

Chapter 6

Deep Springs: Loyalty to a Fault? ⁵

L. Jackson Newell ⁶

The desert has a deep personality; it has a voice; and God speaks through its personality and voice. Great leaders in all ages... have sought the desert and heard its voice. You can hear it if you listen, but you cannot hear it while in the midst of uproar and strife for material things. Gentlemen, "For what came ye into the wilderness?" Not for conventional scholastic training; not for ranch life; not to become proficient in commercial or professional pursuits for personal gain. You came to prepare for a life of service, with the understanding that superior ability and generous purpose would be expected of you. . .

—Letter from L. L. Nunn to the student body, February 17, 1923

Deep Springs College in remote Inyo County in eastern California is nearly 80 years old. It has six faculty members, 24 students, 350 cows, and ranks second among the nation's institutions of higher learning with respect to the aptitude of the students it admits.

The Utopian dream and final effort of a highly successful 19th century inventor and developer, Deep Springs numbers among its alumni U.S. ambassadors, heads of corporations, presidents of universities, members of Congress, distinguished scholars, and prominent news analysts. More than half its students have gone on to acquire doctoral degrees, most of them in academic disciplines. Yet Deep Springs is only a 2-year college—one that requires its students to invest 20 hours a week in labor to sustain the community, and operate the 32,000-acre ranch on which the institution is situated. Why did such a unique college come into being, and what has sustained its unusual program through more than seven turbulent decades?

Lucien L. Nunn, born in Medina, Ohio, in 1853, was an attorney, industrialist and romantic. Diminutive in stature, moralistic in temperament and a bachelor by choice, Nunn's insatiable curiosity and tireless quest for achievement drove him to professional and personal success. His years as a mine owner and hydroelectric power developer in the Rocky Mountains led to the construction of the Ontario Power Works, which still generates electricity at Niagara Falls. After the turn of the century, however, Nunn became increasingly interested in education and pursued a new dream with the same energy that had characterized his business endeavors.

A self-made man, but one who had benefited from excellent teachers, Nunn was inspired by the notion of meritocracy. He was also an elitist who believed that society would be led and improved by "the few." But the few should arise not on the basis of privilege; they should emerge through talent, and they should be guided by the ideal of service to humanity.

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⁶L. Jackson Newell, President, Deep Springs College, Professor of Higher Education, University of Utah.

Nunn's educational ideas evolved over a period of three decades. He began by pioneering on-site industrial education at his power plants in Utah, Idaho and Montana in the 1890s. He hired youthful workers of unusual promise and provided them with instruction in technical subjects related to electric-power generation and transmission. In 1904 he built a library and classroom building as part of the facilities at his Olmsted plant near Provo, Utah. Gradually he shifted his focus from training to education and in 1911 formed the Telluride Institute to recognize formally the educational dimension of his company. But this novel approach soon proved inadequate for his growing educational interests, particularly when his business partners objected to the resources devoted to his educational diversions. Nunn forfeited his interest in Olmsted and, in 1916, bought a farm near Claremont, Virginia, where he invited about a dozen able young men to pursue classical studies in a pastoral setting. The fledgling school fell stillborn, however, when an enterprising army recruiter enlisted the students en masse for the war in Europe.

Undeterred, Nunn bought a cattle ranch in Deep Springs Valley, which lay east of the Sierra Nevada, 28 miles from Big Pine, California. With the assistance of the engineer and masons who had constructed the Ontario power plant, he built a cluster of sturdy academic buildings. He acquired a respectable library of classic works, hired several professors to join his experiment, and invited about 20 students to come to Deep Springs. The students were expected to run the extensive cattle operation and to "taste the fatigue of hard labor and so earn the rest for mental pursuits" (Bailey, 1933:26). Faculty members were expected to offer traditional instruction in the liberal arts based especially on the biographies of great leaders.

Off to a stormy beginning in the autumn of 1917, Deep Springs is virtually unchanged eight decades later. Although its founder died of tuberculosis in 1925, just one day after California statute legally safeguarded the trust fund he had established to sustain the institution, his dreams have lived on.

In his later years, when he was creating Deep Springs, Nunn's overriding concern was with the development of courageous leadership in American society. He saw in the traditional American colleges and universities deplorable academic standards, lopsided curricula and frivolous activities. Why, Nunn asked, should colleges concentrate almost exclusively on intellectual development? What about character? Responsibility? Physical and spiritual growth? The education of the "whole man" was not to be left to chance; it required a total environment. Character would be strengthened not only by reading great literature, but also by real struggles with ethical issues and economic necessities. Students would acquire a sense of duty only if they were granted responsibility. Intellectual toughness might be nurtured by severe physical challenge. And the "inner man," the spirit, might grow where solitude can foster introspection.

What did Nunn expect of the students (all male) who would receive such an education? He expected commitment not only to a strenuous life, but also to an idea. While providing unusual opportunity, he also demanded unusual sacrifice. The physical location of Deep Springs provided natural insulation from the clamor of the world, but it did not assure freedom from what he considered to be personal distractions. A spartan code of ethics, known informally as the "isolation policy," required students to eschew alcohol and tobacco and visits to the nearby towns. There were to be no social connections with local girls. But Nunn did not intend to enforce such rules himself—a condition which would have run counter to developing self control. These simple but significant, prohibitions, written into the Deed of Trust, were assigned to the student government for enforcement.

To give his young charges further responsibility, Nunn provided for three major student offices: (1) a student trustee with full voting rights of the Board; (2) a labor commissioner with responsibility for assigning and directing the labor of students in the work program; and (3) a student president with duties as student-body administrator and official liaison with the dean or college president. The office of student president was traditional, but the other two offices were revolutionary concepts in 1917.

For several years, Nunn lived at Deep Springs and considered himself a member of the student body. He entrusted the administration of the school to a long-time friend and educator, Dean E. A. Thornhill. In 1920, nearing 70 and in failing health, Nunn withdrew to his home in Los Angeles. He rarely visited the school thereafter, but stayed in close touch with Dean Thornhill and the students by correspondence,

leaving a rich record of his expectations and ideals. Before his death in 1925, he turned Deep Springs over to a Board of Trustees composed primarily of his business partners and associates. Many of them, including the chairman, continued to serve on the board into the early 1970s.

The Deep Springs community now numbers about 24 students, 6 or 7 full-time faculty members and a small staff that includes a professional ranch manager, a farmer and a cook. Students come from all parts of the United States and occasionally from abroad. They span a wide socioeconomic range. Frequently, visiting faculty members come for the summer or for short periods during the regular academic year. To a surprising extent, Deep Springs is a self-sustaining economic community. In addition to providing all the labor, some of it skilled, for the ranch operation, students run a small dairy operation (where they milk the cows by hand and churn the butter), operate a slaughterhouse, feed the chickens, cultivate a generous vegetable garden and keep the machinery, vehicles and physical plant in good repair. The labor commissioner manages the work operation, which includes doing much of the office work for the college; students aid in the bookkeeping and operate the bookstore, post office and library. The labor commissioner rotates students from one job to another three or four times a year.

The curriculum is devoted entirely to the liberal arts. It has no relationship to agriculture or business, although courses in economics, psychology, political science and ethics, for example, do use the community as a natural laboratory for observation, experimentation and analysis. Cooperative arrangements with major libraries in California put the printed resources of those institutions at the disposal of Deep Springs, supplementing the school's own 30,000-volume library.

The Socratic method of teaching is common, although the founder's dream of liberating the academic program from the usual concern with credit hours has not been fully achieved. The necessity of transferring credits from Deep Springs to other institutions has acted as a constraint in this regard, although students typically transfer to those few major universities with whom close cooperative relationships exist. Many students transfer to Cornell University (where the Telluride Association operates a house that is, for many students, a second step in Nunnian education), to Ivy League schools and to the University of California, Berkeley.

Nunn hoped to foster articulate leadership; if students were to make use of the unusual education he afforded them, he believed they must be able speakers and writers. Even today every student is required to take public speaking each term he is in residence. The requirement benefits the college in ways that Nunn may not have anticipated. Monday evenings have become major events in the community as faculty, staff and their families gather to hear students speak on topics ranging from international affairs to institutional concerns. Always lively, these sessions provide a natural setting for the exchange of ideas and the unification of the community.

Avoiding intellectual inbreeding has always been of concern to Deep Springs. Partly because of this concern, the danger has generally been kept at bay. Faculty members are expected not only to teach, but also to nurture their contacts with colleagues across the country and around the world and to host distinguished guest lecturers to enliven the environment. Visiting lecturers and notable figures from a variety of fields usually give a formal lecture to the entire community, followed by several days of informal discussion at the boardinghouse or in the classroom. Some guests also try their hands at milking or other work in the labor program, or join the perpetual after-lunch volleyball or soccer game. The academic calendar offers a respite from isolation, too. Occasional field trips throughout the Great Basin give geographical perspective, while month-long holidays at Christmas and between terms provide students an opportunity to get away.

Consistent with the founder's intent to nurture talent irrespective of family wealth or position, the students who are invited to attend Deep Springs receive complete scholarships. There are no fees or tuition, nor is there any charge for board and room. This policy may not seem significant since students invest a great deal of effort in the work program, but the ranch exists in an agricultural region noted for its attractiveness to wealthy landowners in need of tax shelters. In a typical year, the ranch operation turns

only a small profit, but it is a deadly serious business because mistakes in management, or lethargy on the part of students, can mean a disastrous loss. A small endowment helps keep the institution afloat, together with contributions from alumni and friends. Because of the small number of students who have benefited from Deep Springs, the college has had difficulty attracting external support. Aside from government-surplus equipment and a few small grants from foundations, Deep Springs has always operated almost entirely on its own resources.

Any educational institution founded on a set of ideas as distinctive as those of L. L. Nunn would be a topic for study. Certainly Deep Springs' geographical isolation and diminutive scale arouse the curiosity of those who learn of the College. Authorities on the history and nature of higher education both here and abroad are showing increased interest in Nunn's educational experiment on the high desert of eastern California. Its alumni, faculty, and students also have an unusual curiosity about Deep Springs—curiosity about the influence the school has had on them and about the differences it has made in the lives of others who have been educated there. Are the alumni in fact more involved in work of benefit to mankind than they otherwise would have been? Do they indeed possess leadership qualities and exercise them in greater measure than others of similar ability and education?

As a Deep Springs student (1956-59) and faculty member (1965-67), trustee (1987-94), and currently as president (1995-present), I have pondered these questions; and as a professor concerned with the history of colleges and universities, I have long wished to pursue them. Fortunately, my interests converged with those of Edwin Cronk, then dean and director of Deep Springs, and Frederic Laise, a trustee and chairman of the institution's fund-raising effort. With the support of both men, the Board authorized me to study the College; and one of its members offered to bear the direct costs. I proceeded with the effort. Three hundred and thirty-four (slightly over two-thirds) of the known alumni responded to a survey I distributed in the winter of 1980. I sought information concerning their experiences at Deep Springs, their subsequent personal and career development and their assessment of the influence of L. L. Nunn's educational legacy. I have used their replies, along with other sources, in the evaluation that follows.

Many other colleges combine work and study. Other institutions, too, have tried to reduce the scale of the learning environment to a small group of committed students. And many schools are highly selective on the basis of aptitude, offer rigorous instruction, maintain high standards and grant full scholarships. Deep Springs is unique only because it combines all these elements. In my analysis, the results are distinctive in several respects.

Deep Springs shares with other educational institutions, such as Prescott College (AZ) and Warren Wilson College (NC), a belief that manual labor and physical challenge can serve as effective catalysts for developing teamwork, self-confidence and leadership. But it differs from them in the authenticity of the environment. The ranch is there to be operated as a genuine business. A lapse in judgment can provoke a crisis for the institution. A failure of the students to respond, individually or collectively, to the demands of the work program would jeopardize the College's tenuous financial base. The tangible nature of the responsibility given to the students removes any hint that the work is contrived, and lends the Deep Springs experience an unmistakable gravity and reality.

A second mark that characterizes education at Deep Springs is the intensity of interpersonal relations. College-going students, like other human beings, tend to choose as companions those people who have values and backgrounds similar to their own. As a result, they often fail to come to grips with the ideas and values of those who are different from themselves. Because Deep Springs seeks a heterogeneous student body, and because the pool of possible friends or associates available to a student is so limited, friendships and working relationships with people quite different from oneself are the rule. All Deep Springs students labor, study, eat and live in close proximity to one other. Of necessity, they become close associates, if not close friends. The inability to avoid people or issues has far-ranging consequences: when conflicts cannot be escaped, they must be confronted. When new students gather each year, ferocious verbal exchanges are not uncommon, and sometimes exchanges are physical. The kind of friendships that emerge from

the process, however, often last a lifetime. The ability to deal with and respect people of contrasting persuasions is a notable characteristic of alumni. Deep Springs is a community often in the best sense of the word, sometimes in the worst.

In a highly industrialized society, it is common for us to be removed from the natural sources of things. Work is specialized, too, and we may little appreciate the contributions and skills of others. This problem of distance or isolation may be most acute among the best educated. The direct experience with many kinds of skilled and unskilled work at Deep Springs provides an important understanding of natural phenomena and a sense of connection with the processes that underpin our technology-rich way of life. A breakfast table looks different to someone who has milked cows, churned butter, slaughtered hogs, candled eggs and dug potatoes. Shoeing horses, manning a weather station, rebuilding an engine or repairing a water main illuminate processes normally hidden from students in this generation. Not only do the nature and origins of objects that surround us become clear, but one is inspired with a healthy respect for the skills of the artisan—the cowboy, the mechanic, the welder, the accountant.

Students at Deep Springs come to assume they can make a difference. The flexibility and small scale of the school mean that any reasonable idea will get a decent hearing and that any good idea is likely to be given a trial. Decades of observing and exchanging ideas with alumni suggest to me that Deep Springs graduates are likely to believe that they can change and improve their environment.

It is my thesis that the personal qualities and characteristics nurtured in the Deep Springs environment are central to some of the important purposes of liberal education: a preparation for humane leadership, a liberation from cultural biases, a willingness to confront new ideas, a motivation to learn from others, and a sensitivity to our human and natural environment. These qualities are reinforced by a rare congruence of means and ends. Unlike a large university, where several hundred students may sit in auditorium seats to hear a tightly organized lecture on Socrates' approach to teaching, Deep Springs is in the enviable position of enabling students to experience what they learn. A classic philosophical work and a morning's manual labor may join in the student's mind toward a single understanding. If Arthur Chickering and other authorities on college-student psychology are correct in concluding that learning increases as the link between theory and experience becomes closer, then Deep Springs is an important experiment and model.

The alumni survey I undertook was designed to determine whether Deep Springs College made a significant difference in the lives of its students. It also seemed important to identify institutional trends that might have manifested themselves over the seven decades of Deep Springs' history. With data in hand from alumni who span the first six or seven decades of Deep Springs' existence, it is easier to respond to the second concern than the first. It is clear, for instance, that Deep Springs has been reasonably true to Nunn's ideal of an "open elite." While the students may not have been uniformly able in every era, they have always been a particularly gifted and independent breed. They have come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (about 15 percent from blue collar families) and geographical origins (28 percent from the eastern states, 35 percent from the Midwest, and 27 percent from the West). Only rarely, however, have they come from the American minority groups or from foreign countries.

Although Deep Springs graduates generally remember experiences that contributed to their personal growth (community projects, for example, and the work program) with more favor and more prominence than they remember their academic work, nearly two-thirds of them went on to complete their undergraduate degrees either at Ivy League schools or at schools ranked by Astin and Solmon (1979) as the 32 most selective in the nation. Further, more than half the alumni have earned doctoral degrees, and many others hold advanced degrees of other types. Among the alumni who are at a career stage where it is likely that they have completed their formal education, 57 percent hold doctorates. (Only 6 percent of alumni have not completed a bachelor's degree.) Only one Deep Springs student in ten was not able to transfer to the college or university of his choice, and full credit for the academic work taken at Deep Springs was almost always granted. Deep Springs students have most frequently pursued their terminal degrees and careers in the sciences (38 percent) and the humanities (36 percent), with the social sciences (16 percent) and the

fine arts (7 percent) running far behind.

While some alumni have rendered a great deal of unremunerated public service (27 percent of them being engaged in four or more public service projects at the time of the survey), nearly a third of the alumni reported little or no philanthropic activity. Nunn's ideal that Deep Springs graduates should dispatch their debt to him by "lives of service" seems to have expressed itself more in the selection of a career and in dedication to professional excellence than in voluntary humanitarian causes. Ten percent are in public service (many of them in the foreign service), 18 percent are in law or medicine, and 28 percent are educators (nearly all as professors).

We now move to another kind of data, based on personal impressions, memory, and individual judgment. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of alumni believe that the influence of Deep Springs on their lives was "very significant," while only 1 student in 50 regards Deep Springs as having been of little or no importance to his present beliefs, attitudes and situations. While Deep Springs attracts very able students, and they often continue with distinguished academic achievements, the vast majority of alumni consider the major benefit of the Deep Springs experience to have been personal rather than academic.

Alumni also were asked to assess how lasting or permanent Deep Springs' influence was on them. An especially high proportion of students from the early years and from the 1950s perceived Deep Springs to have had a permanent, positive effect on their lives. In the early years the founder's presence was undoubtedly felt by the students. In the 1950s major internal threats to the school's character seem to have had a strangely positive effect. A McCarthyite president precipitated a united effort by students to preserve the school's historic respect for intellectual freedom. In the process, the students' sense of ownership of and loyalty to the institution may have exceeded Nunn's fondest hope.

It is common for people to look back upon the first few years away from home as exciting, seminal and creative, and for many young people this experience coincides with going to college. Certainly the dramatic geographical location of Deep Springs, the small and intense nature of its community and the physical isolation would heighten this typical response. Therefore, we must look for the reasons why alumni have found Deep Springs to be so significant in their lives to understand the meaning of these findings. Deep Springs is many things to many people; it varies substantially from year to year, owing to the small size of the community and the short tenure of students and many faculty members. Reflecting these conditions, and the fact that we all bring a distinctive set of assumptions and experiences to each new opportunity, the alumni perceive Deep Springs variously as (1) a profoundly intellectual experience, (2) a cultural awakening, (3) a laboratory for community life and (4) an experiment in human understanding. The peacefulness of the desert is the primary catalyst for some, while others are stimulated by the rigors of the academic program or the demands of hard physical labor.

Regardless of what the Deep Springs reality was for them, former students are profoundly concerned about the school's future and grateful for its contributions to their lives. Alumni are generous in offering their time, talents and resources to help strengthen the program and assure Deep Springs' continuation. It is worth noting, however, that the high proportion of alumni who have chosen academic careers, especially since the 1940s, also have a limited ability to make large financial contributions, though many contribute "in kind" both intellectually and materially.

Useful as the data are that illuminate the past accomplishments and present activities of Deep Springs alumni, one of the most crucial questions goes largely unanswered: How do the values and accomplishments of these men compare with what they might have been without a Deep Springs education? Since no control group is available, and no comparable studies have been done at other institutions, the answer is not clear. On the basis of this study, however, we conclude that as a group Deep Springs alumni have (1) an awareness of the importance and dignity of physical labor, (2) an appreciation for wilderness and the solitude it affords, (3) a sense of the duty to invest their talents toward humane or public ends, (4) an awareness of society as a social organism dependent on the quality and good will of individuals and (5) a lively cultural and intellectual life. It is probably safe to say that the development of these characteristics

is more likely to happen at Deep Springs, and to happen with more intensity, than is generally the case at other colleges or universities. Character development, though impossible to measure, does seem to occur at a faster-than-normal pace.

Beyond the information that illuminated alumni careers and values, the study revealed several paradoxes that are inherent in Deep Springs as an institution.

1. **Continuity vs. Discontinuity.** There is great continuity at Deep Springs, and there is also great discontinuity. There is a continuity of things—the dinner bell, the farm machinery and the timeless desert on which Deep Springs rests. There is also a continuity of ferment, of energy and of intensity. Yet in terms of people, and even programs, Deep Springs changes very rapidly. It is not uncommon for a student to return for a visit after being away just 2 or 3 years and find himself a complete stranger to nearly everyone in the community. Given this rate of turnover, the survival of customs, traditions and values is most remarkable.

The continuities and discontinuities at Deep Springs are each, in themselves, assets and liabilities. The continuities of tradition and custom sometimes stifle creativity and limit experimentation. Discontinuities in the student body and staff, and in academic programs sometimes cause a disjointed experience for students and a loss of momentum and efficiency of operation for the institution. Deep Springs might benefit from more year-to-year planning, while lightening the overburden of some traditions that are only peripheral to its central purposes.

2. **Individualism vs. Community.** Deep Springs enjoys success in developing self-reliant students, yet the College is based on the idea of community and the ideal of service to others. Leadership is enhanced by thoughtful self-awareness and a good measure of intellectual independence, but it also requires an inspired vision of the common welfare—and a cooperative instinct. Because of its program and physical isolation, Deep Springs attracts individualists, almost by definition. Top students who are willing to risk their education and future with an institution remote and distinctive as Deep Springs are unusual. Thus, we have the inescapable dilemma of an educational institution dedicated to building community life and developing humanitarian values, yet attracting students and faculty who are largely self-selected on the basis of sturdy individualism. This fact injects into the community both vitality and strife, and, judging by the survey, produces qualified results.
3. **Intellectual Freedom vs. Social Conformity.** Deep Springs offers opportunity for virtually unfettered inquiry, given the high quality of the students and faculty and the high degree of freedom afforded by the modest need for structure and the low faculty-to-student ratio. On the other hand, the small size and closed nature of the community leave it vulnerable to intellectual fads among students and ideological preoccupations among the staff. Deep Springs can swing to one or the other pole of this dichotomy very rapidly because the community, and even the student body itself, is largely self-perpetuating. Deep Springs flirted almost mortally with ideological rigidity during the 1950s, and has not been free of such dangers at other times.
4. **The Two Horns of Isolation.** The geographical isolation of the College can lend perspective to world events and to individual lives, but it can also nurture a myopic vision of the world and a preoccupation with the self. For some alumni, the years spent at Deep Springs provided time and space to take stock of one's self and to measure the pressing, immediate problems of society against the backdrop of history. For others, the mountains surrounding the valley seemed to close out the larger world and narrow their consciousness of, and sensitivity to, questions of social justice and human connectedness.

Does life on the desert provide time to think and develop one's unique thoughts and characteristics, or does the small size and isolation of the community produce an overwhelming "togetherness"? The

interdependence of each member of the community is one of the chief benefits of Deep Springs, yet a student must step beyond the fences that encircle the alfalfa fields if the introspection afforded by solitude is to yield its benefits. The desert speaks with a soft voice.

5. **Egalitarianism Among an Elite.** Deep Springs can make a man or break a man. Usually it makes him. For most students, coming to Deep Springs is something of a shock, not just because of the arid terrain but, more importantly, because of the jolt of moving from the top of one's class in high school to the midst of one's peers at Deep Springs. Many alumni remarked on the self-awareness "that came with suddenly being just one of the pack." For most, this healthy discovery of one's limits and one's relationship to others eventually produces a new self-confidence, which is reinforced by the diversity of personal rewards provided by Deep Springs' total environment. One recent alumnus remarked that after surviving a couple of years at Deep Springs slaughtering cattle in sub-zero weather, doing emergency repairs on broken water mains in predawn darkness and participating in spirited student body and trustee meetings, life is likely to produce few challenges that he'll be unwilling to tackle. But even as Deep Springs calls forth new self confidence and self discipline in most students, in others the competition, the independent work situations and the comparative lack of structure erodes these qualities. Everyone tastes failure at Deep Springs, which is one of its virtues, but some taste too much failure and lose confidence as a result.

Each of these five paradoxes seems to be indigenous to Deep Springs. The survey data provided by the alumni amply document their existence. If Deep Springs is "many things to people," it is usually along the lines of these five polarities that it is viewed differently. They create challenges, release energy and provide a rich context for student growth and a challenging environment for the faculty. But these paradoxes also harbor certain dangers, both to individuals and to the institution. Eliminating them, however, would dissipate the forces that give the institution its character.

Looking To The Future

What we know about alumni careers, and about alumni perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of Deep Springs during their time at the College, provides a backdrop for considering its future.

Fundamental issues arise from the fact that times change, but Deep Springs doesn't. At least not very much. Given the revolutionary societal and technological changes of the last 60 years, can a college so remote that it doesn't receive television signals or take a daily newspaper, and still has a hand crank toll-station telephone, adequately prepare students for living in the 21st century? Most alumni believe it can. In a society rendered passive by spectator sports, media hype and electronic games, students at Deep Springs discover and appreciate the rewards of deep contemplation and quiet introspection. Books and conversation are the chief stimuli of intellectual activity, and rigorous, purposeful physical labor obviates the need for Nautilus machines and commercially contrived recreation. Because of the depth and authenticity of the experience, Deep Springs is more salient than ever before. The professional careers and personal characteristics of its alumni lend credence to this view.

Many who are or have been associated with the college, however, believe that Deep Springs should consider changes that would prepare its students to deal more directly with social and technological issues that have emerged in the larger society. For instance, while the benefits of geographic isolation remain quite evident, some disadvantages now loom larger than in the past. Some alumni fear that for students to spend 2 or 3 years away from the mainstream of American society may produce disassociation, rather than perspective.

A school that educates predominantly Caucasian Americans, despite a serious commitment to affirmative action, and seals them off by themselves, may not prepare its students adequately for a world in which

contacts with other cultures and other languages have become the rule. Reflecting his own times, Nunn sought to prepare able men for leadership in a masculine world, but in today's society, not to speak of the one in which contemporary students will live and work, men and women labor side by side in practically all walks of life and all roles of leadership. The all-male policy, therefore, has become the subject of serious, often heated debate. Nunn's meritocratic philosophy and the demands of contemporary leadership suggest a change, but the Deed of Trust and considerations pertinent to the size and isolation of the school impose constraints.

Whichever way these issues are resolved, the depth and gravity of the debate augurs well for the future. Regardless of their differences, those who have shared the Deep Springs experience have a profound commitment to its character and purposes. Entering its eighth decade, Deep Springs is alive and well. Owing to its unusual history and geography, the College may appear to many educators more as a curious experiment than as a serious model. On the other hand, much of what it stands for is at the heart of American higher education, and much of what it has done has proved effective. Academic leaders at other institutions might well find in the Deep Springs experiment ideas that can enrich their own programs.

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