HUMANIZING ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH:

FIVE STORIES FROM THE 1930'S

By

Ronald Hilton, Ph.D.

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FOREWORD

A university is known for its faculty, students, alumni, and the scholarship which such a unique community produces. The work here exemplifies all of those elements which in their totality represent our conception of University. Ronald Hilton recently completed all requirements for the Ph.D. in Adult Education here. After commencement this May, he will join the thousands of other alumni of this School of Education, who hold distinguished positions of leadership as professors, administrators, and teachers in our schools and universities. And as his teachers and professors guided and encouraged his development, we expect that for many decades to come, he will contribute to that unbroken chain linking teacher to pupil, generation to generation.

The Margaret and Alexander Charters Award in Adult Education recognizes a scholarly work produced by a student or recent graduate of this School of Education's program in that field. Ronald Hilton's inquiry which explores the educational experiences of adults during America's "great depression," is a splendid initial recipient of the generous prize offered by the Charters, a husband and wife team, long professors at Syracuse University.

On behalf of the faculty, staff and student body of this School, I want to express gratitude to our friends, Alexander and Margaret Charters, for making this award possible, and to Professor Roger Hiemstra and his committee for their excellent selection of this year's recipient. And lastly, of course, I want to congratulate soon-to-be Professor Ronald Hilton for his work as a student and as a teacher, for his obvious mastery of his field and for his equally obvious ability to instruct both the next generation of students as well as those who are his teachers.

Burton Blatt, Dean
School of Education
Syracuse University

Qualitative methodology, or "grounded research" has rarely been associated with the recent study of adult education. Indeed, our quantitative measures, instruments and language can easily leave us wondering whether we are learning about real people at all, or simply some abstractions called "human subjects." Historical research and oral histories have come into some kind of respectability in very recent years, and we even have a major work of evaluation--that of Jack Mezirow and his colleagues--coming from the grounded research school,[1] but "we have," in the words of the popular song, "only just begun."

This research report presents, very briefly, a three-fold methodology for doing qualitative historical research, and proceeds to illustrate the method with five stories, from more than a hundred contained in the original research upon which this is based. That work, a completed dissertation, is entitled The Birth of the Learning Society: Adult Education in America in the 1930's.[2] The contention of this paper is that these stories, individually and especially in the aggregate, begin to inform our understanding of the dynamics of adult learning and adult education in a way that no other method can. My desire is not, of course, to eliminate or even minimize the importance of quantitative methods, only to urge that they alone cannot inform our understanding. At least two methods are required if we are really to understand how real people learn, seek to learn, or decide to cast their lot with either those individuals known as adult learners or those who decide to become educators of adults.

A Brief Description of Method

An early preoccupation of mine in this study was a concern that historical research in adult education often stands alone, rarely depicts as a starting point the socioeconomic or cultural milieu of which it is a part. Even the remarkable efforts of C. Hartley Grattan[3] and Malcolm Knowles[4] typically treat the relationship of adult education to the larger scene from the inside out rather than the reverse. Consequently, in this study, I required myself to spend nearly a year of part-time study first examining the myriad works about the Thirties: works by Schlesinger[5,6] and Manchester,[7] and Frederick Lewis Allen[8] and and Caroline Bird,[9] Studs Terkel[10] and even Leo Rosten,[11] before turning to our own very substantial writers of the same period: Ruth Kotinsky, to Lyman Bryson, Eduard Lindeman, and Harry and Bonaro Overstreet, to name a few. In between, I read or reread a variety of fiction and film criticism of the period, and

surveyed what seemed at the time tons of demographic data. Among other things I learned that marriage rates were probably never lower, nor suicide rates apparently ever higher, than during the 1930's. Perhaps my most surprising finding was that as many as 34 percent of the adult population of the late 1930's were involved in formal adult education programs. But, before digressing at too great length, let me observe that this is what I mean by reading "from the outside in": seeking out the journalism, history, criticism, and even films and autobiographies before pursuing the literature of adult education.

Secondly, I prepared a letter to be sent, in slightly varied forms made possible by the technology of the mag-card typewriter, to 58 adults across the United States who either had participated in programs, or who had conducted them, or who had already studied the period. About half of the recipients of these letters were formally connected with adult education; the other half included historians, journalists, novelists, a union leader, and assorted others. Remarkably, 41 of these replied, including Saul Bellow, Paul A. Miller, Paul Hadley, Bonaro Overstreet and Malcolm Knowles. Their responses--ranging from a self-administered, typed single spaced self-interview based on my letter of inquiry, running to 20 pages, to hand scribbled notes of less than a page--yielded more than 200 pages of observations and old, original correspondence that, I believe, could not be practically sought out in any other way. Additionally, the sheer delight of those first thoughtful replies from Paul Miller and Saul Bellow assured me that this was a worthy topic and a method well worth trying.

Thirdly, I conducted a very few interviews, principally with adult educators who had gotten their start in the thirties. Transcripts of these 11 interviews run to more than 400 pages. Among the insights these interviews provided were testing points for the hypotheses and hunches that had occurred to me in the earlier research, enormously useful perceptions of people and leaders and typical students and writers, and some of the most enjoyable conversation of my life. Those studying the adult education movement from the twenties till now are indeed forunate to have so many willing, articulate, and sensitive observers as I found. And remarkably, no one refused an interview, although one proved impossible to schedule.

The actual writing of results was done in several stages, of part-time and full-time activity, but I suspect the total equaled about nine months of full-time effort. That may be a modest

exaggeration, but feeling as I do that I have recently given birth, please allow the hyperbole.

Before proceeding, I must express a deep appreciation to all those who participated in the enterprise, whose names are contained if not enshrined in the acknowledgments of the dissertation itself. Special thanks are due to the committee who sponsored this research and saw it through each step of the way: Dr. Thomas F. Green, Chairman of Cultural Foundations, Syracuse University; Dr. Alexander N. Charters, Professor of Adult and Continuing Education, also of Syracuse University; and Dr. Edward F. Kelly, formerly of Syracuse, but now on the faculty of the School of Education at the State University of New York at Albany. Another appreciation must be expressed to Dean Emeritus Paul Sheats of the University of California, a principal actor in one of the five stories below, who graciously read and criticized the entire 300 page manuscript.

But, let us turn to the stories.

Story #1. An Extension Mentor and His Prize Pupil

The Cooperative Extension Service was one of the many adult education success stories of the 1930's, by 1934 expending $25,000,000 annually.[12] Morse Cartwright, Executive Director of The American Association for Adult Education (AAAE)--the organization which is the antecedent of today's Adult Education Association of the United States of America--reported in 1934, extension participation had risen over the prior decade from five million to six million adults,[13] and represented far and away the largest domain of adult education participation for either decade.

Cooperative Extension's success in creating a networking service that really worked has made it a model for countless urban extension imitations, none of which have yet approximated such success. And a profound instrument of its teaching, occasionally ministering, educational delivery system was that "personification of extension, the county agent." In the words of one thoughtful observer:

> The Cooperative Extension Service was an educational effort sponsored in part by the federal government, in part by academics, and in part by the community. The county agent was the Service's representative. His style was active and pragmatic. His purpose was to alter the very nature of the community.[14]

In an imaginative use of well trained professionals and often inspired volunteers, the Cooperative Extension Service implemented

a uniformity of organizational structure from place to place, shared innovative techniques and technologies, infused an eager rural population with some conviction that they might have better control over their lives. And by all accounts, much of the success--despite the invaluable contributions of cooperation, adequate funding, and a highly motivated audience for continuing education of such an important variety--much of that success hinged upon the effectiveness of that single ambassador in the county, the County Agent.

In the spring of 1935 there lived in West Virginia, Mr. and Mrs. Harry A. Miller and their two sons. Harry was a farmer, an industrial worker, and a sometime potter. The Millers' older son was a husky lad who enjoyed farm work. The younger, slighter boy was more given to voracious reading, more than occasional reflection, and, as was often observed by the rest of the family, given to as many intellectual alternatives to farm work as he could find.

The younger son had found a mentor some months before in the County Extension Agent, Mr. Walter C. Gumbel. Young Miller's conversations with Gumbel revolved around books, service to people, and a world of academic excitement. His conversations with his parents centered more frequently on their not wanting their son to go to college. They feared he would simply feel out of place, hurt, and rebuffed because of their humble origins. Quite simply, the Millers wanted their younger son to learn a trade, to find something useful to do. As high school graduation neared in that late spring of 1935, the younger Miller nearly despaired of ever going to college.

In late April, Walter Gumbel arranged to stop by for an evening of conversation with Mr. and Mrs. Miller, specifically to discuss their son's potential as a college student. It was a conversation that lasted more than four hours, ending long after both boys had gone to bed. At the conclusion of that talk, the Millers agreed that their younger son should be permitted the opportunity to attend college for one year, at the end of which time they all (including Gumbel) would meet to reevaluate the wisdom of this potential route to a career.[15]

The rest of the story is better known history. Paul A. Miller went to Bethany College for one year, transferred to the University of West Virginia the following September, graduated to become first, a county extension agent, like his mentor Gumbel, then to go on to further study in rural sociology at the Michigan State University, where less than 15 years later he became Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Later he would serve as President of the University of West Virginia, as Assistant Secretary for Education

during Lyndon Johnson's presidency, and for nearly ten years as President of the Rochester Institute of Technology.

More important to our concerns than the meteoric career of Paul Miller is his frequent observation that his life as a happy academic and public servant would almost certainly not have had its start without Gumbel's conversation with his parents that night in April, 1935. Of equal significance to our consideration, Miller's first job out of college was as an extension agent himself, and, he was the "thoughtful observer" from whom the preceding quotation was taken.

The story of the Gumbel-Miller relationship is revelatory not only of how the Cooperative Extension Service worked, but also of a fairly typical model of the adult educator of the Great Depression: a model, a mentor, and more than occasionally, a missionary.

Story #2. John Studebaker, Lyman Bryson, and Paul Sheats, and the National Public Forums

In the summer of 1936, a young Ph.D. holder from Yale University secured a position with the even younger National Public Forums Division of the U.S. Office of Education. After some seven months as Director of Forums in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Dr. Sheats went to Washington, to work with the Assistant Administrator of the forum demonstration centers. In that capacity, the young Paul Sheats would frequently see the U.S. Commissioner of Education, who was, not coincidentally, the inventor of the major public forum demonstration project of the Great Depression.[16] It was Studebaker's forums as Superintendent of Schools in Des Moines, Iowa, which had captured President Roosevelt's imagination sufficiently to name Studebaker Commissioner of Education in 1934. Beals and Brody (1940) reported that less than two years after Studebaker became Commissioner, "ten thousand (forum) meetings held in nineteen centers were attended by more than a million persons."[17]

John Ward Studebaker had had nearly two years--an ample opportunity--to experiment with the Public Forum techniques when he was in Des Moines, where its success had caused a national stir among those knowledgeable about either adult education or public policy issues. And the evaluative findings were startling. Almost 20 percent (17.6) of the entire adult population of the City of Des Moines had attended one or more forums;[18] in the first year (January 1933-January 1934), total attendance was 13,404; in the following season, from September 1933 to June 1934, attendance had risen to 70,000 and the total number of "meetings" had risen from 341 to 578. (They would decline slightly in 1934-35.)[19]

And although there can be no sure formula for success in the complicated business of inviting citizens to become more informed about the issues and their responsibilities as citizens--if there were such a formula, surely we would be practicing it widely today--John Studebaker adopted a number of practices which clearly increased the prospects for success. He advertised widely and well. He invited really remarkable speakers and teachers (including his friend Lyman Bryson who played a substantial role in the first year of the experiment); he insisted on the use of carefully prepared study guides. And, thanks to a substantial grant from the Carnegie Foundation ($125,000 for a five year demonstration period),[20] the newspaper advertising and fliers which promoted the Forums could guarantee that "any citizen may attend any forum meeting entirely without obligation. There are no fees, no assigned textbooks to be read, no tests or examinations."[21]

And John Studebaker knew more about the participants in the Public Forum Series than most adult educators know today about the demographic environment of their audiences. He knew, for instance, which age ranges were attracted in larger or smaller numbers. (A curious symmetry developed, but an abundance, 46.3 percent, were from ages 35-54; 23.3 percent for those 35-44; and 23 percent for those 45-54. Those 16-24, however, accounted for 11.9 percent; the 65-plus population were an impressive 19.3 percent; while young adults, 25-34, accounted for 15 percent of those attending.)[22]

Studebaker may have been the first to document that the best audiences for adult education are the considerably educated: "Almost 55 percent of the adults with more years of schooling than are required to complete college attended the forums."[23] There were no fewer than 20 indices of attendance at the forums compared and contrasted with other variables, including the number of participants who "took no Des Moines daily newspaper," who took only one paper, or who subscribed to both (1.9 percent, 13.2 percent, 84.9 percent, respectively);[24] the number of attendees who had a radio in their homes (a whopping 91.4 percent),[25] the number who maintained household telephones (75.6 percent)[26] and the number who had library cards (77.3 percent as contrasted with only 48.8 percent for the city as a whole).[27]

Curiously, in his book describing the Des Moines Forum project, Studebaker does not mention Lyman Bryson except as a forum leader; in no way does a reader get the sense that Bryson was a kind of co-inventor of the forum project, although other references (Grattan, for example) strongly suggest that. The relationship of Studebaker and Bryson in real life must have been far

stronger than is evidenced in The American Way. At the outset, Bryson was Studebaker's Director of Forums in Des Moines, having left his work in California (where he had been the principal contributor to the Master Plan for Adult Education for California). From his perspective as observer and nurturer of all the forums, Sheats recalled of Bryson, "He began to move into the national scene because he was such an expert forum leader and discussant. . . ."[28]

In reading almost any of the many works written about adult education in the 1930's, one catches a glimpse of an incredible fervor surrounding that array of activities. In his recollections too, Sheats gives us a hint of one of the origins of that fervor in the person of a new and innovative department of the National Education Association, The Department of Immigrant Education launched in 1921, whose name was changed in 1924 to the "Department of Adult Education."

> I think you have to see this in the historical perspective too. You remember that the first adult education national professional organization was the Department of Immigrant Education in NEA, and we forget that there was a fantastic amount of evangelical devotion to this. L. R. Alderman (that department's first Director) in the U.S. Office of Education was really--his writings were more like a sermon, an exhortation, to join the church than anything else. His verbal pictures and images were all about soldiers of Christ working for these poor immigrants. I'm sure that what happened in the thirties was influenced by what was done under the Immigration and Naturalization Service.[29]

Before leaving the Public Forum Project, we should give ourselves some sense of the excitement and urgency of one of the sessions, of the charisma of the forum leader at his or her work. (They were mostly men, a sex distinction not characteristic of a number of other adult education activities of the period, especially the scholarly and popular writing on the subject.) Fortunately, Dr. Sheats provides this in an interview:

> I was usually trying to do something. For example, you know Cooper Union in New York and Houston Peterson who was head of Cooper Union for years. And he had his Philosophy professorship at Rutgers and would commute; they lived right there in the (Greenwich) Village a couple blocks from Cooper Union.
>
> I always was very fond of Houston. He was such a flamboyant type, you know. Later on I brought him out to

California because I thought he was about the best I had seen in the business in terms of platform ability. Hous would say, "Now, come on down and let's spend a night." You know he had these forums three times a week in Cooper Union right off the Bowery. Most of the people in there were people who came in to keep warm.

Did I tell you about the other job we did together? About the night they had the team down from Yale to talk about Africa and somebody from the floor raised the question, "Did anybody know anything about nickel deposits in Africa?" And this expert who was supposed to be the top guy in the country didn't know. . . He'd never heard about it, I don't think. This (other) guy who was in the audience got up in a huge overcoat, (someone who) obviously hadn't been shaved in a week, and he said if the questioner would really like to know about nickel deposits in Africa, he would be glad to enlighten him.

Hous said, "Come on up. We need you." And the guy got up and talked for ten minutes and he knew everything there was to know. He was a former engineer down on his luck. Hous was always interested in experimenting. . . .[30]

Young Paul Sheats' experience with the National Public Forums would leave him marked for life as a career adult educator who believed--and believes today--deeply in the capacity of many adults not only to learn effectively, but to participate significantly in the opinion and policy formulation that ought to be one of indicators of a democracy fully formed and functioning. Although the forums were never to capture "a majority" of America's 76 million adults, in the last half of the Depression, which had been Studebaker's goal, they did capture more than a million participants, and, their issue is yet to be found in the public discourse of our media today, perhaps especially in the public affairs programming of National Public Radio and National Public Television.

Less messianic than L. R. Alderman, the principal architects and administrators of the National Public Forums were the equal of Walter Gumbel in their enthusiasm, their optimism for the citizenry, and in their solid hard work.

Story #3. Two Dropouts: Loren Eiseley and Edmund Love

A particular concern preoccupied Tom Green, my principal mentor in this research, and me, as I began this study in August of 1977. That concern was about the lavish use of late, of the term "non-traditional student." My own bias had been that nontraditional

students have existed at least since the time of Socrates and Jesus, but both our research and our popular literature suggested that such students were either the invention or the unintended outcome of the 1960's.

To examine this premise more closely, I looked at what I could find--through interviews and autobiographical writings chiefly--about half a dozen "full time students" in universities of the 1930's. Three of the six, as it turned out, owed much of their success to flexible policies of the universities in which they were enrolled as well as to their own considerable initiative. Let us look briefly at two of their accounts, one of Loren Eiseley, the other of Edmund G. Love.

"Loren Eiseley," in the words of a book jacket surrounding one of his volumes of poetry, "was born and spent his boyhood among the salt flats and sunflower forests of eastern Nebraska. . . . The vicissitudes of the Great Depression led him successively from aimless drifter, to fossil hunter, to sporadic college student, and finally to a career in the science of anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania."[31]

The years of drifting were eight in all, including study as a university extension student, occasional employment, frequent "bumming" usually by train throughout much of the Midwest and Southwest, and a year of recuperation from tuberculosis, all shaped by a near-desperate search for personal identity, for a hint of a realistic career path for a poor young adult drawn to a life of books, but extremely introverted, more at home in the prairie flatlands or on anthropological digs than in the world of cities, people or universities.

Eiseley's personal writing is full of paradox, personally experienced and always the subject for new inquiry. Perhaps more than other recent autobiographical work, he describes an interior, brooding life, filled with an extraordinary consciousness of time, even from a very young age, but also filled with a profound consciousness of the timeless quality of both his prairie home and his anthropological interests. The titles of his books echo this bipolar concern with time and the timeless: The Firmament of Time (1960), The Man Who Saw Through Time (1973), and of course, All the Strange Hours (1975). With his union of temperament and discipline, it is not surprising that he lived and wrote in centuries past as fully as he participated in the present.

In part, that timeless quality of his life and work diminish our understanding of his experience as a young student; his is not a chronological autobiography. In equal part, we are drawn to a

curious fusion of his physical and economic hardship, his growing intellectual life, his capacity fully to experience life, especially a life of such great doubt and real physical peril. We are drawn into sharing his struggle to find an identity and create or imagine a vocation. Following a year-long incapacitation on the desert to cure tuberculosis, a therapy that proved successful, his restless quest for identity becomes almost unbearable:

> The rales in my chest were gone, my weight was approaching normal but if this was true, another disease gnawed at my vitals. A yearlong immobility, even my enforced wary care of myself in the Mohave, had left me savage, restless, at odds with my environment. I tried, through university extension courses, to overcome deficiencies and graduate. All failed. I prowled about like an animal. Suddenly, I vanished again. Always, as though it lingered in my blood, the ways, however wandering lay west, not east. I remember from a train top the oak leaves turning red in Missouri, then the desert, California, the desert again. As in the case of all drifters, time was fading from my consciousness.[32]

But Eiseley also had a powerful sense of present-life recall, and could and did provide pictures of what university extension students were about in their drop-out months, away from the university, on the road or railroad, seeking out an existence, trusting temporary friends, all reinforcing the loneliness of an existence that might end abruptly:

> When the thought struck me that I still might be welcome in my uncle's house, if only temporarily, I was huddled against an adobe wall in some nameless little desert town at nightfall. My teeth chattered in the cold of the high desert. I had no blanket and again no money. Sleep was impossible. In the morning I would have to search for food.
>
> The place was a trap. The railroad ran through a concavity in the desert which contained the town. The police watched the two ends of the bottleneck. The town cops had every stranger spotted and merely waited, either for him to leave, which was difficult, or for him to steal, which could prove utterly disastrous.[33]

Within a span of fifteen months from that experience (the chronology is very difficult to date, since Eiseley makes few references to particular months or years), the budding anthropologist would have

sampled his first work on a dig, would have completed his bachelor's degree, and would be enrolled in a graduate program at the University of Pennsylvania. Had it not been for university extension, America might have lost this most productive and profound of her anthropologists.

Another kind of nontraditional student of the 1930's was Edmund G. Love, who later would write plays and novels, most notably The Situation in Flushing and Subways Are for Sleeping. With no ambitions toward non raditionalism, and in fact, as the son of a near-millionaire in Flint, Michigan, Ed Love had every reason to believe he would have a traditional education and a virtual guarantee of a prosperous life. Like his friends in Flint, the Loves' affluence was quite recent, centered around the automotive industry, as they lived "at the very end of the era in which the United States changed from a rural into an urban society."[34]

What changed young Ed Love's life was that his seventeenth birthday occurred just nine months before the stock market crash in 1929. In his autobiographical account of the 1930's, Hanging On, or How to Get Through a Depression and Enjoy Life, Love tells of barely noticing that fateful day of October 29, 1929, busy as he was with the end of an affair with Molly Flexner, his first love.

Edmund Love spent the 1929-30 academic year in Kemper Military School in Boonville, Missouri. When he returned hom to Flint in June of 1930, he discovered that his formerly wealthy father had lost more than everything in the crash. Like many, Mr. Love had ended up in debt. His father's combination lumber business and coal yard had suffered greatly.[35]

Even with the reversal of fortunes for the Love family in the summer of 1930, it was agreed that Ed should go to college at the University of Michigan, which had accepted his freshman year of work from Kemper Military School. He did not know then, of course, that it would take exactly six years, until August of 1936, for him to complete the required three years of work to earn a bachelor's degree. Perhaps more traditional than the wandering Eisely, Love was one of the first recorded instances of the drop-in/drop-out variety of students we have come to know so well in the 1960's and 1970's. Never an evening college or extension student, Ed Love lived an experience that is still of interest to those of us whose principal interests lie in adult education. For one thing, Ed Love worked full-time jobs and saved feverishly, at least when he could ferret out such jobs. For another, he proved both inventive and lucky with gambling activities as varied as pyramid games and horseraces. Further, he was

to gain the degree in time to get the five years of teaching experience, and a master's degree earned in three summers. Just as the Depression was ending for him, in the spring of 1941, he was drafted. When he got out of the Army at War's end, and prepared to start the new life that would lead to a career of writing, he was 34 years old.[36]

One may reasonably ask whether in a time of a depression, any undergraduate students enjoy the luxury of being "traditional." Certainly in the instances of Eiseley and Love, the term simply did not apply.

Story #4. Women as Co-Architects of Adult Education in the 1930's

We have already seen, from the first two stories related, something of the marvelous verve that surrounded adult education during the Great Depression. That is perhaps the first overpowering generalization of those who study the decade. A second observation is that virtually all of the national leaders in adult education of that time were established and highly respected leaders in other fields: Dorothy Canfield Fisher widely known for at least two decades before as a short story writer and novelist; Charles and Mary Beard, historians; Harry and Bonaro Overstreet, psychologist and English teacher/poet. Eduard Lindeman who had written what many take to be the seminal work for adult educators of the period back in 1926, The Meaning of Adult Education,[37] was highly regarded as a philosopher, although he was a model adult student himself, having begun formal education at the age of 21.

But a third conclusion that leaps out of the history of adult education in the 1930's is that women were an integral part of the adult education fabric: as planners and innovators, as thinkers, and especially as writers and editors of the scores of articles, books, and handbooks that characterized the period.

The authoritative book on the role of adult education in public libraries was the work of Jennie Flexner.[38] Dorothy Canfield Fisher was herself an inspirational presence, writing and speaking with great persuasive effect and titles that might have terrified, especially in her book, Learn or Perish.[39]

There were three handbooks of adult education published in the thirties: two were edited by Dorothy Rowden,[40, 41] the third by Mary Ely.[42]

But two particular women of the period have a special capacity to capture our imaginations: Ruth Kotinsky and Bonaro Overstreet.

Ruth Kotinsky's book, Adult Education and the Social Scene[43] published in 1933, is one of the most innovative and thought-provoking books of the entire history of adult education. More than any book of the period, it couples a thoughtful appraisal of what adult education might hope to provide to Americans with a careful caveat of what it had better not try to become. She cautions against overstating the case, against promising more than can be delivered, and of falsely imitating such other professions as medicine or law. An example of her wide ranging familiarity with literature, and of a profundity that passes for simplicity, is contained in the following quotation from Adult Education and the Social Scene.

> First, as to the role that the new movement should play in remaking the schools for younger people. It is immediately apparent that no separate study has been made. The reason may be that a new movement is too overwhelmed with its own problems. On the other hand, it is clear that earlier schooling is one of the conditions of the success or failure of adult education: in education, as in no other field, the child is parent of the man. Further, the world adults are now facing is the kind of world made in part by the kind of persons formed or left unformed by present schools processes, and by those uneducative conditions of life which schools have left untouched. And finally, the education of the young is one of the foremost important concerns of adults, and the institutions through which it is accomplished rank among the major social edifices which they help to erect. Therefore, schooling and the education of the young offers one of the best opportunities for a genuine adult education. For all of these reasons, some conscious study might be expected.[44]

Regrettably, no one whom I have read, corresponded with, or interviewed seems to have a very clear idea of the woman behind the writing. It is certain that she was for brief intensive times an employee on special grant for the older adult education organization, Acubee, as it was typically referred to. Malcolm Knowles remembers her as one who stayed pretty much in her office in New York writing impressive articles and books.[45] More regrettably, she died in the 1950's, one feels before she had made her fullest contributions.

Bonaro Overstreet is alive and well, however. Although she recommends that those interested get their best information about Ruth Kotinsky from some other source, Mrs. Overstreet can illumine and inform us about virtually every aspect of the burgeoning field of adult education during the Great Depression. To interview her is to leap

a chasm of time, and share with her the near intoxication of being so full of delightful work as she felt, beginning in the thirties, and lasting throughout her life. When asked in an interview whether this was indeed a period that was not sexist or chauvinist, she replied enthusiastically in the negative:

> Not at all. Why would it have been? The women had been very conspicuous in the basic practice of adult education in the early years of the century, the Americanization courses which involved more people than any other did at that time, the teaching of immigrants.[46]

And at least some adult educators of the time were deeply sensitive to the notion that appropriate citizen education required considerably more than knowledge of language, history, and laws. An innovator in this form of adult education was Bonaro's good friend, Rachel DuBois, a young woman gifted in what Mrs. Overstreet refers to as "adult education of the spirit":

> There was a woman in New York, Rachel DuBois, a Quaker girl, who was asked by the public school system to invent some method of keeping immigrants from countries that had been hostile to each other in the Old World, keeping them from infecting their children in our public schools with the antagonisms that they had brought with them. The Balkan countries, for example, where there were mutual hatreds and the parents tended to infect the children with them in our system. . . .
>
> Rachel DuBois, who was enormously inventive, planned a program which she called Neighbors in Action. She would gather together clusters of parents, usually she could get the mothers more easily than the men, to just come in and sit around and talk. We attended a few of these. She asked us to come and see how they did it, what she was thinking of, and give her an estimate of what we thought it was worth.
>
> We thought it was marvelous! One evening, for example, there was a cluster of these parents from mutually antagonistic backgrounds. She asked them to recall their first memories of bread and share them. You see, here was something that undercut the differences. Here is the bread of life; here is that which they all had to have in one form or another.

> It was simply miraculous the way the hostilities faded as they compared notes on the kind of bread that their mothers had made when they were children. As simple a thing as that. But the hostilities faded.
>
> At the end of it, a young black man who was there suddenly rose and started singing, "Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees." And the whole crowd began singing. A lot of them didn't know it, but he taught it to us.
>
> It was a miraculous experience. That's adult education too: adult education of the spirit. It isn't just facts; it's sharing.[47]

The marvelous enthusiasm of Bonaro Overstreet for her whole 50-year career as an adult educator is truly infectious. At one point in the interview, having earlier referred to Keats' ode, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," she observed:

> I really didn't talk about the joy, but all this was infected with joy. It was the new planet again, the silence on the peak in Darien--except that we all talked. There was very little silence.[48]

Not all of the experiences of women in the thirties were as positive, we can be sure, as those few briefly told here. One is saddened to learn that only one woman served as President of the American Association for Adult Education throughout its 25 year history, from 1926 to 1951. The policy making body was almost only comprised of men, and as Paul Sheats likes to observe, men whose importance could not be questioned.

But for writers, editors, practitioners, and for a really joyous colleagility of which Mary Ely, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and Bonaro Overstreet, it must have seemed somewhat like Camelot. One cannot help but wonder how much ground was lost in the issue of women's roles in the leadership of adult education between that decade and ten or fifteen years ago when women seemed to find a less supportive environment in which to make their contributions.

Story #5. Learning for the "Soil Soldiers"

Few of the social inventions of the 1930's enjoyed so much popularity and success as the one that seems to have been President Roosevelt's favorite, the Civilian Conservation Corps. We know it today mostly by hearsay, as an antecedent to both the Peace Corps and the Job

Corps. And few of us connect the CCC camps with education, least of all with adult education.

But, despite the fact that the principal goals of the CCC were to reclaim the land, CCC enrollees, as Arthur Schlesinger aptly observes, "did more of course, than reclaim and develop natural resources. They reclaimed and developed themselves."[49]

An educational component to CCC camps was added as an after-thought. After all, these camps recruited largely urban poor youth and placed them in largely rural settings. Enrollees had notoriously weak or nonexistent employment records. In a survey of 104 boys conducted at the Cuyahoga Camp in Ohio, fewer than 17 percent of those interviewed had held a job for more than 35 months prior to enrolling; 51 percent had not even held a job for one full year.[50]

And not all of the enrollees were between the ages of 18 and 23, an age range applied to the original legislation of March 31, 1933.[51] By 1935, Frank Ernest Hill would report that the total enrollment of adults approximated 19 percent of the total number of enrollments of 358,000.[52] The adult population were typically local residents with skills of use to the camps, or veterans desperately in need of employment.

But more than the relative numbers of adults in the camps, what made for adult education environments was the selection, by U.S. Commissioner George F. Zook (Studebaker's immediate predecessor) of a University of Buffalo Dean of Evening Session as Educational Director of the CCC. On December 29, 1933, the appointment of Dr. C. S. Marsh was official.[53]

Dr. Marsh had two significant notions about the kinds of students that CCC camps would attract and the kinds of educational opportunities that would be appropriate for them. The first was that because enrollees were typically from sorely disadvantaged home situations, men for whom school had been an unattractive or intolerable experience, the successful educational experience of the camps had better not resemble the typical high school or college class, had better be more open, and far more informal. Marsh's Handbook for Educational Advisers contained this admonition: Do not rely too much upon classroom instruction as usually carried out in school or college."[54]

Dr. Marsh's second conviction was that as the educational environment should be less formal, the educational mission should be far more ambitious than those of the typical school or college, and far more concerned with developing attitudes and affective learning. The six

"dominant aims" of the Educational Service might well advise undergraduate colleges today as they undertake those institutional reforms that will lead to a more comprehensive learning experience, both within and without the formal curriculum:

1. To develop in each man his powers of self-expression, self-entertainment, and self-culture.
2. To develop pride and satisfaction in cooperative endeavor.
3. To develop as far as practicable an understanding of the prevailing social and economic conditions, to the end that each man may cooperate intelligently in improving these conditions.
4. To preserve and strengthen good habits of health and of mental development.
5. By such vocational training as is feasible, but particularly by vocational counseling and adjustment activities, to assist each man better to meet his employment problems when he leaves camp.
6. To develop an appreciation of nature and country life.[55]

Among his very first actions, Dr. Marsh selected the advisers for the nine corps areas. They in turn selected the advisers for each camp. Once the camp educational adviser was installed, however, he reported to the Camp Commander, always a career military officer, who might look favorably or not upon the role of education in his camp.

A young man who assumed the role of education adviser for one of the camps in Massachusetts was Leo F. Smith, later to become Professor and Vice President for Academic Affairs at the Rochester Institute of Technology. In a letter to me, Dr. Smith described the range of reception he received from three successive directors of that camp:

> For some time Congress, the Army officers in charge of the camps, and the D. I. (Department of Interior) or D. A. (Department of Agriculture) work project superintendents did not finance (in the case of Congress), nor encourage (in the case of the officers and superintendents) the enrollees to attend or make it easy for the camp educational adviser to carry on his work. For example, I worked under three different commanding officers: one was definitely opposed to the educational program; the second was greatly in favor of it, but suffered a nervous breakdown and was relieved. The third had the attitude: I won't help or hinder you, but don't do anything that would get me in trouble.[56]

One gets the impression, reading Leo Smith's letter as well as the books on the subject, that the truly outstanding camp education director had to be a combination of adroit diplomat and skillful scrounge, talents that would be much in demand when the war broke out a few years later. According to that same Handbook each adviser received, "The camp adviser was to plan an educational program in association with his commanding officer, and develop it through such facilities as he could find in camp, or secure from libraries, universities, government agencies, and 'nearby educational institutions.'"[57] He would have an assistant, chosen by him from among the recruits.[58] Although the Handbook did not specify the educational budget, he would have a total of five dollars per month to spend on all educational programming. Again drawing on Dr. Smith's recollections, "That was not $5 per man, but $5 for the 200 men."[59]

As it turned out, one of the advantages of the organizational matrix of the typical CCC camp was that the educational adviser could often find someone from among several federal departments who would indeed be cooperative. In Leo Smith's case, it was the camp superintendent from the Department of the Interior.

> Fortunately, I had a great D. I. Superintendent. He was an Irishman from South Boston, Patrick Joseph O'Malley, (who) had grown up on the streets of "Southie" and knew his way around with his foremen and the enrollees. He gave me great help, and was always willing to bend the regulations enough to help our program.[60]

And Leo Smith found other varieties of assistance for his program, in a variety of settings, more often in the surrounding area than in the camp itself:

> An occasional instructor could be obtained from the men who were working for the Department of Interior, or Department of Agriculture. These men supervised the enrollees during the day on the work projects and occasionally would be willing to teach one night a week for a couple of hours. Most had had no training in education, or teaching, but some did a very creditable job. They did not receive any extra pay for this night teaching.
>
> In our camp I made contact with the WPA (Works Projects Administration) in Worcester, Mass., and obtained a math instructor, and two craft instructors. In addition, I made contact with Clark University in Worcester, and obtained two students--one of whom taught Photography, and one taught Current Events.

> I also made contact with the principal of the Worcester Trade School and got permission to send 15 boys over one night per week for 3 hours to take Machine Shop. As this was a round trip of about 40 miles, and had to be made in one of the D. I. trucks, a responsible adult had to be sent along. Guess who??? Me. This did turn out, however, to be one of the best courses offered. We carefully selected the boys to go, and rounded them up to see that they attended.
>
> Occasionally the camp doctor would teach a course in First Aid. Likewise, at times one of the two Army officers on duty would teach a course, but not very often as everyone was afraid that the CCC might turn into a military movement.
>
> In brief, instructors were obtained from wherever you could get them. The Camp Educational Adviser had no money to pay for any of this, so you just prevailed on any likely soul that you could.
>
> The (educational) materials were "promoted" in a variety of ways. That is, if possible you got the D. I. to furnish lumber, trucks, and heavy equipment (for teaching truck drivers, bull dozer operation, etc.). I made friends with the Superintendent of Schools in Westboro and he gave us old math books, some desks and miscellaneous material they were no longer using.[61]

Frank Ernest Hill in 1935 wrote a book describing the educational program of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The School in the Camps[62] makes delightful reading for anyone interested in alternative educational models. Written at a time when the educational program itself was less than two years old (they really began functioning in the spring of 1934), it is a largely positive though not unrealistic account. We learn in it of some of the educational residue of an array of educators who found new employment as educational advisers or regional directors. Many held master's degrees and some doctorates; a bachelor's degree ("or its equivalent" in experience) was a requirement.[63] Since there was no "common curriculum," and since the educational program differed greatly from one camp to another, consistent with the needs identified or accepted by the enrollees of any particular camp, it is especially useful to read Hill's views on how the successful educational adviser ought, or ought not, to behave:

> Many teachers have gone into the camps and shown a genius for adaptation. They have used what the schools gave them that was useful, and forgotten much that was not. . . . But many teachers have failed. They have

> often been upset by the simple living conditions and have been bewildered by the lack of accustomed facilities. Perhaps they have been even more confused by the reversal of the usual roles of pupil and teacher. For while a camp adviser can exert a great influence over the enrollees, that is a power he must win in man-to-man contact; he is on trial as much as his students, or more. The habit of authority and the tendency to patronize are as dangerous as diseases to his success. He cannot plan a program based on his conception of the men's needs unless he can harmonize it with their own desires. He cannot hold men in his classes if he cannot hold their interest. As a result, if he does not possess the personality to win the confidence of the men, if he lacks the tact and force to deal with the officers and the technical staff, if he cannot adapt camp resources to the enrollee's "needs and wishes," if he is without the ingenuity, courage, and persistence to overcome a sea of miscellaneous problems other than these, he is foredoomed to failure.[64]

Hill also records a conversation with a corps area leader who told him of two men from remarkably similar backgrounds who proved remarkably dissimilar in their efforts to don the challenging roles as educational advisers in the camps:

> "One was turned into the best adviser I have," he declared. "He had been the president of a small college; this was a fearful come-down for him. But did he mourn for his dignity? Not for a minute. He threw himself whole-heartedly into the work; he won the love of his men and the cooperation of every officer and technical man in the camp. He put his really great knowledge to work in a practical way. It was the perfect example of a big man doing a great job in a small place.
>
> "The other man has apparently never forgotten his past. He seems to think his job is too small for him. I get complaints from his officers that he is condescending, that he hasn't put his heart into his work. I have about decided that I'll have to let him go."[65]

These words sound remarkably like those of evening college deans and adult education directors elsewhere, from before that date to this. Regardless of the structure of the curriculum, the successful teacher of adults is always as much on trial as are the students, the "habit of authority and the tendency to patronize" are

as dangerous now as then, and as often warned against by adult education administrators. The "Schools in the Camps" seem to have accepted the principles of andragogy seriously, and practiced them effectively.

The point of these observations, of course, is that the educational style (and even the definition of the learning content) in CCC camps was the style we tend to equate with successful adult education. It observes those principles that all adult educators are expected (whether taught them or not) to acquire, hopefully before their first experiences with real live adult students: that students are indeed adults and have come, as Warren Ziegler likes to put it,[66] to their full humanity long before they entered into adult studenthood in any particular adult education setting; that they are capable of full participation as adults in the learning setting, which may often mean their leading some part of the learning experience; that the ideal role of the successful teacher of adults may be that of scholar or mentor, but it had also better partake heavily of being facilitator, colleague, perhaps even friend.

Thus, the educational program of the CCC camps was, regardless of the age range of enrollees and the dominance of youthful participants, an adult education experience by both design and method.

And students responded to the program with considerable protection and pride. We consider only three of dozens of evaluative observations made, and frequently published, in any one of a number of camp newsletters and at least one national weekly newspaper, Happy Days.

> The CCC is what a fellow makes it. I am thankful that I belong to a government that has a president like Franklin D. Roosevelt who made possible such an organization for the boys who were on the down and out.
>
> Enrollee Kenneth Barnette[67]

One enrollee decided to cast his contribution in the manner of a self-assessment.

> AN INVENTORY OF CHARACTER
>
> As I take stock and inventory of myself at the close of this year, I am jotting down what I consider bricks in a solid foundation for carrying on in future life.

After two years in the Civilian Conservation Corps, I have learned to take care of my body.

I have learned how to cooperate and get along with my fellow man.

I have learned how to think.

I have learned patience, obedience, and attention to duty.

I have learned to know and love mother nature, the trees, the flowers and all living things in the forests.

Above all I have learned to obey orders of those in constituted authority, a lesson; if learned and practiced by all of us, would make us better citizens, true Americans, and good husbands and fathers.

I thank my government.

Enrollee Victor Pesek[68]
Lewiston, Idaho

One is led to wonder, by Enrollee Pesek's expression of devotion to "constituted authority," whether his learnings might not make him, in a slightly different environment, equally committed as an SS officer or technician in a Nazi Concentration Camp. Indeed, one of the haunting questions to us as we look back on the extraordinary success of the CCC camps centers on just what did distinguish them from Hitler's work camps of the German Labor Service. Perhaps we confuse impassioned rhetoric for more innocent reality.

First of all, it is quite appropriate that these writers should have enormous appreciation for the structured experience which accepted them as unemployed, primarily inner city youth and transformed them, typically within six months to two years' time, into young men of competence, of values; which took undernourished and underconfident youths and turned them into robust, confident, frequently employable men.

Secondly, except for the facts that the leaders of the camps were military officers and the camps themselves often resembled small army barracks, all resemblance to the military was assiduously avoided, because in large part, such resemblance was feared by those who watched growing militarism abroad. One veteran of World War I, 45 years old, while describing both his son's and his own personal victories as members of the CCC, also corrects the charge that the "CCC is the army."

. . . "What has the CCC done for me?" I was out of work, and at my age, no prospects of getting any, although

I am a graduate engineer of twenty years' experience. Due to insufficient food and worry, I was run down and not at all well. The only way I got in at all was that I was an experienced army clerk and such men were badly needed. I have, through the influence of rest, good food, and lack of worry over my family's needs, gained weight, regained my health, and am back to the physical condition of 1917. A few weeks ago I had the camp surgeon examine me, and he told me I would have no trouble passing the army physical examination except for my teeth. And I am forty-five.

Some people say, "The CCC is the army." When pressed for their reasons, they say, "Army officers are in charge of the camps and the flag flies over them."

"Why are army officers in charge of camps?" This can best be answered by asking, "Who is better fitted for the task?" And the answer is, "No one." Army officers understand the housing, clothing, subsisting and multitudinous other problems of taking care of men in large groups, as no other class of men in any walk of life do. All honor to those unselfish men who, as officers in charge of the CCC camps, are giving their time to make us better men and keeping us free from the worries of existence outside, in this time of depression.

Propaganda says, "There is military training in the camps." Emphatically--from one who, as a sector clerk, sees all camps--there is not. There is not the slightest sign of any military activity in any camp, and never will be. I know, for I know what military drill is. All those who say there is drill in the camps would not know a CCC camp if they fell over one, and would not go near for fear that they would find out that their pet ideas are all wrong.

Thomas W. Scott[69]
Co. 1509, Zanesville, Ohio

Such writing reflects a fierce pride in the effectiveness and importance of the CCC, and apparently none were more proud of it than the enrollees themselves. It was an educational invention that worked.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

From even these accounts of adult education in the 1930's, we have gathered some notion of how pervasive and influential a force it was. Part and parcel of a larger social fabric, some of these activities--notably Cooperative Extension, and the Public Forums and the CCC Educational Programs--were direct efforts of the federal government to ameliorate conditions, and in some instances, to raise hopes and aspirations. Their successes have added to our leadership and literature ever since, as most of you know who are familiar with the writings of the catalogue of prolific authors we have considered briefly here.

Another consideration of importance is that of how filled with energy and elan the period seems to have been, especially for that band of professionals who began to think of themselves as adult educators during the decade. Their images of the work and the joy that suffused it should not go unnoticed--mentors and missionaries, yes, but also inventors and discoverers. Springing from an already rich history of adult learning in America, they polished and redesigned old models to yield the forum and a greatly expanded Cooperative Extension Service. But they also invented to new experimental models, including the not-yet-replicated adult education of the CCC Camps, and although we have not considered it here, an ample experiment in extension courses by radio.

Ironically, when the rest of the nation was struggling for its economic survival, adult education was frequently well-funded, and experimentation was encouraged by monies from a variety of sources, especially the Carnegie Corporation which gave generously to the American Association for Adult Education, and the federal government itself. As the early days of the Reagan administration seem already to have signalled, we will not see the like in the 1980's.

It was a time for participants and adult educators alike of child-like enthusiasm, of voyaging on new uncharted seas, and with an unquestionable belief in the capacity of adults to learn, and of other adults to help them on their journeys. It was a time of sufficient success and optimism to serve as inspiration for us all.

A Final Note on the Method

The three-tiered method described in the opening pages of this paper is one, I believe, that can serve to inform a variety of other

historical efforts. Clearly, there are risks attendant upon valuing reminiscence and anecdote on the same scale with historical accounts of the time. But the risks are well worth taking. And the discovery for us, I believe, is not dissimilar from the "sincere endeavor" of the novelist described so long ago by Joseph Conrad:

> My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel--it is, before all, to make you <u>see</u>. That--and no more, and it is everything.[70]

I hope these stories have served to illumine, to help us all to see. My fondest hope is that others will pursue the method for a massive enlargement of our collective vision.

FOOTNOTES

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[20]Ibid., p. 42.

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[22]Ibid., Table VI, p. 98.

[23]Ibid., p. 104.

[24]Ibid., Table XIII, p. 112.

[25]Ibid., Table XV, p. 114.

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[56]Letter from Dr. Leo F. Smith, Professor Emeritus and retired Vice President for Academic Affairs of the Rochester Institute of Technology, September 5, 1975.

[57]Hill, op. cit., 13.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Leo F. Smith letter, September 5, 1975.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Hill, op. cit.

[63]Ibid., p. 19.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[66]Warren Ziegler is wont to articulate this portrait of the adult learner; he did it especially well at the Social Philosophy Luncheon of the Annual Conference of the Adult Education Association of the United States of America in Salt Lake City, Utah, November, 1975.

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