

For Elizabeth and Lara

Look Wider Still

The Subversive Nature of Girl Scouting in the 1950s

SUSAN H. SWETNAM

As those who follow women's issues in the media will be aware, over the past few years Girl Scouts of the USA—an organization the name of which has been a byword for wholesomeness, even squareness—has become a flashpoint in the twenty-first century culture wars over reproductive rights, diversity, and the alleged erosion of “American family values.” Girl Scouting, critics charge, has become outrageously liberal, even morally suspect. Indiana state representative Bob Morris made national headlines when he voted against a resolution congratulating American Girl Scouting on its 2012 centennial, asserting that all but three of the fifty role models presented on the Girl Scouts of the USA's (GSUSA) website were “feminists, lesbians, and/or Communists.”¹ Critics have charged GSUSA with promoting an LGBT agenda, citing acceptance of a transgender girl into a Denver troop.² Commentators have lamented that the term “God” is now optional in the Girl Scout Promise and have complained that activities in the Girl Scout curriculum encourage girls “to explore mazes and stone or dirt labyrinths—symbols rooted in pagan mythology.”³ They have warned the public of national staff members' affiliation with organizations that support sex education, abortion, and/or gay marriage.⁴ GSUSA has even been accused of encouraging promiscuity.⁵ Based on such allegations, the right-wing Catholic Eternal World Television Network recently produced an exposé documentary series called “Girl Scouts: Mission Aborted” with episodes titled “Dangerous Liaisons” and “Indoctrinating Our Daughters, the Girl Scout Curriculum” [*sic*].⁶

Disaffected Girl Scouts and their parents have contributed to the public outcry. Two “brave former Girl Scouts” (as one web page calls them) have begun a pro-life, anti-Scout blog called “Speak Now Girl Scouts,” on which they write, “We refuse to remain silent while this organization's unscrupulous principles mislead over 2 million girls.”⁷ Another ex-Scout made a media splash in the wake of the Denver transgender controversy when she posted a call on

YouTube (which has since gone private) urging a boycott of Girl Scout cookie sales. “GSUSA cares more about promoting the desires of a small handful of people than it does for my safety and the safety of my friends and sister Girl Scouts,” she said.⁸ One mother who pulled her daughters from Scouting told the conservative WND news network, “I feel misled, betrayed, offended, and hurt,” recommending as an alternative the American Heritage Girls, a group said to be “building women of integrity through service to God, family, community, and country.”⁹

Such criticism gives the impression—as words like “betrayed” and phrases like “Mission Aborted” suggest—that in recent years Girl Scouting has deviated radically from its roots, becoming an organization espousing a far different ethos than it did historically. Once upon a time, the implication goes, the movement offered desirable training in healthy principles for girls, but now, in a sad sign of the times, it is attempting to substitute fashionable liberal values for solid “mainstream” ones.¹⁰

Despite such nostalgia for an alleged golden age of Scouting, however, considerable evidence suggests that encouraging its charges to think outside the conservative box is nothing new for Girl Scouting. Girl Scout historian Tammy Proctor, indeed, charts a series of controversies stretching from the movement’s very beginning, including allegations that scouting would turn girls into masculine tomboys (considered in more detail later in this essay), and disapproval of racially integrated and mixed-religion troops.¹¹ Even in the supposed golden age of “wholesome” American Girl Scouting, the 1950s, a national incident made the organization a target for conservative fire in a way reminiscent of the early twenty-first century.¹² This 1953–56 controversy has faded into obscurity over the past fifty years, not discussed in histories of Girl Scouting or mentioned by recent critics of the organization. But it made a great deal of noise at the time, as six fat folders of records at GSUSA headquarters in New York City attest. I discovered this collection by chance in the National Historic Preservation Center, Girl Scouts of the USA, while doing research for another project in 2011 (a centennial history of Girl Scouting in Idaho, where I now live) and returned to study the materials in their own right a year later.¹³ What these records demonstrate is that the mid-1950s were not an unobjectionable era in Girl Scouting but a moment of crisis, a point when nervous Cold War paranoia might have destroyed the movement had national leaders not deftly and quickly navigated urgent, delicate compromises. The second decade of the twenty-first century, it turns out, is hardly the first time that Girl Scouting has been charged with a hidden agenda or with misleading children.

As this essay documents, the 1953–56 allegations that Girl Scouting was of-

fering dangerously un-American propaganda to its charges eventually came to naught. Nevertheless, another kind of subversion *was* quietly but pervasively going on in the organization during that era: a challenge to the postwar period's conservative idealization of domesticity for women. Betty Friedan famously called this ethos "The Feminine Mystique," the belief that women could be totally fulfilled by life as wives and mothers, and she argued that pervasive unhappiness resulted from the lack of self-actualization it entailed.¹⁴

It is not that the corporate Girl Scout movement explicitly preached feminism. But the implication is there, clear for anyone who has eyes to see, in the subtext of 1950s Girl Scout materials, which tacitly encouraged young women to embrace wide horizons and open-minded values, to cultivate enthusiastic curiosity and confident autonomy. Recent scholarship in Girl Scouting, inspired by the organization's centennial in 2012, has begun to document this alternate history, belying iconic notions of the organization's innately conservative past. The work is compelling, chronicling a long history of delicate negotiations by generations of dedicated, strong, smart women who were anything but conventional.

And it is correct, as I can attest with more than research-based assurance. You see, I was there.



As a young girl in the late 1950s and early 1960s I spent many hours alone after school and during the summers in the woods and fields around my suburban Philadelphia home. I would prop myself against a maple deep in my parents' acre and an eighth to contemplate the electric vermillion of leaves against an October sky, or stroll the edges of a hilltop clearing nearby searching for the tender curls of spring fiddlehead ferns or first violets, just a girl enjoying her own company.

During those intervals I often daydreamed about what life might be like once I escaped Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, although I could never conjure up much of a concrete picture. The careers that our guidance counselors pushed on us—nurse, secretary, administrative assistant, public school teacher—did not interest me much. I had refused to form an opinion of which local neighborhood I wanted to live in, how many children I would have, and what their names would be.

I knew one thing, though: I was going to escape. I would travel, explore, live in the mountains or by the sea in some place where nobody was always looking over my shoulder, some place where adults were interested in more compelling things than high school sports and swim-club gossip. My work would transcend not just the domestic sphere that was my mother's but also the sort

of service occupations posed as appropriate for girls. My life would have a wider impact, I vowed—it would make a difference not just to a small number of people in a family circle or tiny community but would ripple outward in an expanding tide of influence. I dreamed of a life where I myself would expand as I aged (in contrast to the narrowed life I saw my mother leading, compared to her youth): I would learn new things all the time; I would be free to change as I felt like it. These moments of freedom under the open sky were just a taste of that open-ended future, I told myself as I waited with all the patience I could muster for life to start.

My mother was obsessed with newspaper stories about adolescent girls abducted and lone women murdered by chance maniacs down in the city, and I have a hard time imagining now how such lapses in protective custody could have taken place. Perhaps she did not notice, for my youngest brother and sister were just babies then, and she was trying hard (as I perceive now, anyway) to convince herself that she was happy with the life she said she had always wanted, there in the split-level day after day—living what I thought I recognized as a textbook incarnation of Friedan's theory when I read *The Feminine Mystique* as a college student.

What I do not have a hard time imagining is how I conceived a taste for open-air solitude and open-ended life horizons—even in the face of a girl culture at school that insisted you *were* your friends, and you had better be with them every minute, and think like them, and look like them. In that culture to be too serious, to crave solitude and the company of one's own thoughts, invited pretty much constant mockery, the kind that only girls can deliver to their own.

Still, I persisted, for I was being encouraged to dream outside the boxes of conventional suburban girl herd-culture. I belonged to an organization that was sneakily filling my head with radical notions about female autonomy. I was a Girl Scout.



Little did I dream when I became a Brownie Girl Scout that if recent history had unfolded in a different way, the organization might not have been there for me at all.

Almost completely forgotten today but chronicled in a set of records labeled "American Legion Controversy" in the Girl Scouts of the USA national archives, is the story of how Girl Scouting came in 1953–57 to be tarred briefly as a dangerous, even proto-communist organization. It makes fascinating reading.

Those years, of course, fall directly in the heart of the Cold War, soon after the end of World War II, when nervousness about the spread of Communism

and about nuclear war between the East and West dominated American political thinking. Stalin's efforts to subjugate European states in Russia's sphere of influence, Russia's quick development of its own atomic bomb, China's conversion to Communism, and the invasion of South Korea by communist forces fueled fears that the Soviets were determined to dominate the world; the highly publicized spy trials of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, Alger Hess, and Klaus Fuchs suggested that covert threats lurked in America itself.¹⁵ The internal war on Communism began well before Senator Joseph McCarthy held his intimidation-style hearings as chair of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations in 1953–54. The House Un-American Activities Committee was established in 1938, investigating first German American suspected Nazi sympathizers then moving soon to alleged communists; in 1947 President Harry Truman imposed a loyalty oath on millions of federal employees, and the subsequent Attorney General's List of Subversive Organizations promised serious consequences for those whose names appeared as members. McCarthy, though, brought anti-communist paranoia to new heights, assaulting the reputations of numerous famous and not so famous people in a highly public way.

By early 1954, when the Girl Scout crisis was at its height, multiple voices (including Truman's own) were chastising McCarthy for his use of innuendo, supposition, and bullying, and McCarthy's credibility would collapse that summer, a process helped along by Edward R. Murrow's critical broadcasts and McCarthy's own actions in televised hearings relating to alleged communist activity in the US Department of Defense (the Army-McCarthy Hearings).¹⁶ To be accused of fomenting a communist agenda was still serious business in 1954, however, and the subsequent public calumny and legal ramifications could bring down an individual or organization. In addition to potential loss of reputation and membership, as a nonprofit organization Girl Scouting faced potentially devastating tax consequences: if the movement had been determined to be a political advocacy group, it would have lost its tax-exempt status. The gifts that the organization depended on to fund programs would no longer have been tax-deductible for donors (and thus would certainly have fallen off); all income, even girls' dues and cookie profits, would have been subject to taxes, posing not just a loss of revenue but unthinkably complicated record-keeping logistics at the national, council, and local levels.

The crisis involving Girl Scouts began in California in 1953 when a member of the right-wing group America Plus noticed that the organization celebrated International Thinking Day (a long-time celebration of Scouting around the world) on February 22, rather than highlighting George Washington's birthday. This, he claimed, demonstrated the creeping influence of subversive internationalism in youth organizations. Another watchdog protested that

Girl Scout Leader Magazine had favorably reviewed two books by Langston Hughes and Dorothy Canfield Fisher, both identified as communists. Editorials critical of the movement appeared across the country, and outraged correspondence flowed into Girl Scout headquarters in New York.¹⁷

Enter Robert LeFevre, a rabidly anti-communist, anti-United Nations radio personality and editorial writer associated with right-wing organizations (the National Economic Council, the Congress of Freedom), who went on to found the libertarian Freedom School in Colorado.¹⁸ Seeking a speaker for an event, harried staff of a local Girl Scout Council in Florida who knew only that LeFevre was a radio host in their area invited him to give a talk, then were appalled when someone who had actually heard his broadcasts warned them of the screed that was likely to be presented. The hosts contacted LeFevre and requested that he speak about something other than politics. Offended, LeFevre backed out of the commitment. Then, always suspicious of those who did not welcome his agenda, he began a close reading of the latest edition of the *Girl Scout Handbook*.

On March 31, 1954, his exposé article, “Even the Girl Scouts,” appeared. He had discovered, LeFevre wrote, that Girl Scouting was dangerously un-American. One badge “require[d] girls to sing paeans of praise for the United Nations”; another directed girls to the League of Women Voters, a group LeFevre considered leftist; another endorsed socialism by offering “propaganda for government projects such as public housing.” In LeFevre’s judgment Girl Scouting endorsed indiscriminate racial mixing and derided free enterprise.¹⁹ “All American mothers,” he concluded, should “discourage their girls from joining [Girl Scouting] . . . until it . . . becomes what many think it is, a real American organization.”²⁰

LeFevre had read very selectively, ignoring the presence of the Pledge of Allegiance, American patriotic songs, and badges about American heritage in the handbook. He had also misread the tone of the movement’s long-time internationalism, which went only so far as promoting such innocuous activities as writing to pen pals and learning about others’ customs, games, and food.²¹

Nevertheless “Even the Girl Scouts” went the 1950s version of viral, reprinted and adapted in newspapers from coast to coast. Its message sparked outrage at the Girl Scouts from organizations including the DAR, the Minute Women, the National Economic Council, and the Pro-Constitution League. New allegations came up, including the charge that an eminent anthropologist who had addressed a Girl Scout convention was “pro-communist.”²² Soon the decade’s Rush Limbaughs were demanding an investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee, and LeFevre’s article was read into the *Congressional Record*.

In response GSUSA staff members undertook a systematic defense, issuing calm public statements and meeting personally with religious and political leaders. The organization also enlisted prominent allies as spokespeople, notably including Eleanor Roosevelt, whose leadership of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and championing of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights testified to a strong internationalist stance congruent with the Girl Scouts' own (and had similarly drawn conservative ire).²³ At the same time, though, they began judiciously editing the handbook to eliminate "misunderstandings."²⁴ Some of these changes addressed connotations that were admittedly unfortunate in that time and place: the "One World" badge, its designation evoking for conservatives the United Nations' supposed agenda of imposing a socialist-style world government with the authority to meddle in US domestic politics, was innocuously renamed "My World."²⁵ Other changes compromised with critics: the United Nations-related activities either disappeared from badge requirements or were made optional. Patriotism was foregrounded so that no one could miss it: three verses of the "Star Spangled Banner" were inserted prominently on previously blank front pages of the book. Even the most innocuous approbations of any communist state were edited away. On giving tea to the world, India was substituted where the original handbook had credited China—the communist power allied with North Korea in the recent Korean War.²⁶ Girl Scout leadership went to great lengths to publicize these revisions, distributing thousands of side-by-side inserts free to the rank and file across America before the actual handbook volumes came off the press.

Despite these efforts serious trouble erupted in August 1954, when the Illinois Chapter of the American Legion passed a resolution censuring GSUSA:

WHEREAS, J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, and various investigative committees of the Congress have warned that subversive and un-American influences are attempting to capture the minds of our youth, and

WHEREAS, The 1953 Handbook of the Girl Scouts gives United Nations and one-world citizenship precedence over American citizenship, and

WHEREAS, The writings of certain pro-Communist authors, so identified by government agencies, have been highly recommended in an official Girl Scout magazine . . . therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the American Legion Department of Illinois meeting . . . recommends withdrawal of all support of the Girl Scout

movement until such a time as the responsible directors . . . give irrefutable proof to the American public that they have taken definite measures to eliminate these un-American influences from the Girl Scout Handbook and publications . . .

RESOLVED, That this resolution . . . be referred to the 36th National Convention of the American Legion . . . for its adoption and concurrence.²⁷

Fortunately for the future of American Girl Scouting this resolution proved to be the apogee of threat. A backlash immediately began in the press. “How Screwed Can the Legion Get?” asked the *Chicago Daily Sun-Times*. “Time to Grow Up,” proclaimed the *Christian Century*, deriding the Illinois Legion as “ridiculous.” The national American Legion convention, held a few weeks after the Illinois meeting, ultimately declined to offer censure (though it did urge that handbook revisions go further); the next spring LeFevre’s threat to mobilize the American Congress of Freedom against Girl Scouting fizzled.²⁸ No GSUSA staff member ever went before the McCarthy hearings. The last “blows” of the incident came, in fact, not from conservatives but from long-time liberal friends of Scouting, people upset that the staff had compromised at all. “Girl Scouts in Retreat,” wrote Ben H. Bagdikian in a *Providence Journal* article later adapted for the *Atlantic Monthly*, accusing the organization of “purg[ing]” the handbook. “What’s the matter with you people?” asked a Wellesley professor. “Can’t you stand on your own feet and do your own thinking? What has become of the progressive, forward-looking spirit [of] Girl Scouts in the past?”²⁹ By early 1956, however, even these letters had stopped arriving in New York, and the “American Legion Controversy” was effectively over.



Despite the fact that the American Legion crisis had occurred just a few years before I became a Girl Scout in 1958, no one in Willow Grove ever expressed suspicion over Girl Scouts’ political leanings, at least in my hearing as a Scout. Even if concerned parents had followed the story on the news a few years before, the whole matter was irrelevant to my troop, for neither LeFevre nor the Legionnaires could have found anything remotely offensive in the political cast of our activities. We practiced endless flag ceremonies, sang patriotic songs, and learned about American history. Though we did observe the iffy Thinking Day, that celebration’s manifestation was bland in our Caucasian, middle-class suburban troop: we dressed up as we imagined the garb of our ancestors (mostly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century immigrant Germans and Britons, with a few Italians). Listening to our leaders harangue us about

how lucky those souls had been to come to this melting-pot country of freedom and how lucky we were to live here, we snacked on crumb cake, butter cookies, and the occasional exotic cannoli.

The dominant theme was domesticity, not politics. Nothing in our communal troop activities would have ever led an observer to imagine that the straightened portrait of “domestic and quiescent” 1950s womanhood that Friedan presents in *The Feminine Mystique* was not universal, that many women in that decade were in fact moving into the workforce; or were active in reform, civil rights, and peace movements and in politics; or were reading magazine articles that affirmed a more complex and empowered image of women than stereotypes suggest.³⁰

Instead of tasting these possibilities, we spent our meetings preparing to be good wives and mothers under the tutelage of our uniformly stay-at-home-mom leaders. In fairness, some of these women may also have been volunteering for interesting causes, may have been college educated and had careers to which they hoped to return some day, and may have had rich intellectual or artistic lives. If so, however, none ever leaked a hint to us girls that such self-actualization was achievable or even desirable.

By far the best-worn parts of our handbooks were the “You and Your Home” and “Health and Safety” sections. We spent much of our collective meeting time fulfilling requirements for the Homemaker, Housekeeper, Hospitality, Good Grooming, Home Health and Safety, Home Nurse, Nutrition, Child Care, Seamstress, and Interior Decoration badges.³¹ Along the way we practiced making beds precisely; we learned the right way to clean a stove; we made safety surveys of our homes; we assembled a bath tray for a baby; we dramatized making emergency calls to the fire department; we discussed good conversational topics for dinner parties. I was scolded for reversing the spoons and knives when we learned to set a table and for leaving the tail of thread in my sewing needle too long. Field trips took place in leaders’ kitchens, where we practiced baking peanut butter cookies until the exactly desirable shade of brown was achieved, and we conducted a cook-off to see which brand of boxed chocolate cake mix tasted best (as I recall, Duncan Hines won).

The service component of Girl Scouting (reciting the Promise, we vowed that we would learn to “help other people at all times”) was fulfilled in my troop not in potentially messy causes but as preparation for a modern version of the “municipal housekeeping” spirit embraced by early twentieth-century women’s clubs, wherein women volunteered for unobjectionable civic causes.³² We spent two months on the My Community badge, brainstorming ways to make our town a “nicer place to live.” We learned about the PTA and investigated how the women’s groups associated with our churches (to which

we were all assumed to belong) helped others. We gave dutiful reports on how we might prepare our homes for a local emergency and on how we could make newcomers feel welcome. It was all unutterably dreary.

Some slightly less domestic themes did creep in occasionally. We practiced tying a few knots; we learned about types of clouds and what weather they presaged. We even went camping once a year. But these brief forays into the out-of-doors were extremely protected, quasi-domestic expeditions. Our “wilderness” was always a neat little municipal park just a few miles from home, complete with cabins, flush toilets, and mown lawns. Short violent episodes of Capture the Flag aside, what I remember is much emphasis on keeping the cabins neat, many early morning and twilight flag ceremonies, and lots of camp cooking, including breakfasts of Bisquick strips wrapped around sticks, and foil packet dinners consisting of fatty hamburger, undiluted Campbell’s vegetable soup, and chopped-up potatoes that never seemed to cook through.

I also remember shame on those camping trips, for we had reached sixth grade by that point, and the taunting of those who were “different” had begun. I was definitely different, because I was “a brain,” a disgraceful metonymy in that time and place. Cabins without adults present are perfect places for clusters of girls to sit and whisper and laugh, while other girls sit alone with burning ears, pretending not to care. My Girl Scout leaders, like my school teachers, never seemed to notice when I was chosen last for activities, never seemed to register the rolling eyes and mutterings when I limped over to my clean-up patrol. The disgrace of those episodes came rushing back when I heard the news of the Columbine school shootings, paired with a momentary and immensely disquieting sense of solidarity with those also-bullied outsider boys.

So why did I last in Girl Scouting as long as I did, right up to the verge of junior high? And how can I claim to have been radicalized by it in my sense of what it might mean to be a woman?

Because even as a girl I had discovered another Girl Scouting, one lurking behind the highly selective, partial version of Scouting presented in our troop. This realization dawned because, with characteristic serious-girl earnestness, I had done something that neither my leaders nor my fellow Scouts seemed to have imagined: I had actually read the whole *Junior Girl Scout Handbook*. In it I discovered another Girl Scouting, a program that fascinated me with its focus on more spontaneous and challenging outdoor activity than we were experiencing, its wealth of topics in the arts and sciences, and its assumption that girls might be competent to take risks. I examined the orienteering section of the handbook with longing and the instructions for using a jackknife with wonder (the only knives we ever saw were those I misplaced in table settings). Dipping ahead to the Curved Bar rank, I even found encourage-

ment to reflect in solitude on my own particular gifts and temperament. “Of course everyone needs to feel that she is an individual,” the handbook assured me. “The important thing is to get better acquainted with yourself.”³³ In these parts of the handbook that our leaders ignored, I found nothing less than an implicit manifesto: a call for girls to imagine themselves as potentially self-determined beings who follow their own individual callings, to imagine life as an evolving adventure.

“Can I earn extra badges on my own?” I asked my leaders. Sure, they said, though they raised their eyebrows at such strange enthusiasm. But my mother would have to vet my work, and she would need to modify activities to fit a solitary badge earner.

Bless her heart, she agreed, for though she was always nervous and protective, she always encouraged my curiosity. Thus I earned Reader, Writer, Traveler, Rambler (laying out a nature trail in my home woods for my little brother and sister), an arts sampler badge called Dabbler, Drawing and Painting, World Neighbor (with its now-optional activities about the United Nations), Language, Garden Flower, Wild Plant, Bird, Star, Weather, Adventurer, Back Yard Camper, Magic Carpet (a folklore badge), Architecture, and even Beekeeper. I was able to complete the latter, incidentally, because it did not require a Scout actually to keep bees (that would have been too much for my mother)—only to learn about them.

By the time I quit, unable to stand the bullying any longer and turning toward the alternate call to intellectual curiosity that more advanced grades in school offered, my sash was too full to hold another badge on the front, and I was starting to fill the back.



What I had sensed independently back in the mid-1950s was an abiding paradox that shaped Girl Scouting from its earliest roots: a careful dance between reinforcing the socially acceptable norms of a particular time and place and inviting girls to imagine lives beyond such constraints. One of the several histories of Girl Scouting produced for the movement’s centennial, Proctor’s *Scouting for Girls: A Century of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts*, discusses this theme at length. Proctor notes that British Girl Guides, the parent organization of American Girl Scouts, broke from the Boy Scout movement in 1909 due in part to fears expressed by the public that the girls who tagged along on Boy Scout events would become “too masculine and [neglect] their womanliness.” To preempt such claims, domestic training, child care, and nursing activities were prominently featured in the early Girl Guide/Girl Scout curriculum. While a greater focus was placed on encouraging girls’ bravery and self-

reliance during war years, Girl Scout publications and publicity during the 1950s “overemphasized the domestic training of girls,” according to Proctor, following the era’s widespread belief that home life would serve as a bulwark against Communism. In the 1960s and 1970s a new challenge, this one from liberals, arose as a generation concerned with social justice and feminism judged the organization’s programming to be old-fashioned and irrelevant, and membership declined. The women who shaped Girl Scout programming in those decades responded thoughtfully, as the 1950s administrators had, re-vamping the curriculum to speak to contemporary interest in women’s self-discovery and self-assertion and to encourage appreciation of diversity.³⁴

Despite changes in the areas of the program that are foregrounded in any given period, despite the inclinations of leaders of particular troops (who have considerable freedom to tailor the program to accord with local interests or their own), the *Girl Scout Handbook*, thorough all its myriad revisions, has always offered a diverse, even progressive picture of what it might mean to be a woman. Outdoor activities, science, the arts, sports, creative activity, geography and foreign cultures, civic participation, interpersonal relationships, ethical values, and careers, along with domestic pursuits, have been featured in all editions since the first, *How Girls Can Help Their Country*, in 1913.

The most direct way to account for such breadth of interest is to consider the women who created the movement and shaped it during its formative years (and who continue to shape it today, but that subject is beyond the scope of this essay). These were women whose own horizons were expansive, to say the least, women who would naturally have wished for young women to explore potential interests freely, to find joy in working with other women, and to imagine courageously expanding personal futures, as they had in their own lives. Hardly dangerous proponents of un-American ideas, they were simply dedicated to passing on values they themselves had found life-affirming and inspirational.³⁵

America’s very first Girl Scout, Juliette Gordon Low, was an independent widow who on her own initiative took up the cause of bringing the movement to America. After a stint in England during which she discovered and worked in Girl Guiding, Low returned to the United States and spent decades crafting the systematic nationwide organization that came to be called Girl Scouts. Low’s enthusiasm for Girl Scouting and her obvious competence soon drew other strong women to join her, notably Helen Osborne Storrow, daughter of a delegate to the Seneca Falls conference and wife of a prominent New England attorney. Storrow had studied abroad when young and was dedicated to international friendship (she was an enthusiastic proponent of international folk dancing, in particular); through her connections and efforts she helped

secure Our Chalet, the first international Girl Scout center, after World War II. With her husband and later as a widow, she worked for prison reform and social justice in Massachusetts.

The generation of national leaders who followed these founders—the generation that shaped Girl Scouting during the 1950s, when I was a member—consisted of equally powerful, cosmopolitan, and accomplished women. Notable among them was Dorothy Stratton, who as executive director piloted the organization safely through the LeFevre–American Legion crisis. One of the earliest members of NOW, Stratton came to Scouting after holding demanding administrative positions as dean of women at Purdue; founding director of SPARS, the women’s Coast Guard Reserve; and director of personnel for the International Monetary Fund. Among her right-hand women was field troubleshooter Marguerite Twohy, who began her public service career as a social worker with immigrants in New York and spent years establishing culturally sensitive Girl Scout troops on American Indian reservations and in Japan, Korea, and the Philippines.³⁶

The national figure in that period who turned out to have the deepest influence on my own life, though I did not register her name at the time, was Janet Evelyn Tobitt, folklorist, music historian, and thoroughgoing citizen of the world. “Toby” was born in Great Britain in 1898, became a Girl Guide, and served with particular distinction in young womanhood as a camp director.³⁷ She studied art at London University, earned a degree from St. Andrews University in Scotland, and continued her academic work in France and Switzerland. At one point she served briefly as island commissioner of Malta. In 1930 she made what was intended as a six-month visit to the United States to work as a camp counselor and consultant for GSUSA but stayed to become naturalized and to accept an appointment as GSUSA music consultant.

In that capacity Toby compiled songbooks tailor-made for Girl Scouts, books heavy on folksongs from around the world, including the very popular *The Ditty Bag*, first published 1946, along with songs composed specifically for Scouting. She presented song and folk-dance workshops not only for Girl Scout leaders and camp staff but also for community groups and other youth organizations, and she gave workshops for school and university teachers. She continued to pursue her scholarly passion as “an inveterate traveler,” visiting Europe, Asia, Africa, and the American heartland to collect and preserve songs, dances, and music-related games. One of her notable projects, accomplished during a 1938 sabbatical, was a year-long survey of music and music-based recreational activities in two hundred towns and hamlets in Great Britain. In all Toby published twenty-one books, including anthologies of folksongs from East Asia, of African American songs, and of singing

games based on folk songs. Toby never married. She maintained her energy and sense of purpose into old age: her last book, *A Counselor's Guide to Camp Singing*, appeared in 1971, when she was seventy-three, and she continued to give workshops until shortly before her death a decade later.

Toby came into my life via *Sing Together: A Songbook*, our troop's source for music. Like camping, communal singing has always been a part of Girl Scouting and Girl Guiding worldwide, integral to ceremonies and rituals, and my troop honored this tradition. We opened and closed every meeting with a song and often sang to punctuate other activities.

Thus, when I came across a vintage duplicate of *Sing Together* a few years ago during research for the centennial history of Girl Scouting in Idaho, I opened it with happy nostalgia, expecting sweet and familiar tunes. What those tunes' lyrics revealed after the forty years I had spent analyzing text and subtext as an English professor, though, was startling.

It had not been just the "extra" parts of the *Handbook* that first suggested to me that a woman might actively, fearlessly seek physical and psychic spaces where she could be herself. It had also, even primarily, been Toby's songs.

What a disconnect there was between these songs' collective message and the zeitgeist of everything else we did as a troop! These were songs about freedom, about self-determination. Perhaps our leaders had wanted to inspire us to a life beyond domesticity after all; perhaps they had just been tone-deaf to the words' implications.

These are songs not about settling into conventional roles and indoor life, but about finding one's own path. Many evoke the pleasures of literally breaking away, of physically heading out for the territory. "Barges, I would like to go with you," the girl-narrator of one sings from her harborside bedroom window. "I would like to sail the ocean blue." "My home's in Montana," the nine-year-old me sang, imagining myself as a solitary range rider, and "It's the far northland that's calling me away . . . as I step with sunlight for my load." "Behold the world that lies outside / Your windowsill," one urged us, advising, "When you think you're looking wide, / Look wider still!"³⁸

I had not realized until I revisited that songbook that we sang so much about gypsies—not gypsies as scary vagrants, as in eighteenth-century novels or contemporary travel guides, but gypsies as aspirational figures. "A gypsy's life is free and gay," one song begins. A second ventriloquizes a narrator who blithely abandons her prosperous new husband, then, when cornered, has the audacity to declare for the open road: "O what care I for my house and my lord? / What care I for money-o? . . . I'm off with the rattle-taggle gypsies."

Hiking was also a prominent topic, though my troop never did any. "Swinging along the open road under a sky that's clear," one tune went; another cele-

brated us as “Girl Scouts together . . . winding the old trails, rocky and long.” In one grace, we even thanked God for “all winding roads.”

As a girl I especially loved “Sing Your Way Home.” Though its characters were obviously headed home (which was fine by me, because though I fantasized about sleeping rough, as a girl I had little desire to do it), the narrative itself was set during joyful rambling. In that tune’s gentle rhythm, the beat became the stride, and I often hummed it to myself as I walked home from those dreamy intervals in the fields and woods, dreaming of the days to come when I too would be free to “roam” as I wished in a more comprehensive sense:

Sing your way home
At the close of the day.
Sing your way home,
Drive the shadows away.
Smile every mile
For wherever you roam,
It will brighten your road,
It will lighten your load,
If you sing your way home.

My absolute favorite, though—a song that has remained a personal anthem—was the Welsh folksong “The Ash Grove.” Even at age eight I could tell that it was voicing a proposition I had never previously been invited to consider: that seeking solitude in the natural world was not an aberrant impulse to be overcome but a step toward enlightenment. With a spirit craving more silence than my world allowed, with panic instinctively rising as I imagined what life in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, might be like when I was thirty or fifty, I clung to its words as an alternate vision of the future:

The ash grove how, how graceful, how plainly tis speaking,
The harp wind through it playing has language for me . . .
Down yonder green valley where streamlets meander
When twilight is fading I pensively rove.
Or at the bright noontide in solitude wander,
Amid the dark shades of the lonely ash grove . . .
The ash grove, the ash grove, alone is my home.

There in the church basement room where my Girl Scout troop met, in my parents’ acre and an eighth woods, and in the corridors of Upper Moreland High School, I taught myself to trust that I would someday have an ash grove

of my own—a psychic and literal place where I could be myself, unconventional as that might be. It was okay to be “different,” to break from the herd, the song seemed to suggest. It was okay to listen to your own voice, to trust your inner truth.

Anthems are powerful things, as every organizer knows. And, courtesy of Toby, this anthem went a long way toward ruining me for conventional domestic life—if I had had any tendency in that direction to begin with.

I was being fed subversive ideas by Girl Scouts, all right, but not in the way that the critics of 1953–56 feared, nor in the form disturbing critics today.



As it turns out I have experienced a wonderful succession of ash groves in my life. I found the first at the University of Delaware in 1968–74, where I majored in English then earned an MA, reveling in the joy of losing myself in all-absorbing intellectual work. After a PhD at the University of Michigan (where it was a disgrace *not* to be a “brain”—who knew?), I took a deep breath in 1979 and looked “wider still” to southeast Idaho. The job I accepted teaching writing and literature at Idaho State University has proven to be the first and last I have ever wanted or needed. The classrooms where I have taught, the office where I have met with generations of graduate students, and my writing desk at home have all been ash groves for me.

I have done a great deal of literal and figurative roving around that stable center over the intervening years. My research interests have evolved from fiction theory to regional literature and culture, creative nonfiction, and foodways scholarship; I have grown into a creative writer and teacher of advanced writing students. Early on I discovered public humanities work and in its service have explored the obscure by-ways of the American West, traveling alone to another public library discussion session, another talk, another project aimed at preserving a piece of folk history that might have interested Toby.

I have also managed to sing my way home in my personal life. After moving to Idaho I married a colleague, a Wordsworthian and poet, a mountaineer with a taste for open spaces and confident women. For a decade and a half we walked the Intermountain West outback together. Thanks to my husband Ford I learned to take new kinds of risks, and the spirit of those mountain afternoons helped save me when he died young of cancer and I was left a widow at fifty.

I am still a mountain Rambler, sometimes a solitary one by choice, in my sixties now, newly retired after thirty-five years of teaching. The joy of wind raking across my face as I crest a sage-covered ridge or the abrupt coolness as a trail bends into a stand of ponderosa pines on a July afternoon is as fresh as it has ever been, and I feel just as strong. Occasionally when hiking I think

about those girls who made life so hard for me back in Willow Grove in the mid-1950s. I hope that they can see the sky from wherever they ended up, even if just from a window.

Admittedly a life spent pursuing, as Melville puts it, one's "own straight path to the sea" does carry some costs. "You're such a rebel," a man I briefly dated after being widowed told me, and he did not mean that as a compliment. "Selfish" is a word that often whispers around the edge of consciousness. Back at the beginning of adulthood, in the 1970s, I left the man I married as an undergraduate, fleeing suffocation he did not intend, as determinedly as that gypsy left her husband. And Ford and I had no children.

But that is not quite true, for I do have children, in a gypsy sort of way. I gave birth one sunny morning in 1989 in a church, when our friends' baby, for whom I was serving as godmother, turned and fixed me in a solemn glance. "I know you," the look said, and in that instant I fell forever in love. When Elizabeth was six I began a Girl Scout troop for her. Thus I acquired a dozen daughters.

For the next seven years, from 1994 through 2001, we pursued with a vengeance the comprehensive and wide-ranging spirit of Girl Scouting that I had loved as a child. We first went tent camping when the girls were five and six (a few, I learned that first night, had never even experienced indoor sleepovers, but they proved game). They sang Toby's songs around the campfire on that trip along with silly new ones; they learned wildflowers and clouds and knots; they laid trails for each other. As they got older we hiked a lot; we climbed rock walls and ran rivers. The girls shadowed women with careers they were curious about, went to science and art camps, learned to sew and folk-dance and hammer nails; shared mountains of books and wrote a few of their own collectively. They assumed the responsibility for choosing our service projects (helping rebuild the raptor house at the local zoo; making Christmas decorations with children at the homeless shelter). We were nothing if not eclectic.

Best of all, there was Harriman, an Idaho state park on the border of Yellowstone. After the girls learned to cross-country ski we undertook yearly winter weekend field trips there, hauling our gear on sledges the mile and a half in to the rustic bunkhouse. Though Harriman sits only at the forty-fourth parallel, it can seem like the arctic edge of the world, and over the years we saw wild swans in winter plumage and moose tracks and northern lights, and (a few of the girls swear, anyway) heard wolves howl deep in the night—a perception that might well have been true, given wolf reintroduction in nearby Yellowstone National Park, though I was too soundly asleep after a day of vigorous outdoor fun to be able to offer independent verification.

On those trips my Elizabeth and her best friend Lara (who became my unofficial goddaughter) and I evolved a last-morning ritual. We would rise at

6:00 a.m.—though so eager were these little girls that they often woke me at 3:00 and had to be shooed, comatose but protesting, back to their bunk beds. Then we would ski by the light of our headlamps to the cookhouse and set up breakfast for twenty. By the time the obligatory orange peel fight had ended and everything was laid out neatly against the others' awakening, light would be edging into the world, and we would pass the hour or so until breakfast time by skiing across vast open fields to the wooded bumps and rollers, sometimes in blizzards of goose-feather snow. I let Elizabeth and Lara find and follow the trails, and they always chose correctly at turnings and intersections. We never said much. We never had to.

When the girls turned into sulky teenagers drawn by the fleshpots of rah-rah high school sports, mall fashion, and friends with herd mentality, I feared that all this had been in vain. Elizabeth spoke of fleeing Idaho for some hip place; her friends got wilder; her conversation more snippy. Comprehensively popular, a soccer and track star, she started to look like a beautiful version of everybody else, and I tried not to think about how hard she might be on girls who were "different."

But horizons are wonderful things, both those that beckon you to trails you have never walked and the less literal ones where possibilities seduce you to new courses to teach, new books to read and write, new glimpses of who you are. Acolytes of the road have little choice, I believe, but to trust that whatever is waiting around the next bend will help "drive the shadows away." At any rate, that has proven true for me as the troop dissolved and after my husband died. It is proving true again as I write this article, turning from the career that has sustained me so well and so long to new doors opening.



In the end, I am thankful to recount, the spirit of Girl Scouting does seem to have made a lasting impression on my girls after all—along with the effects of their marvelous parents and their own substantial gifts, of course. In their twenties now, they show no sign of settling for anything remotely like straitened lives. One has begun an MA in California studying science fiction; another has just finished a post-BA year as an au pair in Germany and intends to return to Europe to study international relations; a third, on completing a double major in music and psychology, is moving East to pursue her vocal career. A fourth, also a psych major, just accepted an extremely gratifying first job: as a staff member for the Girl Scout Council in Denver. After a Boren fellowship in Chile, Lara is running her own independent engineering S-Corp in Missoula, though she insists that this is just a seed operation for her real vocation, making fine chocolates. By a chance that has nothing to do with either

our troop or my past but makes me shiver a little when I think about it, she and her husband have just started keeping bees.

And Elizabeth? She has just moved into the residency phase of her study at the University of Washington Medical School, not just at top of her class there but scoring in the 100th percentile on her boards. That's wonderful, of course. But it is an incident that took place several years ago, when she had failed on her first try in getting into medical school at all and this path was still uncertain, that I believe would most please Toby, Low, Storrow, and company with what it says about the resilient, confident perennial legacy of Girl Scouting.

I was giving a paper at a conference in Boston that October, and Elizabeth was living in the city, spending a year with Americorps to build her credentials—and to see what practicing in an American third world might be like (she was imagining Doctors Without Borders as a future then). We met at a grand restaurant and relaxed into being grown-ups together. For two hours this child who used to eat only hamburger and I talked and laughed over scallop sashimi and roasted squash soup, duck and salsify mash, warm chocolate cake, lush Pinot. I brought her up to date on Lara's adventures (the latter and I had traveled to Venice the previous Thanksgiving); we reminisced about snowy Harriman park visits. We talked about our work—she about her troubled clients, me about the Idaho centennial Girl Scout book I had started to write and what I had discovered in the GSUSA archives about the Legion controversy.

As we sipped the last of our wine, Elizabeth confessed that she had changed her mind about the joys of eastern urban living. She was keeping her fingers crossed for UW, but if she was not approved on the next time round, she would try other schools and keep trying until she was admitted somewhere. After all, she said with quiet determination, she could always do her internship in the West. And she would be back eventually anyway, buying a house in rural Idaho or Montana and practicing rural medicine after she burned out on international service, as she had learned people tended to do. "I miss the mountains," she said. "I miss the open space."

Afterwards we stood conspicuous in our bright mountain parkas among the black raincoats, waiting to cross the wide intersection between us and the MTA station. Theater district lights danced in the puddles; taxis honked.

"That's a cool project you're doing," Elizabeth said. "That thing about the Girl Scouts."

"It *is* cool," I agreed. "But crazy. The more I look into Girl Scout history, the more subversive it gets. You know"—here I shook my head in mock contrition, hamming it up—"I'm starting to wonder what I got you girls into."

The light turned, but before I could step off the curb Elizabeth's laughter rang.

"You're just figuring that out?" she asked, and I turned to see her smiling, half with that familiar baby-wisdom, half with the ease of a twenty-one-year old who sees her own horizons beckoning.

SUSAN H. SWETNAM recently retired after an extended career as a professor of English at Idaho State University, during which she became the only faculty member ever to be awarded all three of the institution's top faculty awards (Distinguished Teacher, Researcher, and Public Service). She is the author of seven books, including a social history of Carnegie public library establishment in the *Intermountain West, Books, Bluster, and Bounty* (Utah State University Press), which was named Idaho Book of the Year 2012 by the Idaho Library Association. Her personal essays, creative nonfiction narratives, and articles have appeared in a wide variety of national magazines (*Gourmet*, *Mademoiselle*), regional publications (*Journal of the West*, *High Country News*, and little magazines (*Black Canyon Quarterly*, *New Works Review*)). She was the proud leader of Girl Scout Troop #582 from 1994 to 2001.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Without access to the records in the National Historic Preservation Center, Girl Scouts of the USA, New York, this article could not have been written. I am grateful to GSUSA's directors and legal department for granting permission to access the collection and incorporate information and images gathered there, and to Researcher/Senior Archivist Yevgeniya Gribov for her gracious and efficient help in locating documents and photographs and in serving as a liaison.

NOTES

1. Erin Skarda, "Indiana Lawmaker: Girl Scouts Area 'Radicalized Organization,'" <http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/02/22/indiana-lawmaker-girl-scouts-are-a-radicalized-organization/>.

2. Perry Chiaramonte, "Transgender Girl Scout Controversy Sheds Light on Organization's 'Inclusive' Policies," <http://www.foxnews/us/2011/10/28/transgender-you-brings-to-light-policies-within-girl-scouts>. It is worth noting that news coverage uniformly termed the child in this case a boy rather than a girl, even though she self-identified as the latter.

3. Chelsea Schilling, "Girl Scouts Exposed: Lessons in Lesbianism," <http://www.wnd.com/2009/05/97977>.

4. "GSUSA Leadership," in "100 Questions for Girl Scouts," <http://www.familywatchinternational.com>. See also "Girl Scouts USA radical agenda," in the blog

"Mommy Life," which laments "LGBT activism" in the organization and calls its positions "tres trendy"; http://mommylife.net/arcives/2010/03/girl_scouts_usa.html.

5. These allegations arose when copies of a pamphlet titled *Happy, Healthy, and Hot*, published by the International Planned Parenthood organization, were discovered in a room at a national conference where Girl Scouting, along with other organizations, had presented a session over the course of a day. GSUSA denied any knowledge of or connection with the document. For an example of the outcry that resulted, see Austin Ruse, "The Girl Scout Sex Guide," <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/mar/18/girl-scout-sex-guide>.

6. Eternal World Television Network, "Speak Now Girl Scouts," http://speaknowgirlscouts.com/index.php?p=1_29_ewtn.

7. <http://speakknowgirlscouts.com/>.

8. "Teen asks for boycott of Girl Scout cookies over transgender controversy," <http://blog.timesunion.com/hottopics/teen-asks-for-boycot-of-girl-scout-cookies-over-transgender-controversy>.

9. "The Cookie Crumbles: American Girls Abandoning Girl Scouts," <http://wnd.com/2011/08/331473/>. Ironically, current on-line self-descriptions by GSUSA emphasize exactly the sort of "family values" that organizations like the American Heritage Girls accuse the program of abandoning. Information for potential volunteers assumes that adults at the local level in the program are working with their own children ("the girl in your life") and emphasize that these volunteers will inculcate their own extant values as "role models" and "mentors." A main goal of Girl Scouting, the website proclaims, is for girls "to develop values to guide their actions and give the foundation for sound decision-making"; www.girlscouts.org/for_adults/parenting; www.girlscouts.org/who_we_are/facts/.

10. In justice to critics, Girl Scouting did adapt its program to change with the times in response to declining membership in the 1970s. Recognizing a perceived lack of fit between Girl Scout culture and a generation interested in civil rights, diversity, and feminism, GSUSA (in consultation with grassroots members nationwide) debuted new badges, uniforms, and language in the Girl Scout Promise and Laws to foreground women's independence, critical thinking, and tolerance of diversity. As this essay suggests, however, such values have always been present in Girl Scouting, and in contrast to critics' claims that they represent a minority position, their renewed emphasis led to a significant increase in Girl Scout membership between 1985 and 2005, a period when Boy Scouting (which resisted change and simply reaffirmed traditional values) continued to see declining membership. See Barbara Arneil, "Gender, Diversity, and Organizational Change: The Boy Scouts vs. Girl Scouts of America," *Perspectives on Politics*, 8, no. 1 (2010): 53–68.

11. Tammy M. Proctor, *Scouting for Girls: A Century of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger/ABC Clio, 2009). See especially chapters 1 and 3.

12. Much scholarship has debunked simplistic notions of the post-World War II era as an uncomplicated golden age of idealized, homogeneous American values and culture. See, for example, Stephanie Coontz's *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

13. The only mention of this incident I have been able to find in scholarly or popular history appears as a brief reference in a biographical sketch of conservative pundit Robert LeFevre (who, as discussed later, played a major role in setting off the controversy) in the revised edition of George Thayer's *The Farther Shores of Politics: The American Political Fringe Today* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 268. The Idaho Girl Scout history project, which I undertook as a member of the Board of Directors of Silver Sage Girl Scout Council in 2011–12, resulted in the publication of *Courage, Confidence, and Character: A History of Girl Scouting in Southern Idaho* (Boise, ID: Silver Sage Girl Scout Council, 2012), along with an exhibit installed in the spring of 2012 at the Idaho State Historical Museum in Boise. It was supported by administrative services from the Silver Sage Girl Scout Council and by funding from the Idaho Humanities Council, the College of Arts and Letters at Idaho State University, and the State Farm Good Neighbor program, along with donations from dozens of private individuals.

14. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963). Friedan, incidentally, was a member of the GSUSA National Board of Directors from 1974 to 1981.

15. For an accessible overview of Cold War history, see John Lewis Gaddis's *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

16. Thomas Doherty discusses McCarthy's fall in *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

17. In the interest of streamlining references regarding the controversy, unless otherwise cited all material reported in this section is discussed in a twelve-page, single-spaced typescript, "Girl Scouts in Wonderland," written in April 1955 by national Girl Scout staff. Though this document, produced for council presidents (executive directors of regional Girl Scout jurisdictions), takes a wry, even breezy, and frankly biased tone (it is headed "*not for publication*"), it provides by far the most comprehensive timeline of events and synthesizes key details from hundreds, if not thousands, of uncatalogued primary documents in the archive about the controversy, many of which appear in multiple copies in more than one box. These include copies of letters and press releases sent from Girl Scout headquarters, letters received, newspaper clippings and photocopies of news stories and editorials, magazine articles, copies of the *Congressional Record*, internal staff memos, and narrative synopses of events. All these documents are held in the National Historic Preservation Center, Girl Scouts of the USA.

18. A short biography of LeFevre, as mentioned, appears in Thayer, *Farther Shores*, 262–72.

19. LeFevre's outrage over Girls Scouts' support of interracial friendship may have been fed by current events, for 1954 was also the year that the legal case of Brown vs. Board of Education was decided in support of school integration, and conservative segregationist values would have seemed particularly under siege.

20. "Even the Girl Scouts" first appeared as a stand-alone four-page issue of the newsletter *Human Events*, 11, no. 13 (March 31, 1954). It was reprinted a week later by the *News Leader* of Richmond, Virginia, under the title "Girl Scout Handbook Tries to Sell 'One World' Idea to Youngsters" (April 7, 1954), then picked up by numerous other newspapers across the country.

21. Internationalism had been a fundamental value of scouting for girls since the movement's inception. Troops of Girl Guides were established in parts of the British Empire and beyond during the first decade of the Girl Guiding movement. The International Council of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts was established in 1919 as an umbrella organization. That body was replaced by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in 1928, with a membership of twenty-six countries. February 22 had been chosen as a day for celebrating this larger sisterhood because it was the joint birthday of Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the British founder of Boy Scouts, and his sister Olave Baden-Powell, who founded Girl Guides. Proctor offers a detailed history of the movement's international expansion.

22. Letter from Martha S. Prendergast to Vaal Stark, October 14, 1953, GSUSA American Legion Controversy records.

23. Maurine H. Beasley's recent biography, *Eleanor Roosevelt: Transformative First Lady* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010) thoroughly documents Roosevelt's commitment to internationalism and human rights.

24. Throughout the controversy staff members maintained that they had already realized themselves, based on complaints from rank-and-file leaders, that the original 1953 handbook needed revision and had begun this process before LeFevre's attack. "The truth of the matter is that Mr. LeFevre's article was useful to us only as one demonstration of how facts can be distorted by people of his point of view for their own purpose," an August 1954 press release contends ("A Statement of Facts Concerning the Girl Scout Handbook," GSUSA American Legion Controversy records). Still, the timing of the revisions' publication and the fact that many directly address LeFevre's complaints suggest that his attack did influence as well as speed the process.

25. This allegation is still alive today; see the John Birch Society's web page about the United Nations, www.jbs.org/legislation/get-us-out-of-the-united-nations. LeFevre's antagonism to the UN was in accord with his libertarianism; suspicious of the meddling powers of all government, including American government, he was doubly appalled by the concept of an even more comprehensive agency.

26. For a comprehensive, side-by-side description of changes, see the typescript 8-page memo released by GSUSA in 1954 with a cover letter from Olivia Layton, pres-

ident of the Board of Directors, GSUSA, "Revisions in the Fifth Impression of the 1953 Edition of the Girl Scout Handbook," GSUSA American Legion Controversy records.

27. "Resolution 33, Girl Scouts of America, American Legion of Illinois, 36th Annual Department Convention, Chicago, Illinois," adopted August 6, 1954, GSUSA American Legion Controversy records.

28. Letter from Gertrude Simpson to Katharine Berkeley, April 26, 1955, GSUSA American Legion Controversy records.

29. "Girl Scouts in Retreat," *Providence Journal*, April 24, 1955; "What Happened to the Girl Scouts?" *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1, 1955; letter from Edward Ely Curtis, Dept. of History, Wellesley College, to Margaret Purdy, Director of Publicity, Girl Scout Council of Greater New York, January 2, 1955, GSUSA American Legion Controversy records.

30. The phrase "domestic and quiescent" comes from Meyerowitz's introduction to *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994). The stereotype-challenging elements specifically noted in this paragraph are discussed in the following essays in that volume: Susan M. Hartmann, "Women's Employment and the Domestic Ideal in the Early Cold War Years" (84-100); Susan Lynn, "Gender and Progressive Politics: A Bridge to Social Activism in the 1960s" (103-27); and Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique" (229-62).

31. Badge names and handbook details have been verified against the *Girl Scout Handbook, Intermediate Program* (New York: Girl Scouts of the USA, 1958).

32. Municipal housekeeping is discussed in Karen Blair's *Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1860-1914* (Teaneck, NJ: Holmes and Meier, 1980).

33. *Girl Scout Handbook*, 99-100.

34. Proctor discusses anxieties over the defeminization of girls in chapters 1 and 3 of *Scouting for Girls*; she considers questions of racial and linguistic mixing in chapter 3, and touches on more recent challenges involving feminism in chapter 7. Arneil details the 1970s revisions.

35. As such, these women were implicitly part of a larger progressive push-back during the Cold War against the period's xenophobia, racism, and curtailing of individual rights. Like the writers of children's books whose work Julia L. Mickenberg describes in *Learning from the Left: Children's Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), they quietly worked to promote interest in social justice, cooperation, and tolerance among the young people they reached.

36. For an excellent, nuanced discussion of Low's life, see Stacy A. Cordery, *Juliette Gordon Low: The Remarkable Founder of Girl Scouts* (New York: Viking, 2012). Details about Storrow come from "Helen Osborne Storrow," typescript, n.d.; "Biographical, Mrs. James J. Storrow," *Trailmaker*, March 29, 1938; and Leonard Ware, *Helen Osborne Storrow, A Memoir* (Northampton, MA: N.p., 1970). Stratton's career is described in

"A Salute to Captain Stratton USCGRW," press release, GSUSA, February 4, 1952. Details about Marguerite Twohy's life come from Mrs. Dermady, "Interview with Miss Marguerite Twohy," Historical Search Project, Sun City, AZ, February 12, 1966; and the pamphlet "Marguerite Twohy: Pacemaker for an Expanding Movement," *People to Remember*, n.p., January 15, 1992. All materials cited on Storrow, Stratton, and Twohy are held in the GSUSA Personality records.

37. Details about Janet Evelyn Tobitt's life come from "Janet Tobitt," a press release issued by GSUSA, n.d.; and a news story clipping "Janet E. Tobitt to Train Girl Scout Leaders Here," *Niagara Gazette* (Niagara Falls, NY), November 20, 1950. Both are held in the GSUSA Personality records.

38. All song lyrics are quoted from the *Sing Together Songbook* (New York: GSUSA, 1949, or the *Girl Scout Pocket Songbook* (New York: GSUSA, 1956, repr. 1997).

Copyright of *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* is the property of University of Nebraska Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.