

A DIARY OF THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE FIRST PARTICIPANTS IN THE
STUDENT CONSERVATION PROGRAM
1957

By Eliot T. Putnam, Jr.

This diary was written by a member of the Student Conservation Program, an experimental project sponsored by the National Parks Association. The fifteen high school boys in Group I who contributed their services to Olympic National Park are:

George A. Bjorgen	Martin B. Dessau	Dirk Moeller	Eliot T. Putnam
Dale H. Boggs	Harry M. Irwin	Lee Motteler	Joel E. Rubey
John Coleman	John T. Little	John Newton	Gary Walters
Steve Cook	Frank T. Magiera	Dennis R. Prichard	

Monday, June 24:

Fifteen young woodsmen, representing such far-flung places as Boston, Chicago, and Englewood, N.J., were welcomed to Olympic National Park as the pioneers in the entirely new Student Conservation Program. Superintendent Overly made us feel right at home with a warm talk, and then handed us over to our "boss," Chuck Maiden, who, with little further ado, led us to our first week's campsite above the Elwha River, three miles in from Whisky Bend on a trail that would rival the New York State Thruway for speed and comfort.

After greedily devouring a late lunch we proceeded to set up camp. The first tent went up swiftly, under the able direction of Ranger Ted Sullivan; however, the second tent took somewhat longer, requiring about two hours of unskilled, Ted-less labor, and eventually standing on jointed uprights.

Other accomplishments included the building of two tables, raising two other tents, cleaning and face-lifting the main cabin, and digging a garbage pit, and by the end of the afternoon the campsite was hotel-like in its neatness and cleanness. A post-supper fishing expedition proved fruitless, and all hands turned in early to be ready for their first work day.

Tuesday, June 25:

All hands were up early, too early for most. Ted showed up about 7:30 to lead us to our job - the construction of 300 feet of trail to a certain observation point overlooking the Elwha and an old homestead where elk often graze. Progress was excellent, considering our inexperience in trail building, and by 3:30 a large part of the trail was dug out and was really beginning to look like something.

The afternoon's fishing expedition was rather more successful, as John Little produced two dollies which we hear were very tasty, though we're looking forward to some first-hand experience. After supper of stew, we had a fine lecture on the plant life of the park by Mr. Chance, Ranger-Naturalist from Lake Crescent. Then the whole camp was lulled to a well-deserved sleep by the melodic strains of the top-twenty in barroom ballads from the "little tent."

Wednesday, June 26:

Wednesday breakfast featured "Maiden's magnificent" pancakes and sausages. Then we all left for our second day of work, which saw the rest of the path dug out and partly finished, and included extensive rock throwing contests ending in one gigantic, mountain-moving operation.

The day's casualties included Steve Cook, who was clipped on the noggin by a large falling log. No fish today. Our second after-dinner lecture was given by Ranger-Naturalist Erspamer on geology in relation to Olympic National Park. This fine talk was followed by our first campfire program, which, led by Marty and Chuck, was very enjoyable and revealed much hidden talent (?) among our members.

Thursday, June 27:

Today we finished building the path to the lookout and started clearing another trail down to the river. About 2:00 p.m., while we were working on this new trail, we received news that caused great excitement in the ranks - Chuck's wife had just had a baby girl! Congrats Chuck - it couldn't have happened to a sweller guy! The evening featured jello which didn't harden and a discussion on the animal life by Ranger-Naturalist Knight.

Friday, June 28:

Chuck left after lunch for a week-end of domestic and Naval duties, and Mr. Martin came in to take his place. Once again the jello failed to harden, but we placed it in the cooler for the week-end, and if it isn't hard by Sunday, something is awfully wrong with us cooks. After dinner Mr. Martin scared the wits out of many with his talk on "What to Do When You're Lost," and his many tales of what queer things people will do when they find out they are lost.

Saturday, June 29:

The cooking crew of Bjergsen, Boggs, and Putnam did not cover themselves with glory on Saturday's breakfast, as they put too much water in the mush, made too little hotcake batter, and burnt the cocoa. However, spirits were high as the troops hiked out to Whisky Bend, from where we were driven to Olympic Hot Springs for the hike up to Boulder Lake. Spirits were somewhat dulled on arrival at the Lake by the adverse weather conditions. Most spent a cold, rainy afternoon doing nothing, and retired at a frighteningly early hour, though it was 9:00 p.m. before anyone even came close to going to sleep.

Sunday, June 30:

This morning dawned clear and beautiful. Around 7:00 Mr. Martin and 2/3 of the group stumbled sleepily up Boulder Peak, where they were fully rewarded for their efforts by the priceless beauty of the scenery, especially the freshly bloomed avalanche lilies. After a late and leisurely breakfast we hiked back down to the Hot Springs for a long swim in the pool, featuring a great game of "water polo," and a bit of civilized (though expensive) food, before trucking back to the Elwha. There was much rejoicing when the jello was found to have finally hardened! After it was greedily devoured Mr. Martin gave us an interesting lecture on Photography and finished this Sunday with a lovely devotional, after which, without exception, we turned in.

Monday, July 1:

Back to work, but only for half a day. In the afternoon Chuck returned and most of the troops washed clothes in preparation for the six-day hike. A fishing expedition produced one under-sized trout. Total catch to date: 4 trout, 2 of them too small. C'mon fish, give us a break! Campfire in the evening. Woops - almost forgot - Denny got some fudge : Yummy!

Tuesday, July 2:

Last work day on the Elwha: trail finished! We're going to miss Ted, who has been such a great and undemanding trail boss and has certainly been a faithful mailman! If our boss at the Hoh is half as good we'll be satisfied. The afternoon was spent packing out extra food, loading our own packs, sleeping, and fishing (no luck). Our last supper on the Elwha was a honey, and most of us turned in early to be ready for the trip for which all seems to be in readiness - though you naver can tell what we might forget. Note: Latest Stretch Tournament: 1st place - Newton, 2nd place - Boggs, 3rd place - Little.

Wednesday, July 3:

A long day! Everyone was up early. The last of us left the Elwha campsite about 8:45, leaving it spic and span. We were sorry to leave, for "Micheal's Ranch" has been a good campsite. After a stop at the Elwha Ranger Station, we were trucked to the Hot Springs from where, 'mid groans of "See you next year," we took off into the Wilds. Seven hours, and many, many, painful steps later we were admiring the beautiful view atop Appleton Ridge, we were extremely glad to be there. Chuck exercised the two-way radio, our latest bit of camping equipment. Mountaineers Prichard and Irwin led a small and hardy group ridge-running. Otherwise the main activity was sacking out, early, beneath a brilliant display of stars.

Thursday, July 4:

The Fourth of July was filled with various activities. The first was sleeping late - very enjoyable! The second, after we broke camp, was a class in snow navigation, led by the more experienced mountaineers of the group: Prichard, Maiden, Bjorgen, Irwin, and Walters. This resulted in a glorious glissading marathon, and greatly increased interest in snow techniques - at least the downhill variety!

We then hiked down to the Sol Duc River and up to Heart Lake, arriving about 5:00 p.m. at this lovely secluded spot. Fishing proved fruitless; indeed, the lake seemed too small to hold anything but minnows. After dinner a small group, among them yours truly, hiked up to the High Divide for some evening photographs of the Olympics which, at this time, were indescribably and breath-takingly magnificent. The scenery up here is really fabulous!

As darkness fell, one might have noticed two white figures trembling in the positively icy waters of Heart Creek, and upon looking closer one might have recognized that - yes, the two men were Maiden and Walters, gone stark, raving mad and taking an evening bath!

Friday, July 5:

Today we climbed Mt. Carrie - almost. We left at 7:00 a.m. Though we had a bit of slow going over the Cat Walk, we were on the false peak by 1:30 where we found some very pretty crystals. However, extremely inclement weather made us head home, and we whipped back through intermittent rain showers, in record time, only to find several sleeping bags drenched and camp a cold and desolate mess. A large fire, a good hot supper, and some hastily erected shelters helped matters greatly, and everyone dried out as best they could and turned in.

A few other things should be mentioned about this active day. The first is the dramatic airdrop that we got about 6:45 a.m., which brought us, among other things, probably the first ice cream ever seen at Heart Lake, and a package of much wanted mail. The second is the wildlife we saw on our mountain trip. It included 20-30 elk, seen in two herds, a bear (about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away), a deer and 2 fawn, several grouse, and cougar droppings. Though uncomfortable at times, this might be termed an almost great day!

Saturday, July 6:

Breakfast featured tales of the night before. It was a dreary one for many, among them the squad of Boggs, Little, Putnam, and Walters, who erected one of the flimsiest shelters seen in quite a while. It consisted of one cellophane ground cloth, and the occupants suffered accordingly. All hands agreed that the trail was the best place in such weather, so we packed up our wet gear and headed for Olympus Guard Station on the Hoh River. We completed this previously scheduled two-day hike about 3:30 p.m., damp but happy.

We were now in the rain forest, quite a change from the snowfields of the High Divide. About 6:00 p.m., lo and behold, Marty and friend appeared, having hiked clear from the Sol Duc, with the greatest of treasures - Mail, this time especially fruitful for yours truly! - The day ended with a small but exclusive campfire.

Sunday, July 7:

This Sunday was indeed a rest day. Everyone took it easy: washing clothes, drying sleeping bags, fishing, eating, and taking photographs. Fishing laurels were carried away by a dark horse, Steve Cook, who snagged 10 trout, much to the chagrin of the more seasoned veterans. Little John also got a few, and all were eaten with relish. It's about time, fish! Around dinner time a couple of trail crew men appeared, one of them an old friend of Chuck's, and the other a college football player. We "swapped yarns" with them in the cabin until about 10:00 p.m., when all turned in, looking forward to the completion of a great trip on the following day.

Monday, July 8:

We hiked in to the Hoh Ranger Station this morning in intermittent showers that had turned to a downpour by the time we arrived. On the way, Frank and Lee established themselves as true, four-minute hikers, as they both, in turn, left the rest of the group coughing in their dust (or spray), miles behind them. We were met by a dripping District Ranger Henneberger, who showed us to our wet weather quarters (later established as permanent) in the loft of the Station barn. A Hot shower in the bunk house was then thoroughly enjoyed by all, and the rest of the day was spent setting up cook-tent, kitchen, stove, etc., in the rain. By the time we all sacked out in preparation for our new job, the camp was all set up.

Tuesday, July 9:

A dilemma was discovered this morning which was to plague us the rest of the week. It seems that horses have irregular bed hours, though at the time there is only one horse in the barn. She is a huge work horse named Babe, whose every step shakes the barn to its boots. Conclusion: everyone was awake early!

We started work today at 8:00 a.m. by carrying cedar puncheon for a bridge and for muddy spots on the Rain Forest Nature Trail. We ended the day by having widened and graveled 150 feet of it in an effort to solve the messy problems of the quagmires of mud on the trail left by the recent rains. We met our new bosses, John Henneberger and Bill Brockman, who seem to be as good men as one could possibly ask for.

I neglected to mention one unfortunate thing that befell us. Yesterday, upon arriving at the station, we learned that Little John would have to leave us for the last week, and he was driven off to Port Angeles later on. This was a big loss. Little John was one of the spark plugs of our group, and one of the cheeriest, spunkiest fellows we've ever known. He will be greatly missed in our last six days.

Wednesday: July 10:

Rain all day - rather dreary. We continued to gravel the Nature Trail, and were treated, firstly, by a bunch of recent newspapers, and, secondly, by a dinner of fresh salmon. By evening the weather cleared and we had a great game of softball in the parking lot with the rangers and trail crew. Footnote: Four more horses arrived today. Looks like more rude awakenings. Latest rage is mouse hunting in the barn, though we have yet to catch one. We have, however, bagged some bats, and are becoming rather alarmed about George, who has shown marked tendencies toward devouring these bats, and has gotten very worked up over them.

Thursday, July 11:

There was a full-scale stampede below us this morning, and no one slept a wink after 6:30 a.m. We had part of the morning off to wash clothes, but since this was done by the Station's washing machine, we relaxed 'til 11:00 when we went back to our graveling. Upon returning for lunch we found - hooray, hooray - Mail, and Marty, and the Superintendent of the Park come to inspect our doings - pretty big stuff.

More rain this afternoon, it's a habit by now, but we made great progress with the graveling, which atoned for breaking the tailgate of the truck, unfortunately right in front of the Superintendent. No more driving for us. More baseball after supper, plus a heated game of gin rummy in which Chicago, the teacher, lost to Irwin, the pupil. PRICHARD WAS CAUGHT CHEATING AT SOLITARE: FOR SHAME, DENNY.

Friday, July 12:

Finished up our job with a good, hard day of carrying gravel: 1800 feet of trail completed! They tell us we've done a great job. Could be, but we'll give a good hunk of the credit to our bosses, who've really made us want to work - almost. Many thanks, Bill and John, for a short but great week!

The horse craze swept the camp before supper, and most of the group had a whirl in the saddle, many for the first time. There'll be sore tails in the morning! We had another great softball game before sacking out (Chuck's team lost again - heh, heh).

Saturday, July 13:

Last day, and for it we were given a bit of a treat. We got up at 5:30 a.m. and were driven to the beach at Kalalock for some clamming (rather poor, but great fun) and a look at the Pacific, the first time for many. Jersey came attired in a white button-down shirt, no less. However, it was soon something less than white. On the way home, Frisco bought some hamburg for his and Chicago's dinner: Tired of beef stew, boys?

While we were gone, Lee, who had stayed behind to ride horses, was picked up by his grandmother, so we couldn't say goodbye to him. Good luck, Lee!

Showers were had by all, in a last minute attempt to smell somewhat civilized for the home folks. Why, Dirk, you've shaved off your beard, you don't look like an Indian anymore! Chuck, too - why, you look ten years younger!

Boots were greased and some packs packed, and then after supper we all gathered in the loft (raining of course) for our last gathering. Chuck and Marty both made little talks. It seems that this group has made a big hit in the park. But a good half of the credit should go to the people who have had a hand in the program, and especially to Chuck Maiden who has been the real guts of our little bunch of boys from around the United States.

Tomorrow we'll be leaving in different groups, and there will be little to write about besides a few handshakes, so here I will close this diary of the first group of SCP participants, once more thanking, for the group, all who have helped us during these three weeks. We will never forget them.

E.T.P. Jr.