

= Cedric Wright =

George Cedric Wright (April 13 , 1889 ? 1959) was an American violinist and wilderness photographer of the High Sierra . He was Ansel Adams 's mentor and best friend for decades , and accompanied Adams when three of his most famous photographs were taken . He was a long -time participant in the annual wilderness High Trips sponsored by the Sierra Club .

= = Family = =

Cedric Wright was born and raised in Alameda , California . His father was a successful attorney , and one of his father 's clients was astronomer Charles Hitchcock Adams , Ansel Adams 's father . Cedric 's uncle , William Hammond Wright , was an astronomer who became head of Lick Observatory . As a result of his father 's success , Wright was financially comfortable throughout his life .

His first wife was Mildred Sahlström , and they had a daughter , Alberta . After they divorced , he married pianist and piano teacher Rhea Ufford in 1929 . They had a daughter , Joanne , and a son , David .

= = Violinist = =

Wright was motivated to become a violinist when he heard a performance by Fritz Kreisler . After study in the United States , he spent seven years studying with Otakar ?ev?ík in Prague and Vienna .

Wright was known as a " distinguished violinist " , and was a violin teacher at the University of California Extension and Mills College for many years . Renowned violin teacher and conductor Louis Persinger called him " one of the foremost performers and instructors in the West " . In 1934 , arthritis brought an early end to his professional career as a violinist , and he then decided to pursue his hobby of photography as a career .

= = Friendship and collaboration with Ansel Adams = =

Wright first met Ansel Adams at a family gathering at the Wright family vacation home in the Santa Cruz Mountains when Cedric was about 21 and Ansel was about 8 years old . They encountered each other again on a four @-@ week wilderness High Trip in Yosemite National Park , organized by the Sierra Club in 1923 . Nancy Newhall wrote , " On that first High Trip , Ansel found himself drawn to one Cedric Wright , a violinist , who could fiddle by the fire deep into the night and still be among the first up , making a little fire of twigs . . . " .

Their friendship , which continued until Wright 's death in 1959 , was described by Mary Street Alinder as an " intense comradeship " . The men shared a deep interest in both classical music and photography , since Adams was an accomplished classical pianist . Wright introduced Adams to the writings of the British philosopher Edward Carpenter , whose thoughts helped shape both men 's world views . Together , they discussed the works of other writers , including Elbert Hubbard and Walt Whitman .

Back in the Bay Area after their initial 1923 wilderness journey together had ended , Adams became a part of Wright 's social circle of musicians and Sierra Club activists who gathered at his Berkeley home . Adams " idolized " Wright , and he followed in Wright 's footsteps by taking long trips into the wilderness of the Sierra Nevada each summer , photographing the remote mountain peaks .

In his autobiography , Ansel Adams called Cedric Wright " my best friend for many years " . He described Wright as " almost an occupant of another world and a creator and messenger of beauty and mysteries . Perhaps his greatest gift was that of imparting confidence to those who were wavering on the edge of fear and indecision ; often it was me . "

In 1926 , Wright introduced Adams to Albert Bender , a patron of the arts who was to play an

instrumental role in Adams 's enormous success as a photographer . Wright was also a close friend of Virginia Best , who was Adams ' girlfriend for years . Wright visited with her when Adams was away on photography trips , and she confided in him about the problems in her relationship with Adams . Wright was their best man when they were married on January 2 , 1928 .

Wright accompanied and assisted Adams when he took three of the most famous photographs of his career :

On April 10 , 1927 , Wright hiked with Adams , Virginia Best , Charles Michael and another photographer , Arnold Williams , to a rocky perch high above Yosemite Valley called the " Diving Board " . There , Adams took *Monolith , the Face of Half Dome* , which Mary Street Alinder called Adams 's " most significant photograph " because it was a triumph of visualization showing " extreme manipulation of tonal values " . This photo set Adams on the path of becoming America 's most well @-@ known photographer . Adams called the excursion a " personally historic moment in my photographic career . "

During the 1932 Sierra Club High Trip to Sequoia National Park , Wright and Adams both photographed *Precipice Lake* near Eagle Scout Peak , while Virginia swam in the lake , still arrayed with icy patches . Wright was shocked when he saw Adams 's *Frozen Lake and Cliffs* , The Sierra Nevada , Sequoia National Park , so much more beautiful than the photos Wright himself had produced . Mary Street Alinder described the image : " Mirrored ghostly upon the inky waters , a shattered black cliff descends into a partially frozen lake . "

In 1941 , Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes hired Adams for six months to create photographs of lands under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior . Wright accompanied Adams and his young son Michael Adams on a long road trip around the west . While traveling through the Chama River valley near nightfall on November 1 , 1941 , they encountered a " fantastic scene " , a church and cemetery near Hernandez , New Mexico , and pulled to the side of the road . Adams recalled that he yelled at his son Michael and at Wright to " Get this ! Get that , for God 's sake ! We don 't have much time ! " Desperate to capture the image in the fading light , they scrambled to set up the tripod and camera , knowing that only moments remained before the light was gone . The result was *Moonrise , Hernandez , New Mexico* , a photograph that became so popular and collectible that Adams personally made over 1 @,@ 300 photographic prints of it during his long career . On October 17 , 2006 , Sotheby 's auctioned a print of this photograph for \$ 609 @,@ 600 . Art historian H. W. Janson called this photo " a perfect marriage of straight and pure photography " .

= = Wright 's Berkeley home = =

In 1921 , Wright purchased an old dairy barn at 2515 Etna Street in Berkeley , California , and hired architect Bernard Maybeck to remodel it into a home . Nicknamed " the barn " , Wright 's home featured " a soaring ceiling with room for a rope swing hung from the rafters and space enough for two grand pianos . Maybeck 's daughter @-@ in @-@ law *Jacomena Maybeck* " remembered evenings at Cedric Wright 's studio , when the women wore evening dresses and the men wore tuxedos , and there was much music around the big stone fireplace . "

The home was known as " party central " among Sierra Club members of the era . Among that social circle were Richard M. Leonard and his wife Doris , Francis P. Farquhar and his wife Marjorie , David Brower and his wife Anne , Edgar Wayburn and his wife Peggy , and Wright 's best friends , Ansel Adams and his wife Virginia . Nancy Newhall described the atmosphere : " Meanwhile in Cedric Wright 's house among the redwoods in Berkeley , Ansel was finding a warm welcome ... In his house there was music for violin and piano ; there was poetry , especially Whitman . "

= = Sierra Club High Trips = =

The High Trips were large wilderness excursions organized and led by the Sierra Club , beginning in 1901 . While most of these excursions were to the High Sierra , some were to other destinations , such as the Canadian Rockies in 1928 . Wright 's photos of that trip , along with those of Adams and other photographers , were included in a portfolio produced to commemorate it . No other member

participated in as many High Trips as Wright , and David Brower recounted that Wright told him in 1953 that he had participated in 33 High Trips . Tom Turner wrote that " Wright was a tireless and talented photographer of the mountain scene , who entertained campers with his fiddle and loved to greet weary hikers at day 's end with an unexpected cup of tea or soup . " During the High Trips , Wright and his student Dorothy Minty would often entertain groups of 200 participants with performances of Bach 's Double Violin Concerto .

= = Photographer , inventor and writer = =

Arthritis forced Wright to give up his career as a violinist in 1934 , and he resolved to pursue his hobby of photography as a new career . In 1939 the Museum of Modern Art accepted six of Wright 's photographs , donated by Albert Bender , into its photography collection . These were followed by another ten prints the following year . Several of his photos were displayed at the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco in 1939 and 1940 . Wright 's work was also featured in a 1943 exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art called " Action Photography " , along with work by Erich Salomon , Peter Stackpole , Alfred Stieglitz , Paul Strand and Weegee .

He was issued a United States patent for a portable photo @-@ printing device in 1935 . He also made various devices , including " collapsible and portable latrines " for the High Trips , and " astonishingly solid camera and violin cases of varnished plywood with leather thongs , which would tolerate the rigors of being packed for a month on muleback . "

In an article published in 1957 , which included eight full @-@ page photographs , Wright described his thoughts about how high mountain beauty resembles great music : " Beauty haunts the high country like a majestic hymn , sings in cold sunny air , the brilliant mountain air ? makes of sunlight a living thing ? floats in cloud forms ? filters changing floods of light ever clothing the mountains anew . Beauty arrives in deep voice of river and wind through forest , swelling the chorus , giving sonority universal proportions . " He dedicated these words to Sierra Club leader William Edward Colby , and they became part of the introduction to Wright 's posthumous book , Words of the Earth .

= = Final years = =

Ansel Adams described Wright 's final years as " complex and difficult " . He suffered a stroke , which caused a personality change , and he became " rigid and dictatorial " , which was a " painful experience for all his friends . " Wright died in 1959 .

= = Legacy = =

After his death , Nancy Newhall edited and completed his book , Words of the Earth , which was among the first titles published by Sierra Club Books in 1960 . Ansel Adams wrote the foreword .

In 1961 , a 12 @,@ 362 @-@ foot (3768 meter) High Sierra peak was officially named Mount Cedric Wright (36 ° 54 ? 13 @.@ 9 ? N 118 ° 23 ? 15 @.@ 2 ? W) , in memory of Wright , who was described as an " internationally known photographer whose photography has made a significant contribution to the appreciation of the natural scene . " The mountain is located in Kings Canyon National Park , 1 @.@ 9 km (1 @.@ 2 mi) southwest of Colosseum Mountain and 5 @.@ 3 km (3 @.@ 3 mi) south @-@ southeast of Mount Pinchot . Virginia Best Adams later arranged for park ranger Randy Morgenson to scatter Wright 's ashes on the slopes of Mount Cedric Wright . In 1976 , Ansel Adams and the Sierra Club arranged for Wright 's personal papers to be donated to the Bancroft Library at the University of California , Berkeley .

A 2011 exhibit at the Chadwick School featured photos of the school by both Wright and Adams . Two of Wright 's children had attended the school . A critic writing for the Los Angeles Times praised Wright 's work : " In the Chadwick exhibition , it 's Wright who trumps Adams with the show 's most jaw @-@ dropping image : a 1947 shot of five boys playing basketball on the school 's outdoor court , against a backdrop of rolling hills and the Los Angeles Basin far below . It captures a moment of sheer ballet , the composition so gracefully perfect that one would think it had been choreographed

by Balanchine ? except that you can 't choreograph players leaping for a rebound . "