

August 17, 1970

Dear Dr. Porter:

We wish to extend to you, and to those individuals who have assisted you in preparing the SIERRA CLUB publications, our most sincere appreciation. We find in both photographs and accompanying text, an eloquent and masterful statement dedicated to the wilderness and its beauty. We are indebted to you for awakening us to the necessity of its preservation. It was largely in your work that we were able to discover the magnitude and beauty of our wildlands. Places which we now feel dedicated to preserve and enjoy.

Through exposure to sources which publish your work, and that of others like Ansel Adams, we have been motivated to learn about wildness and to get out and become involved in even its most minute details. We are beginning to express our impressions on film and aspire to become increasingly more proficient and knowledgeable in this area of photographic art.

At this point we have made only a few photographs which illustrate to us the extent of our vision and that which remains to be discovered. We are sure that you can well understand the "growing pains" accompanying ones learning to see--and overcoming the technical difficulties as well. These arise despite my having ten years experience as a photographer in the Navy and a subsequent education in design. At this point, my Wife and I are working to discover new techniques in even the most simple rudiments of photographic documentation. Later, as we progress, we hope to discover our individual "styles".

Our present goal is to attempt to follow your own example. As our sensitivities become more acute, and our attitude towards Nature becomes nourished through more exposure and education; we hope to achieve our goal and become totally committed to the Art which you have mastered.

Should it be possible, we would like to establish correspondence with you and send examples of our work for your periodic attention. We do not wish to encumber you with an endless barrage of letters and photographs. We would like to learn of a way in which we can comfortably exchange correspondence, and ultimately, secure an opportunity to meet and visit with you in Santa Fe. We have no intentions of selling our work. If you find any of it satisfactory, we would appreciate your comments and criticism. If you find that our photographs are to your liking and wish to use them, we would gladly give them to you without obligation. In this manner we display our gratitude for your inspiring us, and share the work with others through communications in the Conservation Effort.

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We are young people with a great desire to live and enjoy our lives. We are idealistic and, certainly naive. For several years we have lived here in Los Angeles; attending Art Center College of Design, and working as professional graphic and industrial designers. We have taken advantage of the positive aspects of the city and endured the negatives of a megalopolis. We have managed our finances well enough to overcome the debts incurred while in school and still save enough to be able to leave in search of a better way of life.

At this point we are working to achieve this goal. We are looking forward to finding a smaller city or community, free from congestion and smog, where we can make a modest living in support of our needs. We wish to find first a small apartment or house we can rent until we can purchase land. We would like to set up a studio and practice our craft. It will be necessary for us to find some employment alternative to Art; lest we were fortunate enough to find a professional opportunity. We have written to the Chambers of Commerce in the areas we prefer. We are also investigating other areas. Our only present criteria is that we remain in the West. I have also to write to the Chamber of Commerce in Santa Fe, and Taos. We have received information, and are contacting individuals in Sedona and Oak Creek Canyon, Arizona. Our goal is to leave Los Angeles within the year; possibly as soon as Christmas. Should our search continue for a longer period of time, we will wait and not sacrifice the quality of environment that might be afforded us through a more diligent search.

We sincerely hope that we have not burdened you with this correspondence. We feel that your time is valuable and surely quite busy. Unfortunately we were unable to extend a more personal expression of our appreciation as would have been possible had we been able to meet with you. Whether or not you return correspondence, our feelings remain as we have expressed them...and we are grateful to you.

Mr. and Mrs. Mel Schockner
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Hollywood, California
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Very sincerely,
Mel Schockner
Jan Schockner