

We abuse the land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.

—Aldo Leopold

“Constant Pressure, Constantly Applied”: Arizona’s Greatest Conservationist, Bob Witzeman, 1927-2014

The oft-cited quotation attributed to anthropologist Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has,” plays a central and inspirational role in what many Americans think about identity, community, and grassroots initiatives.¹ The statement holds a lasting role among organizers, activists, and other change agents. It is proudly proclaimed by progressives and is a common bumper sticker expression. In the case of the fight during the 1970s and 1980s against largescale and expensive dam, aqueduct, flood control, and irrigation projects that were a part of the United States Bureau of Reclamation’s (USBR) infamous Central Arizona Project (CAP), this sentiment rang true.²

The author thanks Bob and Janet Witzeman, Robin Silver, the Board of the Maricopa Audubon Society (Phoenix), and Scott Burge, Carolina Butler, Cile Rice, and Frank Welsh for their inspiration and assistance with this essay. Thanks also to John Welch and Jason Eden. Vegan kudos to Valerie and “the gang” for their encouragement. This essay is dedicated to Ola Cassadore Davis (d. 2012), Mike Davis (d. 2013), Peter Warshall (d. 2013), Keith Basso (d. 2013), and Bob (d. 2014)—fierce crusaders all for social justice.

¹ Nancy C. Lutkehaus, *Margaret Mead: The Making of an American Icon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 4; Margaret Mead, *Continuities in Cultural Evolution* (1964; Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999).

² Tom Kuhn, “CAP canal to ruin desert, hearing told,” *The Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 3 May 1973; Thomas W. Pew, “Last Squeeze on the Colorado: Central Arizona Project dooms wildlife, rewards developers,” *Defenders—The Magazine of the Defenders of Wildlife*, August 1975; Maricopa Audubon Society, “Salt River Project Policy Blamed for Flood Damage,” News Release, 8 March 1978; Robert A. Witzeman, “Protection Available ‘Almost Overnight,’” *The Phoenix Gazette*, 15 January 1979.

For more information regarding the history of the Orme Dam and other CAP projects, see: Ron K. Schilling, “Indians and Eagles: The Struggle Against Orme Dam,” M.A. Thesis, Prescott College, 1998; Ron K. Schilling, “Indians and Eagles: The Struggle over Orme Dam,” *The Journal of Arizona History*, vol. 41, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 57-82; Central Arizona Project, “Oral History Transcripts: Bruce Babbit,” 1 December 2006, esp. 5-6, <http://www.cap-az.com/about-us/oral-history-transcripts>, accessed 5 August 2015; PBS (Arizona State University), “Orme Dam,” “Arizona Stories” series, The Arizona Collection, 1 January 2009, <http://www.azpbs.org/arizonastories/ppedetail.php?id=90>, accessed 2 August 2015; Frank Welsh, *How to Create a Water Crisis* (Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 1985); Abraham Lustgarten, “Killing the Colorado,” ProPublica, 16 June 2015, <http://www.propublica.org/series/killing-the-colorado>, accessed 28 June 2015. Also see, Fresh Air, “How a Historical Blunder Helped Create the Water Crisis in the West,” National Public

Mead's words also played a significant role in the life of environmentalist Dr. Robert (Bob) Witzeman, one of the most successful and outspoken environmental activists of the last 40 years, particularly in the American Southwest, who died in August 2014. Bob was a key member of what one journalist called the "little people"—relentless conservationists, Yavapai Indians, and citizen taxpayers—who formed a network of organizations to resist the building of the \$1 billion Orme Dam at the confluence of the Salt and Verde Rivers, as well as other CAP projects.³ They were exactly the people about whom Mead referred. According to historian Ron Schilling, "You had David, represented by the Indians [and] the environmentalists, versus Goliath, which was most of the Arizona congressional delegation [and] the major water officials in the county and state governments."⁴ Bob's leadership proved invaluable.

With Bob's help, advisement, and activism, the "little people" ultimately won and defeated the Orme Dam project, thus creating one of the most inspiring come-from-behind environmental and Indigenous rights victories in U.S. history. Orme Dam, a key component of CAP, would have flooded the Fort McDowell Indian Reservation, home of the Yavapai people, and the habitat of rare desert-nesting Bald Eagle pairs. The Verde River was also an area popular to birders. Wrote Janet Witzeman, Bob's wife, "The first Orme Dam Hearing was in July 1976 and that is when Bob started to get involved in the dam fights because of the important riparian [bird habitat along the banks of a river, within in a desert landscape] area on the Verde River for so many species of birds, but especially for the Bald Eagles."⁵ Eventually "thousands of inner tubers" who enjoyed floating down the Salt River also joined the fight to establish a strong coalition of Indians, conservationists, engineers, economists, and recreationists.⁶

Radio, 25 June 2015, <http://www.npr.org/2015/06/25/417430662/how-a-historical-blunder-helped-create-the-water-crisis-in-the-west>, accessed 28 June 2015.

³ Mike Tulemello, "Orme proves 'little' people can win," *Sunday Tribune* (Mesa, Arizona), 11 October 1981. For excellent articles regarding Bob, see: John J. Harrigan, "Ornithologist fears for habitat of rails," *The Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 20 December 1973; Pew, "Last Squeeze on the Colorado"; "CAP unneeded, won't be finished, foe says," *Scottsdale Daily Progress*, 17 October 1977; Ruth Norris, "Audubon People," *Audubon Magazine*, September 1981; Jim Burns, "Our riparian warrior," *The Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 7 September 2007; Editor, "In Memoriam: Robert A. Witzeman, MD (remembrances compiled by the Editor)," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), vol. LXVIII, no. 4 (Winter 2014), 16, <http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/Wrendition%20Winter%202014.pdf>, accessed 3 July 2015; Kenn Kaufman, "Monument to a Brave Bird Watcher," *Bird Watcher's Digest*, January/February 2015, 18-24.

⁴ PBS, "Orme Dam." Frank Welch makes the same claims: Central Arizona Project, "Oral History Transcripts: Frank Welch," 22 June 2006, 4, <http://www.cap-az.com/about-us/oral-history-transcripts>, accessed 5 August 2015.

⁵ Janet Witzeman to author, email, 3 June 2015.

⁶ Robert Witzeman, *Press Releases of The Maricopa Audubon Society and its Friends and Allies, 1973-1991*, vol. I (Phoenix: Maricopa Audubon Society, 2014), 14, <http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/Press%20Releases.html>, accessed 3 July 2015.

Following the victory against the Orme Dam, Bob went on to criticize, critique and ultimately beat Cliff Dam and the other dam projects.⁷ In fact, Bob was a member of the Citizens Advisory Commission, called the Plan 6 Committee, that was created to look at alternatives to Orme Dam for Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt. As a sign of his integrity, Bob was the lone person to vote against Plan 6 because it would still harm Bald Eagles.⁸ About Babbitt who was planning to run for president, Bob wrote, “Will he continue to represent the interest of Arizona developers at the expense of the national emblem and the nation’s taxpayers? Or will he represent the great majority of American taxpayers who side with these endangered, desert-nesting Bald Eagles?”⁹

The victory against the Orme Dam and other CAP schemes set Bob on a course that would pit him against the largest names in politics, economic development, and scientific research during the last 40 years of his life. Indeed, Bob had a knack for confronting, educating, and oftentimes scolding politicians such as Governor Babbitt, Representatives Jim Kolbe and Morris K. Udall, and Senators Barry Goldwater, Dennis DeConcini, Jon Kyl, and John McCain. “The C.A.P. is socialism for all the freeloaders at the Federal water trough,” proclaimed Bob. He frequently criticized large governmental organizations.¹⁰ “I get angry when these well-financed special interests lie to the public about their intentions,” Bob stated. “Righteous indignation sets in when I see the Bureau of Reclamation use our tax dollars to destroy a river in order to line the pockets of some wealthy real estate developers.”¹¹ He loved to spoil their plans. No government organization, elected representative, developer, mining company, rancher, timber industry, or university was spared Bob’s critique.¹² Bob seemed to echo the sentiments of Will Rogers who

⁷ Keith Bagwell, “Need for new dam disputed,” *Daily Progress* (Scottsdale, AZ), 5 August 1982; Mary A. M. Gindhart, “Cliff Dam’s Demise Reverses Mind-set On Water Projects,” *The Arizona Republic*, 28 June 1987.

⁸ Carolina Butler, author interview, 5 August 2015; Central Arizona Project, “Oral History Transcripts: Bruce Babbitt”; Robert Witzeman, “Statement of Robert Witzeman, M.D., 4-16-85 to Governor’s Committee on Plan 6 Funding,” 1-4; Bob Witzeman, “Cliff Dam Goes to Court and Congress,” *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), September-October 1985, 8-9; UPI, “Cliff Dam foe urges House panel to halt it,” *The Phoenix Gazette*, 11 April 1986, B-9, E-5; Chris Gehlker, “Tribute to Bob Witzeman,” *Canyon Echo* (Sierra Club, Grand Canyon Chapter), October 1999, 3.

⁹ Witzeman, “Cliff Dam Goes to Court,” 9.

¹⁰ Iver Peterson, “Arizona Cheers as Canal Carries Colorado River Water to Phoenix,” *The New York Times*, 17 November 1985, 26. See also, Doug Frerichs, “Audubon Society to monitor bird habitat during dam work,” *The Phoenix Gazette*, [n.d.] May 1989.

¹¹ “One Gung-ho Individual Can Make All the Difference,” *Audubon Activist*, September 1986, 12.

¹² Bob Witzeman, “Rancher subsidies hit consumers twice,” *The Arizona Republic*, 26 April 1991, A13; Robert Witzeman, “Why We Need The Endangered Species Act,” *Arizona Wildlife News*, vol. 37, issue 2, Spring 1996, 8-9; Bob Witzeman, “Leave our burned trees alone, Smoky: Burned, remnant trees important to forest health, bird species,” *Canyon Echo* (Sierra Club, Grand Canyon Chapter), March 1997; Bob Witzeman, “The Great Forest Health Myth,” *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), n.d. [1997?], 5; Robert Witzeman, “Bring Mount Graham into much sharper focus,” *Columbus Dispatch*, 19 January 1998; Bob Witzeman, “Mines don’t pay fee,” *The Arizona Republic*, 15 May 1998.

generations earlier wrote, “This dam business is getting to be quite a racket.”¹³ For his work, one writer for *Audubon Magazine* referred to Bob as “an anesthesiologist, citizen crusader, eagle partisan,” but he was so much more.¹⁴

Bob was born and grew up in Akron, Ohio. He was the fourth-born of five children. Bob’s grandfather owned real estate, while his father was an otolaryngologist who managed to go to medical school despite protests from his mother, who was a devout Christian Scientist. Bob’s mother often carted the children to school and other activities in her Buick—she “always drove a Buick,” stated Bob’s sister, Cile Rice. His parents “were nature-oriented,” according to Cile, and almost all of the children developed a love for the out-of-doors. Bob and his siblings were raised Lutheran in the city of rubber and dirigibles, however, during high school Bob attended the noted private University School in Cleveland and did quite well. It was likely during yearly family vacations to national parks such as Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Glacier, Rocky Mountain, and Petrified Forest (then a National Monument), as well as Alaska, that Bob made lasting connections to both nature and the West. Bob’s mother, siblings, and sometimes aunts would travel using a trailer in advance of his father’s annual two-week-long vacations. His father would meet them later via train, but during World War II, the entire family took the train.¹⁵ As his wife Janet wrote, Bob’s “main reason for getting involved in conservation was because of his love of wildlife and his interest in protecting the habitat.”¹⁶

Bob served in the Navy in 1945, then graduated from Oberlin College in 1950 and Case Western Reserve University Medical School in 1954, the same year that he married Janet and was discharged from the military as an Ensign.¹⁷ After an internship in Salt Lake City and a residency in anesthesiology in Cleveland, he moved to Phoenix with his wife and two-year-old daughter Karen, in 1958. Bob became busy starting his specialized medical practice in anesthesiology. His son Jeff was born in 1959. The family, according to wife Janet, “took trips in [their] camper with them all [over] the west and one to Central America and one to Baja.” The Witzeman family joined the Maricopa Audubon Society, a Phoenix-based local chapter of the National Audubon Society, soon after they arrived in Phoenix and “went on the local birding trips” and “always took part in the annual Christmas Bird Counts” throughout Arizona.¹⁸ Wherever Bob travelled, including to Tokyo, Japan, for an international anesthesiology meeting, he took time out of his schedule to study shorebirds.¹⁹ He was an avid birdwatcher and photographer of dragonflies, butterflies, birds, lizards, mammals, and wildflowers.²⁰ According

¹³ Will Rogers, *Will Rogers’ Weekly Articles*, vol.5: The Hoover Years 1931-1933, Stillwater, OK: Oklahoma State University Press, 204-205, <http://www.willrogers.com/papers/weekly/WA-Vol-5.pdf>, accessed 24 October 2015.

¹⁴ James R. Udall, “Desert Eagles,” *Audubon Magazine*, vol. 88, no. 1 (January 1986), 28.

¹⁵ Cile Rice, author interview, 29 July 2015.

¹⁶ Janet Witzeman to author, email, 1 July 2015.

¹⁷ “A Life Remembered: Bob Witzeman 1927-2014,” video played at Memorial Service for Bob Witzeman, 2014; “Robert Allen Witzeman,” Obituary, *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson), <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/tucson/obituary.aspx?pid=172354657>, accessed 2 August 2015; Scott Burge, author interview, 4 August 2015.

¹⁸ Janet Witzeman to author, email, 3 June 2015.

¹⁹ “A Life Remembered.”

²⁰ See: “Dragons can fly at the Riparian Preserve,” *The Gilbert Republic*, 25 July 2005; Bob Witzeman, “Reflecting on our Winter Odonata and Butterflies,” *The Cactus Wrendition*

to his wife, “He was proud of having photographed four first state records for Arizona: Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Wandering Tattler, Ruff, and Long-tailed Jaeger, as well as several firsts for Maricopa County. Although he was hoping to see half of the world’s approximately 10,000 [bird] species, he was happy with his total World List of 4360 species.”²¹ But Bob was not just one thing. He was a member of the John Birch Society in the 1960s.²² He enjoyed working on his stamp collection, international travel, birding and camping trips, vacations, various adventures, writing letters and op-ed columns, and running the Tucson Marathon and the Fiesta Bowl Marathon in Phoenix. He entered and placed high in 10K races in his age bracket. His marathon running prepared him well for several grueling decades-long fights.

His sister Cile described him as “restless” and filled with “wanderlust.” During a recent family reunion, Bob could not sit still and asked who wanted to join him to “go looking for birds.”²³ According to wife Janet, “Bob’s favorite times in his life were when we were on birding trips to other countries, not only seeing new ‘life’ birds [birds new to Bob], but also photographing them.” Bob and his wife travelled extensively to see birds: “Over the years we birded in Kenya, Australia, New Guinea, Europe, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, Mexico, Costa Rica, Cuba, Suriname, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Hawaii, [and] Alaska.” Bob continued to travel in much the same ways in which he did as a youth with his family in Ohio. “He enjoyed the many trips we took in our camper around the U.S. and especially an extended camping trip through Baja, California, when our children were young and an extended camping trip throughout Europe when our children were in high school,” wrote Janet. “In 1961, Bob and I took an extended trip to the Middle East—Egypt, Jordan, then buying a VW in Lebanon and driving north through Syria, Turkey, Greece, and southern Italy.”²⁴

Bob eventually took on an active role in the Maricopa Audubon Society (MAS). As he told an *Audubon Magazine* reporter in 1981, “I’m just a birdwatcher who got into this by accident.”²⁵ Although trained as a physician and an avid birdwatcher, Bob learned the language of scientists and economists in order to win arguments and effectively utilize the media. He knew the law and the full particulars of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act, legislation that was passed just as Bob was taking a more active and activist role in conservation.²⁶ According to Janet, “It was his interest in wildlife, especially

(Maricopa Audubon Society), vol. LXIII, no. 2 (Summer 2014), 17, <http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/Wrendition%20Summer%202014.pdf>, accessed 3 July 2015; “Celebration of Life: Bob Witzeman,” Memorial Service program, Phoenix Zoo, Phoenix, Arizona, 27 December 2014.

²¹ “Celebration of Life.”

²² Burge, author interview, 4 August 2015.

²³ Rice, author interview, 29 July 2015.

²⁴ Janet Witzeman to author, email, 1 July 2015.

²⁵ Norris, “Audubon People.”

²⁶ Bob Witzeman, “Endangered Species Act at the Crossroads,” *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), November-December 1990; Witzeman, “Why We Need The Endangered Species Act”; Bob Witzeman, “Endangered Species Act Under Attack,” *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), Winter 2004, 5; Robert Witzeman, “Act helped save falcon,” *The Arizona Republic*, 29 November 1999, B6. Bob also wrote at least three separate updates regarding Oak Flat and ESA and NEPA: Bob Witzeman, “National Audubon Society at the Crossroads,” *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society),

birds, that caused him to enter these fights. And with the passage of NEPA he had a tool to help in the fights by being able to answer environmental impact statements and sometimes going to court.”²⁷ He became president of MAS in June 1973 and served in that capacity until May 1979, when he became Conservation Chairman, a position that he held until his death more than 35 years later. Bob retired in March 1986 “so he could devote all his time to conservation battles.”²⁸ As a sign of the breadth and depth of Bob’s work on and knowledge about various environmental issues, MAS had to establish a conservation committee of many people after Bob died to carry on the work that he often seemed to do singlehandedly.

One of Bob’s greatest and longest lasting campaigns was against the University of Arizona (UA) and its research partners, including the Vatican, German and Italian research institutes, and U.S. universities.²⁹ It was during this ongoing campaign that I met with, learned from, and was inspired by Bob. In the 1980s, UA astronomers and other research scientists selected Mount Graham, a sacred and ecologically unique mountain in Arizona, as the site for new astrophysical development, including a large telescope inappropriately named the Columbus Project. Bob was an early opponent of UA’s efforts; the earliest newspaper article in his files is from late 1983 and he began speaking out publically about Mount Graham in early 1987—a delay brought about because of the ending of his medical practice.³⁰ He lobbied elected officials, created thick spiral-bound press packets, and travelled throughout the U.S. and Europe to attempt to stop this project.³¹ A main focus of Bob’s was to visit universities to “get student environmentalists involved.”³² He also paid for environmental activists and Western Apache people to travel globally and meet with elected officials, government agencies, scientists, and university administrations, among other people. Bob effectively campaigned against the

Winter 2004, 9; Winter 2005, 6-7; Fall 2005, 6-7; Bob Witzeman, “Rep. Gosar removes NEPA oversight from Oak Flat Land Swap,” *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), Fall 2011, 13-14; Bob Witzeman, “Oak Flat Update,” *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), Winter 2013, 14.

²⁷ Janet Witzeman to author, email, 3 June 2015.

²⁸ Robert A. Witzeman, “Dear colleague,” letter, 25 May 1986; Janet Witzeman to author, email, 3 June 2015.

²⁹ See Joel T. Helfrich, “A Mountain of Politics: The Struggle for *dzil nchaa si’an* (Mount Graham), 1871-2002” (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2010); Joel T. Helfrich, “Cultural Survival in Action: Ola Cassadore Davis and the Struggle for *dzil nchaa si’an* (Mount Graham),” *Native American and Indigenous Studies Journal*, vol. 1, issue 2 (Fall 2014).

³⁰ Denise E. Swibold, “Mount Graham preferred as site for radio telescope,” *Arizona Daily Wildcat* (University of Arizona), 28 Oct 1983, 1; Robert A. Witzeman to R. B. Tippeconnic, letter, 15 January 1987; Ward Harkavy, “In Love With The Squirrel,” *Phoenix New Times*, 6-12 September 1989; Doug Frerichs, “Mount Graham: Foes plan ‘holy war’ to block telescope,” *The Phoenix Gazette*, 24 January 1990.

³¹ Bob created the best collections of documents relating to Mount Graham: Mt. Graham Coalition, *Living Land, Sacred Land (The case against the Mt. Graham observatory)*, Self-published compendium, 1995; Mt. Graham Coalition, “Mt. Graham—a vulnerable old-growth summit boreal forest—an irreplaceable cradle of evolution,” Self-published compendium, September 2002.

³² Janet Witzeman to author, email, 3 June 2015.

telescopes on Mount Graham and in the process helped to launch what was at the time the largest coalition of environmental and indigenous rights organizations in the U.S. It would be difficult today to imagine any living Mount Graham red squirrels, one of the most imperiled mammals on the planet, without Bob's efforts and organizing abilities. Although three telescopes were ultimately built, the astronomer's grand plans were curtailed.³³

That Bob was Arizona's greatest conservationist is no hyperbole.³⁴ He was at the forefront of every single major environmental struggle and victory in the Southwest from the early 1970s onwards. In fact, he did not take a break from environmental-related work from at least 1972, when he read his first Environmental Impact Statement regarding the Orme Dam construction, until he died in 2014.³⁵ According to his wife, he "moved from Orme to Cliff, to Mt. Graham, to the copper mine at Oak Flat and at the same time—many fights concerning logging of old growth forests, grazing, roads through important wildlife habitat," and even shade grown coffee.³⁶ As the head of the Endangered Species Coalition put it, "I have no hesitation in saying Bob is easily among the very greatest environmentalists of our times."³⁷ Bob played a central and critical role in nearly all successful work of MAS. Because of Bob's help, MAS stopped the construction of Orme Dam and Cliff Dam, as well as Charleston Dam, Conner Dam, Hooker Dam, Buttes Dam, the Kofa Power Lines, and the Rio Verde Road. Among many other initiatives, he worked with MAS to make certain that the Topock Marsh was not dredged, that the Spur Cross Exchange was halted, and that grazing on the Salt and Verde Rivers was altered to aid Bald Eagles. He worked tirelessly to ensure that Maricopa County voters rejected the Rio Salado Taxing District.³⁸ In the case of astrophysical development on Mount Graham, with which Bob concerned himself for the last 30 years of his life, the number of telescopes was limited to three from over 17 planned. Many universities dropped their participation in the project because of Bob's organizing.³⁹ His track record of protecting riparian areas is unparalleled in the Southwest.⁴⁰ Scott Burge, a longtime friend of Bob's, said, in the case of Hooker, Charleston, and Buttes Dams, "they were proposed but never authorized." However,

³³ For comments from Bob regarding Mount Graham, see: Keith Bagwell, "Mt. Graham squirrels face starvation in winter, group says," *The Arizona Daily Star*, 13 September 1989, 2B; Douglas Kreutz, "Red squirrels need feeding, official says," *The Arizona Daily Star*, 22 September 1989; Dawn Grimes, "45 hold rally at Smithsonian to protest Mt. Graham scopes," *The Arizona Daily Star*, 7 February 1990; R. Gustav Niebuhr, "Heavenly Plan Pits a Graceful Squirrel Against Holy See," *Wall Street Journal*, 1 March 1990, A1; Bob Downing, "Red squirrels threaten giant telescope project," *Akron Beacon Journal*, 7 July 1991, A1, 8-9.

³⁴ Editor, "In Memoriam: Robert A. Witzeman, MD (remembrances compiled by the Editor)," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), vol. LXVIII, no. 4 (Winter 2014), 16, <http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/Wrendition%20Winter%202014.pdf>, accessed 3 July 2015.

³⁵ Bob Witzeman, "Verde River Tour Planned," *Phoenix Gazette*, 18 October 1973.

³⁶ Janet Witzeman to author, email, 3 June 2015.

³⁷ Brock Evans to Anne Carl, letter, 5 May 1999.

³⁸ Mary A. M. Gindhart, "Rio Salado's deal with Audubon Society miffs rock industry," *Arizona Republic*, 21 August 1987; Witzeman, "Statement of Robert Witzeman," 2-4.

³⁹ Helfrich, "A Mountain of Politics," 209-221.

⁴⁰ Scott Burge, "Forward—A Look Back at the Last Millennium: Maricopa Audubon Society's Conservation Accomplishments," in Witzeman, *Press Releases*, vol. I, 1-2; Burns, "Our riparian warrior."

said Burge, “[USBR] was intent on having Cliff Dam built and when that failed, there was no chance the other dams would be authorized by Congress. Bob had already written about the negative aspects of those dams.” According to Burge, USBR officials “knew that if they tried to push for them, they would find Bob sitting on the court house steps.”⁴¹

He was essentially given carte blanche from MAS to do what he wanted for more than four decades, first as its president and then as its conservation chairman. Bob went from being a dedicated and “complete bird watcher to a complete conservationist, a metamorphosis that was likely completed by 1980,” noted Burge.⁴² He was the Chapter’s spokesperson for decades on all matter of environmental issues, from dam, road, and power line construction, to astrophysical and economic development, to endangered species and riparian habitat threats. In fact, the Salt, Verde, Gila, and San Pedro rivers, many mountain summits, and other riparian areas would look vastly different and hold less or no water, as well as animal and plant life, if not for Bob’s strength, determination, and courage. As Burge put it, “A farm boy from Ohio changed the face of Arizona. Without him, Arizona would have been dramatically different.”⁴³ MAS became an activist organization because of Bob’s leadership.⁴⁴

From the headquarters in his house or “war room,” as he referred to it, he launched assaults on any politician, businessman, company, or government agency with which he disagreed or who threatened human and indigenous rights, the environment, or protected places in Arizona. Armed with a station for sending out mailings, a typewriter, rows of file folders and boxes, and eventually a fax machine, copier, and computer, Bob was able to take on and often slay giants, whether they were scientists, engineers, politicians, government agencies, or otherwise. Bob testified at numerous hearings by the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Arizona Game & Fish Department, among others, according to his wife.⁴⁵ “I never met anyone like Bob Witzeman. He would go for days on end writing and getting the details straight. He was a workaholic. He was always working to get the facts straight,” stated Burge. “He would go to any public meeting with a politician, municipal government, anywhere, grab the podium, and take over.”⁴⁶

For 35 years, Bob wrote the conservation opinion columns for MAS’s newsletter, *The Cactus Wrendition*.⁴⁷ He wrote about many topics, such as: public lands, “fireproofing” forests, global warming, grazing, logging, the benefits of solar-powered birdbaths, and conservation victories.⁴⁸ In one critique, Witzeman pointed out that “public lands welfare [cattle] grazing ...

⁴¹ Janet Witzeman to author, email, 29 July 2015.

⁴² Burge, author interview, 4 August 2015.

⁴³ Burge, author interview, 4 August 2015. See Bob’s comments regarding the Glen Canyon Dam: Tensie Whelan, “Glen Canyon Dam: Selling the Environment Down the River,” *Audubon Activist*, November/December 1989, 5.

⁴⁴ Gene Varn, “Audubon members insist organization not just for birds: Focus is on worldwide conservation,” *The Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 18 September 1989.

⁴⁵ Janet Witzeman to author, email, 3 June 2015.

⁴⁶ Burge, author interview, 4 August 2015.

⁴⁷ For all of Witzeman’s columns in the *Cactus Wrendition* since 2000, see: <http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/nwsltr.html>, accessed 3 July 2015.

⁴⁸ See, for example: Bob Witzeman, “A Banner Month for the Environment,” *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), January-February 2000; Bob Witzeman, “Our Forests Can Be Saved,” *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), July-August

produces only 2% of the nation's beef. It does so at a net loss of some half a billion dollars annually to U.S. taxpayers. Hence, voluntary buy-out/retirement would save tax dollars. More beef is produced in Iowa than all the public lands in the West. Public lands grazing is a destructive anachronism whose time has past."⁴⁹ About proposed drilling for oil in Alaska, Bob commented in 1988: "You think that drilling oil wells up there can't have any effect on us, but there are birds that come all the way down here from there every year. It's amazing."⁵⁰ He always looked at the larger picture of any environmental issue.⁵¹

Bob was regularly recognized for his conservation work. In 1977, he won the "Citizen Conservation Activity" award for his individual efforts from the Rocky Mountain Center on Environment.⁵² In 1979, he was recognized as the "Nonprofessional Wildlifer of the Year" by the Arizona-New Mexico Section of The Wildlife Society.⁵³ Bob was the 1982 recipient of the

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- 2000; Bob Witzeman, "Good news for our public lands," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), September-October 2000; Bob Witzeman, "'Fireproofing' Our Forests," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), November-December 2000; Bob Witzeman, "Teddy Roosevelt would have agreed," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), March-April 2001; Bob Witzeman, "We learned much at regional Audubon Conferences," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), May-June 2001; Bob Witzeman, "Birds and Forest Fire," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), July-August 2001, 5, http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/web-content/wrendition/wren_070801-pg5-6.htm#conserv_birds_forest_fire, accessed 3 July 2015; Bob Witzeman, "Scalping Arizona's Forests," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), Spring 2003, 6-7; Bob Witzeman, "Southwestern Willow Flycatcher at the Crossroads," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), Summer 2003, 5-6; Bob Witzeman, "Arizona's State School Trust Lands at the Crossroads," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), Summer 2004, 5-6; Bob Witzeman, "Bird Populations and Global Warming," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), vol. LIX, no. 2 (Summer 2009), 10, <http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/Wrendition%20Summer%202009.pdf>, accessed 1 July 2015. See also, Bob Witzeman, "Another Perspective on Forest Restoration," *Arizona Conservation Voter*, Fall 2000; Bob Witzeman, "'Pre-settlement restoration'—the Trojan horse of the logging industry," *Canyon Echo* (Sierra Club, Grand Canyon Chapter), May-June 2001, 3; Robert Witzeman, "Recipe for disaster," *The Arizona Republic*, 14 June 2003, B9.
- ⁴⁹ Bob Witzeman, "Grazing Threatens Arizona's Wildlife," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), January-February 2001.
- ⁵⁰ Clay Thompson, "A fowl smell: Bird watchers follow their noses to the best spots," *The Phoenix Gazette*, 17 September 1988, A-5. See also, Bob Witzeman, "Efficiency makes sense," *The Arizona Republic*, 26 March 1991.
- ⁵¹ See, for example: Dale Hajek, "Off-roaders assail proposal: Clinton plan would limit forest access," *The Arizona Republic*, 6 January 2000.
- ⁵² Rocky Mountain Center on Environment, "Environmental Awards" program, Denver, Colorado, 17 October 1977, cover, 4-5; "Orme Dam protestor chosen for award," *The Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 16 October 1977; "Environment Award Winners Named," *Denver Post*, 20 October 1977; "CAP unneeded, won't be finished, foe says."
- ⁵³ press clipping, *Wildlife Views*, April 1979, 9; Norris, "Audubon People."

Sol Feinstone Environmental Award.⁵⁴ According to a biographical sketch at the time, “Through an aggressively educational campaign to the public on the environmental, social and economic fallacies of Orme Dam,” Bob was able to defeat the project, despite opposition from the “entire [Arizona] Congressional delegation . . . and the largest newspaper in the state.” The organization that honored him with the award noted his “constant pressure” made Bob successful.⁵⁵ The *Phoenix New Times* praised Bob in its 1984 yearbook as a “dissident” and effective “troublemaker.”⁵⁶ In 1986, he won the “Bald Eagle Person of the Year Award” from the Eagle Foundation.⁵⁷ The editors of *The Phoenix Gazette* selected Bob as a winner of its Golden Pen Award in 1988 for an excellent letter he wrote titled, “Thirsty, costly cotton gulping up precious water.”⁵⁸ The 1990 *Calendar of American Rivers* showcased Bob’s photograph of the Verde River for the month of June.⁵⁹ In 1999, the Southwest Forest Alliance, Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, and Audubon Society presented Bob with a lifetime achievement award. In her letter to various supporters, environmental activist Anne Carl wrote, “Bob has made all the right people feel uncomfortable.”⁶⁰ That same year, Bob was honored by the Arizona Wildlife Federation’s McCullough Conservation Award in the Non-Professional category.⁶¹ Throughout the rest of his life, he participated in the annual Orme Dam Victory Days parade and celebration on the Fort McDowell Yavapai Indian Reservation.

Bob was constantly giving credit to his friends, fellow activists and organizers, and other sources of inspiration. He praised people and organizations that were doing great work and used their words to support his efforts. He regularly began his conservation columns with a favorite quotation from William Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Teddy Roosevelt, John Muir, Jacques Cousteau, Wallace Stegner, E. O. Wilson, or some other writer or conservationist whose words echoed the sentiments of the topic on which Witzeman was writing. One person he turned to was Mahatma Gandhi and his “seven deadly sins,” especially “Knowledge without character,” “Commerce without morality,” “Politics without principles,” and “Science without humanity.”⁶² Bob’s memorial service card included

⁵⁴ Victor Dricks, “This is a story about . . .,” *The Phoenix Gazette*, 22 May 1982; State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, “Announcing the 1983 Sol Feinstone Environmental Awards,” Program, 1983.

⁵⁵ n.a., “Biographical Sketch,” n.d. [likely 1982].

⁵⁶ *Phoenix New Times*, “Troublemakers: The Gang of Six has let the air out of some big tires,” *The Best of Phoenix 1984 Yearbook*, 34.

⁵⁷ Eagle Foundation, “Bald Eagle Person of the Year Award,” brochure, 11.

⁵⁸ Jay Brasher to Dr. Robert A. Witzeman, letter, 5 May 1988; Robert A. Witzeman, “Thirsty, costly cotton gulping up precious water,” *The Phoenix Gazette*, 5 May 1988. See also, Robert A. Witzeman, “A lot of hairs split in defense of farmers,” *The Arizona Republic*, 18 March 1989.

⁵⁹ “Verde River, Arizona” (June 1990), *1990 Calendar of the American Rivers*.

⁶⁰ Anne Carl, “Dear environmental colleague,” confidential letter, [n.d., likely April 1999]; Steve Yozwiak, “Retired physician honored for environmental work,” *The Arizona Republic*, 12 May 1999, B3.

⁶¹ Ace Peterson, “Conservation Awards 1999,” *Arizona Wildlife News*, Summer 1999, 10.

⁶² Bob Witzeman, “Science without Humanity: The Mt. Graham Telescope Project,” *The Cactus Wren* (Maricopa Audubon Society), vol. L, no. 4 (Winter 2002-2003), 8, http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/web-content/audubon-wren/audubon-wren_winter02-03-

favorite quotations of his by Leonardo da Vinci (“Human subtlety ... will never devise an invention more beautiful, more simple, or more direct than does nature, because in her intentions nothing is lacking, and nothing is superfluous.”), Albert Schweitzer (“Until he extends the circle of compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace.”), and Mead.

Bob was a strategic adversary, always thinking of the future, such as with this 1988 letter to Representative Kolbe:

Your ... reply to us regarding the Mt. Graham scopes was so well expressed that it would be unworthy and disrespectful to even attempt rebuttal. In thirty years of writing letters to Congress, I have only had few letters from Congressmen that were so well written—especially when the Congressman had to reply to constituent with differing viewpoint. Barry Goldwater was one of those few, like you, who could do it. The aplomb and charm of Barry’s letters is legendary and treasure them in my files. Of course, this also speaks well for top caliber office staff, Jim, which you have clearly inspired to great heights.

Continued Bob:

We know that you, like Barry, share genuine concern for this state’s natural treasures. Barry was photographer and his eyes quickly learned to comprehend and love the natural beauty of this state. He conceded his legislative timing was not always perfect and if there were one tie vote he wished he could have turned around it was when he voted to build Glen Canyon Dam.

Bob ended his letter by writing,

In 30 years of living here in Arizona, I have learned that the children of our state’s pioneer families, like yourself, have all been brought up with great respect for Arizona’s singular natural areas and scenic grandeur. When our chapter President, Charles Babbitt (also of pioneer family), visited you in your office this year regarding the Santa Rita land exchange, he gave our Board nothing but accolades for you—as person who might someday be sitting at the same table with us working for the preservation of this state’s awesome natural heritage.⁶³

He mailed thousands of often lengthy letters like these, as well as massive lobbying packets, to elected officials, journalists, activists, and allies.⁶⁴ According to longtime friend and fellow activist against the Orme Dam, Carolina Butler, in terms of letter writing, “Nobody beats Bob.”⁶⁵ He was humorous at times, such as when he complimented Representative Kolbe and his staff, but then urged him to reconsider his support of projects Witzeman knew were mistakes.

[pg7-8.htm](#), accessed 30 June 2015; Bob Witzeman, “Science without Humanity: The Mt. Graham Telescope Project,” *Arizona Wildlife News* (Arizona Wildlife Federation), vol. 45, issue 1 (Winter 2003), 4,

<http://www.nwfaffiliates.org/sites/azwildlife.org/ht/a/GetDocumentAction/i/60928>, accessed 30 June 2015.

⁶³ Robert A. Witzeman to Congressman Jim Kolbe, letter, 1 October 1988.

⁶⁴ In a handwritten letter to California Representative George Miller, Bob wrote, “*The [Arizona] Republic* + 99.8% of Arizonans are on your side George—Keep up the good work.” Bob Witzeman to George Miller, letter, n.d., [May/June 1991?], with a photocopy of Elise Lauster, “Arizona’s agribarons are quadruple-dippers,” letter to editor, *The Arizona Republic*, 28 May 1991, A13.

⁶⁵ Carolina Butler, author interview, 5 August 2015. See Carolina Butler, ed., *Oral History of the Yavapai* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015).

Congressmen Udall and Kolbe, and Senators DeConcini and McCain, among many others, all have letters from Bob in their archives. He was on a first-name basis with many elected officials and Bob could be extremely persuasive, as the letter above attests.

Nevertheless, Bob was unwilling to back down from a fight, no matter who or what he was up against. He had the ability to get under the skin of his adversaries. In 1992, Bob and his fellow physician/photographer/environmentalist and friend Robin Silver went to meet with McCain to discuss Mount Graham. At the mention of the words “Mount Graham,” McCain “slammed his fists on his desk, scattering papers across the room,” said Silver. “He jumped up and down, screaming obscenities at us for about 10 minutes. He shook his fists as if he was going to slug us.” Bob bluntly stated, “I’m a lifelong environmentalist, but what ... scares me about McCain is not his environmental policies, which are horrid, but his violent, irrational temper.” Continued Bob, “I think McCain is so unbalanced that if [Russian President] Vladimir Putin told him something he didn’t like, he’d lose it, start beating his chest about having his finger on the nuclear trigger. Who knows where it would stop. To my mind, McCain’s the most likely senator to start a nuclear war. I wouldn’t want to see this guy with his finger on the button.”⁶⁶

To be clear, Bob was a registered Republican, but in the Teddy Roosevelt tradition.⁶⁷ “He was born a Republican, lived as a Republican, died as a Republican, but never voted for them” because they never passed the “smell test,” according to Burge. Bob believed in and practiced “rugged individualism. He took those ideals from the marketplace to conservation. He had money from his practice and possibly from his parents” to support many conservation initiatives. Bob was “completely at peace with himself. He had his eye on the ball and the ball was the world can be a better place,” as Burge saw it. Furthermore, “He knew that the politicians had a thousand issues and he had one [issue] and all of his contacts, so he knew he could win”—a great strategy that worked well for him.⁶⁸

During the last 45 years of his life, Bob published hundreds of op-eds and letters to the editor, and faxed countless press releases to his media contacts. With regards to the dams that were part of CAP, Bob wrote or assisted with more than 120 press releases from 1973 until

⁶⁶ Jeffrey St. Clair, “Star Whores, Astronomers vs. Apaches on Mount Graham,” 1 February 2003, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2003/02/01/star-whores-astronomers-vs-apaches-on-mount-graham>, 1 November 2015; Jeffrey St. Clair, “Meet the Senator Most Likely to Start a Nuclear War: The Real John McCain,” 21 September 2008, <http://www.todaysalternativenews.com/index.php?event=link,150&values%5B0%5D=&values%5B1%5D=5498>, accessed 30 June 2015; Jeffrey St. Clair, “Star Whores: How John McCain Doomed Mount Graham,” 16 July 2008, <http://www.counterpunch.org/stclair07162008.html>, accessed 26 June 2015; Alan Maimon, “Arizonians recall run-ins with McCain,” 5 October 2008, <http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/elections/arizonians-recall-run-ins-mccain>, accessed 26 June 2015. See also, Andrew Lawler, “Election 2008: Politics,” *Audubon Magazine*, September-October 2008, <http://archive.audubonmagazine.org/features0809/politics.html>, accessed 28 June 2015; Atty. Francis L. Holland, “‘Bomb, Bomb’ McCain has Lost His Bearings,” 24 May 2008, <http://truth-about-mccain.blogspot.com/2008/05/bomb-bomb-mccain-has-lost-his-bearings.html>, accessed 30 June 2015.

⁶⁷ Witzeman, “Teddy Roosevelt would have agreed.”

⁶⁸ Burge, author interview, 4 August 2015; Norris, “Audubon People.”

1986.⁶⁹ Bob was also responsible for creating MAS's first news release, which was mailed in October 1973.⁷⁰ According to Janet Witzeman, "He wrote fund raising brochures and we had many mailing parties at our house to send them out along with envelopes asking for money to help pay lawyers and print brochures. He passed out postcards at meetings and environmental events—getting people to write to their congressman or the Forest Service or [Bureau of Land Management] etc." His letters were published in major daily newspapers, including the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*.⁷¹ In his files, after having the same letter published in four separate Arizona newspapers, Bob beamed, "It never hurts to send the same letter to all the papers."⁷² He encouraged readers to take action by writing elected officials, ambassadors, international research institutes, and other people and organizations that might need to be lobbied.⁷³ As he wrote, at first on a typewriter and later on a computer, he listened and hummed to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, his muse. Bob liked to envision himself as the renegade CIA agent-turned-writer Miles Kendig (played by Walter Matthau) in his favorite film, *Hopscotch* (1980). He always tried to keep one step ahead of any adversary.⁷⁴

He was a relentless record keeper, asking anyone he knew to send him documents and news clippings for his files and future spiral-bound lobbying packets. He would send self-addressed stamped envelopes with a Post-It Note requesting that willing allies forward to him anything of significance. On most newspaper clippings and reports, he would write notes in the margins, highlighting any errors or shocking material. He would photocopy published data and then when he received uncorrected or draft documents (often through Freedom of Information Act requests or from informants) that clearly went against later versions, he would place them side-by-side to point out manipulations, scheming, corruption, and falsification. Various lobbying packets were filled with Bob's handwritten notes, as were the 12,000 documents he kept in his files that pertained only to Mount Graham. Bob worked with Robin Silver to ensure that those records were digitized.

He always bemoaned the amount of money he spent on many of the campaigns. He joked that he was taking away from his children's inheritances. One close friend estimated that Bob likely spent hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years on various conservation movements.⁷⁵ He often funded the publication of lobbying materials, the work of activists around

⁶⁹ Witzeman, *Press Releases*, vol. I; Robert Witzeman, *Press Releases of The Maricopa Audubon Society and its Friends and Allies, 1991-2008*, vol. II (Phoenix: Maricopa Audubon Society, 2014).

⁷⁰ Witzeman, *Press Releases*, vol. I, 3-5.

⁷¹ Robert A. Witzeman, "Long List of Opponents To Telescope Project," letter to editor, *Wall Street Journal*, 6 July 1990, A7; Robert Witzeman, "Where Buffalo Roam, the Peace is Fragile," letter to editor, *The New York Times*, 30 August 1999, A19.

⁷² Robert Witzeman, "Ignoring laws may result in extinction of squirrels," letter to editor, *The Arizona Republic*, 15 July 1989; Robert Witzeman, "UofA project hurts," letter to editor, *The Phoenix Gazette*, 21 July 1989; Robert Witzeman, "Mountain harmony," letter to the editor, *Tempe, Mesa, Chandler Tribunes*, 23 July 1989; Robert Witzeman, "Environmental end run," letter to editor, *Tucson Citizen*, 27 July 1989.

⁷³ Bob Witzeman, "Mt. Graham Red Squirrel At The Crossroads," *Arizona Wildlife News*, August 1989.

⁷⁴ Burge, author interview, 4 August 2015.

⁷⁵ Burge, author interview, 4 August 2015.

the country (and in European campaigns), and even the transcription of certain meetings that he was then able to use at a later time to persuade or point out inconsistencies in the record. He paid for the transcription of a University of Minnesota Board of Regents' meeting, for example, as well as for newspaper articles written in German and Italian to be translated into English.

Witzeman cultivated friendships with a number of secret informants—some of whom he communicated with for decades. These were “inside” women and men—for example, biological scientists, researchers, astronomers, engineers, attorneys, and university professors—who provided him intel regarding, among other things, the machinations of the University of Arizona, astronomers, and politicians, as well as fudged building costs and astronomical studies.

“Graduate students funneled him information. They knew about this older guy named Bob who did conservation work,” stated Burge. “Bob taught me that enemy identification is the key. We got secret memos all the time. They would be hostile to you in public meetings, then funnel materials to you after the fact, as long as you had not impugned their honor or insulted their character.”⁷⁶ Bob often relished the opportunity to go on reconnaissance missions to document and photograph, for example, illegal tree thinning around the telescopes on Mount Graham or sites selected by business and government leaders for development.

No person seemed to know more about how to deal with the media. In that regard, he was a mentor to many activists who have followed his lead, as well as an advisor to people in the media. (In a letter to journalist Doug Frerichs of *The Phoenix Gazette*, Bob advised him regarding what he was up against in terms of media backlash from strong oppositional forces for articles he had written for *The Arizona Republic*.⁷⁷) He would send out fax blasts and sign-on letters that included nearly every single major environmental organization in the world. He maintained a list of media contacts that he would put to good use anywhere he traveled. In fact, he seemed willing to go anywhere for causes in which he believed. Lawyer Brock Evans of the Endangered Species Coalition wrote, “one incident stands out as a supreme example of Bob’s total commitment to fight for his vision, whatever it takes. It was January 1996,” according to Evans, who was giving a speech in Columbus, Ohio. “As I was getting ready, I looked around the room and saw a familiar, yet totally out of context, face in the audience—Bob Witzeman!”⁷⁸ In preparation for community hearings, meetings with government agencies, and environmental and media events, including some that received significant airtime, he created large posters and displays, as well as fine-looking books and fold-out brochures, with incorruptible and irrefutable facts, diagrams, photographs, quotations, and maps.⁷⁹ One of his last actions taken on behalf of the environment was to create a poster for Salt River Indian Community Earth Day event in April 2014. He was especially up-to-date regarding facts, figures, and economics of grazing, mining, logging, flood control, endangered species, and groundwater recharge. During many interviews and news conferences, he seemed always ready to answer any question, refute all disinformation, and argue calmly and forcefully for what he knew to be right.

It was easy to be the student when Bob spoke. Like the best teacher, he would encourage, remind, and sometimes admonish his readers. In 1988, he wrote, “Democracy may appear slow

⁷⁶ Burge, author interview, 4 August 2015.

⁷⁷ Frerichs, “Audubon Society to monitor”; Frerichs, “Mount Graham.”

⁷⁸ Evans to Carl, letter.

⁷⁹ Janet Witzeman to author, email, 3 June 2015.

and inefficient at times but it's the best system in the long run. Let's cherish it."⁸⁰ When fighting the Orme Dam project, he stated during one interview, "What we would like to point out is that if the gates of the dams were used optimally, they could end up with fairly full reservoirs and they wouldn't lose as much water as they're losing now." He continued, "We could be recharging that water into the groundwater table." His plans, as he made clear with maps and diagrams, were to "recharge the Valley's water table" in order to have "everybody's wells would use less electricity"—a "great thing," according to Bob.⁸¹ Indeed, he was able to within a few minutes reprimand the Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, state lawmakers, municipal governments, and various state agencies. He never let anyone interrupt him as he made sure to get across his key points. Bob was a delight to watch during these interviews. While other officials, including a "Mr. Donald" of the "establishment," answered questions with a word or two, Bob used his time to educate the audience and argue effectively at length for his side. In other interviews, he spoke about the prices of various crops, water, and dirt, offering percentages of water that went to grow crops in Arizona that were never suited for the desert.⁸²

In 2002, Bob spoke to the Living Rivers/Colorado Riverkeeper organization during a rally in Phoenix to protest ongoing ecological destruction caused by Glen Canyon Dam and stresses placed on the Colorado River.⁸³ In its publication a month later, Living Rivers/Colorado Riverkeeper called Bob the "dean of Arizona's conservation community" and stated that "He ended his speech with advice for forcing action from the powers-that-be: 'Constant pressure, constantly applied.'"⁸⁴ Bob repeated this quotation throughout the rest of his life. Bob commented, "Don't expect to win overnight. And don't focus on minor setbacks. Keep your eyes on the big picture." Furthermore, Bob told the *Audubon Activist*, "Sometimes you'll lose an area but make tremendous gains in public awareness and support. Use that to win the next one," he urged. In other places, Bob urged, "You have to be motivated to motivate others. Then let everyone play to their skills, whether they be speakers, writers, or organizers." As Bob put it, conservation work is "a never-ending process. The only way to stay sane is to make it fun."⁸⁵ According to one activist, Bob "always encouraged you to participate and get involved."⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Robert A. Witzeman, "Protect Mt. Graham," letter to editor, *Scottsdale Arizona Progress*, 28 September 1988, 5; Robert A. Witzeman, "No rush on scopes," letter to editor, *The Phoenix Gazette*, 29 September 1988, 5.

⁸¹ Janet Witzeman to author, email, 25 May 2015; "A Life Remembered."

⁸² "A Life Remembered"; Frank Welsh, author interview, 3 August 2015.

⁸³ See Russ Hemphill, "Powerful thirst: Demand to exceed limits on river," *The Phoenix Gazette*, 10 April 1990, A1-2.

⁸⁴ "Grand Canyon: Phoenix Takes Action," *Living Rivers Currents* (Living Rivers/Colorado Riverkeeper), 1 February 2002, <http://www.livingrivers.org/archives/article.cfm?NewsID=255>, accessed 30 June 2015; "Grand Canyon: Challenging Adaptive Management," *Living Rivers Currents* (Living Rivers/Colorado Riverkeeper), vol. 2, no. 2 (February 2002), 2, http://www.livingrivers.org/pdfs/LRC_v2_n2.pdf, accessed 30 June 2015. Activist and lawyer Brock Evans uses the phrase "Endless Pressure Endlessly Applied." See: <http://brockevans.org/>, accessed 30 June 2015. In 1999, Evans wrote, "As I am fond of saying, [Bob is] the finest exponent I know of our environmental formula for guaranteed success—'endless pressure, endlessly applied.'" Evans to Carl, letter.

⁸⁵ "One Gung-ho Individual," 12-13.

⁸⁶ Yozwiak, "Retired physician."

Bob never ended our phone conversations with any standard valediction; he would simply hang up the phone, but I never felt that he was being rude in any way. He was always willing to help, even when he was on vacation. I called him once whilst he was visiting his daughter in New York City and asked him to call into a radio program in Minnesota. The University of Minnesota (UMN) president was on Minnesota Public Radio. Bob called the program, got a tremendous amount of airtime seemingly without taking a breath, then received a rather vacuous response from the UMN president. But likely thousands of people heard that program and perhaps some were moved to action because of Witzeman's words.

Bob possessed an inexhaustible amount of energy—coupled with a tireless work ethic—that afforded him the ability to harness many of the skills in an activist's toolbelt.⁸⁷ As climate change activists Hilary Moore and Joshua Kahn Russell wrote in their pamphlet, *Organizing Cools the Planet*, activists generally fall into one or a few of seven distinct organizing roles. Bob arguably had the skills to be considered a representative for all seven, sometimes in overlapping ways. He represented “Direct support people” through his work for and with organizations such as MAS, Committee to Save the Fort McDowell Reservation, Citizens Concerned About the Project, Mount Graham Coalition, Apache Survival Coalition, and Apaches for Cultural Preservation, among many others. Bob was a “Movement servicer” who offered specific skill sets such as his knowledge of law, research expertise, and media literacy to assist “different groups, networks, and institutions.” He was clearly an “Amplifier” who was able to engage “political networks [and] media to highlight movement work and put pressure on targets.” Some of Bob's best work was as a “Bridge” who worked “at the intersections of different ... movements,” such as that of Indigenous and human rights and environmental groups. Indeed, while working with Indigenous communities, he was able to build the largest coalition of Native peoples and environmentalists at the time. He was a “Mobilizer” who was able to “leverage broader networks [including large environmental and indigenous peoples' organizations] to flex their muscles when needed,” even when he did not live in the areas about which these struggles were being waged. As a birdwatcher and photographer, as well as a superb writer, speaker, and storyteller, he acted as a “Cultural worker” who was able to amplify stories and do so in careful and accountable ways. Lastly, he was a “Community organizer” who embedded himself within various communities and stayed “for the long haul.”⁸⁸ Bob was “Democracy in Action,” the true embodiment of astounding citizenship and public ethics.

* * * * *

During the last decade of his life, Bob was tirelessly working to protect Oak Flat (or Chich'il Bildagoteel in the Apache language), an area within Tonto National Forest that is sacred to Western Apache people. Since “time immemorial,” Western Apaches have travelled to Oak Flat in order to conduct religious activities and girls' coming-of-age ceremonies. Oak Flat is also a valuable riparian area that is cherished by birders.⁸⁹ Bob was angry that McCain marginalized

⁸⁷ Burge, author interview, 4 August 2015.

⁸⁸ Hilary Moore and Joshua Kahn Russell, *Organizing Cools the Planet: Tools and Reflections to Navigate the Climate Crisis* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2011), p. 25, <https://organizingcoolstheplanet.wordpress.com/get-copies-of-ocp/>, accessed 26 June 2015.

⁸⁹ Bob Witzeman to Vernelda Grant, email, “RE: Oak Flat/Apache Leap Resolution Copper Bill,” 29 April 2005.

Western Apaches again and attempted an end run for a private mining company against an incredibly important ecological area that was significant and unique enough that both Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon protected it.⁹⁰ Indeed, in 1955, Eisenhower signed Public Land Order 1229, which placed this land off limits to future mining activity.

After Bob's death, Arizona politicians gave large portions of this federal forest, including Oak Flat, to an international copper mining company, in exchange for degraded privately held land elsewhere in Arizona. The Arizona delegation attached a rider to a must-pass military appropriations bill in Congress that privatized 2400 acres of this federal land. That Arizona's Congressional delegation was unable to give the land away until after Bob's death speaks volumes about his abilities as an adversary.⁹¹ "Bob is the only one in the conservation community who actually went out and investigated these places and found them to be degraded and worthless." Indeed, "Bob visited these sites and took photos and found them to be overgrazed, bone dry riverbeds with no riparian values," according to Janet Witzeman.⁹²

Bob had a tell it like it is attitude and was even willing to call out the hypocrisy of the organizations he supported such as Audubon Arizona (AA), the Nature Conservancy, and the Sonoran Institute. "It seems everybody is being bought off," exclaimed Bob.⁹³ Bob asked, "Were you aware the National Audubon office in Phoenix (it's called Audubon Arizona) favors the RCC [Resolution Copper Company and Rio Tinto] mine land swap and has been bought off by their cash contributions to them?" The reason as Bob saw it was because of the money. "AA has published in their newsletters the hundreds of thousands of dollars the mine has given them annually in charitable contributions. It amounts to way over \$300,000.... And National Audubon will receive some \$5,000,000 or so worth of land (some 1000 acres) to add to their NAS research ranch in Elgin, Arizona, from RCC if the land swap is consummated." Wrote Bob, "What a tragedy to think Audubon is prostituting themselves and destroying an irreplaceable riparian and ecological treasure in GAAN (Devil's) Canyon and an extraordinary USFS campground wetland

⁹⁰ Ryan Van Velzer, "Arizona copper mine stirs debate pitting profits vs religion," *Yahoo News*, 2 July 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/arizona-copper-mine-stirs-debate-pitting-profits-vs-060945912--finance.html>, accessed 3 July 2015.

⁹¹ Robert A. Witzeman to Congressman Harry Mitchell, letter, 30 March 2009, in *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), vol. LIX, no. 2 (Summer 2009), 3, <http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/Wrendition%20Summer%2009.pdf>, accessed 1 July 2015.

⁹² Janet Witzeman to author, email, 29 July 2015. See his report here: <http://www.mining-law-reform.info/landswap.htm>, accessed 25 October 2015. Janet Witzeman to author, email, 3 June 2015; Bob Witzeman, "Land Swap Threatens Our Public Lands: Oak Flat Campground on the Chopping Block," 2-sided flyer, n.d.; Bob Witzeman, "Devil's Canyon, riparian masterpiece threatened by a mine," 2-sided flyer, n.d.; Witzeman, "National Audubon Society at the Crossroads," Winter 2004, Winter 2005, and Fall 2005; Maricopa Audubon Society, "The Proposed Oak Flat Land Exchange," flyer, 2005; Bob Witzeman, "MAS Defends Cultural & Environmental Education," *The Cactus Wrendition* (Maricopa Audubon Society), Spring 2007, 12-13; Witzeman, "Rep. Gosar removes NEPA oversight from Oak Flat Land Swap"; Witzeman, "Oak Flat Update."

⁹³ "LAND Outdoor exchange," *Arizona Republic*, 18 April 2005.

ecosystem removed permanently from mining by Eisenhower and Nixon.”⁹⁴ Bob proclaimed, “We would be brain dead to believe that the money they’ve given to Audubon Arizona doesn’t have anything to do with the land exchange.... It’s a red flag.”⁹⁵

Bob was clearly ahead of the times. The concerns he raised in the 1970s about dam construction and the USBR have been supported in the recent past as various citizens and public officials have called for the abolishment of the USBR, a halt on any new dam projects, the elimination of government subsidies for desert agriculture, and even the removal of Glen Canyon Dam.⁹⁶ He certainly would have involved himself against plans to build new dams and reservoirs in Alaska, Colorado, and Texas.⁹⁷

As much as this essay is a tribute to Bob Witzeman and his unparalleled legacy, it is also an invitation and a call to action.⁹⁸ As his longtime friend and fellow activist (and conspirator) Frank Welsh put it during Bob Witzeman’s memorial service, “His fight is over and now we must carry on” what he started.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Bob Witzeman to author, email, 8 October 2010. See also, Witzeman, “National Audubon Society at the Crossroads,” Winter 2004, Winter 2005, and Fall 2005; Witzeman, “MAS Defends Cultural & Environmental Education.”

⁹⁵ Johnson, “Company seeking copper mine forges pact with town.”

⁹⁶ Daniel P. Beard, *Deadbeat Dams: Why We Should Abolish the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Tear Down Glen Canyon Dam* (Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 2015); J. E. O’Connor, J. J. Duda, and G. E. Grant, “1000 dams down and counting,” *Science*, 1 May 2015, 496-7.

⁹⁷ See: Ben Knight and Travis Rummel, dirs., *DamNation*, Felt Soul Media, 2014; Bruce Finley, “Parker dam and reservoir offer hope for thirsty Colorado Communities,” *The Denver Post*, 2 November 2015.

⁹⁸ John Welch to author, email, 18 November 2015.

⁹⁹ Frank Welsh, “For Doc Witzeman’s Funeral,” 2014.