that country, its timber, its vast deposits of iron and other resources? There is no denying the part it plays in our economy, but when I think of it, I remember the vistas of wilderness waterways, the solitude and quiet, and the calling of the loons. They are the intangible values which someday in the future with our zooming population may far overshadow all others in importance.

Water. I think of Izaak Walton and the verse in the stained glass window of the cathedral at Winchester, England, where he is buried. There are only four words-"Study to be quiet"-but they embody his whole philosophy and way of life. Here was his search for tranquility and peace, here the whole reason for his communion with the out of doors. He did not mention the number of fish he caught. He remembered the quiet and the intangible values of the things he wrote about.

I visited Crater Lake, Oregon, this past summer and remember its startlingly blue water, its high peaks and snowfields. I remember especially how it looked in the early morning when it was half covered with mist. It is one of the most dramatic vistas on the continent and possibly in the world. Intangible values? Capture them? You bring them away with you but you cannot explain them.

I remember a little trout stream of a long time ago. I had followed it to the headwaters on the advice of an Indian who had told me I would find a pool that no one had ever fished. I found that pool after looking for it for two whole days. I have never gone back there, and I do not want to go back, because I've heard that the pool has changed.

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Intangible Things (Continued from page 5)

That pool was about the size of this room. There were great trees around it, primeval yellow birch, huge white pines and hemlocks. It was a rock pool, and I climbed out on a ledge and looked down into water that was clear and deep. Down on the bottom were schools of speckled trout, just laying there fanning their fins. I remember tossing a pine cone onto the surface and how the water exploded with rising trout. I sat on that ledge for a long time and watched those trout and all the great trees around the pool, and I thought to myself, "This is something very special; this is a part of America as it used to be."

Some years later, I described that pool in an article I wrote. "This," I said, "must be what we all think about when we sing, 'Thy rocks and rills, thy woods and templed hills.'" Here was something perfect. There were no dollar values around that pool, only intangibles.

Whenever I think of little rivers, I think of the 23rd Psalm, "He leadeth me beside still waters; He restoreth my soul." Again, the intangibles and spiritual values.

And what about wildlife and the intangibles there? Do you duck hunters remember how many ducks you shot last year or the year before? No, but you remember the sound of wings in the dawn or at dusk. You remember as though it was yesterday that mallard hen quacking far out in the rice and how the rushes looked when they were gold against the blue water.

One day just about eight years ago, I was walking along a river in Germany. It was quiet and dusk and there was a dull glow in the west. On both sides of the river were the silhouettes of bombed buildings, and a bridge lay broken in two in the current. I wasn't thinking of duck hunting, for it was spring and I was far from home, but then I heard a familiar sound, a whistle of wings overhead. I looked up and there was a flight of mallards heading down the river. For a moment I forgot everything and was back in the rice beds of the Minnesota lakes. The whistle of those wings were intangible values to me.

Last summer on a pack trip in the Sun River country of Montana we were riding through a dense stand of spruce in the bottom of a canyon. I got off my horse to lead it around a windfall and there in the center of the trail I saw the track of a grizzly. We never did see the bear, though we found where he had scratched great marks in the bark of a spruce as high as he could reach. From that moment on the country changed. It was the land of the mountain men of another century, the country of Lewis and Clark, part of the Old West. Those grizzly signs belonged to the intangibles.

It is hard to place a price tag on these things, on the sounds and smells and memories of the out of doors, on the countless things we have seen and loved. They are the dividends of the good life.

Have you ever stood in a stand of virgin timber where it is

very quiet and the only sounds the twittering of the nuthatches and the kinglets way up in the tops? John Muir once said, "The sequoias belong to the solitudes and the millenniums." I was in the sequoias not long ago and it was a spiritual experience. To realize that those great trees were mature long before the continent was discovered, that their lives reached back to the beginnings of western civilization, was sobering to short-lived man and his ambitions.

We need trees. We need them for our mills, for industry, for paper. We must have them for our particular kind of civilization. They are an important factor in our economy. But let us not forget that there are other values in trees besides the practical, values that may be more important in the long run.

You heard today that by 1970 there will be a fifth mouth to feed at every table of four. What is that going to do to our way of life? What is it going to do to the places where a man can still find silence and peace?

I read an editorial in the *New York Times* last year when the Supreme Court of the United States gave its favorable decision on the validity of the air space reservation over the Roadless Areas of the Superior National Forest in northern Minnesota. The heading of the editorial was "Tranquility is Beyond Price." Tranquility is one of the intangibles. Solitude is also one of them. Those things are truly beyond price.

Much of my time is spent in the effort to preserve wilderness regions of the United States. They are the wild areas set aside by the states and the federal government as forests and parks. A constant effort is necessary to save them from exploitation. What we are fighting for is to preserve this less than one percent of our total land area. We are thinking of those places not only in terms of the physical resources within them but of their spiritual resources and intangible values.

The fact that last year forty-six million people visited our national parks and over thirty million our national forests, indicates that there is a hunger, a need in the American people to renew their associations with unspoiled nature.

We are trying—and when I say "we" I mean the Izaak Walton League together with all other conservation groups, the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service—to hold the line and pass these areas on unimpaired to future generations, so that there will always be someplace where men can find peace and quiet.

And so when we talk about intangible values remember that they cannot be separated from the others. The conservation of waters, forests, soils, and wildlife are all involved with the conservation of the human spirit. The goal we all strive toward is happiness, contentment, the dignity of the individual, and the good life. This goal will elude us forever if we forget the importance of the intangibles. ●

Letters from Sig

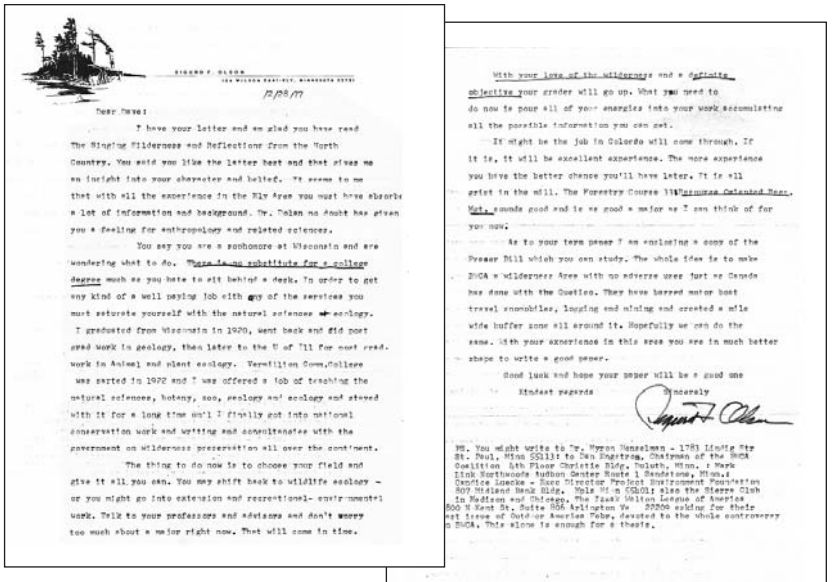
David Backes writes: When I wrote to Sigurd Olson for the first time, in February 1977, I was close to dropping out of school. I was a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and was floundering. A disastrous second semester my freshman year, in which I unwisely took three five-credit courses (calculus, organic chemistry and zoology), had not only put me on probation but made it impossible for me to get into the majors that most interested me. I had lost all sense of direction, and most of my hope.

I couldn't really talk about this with my parents, so I turned to Sig. I had read "The Singing Wilderness" in high school and had loved it. "Reflections from the North Country" had just recently come out—I bought a copy for my dad at Christmas so I could read it over my semester break. I loved that one even more, and so that February, when I didn't know if I could last beyond the end of the semester, I sat at my dorm room desk and wrote to Sig for advice. I told him how my grades stunk, that no matter how hard I studied they still stunk, and I just didn't know if it was worth it any more. I dreamed of being outdoors, and asked if he thought school was necessary to find a career in a national park or wilderness area.

I also told him I was writing a term paper about recreational conflicts over the canoe country, and asked if he had any advice or information he could send me. Frankly, I brought that up just to increase the odds that he would respond at all!

I needn't have worried. I could not believe it when, just six days later, my dorm mailbox contained a beige envelope from Sigurd F. Olson, 106 E. Wilson St., Ely, MN! His main point was clear—in fact he underlined the first half of it: "There is no substitute for a college degree much as you hate to sit behind a desk." But the fact that he wrote to me at all—and so fast!—and his encouraging tone, too, renewed my hope. His letter didn't magically remove my confusion, or even make the road to a degree any easier, but it kept me from quitting. And in the decades since then, when somehow I ended up as a writer and a professor, I have tried to take his example to heart and provide encouragement to others who are struggling.

As for that term paper that I also used as a reason to write to him? Well, I honestly don't remember how I did on it. Some things that seem important at the moment, truly are not in retrospect... ●



Dear Dave,

I have your letter and am glad you have read The Singing Wilderness and Reflections from the North Country. You said you like the latter best and that gives me an insight into your character and belief. It seems to me that with all the experience in the Ely Area you must have absorbed a lot of information and background. Dr. Dolan no doubt has given you a feeling for anthropology and related sciences.

You say you are a sophomore at Wisconsin and are wondering what to do. There is no substitute for a college degree much as you hate to sit behind a desk. In order to get any kinds of a well paying job with any of the services you must saturate yourself with the natural sciences of ecology.

I graduated from Wisconsin in 1920, went back and did post grad work in geology, then later to the U of Ill for post grad work in Animal and plant ecology. Vermillion Comm. College was started in 1922 and I was offered a job of teaching the natural sciences, botany, zoo, geology and ecology and stayed with it for a long time until I finally got into national conservation work and writing and consultancies with the government on wilderness preservatin all over the continent.

The thing to do now is to choose your field and give it all you can. You may shift back to wildlife ecology – or you might to into extension and recreational-environmental work. Talk to your professors and advisors and don't worry too much about a major right now. That will come in time.

With your love of the wilderness and a definite objective your grades will go up. What you need to do now is pour all of your energies into your work accumulating all the possible information you can get.

It might be the job in Colorado will come through. If it is, it will be excellent experience. The more experience you have the better chance you'll have later. It is all grist in the mill. The Forestry Course 33 Resource Oriented Recr. Mgt. sounds good and is as good a major as I can think of for you now.

As to your term paper I am enclosing a copy of the Fraser Bill which you can study. The whole idea is to make BWCA a wilderness Aera with no adverse uses just as Canada has done with the Quetico. They have barred motor boat travel snowmobiles, logging and mining and created a mile wide buffer zone all around it. Hoperully we can do the same. With your experience in this area you are in much better shape to write a good paper.

Good luck and hope your paper will be a good one.
Kindest regards.

Sincerely,
Sigurd F. Olson

2/28/77

The Listening Point Foundation, Inc. 2009 Annual Report

During 2009, Listening Point Foundation launched several initiatives in accordance with its mission and built upon the powerful legacy of Sigurd F. Olson. These initiatives were made possible through:

- The financial contributions from more than 300 donors to the Foundation,
- Active engagement from readers of "The View From Listening Point" newsletter,
- Gift Shop sales from across the country,
- Contributors to the Listening Point Maintenance Endowment Fund, and
- More than 480 visitors to Listening Point.

With this type of broad-based engagement, energy and resources from supporters of the Listening Point Foundation, we believe the coming year will bring many new and exciting avenues for growth.

Projects during 2009 and continuing in 2010 include:

1. Three major educational projects:

A. **The Singing Wilderness Environmental package:** teachers and group leaders receive a copy of *The Singing Wilderness*, the "Wilderness World of Sigurd Olson" dvd and discussion questions to share Olson's wilderness legacy with students and trip participants.

B. **"Sig Olson's Wilderness Moments"** booklet designed for young campers and canoeists includes excerpts from *The Singing Wilderness* and *Reflections of the North Country*. This 30-page booklet, along with the "Wilderness World" dvd will guide trip leaders with young readers.

C. **Curriculum for high school and college-age students.** Written by Northland College instructor Clayton Russell for teachers involved in environmental or literature studies. Much of the material is based on the writings of Sigurd Olson.

Please contact: info@listeningpointfoundation.org for more information about these projects.

2. Established a new endowment fund with The Minnesota Community Foundation to provide annual earnings to cover maintenance expenses of Listening Point. An initial fund goal of \$100,000 has been set. To complete this new fund goal, an additional \$55,585.00 will be sought in 2010.

3. Launched a comprehensive development and fund raising program to help LPF prepare for future needs in education, outreach and administration. This program will focus on annual gifts, special project support, endowments and planned gifts. A new fund raising brochure is now available for interested donors.

4. Expanded the Foundation website and gift shop selections.

5. Conducted a July gathering in July at Chuck & Marty Wick's yurt on Burntside Lake in Ely, adjacent to Listening Point. The Foundation hosted area guest and LPF Board members to introduce the legacy of Sigurd Olson and the mission of LPF.

6. Began a photo archive project to identify, organize and store hundreds of photos important to the history and mission of the Foundation.

7. Submitted a grant request for \$10,000 to the Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grants program for the restoration of the stone foundation and hearth at Sig's and Elizabeth's cabin. Received grant in late January, work to begin in April.

8. Hosted the Foundation's annual information booth at the Ely Blueberry Festival in July. Approximately 125 people visited the Listening Point Foundation booth, with 43 signing up to receive the newsletter.

9. Added two new Board members: Richard Struck and Tim Barzen.

10. Hosted the annual April Sigurd Olson Birthday Anniversary celebration in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Financial Report (unaudited) Synopsis for 2009

The Foundation received \$29,780 in total gift income and \$5,075 in miscellaneous income for a revenue total of \$34,855. Expenses for the year amounted to \$37,093.

Foundation Asset Summary as of December 31, 2009:

Total cash funds managed: \$112,130
 Total endowment funds: \$44,414
 Planned gifts of record (est.): \$226,00
 Total fixed assets (est.): \$287,376
 Total Foundation Assets: \$669,920



You may obtain details regarding the work of the Listening Point Foundation and opportunities to participate in its projects and programs by contacting: info@listeningpointfoundation.org.

A Scottish Perspective

By Charlie Coull

In Scotland we see John Muir firmly as one of our own. We're very proud of his achievements over the water but see him essentially as a Dunbar boy made good over the pond. Our major Conservation Charity is the John Muir Trust (www.jmt.org) and there may even be one or two folk who know the work of the Trust but have no idea of John Muir's impact on the conservation culture in the United States. Sigurd F Olson is a different matter entirely. Whilst I daresay he is well know to conservation and wildlife specialists in Scotland to the majority over here he is unknown. That is, as I have discovered, a great shame.

All the more delightful then to have come across him and to have been encouraged in my exploration of his works by the Listening Point Foundation. My journey began courtesy of a certain very well known internet book provider. Their forensic analysis of my fairly erratic buying history sensed an interest in wildlife, spotted the occasional foray into canoeing literature tied it in with a couple of books on the history of Canada and started stubbornly to suggest a certain Sigurd F Olson! I would probably

have continued to furrow my own way had it not been for the rather distinctive covers of the Minnesota Heritage series and the beautiful woodcuts that illustrate them.

I am now, of course, very much a fan. I have read most of what I can lay my hands on. Much of that courtesy of a delightful parcel put together by Alanna Dore of the Foundation which also included the DVD. I have even managed to track down a couple of out of prints works through ABE on the internet as well. I've really enjoyed both his essays on nature and conservation and his stories of trips and woodcraft.

In return can I suggest to fellow followers that they have a look at the works of the naturalist Sir John Lister Kaye. He has such similar views to the wise man of Ely that it is hard to believe that he had not come across Sigurd Olson at some point. They are certainly kindred spirits. A good start to those fond of Listening Point might be "At The Water's Edge: A Personal Quest for Wilderness." Available of course from that certain internet book seller if nowhere else!

—Charlie Coull's home town is Troon, Ayrshire, Scotland

Gift Shop

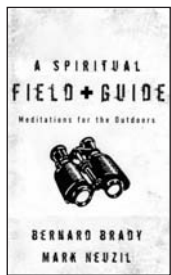
Share the spirit of Listening Point with friends and family with one of these gift items that celebrate Sigurd Olson and Listening Point.



The Story of Listening Point

This 28-page booklet, written by Sig's son Robert K. Olson, tells the inside story of how Listening Point came to be and why, what it meant to Sigurd Olson, and what it continues to mean to wilderness lovers and loyalists. Features dozens of historical photos and images.

..... \$5



A Spiritual Field Guide

This 192-page softcover book contains passages from a wide variety of writers, activists and others (including Sigurd F. Olson) who have thought long and deeply about the meaning and value of nature and wilderness. A perfect trip companion.

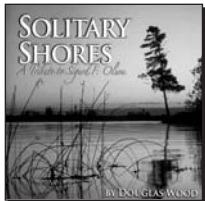
..... \$13



The Wilderness World of Sigurd F. Olson DVD

A digitally remastered version of the classic film "The Wilderness World of Sigurd F. Olson" includes more than two hours of conversations with Sig as he speaks about the craft of writing and life in the wilderness. You'll also hear Sig's wife Elizabeth and their son Sig Jr. speak candidly about Sigurd, his profession, and life in the north woods.

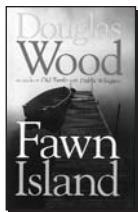
..... \$15



Solitary Shores CD

First recorded in 1983, *Solitary Shores* was Douglas Wood's musical tribute to Sigurd Olson. All of the songs have a strong North Country flavor, and there is even a segment of Sig reading from one of his own essays.

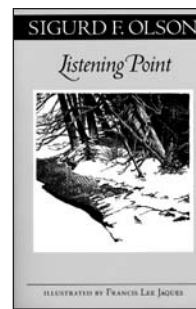
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Fawn Island (hard cover)

Fawn Island is not merely a charming wilderness hideaway; it is the entry to realms of thought and meaning as well. Author Doug Wood probes for meaning into the nature of neighborliness and independence, of community and solitude.

..... \$20

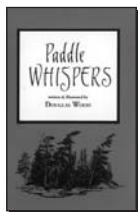


Sigurd Olson Classics

Attractive paperback versions of seven of Sigurd Olson's most loved books.

- ❖ *The Singing Wilderness*
- ❖ *Listening Point*
- ❖ *The Lonely Land*
- ❖ *Runes of the North*
- ❖ *Open Horizons*
- ❖ *Reflections from the North Country*
- ❖ *Of Time and Place*

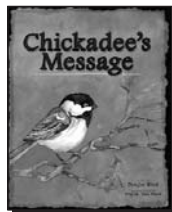
..... \$15 each



Paddle Whispers

An illustrated, nonfiction meditation about the human soul encountering itself through the soul of the wilderness on a canoe trip through the rocks, woods and water of the North Country.

..... \$16



Chickadee's Message (hard cover)

Doug Wood's retelling of a Lakota Indian legend about chickadees' strong spirit and boundless good cheer. The story is accompanied by Elly Van Diest's stunning watercolor illustrations that make this an appealing book for readers of all ages.

..... \$15

Listening Point Foundation Gift Shop
order form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

- Story of Listening Point booklet @ \$ 5.00 = _____
- A Spiritual Field Guide book @ \$13.00 = _____
- Wilderness World DVD @ \$15.00 = _____
- Solitary Shores audio CD @ \$18.00 = _____
- Fawn Island @ \$20.00 = _____
- Paddle Whispers @ \$16.00 = _____
- Chickadee's Message @ \$15.00 = _____
- Sigurd Olson paperback books @ \$15.00 = _____

specify title(s): _____

Shipping/Handling (\$2.00 for each item) @ \$ 2.00 = _____

ORDER TOTAL: _____

Please send order form and your check to Listening Point Foundation (LPF), to:

Listening Point Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 180
Ely, Minnesota 55731

Orders also may be placed by email (to info@listeningpointfoundation.org) or fax (to 218/365-7072). Invoices will be included with your shipped order.

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love for Sig & Elizabeth, and the
wilderness*

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The Listening Point Foundation is pleased to introduce a program of Planned Giving in support of Sigurd F. Olson's rich legacy of wilderness education and Listening Point. By naming the Listening Point Foundation in your will or by designating the Foundation as a beneficiary through another method of planned giving, you will help continue the vital work of the Foundation in the years to come. All gifts are welcome and will help to sustain Listening Point, the cabin and outbuildings, as well as wilderness educational outreach programs. With your help, future generations will come to know and support our rich wilderness heritage.

If you or your advisor would like information on how to name the Listening Point Foundation as a beneficiary of your estate or about the benefits of a planned gift, please call 218-365-7890 or email us at info@listeningpointfoundation.org.

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