



The View From Listening Point

NEWSLETTER *of the* Listening Point Foundation, Inc.

VOLUME XI, NUMBER 2 ~ FALL 2009

www.listeningpointfoundation.org

Remembering Elizabeth Uhrenholdt Olson



By Kevin Proescholdt

Readers of Sigurd Olson's books may not have learned much about Sig's wife, Elizabeth. He rarely mentioned her in his books. Yet her importance in Sig's life and her influence on the writer Sig became cannot be overstated.

And she was much more than just "the woman behind the man." Elizabeth was charming and delightful and a person in her own right.

This issue of the newsletter delves into who Elizabeth Uhrenholdt Olson was, including a warm look at Elizabeth by David Backes, and reminiscences from family members. This first piece (below) is an excerpt from an article that Sig wrote in 1949, describing an experience on a canoe trip that he and Elizabeth had taken. This excerpt provided the entry into a conservation article about the history of the area and the need for the presidential executive order establishing an airspace reservation over the canoe country, an action that President Truman ultimately took in December of 1949. And it is one of only a few articles in which Sig wrote about Elizabeth. ●

Swift as the Wild Goose Flies

By Sigurd Olson

published in *National Parks Magazine*, (Oct-Dec. 1949)

For almost a year, I had been away from the canoe country of the Minnesota-Ontario border, a year in which I had seen many parts of the United States and Canada. But now I was home again and my old canoe was slipping along the darkened shores of a lake I had known well in the past. It was calm. There was a full moon. The loons were calling, and overhead was a whisper of wings that told of coming fall.

Elizabeth was in the bow.

"There's no place on earth quite like this country," I said, "no place with quite this combination of water and forests and islands and rocks, no place where the feeling of wilderness is quite the same as here."

She laughed. "You've just been homesick," she said.

Then we heard the singing, a faint rhythmical chant from far up the lake. We stopped paddling and awaited in the deep shadows of the shore. Far up along the path of the moonlight, we caught the flash of paddles and then three canoes were

bearing swiftly toward us. As they approached, the chant became true and clear, boyish voices singing a round, the kind of song the voyageurs of old used to sing as they swung their paddles down these same waterways.

Our paddles gleaming bright,

Flashing like silver,

Swift as the wild goose flies,

Dip - Dip - and Swing -

The paddles flashed in rhythm and the three canoes moved as one. In the bright moonlight, the effect was startling. Ghost-like, the canoes seemed to float across the water above their reflections, and the sparkling waves around them. In a moment they were past. The song grew fainter, but the rhythm and the flashing blades remained long after the words were lost.

Entranced, we sat there in the darkness of the shore watching until the last silvery flash had been swallowed by the

Continued on page 4

Simplicity in All Things

"Simplicity in all things is one of the secrets of wilderness."
—Sigurd F. Olson, *Reflections from the North Country*



courtesy Tim Rudnicki

Do you ever have one of those days when a supposedly useful tool, like a computer, a word processing program or some other electronic gadget, seems to rob you of time as you try to make it work? The computer is a bit more complicated than a mechanical typewriter, but, for the most part, it helps many of us do the essential work. Olson, however, reminds us in some situations complexity "robs us of time and energy by making life so involved with the unessential, the real things are forgotten and never seen."

Olson has a way of challenging our way of thinking and how we view life. At the time he wrote *Reflections from the North Country*, the United States was working through some difficult energy issues that have yet to be fully resolved. Olson observed that they were in a "crunch" period, but their quality of life was high even though they reduced energy usage and had forgone things thought to be essential. The chapter on "Simplicity" also reminds us that it is through "the simplicities of wilderness travel" that we come to know what we are missing and can better view the "familiar world" to get some perspective on life.

Wilderness does give us the necessary food for the soul and helps to protect our collective well-being. For those times when a trip into the wilderness is not feasible, we can get a vicarious wilderness experience by reading Sigurd Olson. Until I can make my next trip into the wilderness, or even hike in a local park, just reading the chapter on Simplicity helps me put things in perspective, to focus on the real things, the essential.

At the Listening Point Foundation, thanks to your continued support, we work everyday to focus on the real things that matter and to ensure they are not forgotten. For example, in this issue of "The View From Listening Point," we bring to the forefront the quiet role that Elizabeth Olson played in helping her spouse craft his many works to protect and help us understand the meaning of wilderness. Over the coming months, we will be refining the Listening Point Foundation wilderness education and outreach projects in keeping with Sigurd Olson's legacy of education. And we will be working to repair and maintain Listening Point.

By working together, we can indeed ensure the real things are remembered and seen by current and future generations. We hope you enjoy this issue of our newsletter and find some nugget of information or inspiration to brighten your day. Thank you for your interest in the work of the Listening Point Foundation.

I look forward to hearing from you via an e-mail message, letter or telephone call. Thank you for your continued involvement in the work of Listening Point Foundation. ●

—Tim Rudnicki

You may reach Tim by telephone at 952-915-1505
or by e-mail at tjrudnicki@earthlink.net

Inside

From the Chairman	2
Upcoming Events	2
This and That	3
Final Thoughts of the Point	3
Auntie Lib	4
Elizabeth Remembered	5
The Bow Paddle	5
Guest Pen	6
Letters from Sig	8
Donors	10
Gift Shop	11

Upcoming Events

2009

- **Early November:** fall newsletter
- **Late November:** 2009 annual appeal

2010

- **January 23:** Board of Directors meeting, Audubon Center, Sandstone, Minn.
- **April 10:** annual spring luncheon, Town & Country Club, St. Paul, Minn.
- **May:** Spring newsletter
- **Mid-May:** Board of Directors meeting, Sig's cabin, Ely, Minn.
- **Summer:** guided visits to the Point. Call 218-365-7890 to arrange a visit.
- **July 23–25:** Blueberry Art Festival, Ely, Minn.—LPF outreach/information booth
- **Late summer:** Wine & Cheese gathering, Ely, Minn.—date to be determined
- **Mid-October:** Board of Directors meeting, Audubon Center, Sandstone, Minn.

This and That...

- **Visits to the Point** this past summer were up from last year, numbering close to 400 individuals. Visitors included Olson family members, three photographers, several writers, student groups, and others. One writer in particular, Kristin J. Eggerling, is working on a children's book about Sig. We'll keep you posted. (photo sent)
- **Carl-Lars Engen**, 8th grader from the Twin Cities who participated in the National History Day program, placed 8th in the country with his DVD "More Than Words" about Sigurd Olson. Congratulations Carl-Lars!
- **Wine and Cheese and Sig Olson:** A group of interested folks got together on a Sunday afternoon in July, on Burntside Lake. Music by Doug Wood set the tone. Mark Peterson welcomed everyone and Development Chair Dick Struck shared LPF's mission and goals. A number of those attending were new to Sig and his legacy and the work of the Foundation.
- **Writings by Sig** are included in a new book entitled *Our Neck of the Woods, Exploring Minnesota's Wild Places*, by Daniel J. Philippon. The book describes outdoor experiences that range from natural history observations to adventurous tales of coming-of-age camping and hunting trips. Sig and Paul Grochow, Bill Holm, Laurie Allman are among the writers represented.
- **Our apologies:** the profile piece honoring Sigurd Thorne Olson (Sig's son) in the spring issue of this newsletter was written and illustrated jointly by Greg Olson and Robert T. Olson (Sig Jr's sons) as well as by Sig Jr's brother, Robert K. Olson. We wish to correct the omission. ●

Final Thoughts About Listening Point

By Travis Wuori

Shortly after beginning my summer work-study experience, I found out that I was going to have the chance to lead tours at Sig's cherished Listening Point. At that time all I knew of Sigurd Olson was that he used to be the dean of the Ely Junior College. I was unaware of the impact he had made in the field of wilderness preservation, in the art of nature writing, and as an inspiration to people in general. After doing some studying I came to realize why some people looked at him as a wilderness guru and savior.

Growing up on the Iron Range in the north woods, I always considered myself in tune with nature. After reading *Listening Point* and David Backes's biography *A Wilderness Within*, I realized I hadn't even scraped the bottom of the barrel. Sig's book gave me a deeper appreciation for everything a person could find in nature. Wind blowing through the pines, the drumming of a ruffed grouse, and glaciated rocks all seemed to have more beauty and significance than they did before. Forests now spring alive



Travis Wuori at the Writing Shack

grounds. Those not so familiar with Sig and his work walked away from the tour appreciating nature and wild places even more than they did before. It was pleasing to see the ecstatic reactions from people who were so excited to finally see the famous Point, inside the cabin, and the writing shack. Some folks were on their second and third tours of Listening Point.

I feel honored that I had the chance to lead these tours and to be a part of the Listening Point legacy, but most of all I feel blessed that I have learned so much about Sigurd Olson and his wilderness theology. ●

Leave a Legacy

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

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

with diversity where subtle habitats and organisms used to be overlooked.

After reading these two books I immediately picked up *The Singing Wilderness*, and became another statistic influenced by Sig's wilderness theology.

By bringing people out to Listening Point, I have had a wonderful opportunity to see first-hand the impact Sigurd has had on peoples' lives. People who held his wise, poetic words so close to their hearts were always touched to be on Sig's hallowed

ELIZABETH OLSON REMEMBERED

Memories of “Auntie Lib”

Home and children were the heart and soul of Elizabeth (Uhrenholdt) Olson. She was born and grew up in a large, closely-knit family of eight boys and girls with plenty of young friends brought together in the work and play of pioneer life in Northwest Wisconsin. She taught school in the little country school across the road. Soon she became “Auntie Lib” to a host of nephews and nieces from both the Olson and Uhrenholdt families including becoming a mother and grandmother to boot.

After Elizabeth relocated to Ely, her home attracted a new generation of young people eager to meet and talk to Sig. Elizabeth was again in her element. She loved them and cosseted them with cookies, coffee, conversation, and limitless hospitality and affection. Sig was the star. No doubt about that. He was the authority they came to hear. But Auntie Lib brought what open hospitality, endless patience, and what hours of quiet talk can mean to warming hearts, opening minds, cementing alliances, and supporting the cause.

It is for this she is warmly remembered through the years. However, near the end of her life she made an interesting confession to me. I quote:

“I have lived my whole life up there in the northwoods and given my life to my husband and sons. But deep in my heart is my

love for my old family home. Each tree, each building, each room in the old house is precious to me. And now in the evening of my life, those days become once again more real and more precious than anything I have known since.”

—Robert K. Olson

Elizabeth’s three nieces, Jeanne King, Marjorie Sanzi and Christine Tschudy, all say “Auntie Lib” was a most gracious “lady.” They remember her as a warm, happy and optimistic person. She was an extraordinary hostess, welcoming Uncle Sig’s colleagues, friends, family and the many who took inspiration from meeting with Sigurd Olson. They remembered she always served cookies and coffee. Auntie Lib would also shield Uncle Sig from interruption when he was writing.

Auntie Lib was very knowledgeable about the ways of the wilderness and its importance to the balance and well-being of life, but she never put herself in the limelight. She worked behind the scenes using her educational training to help edit the writings of Sigurd. She was never one to take credit for her many forms of support.

—By Sue Sanzi Schaedel,
Elizabeth’s great-niece

Wild Goose (continued from page 1)

dusk. The loons called once more and then we were alone.

“Swift as the wild goose flies,” said Elizabeth. “Youth, romance, and adventure, the silence of canoes slipping along in the moonlight, the swish of paddles, the joy of free movement, singing, young men from all over the continent discovering the meaning of solitude and wilderness companionship.”

I could see the hundreds of such parties scattered through the labyrinth of lakes and rivers of the Rainy Lake watershed, the hundreds of thousands of such groups, who, if the area was preserved, would enjoy it in the future. At that moment, I realized more powerfully than ever before that the long battle to save the Quetico-Superior country was worth while....

Our canoe was slipping through the moonlight toward the head of the lake. Again we heard the faint music of the paddling song. The three canoes were returning to their camp. This time, we met them out in the open. Stripped to the waist, the bright moonlight shown on bronzed young bodies, lean and hard from days of portaging and paddling down the waterways.

The singing stopped as they approached, but the old rhythm did not change.

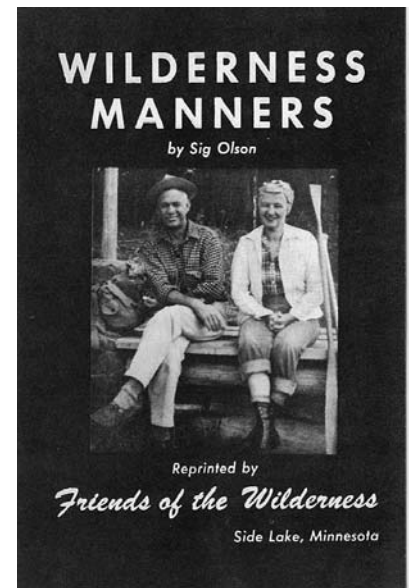
Flashing like silver,

Swift as the wild goose flies,

Dip – dip – and swing –

They waved and we waved back, then sat and watched them moving swiftly off into the moonlight. Again they were swallowed by the darkness and distance.

There we knew was the answer to the devotion of all those who had fought for the Quetico-Superior. There was the hope, there was the reason for its preservation—so that young men and women would always have the opportunity of enjoying this wilderness of lakes and rivers—so that their songs could always ring down its moonlit waterways—their laughter echo from its rocky shores. This must always be a land for voyageurs where the youth of America might know again the thrill of wilderness. There was a sacred heritage. ●



Elizabeth Remembered

By Marty Wick

Elizabeth and Sig Olson were our Ely parents and grandparents to our daughter, Karyn. They were our mentors and friends as well. After our wedding in 1975, I moved to Ely. I left a career I loved, friends and family to spend my life in a community where I knew no one except my husband.

Chuck introduced me to his lifelong friends, Sig and Elizabeth; Elizabeth especially gathered me in with friendship and gracious hospitality. There were 40 + years in age between us, but it never mattered. We shared many meals together back and forth. Elizabeth's favorite was a good hamburger. She would always drop everything if I called to say we were having hamburgers. I knew I could stop by her home anytime for a cup of tea and her famous cookies.

Elizabeth was very well read and up on current affairs. She would discuss these issues with Chuck, but when I was there, we talked about her growing up years and her family in Wisconsin. We talked about her old boy friends, how she met Sig, and her struggles to adapt to a new life in Ely.

The day Sig died was a day I will never forget. I stayed with her that night and we talked the whole night, mostly about her life with Sig. We talked about all the people that would stop by to see Sig, individuals who had read his books, Boy Scout groups, YMCA camps and church youth groups all heading out to his beloved wilderness. I can still see him sitting in a chair, white hair lit up by the sun and a group of young men sitting at his feet listening intently. Elizabeth made the comment that she would miss the visitors so much now that Sig was gone. No one would come by just to see her. I couldn't believe what I was hearing and told her so.

After Sig's death, there were always cars in the driveway. She continued to serve coffee and cookies to a wide variety of visitors. She became a mentor to many young women in the community, who would drop by and often talk about their lives, joys and difficulties. We all loved her for her own great qualities, not because she was Sig's wife. She was a wonderful role model for growing older graciously. I miss her so much and am blessed to live in her home. ●

—Marty Wick, longtime friend of Elizabeth and Sig,
lives in the Olson family home in Ely.



Elizabeth at Listening Point on her 73rd birthday: Nov. 13, 1970

The Bow Paddle

By David Backes

When Elizabeth Uhrenholdt received her marriage proposal from Sigurd Olson, it came with a caveat: Sig wanted her to realize that he would be spending a lot of time outdoors, and that he couldn't be happy if he had to give that up. She said okay, and soon found out he meant it. Their honeymoon in August 1921 was a three-week canoe trip, and Sig had her paddling so long and hard that after two days she got physically ill and had to rest up for a couple of days before she could continue. Later on, Elizabeth became quite frightened on a portage when they saw a sign that said "Wild Man, last seen east just across the portage."

That honeymoon trip can be seen as a metaphor for their entire 60 years of marriage. First, Sig did spend a lot of time outdoors. That fall, on her 24th birthday, Sig was out deer hunting and returned home hours late. Elizabeth was worried and hurt, but understood once he told her he had wounded a deer and felt he had to track it until he could put it out of its misery.



Nevertheless, his habit of being in the woods every weekend so bothered a neighbor that she said to Elizabeth, "You've got to tame that Sig."

Which leads to the next point of the honeymoon metaphor. That Wild Man on the portage? Elizabeth Olson knew who he was. He was paddling her canoe, and she had married him. No wonder she was frightened!

But it wasn't the outdoors that made him wild. It wasn't anything outside at all. It was what was inside. Sig was restless, struggling to figure out what he was supposed to do in life, feeling strongly that he had something to contribute to the wider world, and unable to be content until he figured out what it was and did it. Elizabeth didn't understand that. She was settled, and was quite content with a simple, normal life filled with family and friends.

On their honeymoon, Sig soon found out that Elizabeth could not keep up with him. Long before he wanted to stop for the

Continued on page 9

Guest Pen

By Justin Singleton

Sig's Legacy Lives On

"We are still adventurers of the wilderness and must answer the call in order to keep our equilibrium. Once we lose our touch with the wild and we lose our perspective; too long a time on the pavements and we starve for the smell and touch of virile earth."

—Sigurd Olson, *Search for the Wild*

The writings and wilderness philosophy of Sigurd Olson have come to mean much to me over the past three years. I was first introduced to the legacy of Sig in the summer of 2006 while working as an interpreter (canoe guide) at the Boy Scout's Northern Tier National High Adventure Base located on Moose Lake. That summer, while spending my time paddling and camping on the beautiful lakes of the Quetico-Superior, I heard the name Sigurd Olson mentioned many times. All I knew of Sig at that point was that he had played a major role in saving the canoe country. Through frequent visits to Ely and the surrounding areas, I became aware that Sig was somewhat of a legend in the canoe country.

I enjoyed my experiences in the Quetico-Superior greatly. This may be due to the fact that I have always been content and happy while living in and near the primitive wilderness, much more so than in busy cities and towns. I came back for another summer in 2007 and enjoyed traveling to many different lakes that were new to me: Kawnipi, Sturgeon, Darkwater and Argo. During these two summers I came to know the ways of the canoe country intimately. I experienced the beauty and stillness of a multicolored sunset looking west from Kings Point on Basswood Lake. I paddled with all of my strength against a windy gale heading north on 15-mile-long Lake Agnes. I watched and felt the power and ferocity of countless summer thunderstorms that came up on a moments notice. I witnessed a moose swimming across Argo Lake at twilight and a black bear and her two cubs contentedly munching blueberries high on a cliff on Lake Saganaga. I struggled across many long and rocky portages, always curious to know what new mysteries the next lake would bring. The canoe country held many wonderful memories for me and I was sad to leave it.

It was not until after the summer, back home in Texas, that I really began to discover Sig and his writings. A friend of mine, who had worked at the Boy Scout canoe base with me, handed me

a copy of *Reflections from the North Country* and said "You need to read this." So that is what I did. In fact, I could not put the book down. I was amazed at the depth of Sig's thoughts and all that he said made great sense to me. I could personally relate to his descriptions and insights, as I had been to the canoe country and experienced the same sights, sounds and stirrings. His writing provoked strong senses within me. I almost felt as though I were back in the Quetico-Superior, canoeing along the shoreline and soaking in the sights and sounds once more.

After reading *Reflections*, I passed it along to my father and strongly encouraged him to read it. Sig affected him as well. My father bought at least a dozen copies and presented them as special gifts to close friends. Soon, copies of all Sig's major books became part of my personal library. I was even able to find two volumes edited by Mike Link titled *The Collective Works of Sigurd F. Olson*, which included many published and unpublished magazine articles from his early years. All of his writings gave me a sense of oneness with nature and awakened memories of my own

time spent in the great canoe country of the North. I knew that Sig had done what no one else could; he had captured the spirit of the canoe country in words that thousands of people could personally identify with and relate to.

As time went by, I felt a strong need to visit the canoe country again. As we say at the Northern Tier canoe base: the Northwoods bug had bitten me and it was starting to itch. I began to plan a canoe trip for the summer of 2009 that would include several members of my family: my father, grandfather, great uncle, my father's first cousin and a close friend of mine (the same friend that gave me my first Olson book). We would spend six days in Quetico Provincial Park, taking a route to Lake Agnes. It would be my grandfather's first canoe experience and my father's second.

As a young 14-year-old in 1999, I, along with my brother (12 at the time) and father took a canoe trip through the Boy Scout canoe base in Bissett, Manitoba. This trip, taken 10 years ago, infused the North Country in my blood. It laid the groundwork for the strong feelings that would once again bring me North many years later. Having both my father and grandfather on the trip promised to make this excursion extra special. I greatly wanted to visit Listening Point as well, during our journey north, to see the place that had meant so much to Sig.



Justin Singleton relaxing at the cabin on Listening Point

Continued on next page

The Legacy Lives On (continued)

As the time for our trip drew near, I contacted Alanna Johnson from the Listening Point Foundation and she agreed to meet us in Ely and take us to see the Point. Beginning the long journey from Texas, I felt my excitement growing the further north I went. We finally arrived in Ely, and all I could think about was Listening Point and the deep insights that awaited me there. Alanna met us in Ely on Sunday morning, June 28, and we followed her out of town towards Burntside Lake. On arriving at the entrance, where the dirt road begins, we discovered a fallen tree over our path. We parked our cars, and began to walk along the dirt road towards the Point. I recalled the controversy that Sig had within himself as this road was being built, how he could hardly stand watching the trees and boulders being pushed out of the way by heavy machinery like so much refuse. I know this was difficult for him, but to me the road displayed primitive qualities and did not detract from the wildness of the property.

After Alanna showed us the marker stating that Listening Point had been added to the National Register of Historic Places, we walked down the trail and came to the sauna. I remembered reading of the peace and relaxation that it had provided for Sig many times throughout his life, the ancient tradition of its use deepening these sensations. We then walked to the wooden dock, designed by Sig himself, near the small sandy beach. I could almost picture Sig lying down on the dock at dusk, having just come from the sauna, listening to the soothing sound of the water lapping against the shore just beneath him and soaking it all up. Alanna then led us along the narrow trail to the cabin and the Point. I was impressed by the construction of the small cabin, how simple it was and yet how sturdy, able to withstand the relentless weather of many years without losing strength and quality. It was special to see Sig's paddles, canoe, books and other items inside the cabin. All of these objects emitted a powerful and unseen force, to me the essence of his spirit.

Walking onto the Point, I looked out over Burntside Lake and noticed a few of the islands that Sig mentions in his writing. By the water's edge I was able to see the glacial striations in the rock, just as he had described them. I thought about how important this little piece of land was to Sig. Here he had found equilibrium and solitude, here the deep and meaningful contemplation of thoughts and ideas. I thought of my own Listening Point, far to the south, on an oak and cedar covered ranch in the hill country of Central Texas. My grandparents live there, and it is where my father was



raised. It means much the same to me as this point did to Sig; it is a place close to home that I can flee to when the pressure of city dwelling becomes overbearing. It is where I can be close to nature and the land, where I restore my equilibrium. As we walked back toward our cars, I felt a common bond with Sig: how essential and worthwhile it is to have a wilderness refuge like this, giving us perspective in our busy lives.

We traveled back to Ely, making a stop at Sig and Elizabeth's house in town to see his small writing shack. This was very memorable to me, to see where he had toiled over his writing for long periods of time. The experience of witnessing first hand what I had read about in his books was very fulfilling. I felt in some small way a part of his legacy, and was happy to have known a part of his thoughts and experiences.

The following day, my group and I began our canoe trip. I wanted to somehow incorporate Sig's writings to direct all of our thoughts towards a wilderness mindset and add to the overall enjoyment and contentment of the trip. My father and I selected one chapter to read around the campfire each night. A few of the chapters we read included: "The Great Silences," "Timelessness," and "Simplicity" from *Reflections* and "The Way of a Canoe" from *The Singing Wilderness*. This was very successful, and I believe that it greatly helped to increase each individual's wilderness experience.

We had a great time on our trip. We battled wind, waves and rain for several days, and just as Sig felt, it added to the joy and brotherhood of our adventure. Each one of us came away refreshed and with many wonderful memories, memories that will be cherished for the rest of our lives. I owe a great deal to Sig for directing our minds in ways that allowed for the utmost absorption and contemplation of the wild places we encountered.

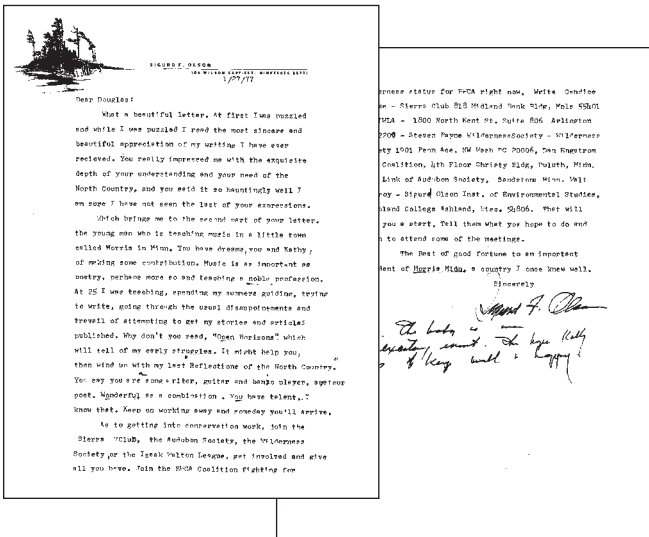
I am also grateful that he loved and fought for wilderness and the canoe country, making it possible today for us to enjoy its beauty and solitude. He was able to capture the physical and spiritual essence of the canoe country in his writing, which today gives us a profound gratification and harmony in our wilderness travels. I am indebted to him for giving many people, myself included, a view of nature and the wilderness which opens our eyes to possibilities and increases the depths of our thoughts. I will always read his words when the burden of city life becomes too overpowering and I need a dose of nature and wild places. I know that my days in the wilds will be more meaningful and fruitful seen through the perspective of his life and insights. ●

Letters from Sig

Sig was known for his personal and quick response to letters he received from people all over the country. Often times people tell us how those letters changed their lives, were an inspiration, helped them make a decision and on and on.

The letter printed here is shared by LPF Board Member Douglas Wood, who at age 25 wrote to Sig looking for some direction in life.

If you have a letter from Sig that you want to share, please let us know. Call us at (218) 365-7890, or e-mail info@listeningpointfoundation.org.



1/27/77

Dear Douglas,

What a beautiful letter. At first I was puzzled and while I was puzzled I read the most sincere and beautiful appreciation of my writing I have ever received. You really impressed me with the exquisite depth of your understanding and your need of the North Country, and you said it so hauntingly well I am sure I have not seen the last of your expressions.

Which brings me to the second part of your letter. The young man who is teaching music in a little town called Morris in Minn. You have dreams, you and Kathy, of making some contribution. Music is as important as poetry, perhaps more so and teaching a noble profession. At 25 I was teaching, spending my summers guiding, trying to write, going through the usual disappointments and travail of attempting to get my stories and articles published. Why don't you read, "Open Horizons" which will tell of my early struggles. It might help you, then wind up with my last "Reflections of the North Country." You say you are a song writer, guitar and banjo player, amateur poet. Wonderful as a combination. You have talent, I know that. Keep on working away and someday you'll arrive.

As to getting into conservation work, join the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, the Wilderness Society, or the Izaak Walton League, get involved and give all you have. Join the BWCA Coalition fighting for wilderness status for BWCA right now. Write Candice Luecke - Sierra Club 818 Midland Bank Bldg, Mpls 55401 The IWLA - 1800 North Kent St Suite 806 Arlington Va22209 - Steven Payne Wilderness Society - Wilderness Society 1901 Penn Ave. NW Wash DC 20006, Dan Engstrom BWCA Coalition, 4th Floor Christy Bldg, Duluth, Minn. Link of Audubon Society, Sandstone Minn. 55101 - Sigurd Olson Inst. of Environmental Studies, Northland College Ashland, Wisc. 54806. That will give you a start. Tell them what you hope to do and to attend some of the meetings.

The Best of good fortune to an important resident of Morris Minn, a country I once knew well.

Sincerely,
Sigurd F. Olson

PS: The baby is an exciting event. We hope Kathy is keeping well and happy.

Listening Point Foundation Contribution Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

E-mail _____

My contribution is in (select one) honor/memory of:

CONTRIBUTION AMOUNT

- \$25 \$250
- \$50 \$500
- \$100 (other) _____

Please send your check payable to
Listening Point Foundation to:

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

Listening Point Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization; your gift is tax deductible as provided for by law.

The Bow Paddle (continued from page 3)

night, she would ask if their campsite was near. To keep her going, he would say that it was just around the next bend. When they got there, he would say they would go a little farther. In real life, too, Sig was in the stern, and Elizabeth in the bow. There were times when—especially in his long, hard struggles to become a writer, with all the frustration and near despair—Elizabeth must have felt mentally exhausted. Sig was paddling long and hard, and she had no idea where they were going or when they would reach their destination. He would tell her that he thought he had found his direction, but then it was just a matter of time before he decided there was another bend to go around.

That was the hard part of it. And for Elizabeth, who once told me that she never truly understood her husband, it must at times have been extremely difficult. And yet of course it wasn't always that way. During that first part of their honeymoon, when Sig drove her to exhaustion, there were still many moments of beauty and wonder and tenderness. Likewise for the first part of their marriage, despite Sig's inner struggles. For Elizabeth, both the honeymoon and her marriage ultimately became happy memories.

How? She kept paddling. She paddled through sun and storm, paddled when the next portage was in plain view and when it was lost in a blue and green maze of water and islands. She paddled when she was happy, and when she was sad or angry. Sig was in the stern of their marriage, and Elizabeth was in the bow. It wasn't just Sig's canoe, it was hers, too, and she more than pulled her share of the load. And over time, as Sig came to know his direction and follow it, she grew not only to enjoy being the "bow paddle," she became an expert at it.

As the bow paddle, Elizabeth provided tremendous stability and common sense to the man in the stern. She would give Sig feedback on his writing (not always well-received in the early years), encouraged him when she could, and challenged him when necessary. She made sure Sig looked his best, and tried to keep him healthy. And in their dealings with publishers and the public, Elizabeth, bow paddle in hand, excelled at keeping a sharp eye ahead for rocks that she knew Sig would never see. His eyes were always on the open horizon. Without Elizabeth, Sig would have sunk.

Her personality suited her for the role. Elizabeth was outgoing and made friends easily. She loved to meet new people,



and to entertain. Being in the bow, Elizabeth was the first to greet the many visitors who arrived at their door once Sig became famous. She would usher them into a three-season paneled porch with a picture window view of red pines and bird feeders, and introduce the guests to her husband. Then she would hurry off to

the kitchen for coffee and some of her freshly made lemon cake or sugar cookies. It didn't matter if you were a college student dressed in shorts and sandals or a senator or Supreme Court justice with an entourage in suit and tie, Elizabeth Olson was kind and gracious, genuinely interested in getting to know you, and a great listener. Being well-read, she could talk knowledgeably about current affairs and many other topics. She made so many friends as the wife of Sigurd F. Olson—friends young and old, from all walks of life. And she loved it. Loved the journey she

had taken with the man in the stern.

In the dozen years that she lived after Sig's death in 1982, the people didn't stop coming. She continued to make new friends, especially the young people coming up to Ely and dropping by because they had read *The Singing Wilderness* or *Reflections from the North Country* or one of the other books Sig wrote. In her 80s and even into her 90s, she would still greet them with a smile, invite them in for coffee and cookies, and listen to them talk about their dreams and their struggles. They would leave feeling graced, uplifted. She would encourage them when she could, and challenge them when necessary. She gave common-sense advice, pointing out some of the rocks she knew they might not see. For she knew that most of these young men and women coming to her door were restless, seeking something that might take them a long time to find. She didn't want them to take their eyes off the horizon. She wanted them to live their dreams, to find their calling and make the difference they were supposed to make. She knew how to nurture them, for she had been doing it for three-quarters of a century.

She wasn't just Mrs. Sigurd F. Olson. She hadn't been along just for the ride. She was Elizabeth Uhrenholdt Olson, a woman of spirit and grace, wisdom and intelligence—and a world-class bow paddle. ●

—David Backes is a LPF Advisory Board member and author of the award-winning biography of Sigurd Olson titled *A Wilderness Within*

DONORS

THE LISTENING POINT FOUNDATION WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS,
FOUNDATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR GENEROUS GIFTS:*

Andrew Aarons	Michael Gilgosh	Sam & Marian Nichols	John Topczewski
Mark Allsup	Howard Gitelson	Patrick North	Trust for Public Land
David Anderson	Kevin Grasley	Andrea & David Novak	Christine Tschudy
Christopher Angus	Rich & Mary Grayson	Jon & Cheryl Nygaard	Nancy Jo Tubbs
Donna Arbaugh	Jonathan Green & Joy Schochet	Oberholtzer Foundation	Russell Urhenholdt
Clint & Pepper Asche	Jim Greig	Carolyn Oliver	Soren Urhenholdt
David & Judy Backes	Paul Gustad	Peter Olsen	John & Donna Virr
Victor Baer	Karen Halbersleben & Jack Miller	Derek Olson	Derrick Voelka
Bruce & June Baker	Paul Hanten	Robert Olson	Jim Vogeli
Ernest Banttari	Fred Harnisch	Susan Olson	Albert Vogel
Tim & Vicki Barzen	Jim Hart	Dennis & Turid Ormseth	Erika Walker
Terry Beirl	Jon Helminiak	John & Charlotte Parish	Joe & Marilee Wandke
Rodney Bjorklund	Ray Helminiak	Mr & Mrs. Robert Rue Parsonage	William Wang
David Brand	Julie & John Highlen	Susan Pekarek	Tom & Lynette Ward
Stewart Brandborg	Doug Hill	Shirley Perkins	Beth Waterhouse
Jim & Judy Brandenburg	Phil & Jan Hogan	Mark & Erica Peterson	Richard & Audrey Webb
Brandenburg Gallery	Mary Holmes	Steve & Nancy Piragis	Kris Wegerson
Andy Breckenridge	Layton Humphrey	Pomeroy Foundation	David & Marjorie White
Todd & Stephanie Burras	Cornelia Hutt	Graham Prather	Chuck & Marty Wick
Mr & Mrs James Call	Steve & Ann Jay	Charles Prewitt	Wilderness Wind Resort
John & Cindy Cantrell	Russell & Mary Jeckel	Kevin Proescholdt	Guy Williams
William Carlson	Linda Jenny	Prudential Matching Gifts	Fred & Eleanor Winston
Don & Connie Chase	Paul Jensen	Charles Purdham	Doug & Kathy Wood
Ray Christensen	Don Johanning	Question Club	Bob, Marion & Linda Woodbury
Thomas Clarke	Larry & Jan Johnson	Ronney & Linda Ramsden	Fred Wooley
Margaret Cleveland	Preston Johnson	Joseph Raymond	Travis Wuori
David Cline	Richard Jorgensen	Joe Rejman	Judy Young
Lee Coleman	Jeffery Kaliebe	John Rejman	David & Margo Zentner
Carmie Cook	Frank Keeler	Richard Rice	
Jack & Sue Cornwell	Martin & Esther Kellogg	Judy Rich	
Anne Cowie	Charles A. Kelly	Don Richard	
Elizabeth Cowie	John & Teresa Kendrick	Bill & Lauren Ritchie	
Gerald & Lynn Cox	Scott Kenny	John Ritter	
Jill Crafton	Jeanne King	Eugene Roark	
Henry Crosby	Paula King	Win Rockwell & Binky Wood	
John Curry	Thomas King	David Rolloff	
Kelly Dahl	Al Knutson	Barbara Rom	
Dr. Sheldon & Carol Damberg	Victor Koivumaki	Becky Rom	
Blake & Sandy Davis	Ed & Judy Koska	Jeff & Sharon Rome	
Milton Davis	Carol Krutsch	Helen Rudie	
Thomas Dean	Christine Kuehn	Timothy Rudnicki	
Thomas Derrick	Roberta Kuehn	Clayton Russell	
Al DeRuyter & Linda Peterson	Gary & Judy Larson	Kurt Ruud	
Bill & Marian Dirks	Pat & Gary Larson	Marjorie Sanzi	
Dan & Nancy Young Dickson	Andy Lein	John Saxhaug	
Tom & Marjorie Dome	Mike & Marci Lein	Andy Schaedel & Sue Sanzi Schaedel	
Ruth Donhowe	Paul Lennartson	Daniel Schmiechen	
Elaine Dove	Dan Lindberg	Kathy Schwarz	
Dennis Dreher	Verna Lofberg	Leif Selkregg & Laura Myntti	
Laverne & Barbara Dunsmore	Betty Magnuson	John Sheehy	
Brian & Sharon Eckstein	Judy Mans	Don & Barbara Shelby	
Mr & Mrs. Larry Ehert	Malcolm & Wendy McLean	Justin Singleton	
Jennifer Ell	John & Karen McManus	Bill Sisson	
Gary & Betty Ellis	Eileen McMonigal	Roselyn Slepian	
Barbara Ellison	Bill & Sally Meadows	Nan & Gerry Snyder	
Jeff Evans	Larry Merrill	Jeff Soderstrom	
Harold Fenske	Anne Meyer	Kevin Solie	
Marion Forgatch	Robert Minish	Tim & Carolyn Sundquist	
John Foster	Jeff & Patsy Mogush	Allen Stolee	
Dennis Fontaine	David & Edith Moore	Jill Stolenberg	
Steve Foutty	Milo Moyano	Stewart Stone	
Shirley Fox	Paul & Heidi Mumm	Richard & Peggy Struck	
Dave & Sharon Fremming	Don & Rita Myntti	Darlene Swanson	
Karen & Wayne Friedrich	Diane Neby	Bill Tefft	
Friends of the Boundary Waters	Darby & Geri Nelson	Diane Tessari	
Hollis Fritts	David & Mary Ness	Elaine Thrune	
Mr & Mrs. William Fucik	Sharyl Nestor	Forest Tibbets	
James Gardner	Mark Neuzil		

IN HONOR AND MEMORY

Christopher Angus,
in honor of Clarence Petty

Don & Connie Chase,
in honor of Robert K. Olson

Susan Dorgeloh,
in honor of Alanna Dore, and in memory of my mother, Claire O. Dorgeloh

Fred Harnisch,
in memory of Sigurd T. Olson

Claudia & Layton Humphrey,
in memory of Bill Trygg

Richard Jorgensen,
in memory of Elton Jorgensen

Thomas J. King,
in memory of Yvonne Olson

Carole & Michael Krutsch,
in memory of Clara & Bill Jokela

Malcolm & Wendy McLean,
in memory of Sigurd T. Olson

Lauren & William Ritchie,
in honor of Jeanne King's 90th birthday

Eugene Roark,
in honor of Robert K. Olson

Helen Rudie,
in memory of Franklin P. Schoberg, US Forest Ranger

Andrew Schaedel & Susan Sanzi-Schaedel,
in honor of Jeanne King's 90th birthday

Katy & Fritz Schwarz,
in memory of Griffith & Carolyn Brogan

Jill Stoltenberg,
in memory of Mary Jo Lawless' mother

Bryan Wood,
in memory of Doris Wilton

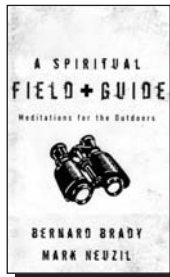
*This list acknowledges gifts received from January 1, 2009 through November 1, 2009.

Gift Shop

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



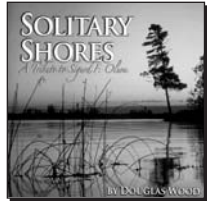
The Story of Listening Point
 This 28-page booklet, written by Sig's son Robert K. Olson, tells the inside story of how Listening Point came to be and why, what it meant to Sigurd Olson, and what it continues to mean to wilderness lovers and loyalists. Features dozens of historical photos and images.
 \$5



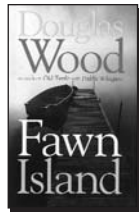
A Spiritual Field Guide
 This 192-page softcover book contains passages from a wide variety of writers, activists and others (including Sigurd F. Olson) who have thought long and deeply about the meaning and value of nature and wilderness. A perfect trip companion.
 \$13



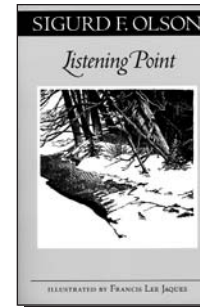
The Wilderness World of Sigurd F. Olson DVD
 A digitally remastered version of the classic film "The Wilderness World of Sigurd F. Olson" includes more than two hours of conversations with Sig as he speaks about the craft of writing and life in the wilderness. You'll also hear Sig's wife Elizabeth and their son Sig Jr. speak candidly about Sigurd, his profession, and life in the north woods.
 \$15



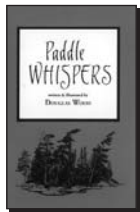
Solitary Shores CD
 First recorded in 1983, *Solitary Shores* was Douglas Wood's musical tribute to Sigurd Olson. All of the songs have a strong North Country flavor, and there is even a segment of Sig reading from one of his own essays.
 \$18



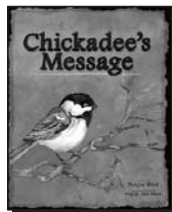
Fawn Island
 Fawn Island is not merely a charming wilderness hideaway; it is the entry to realms of thought and meaning as well. Author Doug Wood probes for meaning into the nature of neighborliness and independence, of community and solitude.
 \$20



Sigurd Olson Classics
 Attractive paperback versions of seven of Sigurd Olson's most loved books.
 ❖ *The Singing Wilderness*
 ❖ *Listening Point*
 ❖ *The Lonely Land*
 ❖ *Runes of the North*
 ❖ *Open Horizons*
 ❖ *Reflections from the North Country*
 ❖ *Of Time and Place*
 \$15 each



Paddle Whispers
 An illustrated, nonfiction meditation about the human soul encountering itself through the soul of the wilderness on a canoe trip through the rocks, woods and water of the North Country.
 \$16



Chickadee's Message
 Doug Wood's retelling of a Lakota Indian legend about chickadees' strong spirit and boundless good cheer. The story is accompanied by Elly Van Dier's stunning watercolor illustrations that make this an appealing book for readers of all ages.
 \$15

Listening Point Foundation Gift Shop
order form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

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

specify title(s): _____

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

ORDER TOTAL: _____

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

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

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



*Listening Point
Foundation, Inc.*

P.O. Box 180
Ely, Minnesota 55731



THE VIEW FROM LISTENING POINT — FALL 2009

Published by
The Listening Point Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 180
Ely, Minnesota 55731
Telephone: 218/365-7890
FAX: 218/365-7072
E-mail: info@listeningpointfoundation.org
Website: www.listeningpointfoundation.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Alanna Dore

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Timothy J. Rudnicki, *Chair*
Charles Wick, *Vice Chair*
Nancy Jo Tubbs, *Secretary*
Karen Friedrich, *Treasurer*
Robert K. Olson, *President Emeritus*
Tim Barzen
Martin Kellogg
Richard C. Struck
Douglas Wood
Jon Helminiak
Dr. Mark Peterson
Bryan Wood

NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Paul Anderson
Dr. David Backes
John "Jeb" Barzen
Jim Brandenburg
Ray Christensen
Gary Deason
Esther Kellogg
Mike Link
Vance G. Martin
Malcolm McLean
Dr. Michael Nelson
Kevin Proescholdt
Clayton Russell
Tim Sundquist
Robert Treuer
Steve Waddell
Dave Zentner
Bloomington, MN
S. Milwaukee, WI
Spring Green, WI
Ely, MN
Bloomington, MN
Flagstaff, AZ
St. Paul, MN
Willow River, MN
Boulder, CO
St. Paul, MN
Moscow, ID
St. Paul, MN
Ashland, WI
Duluth, MN
Bemidji, MN
Bellbrook, OH
Duluth, MN

**INTERNATIONAL AND SENIOR
BOARD OF ADVISORS**

Dr. Anne LaBastille
Author/Ecologist
Westport, NY
Dr. Ian Player
Founder/President, The Wilderness Foundation
Durban, Republic of South Africa
Franco Zunino
Founder/Director General
Associazione Italiana Wilderness
Murialdo (SV), Italy

Produced and printed by Advance Printing,
15576 US Hwy 63, Hayward, WI 54843;
phone 715/634-6888; fax 715/634-6912;
advprint@cheqnet.net

Editor: Laurence J. Wiland
Production: Debra Kurtzweil

Visit us online!
www.listeningpointfoundation.org

Materials in the newsletter may be reproduced
with attribution to the author, the newsletter,
and the Foundation. We welcome readers'
letters, comments and suggestions.