

The New Jersey School of Conservation 1949-2019

A spirit, a dream, a hope for the future



Edited by Kerry Kirk Pflugh
October, 2019

Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation



Preface

In the early 1930's, a group of young men from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built a lake, a dam, several buildings, and a camp site, never knowing that they were actually building the foundation of what would become an internationally known outdoor education field center. Since those humble beginnings, a score of founders and pioneers, six directors, dedicated staff and academic colleagues from across the country and world have all contributed to the growth and evolution of the New Jersey School of Conservation. Through the programs and research offered and conducted on these beautiful and magical 240 acres, hundreds of thousands of students, teachers, professors, researchers, campers and counselors have been introduced to the critical importance and value of the natural world and have been given an environmental ethic by which to live.

This document represents a concise version of the 70-year history of the New Jersey School of Conservation, which had its official origin on the Memorial Day weekend of 1949. This historical overview was compiled largely from information gathered from *The New Jersey School of Conservation and the Evolution of Environmental Education* by John J. Kirk, **Facets and Faces, Chapter 1, 1982**, and **The New Jersey School of Conservation From 1949-1999**, September 2005, by Annette Sambolin. Additional contributions were made by individuals representing key staff positions from a variety of NJSOC historical programs.

Dedication

This concise history of the New Jersey School of Conservation is hereby dedicated to all who have ever walked the trails of NJSOC; reveled in the beauty and majesty of its natural surroundings; facilitated or participated in its multi-disciplinary programs; captured its vision for championing an environmental ethic; and relished the opportunity to experience a shared and collaborative outdoor learning environment.

New Jersey School of Conservation: An Illustrious History

The story of the New Jersey School of Conservation begins in 1924 when officials in the State Department of Conservation purchased the Skellinger Farm for the price of \$100 and added the property to the Stokes State Forest system. Stokes State Forest was established in 1907, after New Jersey Governor Edward Stokes donated some of his own holdings. His acreage was combined with other land either donated or confiscated from people delinquent in property tax payments. (6) In 1934, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) moved onto the Skellinger site, cleared some of the land, built an earthen dam across a cornfield and the mountain stream used to irrigate the land, and created an 11.3 acre body of water now known as Lake Wapalanne.



Water tower and lake during the CCC and early SOC days.

After the lake's completion in 1936, the CCC constructed twelve cabins, toilet facilities, a dining room pavilion and three activity buildings. The purpose of the development was to provide a summer camping experience for indigent children from the cities. The new cabins on the east shore of the lake combined with the CCC cabins on the west shore became the Skellinger Group Camp and consisted of thirty-five acres located in the center of Stokes State Forest.

When World War II ended, there was considerable discussion in Trenton, New Jersey's state capitol, concerning the administration and financing of the Skellinger Group Camp. The dilemma concerning the camp was brought to the attention of a group of



SOC staff and their family members, including first director, Dr. E. De Alton Partridge, top row center and his wife, Nell to his left and Bobb Partridge to the right at the end. Bottom row Betty Vivian and SOC Pioneer Dr. Eugene Vivian and two of their young children Mark and Joan.

educators and interested conservationists involved in outdoor education and conservation programs at the famous Life Camps operated by Dr. Lloyd B. Sharp, located eight miles from the Skellinger Group Camp. Leaders of the Life Camps joined with other concerned state conservationists to initiate a campaign to convert the Skellinger Group Camp into a conservation field campus for the six state colleges of New Jersey.

After much discussion, and with the advocacy of Senator Alfred B. Littell, the New Jersey State Board of Education, with the approval of Governor Alfred E. Driscoll, designated the Skellinger Group Camp as the New Jersey State School of Conservation. Senator Littell's love of the outdoors, and his desire to develop a conservation center in Sussex County led to his passionate advocacy.



CCC camp pictured near Long House.

Montclair State Teachers College was designated as the state agency responsible for the administration of the new school and demonstration camp. Dr. E. DeAlton Partridge, director of Graduate Studies at Montclair, was appointed as Director of the School. He greeted the first group of college students on Memorial Day weekend in 1949.

Dr. Partridge, with a strong background in teacher training, worked on the design and implementation of field courses at the School of Conservation. These were intended to enrich the school curriculum and provide future teachers with the necessary skills and ability to work comfortably with children in the natural environment. The decade of the fifties has been identified as the "curriculum phase" of the Outdoor Education and Conservation Movement in the United States (1), and the School of Conservation was one of the field centers that pioneered and guided the movement in this new direction.

Camp Wapalanne is Born

When the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed the cabins at the School of Conservation, it was with the intent to create a children's summer camp. That objective was finally realized when Camp Wapalanne welcomed its first 30 campers in the summer of 1950. Marie Kuhnen was hired to be the director of the new camp, a position she held for its first three summers, from 1950 to 1952. Dr. Kuhnen went on to have a life-long relationship with the School of Conservation as a professor and Biology Department Chair at Montclair State.

In keeping with the mission of the School of Conservation, the camp's main educational goal was to help campers learn, live, and practice conservation as a way of life. This focus remained a common thread throughout Camp Wapalanne's history. In the early 1950's, it took the form of visits to the local Snook Family Farm where campers learned about the conservation practices of the day, including contour farming, strip cropping, and pond irrigation. Campers also had the opportunity to work with college students to develop dioramas focusing on issues in agriculture, forestry, and forest fires. These were displayed at the Sussex County Fair in Branchville.

Camp Wapalanne incorporated elements of the decentralized camping philosophy championed by Dr. Sharp, a pioneer in the camping movement and mentor to the SOC director, Dr. Partridge. While younger campers (8-12 year olds) used the numbered cabins on the hill, older, more experienced campers had their own small campsites where they



Dr. Marie Kuhnen, first director of Camp Wapalanne.



SOC staff and students including Directors Clifford Emanuelson (front left), Director Luther Lindenmuth (front center), and Ed Ambry (front right).

lived in teepees, handmade shelters, or covered wagons with counselors who were completely responsible for planning and directing their own activities. These experienced campers planned camping and hiking trips to Tillman's Ravine, canoe trips on the Delaware River, and trips to a campsite west of the Delaware River, during which they prepared three meals a day.

Decentralized camping was reserved as a demonstration camp project for in-service teachers during the last two weeks of camp when in-service teacher courses were in session. Teachers were able to observe the outdoor teaching techniques employed by the counselors, some of whom were National Life Camp alumni. The age of this counseling staff was considerably older than the average age of camp counselors in general, most of whom were students from New Jersey colleges. (7) With courses for teachers, sessions for visiting foreign students, and summer camp, SOC's facilities were in continual use during the summer with a schedule that was demanding, time-consuming, and required to be self-supporting. (6)

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In 1951, Dr. Partridge was selected by the New Jersey State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education to be President of Montclair State Teachers College. He chose Edward J. Ambry, who had also been active in programs at Dr. Sharp's

Life Camps, to be the Director of Graduate Studies. As Director of Graduate Studies, Edward Ambry was also the second Director of the New Jersey State School of Conservation. Under his leadership, the Outdoor Education and Conservation programs continued to focus on curriculum enrichment and teacher preparation. As more programs were developed, administrators and faculty members at the five other state colleges—Glassboro, Jersey City, Newark, Paterson and Trenton—became intrigued with the potential of this new college program at Montclair. In May 1957, a five-day program was launched involving ten sophomores and one faculty member from each of the six state colleges. When the program was evaluated and the results presented to the Council of College Presidents, the Council voted to provide such a resident experience for students at all the state colleges. In the Spring of 1957, the School of Conservation expanded its programs to provide services to students from the six state colleges then in existence.

With the increased number of students, it became necessary that the School of Conservation become a twelve-month operation and it was obvious that a full-time director was needed. Since funds were not available for such a position, Luther Lindenmuth, Principal Forester of the State of New Jersey and another associate of Dr. Sharp, was appointed Director of the School in addition to his other duties. After one year, it was apparent that joint responsibilities as Principal Forester for the State of New Jersey, and Director of the New Jersey School of Conservation, were far too demanding for one person, both administratively and physically. To solve the problem, the



Pitching a tent at Piney Point.



Ruth Morrison and Maplewood students studying mushrooms.

administration of the School of Conservation was transferred to the office of the Director of Teacher Education and Certification in the Division of Higher Education, New Jersey Department of Education. At this point, 1958, Clifford Emanuelson was hired to serve as the first full-time director, being the fourth individual to hold the director's position.

During the 1950's, college courses and teacher workshops conducted during the spring and summer at the School boasted some of the most distinguished Outdoor Education and Conservation Education leaders that the United States has ever produced. In addition to Dr. Sharp, frequent instructors at the School were: Dr. William Gould Vinal, affectionately known by his students as Cap'n Bill, now recognized as the father of Nature Recreation; Dr. Julian W. Smith of Michigan State University, founder of the famous Battle Creek Outdoor Education Center; Dr. William M. (Moosewood Bill) Harlow, co-author of the famous publication, *Textbook of Dendrology*; and Dr. Matthew J. Brennan, one of the country's leading natural scientists and Chief Scientist for the Antarctic Expedition during the International Geophysical Year in 1957, who also introduced the concept of interdisciplinary programs in conservation at the School of Conservation in the mid 1950's. In later years, this approach of integrating various content areas in teaching conservation became an accepted procedure. It had its beginnings at the School of Conservation. (2)

In order to provide a more comfortable setting during winter months, the buildings at the School

of Conservation were insulated and winterized in 1958 and 1959 under Mr. Emanuelson's supervision. The teaching staff was also expanded. In addition to Mr. Emanuelson, two other faculty members were appointed to the School of Conservation, and the property of the School was enlarged from thirty-five acres to two hundred and forty acres. All official records concerning the School of Conservation were moved from Montclair State College to the School of Conservation and the Director of the School was made administratively responsible to the Director of Teacher Education and Certification in the State Department of Education.

The six state colleges were now sending all sophomores for a five-day session at the School of Conservation. In addition, a few selected public school groups were also accommodated. The public school programs were also of five-days duration and the school systems were permitted to participate in programs at the School of Conservation for a two-year period; then it was expected that they would move to another facility. This ruling was placed in effect in order to provide more school districts with the opportunity of having their teachers exposed to the philosophy and field techniques that had been pioneered and developed at the School of Conservation.

In the late fifties and early sixties, under the leadership of Mr. Emanuelson, the philosophy of the School of Conservation made a gradual transition. It began to focus more on curriculum enrichment through conservation field study and on developing a sensitivity and awareness concerning the importance of natural resource management. Since the 1960's proved to be the Conservation Phase of the Outdoor Movement, the School of Conservation was once again in the vanguard. (1)

The number of students attending the School of Conservation increased from sixty in the first pilot program in 1957, to approximately three thousand in the 1960 and 1961 academic years. During this early period in the history of the School, the philosophical foundation upon which programs were developed stressed the techniques and teachings of Dr. Sharp, who completed the first doctoral study on Outdoor Education at Teacher's College, Colum-



Director Dr. John J. Kirk talking with students.

bia University, in 1929 and, as previously stated, directed the National Life Camps during the 1940's. All four directors of the School of Conservation had worked with Dr. Sharp and were strong advocates of his philosophy and approach to field teaching. The philosophy of Dr. Sharp can best be summarized as "that which can be best learned in the out-of-doors through direct experience and dealing with native materials and life situations should there be learned."

In September of 1963, Dr. John J. Kirk, was appointed the fifth director of the School of Conservation. During the first three years of Dr. Kirk's tenure, both college and public school programs grew considerably until, in the academic year 1966-1967, over four thousand college students and two thousand public school youngsters participated in five-day resident programs focusing upon conservation and natural resource management. This exceptional growth rate made the New Jersey State School of Conservation one of the largest resident field centers in the world and focused much national and international attention on the programs being developed and implemented at the School.

During this period of time, a shift in philosophical emphasis from that of previous years began to evolve. The new focus stressed the development of a reverence for life through an ecological investigation of the interdependence of living things and the formation of a land ethic which tends to demonstrate man's temporary stewardship of the land. This approach to field study places a greater emphasis

on the affective aspects of learning and ultimately contributes to the development of new attitudes and values regarding mankind and the relationship to the natural environment.

Camp Wapalanne during the Kirk Years

Under Dr. Kirk's leadership, changes were implemented in the Camp Wapalanne summer program as well. In 1963, Kirk modified the camping philosophy from a decentralized to a centralized approach, giving all campers a cabin or unit as a "home base" and encouraging regular scheduled use of the decentralized sites. The covered wagons scattered around the school's property were relocated to Frontier Town, across the street from the original climbing wall. Wooden domes designed by maintenance supervisor Millard van Dien at Kirk's request were built to house the Outpost Units, for campers aged 13-16 (the age was later dropped to 14 in the early 1970s).

In 1965, Dr. Kirk began hiring counselors with specialized skills to offer archery, riflery, boating, crafts, waterfront, and natural sciences to all campers. Each Cabin/Unit had two counselors, paired to deliver a balanced program of Environmental Science and Outdoor Recreation. The camp's focus shifted from camping education to ecological awareness and environmental education. (6) The length of camp sessions increased from three to four weeks during the summer of 1966. Each cabin and unit had a block of 20 hours a week set aside for nature-oriented activities. During rest hour on Sunday, counselors and campers discussed what projects they would like



Opening day at Camp Wapalanne with Dr. Kirk.



Devotions at Piney Point.

to undertake during this allotted time. On Sunday evening, the plans developed with the campers would be reviewed with the Camp Director, Program Director, and Environmental Studies Coordinator to ensure that the areas to be studied and their presentation would effectively meet the educational goals and objectives established by the camp.

Camp Wapalanne enrollment peaked in 1967. Each summer, campers and counselors bonded within a program that consistently offered structure, tradition, and ceremony. The program continued, with only minor changes, until 1985 when low enrollment, likely due to societal and family changes, made it no longer economically viable.

All-Camp trips, camp songs, meal-time procedures, and ceremonial opening and closing campfires loom large in the shared memories of former campers and counselors. The Camp Wapalanne alumni group has been well-represented at the School's Anniversary programs, with participants returning from across the country and around the globe. The influence of the camp experience has been credited with directing the career paths of many of its alumni.

Camp Sequoya

During the summer of 1963, a new building was constructed on the western side of the School of Conservation's campus - Lenape Lodge. The large, open dormitory-style building was designed to facilitate special needs participants who were unable to navigate the rocky paths to the cabins on the Wapalanne

side of the lake. This allowed for an additional 44 participants to stay at the SOC. (6)

During the first two years of operation, Camp Sequoya housed campers focusing on speech therapy. The Sequoya staff and counselors were Trenton State faculty and college students trained in speech therapy. Campers received intensive therapy using the natural environment to inspire and assist in forming sounds and words. Additionally, campers enjoyed the traditional camp program of nature studies and recreation. (6)

In 1965, Camp Sequoya was used by the Garden School for Emotionally Disturbed Children, providing a one-week camping experience for organically brain-damaged children. In 1966, Camp Sequoya was leased to the Salem County School Districts to conduct a six-week camping program for culturally and socially deprived children. For some years after this camp program ended, Camp Sequoya functioned exclusively as a base for teaching summer graduate courses for Montclair State College. (6)



Lenape Lodge under construction.

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In 1965 and 1966, the focus of the college program shifted from general education to professional education. Three of the state colleges moved the experience from the sophomore year to the junior year in order to more closely relate it to the student teaching experience. This change made the five-day resident experience far more relevant and meaningful to the college students, since much of the material presented at the School of Conservation could



College students studying Forest Ecology.

be utilized during their student teaching experience. The lack of relevance was a major criticism leveled at many resident programs in Outdoor Education and Conservation (3)—and with considerable merit. The shift to the college junior year negated such criticism and also tied the experience more closely to the school curriculum with which these future teachers were beginning to work.

In 1967, the New Jersey State Legislature approved legislation that would separate higher education from elementary and secondary education, thus forming the State Department of Higher Education. This structure provided more autonomous roles for the School of Conservation and the six state colleges then in existence. As a result, the state colleges of New Jersey shifted from their previously exclusive emphasis on teacher preparation to become multi-faceted institutes of higher learning. With this new focus in public higher education, four of the state colleges chose to eliminate the requirement for all students to attend the School of Conservation. Trenton State College and Glassboro State College remained in the program, and during the 1968-1969 academic year, sent a combined enrollment of eighteen hundred college juniors to the School of Conservation for the five-day resident experience in Outdoor Education and Conservation.

During the late 1960's, two aspects of the School of Conservation program and philosophy were brought into clearer focus. Starting in 1963, the administration of the School attempted to integrate an international dimension into program content. This was accomplished by having teachers and college faculty

members from other countries spend three to six months as visiting instructors. Twelve countries were represented on the faculty from 1963 through 1968.

In the 1967-1968 academic year, Professor Shinshiro Ebashi of the University of Tokyo, joined the School of Conservation faculty as a Distinguished Visiting Professor. His many contributions to the program and his work with the Director of the School of Conservation in other areas of international concern, demonstrated rather convincingly the necessity of integrating a one-world concept into the various field studies offered at the School. This added dimension was clearly substantiated in 1975 at the UNESCO Conference in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, which produced the Belgrade Charter, the World Master Plan for Environmental Education (4). One of the points stressed at the Conference was the need for individuals to consider environmental issues from a global point of view, and to understand the value and necessity of local, national, and international cooperation in the resolution of environmental problems. The School of Conservation was attempting, in its own small way, to initiate this idea in the mid-1960's, ten years prior to the appearance of the Belgrade Charter.

Another philosophical change in the School's teaching in the late 1960's and early 1970's, was an emphasis on natural resource management from a general, to a more specific, local level. Environmental assessment surveys conducted in the community of each visiting school group made it possible for the School of Conservation staff to make lessons more relevant



Distinguished visiting professor from Japan, Professor Shinshiro "Shine" Ebashi with students.



Dr. Kirk with his administrative staff and visiting professor.

to visiting students by focusing on the resources and issues in their own community. This new approach resulted in a gradual reposition from conservation education to a series of educational experiences in the field more compatible with the emerging field of Environmental Education, which burst upon the world scene in the late 1960's. (1)

In the summers of 1968, 1969, and 1970, the School of Conservation served as the field campus for a federally funded graduate program under Title V of the Higher Education Act. This program was jointly sponsored by Glassboro State College, Montclair State College, Trenton State College, and the School of Conservation. The courses at the three colleges and the School of Conservation were designed to provide experienced teachers with a philosophical base and the technical skills to conduct environmentally-oriented field programs and to modify existing curriculum in order to focus on conservation and environmental problems that were threatening all people.



Prospective Teacher Fellowship Program.

Following a review and analysis of the program by Dr. Betty Van der Smissen of the Pennsylvania State University and Ann Brinley of the Outdoor Education Association, the focus was altered during the second and third years of the program, and it became known as the Prospective Teacher Fellowship Program. Its intent was to encourage student interest in pursuing an environmental career. Dr. Thomas Rillo, who at the time was a professor at Glassboro State College, was hired to direct the program. Ms. Patricia Ford, who would be accepting the position of SOC's Coordinator of School Programs in the near future, was a participant in the program. (6) This joint program continued for three years and produced seventy-five teachers with Masters of Arts degrees in Outdoor Education and Conservation. A tribute to the selection process and to the caliber of the candidates was evidenced by the role and contribution that the alumni of that program made to the field of Environmental Education. Several became directors of field centers and coordinators of programs in schools and colleges throughout the United States.

In the Spring of 1969, the School of Conservation further demonstrated a concern and interest in the international dimension of Environmental Studies by initiating a faculty exchange program with the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority located in Ontario, Canada. Each year a member of the faculty from the School of Conservation traveled to one of the field centers in Ontario, and a member of the faculty from one of the three environmental field centers operated by the Authority joined the faculty at the School of Conservation. This exchange proved to be mutually beneficial, enriching the programs operated by both agencies. It also gave students an opportunity to see and understand a little more clearly the interrelationship and interdependence between the United States and our friends in Canada, as well as our shared responsibility to the global environment.

In December of 1969, Dr. Mason Gross, then President of Rutgers University, granted academic rank to the faculty of the School of Conservation. The five faculty members were assigned as adjuncts to the then Department of Environmental Resources



Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Ontario, Canada exchange program with SOC staff.

of Cook College, the former Agriculture School of Rutgers University. At the request of the Dean, the School of Conservation faculty jointly developed the first environmental education curriculum course to be offered at Rutgers University. Students were enrolled in the fall of 1970 and the course was team taught by all five faculty members.

In April of 1972, one of the more significant events in the history of the School of Conservation's international involvement occurred. By mutual consent, the Osaka Perfectual Youth Outdoor Activities Center in Osaka, Japan, and the School of Conservation were proclaimed as Sister Centers in Environmental Studies dedicated to the one world concept. Professor Shinshiro Ebashi of the University of Tokyo was instrumental in initiating the negotiations which brought the two centers together. During the 70's and 80's, Japanese students participated in the School of Conservation's program as members of the summer Camp Wapalanne staff.



Professor Ebashi with Director John J. Kirk at the Osaka Perfectual Youth Outdoor Activities Center in Osaka, Japan.

The 1970's also saw the transfer of the administration of the School of Conservation back to Montclair State from the State Department of Higher Education. The School of Conservation became a division of the School of Professional Arts and Sciences. The purpose of the transfer was to provide an opportunity for additional courses to be developed for the graduate program in Environmental Studies which had recently been established at the College.

As a result of the administrative transfer of the School of Conservation back to Montclair State College, many new and exciting programs were initiated. One involved a course, Industrial and Technical Education, which brought an 1813 carriage house owned by the Wight family along the Delaware



Graduate Students with the reconstructed Carriage House, donated by the Wight Family from their property on the Delaware River.

River, to the School of Conservation. Additionally, the following year, students also moved and reconstructed a two story 1860 log cabin known as the DeGroat Cabin. These historical restoration projects brought considerable attention to Montclair State College and, as a result of these unique courses and their highly successful conclusions, the National Park Service requested Dr. Goodall and Montclair State students to travel to different national parks each summer and restore historically significant buildings. An outstanding honor for Dr. Goodall and Montclair State College and a unique educational opportunity for Montclair State students.

In September of 1973, the administration of Montclair State College approved the implementation of a Graduate Teaching Fellowship program at the



Business Manager, Maclyn L. Wight.

School of Conservation. The Fellowship program provided for three graduate students each year, who were enrolled in the Environmental Studies program, to live at the School of Conservation and to work in the elementary, secondary, and college programs teaching field courses for fifteen hours each week. This field experience made the theory courses on the main campus much more meaningful and provided opportunities for innovation in their teaching. The Teaching Fellows received room and board at the School of Conservation, remission of tuition at the college, and a small stipend. In twelve months, the Teaching Fellows left with their Masters of Arts degree plus one of the most unusual educational experiences offered anywhere in the United States. To demonstrate the one world concept in practice, the School faculty, who served as the selection committee for the Teaching Fellows, selected one candidate from a country other than the United States. There were representatives in this program from Canada, Ireland, and Norway. Further demonstrating the international involvement, the School of Conservation established an additional faculty exchange program with the Toronto Board of Education. Each Spring, a teacher from the Boyne River Natural Science School in Shelbourne, Ontario, joined the School of Conservation faculty and one of the resident faculty from the School of Conservation traveled to Boyne River.

During the Spring of 1978, another dimension was added to the School of Conservation. In cooperation with Montclair's Recreation Professions Department, an undergraduate intern program was

initiated. Each semester, one or two undergraduate students who had completed their course work for the Bachelor's Degree spent a semester in residence at the School of Conservation. During that time, they received training in the techniques of field teaching in the Natural Sciences, Outdoor Pursuits, Social Studies, and the Humanities. Those interested in administration had the opportunity to work with the Director of the School of Conservation and with Business Manager, Maclyn L. Wight in order to learn more about budgeting, purchasing and overall administration of a resident facility for Environmental Studies.



Blacksmithing with undergraduate students.

A. Harry Moore

That same year, the SOC added a new and dynamic summer camp. Under the direction of Dennis Paparello and Jo Bruno, the camp offered a unique recreational and environmental experience for physically and developmentally challenged youth from the A. Harry Moore School in Jersey City, a laboratory school of Jersey City State College, now known as New Jersey City University. The staff of A. Harry Moore Camp were special education undergraduates at Jersey City State College. They provided supervision and the majority of instruction for the children in attendance. This connection allowed college students to gain hands-on experience working with special needs students while simultaneously receiving college credits.



A. Harry Moore and Camp Wapalanne administrative staff.

The students, ages 5 to 21, were offered the opportunity to attend one of three two-week sessions held each summer. Campers experienced arts and crafts, music, swimming, boating, hiking, and a nature program. A special one-day field trip was also conducted each camping session. During its first three years, the A. Harry Moore Camp and Camp Wapalanne shared waterfront staff and nature study programs. Counselors from the School of Conservation provided instruction in the natural sciences and aquatic activities.

The A. Harry Moore Camp was a successful program for two decades at the School of Conservation. (6) In the summer of 1999, the A. Harry Moore Camp program conducted its last season. Difficulty in funding and hiring staff were the main reasons for its conclusion. During the camp’s 21 years at the SOC, it offered a memorable outdoor experience for over 1,500 students and their staff members.



Jim Merritt teaching A. Harry Moore campers.



A. Harry Moore campers at boating.

SOC Celebrates 30 Years

In the Spring of 1979, the School of Conservation celebrated its 30th Anniversary. A commemorative conference was held in May and six national leaders in environmental education were featured in a weekend program: Dr. John J. Kirk, director of the School of Conservation; Dr. Betty Van der Smitten, chairperson of the Outdoor Recreation Department of Michigan State University; Professor Clay Schoenfeld, director of the Center for Environmental Communication at the University of Wisconsin, Madison; Dr. Herbert Wong, former associate professor at the College of Natural Resources at the University of California; Dr. William B. Stapp, chair of the department of Behavior and Environment at the University of Michigan, and Dr. Noel Brown, the North American Liaison Officer of the United Nations Environment Programme. The central theme of the celebration focused on the School of Conservation being an integral partner with all other centers in the United States. A publication entitled, *Faces and Facets of Environmental Education*, a summary of the presentations from the two-day celebration, documents the discussions from the weekend.

During the late 1970’s, the School of Conservation experienced budgetary problems since it was constrained in raising user fees to support its growing program. The problem was compounded in September of 1980, when the School received word from the Chancellor of Higher Education that its annual subsidy of \$50,000 was to be terminated. A massive legislative campaign was mounted, involving



NJ SOC 30th anniversary speakers: Dr. John J. Kirk, Dr. Betty Van der Smitten, Dr. Herbert H. Wong, Dr. Noel J. Brown, Dr. Clarence A. Schoenfeld, and Dr. William B. Stapp.

then state Assemblyman Robert Littell and Senator Wayne Dumont, and calling for appeals of public support for the continuation of the School. Companion bills were introduced in the state Assembly and Senate calling for a \$125,000 state subsidy.

Approximately 20,000 letters were sent to government officials and legislators. This flood of support came from people who had experienced the education and leadership programs offered by the school over the past 30 years. They were expressed through: newspaper articles, radio stations, television programs, lobbying efforts, as well as endorsements from the Association of New Jersey School Boards, the Federation of Sportsman’s Clubs, the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), the Sierra Club, the Garden Clubs of New Jersey, and the Society for Environment and Economic Development. Personal letters from New Jersey school students were also sent.

Samuel Convissor, who sent his children to the School of Conservation’s Camp Wapalanne program as summer campers, and later as counselors, worked in New York City at the time as Executive Vice President of Corporate Relations at RCA. When informed of the closure threat, he was instrumental in getting news coverage for the School of Conservation. He worked closely with Senator Dumont and Assemblyman Littell and gave intense support to the passage of legislation that would keep the School open. (6)

The intent of the “Save the School” legislation, which passed unanimously in both legislative hous-

es and was signed into law by Governor Brendon Byrne on May 18, 1981, was to establish the School in perpetuity. The work Dr. Kirk engaged in with then Assemblyman, and later Senator Littell, laid the foundation for a life-long friendship between the two men. Senator Littell was often credited by Dr. Kirk as having saved the School of Conservation from closure.

As the School of Conservation entered the decade of the eighties, more attention was focused on refining the techniques of integrating environmental concepts into the curriculum in the classroom, on the school grounds, in the community, and in natural areas. New programs were developed in the Humanities, Social Studies, Outdoor Pursuits, and the Natural and Physical Sciences. These programs were designed to assist teachers as they attempted to develop an environmental sensitivity in their students. The international significance of resource management also was stressed as outlined in the World Conservation Strategy of the United Nations. (5)

In 1981-82, attendance at SOC reached a high point of 10,519, including 9,309 elementary/secondary school students and weekend program participants. As the decade progressed, computers were introduced to the School and a research component of the program was initiated. The School of Conservation continued to refine the four curriculum areas: Natural Sciences, Humanities, Social Studies, and Outdoor Pursuits. New staff brought fresh ideas and



American Heritage Skills class with Patty Ford.



Action Socialization Experiences.

new perspectives to the traditional programs of the School and research and collaborations with the Natural and Historic Resources program of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and other institutions were established.

SOC Celebrates 40 Years

In 1989, the School of Conservation paused to celebrate its history once again. This time the celebration came on the heels of an executive order signed by Governor Thomas H. Kean for the establishment of the Governor's Commission on Environmental Education in New Jersey. The speakers included representatives from academic institutions across the country and the world. At the celebration, Dr. Kirk presented the SOC Award of Merit to Governor Kean for his support of environmental education in the state and for his support of the School. Legendary environmental activist, and Assistant Commissioner of Natural and Historic Resources, Helen Fenske accepted the award on the Governor's behalf. In addition, Senator Wayne Dumont and Assemblyman Robert Littell were given an Award of Merit for their "contributions to the protection of New Jersey's environment over the years." (6)

As the School of Conservation entered the decade of the 1990's, its focus turned to further refining its four curriculum areas: Natural Sciences, Humanities, Social Studies, and Outdoor Pursuits. Under the supervision of Mr. Jerry Schierloh, in the Natural Sciences area, classes were added to give students a greater exposure to the natural history of Stokes

State Forest. These classes included ornithology, herpetology, entomology and winter ecology. Additionally, classes focused on field lessons related to New Jersey environmental issues and social concerns of the day. (6)

The philosophical approach employed in both Humanities and Social Science areas during this time was largely influenced by Ms. Regina Kelly, coordinator of these programs. Social studies were viewed as a means to investigate and examine human beings in the context of their communities – family, cultural, and political realms. It was believed that knowledge gained through these investigations would contribute to the development of understanding humankind's place within and responsibility toward the natural environment. (6)

The goal of the Outdoor Pursuits program, under the direction of Dr. Walt Myers, was to teach outdoor skills and inspire students to feel good about themselves, thus turning those feelings into positive actions towards others and the environment. Outdoor Pursuits had three distinct content areas. The first area was wilderness education which included orienteering, Nordic skiing and survival training. The second area was adventure/challenge classes that emphasized inter- and intra-personal student development through team building and confidence-enhancing classes. These sessions used the Action Socialization Exercises (A.S.E.), developed by Dr. James Merritt during his tenure as the SOC's Outdoor Pursuits coordinator. These included: climbing wall, confidence course, and cable bridge crossing exercises, to name just a few. The third category was outdoor recreation which included: boating, ice skating, archery and non-competitive games. (6)



NJ SOC 40th Anniversary speakers.

The 1990's reemphasized the connection between regional and local environmental education, making course content relevant to the issues and concerns that students might face within their communities. This approach began in the 1970's under the direction of School Coordinator, Jackie Russell. (6)

Junior Fly Fishing School

In 1992, a Junior Fly Fishing School for elementary and junior high school students was instituted at the School. The program was co-sponsored by the Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF) in cooperation with the North Jersey Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Members of both groups served as faculty. In addition to traditional camping activities, including swimming, boating, and canoeing, the program offered students sessions in safety procedures, selection and care of fly fishing equipment, basic fly casting, knot tying and fly tying techniques for wet or dry flies, steamers and nymphs. There was also a session on rod building, as well as a field trip to the Pequest Trout Hatchery operated by the State of New Jersey.

The concept for the Junior Fly Fishing camp grew from Dr. Kirk's own passion for the sport. He wished to take the concepts of fly fishing and translate them into an environmentally-themed camp similar to Camp Wapalanne. Instructors from throughout the Mid-Atlantic were recruited to teach and act as counselors for the young participants. Specialists in fly tying and fly casting were recruited as counselors and instructors. Dr. Kirk's enthusiasm for the sport inspired a core group of volunteer instructors from



Junior Fly Fishing School.



Junior Fly Fishing School staff.

New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland and Virginia to staff the camp. These same volunteers returned to the School of Conservation year after year.

In addition to teaching young people how to fly fish, the camp also worked to instill a respect for nature in the students.

Conservation of natural resources was taught through the lens of fly fishing. The Junior Fly Fishing school ran for nearly a decade and provided young people with the opportunity to not only learn how to fly fish, but also to understand the importance of high water quality in order to sustain a diverse and healthy aquatic ecosystem. (6)

Music Ecology Camp

A Music Ecology Camp was initiated at the School of Conservation in 1993 and directed by Dr. Ruth Rendleman of Montclair State University. The camp is geared for students aged 10 to 18. The program's aim is to introduce "budding musicians to the artistic inspiration of nature." (6)

Dr. Rendleman had approached Dr. Kirk with the idea of a music camp. Dr. Kirk suggested adding an ecology component to the curriculum. A full variety of musical compositions, reflective of a selected theme about nature were part of the camp's first year. Arrangements for orchestra, jazz ensembles, and chamber music were created and practiced.



Music Ecology Camp performance in Big Timbers.

In addition to music, campers also enjoy the traditional camping activities such as boating, swimming, canoeing, and forest, wildlife, and water ecology. (6) The music camp is now celebrating its 26th year of teaching young artists by immersing them in a natural setting so they may create and appreciate the music that nature inspires.

Ultimately, the environmental education goal for the SOC in the 1990's, both with its year round program and summer camps, was to foster in a student the ability to take concepts learned at the School and apply them to their own bioregion. The importance of environmental literacy -- knowledge of ecological systems and humankind's place within those systems -- and the creation of an environmental ethic, or a sense of responsibility to the earth, became principal concepts integrated into the curriculum during this decade. While technology was advancing and use of computers as learning tools grew, at its core, the School of Conservation continued to practice experiential learning by providing human-nature interactions and experiences.

SOC Celebrates 50 Years

In 1999, the School of Conservation celebrated its Golden Anniversary. Throughout the course of that year, weekend workshops were held, during which celebrated environmental educators from across the country and the world spoke with teachers,



Senator Robert E. Littell presenting Dr. Kirk with the New Jersey Senate's Legislative Resolution of Honor.

professors, and students. This led up to a Gala event in June where academics, students, professors, and camp alumni from the various camps sponsored by the School gathered for a weekend celebration of the SOC's 50 years as an international leader in environmental education. The weekend opened with an audio-visual retrospective of the 50 years of the School of Conservation, followed by a square dance in Big Timbers, called by Richard "Dick" Pasvolsky, SOC educator and long-time square dance caller. A traditional Buffalo Tro' at Piney Point was offered, as well as hikes throughout Stokes State Forest and music, courtesy of the Camp Wapalanne Alumni and the Music Ecology Camp. Presentations on the historical significance and evolution of the School and its influence on the environmental education field were presented by speakers from Norway, Japan, and Canada, as well as the United States.



Raising the 50th Anniversary flag.

Senator Robert E. Littell, a guest speaker at the event, spoke of his family's long-time history with the School, and presented Dr. Kirk with the New Jersey Senate's Legislative Resolution of Honor for boosting the ecological awareness of more than 250,000 students and teachers since the School's opening days. (6)

As the century came to an end, the School of Conservation was adapting yet again. In 2001, Dr. Kirk retired from the SOC after 38 years. Dr. William H. Thomas was hired in 2002 and became the sixth director of the School of Conservation. Dr. Thomas brought with him extensive experience in research and conservation. Because the SOC is a university-based facility, and at their heart, universities are about discovery, he wanted to facilitate discovery for visitors of all ages and educational levels. As such, Dr. Thomas, along with his Associate Director, Dr. Randy FitzGerald, established the only university research station in New Jersey located in an upland temperate forest community.

Montclair professors and their graduate students from 14 academic programs work and study at the SOC. The diverse habitats of the SOC have enabled graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and university faculty members to carry out significant research in ecology, conservation, animal behavior, systematics, biological diversity and evolutionary biology. Much of the research is a collaboration between the SOC, the Endangered Species and Nongame Species program at the New Jersey De-



Release of a radio-collared vole.



Dr. Randall FitzGerald radio collaring a bobcat.

partment of Environmental Protection, and university faculty and graduate staff. These collaborations have resulted in some forty published research projects.

Dr. Thomas and Dr. FitzGerald have also established a strong and well-developed partnership with AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is a state and national service initiative that provides opportunities for participants to engage in community service in return for a stipend and scholarship funds. Each year over 100,000 American citizens serve their communities and country through participation in AmeriCorps programs located throughout the United States.

The SOC AmeriCorps program provides unique environmental training opportunities for those with undergraduate degrees, infusing their training into the School's existing residential environmental education programs. In addition to gaining valuable experience in field instruction, AmeriCorps members plan, organize, and coordinate environmental conservation service projects, and help maintain and restore the SOC infrastructure and habitat related to the educational and environmental mission of the School.



Bear ecology.

Through the SOC’s collaboration with AmeriCorps and the focus on science and research, the SOC has diversified its mission to promote a multi-pronged approach to environmental studies, including environmental education, environmental research, and select pursuits in environmental management.

The SOC’s research is infused in its elementary school programs and teacher training workshops as well. Seven curriculum areas are covered: environmental sciences, social sciences, humanities, outdoor pursuits, wilderness education activities, outdoor education activities, and winter outdoor recreation activities. Classes range from bear education, entomology, forest ecology and herpetology to water ecology, bird watching, stream ecology and wildlife ecology. In the areas of humanities and social studies, students and educators study colonial life, woodworking, Native American life, metalsmithing, and pioneer life. Outdoor pursuits and traditional camp experiences like archery, boating, and fishing are also conducted.

Although the School of Conservation has always transformed and evolved to address the changing needs of students and educators, in many ways its success and endurance as an institution of learning lie in its original approach to instruction: discovery through field study.



Residential school program students.

In the words of Dr. John J. Kirk on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the SOC and still relevant today:

“Yet, the School of Conservation is more than a unique educational facility, it is more than its fifty-seven buildings, sparkling lake, exciting trout streams, lush forests and rolling hills. The New Jersey School of Conservation is all of these, but much more; for it is a spirit, a dream, and a hope for the future that tends to enrich the lives of all those who are privileged to participate in its many varied programs. May it always be thus.” ■

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Directors – Past and Present



Dr. De Alton Partridge
1949-1951

Dr. De Alton Partridge, as the School's **1st Director**, took on the awesome responsibility of converting a deteriorating CCC camp into a conservation and natural resource training center for college students. It was a monumental task, as later described by one of his sons, Clark Partridge. Even after his appointment as President of Montclair State College, Dr. Partridge continued his support for the SOC in ways that would ensure its continuation. Were it not for Dr. Partridge's far-sighted vision and determination to transform that vision into a reality, the New Jersey School of Conservation may never have come into existence. An oft-quoted statement of Partridge came from a paper he co-authored with a revered 'school camping' colleague, Dr. Lloyd Burgess Sharp, in 1947. It dealt with the value of outdoor instruction and learning. Quoting Partridge: "... *Aristotle, Socrates, and others managed to make a profound impression on their followers without the advantage of a row of seats, blackboards, or a lectern behind which to preserve professorial dignity.*"



Dr. Edward Ambry
1951 - 1956

Dr. Edward Ambry was a fortuitous choice as SOC's **2nd Director**. He was a member of the Montclair State faculty who brought considerable administrative skills to the SOC as a former school superintendent. He was familiar with state college procedures and helped to facilitate the managerial aspects of the SOC's development at a time when it was urgently needed. Perhaps his most significant contributions were related to facilities. He supervised the installation of a first class sewage system, put new roofs on all the buildings, and lifted all the CCC buildings off the ground onto solid foundations.



Luther Lindenmuth
1957-1958

Luther Lindenmuth became the **3rd Director** of the SOC in 1957, in addition to his other duties as Principal Forester and Superintendent of Stokes State Forest. For years, a plaque in the SOC library honored "Lindy" for his roles as "trailside teacher," "able administrator," "mentor to outdoor educators," "naturalist" and "defender of all things wild." Perhaps one of his most cherished contributions was the naming of the School of Conservation lake, adopting the Lenni Lenape word, *Wapalanne*, which alludes to a "bird of sky and water." It is, perhaps, more than coincidental that an aerial view of Lake Wapalanne seems to portray the head, wings, and talons of an eagle.



Clifford Emanuelson
1958-1963

As **4th Director** of the School of Conservation, Clifford Emanuelson became its first year-round director in 1958. It was during his five-year tenure, that college sophomores from the six state teacher colleges were required to attend the SOC for a one-week program. Mr. Emanuelson also initiated a five-fold program that was described in a publicity brochure as including:

- College Outdoor Education Programs for Teacher Education;
- Public School Outdoor Education Demonstration Programs;
- Summer Courses for College Students and In-Service Teachers;
- Summer Youth Outdoor Education, Conservation and Camping Programs, and
- Conferences, Workshops, and Weekend Groups.

Mr. Emanuelson also arranged to have these programs augmented by supporting instruction in geology, forestry, and wildlife, from the New Jersey Department of Conservation and Economic Development.



Dr. John J. Kirk
1963-2001

Dr. John J. Kirk became the **5th Director** of the School of Conservation in 1963, a position he held for nearly forty years. The concept of ‘multi-disciplinary’ programs in environmental education represented one of the hallmark distinctions for which Dr. Kirk became known. He not only actively promoted these programs, but he hired disciplinary specialists to facilitate them.

Dr. Kirk gave academic stature to the School of Conservation by promoting graduate courses taught on the Montclair State Campus by School faculty. In addition, he was instrumental in establishing a Graduate Fellowship program whereby graduate students enrolled in Montclair’s Environmental Studies program could earn their Master’s Degree in Environmental Education, while gaining valuable field teaching experience at the SOC. Countless individuals ‘jump-started’ their professional, environmentally-related careers through this experience.

In-service teacher training workshops and summer courses earning graduate credit became a common way for New Jersey teachers to augment their professional development hours during Dr. Kirk’s tenure.

He internationalized the SOC’s programs by inviting students, teachers, and scholars from all parts of the world to participate in a wide variety of programs. He accomplished this, in part, through a rigorous travel schedule imbued with lecture tours and visitations to environmental centers on several continents.

The School of Conservation became well-known and respected as a field center for Environmental Education through Dr. Kirk’s invitations to a host of scholars and experts in the field who participated in key conferences and programs throughout his tenure. The 30th, 40th, and 50th Anniversary years were significant ‘milestone’ examples of this. The result was that the SOC became recognized as the oldest and largest university-related field center focusing on environmental education in the western hemisphere.

Dr. Kirk’s penchant for running or overseeing first-class summer camping programs was legendary. Camp Wapalanne, the A. Harry Moore Camp, Montclair State’s Music Camp, or the Junior Fly-Fishing School are all examples of unique and memorable summer camp programs unequalled anywhere in the United States.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Dr. Kirk cultivated a long-term relationship with New Jersey political and influential leaders, which led to legislation establishing the New Jersey School of Conservation as a field center to be used for environmental study in perpetuity.



Dr. William H. Thomas
2001 to the present

The **6th and current Director** of the School is Dr. William H. Thomas. Since becoming Director, Dr. Thomas has been responsible for initiating a strong and well-developed partnership with AmeriCorps, a national service program, which provides unique environmental training opportunities for those with undergraduate degrees, infusing their training into the School’s existing residential environmental education programs.

Dr. Thomas is also credited, along with his Associate Director, Dr. Randy FitzGerald, with establishing the only university research station in New Jersey that is located in an upland temperate forest community. Under Dr. Thomas’ leadership, forty published research projects have been conducted in biological, geological and environmental topics, using Stokes Forest and its environs as a basis for these investigations.

Through the School’s collaboration with AmeriCorps and the focus on science and research, Dr. Thomas has diversified the mission of the School of Conservation to promote a multi-pronged approach to environmental studies, including environmental education, environmental research, and select pursuits in environmental management.

Dr. Thomas has also been responsible for securing grant-funding efforts that have included the creation of an on-site solar panel field that has enhanced the efficiency of energy use on the SOC campus.

Dr. Thomas has made facility infrastructure improvement and maintenance a priority for his administration. To date, new roofs and reconfiguration of structures have taken place on roughly 10 of the 57 buildings, most of which are at least 75 years old, if not older. Some of the renovations of buildings and facilities now support the research focus of the SOC with state-of-the-art laboratories. ■

Key New Jersey School of Conservation Founders and Formative Leaders

In the mid-1940's, a group of far-sighted New Jersey educators and conservationists collaborated on the concept of a field campus for the six state colleges involved in teacher education: Glassboro, Jersey City, Montclair, Newark, Paterson, and Trenton. Among these visionaries were four individuals, or the Founders of the NJSOC. In addition, there were several prominent educators, the Formative Leaders, who had a profound influence on the early development of the School.



Dr. Morrison served as the New Jersey Assistant Commissioner for Higher Education (1945-57) and staunchly believed that every pre-service teacher should have direct learning experiences in studying the conservation of New Jersey environments. It was Morrison who conceived the original plan to use the

abandoned CCC campsite in Stokes Forest as an outdoor school for the Teacher Colleges of New Jersey. The idea of a camping institute for these colleges was first expressed during a conference at National Camp in July 1941. On October 21, 1941, representatives of the state colleges met in Dr. Morrison's office in Trenton to discuss the proposed institute. They agreed unanimously that such an institute should be held, and at a November 19th meeting the same year, the college presidents agreed to sponsor the institute.

As he later helped guide the School through its difficult years of conception, he often demonstrated his own adage: *"What is educationally sound should be administratively possible."* His zeal stemmed from a conviction that the consideration of environmental learning and values is intensified in an outdoor-oriented resident program.



Dr. DeAlton Partridge was Director of Graduate Studies at Montclair State College when the concept of a field campus achieved fruition. He was one of a growing number of educators who had witnessed the value of the school camping and outdoor education movements initiated by Dr. Lloyd B. Sharp and his

colleagues at the famous National Camp, located at Lake Mashipicong in the northwestern corner of the state. Since the programs at National Camp were geared primarily to young and adult sectors of the state's population, Dr. Partridge felt it would be important to establish a similar institution which served pre-service teachers at the undergraduate level. All this was most fitting since Dr. Partridge was among those who initially dreamed of the concept of a School of Conservation and who, perhaps, could see most clearly the potential of the Stokes State Forest site for field studies. Later, Dr. Partridge lived out his dream when he became the School's first Director.



Mr. Jules Marron was the Supervisor of Public Relations for the New Jersey Department of Conservation and Economic Development in the 1950's and 1960's. He was a prominent conservationist, superb public speaker and,

as a citizen of Sussex County, played a key role in seeing that the abandoned CCC camp land was made available for the proposed field campus through the resources and support of the Department of Conservation. Once the college programs were established at the School of Conservation, he presented evening slide shows on the themes of rural agriculture, forest resources and conservation. Because of his zeal and public speaking ability, he was otherwise known as the 'Billy Sunday' of Conservation.



Senator Alfred Beattie Littell was an American Republican Party politician who served as a member of both houses in the New Jersey legislature and as President of the New Jersey State Senate in 1951. In the late 1940's, he heard about a prominent

group of educators and government leaders who were interested in converting the old CCC camp into some type of outdoor educational institution. Upon learning more of the details, he contacted New Jersey Governor Alfred Driscoll and approval was granted for the first group of college students to participate in a program at the Camp. Senator Littell's love of the outdoors and his desire to develop a conservation program in the county he represented would soon come to fulfillment. This pioneer program led to the establishment of the New Jersey School of Conservation. The School, its programs, and its future visions would continue through the efforts of the elder Littell's son, **Senator Robert E. Littell**, who perpetuated his father's support of the SOC throughout his distinguished career in the New Jersey State legislature.



SOC's Early Formative Leaders



Dr. Matthew Brennan was present at the SOC's official opening on Memorial Day weekend in 1949. He taught classes at the SOC until the early 60's as a professor from Jersey City, returning in the mid-70's, at the request of Dr.

Kirk, to teach the course, Society and the Natural Environment. Brennan continued teaching classes and participating in programs at the SOC until 1991. In 1992, he was awarded the Annual Award of Merit by the Friends of SOC for his lifetime of dedicated service to the Earth as a teacher, writer and research scientist and for his loyal friendship and support of the SOC for over four decades.



Dr. William Harlow was a Professor of Wood Technology at the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, the State University of New York. He was author of seven books on trees, forests, and wood technology, including his renowned *Textbook of Den-*

drology. He was also an accomplished nature photographer and filmmaker. Dr. Harlow was a strong advocate for Outdoor Education, which is what may have motivated him to serve as an adjunct professor at Montclair State College and the School of Conservation during summers of the early SOC years. He earned the name, "Moosewood Bill" for his penchant for making whistles from a particular variety of tree called "moose maple."



Dr. S. Marie Kuhnen was hired by Dr. Partridge to be the director of the new SOC Camp Wapalanne program during the summers of 1950 to 1952. For over two decades, she taught a 10-day summer

Field Biology course on the SOC campus for undergraduates at Montclair State. Dr. Kuhnen eventually became the chairperson of Montclair's Biology

Department and held that position for nearly eight years. In 1995, the Friends of SOC presented her their Annual Award of Merit for her lifetime of dedicated service to the Earth.



In a speech given at the 40th Anniversary of the School of Conservation (1989), **Dr. Thomas Rillo**, highlighted what it was like, in 1949, to have been a participant in the SOC’s first college program as a Panzer student from Montclair State College. Dr. Rillo identified the SOC as the place where he honed many of his outdoor teaching and living skills, drawing upon what he had learned about decentralized camping at Life Camps. He continued his connections and collaborations with the SOC, and in the late 1960’s, as a Glassboro State College faculty member, Dr. Rillo helped to coordinate two Environmental Fellowship Programs for both experienced and prospective New Jersey teachers as part of an Environmental Education Master’s Degree Program.



Dr. Lloyd Burgess Sharp, or L.B.—as he was known by most—was responsible for forwarding and promoting the concept of decentralized camping through outdoor education pursuits at Life Magazine’s National Camp, located only a few miles from the future site of the School of Conservation. Decentralized camping involved creating small campsites, where participants lived in tepees or hand-made shelters and were responsible for creating everything necessary to live comfortably, and in harmony with the land surrounding the campsite. It became the SOC’s primary outdoor education philosophy from the 50’s through the early 60’s. Dr. Sharp was also a pioneer in the school camping movement, encouraging school districts to send children and teachers to field centers to learn about nature and conservation. The adjacent photo shows Dr. Sharp leading a discussion with key education leaders on the possibility of the CCC Group Camp in Stokes Forest becoming a school of conservation.



Dr. William Gould Vinal, also widely known by colleagues and friends as ‘Cap’n Bill,’ was an American pioneer in the field of Nature Education. Dr. Vinal taught courses in conservation, outdoor leadership, outdoor recreation, and nature guiding, as a Professor of Nature Education in the Nature Guide School of Massachusetts State College. Although most of his teaching and work was carried out in his native New England, he also taught in the Life Camp program as a contemporary of Dr. L.B. Sharp, and spent time at the New Jersey School of Conservation, as reflected in historical notes written by Dr. Thomas Rillo. Dr. Vinal pioneered the staging of the legendary ‘Buffalo Tro’ at Piney Point (cooking steaks flat on coals), using a stone grill that he helped to construct. Dr. Partridge had these words of praise for Cap’n Bill: “He was the best teacher I have ever known and taught me much about the Socratic method. Instead of lectures, he presented the students with problems to solve and discuss among themselves.”



Dr. V. Eugene Vivian was a participant at the 1949 Memorial Day weekend celebrating the opening of the SOC. He was then Assistant Professor of Science at Paterson State. Dr. Partridge had invited him to open the facility as well as plan the ten-day courses for the mid-June programs of that year. It was also that month that he helped to build the trail to Springbrook Cabin. Dr. Vivian was Director of Curriculum at the SOC from May, 1949 until June, 1952, where he taught field science to Montclair State College students. He was liaison and organizer of the five-day outdoor and conservation education experiences at the SOC for sophomores from Paterson State until 1954, and later at Glassboro State for sophomores/juniors from 1956-60. Later, he became Co-Director of the Experienced Teacher Fellowship Program in 1967 for Master’s Degree students from Glassboro, Montclair, and Trenton State Colleges, which included a one-week summer session at the SOC in 1968. ■

Afterword

Each evening the Kirk family would gather around the dinner table and share the events of our day. It was at these daily gatherings that we first heard the names, L.B. Sharp, “Bobby” Littell, Cap’n Bill, Matt Brennan and Marie Kuhnen. I was too young then to fully understand who these pioneering educators were, but I knew they were important to my dad, Dr. John J. Kirk, and that he was inspired by their intellect, approach to education, and commitment to the environment.

Later, as a college student, I had the opportunity to take several teacher training workshops at the SOC. It was at these workshops that I learned more about its role in the development of the environmental education field. During the summer months, I attended the famous environmental summer program, Camp Wapalanne, as a camper and camp counselor. Some of the SOC formative leaders, Dr. Brennan and Dr. Kuhnen were present and teaching graduate and undergraduate courses. I was able to see for myself their talent as educators and their passion for the outdoors. Like my father, I became their life-long fan. Yet, despite these interactions and trainings, I still never fully realized the impact of these leaders, and of the SOC, in the development of the field of environmental education statewide, nationally and globally.

It wasn’t until a year ago, when I inherited my father’s files, books, papers and various collections of slides, photographs and recordings, that I began to comprehend. By reading dad’s papers, looking through his slides, traveling to Indiana to meet Dr. Thomas Rillo, and driving around the state of New Jersey to talk with leaders in the Green Faith community, fly fishing community and recreation community, I came to fully grasp the significance of the SOC’s founders, directors and formative leaders. And over the last year, these leaders went from being historical figures to people I felt I knew as a friend or mentor.

This blended text from the paper written by my dad on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the SOC, and the excerpts from the history of the SOC written by Annette Sambolin, along with the wonderful pictures that were part of dad’s collection of slides, hopefully brings to life the people, their place in history, and their time here at the SOC for you, just as it has done for me. It is also my hope that, like my dad and I, you feel their presence and influence as you walk the trails of the SOC. And if you do, that you pause to thank them for the beautiful gift they have given to us.

The history of the School of Conservation reflects the history of environmental education in our state and in the nation. Who would have thought in 1924 that a humble CCC camp would be transformed into an outdoor education center in 1949 by a group of visionary educators and politicians? And through the work of six extraordinary directors and their colleagues, eventually become an internationally known residential environmental education and research field center? I believe the answer is De Alton, Ed, Luther, Clifford, John, and Bill.

Kerry Kirk Pflugh, Editor

