REMEMBERING THE GOOD OLD DAYS:
MEMORY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MANHOOD IN THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

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At the turn of the twentieth century, the first generation of forest rangers in the northern Colorado Rockies set out to manage the newly designed forest reserves. Decades later, at the end of their careers, rangers vividly depicted their law enforcement experiences as tests of their masculine toughness. Frank Liebig, a lifelong forest ranger, boasted of his reputation as a "good shot" and reminded his readers that his marksmanship assured he "always came out on top" when confronting trespassers in his 1944 memoir.[1] In contrast, twelve years later Liebig's colleague Roy Phillips remembered a nearly identical confrontation from the same time period as a test of his "patience, fortitude, and willpower" yet his mental toughness guaranteed he overcame "any human or physical obstacle."[2] Both of these memories recall events that occurred in the years following 1906, during which these men held identical positions in the same region. What caused one man to value his marksmanship and the other his mental fortitude? What accounts for their drastically different memories of similar law enforcement experiences? The disparate notions of masculinity expressed in these memoirs underscore the impact that memory had on individual constructions of gender within this community of forest rangers.

Previous historical studies of manhood in the United States have underestimated the significance of memory in the process of identity formation. The earliest strategies of social historians identified crisis points that triggered shifts in masculine identity formation among American males.[3] These studies often predicated their arguments on the assumption that experience reflected natural and unproblematic changes in masculine identity. In an effort to address this, many cultural historians turned to discourse as a means to understand identity construction as a dynamic cultural process best understood through studies of social, cultural, and political discourses.[4] These approaches, however, removed the individual process of identity formation by focusing primarily on language rather than experience. Some studies have explored changes in masculinity by contrasting different modes of identity construction between different groups within a community over time. Few studies have contrasted individual constructions

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[1] Frank F. Liebig, untitled, in *The Early Days in the Forest Service* (Montana: United States Department of Agriculture, [1944?]), 1:130.

[2] Roy Phillips, "Recollections," in *The Early Days in the Forest Service* (Montana: United States Department of Agriculture, [1956?]), 2:17.

[3] For examples of how social historians have approached these studies see: Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

[4] For supplementary cultural histories of manhood see: K.A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, (New York: Routledge Press, 2004). Kevin Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, and the Politics of Progressive Era Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

of gender from members of a demographically cohesive community over time. Building on the insights of previous scholars, this paper analyzes the writings of a community of forest rangers from the Inland Northwest over a thirty-year period in order to show how the interaction between broader cultural filters and individual memory influenced changes in masculine values over time.

In 1944, the United States Forest Service launched a project to capture the essence of the "old timers" for future generations of rangers. The letters submitted by retired forest rangers for this project offer a glimpse into how men at different points in time constructed professional and masculine legacies for a readership comprised of their colleagues and younger successors. When lifelong forest ranger Eugen Grush lamented in 1962 that so "many of the old timers have slipped over the Great Divide [and are] no doubt swapping yarns about 'the good old days,'" he underscored the significance of storytelling among his generation.[5] During each decade from the 1940s until the 1960s, retired forest rangers submitted public letters for these collections.[6] These short memoirs present carefully crafted versions of their authors' careers that convey tales of manhood in the rugged wilderness of the northern Colorado Rockies and reveal the malleability of memory. By comparing each decade of writing, this essay explores the intersection of memory and personal identity construction among these authors.

The memoirs form a representative body of the first generation of forest rangers employed on the front lines of an expanding federal presence in remote Western communities. Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the U.S. Forest Service promised to hire only "western people" to oversee the reserves. This meant that most rangers had deep roots to the areas where they worked.[7] The early agency recruited "technically trained Foresters," most of whom possessed at least some degree of education.[8] Permutations in gender values that emerged over the course of three decades show how these men constructed and renegotiated their gendered identity over time; sometimes choosing more rural images and at other times favoring ones that more closely resembled urban professionals.

In crafting their retirement memoirs between 1940 and 1960, rural forest rangers struggled between tough and professional legacies, which simultaneously drew from their western heritage as well as their modern expertise. The definition of toughness remained fluid and unstable, however, it vacillated between these competing identities in three separate periods of writing. Rangers who composed their memoirs in the 1940s relied on an archetypal cowboy iconography to present their legacies as identical to those of other western masculine traditions. A second group of rangers in the

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[5] Eugen Grush, "Just Reminiscences," in *Early Days in the Forest Service* (Montana: U.S. Department of Agriculture, [1962?]), 3:70.

[6] The fourth and final volume published in 1976 reflects a later group of employees who started their careers from the 1920s onward. As these men belong to a later generation, their memoirs have been excluded from this analysis.

[7] Elers Koch, "Early Ranger Examinations in Montana," in *Early Days*, 1:109.

[8] Harold Steen, *The U.S. Forest Service: A History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 50.

1950s abandoned the language of western masculinity in favor of rugged individualism that relied on solitary work, mental toughness, deprivation, and the incompetency of rural people. The final group of retirees writing in the 1960s did not adopt a vocabulary of toughness; rather, they embraced their education, leisure, and family as a way of constructing social identities outside of their professional legacies.

The first volume of letters from the 1940s reveals the strategies some rural professionals used to define their legacies for their peers and successors. These men relied on a language and iconography of western masculinity to represent themselves as heirs to the cowboy-pioneer legacy. Law enforcement narratives concerning land disputes reinforced class and racial boundaries that were important to the progressive mission that justified their defense of new federal boundaries. They struggled, however, to balance the softening effect of education by describing how rugged fieldwork applied to their knowledge. This oscillating identity underscored the anxiety over education and expertise in their profession that manifested in characterizations of unfit, weak young men incapable of performing fieldwork.

The authors of this decade drew upon archetypal language of cowboy toughness in order to define their professional legacies. Cowboy masculinity in rural societies rested on elaborate initiation processes that required young men to learn masculine traits from more experienced men before being accepted into "the cowboy fraternity" that signified a true "marker of manhood."[9] By the 1940s, these men drew from this heritage as a source of toughness when their age excluded them from the more common wartime masculine tropes available to younger men. Rangers represented themselves through personal or professional connections to the masculine legacies of frontier cowboys and pioneers. Clarence Swim tells an anecdotal story of his father's friendship with Buffalo Bill, citing his "career and exploits" as motivation "to leave the farm and seek fortune farther west."[10] Supervisors boasted about how they took "great pains... to help" young men "inexperienced in the West and western ways" to "learn the techniques of the western man."[11] By linking their professional lives to the masculine legacies of Western cowboys and pioneers, retirees of the 1940s accessed a language and iconography of unquestionable masculine toughness to define their professional legacies.

Rangers' perceived the landscape of the northern Colorado Rocky Mountains as spiritually powerful yet fragile enough to require their protection. This view reflected disparate cultural filters that paralleled their broader struggle to forge an identity as men of physical action and mental aptitude. Popular romantic notions linked nature to more "authentic experience[s]" in what Karl Jacoby characterized as "an anecdote to an

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[9] Jacqueline M. Moore, *Cow Boys and Cattle Men: Class and Masculinities on the Texas Frontier, 1865-1900* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 45-6.
[10] Clarence Swim, untitled, in *Early Days*, 1:184.
[11] John P. Lowell, "Early History of the U.S. Forest Service and Events Leading up to the Author's Connection with It," in *Early Days*, 1:146.

increasingly industrial, 'overcivilized' existence."[12] The influence of these cultural filters led many rangers to describe being "entranced and spellbound" during their first experiences in the wilderness that "seemed natural" to feel "at home and a part of."[13] Rangers represented the land as a crucial element in their gendered identities as western men because it provided a powerful respite from the demands of their "civilized" lives. On the other hand, a scientifically modern belief in the power of the state to rationally manage and protect national resources led many rangers to emphasize the fragileness of the land.[14] Many rangers represented the land as under constant threat from natural disasters that required "our mite [*sic*] of strength... [to] stop the destruction [so] that those [who] follow may profit and enjoy our great national heritage."[15] Thus, rangers authenticated their legacies as defenders of western lands through different vocabularies of toughness directed at local populations who threatened the land.

Rangers' understanding of the relationship between rural populations and the land drew from the broader discourse of the conservation movement, which generally viewed rural citizens as ignorant, naïve, and narrow-minded people who could not grasp the long-term benefits of forestry work. A "degradation discourse" that justified early conservationist challenges to rural social structures characterized rural citizens as reckless and dangerous in their management of the land.[16] With this in mind, rangers upheld the need to bring orderly, rational regulation to both people and land as a fundamental tenet of their profession.[17] Rangers imagined local towns of "roaring, seething, riotous brawl[s] of... fighting humanity" when explaining why locals needed law and order.[18] They decried local citizens for being "very hostile to [our] objectives" and frequently denouncing their rules.[19] Rural populations acted as important negative referents for rangers to contrast the importance of their work in bringing order and regulation to remote and lawless regions.

Writing in the 1940s, rangers reminisced about episodes of law enforcement involving non-whites as opportunities to define their masculinity according to their use of violence and intimidation. At the turn of the twentieth century, white men in the Northern Rocky region assumed authority over indigenous people and lands through a masculine woodsman culture centered on expert regulation of natural resources, superior "trigger

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[12] Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 16.
[13] Clarence Swim, untitled, in *Early Days*, 1:188.
[14] Jacoby, 16.
[15] Joseph Halm, "All in a Day's Work," in *Early Days*, 1:96.
[16] Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, 198.
[17] Adam Rome, "'Political Hermaphrodites': Gender and Environmental Reform in Progressive America," *Environmental History* 11 (Jul 2006), 451. For more on how early foresters defined their profession see: Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, 4-6.
[18] Joseph Halm, "Some of the Highlights of my Career with the Forest Service," in *Early Days*, 1:76.
[19] Albert E Cole, untitled, in *Early Days*, 1:40.

finger[s]," and a belief in their instinctive knowledge of the land.[20] Rangers consistently saw force and threats as the only solutions for handling non-white groups violating federal boundaries. J.N. Templar had no patience for "noble redskins," during an encounter with a hunting party he characterized as dangerous and "s[aw] that force would probably be necessary."[21] Frank Lieburg's partner turned to violence when forcing an eviction of a "diseased-looking" chief and his hunting party.[22] He fired "three or four [shots]... and a couple of dead dogs rolled on the ground" despite acknowledging that "the Indians could not exist without the [hunting] dogs."[23] Rangers constructed masculine identities against the perceived weaknesses of ethnic minorities. Violence directed at non-white groups also gave rangers a socially acceptable outlet for representing themselves as gun-toting, tough lawmen defending the newly minted boundaries of federal wilderness.

In contrast to the violence that characterized their law enforcement encounters with ethnic minorities, rangers boasted of their professionalism by emphasizing their patience, reason, and moral character in similar encounters with the local white populations. This strategy proved similar to that of middle-class professionals in the early twentieth century who defined the gendered boundaries of their work by linking expertise to strong moral character.[24] Joseph Halm bragged about his patience and persistence when evicting the owners of illegally constructed taverns inside the Forest Reserves. Over a two-month period he avoided violence at all costs despite "a burly tough [owner] and his equally tough assistant" who "had threatened to shoot us on site."[25] Earl Welton also boasted of his restraint and moral character by "stay[ing] in the straight and narrow path" after a trespasser offered him a bribe, which he promptly declined and reported.[26] Law enforcement encounters with the local white population presented a chance for rangers to show off their patience, expertise, and moral character when defending the same boundaries that also required violence and intimidation against non-whites.

Contradictory memories of law enforcement experiences underscored the divergent ways in which rural professionals crafted their personas as both educated experts and tough, masculine cowboy defenders. Each of these rangers struggled to carve an identity as both cowboy frontiersman and expert professional. At times the violent tactics described by these men allowed them to assert the superiority of western masculinity over non-white groups. Rangers represented themselves during these

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[20] Karen Jones, "'My Winchester Spoke to Her': Crafting the Northern Rockies as a Hunter's Paradise, c. 1870-1910," *American Nineteenth Century History*, 6 (June 2010), 183-87.

[21] J.N. Templar, "The Good Men Do Lives After Them," in *Early Days*, 1:204.

[22] Frank Liebig, untitled, in *Early Days*, 1:131.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 197-8, 214. For more on manhood and professionalism, see Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870-1930* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998). Carole Srole, *Transcribing Class and Gender: Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Courts and Offices* (Ann Harbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).

[25] Joseph Halm, "One Hundred and Five Miles of Rapids," in *Early Days*, 1:89.

[26] Earl Welton, untitled, in *Early Days*, 1:206.

encounters as defenders of a new boundary of federal wilderness from outsiders. These boundaries acted as a physical and racial demarcation for rangers who excluded non-whites entirely, while upholding a belief that the land must be conserved for future use by local white populations. The tenure of these "forestry pioneers" ended in the wake of the professionalization of the agency in the 1940s.[27] Their declining importance may have motivated them to emphasize their expertise, reason, and moral character in order to connect their legacies to the emerging professionalism within the agency. Furthermore, violence against local whites would have challenged their mission as modern foresters tasked with preserving this space for local white communities.

These memoirs from the 1940s intended to teach lessons of character to their successors, men that they viewed as overly educated and insufficiently tough. Retired rangers pointed to the younger generation's inability to perform strenuous fieldwork as the evidence of their weakness. Older rangers insisted that they had "taught, trained and guided" this younger generation to "make good."[28] However, the retirees consistently ridiculed their successors for displaying a "lack of experience in the mountains" and joked about how just one night in the wild would "scare... the vinegar" out of them."[29] Rangers blamed structural changes in the agency such as the "present-day purely written Civil Service examination" for not properly testing and training young men.[30] Concern for this younger generation frequently gave way to mockery as these authors used them as negative referents for defining their toughness as defenders of the land. These anecdotes highlight the importance of fieldwork to how older rangers articulated their gendered identity. Similar to how these rangers remembered their cowboy roots and law enforcement experiences; these anecdotes supported the larger effort to represent the original generation as icons of rugged western masculinity.

By the 1950s, rangers abandoned the masculine cowboy archetype in favor of a mental toughness focused on their ability to survive and use their intelligence to overcome challenges. Since they no longer depicted their generation within the continuum of western masculinity or as protectors of the land, these rangers departed dramatically from their peers who wrote in the 1940s. Familiar negative referents became more pronounced in shaping their masculine identity by emphasizing a new opposition to the softening influences of families and office work. The shifting representations of masculine character between the 1940s and the 1950s underscore the fluidity of gender values in an aging community of men seeking to define their professional legacies during a period of rapidly changing cultural values in America.

Retirees in the 1950s replaced the cowboy archetype by representing violence in more extreme ways in order to define a new, overly

[27] Harold Steen, *U.S. Forest Service*, 246.
[28] Joseph Halm, "All in a Day's Work," in *Early Days*, 1:95.
[29] Hartley A. Calkins, untitled, in *Early Days*, 1:32.
[30] Elers Koch, "Early Ranger Examinations in Montana," in *Early Days*, 1:109.

aggressive form of masculine toughness. This resulted in the uncoupling of violence from race and led to the first stories of rangers becoming violent with local white residents. A story about ranger Albert Weisendanger described him as having "more influen[ce] [and] friends than anyone else in the district;" he was "legendary for beat[ing]" one man and intimidating another who stood between him and a potential promotion.[31] In another instance, Frank Haun became so frustrated with the laziness of the local population that he intentionally directed a fire towards Taft, Montana in order to forcefully motivate them to help with firefighting efforts.[32] These stories characterized a broader shift in masculine identity during the 1950s that redefined acceptable parameters of violence as well as negative referents in order to articulate a new, overtly aggressive image of masculinity.

In contrast to their colleagues' characterization of trainees in the 1940s as insufficiently tough but well-intentioned, rangers now depicted this younger generation of rangers as spoiled, arrogant, and self-entitled. In fact, many of them believed that "rangers and supervisors ha[d] become office bound paper drudges... [that] were getting father away from the trees."[33] Growing cultural suspicions of the perceived subservience and conformity required in office work reflected widespread masculine anxieties about rapidly changing employment realities during the middle of the twentieth century.[34] Rangers such as C.S. Webb bragged that they "had to make it the hard way" compared to the boys with "college degrees" who had it easy in spite of Webb's own undergraduate business degree.[35] David Lake complained that younger rangers did "a lot of talking, espounding [*sic*] [their] knowledge and ability" in just about every area, despite their total incompetence once put to the test.[36] These descriptions reflected lingering pre-war perceptions that college degrees provided no applicable skills and in fact sheltered young men from real experiences.[37] Retired rangers still used their younger successors as negative referents to balance their own education and practical experience. Unlike the previous generation, younger rangers were no longer depicted as redeemable or as extensions of the original generation. Instead they became spoiled and egotistical paper-pushers. Changing images of their younger successors in these later narratives suggests a broader shift in the use of negative referents for rangers writing in the 1950s.

Like their retiring colleagues who wrote in the 1940s, these rangers portrayed local populations as ignorant but also lazy, sheepish, and weak. Rangers pointed to the embarrassment of "common people" who remained

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[31] Rylee Teed, "Land Exchange," in *Early Days*, 2:62.
[32] Roy Phillips, "Recollections," in *Early Days*, 2:17.
[33] Ibid., 2:18.
[34] Clark Davis, *Company Men: White-Collar Life and Corporate Cultures in Los Angeles, 1892-1941* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), 6, 82.
[35] C.S. Webb, "Some Incidents Occurring During my Employment with the U.S. Forest Service," in *Early Days*, 2:268.
[36] David Lake, "Early Day Experiences," in *Early Days*, 2:11.
[37] Daniel Clark, "The Two Joes Meet. Joe College, Joe Veteran: The G. I. Bill, College Education, and Postwar American Culture," *History of Education Quarterly* 38 (Summer, 1998), 169.

illiterate as signs of their "primitiveness."[38] The conservation mission that informed similar descriptions in the 1940s no longer appeared adequate in these narratives as rangers described locals as utterly incompetent in just about every facet of their lives. Charlie E. Powell caught a pair of trespassing ranchers who he derided for being so dumb and incompetent that they forgot to bring feed for their cattle which they had already lost in the dangerous terrain that proved too challenging for them to navigate.[39] The foolish ranchers then begged Powell to guide their cattle back for them. The nuanced shifts in rangers' descriptions of their interactions with locals underscores a new emphasis among rangers who represented themselves as mentally tough and superior professionals who could not be bothered with the inadequacies of their successors and the communities they served.

Rangers writing in the 1950s embraced this new vision of toughness that depended on mental strength and expertise to overcome all challenges. They boasted about their "patience, fortitude, and willpower" in overcoming "human and physical obstacles."[40] These men now relished the organizational difficulties of the early agency for providing "fresh challenges [that] developed" their character unlike the previous decade that decried these difficulties as hindrances to real work.[41] This new way of representing technical labor differed from the 1940s by conflating it with definitions of toughness. The masculine identity of these rangers no longer developed from their representations as cowboys but developed through stories about the application of their expertise.

While law enforcement narratives primarily articulated toughness in 1940s memoirs, leadership experience presented new avenues to show-off mental toughness in the 1950s. Rangers now defined "all accomplishment" by their ability to "get the most out of others" and reminded their audience that this ability led to their advancement "in the Service."[42] Leadership allowed men to flaunt their superior rank in the hierarchy of the agency and define the characteristics of their mental toughness. For example, Theodore Shoemaker transformed "men [who], with few exceptions, [were] soft" into a tough and capable firefighting unit that worked "through the night" to contain a devastating forest fire.[43] Examples of leadership showed off their mental discipline and capabilities as well as their superiority over other men. Rangers also represented their mental toughness through stories about the solitary nature of their work and occasionally depicted men with families as unfit for the difficulties of the ranger lifestyle.

Cultural notions of family "togetherness" exploded during the 1950s as a result of "suburbanization, male careerism, and the changing role of

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[38] Ryle Teed, "Reminiscences of Early Days in the Forest Service," in *Early Days*, 2:53-54.
[39] Charlie Powell, "Recollections," in *Early Days*, 2:30.
[40] Roy Phillips, "Recollections," in *Early Days*, 2:18.
[41] C.S. Webb, "Some Incidents Occurring During my Employment with the U.S. Forest Service," in *Early Days*, 2:268.
[42] Roy Phillips, "Recollections," in *Early Days*, 2:23.
[43] Theodore Shoemaker, "Memories," in *Early Days*, 2:42.

women."[44] Historian K.A. Cuordileone shows how popular culture reflected male anxieties over the restricting, softening forces of these new social institutions that led them to redefine masculinity along hard, individualistic lines.[45] K.D. Swam decried his official office records for not capturing the "blood and sweat" of work which demanded that men to be "too tough for tears" when alone in the wild.[46] On one occasion, a ranger described a "town woodsmen" as man with a family in the city who was so terrified after being lost only five hours that the ranger joked he might "have to shoot him."[47] In contrast, that same ranger bragged about how he "never panicked at all" when he was "lone wolfing" it in "utterly primitive" country.[48] Boasting about the solitary nature of their work highlighted the mental toughness these authors valued while linking social attachments to the weakness of men who could not perform fieldwork.

Similarly, rangers began explicitly separating fieldwork from office work that they considered both effeminate and insufficiently tough. They characterized office workers as "silver-tongue[d]" actors who spent too much time "gallivanting around" talking and socializing instead of doing their jobs. [49] The effeminate characteristics of younger "office bound paper drudges" are expressly linked to social and cooperative nature of their work. [50] Rangers only admitted crossing "the great abyss which separates the forester from the clerk" when they grew old and tied down by the imperatives of family.[51] Rangers perceived office work as inherently social and therefore diametrically opposed to the solitary fieldwork that defined their own professional legacies.

Rangers linked the social and communal attachments associated with office work to cultural anxieties over the softening effects of materialism. For these men, lacking material possessions defined their solitary work in opposition to the weakness of families and city lives. Rangers frequently emphasized that "all of [their] worldly possessions" could be carried on their back.[52] Carrying everything they owned from "one site to the next" built "tough" characters in men of their generation.[53] Many rangers doubted whether their successors "would stay on the job today" being as "poorly supplied" as they were.[54] While these early writings mention the deprivations they faced on the job, they became far more central to the memories of rangers in the 1950s. Deprivation also established the nature of their work as completely self-reliant in a dangerous environment that tested their mental capabilities to deal with a lack of basic supplies. Deprivation fit

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[44] Jessica Weiss, *To Have and to Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom and Social Change* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 138.

[45] K.A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture*, 134.

[46] K.D. Swan, "Musselshell Reminiscence," in *Early Days*, 2:44.

[47] Rylee Teed, "Land Exchange," in *Early Days*, 2:56.

[48] Ibid., 2:55.

[49] Ibid., 2:60.

[50] Roy Phillips, "Recollections," in *Early Days*, 2:18.

[51] Rylee Teed, "Land Exchange," in *Early Days*, 2:62.

[52] C.S. Webb, "Some Incidents Occurring During my Employment with the U.S. Forest Service," in *Early Days*, 2:68.

[53] Rylee Teed, "Land Exchange," in *Early Days*, 2:55.

[54] K.D. Swan, "Musselshell Reminiscence," in *Early Days*, 2:46.

into the broader effort by retired rangers to redefine their generation as aggressive wilderness warriors who rejected softening influences of office work, family, and community that fueled a broader crisis of masculinity in the 1950s.

By the 1960s, the last group of retirees from the original generation of forest rangers no longer defined their professional legacies as tough; for these men, education represented a link between their youth and the excitement of earlier experiences in the wild.[55] They drew from a familiar vocabulary to represent themselves as simultaneously cowboy-like and professional, but also emphasized leisure as a major theme. This change reflected the increasing post-war significance of leisure to men crafting their social identities outside of work.[56] A second theme that emerged was their representation of the family unit. Rangers now cast their original supervisors in fatherly terms, unlike those in the 1940s who described them as teachers of a tough western masculinity. In addition, families became active participants in their professional hardships during their early years of service. Finally, they depicted local populations with inverted, dysfunctional family values suggesting yet another shift in the purpose of negative referents in these final narratives. Thus, like leisure, families offered another avenue for social identification in post-war society.

Unlike rangers in the 1940s who used the cowboy imagery to present a way of life, rangers in the 1960s described this aspect of work as a requirement yet failed to adopt an overarching cowboy persona. For example, one ranger noted that while "present day Ranger[s]... may feel that toting a gun...was uncalled for" it was a work requirement, not a way of life.[57] Ranger Dean Harrington closed his story by cautioning that he did "not wish to appear as a 'Hard boiled' gun-toting ex-Ranger" and explained that "neither [did he] wish to recommend the same procedures for present-day Rangers."[58] Uncoupling the imagery and vocabulary of western masculinity from toughness shows a major shift in how this final decade of authors found meaning in their work.

Whereas descriptions of college education in previous decades rarely filled more than one or two lines, by the 1960s many devoted entire paragraphs or more to their memories of college experience as the gateway to the excitement of travelling into the wilderness. Authors in previous decades alluded to college in ambiguous terms because they viewed it as softening and blamed it for preventing men from experiencing real work. Education was no more frequent among this decade of authors than those previous, yet the meaning of their college memories took on a new

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[55] The rangers writing during the 1960s began their careers at the same time as the authors in the two previous decades but most likely represent the youngest employees of the first generation. Typically, they remained on the job longer than their older colleagues. Nearly every author regardless of when they retired was a career employee who served at least twenty years with the agency.

[56] Lisa M. Fine, "Rights of Men, Rites of Passage: Hunting and Masculinity at Reo Motors of Lansing, Michigan, 1945-1975," *Journal of Social History* 33 (Summer 2000), 807.

[57] Dean Harrington, "Horse Roundup Days on the Old Jefferson Forest," in *Early Days*, 3:155.

[58] Ibid., 3: 161.

significance. The importance of education reflected different cultural values that changed the role of education in the development of manly work. Unlike their colleagues in the 1950s who viewed education as a hindrance to authentic experiences, these final authors represented education as a gateway that led them to the fieldwork that defined the first generation of rangers. K.D. Swan who never included any specifics of his educational experiences in his letter in the 1950s now described his graduation from Harvard Forest School as motivation for him to go back West and seek excitement.[59] It was "especially important" for Dave Olsen "to acquire woods experience" as a student at the University of Nebraska so he went back West and spent his summers in the "wild and beautiful country" where he would eventually work.[60] The surfacing of these college memories highlights the way in which men linked education with the excitement of early fieldwork and wilderness experience.

Some of these final rangers from the original generation celebrated their drinking, dancing, and socializing in towns as some of the fondest memories of their youth. Stories of drinking and leisure reflect different post-war values held by these final authors who viewed "drinking as a quintessential feature" of American leisure.[61] Ranger David Olsen enthusiastically recalled dancing all night on his weekend excursions to a local town, which he regretted that he could no longer do.[62] Other rangers engaged in adventurous leisure activities in the wilderness. Outdoor recreation offered a new avenue for social identification for men in post-war society that was not bound by strict notions of class or labor.[63] For example, one ranger dedicated an entire page to a time when he "loaded the family and a camping outfit in the car" and set out on a 12,000 mile, half-year journey across the continent.[64] The significance of different types of leisure in the memoirs of these retired rangers reflects changing cultural values in post-war American society. Memories of leisure offered these final authors a chance to craft part of their social and masculine identity outside of the workplace, unlike their colleagues in previous decades who rarely described leisure and usually equated it with social, effeminate behavior.

Families emerged as the strongest thematic link throughout the writings of the 1960s. Rangers remembered their supervisors and older coworkers as fatherly figures departing from their colleagues in previous decades who remembered many of the same men as tough, old pioneer characters as earlier authors did in the 1940s. These narratives followed a period of intense cultural renegotiation of fatherhood during the 1950s in which popular culture re-imagined fathers as domestic, involved, and

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[59] K.D Swan, "Reminiscences of the Dakota National Forest," in *Early Days*, 3:258. Swan is one of only three men who wrote letters for more than one volume.

[60] Dave Olsen, "Uncle Sam's Biggest Nursery," in *Early Days*, 3:170.

[61] Lori Rotskoff, *Love on the Rocks: Men, Women, and Alcohol in Post-World War II America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 229.

[62] David Olsen, "Summer Work," in *Early Days*, 3:171.

[63] Lisa M. Fine, "Rights of Men, Rites of Passage," 807.

[64] Eugene Grush, "Just Reminiscences," in *Early Days*, 3:67.

nurturing.[65] At the very least, representing supervisors as fatherly figures reflected a new understanding of fatherly relationships amongst a group of retirees more concerned with their own families. One "veteran cowman" appeared as "a very lovable gentlemen" who advised and guided a younger ranger on his new post.[66] Dean Harrington recalled his first supervisor as a man "loved by the community" and fatherly in his management and care of his new wards.[67] Shifting representations of their relationships with supervisors is one piece of the broader emphasis of family in these final narratives.

These final authors noted rural families in their memoirs for their inverted family values and dangerously ignorant parenting skills for the first time. In the post-war years, rural poverty gained national attention along with increasingly prevalent stereotypes about poor whites.[68] Popular culture depicted "hillbilly" families as backwards, ignorant, and often deranged in their values throughout the 1960s.[69] These stereotypes influenced retired rangers' memories of their encounters with rural families. For example, Charlie Powell wrote about a remote family who became dependent upon his willingness to trade with them after he did the father a small favor. Over time he gained the trust of this father of twelve who one day explained that he was "just a little worried [that his daughter] might be marrying her half-brother" after asking Charlie for his thoughts on the proposed marriage.[70] Another ranger mocked local families who "fought like hell" to save a liquor stash from being destroyed in a fire despite letting their homes burn.[71] Rural families acted as negative referents for rangers who represented themselves as family men. For them, families offered an important image to craft their professional and masculine identities around unlike their colleagues in previous decades that believed families softened and hindered hard, masculine fieldwork.

Lastly, rangers retiring in the 1960s defined the toughness of their work through descriptions of long, difficulty periods spent away from their families. Dean Harrington characterizes his employment as "the most lonesome job I ever had." He concluded his memoir by contrasting his enjoyment of working with his wife against his lonely, solitary work in the backcountry.[72] Charles Shaw lamented that "Rangers... stationed in the back country... all winter" had to be "separated from their families for six months at a time" while doing lonely and solitary work.[73] Rangers emphasized the

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[65] Jessica Weiss, "To Have and to Hold," in *Early Days*, 3:84.

[66] Ibid., 3:191.

[67] Dean Harrington, "The Beginning of the United States Forest Service as I Remember it," in *Early Days*, 3:111.

[68] Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 200-201.

[69] Lee A. Dew, "On a Slow Train through Arkansaw: The Negative Image of Arkansas in the Early Twentieth Century," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 39 (Summer 1980): 125-135.

[70] Charlie Powell, "Recollections," in *Early Days*, 3:181.

[71] Eugen Grush, "Just Reminiscences," in *Early Days*, 3:64.

[72] Dean Harrington, "The Beginning of the United States Forest Service as I Remember it," in *Early Days*, 3:117, 151.

[73] Eugen Grush, "Just Reminiscences," in *Early Days*, 3:46.

importance of their wives' domesticity in order to represent themselves as family men. Family, like leisure and education, fit into a new representation offered by the final authors of the original generation of rangers who defined their accomplishments outside of the tough field work that had possessed their peers in past decades.

While constructing their retirement memoirs in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, rural forest rangers from the Northern Rocky Mountain region adopted different motifs to define their professional legacies. They drew from their western heritage as well as their modern expertise and training. Their vacillating representations highlight the significant role played by memory in how men negotiated their gendered identities in relation to their work. In the 1940s retiring rangers modeled their professional identities around cowboy archetypes through their ties to the land, their law enforcement experiences and tutelage of inexperienced, younger men. By the 1950s rangers abandoned the cowboy archetype in favor of a mental toughness expressed through stories of deprivation and hardship that reflected broader cultural anxieties about conformity, families, and consumerism. Finally in the 1960s, the last of the retirees defined their accomplishments outside of their tough, wilderness careers by favoring stories about leisurely youth, families, and days as college students. Taken together, the writings of the original generation of forest rangers underscore the dynamic and shifting role of memory in individual constructions of identity.

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