

From the Editor . . .

Take two events widely separated in time and space — interpret them in terms of the human reactions they touched off — give the scientific evidence of the interconnectedness of these events both in geologic and in human impact terms — and you have the ingredients for an immeasurably heightened “visitor experience.”

Mount St. Helens and Sunset Crater, NM are only the most recent and dramatic examples of how “tying together” seemingly separate events and information can enrich interpretation and make outstanding use of the scientific research that takes place in and around parks.

The cataclysmic explosions of May 18, 1980 in the state of Washington and of a similarly ash-blackened day in 1065 A.D. 80 miles south and east of the Grand Canyon not only make excellent grist for the NPS interpretation mill, but they take advantage of the visitor interest already at white heat, thanks to the St. Helens eruption. The similarities between the two explosions have drawn increasing visitation to Sunset Crater, despite the rising cost of fuel. Interpretive planners are meeting this interest more than halfway by turning the scientific evidence that links the events into a fascinating story for visitors — and casting the presentation in terms of human impact, then and now. Thoughtful visitors have even brought to Sunset Crater samples of volcanic ash from St. Helens for incorporation in the Sunset Crater visitor center exhibit.

Glen Hinsdale's superlative piece of interpretive writing, “The Incident at Mount St. Helens,” — reported in Pacific Park Science's Fall 1980 issue — touched off the interest of Denver Service Center interpretive planners (see item p.3) and the connection gave rise to the current interpretive

effort at Sunset.

News of this salutary use of scientific information by interpreters was underscored by several phone calls from interpreters around the nation, commenting on the unexpected wealth of interpretive material they were picking up from Pacific Park Science . . . expressing appreciation for help in pin-pointing where specific information can be found.

This is a side of our bulletin's mission we haven't emphasized yet. Delightfully, recognition of it has come first from the field. Our first job was — and remains — to report research in terms of its applicability to the solution of management problems. This, in turn, requires reporting it in terms that don't require a Ph.D. to decipher. And THIS brings the whole fascinating scientific level of park understanding into the realm of interpretation for visitor edification.

And finally, this brings us to a specific invitation to the field — managers, maintenance people, interpreters — all of you who serve the parks and the public from out there. You are cordially invited to use these pages to propose solutions — to ask for solutions — to suggest needed research — to do, in short, whatever you feel is needed to help you manage and maintain and interpret the areas you serve.

We felt in the beginning — and the feedback since we started is convincing evidence that the feeling was justified — that much more could usefully be made of the information we already have and are continuing to accumulate. The clearinghouse and connective nature of this quarterly bulletin serves that objective: To make everything we do in the area of scientific research as widely available, as easily applicable, and as thoroughly understandable as the printed word makes possible.