



interpreters
information
exchange

IN TOUCH

produced
by and for
nps people
concerned with
interpretive
and visitor
services

Number 9

September, 1975



I am an interpretive naturalist who lives in a city. Furthermore, I enjoy living in a city.

There--I've said it and I'm proud I've said it. Now I need only stand back as the tomatoes, eggs, and other associated missiles are hurled in my direction by those true naturalists who wish to demonstrate clearly that my attitude is both contemptible and ludicrous.

Having withstood the missiles, I now wish to counterattack. I am not at all impressed by those interpreters who greet visitors to "their" parks with words such as the following:

"Welcome to Bunjeewunjee National Park. Here you can escape from all the dirt and noise and congestion of the city, all the pettiness and squabbles of your daily routine. We hope that in your short time with us you will be refreshed to enable you to face once again the rigors of life in the city."

As interpreters communicating with people, we realize that it is important to recognize where the visitors are at, to achieve some degree of rapport with them at their level. It seems unlikely that we shall achieve such rapport if we begin by placing them in a defensive position, by making them feel inadequate because they are urban dwellers, spineless because they accept a system which forces them to live in what is obviously abject squalor.

Our society is now overwhelmingly urban and will continue to become even more urban. Moreover, though the urban people now comprise 3/4 of our total population, they comprise an even larger proportion of the total visitors to our national parks. We interpreters would do well to

treat these people with more respect, to realize that many of them actually like living in cities, and that they are no less human for harboring such wholly ridiculous preferences. It is just possible that they visit the parks not because they detest their urban existence, but because they wish to expand their range of experience.

A few years ago, Reyner Barham, a distinguished British professor of architecture, published a book on the architecture of Los Angeles.¹ Even amongst North American architects, urban planners, and environmentalists, Los Angeles is synonymous with all that is worst in our urban industrial society. Amongst a large segment of the intelligentsia of Europe to whom the whole of North America is eminently worthy of being ignored, Los Angeles is simply unmentionable. One can begin to appreciate then, the audacity of this eminent British architect in writing such a book.

"A distinguished Italian architect, on discovering that I was writing this book doubted that anyone who cared for architecture could lower himself to such a project and walked away without a word further."²

Vol. 1	No. 8
Editor	Roy Graybill
Design	Keith Hoofnagle
Coordinator	Roy Graybill
Published every other month by NPS	
Division of Interpretation, WASO	
Address contributions to-	
National Park Service	
Room 3410, Interior Bldg.	
Washington, D.C. 20240	

The Italian was not alone in his image of Los Angeles. However, another European with a similarly fashionable image of L.A. at least deigned to visit the city. "On my first visit to Los Angeles, I was conventionally prepared for almost anything except for what it really looked like-- a quite beautiful place."³

In his concluding chapter, Banham writes as follows:

"Los Angeles threatens the intellectual repose and professional livelihood of many architects, artists, planners, and environmentalists... It emphatically suggests that there is no simple correlation between urban form and social form. Where it threatens the 'human values' oriented tradition of town planning inherited from Renaissance humanism, it is in revealing how simple-mindedly mechanistic that supposedly humane tradition can be, how deeply attached to the mechanical fallacy that there is a necessary causal connection between built form and human life....The common reflexes of hostility [towards Los Angeles] are not a defence of architectural values but a negation of them, at least insofar as architecture has any part in the thoughts and aspiration of the human race beyond the little private world of the profession."⁴

For "Los Angeles" read "the City", and for "architectural" and "architecture" read "interpretive" and "interpretation". It is fashionable amongst interpretive naturalists to denigrate the city--fashionable but hardly justifiable. The very concept of a national park as we know it is a product of the twentieth century urban society. Moreover, the greatest support for national parks and wilderness preservation is found amongst the populations of our large cities.

Finally it seems reasonable to suggest that interpretive naturalists would be more effective in communicating with park visitors if their views of the city were less negative. Naturalists are well aware that visitors bring with them a plethora of images of wilderness, many of them greatly at odds with reality. These images may constitute barriers, making it difficult for the visitors to appreciate and enjoy wilderness.

It may be true, however, that the images which many naturalists have of the city are equally at odds with reality, and hinder the interpreters in their efforts to communicate park values to the visitors. Attempts by interpreters to understand more completely urban society and urban dwellers may well facilitate meaningful shared experiences between interpreters and visitors, experiences of which successful interpretation is made.

References

1. Reyner Banham, Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies. (Harmondsworth, England: Pelican Books, 1973.)
2. Ibid, p.235.
3. Ibid, p.16.
4. Ibid, pp. 236,237,244.

Ron Seale
Interpretive Naturalist
Parks Canada

*Taken from the June issue of
INTERPRETATION CANADA*



This is the SandCastle at Cape Hatteras National Seashore. It was built of driftwood years ago by a man who ran a local ferry service along the Outer Banks of North Carolina. It served as shelter between runs for many years. Much later, with the building of bridges, it fell into disuse and was scheduled for burning. At that point, the Cape Hatteras Interpretive and Maintenance Staffs stepped in and appropriated it for a children's environmental activity center. Volunteer artists and park families joined forces to decorate it with bright painted crabs, fish and mermaids.

Its immediate popularity with visitors of all ages led to last summer's professional staffing and program development and to this season's continuing expansion.

Throughout this time of growth, visitors' compliments have been accompanied by the same old questions, "Why doesn't 'My Home Town Park' have a children's activity center, too? Couldn't you tell them how much we like the SandCastle?" We reach out to you in their behalf.

The SandCastle answers a need to be young at heart and to come together to discover ourselves and the world around us. Programs consist of natural arts and crafts activities that are built around the goal of increasing the youngster's interaction with his environment. To put it in Rachel Carson's terms, we go after his "sense of wonder" and try to create situations in which it might flourish. Whether the child is making windchimes, playing with puppets, or seine-net fish-

ing, a unifying theme of environmental awareness is sustained. With a lot of planning and a little bit of luck, our visitors carry home much more than a memory of some fun in the sun. They take with them a growing understanding of their ecological niche in the web of all our lives.

In this busy year of Bicentennial planning--of looking back and of creating a sane future--perhaps we should pursue this path with heart...and create sisters and brothers of the SandCastle.

Such programming might be troublesome because it is unpredictable and often needs to be intuitively altered from day to day. It will not really fit into one clear-cut pattern, but will have the spirit to reach out to the child in all of us in order to re-establish the old connections between ourselves and our natural world.

*News Release from
Cape Hatteras N.S.*

To round out this article we have included a typical weeks program for the SandCastle, taken from the SandCastle Activity Center schedule of events for August 11 - 17, 1975.

<u>MON</u>	10AM	LIVING HISTORY IN CLAY	Meet at SandCastle
<u>MON</u>	2PM	BEACH MUSIC	Meet at SandCastle
<u>TUE</u>	10AM	MARSH ADVENTURE	Front Porch, Oregon Inlet Marina
<u>TUE</u>	2PM	SWIM-IN	Front Porch, Oregon Inlet Marina
<u>WED</u>	10AM	PUPPETRY	Meet at SandCastle
<u>WED</u>	2PM	BEACH DISCOVERY WALK	Meet at SandCastle
<u>THU</u>	10AM	SHELL WALK	Meet at SandCastle
<u>THU</u>	1:45PM	OUTER BANKS PAST	Meet at SandCastle
<u>THU</u>	7-9PM	KIDS' KAMPFIRE	Beach behind the SandCastle (Parents please attend)
<u>FRI</u>	10AM	SUNSHINE SPECIAL	Meet at SandCastle
<u>FRI</u>	2PM	ALL ABOUT SAND	Meet at SandCastle
<u>SAT</u>	10AM	SURF PROGRAM	Meet at SandCastle
<u>SAT</u>	2PM	SEINING IN THE SOUND	Front Porch, Oregon Inlet Marina
<u>SUN</u>	10AM	SEASHORE ARTS	Meet at SandCastle
<u>SUN</u>	2PM	SAND SCULPTURE	Meet at SandCastle

OUTER BANKS PAST: Meet at the SandCastle and join us to see surfmen practice the old-time beach apparatus drill. Then return to the SandCastle for shipwreck stories, a net-tying demonstration, and tapes of Outer Banks music.

SURF PROGRAM: See lifeguard rescue demonstration and learn about safe ocean swimming. Then join us for a cool dip in the surf. Wear bathing suits. Kids, bring your parents!

COOPERATING ASSOCIATIONS



PRODUCT ENDORSEMENT

As you might suspect, this office is besieged with requests for endorsement of products and publications, particularly so during these Bicentennial years. Our policy on this matter should be made clear.

Recently the CAC attended a meeting at which a certain Civil War related publication was passed around. The intention was to solicit opinions. The concept was great but time did not permit anyone to really offer a fair appraisal. Nonetheless, the publisher took it on his own to interpret the Coordinator's sympathetic nod to be an enthusiastic endorsement and so wrote to a number of parks. As it turned out, the publication contained at least a dozen prominent and serious errors.

This kind of thing has happened twice before when publishers or salesmen have broadly interpreted remarks of this office as full endorsement and it has proven embarrassing. It clearly points out that we are going to have to stop mumbling or cease being nice to these people. This is a matter to be handled at this end.

All associations should understand that should this office see fit to endorse any product or publication, it will be done so with a memorandum-recommendation over Jim Murfin's signature. The use of this name

or the name of this office or coordinator's title does not constitute an endorsement in any way, shape or form. We trust that you will keep this in mind and notify this office should the policy be ignored by vendors.

★ ★ ★

COOPERATING ASSOCIATION TRAINING

The first of two training seminars for cooperating association personnel (NPS and non-NPS) will be held at Albright, October 13-17. The second class is at Mather, November 3-7. If for some reason there is not a full complement of enrollees (24 in each class), the two classes will be reduced to one and held at Albright. Deadline for all applications is August 31.

★ ★ ★

NPS CHILDREN'S MEDIA WORKSHOP

A workshop to discuss children's publications--where we are and where we should be going--has been in the discussion stages for a long time. Plans are now underway and it is shaping up as a most important meeting.

The following will give you an idea of the structure and emphasis of the workshop.

Object:

1. To develop a direction for future association and NPS publications programs for children.
2. To explore approaches to publications specifically for children about our parks.
3. To become familiar with publications and materials now available.
4. To heighten our consciousness of what kids are like today.
5. To create channels of communications with the children's publishing field and the American Library Association.

Audience:

Cooperating Association executive secretaries, business managers, and any members, such as publications committees, that are involved in publications programs; regional interpretive officers, and park interpretation staffs that are involved in writing or marketing children's literature.

Place:

Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace, 28-20th St., New York City

Dates: October 28 - 29, 1975

Program: What are kids like today?

We are bringing in a class of 6 to 8 children to critique our association publications and to give us their impressions about a number of things, including interpretation in parks. This is to set the tone of the workshop; to get an idea of what kids think about the kind of job we do. It should not only be fun but most instructive. Accompanying the children will be the headmaster of a private school who will briefly discuss some of the problems of identifying with this kind of audience.

What is happening in children's media today?

What park-related items are now being published?

What other interpretive products are available?

How does an author, artist, photographer create a children's book?

How does an editor edit a children's book?

Professional evaluation of association publications.

Trade publishers and the associations.

Notices will be sent to all associations shortly. You are urged to give this serious consideration.



ON THE OUTSIDE



GOOD SHOW IN WHITMAN COUNTY

Sam Ham has one of the most successful county park interpretive programs in Washington State. It is a safe bet there are not many, anywhere, that can match it for sheer momentum, visitor involvement, and the staunch patronage it has generated.

A last year's graduate from the Forestry and and Range Management Department at Washington State University at Pullman, Sam got a job with the Whitman County Parks and Recreation Department. Using the STRANDS concepts from the NEED program, Sam developed a "Junior Naturalist Program" for eighty Whitman County children in grades K through 6, divided into three groups who spent one day a week for six weeks in Kamiak Butte County Park. Sam enlisted the help and advice of school administrators, parents and many others in tailoring his program to the needs of the children and the community. He applied his knowledge of the NEED program philosophy to develop a program that emphasized a comfortable friendship with the natural phenomena characteristic of the park, and a holistic viewpoint of the environment. The plan was successful beyond all expectations.

This year Sam is Assistant Director of Whitman County Parks. After reviewing the successful elements in last year's interpretive program, the Whitman County Parks and Recreation Department Board of Directors endorsed the NEED program concepts as the basis for all interpretive development.

Using the inspiration of the Bicentennial Year, Sam doubled the size of his day camp

program and added bus trips to other study areas in the county where children can learn the history of the famous "Palouse Country" in which they live, and participate in living history experiences that teach how their forefathers lived in the early days of settlement.

There are waiting lists of parents impressed enough by the effect the program has on their children to want to help with transportation, supervision and logistics. For these parents and other adult residents of the county, Sam began a summer series of traditional campfire programs at Kamiak Butte County Park. They have been packed with family groups that drive twenty miles or more every Wednesday and Saturday night to attend, sometimes bringing a picnic supper to enjoy before the program.

On the last day of each Palouse Pioneer Camp program, there is a full day of cook-out, eat-out, sleep-out experience at Kamiak Butte Park. On the day I visited the project, fifty children were engaged in these activities. Sam and his staff of two assistants were being reinforced by more than half a dozen volunteer parents and other interested adults. That night, more than one hundred eighty-five people were present in the amphitheater for the campfire program, and many of these slept overnight on the grounds near the borrowed squad tents that housed their children.

Highlight of the last day's activities

began with the arrival of Park Technician Angus Wilson and Cultural Demonstrator Viola Morris from Nez Perce National Historical Park, sixty miles to the south. Both are Nez Perce Indians who, between them, hold knowledge of virtually all the folklore and all the cultural intricacies there are to know. For two and a half hours they held the absolute attention of every child in the park as they demonstrated native clothing and folk crafts, and taught the children Nez Perce words. There was plenty of one-on-one interaction as groups of children vibrated back and forth between Angus and Viola after the first part of their presentation, when they took comfortable positions among the children.

Sam and his staff have adopted the National Park Service Environman button as a standard part of their uniform. It is worn

on the left point of the shirt collar. "You'd be surprised," Sam grinned, "how much mileage we get out of it by just waiting for people to ask us what it means! It is the perfect way to open a conversation about the environmental problems we face here in Whitman County!"

The "magic" in Sam's success story is transparent: A sincere interest in children, wise collaboration with the public service and social structures of the community, sound principles of interpretation intelligently applied, good timing and logistics, and an appetite for hard work. The rewards are infinite.

Glen Hinsdale
Environmental Education
Specialist
PNWRO



FORUM



In response to the Career Plan for NPS Interpreters that was recently published, I can not agree 100 per cent with the statement..."The plan addresses itself to interpreters as a general group, with emphasis on developing communications and management skills through on-the-job experience, training and outside contacts." I do agree experience is the best teacher and that the Park Service has very good training programs, but I believe persons with communication and behavioral science backgrounds should be selected for the ranger intake program (apprentice interpreter). I remember in the Cantu/Baker report from the University of Arizona, this point was brought out several times. I agree a person in a park situation should know his subject matter, but also he should know how to relate it to the visitor.

I'll give you a for instance: I am a college senior majoring in communication (I will have 34 semester hours when I graduate in May 1976). I will have a minor in history (18 or 21 hours) in addition to 12 hours in psychology and 12 hours in science. I will have an additional 62 hours required in my curriculum. My communication courses include: journalism (ideal for writing news releases), broadcasting and the media (the hows and whys in addition to writing spot announcements that could be used to inform the visitor before he reaches the park), public speaking, oral interpretation (this could be worked into historical interpretation so easily). theatre courses--acting, directing,

stagecraft, **etc.** (It's been said before "that's what living history is to a degree" and what about "People of 1776" and "We've Come Back for a Little Look Around"?)

With this educational background plus my seasonal experience in living history, environmental education and direct visitor contact, I feel I am qualified for the intake program but the NPS Career Plan states ..."It is expected that interpreters will continue to come in to the Service with an academic major in one of the resource-oriented disciplines...cultural history, natural history or outdoor recreation with a balancing expertise in the field of human communications." Like I have said before "It's important to know these subjects, but we have people with biology majors in historical parks and people with history majors in natural area parks."

Please don't limit the apprentice intake program to majors in cultural history, natural history and outdoor recreation;
GIVE US COMMUNICATION PEOPLE A CHANCE!

I would appreciate any opinions and/or responses.

Randy W. Turner
Seasonal Park Technician,
Interpreter
Natchez Trace Parkway

★ ★ ★

Dear Editor:

The cartoon on the back cover of July In Touch was moderately funny. But the career plan for interpreters is hysterical. You've got to be kidding! Selective factors and crossover opportunities are simply words which try to regularize a situation which is irregular. If one follows a recipe such as the one you have outlined on pages 15 through 17, one will certainly come out with a cake. That cake, however, may not be in demand any longer. A number of former park interpreters have moved into top management positions where what they do makes a difference. The things they have in common are not listed among your selective factors. They are: risk taking, innovation and the ability to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. You've got to be either a magician or a gut-fighter to make it in this age of future shock. Those of you who spend your time trying to professionalize interpretation are going to be left standing at the gate.

My advice is three-fold. First, have some fun in your job. The best interpreters I know are either half-crazy or enjoying themselves immensely. Second, learn to make decisions. If you get in the habit now it will be easier when the decisions make some difference. Indecisive bureaucrats cost the taxpayers a bundle and make things miserable for their co-workers. The last thing is probably the most important. Have some alternate plans. It amazed me to find out how much I enjoyed being a National Park Superintendent when I knew I didn't have to look forward to 30 years of the same.

Russ Cahill
Director
State of Alaska Dept. of
Natural Resources

★ ★ ★

CONFERENCE PROPOSAL

I would like to propose a "Nuts and Bolts" interpretive conference for Atlantic and Gulf National Seashore areas. Possibilities of this have been kicked around for some time but nothing seems to happen.

Many interpretive meetings dole out too much time for general or philosophic discussions of one sort or another with a tour of the conference site thrown in for good measure. I would like to suggest a compact, two day winter workshop whereby in attendance are the Interpretive Specialists and as many permanent interpreters as the following parks can spare: Cape Cod, Padre Island, Gulf Island, Cape Hatteras, Assateague, Fire Island, Acadia, and representatives who could describe to participants the recently established Cumberland, Canaveral and Cape Lookout National Seashores.

I would invite as observers and participants from the floor all Interpretive Specialists from the Southeast, Mid-Atlantic and North Atlantic Regions. Only a limited number of these people would be a part of the agenda. Rather, they would serve as program coordinators and we would expect general floor input from their experience; it would be their responsibility to take back what is learned for possible dissemination to the coastal historic sites in their respective regions.

I have developed a program agenda for such a conference and would like to work with anyone else who shares my feelings to set something up.

Larry G. Points
Interpretive Specialist
Assateague Island NS

★ ★ ★

MEDITATIONS ON AN ICE CREAM CONE

Once, when I was four years old or so, I was secluded in a neighbor's kitchen with a boy about my own age while our mothers prattled alone in the living room. To keep us quiet, entertained, and happy, we were each given an ice cream cone. Now, Brad (my friend) was on his own turf. It was HIS house, and I was the visitor. So, when Brad pulled out a spoon to eat his ice cream cone with, he pulled out an extra one for me. Though I was once accused by my mother of being born in a mule barn because of my stubbornness, I could not fathom the necessity or the pleasure derived from eating an ice cream cone with a spoon. After giving it a try, I stuck my tongue out at Brad's insistence that I enjoy it his way, and continued to eat it the way I felt an ice cream cone was meant to be eaten.

Immediately, Brad pulled the cone from my mouth in horror, and proceeded to show me that in his house cones were eaten with a spoon, and I had better learn the pleasure from his frame of thinking. Well, I think I screamed for mommy, and in the long run, as I remember, I finished the ice cream with my tongue and with a look of tear-stained triumph on my face.

Unfortunately (and now I draw my analogy), the park visitor seldom has the recourse that I had, and in many cases winds up eating the ice cream with the Park Service's spoon; though sometimes the taste of metal kills the enjoyment.

If this is somewhat of a cold analogy, let me warm up to my subject. It was twenty some odd years after I discarded the forced spoon that I found myself as a host (ranger) in my home (a national park, never mind which one). Here, to my horror, I found myself offering the luscious ice cream of the resource to the visitor, along with

the spoon to eat it with, and detailed instructions on how to do it (though many people had brought their own ideas of enjoyment). "No sir, I'm sorry; frisbees do not blend in with the wilderness. We prefer you to sit and quietly contemplate the beauties here in the lotus position of your choice."

Again: "I'm sorry boys; that baseball will have to be stuck inside your pack."

And the coup de grace: "Have you ever sat and looked at the patterns in a leaf?"

Singing on the trail while hiking was also an ecological faux pas.

If someone tells me again to walk barefoot through a forest blindfolded, or see the patterns on the underside of a false morrel (which, by the way, are beautiful; which will probably send several people scurrying through the woods on a mushroom hunt), I'll scream.

Interpretation, like a diploma, should ideally provide the groundwork and the incentive for self-learning. Whether this be with facts or abstractions, it should do only this. Just as there can not and should not be a ranger at every bend in the trail to make sure the visitor obeys all the rules (we hope we can trust the majority of visitors on their own) likewise, there can not or should not be an interpreter at every bend in the trail to point out the next amazing and wonderful fact of life. If one walks through a patch of devil's club with bare legs, one will immediately know what devil's club consists of.

The person (visitor or employee) that wants to sing while hiking, or the team of scouts that for the afternoon have decided to throw a frisbee back and forth across a wilderness stream, should not

be reprimanded from above to stop it and to feel the delicacies of nature around them that it appears they are missing.

There should be a place for the expressions of joy in being in the outdoors (games, singing, whistling, and even frisbees) as well as a place for the meditations of the pantheist. Perhaps we can be the leaders and the providers without having to be the criticizing teachers of technique.

Tony Sisto
Park Technician, Seasonal
Katmai National Monument

★ ★ ★

I would like to respond to the article by Lorraine Lagnes on the NPS women's uniform that appeared in the last issue of In Touch. From the various comments I have received over the past few months, I realize that the women's uniform has become a controversial topic of conversation. In this time I have discovered that many of our employees are either misinformed or unaware of the current uniform standards and options.

The traditional uniform was authorized in February 1974 so that men and women performing the same duties would be provided the same uniform options. The women's uniform (green doubleknit and green cotton polyester) was changed from beige as the contract with Hart, Schaffner and Marx expired. The general opinion of field personnel, along with the uniform task force, was that the green fabric would be much more serviceable than the beige. The National Park Service policy on uniforms was designed to offer a variety of options to meet a wide range of operational needs. However, each area in the National Park System develops its own local uniform standard. The Superintendent determines who wears the uniform, when it will be worn and which uniform items are approved for the area.

I hope this short reply will give a better understanding of the reasons for diversity in our uniform program.

Linda Balatti
Division of Visitor
Services
WASO

★ ★ ★

RAP UP



DRAMATIC INTERPRETATION

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site developed a smashingly successful new interpretive program this summer which we'd like to share with the readers of In Touch. Drama students from the University of Maryland created a new concept in interpretation for the site through a series of "informances" presented hourly.

What's an "informance"? It's a scene or skit, 15 to 20 minutes long, depicting lifestyles, personalities and attitudes during President Lincoln's era and in the 1860's. More than 15 different informances were developed, including such topics as music of the day, reaction of common people to Lincoln's assassination, a hacker's tour of Washington in the 1860's, and recollections of those who knew John Wilkes Booth.

Eleven trained drama students, divided into groups of five with one alternate, were hired under contract with the University of Maryland for six weeks. Park Technician Colleen McCurdy was responsible for coordinating the program once it was underway. The students researched the information with the help of the staff historian, John Tiff, and wrote and performed the material themselves.

The objectives of this program were:

1. To provide the visitors with information which could be entertaining but not morbid.

2. To allow more visitors to see the facility more frequently.

3. To emphasize the "times" of President Lincoln rather than just the details of his assassination.

And what a grand reception the visitors gave it! The informances did not replace the hourly historic talks on the assassination given by park interpreters, but alternated with them at half past the hour. Many visitors stayed for both. An extra dimension was added by putting the theatre stage to good interpretive use.

The cost? Total cost of the program including students, faculty advisor, costumes and administrative cost was \$22,000. This made it less expensive than the costly thirty-five minute "Sound and Light" show which used to fill the theatre in the summer. The theatre was also available more fully throughout the season when the informances were used.

Skip Larson, Site Manager for Ford's Theatre and House Where Lincoln Died NHS, was the spark behind this highly successful new program. With a keen interest in interpreting the social, cultural, physical, and political environment of Lincoln's time, he and his staff brought something extra to the park visitor and the word "informance" into the interpreter's lexicon.

Mary Bradford
Interpretive Specialist
National Capital Parks

THE J.F.KENNEDY CENTER

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is one of the newest and most unique sites in the National Park Service. Even among urban sites in National Capital Parks, it is a little unusual, since it is not historical or what most people consider a park. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of the National Park Service to maintain and interpret the building.

The Kennedy Center is one of the major attractions in the city of Washington. Longer than the Washington Monument is tall, the building houses three live theaters, one movie theater, several restaurants, a parking garage, miscellaneous rooms and offices. In 1974, over one million people visited the Center during the day, and another one million tickets were sold for concerts, plays, operas, musical comedies and ballets.

To assist these visitors, we operate two large informational desks (carpeted in red like most of the building) located in the two entrance halls. In addition, during the summer months we operate an outdoor Kiosk. From these facilities we provide information on everything from the programs in the Center on a particular day, to how to contact your respective Congressman or Senator or how to take a bus back to the airport. One of our most useful items is a notebook, one for each information desk, listing and describing places of interest, their hours of operation and visitor services. Favorite handout items are maps: of the area, of bicycle routes, and of the public bus system.

Tours of the Kennedy Center are conducted by a special group of volunteers, the Friends of the Kennedy Center. To introduce these tours, the Park Service provides a slide program describing the Center. After tour hours, a longer more detailed version is used.

Tours are also given on the Roof Terrace of the building, and this is the special domain of the Park Service interpreter. The tours are called simply "Rooftop Talks". These talks are historically oriented, and point out the major sites, monuments, and memorials that can be seen from the Roof Terrace of the Kennedy Center. Naturally, each interpreter writes his or her own talk and develops it to suit individual interests and personality.

In addition to normal interpretive duties, the Division of Visitor Services also provides audio and technical support for a variety of functions at the Kennedy Center. These may include special dinner theater workshops, ceremonial celebrations, and many other occasions. Frequently, we use our audio equipment in cooperation with other organizations in the building, sponsoring free family and school concerts, symposia, and other programs for the public.

Future plans of the Interpretive staff include a senior citizens day, a slide program on the National Park System, a video program on theater operations for school groups, and the development of an outdoor area for free informal productions.

These interpretive activities may seem a little unusual to many of you. However, we feel they are appropriate to a cultural center, and reflect our efforts to serve the interests of its patrons and visitors.

Debby Griffin
Larry Steeler
John F. Kennedy Center
for the Performing Arts



MORE THAN A CAVE

Sometimes in our National Park Service areas, especially the smaller less publicized ones which have the name of a certain specific feature within the area, we find other features of the area overlooked.

Such an area, I feel, is Wind Cave National Park. Truly a distinctive place like Wind Cave itself is well worth the time to visit. Two regular cave tours of an hour or an hour and a half offer a fine overall interpretation of the cave. A special candlelight tour in which living history is used was introduced a year ago. The ranger dresses up and explains areas of the cave as the guides did during the 1890's. For a unique experience on a limited basis, a visitor can take a spelunking tour on which he or she is shown the techniques of caving away from a developed trail. So there are cave tours for a variety of interests.

But speaking of variety, that is the reason for writing this letter. The surface area of Wind Cave National Park, which is taken for granted by many of the visitors, has a great deal to offer. At Wind Cave are the remains of a vast land of America in its natural state--The Mixed Grass Prairie. The prairie world is truly a fascinating area to explore. At the park, prairie animals such as the buffalo, prairie dog, deer and antelope are in most cases seen rather easily in their natural state by driving through the park.

To explore the prairie, new activities have been started. Three nature walks have been introduced: Outdoor Lore, Prairie Poke-Around and the Discoveries. The programs vary somewhat in times and places they go, but all try to give the visitor an appreciation of the prairie environment. These walks are more than just a time to cover a certain amount of area. In fact, they are just the opposite. The distance covered is small, but the experiences many. The visitor's participation is multisensory. The main idea is for the visitor to become involved through his or her own feelings and ways of perceiving the prairie environment. One really finds out about an environment not through just being told about it, but by experiencing it in his or her own terms. The naturalist hopes to help the visitor

become involved, each in his or her own way, through encouragement, leading question questions, and his own enthusiasm for the area. Naturalists have used such things as Blind Walks, Magic Circle and Tag It, along with other activities to help reinforce concepts and to encourage the visitor to take an active part in the prairie world around him. I gave a group a simple hand lens, and it was amazing to see the reaction of the group, young and old; how they took time to look at things they would never have noticed otherwise.

It is hoped, after taking part in these activities, the visitor will have an awakened sense of appreciation of Wind Cave National Park. After working here five years as a seasonal, I personally have gained a renewed respect of the prairie and the living ecosystem it represents. It is my hope if in the future someone asks about Wind Cave, the question is answered not by saying it is just a cave, but an exciting environment both above and below the ground.

Doug Buehler
Seasonal Ranger
Wind Cave National Park

★ ★ ★

NUTS AND BOLTS

Got fishing in your park? River fishing, lake fishing, surf fishing? Then why not put together a fish walk for your area. Have it meet nice and early or in the late evening and talk about your park in a fishing context. What to do? Interview the old fishermen of the area to find out the best way. Read articles on why fish are slimy and so forth. Through this walk you may contact a group of people that might surprise you. They did me. Oh yes, include some safety and ecological tips as well.

Corky Mayo
Park Technician
Great Falls Park, Virginia

WAXING FURNITURE

Rewaxing is needed if the finish has become worn or dull and will not shine when buffed with a hard cloth. Never wax over dirty finish. See instructions for cleaning furniture.

After the furniture has been cleaned, let it dry well. Then apply a coat or two of paste wax. Butcher's wax, a brand name for a blend of carnauba and other waxes which produces a very good hard finish, is recommended. It can be obtained through the Division of Museum Services, Harpers Ferry Center. Silicone waxes are not recommended. They may penetrate into some finishes, especially lacquers. This finish in turn repels additional coats. This could create problems in restoration of the finish.

Apply a light coat of paste wax, let dry at least 20 minutes, then buff. Apply a second thin coat if necessary, and rebuff. Two thin coats are better than one thick coat. Paste wax may be applied to carvings, etc., with an old, soft bristle toothbrush, then polished with a fiber shoe polish brush, but apply it in thin, even coats. Light yellow waxes used over dark wood may show white in cracks and pores when dry. In such cases it is better to use a brown or amber wax. A wax surface should be dusted as needed with a soft, lint-free cloth without adding new wax. Paste wax is not recommended as a finish on bare wood; once applied it is very difficult to remove. It should be used as a protective coating over a finish of varnish, shellac, etc. However, wax used as a lubricant for drawer runners, etc., is of great benefit as it frees the drawer to move in and out and helps prevent wearing away of the wood.

Several advantages of a wax finish include:

1. It provides a protective coating for the original finish.

2. A small area may be removed and re-waxed without taking the old wax from the whole piece.

3. Wax is a hard, slick finish to which dust and dirt do not cling. (This is one of the serious objections to commercial furniture polishes containing oil. They are easy to apply but collect dirt and build up grimy layers very hard to remove.)

4. Although it will discolor in time, it can be removed with turpentine and a new coat of wax applied with no damage to the original finish.

5. Wax is not recommended for surfaces where water or hot dishes are likely to stand.

Ralph Sheetz

★ ★ ★

INTERPRETATION TRAINING FOR SEASONALS

On the first of June, 24 seasonal interpreters from 22 NPS areas converged on Mather Training Center in Harpers Ferry for what may well prove to be one of the most rewarding experiences that they will have as employees of the National Park Service. The occasion was a new, two-week training course entitled "Interpretation for Seasonals" presented by instructor Andy Kardos. The course focused on Freeman Tilden's principles of interpretation (along with current trends and audio-visual support), communications and human relations skills as related to both co-workers and park visitors, training, supervision, and counseling and evaluation.

From my point of view--the seasonal's point of view--the course was a great success (and I feel that I am speaking here for all who shared the experience of those two weeks). It is difficult to even attempt to convey to you the remarkable amount of energy and the ideas, the creativity, the self-growth generated by the group in our activities and our sharing. And even more remarkable was the discovery that what happened at Mather was simply the activation of a vast potential of that same

energy to put to work in each of our own individual situations.

It will be a tremendous waste if "Interpretation for Seasonals" is not offered again--and not just for the seasonals. Think about the parks.

Sue Mumma
Seasonal Interpreter
Chesapeake and Ohio
Canal NHP

★ ★ ★

WANTED: DISPLAY UNIT

We are looking for a display unit for pressed plants. Canyon de Chelly and Chaco Canyon are currently using a "Wing King" put out by the Multiplex Display Fixture Company, 1555 Larkis William Road, Fenton, Missouri 63026. These are units which sit on a table and have 12 leaves, both sides of which may be used for display. Each leaf is 8½" x 11". They resemble the units in which wallpaper is sometimes displayed.

If your area has one of these, and no use for it, we would very much appreciate receiving it on survey. We would also be interested in hearing of other methods which have proved successful for display of plant material.

Martha Mayben
Navajo National Monument

★ ★ ★

THOUGHTS ON IN TOUCH

As the Editor has suggested, I have re-read the first issue to understand the goals of our In Touch, "the voice of the interpreter." I also took the time to read issue number two. In the Rap-Up section, I noted that "In Touch" will receive more material than can be used in the next issue. So, depending on the type of material there may be one or more issues before a contri-

bution is published. In some cases it may be impossible for us to use a contribution at all, and we'll let you know." Then I continued to read through issue number four where Dale Thompson writes of In Touch falling short of its intended purpose in one vital area. This area is concerned with the dissemination of information on techniques, tools, training, and sources for help. A plea for a few more articles on the basics.

Now I have read the most recent issue (number seven) which complains of the weakening interpretive voice that is growing to a whisper. I question whether the interpretive voice has become weak because of lack of interest or is the weakness caused by a lack of faith in In Touch. Perhaps the magazine is too fancy and is not reflecting enough of the interpretive voice. Perhaps it is time to re-think the publication. I, for one, believe we interpreters can give it the shot in the arm that is needed. If we don't, then the publication no longer will be functional for us. We can give it the shot in the arm. What is done with the material will be reflected in the publication and its ultimate fate. If you, the interpreter, are no longer contributing due to lack of faith, let's give it another try and see where it goes.

Corky Mayo
Park Technician
Great Falls Park, Virginia

★ ★ ★

"THEY MADE AMERICA"

Nestled between Moraine and Canyon View Campgrounds is something new in Cedar Grove this summer. Overlooked by the massive walls of the Kings River Canyon is a new amphitheater where a very special program is held each evening. This is where the Bicentennial effort of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks is centered. The obvious question has to be asked: What does Kings Canyon have to do with what was happening on the East

Coast two hundred years ago? The answer is, of course, little or nothing. However, California and the Sierra Nevada have a good deal to do with the Bicentennial.

During the two years of the Bicentennial we are celebrating a nation. We are reflecting as to how we, as people, have managed to make a nation last for two centuries. Perhaps the events in Philadelphia and elsewhere gain their major significance from the fact that they marked the beginnings of a nation that lasted. A nation that has endured two centuries because generations of Americans would not permit it to fail.

Here in Kings Canyon, in the series "They Made America", we are telling the story of some of those Americans who have helped to make our country endure. We are telling the story of some of the men and women who helped influence not only the history of California and the Sierra Nevada, but also of the nation whose birthday we are now celebrating. Seven different programs are given in the "old-fashioned" campfire style, without any electronic aid. A series of log benches are arranged facing a small campfire circle and the costumed interpreter tells his story in the first person.

Kit Carson and John C. Fremont tell us of their explorations in the west. They tell us of their winter crossing of the Sierra and of their adventures during the Bear Flag Revolt and the Mexican War. Mark Twain shares some of his younger days with us, speaking of travels on the overland stage, of a remarkable frog by the name of Dan'l Webster, and of his visit to Lake Tahoe, that mountain jewel surrounded by a "rim of snowclad mountains." Nancy Kelsy relates her adventures crossing the Sierra. She informs us that she was the first emigrant woman to make the trip, and that she did it barefoot. The legendary California bandit, Joaquin Murieta, makes a weekly appearance. He tells of some of California's "spoil-

ers," such as the scourge of the Wells Fargo Company, Black Bart the Shotgun Poet. He tells us the saga of Chris Evans and John Sontag, men accused of several Central Valley train robberies. He even reveals some of his own daring exploits. John Muir also pays a visit to the campfire. Usually he settles down, prepares some tea, and then shares with us some of his journeys throughout the "range of light." He also tells of how he spent such a great part of his life in the fight to preserve the natural state of the mountains for us and for our offspring. Lastly, we learn of the life of a tourist in Kings Canyon fifty years ago. A visitor of the era tells of the hardship in just reaching the canyon, of the people she found living here, and of the intense struggle to have the Kings Canyon set aside for the enjoyment "of this and future generations."

This series of programs is but one of the many ways that we in the West are celebrating that past two hundred years of our nation. But no matter where the Bicentennial is being celebrated, West or East, there is something that should perhaps always be borne in mind. In celebrating our nation's past, we have a responsibility to examine all of our history, good and bad. We can point with pride to our good accomplishments, but we should not ignore, even during the Bicentennial, those parts of our history that are less than flattering. As the character of Joaquin Murieta says: "To deny that our past has had in it elements of violence, of injustice, and of prejudice would be to deny our own history. It would be to refuse to face the problems that those elements have caused. It is perhaps as well to remember that all of us living in this land for the past two hundred years, have, for better or for worse, helped make America."

Ronald J. Young
Park Technician
Sequoia-Kings Canyon
National Parks

Here we go again

YOU CAN TAKE OFF YOUR ASBESTOS SMOKEY BEAR SUIT. THE FIRE HAS PASSED!

hoofagle HAVO

I WONDER HOW MANY PEOPLE HE'S GOING TO OFFEND THIS TIME!

THIS IS A SELF-SERVICE NATIONAL PARK. VISITORS MUST PROVIDE THEIR OWN PROTECTION INTERPRETATION MAINTENANCE

HAS IT COME TO THIS?

THAT'S THE CHIEF OVER THERE. HE CAN'T STAND BEARDS ON UNIFORMED PERSONNEL !!

I CAN'T STAND MIDRIFF BULGE, EITHER, BUT I DON'T MAKE A BIG DEAL OUT OF IT!

AND HERE SHE IS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MISS INTERPRETATION!

NOW THERE'S A NICE UNIFORM!

MISS INTERPRETATION?

IT'S JOHN BROWN, JOHN WILKES BOOTH, BENEDICT ARNOLD, AND LIZZIE BORDEN. THEY SAY THEY'VE COME BACK FOR A LITTLE LOOK AROUND!

I'D RATHER SWITCH THAN FIGHT