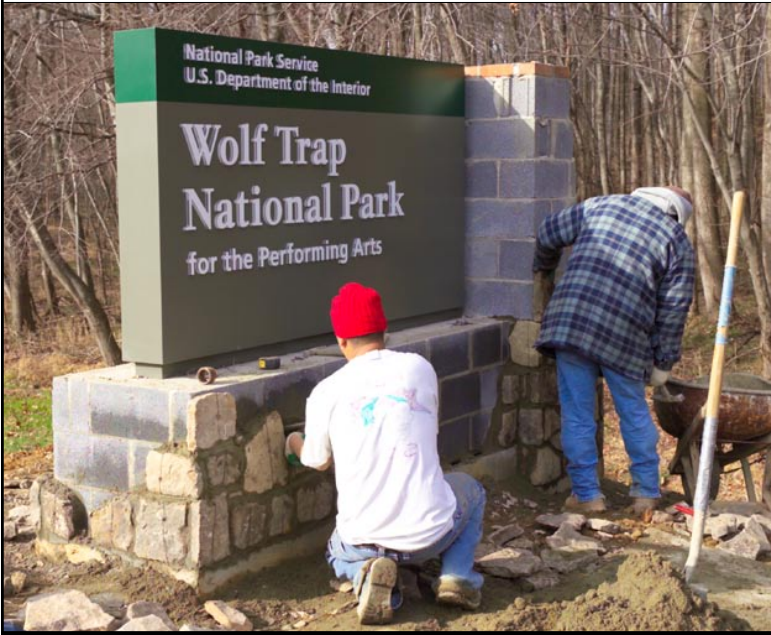




# HFC *on* MEDIA

December | 2004

Issue 2



*Contractors install one of the two new Wolf Trap entrance signs and complete the stone work. The newly legislated name change gave the park an opportunity to re-do their signs. The park came to HFC and Bob Clark, designer and sign standard coordinator, who used the new NPS Uniguide Sign standards to create new entrance signs and an electronic marquee to announce upcoming events at the park amphitheater.*

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## From the Manager

A few days ago the Harpers Ferry Center staff attended an all-employee meeting to see where we've been, where we are, and where we might want to go to be the NPS's first choice for interpretive media products. We had the chance to hear from Neil DeJong, Intermountain Region's Chief of Interpretation, on what he called his Top 10 list of reasons the Harpers Ferry Center has some work to do to improve its reputation as the center of interpretive media excellence. It would be easy for us to become defensive about the points Neil raised regarding our shortcomings on behalf of our field colleagues who use and want our products. We could say "But you don't understand." In reality, perhaps you don't understand how we go about our work. We're not trying to be mysterious, but if we're coming across that way, we will need to fix that.

HFC onMedia is intended to help show you how we operate and show how we are changing. To make this work, we need to hear from you on what topics you would like us to cover; on what products and services you would like to see HFC offer; and on which new products or technologies you would like to recommend to us. We need to know what is working and what is not, so we can reduce Neil's list from 10 to zero—our resolution for 2005!

I and all the Harpers Ferry Center staff wish you a happy and safe holiday season. See you in January.

— Gary Cummins

# Curators to the Rescue:

## *Who to Call When Disaster Strikes*

**On September 16, 2004, Hurricane Ivan roared out of the Gulf of Mexico with 130-mile-per-hour winds, headed almost directly at Santa Rosa Island and the historic Fort Pickens area of Gulf Islands National Seashore. More than 300,000 artifacts were on display or in storage on the island. An eight-foot storm surge washed clear across the island, and a wave reported to be 50 feet high washed out the bridge to the mainland and all the docks. Emergency assistance was needed, and the only fortunate thing in a most unfortunate situation was that a Museum Emergency Response Team (MERT), newly trained, was ready to be dispatched.**

Almost exactly one year earlier, September 2003, Hurricane Isabel hit Cape Lookout National Seashore and Jamestown Island in Colonial National Historical Park. The damage to natural and cultural resources was so widespread that the Incident Command (IC) System was activated. It soon became apparent that despite the IC teams' effectiveness, they were not equipped or trained to care for museum and artifact collections. Museum staff, curators, and conservators from the National Capital Region (NCR), Northeast Region (NER), and Harpers Ferry Center (HFC) were called in to manage the salvage operation. For both groups, the time together was a learning experience. Everyone realized that forging an alliance and establishing links with the IC System could be very fruitful and have long-range impacts on the recovery of cultural and natural collections in emergency situations. Upon her return to NCR, Regional Curator Pam West formed MERT, consisting of Trudy Kelley, her

deputy, park curators and HFC staff members Sylvia Frye, Al Levitan, Karen Matson, and Theresa Shockey.

They held monthly meetings to plan a training course for NCR museum staff. The idea was to prepare the team to work on a local level within the region,



*Building 5, which housed the main park exhibits, was torn from its foundations and the T-shaped structure broken apart.*

*“Everyone realized, however, that forging an alliance and establishing links with the IC System could be very fruitful and have long-range impacts on the recovery of cultural and natural collections in emergency situations.”*

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or under an IC team when recovery of cultural and natural artifacts was necessary. Participants were carefully selected, based on their availability, skills, and experience. In August, the group was trained in the leadership aspects of Incident Command, since they already knew how to do the salvage work. Not quite a month later their training was put to the test at Gulf Islands.

The first to arrive at Gulf Islands were Theresa Shockey of Harpers Ferry Center and Paul Rogers of the Southeast Region. They made an initial assessment of conditions. On the mainland, the collections were in good shape.

Then Shockey and Rogers turned their attention to the island, now accessible only by boat. Pilings were all that was left of the docks, making landing problematic. Debris was everywhere, power was out, and only three vehicles on the island still ran. Primary concerns for everyone were public health, safety issues, and structural integrity. For example, on this 150-year-old military installation had the storm uncovered live ammunition? Almost all the structures on the island are historic and almost all had sustained damage. A public health official and a structural engineer accompanied the earliest team trips to the island.

### How Bad Was It?

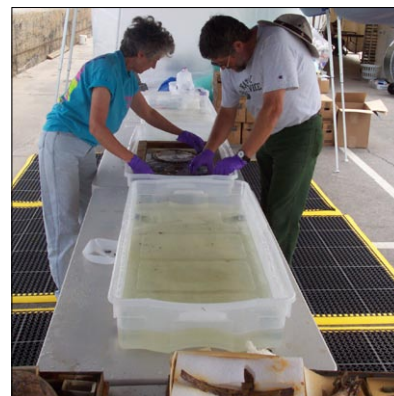
The bulk of the park's artifacts were in an insulated, climate-controlled Bally building inside Building 17, located only a few feet away from the island's bayside seawall. The team did not know what to expect. Would water spill out when the door was opened, washing out valuable and irreplaceable items? They carefully pried one corner open, and when no water poured out, they opened the door. The smell of mold filled the already humid, tropical air, and they knew to expect the worst, for mold is the enemy of preservation. The Bally building had

floated and bobbed inside Building 17, tossing records from the shelves onto the floor, turning them into a sodden mass of paper. Cabinet drawers and their contents lay all over the floor, and mold was growing everywhere.

Once they realized what the extent of the recovery operation would be, Shockey and Rogers knew they needed help. Swiftly, Sylvia Frye and Karen Matson of Harpers Ferry Center, Catherine Dewey and Bob Sonderman of NCR, and Gloria Swift from Monocacy National Battlefield were dispatched. Allen Bohnert of the Southeast Region and Al Levitan of Harpers Ferry joined them later.

The team knew they would have to stay on the island since going back and forth each day consumed valuable time. They had only cold running water. A barge was run up on the shore to serve as a dock. Island raccoons, used to scavenging in campground garbage, were starving and a constant menace. One day the temperature hit 109° with 90 percent humidity. The brilliant white sand, so alluring in pictures for visitors, reflected the bright sunlight relentlessly. Black flies feasted on sweaty, bare skin. Finding the simplest supplies was a challenge, for the immediate area had been devastated and hundreds of thousands of people needed everything. Two pallets of supplies sent from the Museum Resource Center arrived, but were not enough. Faced with these obstacles, the team had one objective: get the thousands of artifacts off the island and into safe and secure storage. That meant sorting the objects, performing on-site triage, keeping tags and identifying markings together, and packing the items.

Paper and photographic materials needed to be frozen to stop mold growth, but restaurants and grocery stores needed freezer trucks to preserve food. Three freezers were purchased at a hardware store. Though welcome, their



*Top: Catherine Dewey, architectural conservator at NCR, cleans and sorts slides from the park's collection. Salt water can wash the emulsion off the film and destroy the image. A slide with any bit of image was saved and set aside for a final determination.*

*Middle: Karen Matson, HFC, and Stanley Lawhead, Gulf Islands, wash metal artifacts and lay them out to dry.*

*Bottom: Mold growth exploded in the damp and humid climate. These fabric items that had been in good condition just two weeks earlier were now host to blossoming mold.*



limited size meant that conservators had to make choices since not all items would fit.

### Using Lessons Learned

The practices learned at Cape Lookout and Jamestown now came into play, and systems developed in 2003 were repeated on Santa Rosa Island. Gulf Islands NS staff, dealing with damage and losses to their own residences, joined the team. With the addition of Roxanne Sellers, Stanley Lawhead, and Jeff Halsted, the pace of work picked up and settled into a routine. As boxes were filled and closed, they were stored in tents and structures on the island. Later they were moved to the casemates of Fort Pickens, one of the few protected and dry locations on the island. As work was ending, news came of a new storm, Tropical Storm Matthew, brewing in the Gulf. It was headed for Santa Rosa Island.

### Here We Go Again

The newly sorted and packaged artifacts could not be left to the mercy of another storm, but had to be moved to protected shelter on the mainland. Eve-

ryone quickly mobilized, loading boxes on pallets with only forklift headlights to illuminate the dark casemates. Halsted knew someone who had a World War II landing craft that could carry all the artifacts in one trip. That particular craft was essential because the temporary docks would not bear the weight of a forklift. Forklifts drove to the sea wall with pallets of shrink-wrapped boxes and loaded them directly into the landing craft. On the mainland, a special forklift on a boom lifted the pallets out of the craft. Wet paper and photographic materials needed to go to a facility in Texas to be freeze-dried. West found a refrigerator truck traveling through Pensacola headed for Texas. They arranged with dispatchers to meet the truck and turn over the items. The connection was made and the items went off to Texas.

Conservators, curators, and administrators from HFC, NCR, and the Southeast Region spent September 23 to October 14 saving more than 300,000 irreplaceable artifacts under extremely adverse circumstances. That was the dramatic story. But another story, one with equally important effects, occurred at the same time.

### Merging Two Worlds

IC teams do not have a lot of experience saving cultural artifacts, but they do know how to organize and deal with emergencies. They know how to procure supplies and equipment on very short notice. They are innovative in their ability to meet unexpected needs or situations. The IC world and the world of cultural and natural resources professionals needed to be brought together. The curators and conservators knew that harnessing that energy and expertise was the



*Pam West (NCR), Pat Hooks (Southeast Regional Director), Fran Mainella (NPS Director) and Alan Bohnert (Southeast Region) examine a tray of buttons, ceramic items, and metal shells before any cleaning or triage had been begun.*

*“Incident Command teams do not have a lot of experience saving cultural artifacts, but they do know how to organize and deal with emergencies.”*

## News Briefs

### NAI Awards

Two Harpers Ferry Center projects won first place in their categories at the recent NAI conference. The Sandstone Visitor Center won in the Interior Exhibits category, and “On the Edge of the Gichigami,” a movie for Apostle Islands National Lakeshore won in Film/Video. The HFC team for the Sandstone Visitor Center was: Ed Boutte, Michele Hartley, Kim Hildebrand, Paul Koehler, Michael Paskowsky, and Barry Vance. For the Apostle Islands Film, the team was Valerie Coffey, Eric Epstein, Michele Hartley, Mary Ann Kave, Steve Ruth, and Anne Tubiolo.

### The Sign Program

The Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Servicewide Sign Management Program was issued Nov. 16, 2004. Contractors have three months to respond to the RFP. An award is scheduled for June 1, 2005. This program is for the planning, design, and manufacture of new and replacement signs consistent with the NPS UniGuide Sign Standards for all units of the National Park System. The program also provides for the manufacture of wayside exhibit panels and hardware. It also includes the fabrication of standard signs and associated hardware that have general content applicable at multiple parks. A website for ordering will be an integral part of the program.

### Corps Award

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers annually recognizes excellence in design and environmental achievement of the Engineers and their professional partners. In 2004, one of the Honors Awards has been presented to Harpers Ferry Center, Missouri National Recreational River, and Ponca State Park for the Resource and Education Center at Ponca, Nebraska.

key to grafting a curatorial arm onto the IC structure. Some awkward moments developed: “Why do you need distilled water? Just use what comes out of the tap.” “Why are we using our valuable generators to run those freezers, and why are you freezing artifacts?” These events became learning opportunities, and the theories and procedures that had been developed in the classroom were tested in the midst of actual work. From that experience, the cultural resources people and the Incident Command personnel developed new respect and understanding for the procedures and practices each exercised. The Wyoming Hotshots and the Malheur Rapellers fire fighting crews worked alongside curators, sorting, washing, and packaging. A new dimension has now been added to the work of IC teams, and curators and conservators have created a valuable new relationship

to help preserve our cultural patrimony.

The team members who went to Gulf Islands and those that supported them from home can all be proud that they were the first team of this type in the National Park Service. Pam West and HFC are working closely with other regions to form similar teams. The plan is that every region will field such a team, or work together to share one. Out of natural disaster, a seed has been planted and is growing. Training is scheduled for the Northeast Region in April. Hurricane season returns June 1.



*Top: The impromptu camp for the museum crew near the Fort Pickens area made access to the worksite easier and proved to be the source for a lot of good stories.*

*Bottom: This drawer and its rusted and moldy contents is typical of what faced conservators at every turn.*



*At the end of the first week of the recovery efforts, the crew working on sorting, cleaning, and packaging the artifacts stopped work for a group picture. They are, from left to right, (back row): Bob Sonderman, NCR; Hugh Shockey, contractor; the four men and one woman of the Wyoming Hotshots; Paul Rogers, Southeast Region; (front row) Stanley Lawhead, Gulf Islands; Theresa Shockey, HFC; Pam West, NCR; Floria Swift, Monocacy; Sylvia Frye, HFC; Roxanne Sellers, Gulf Islands; Catherine Dewey, NCR; and Karen Matson, HFC.*



# Student Interns:

## *Fostering a New Generation of Media Specialists*

### **Student interns are becoming fixtures in the Harpers Ferry Center media departments. And they are showing us they have a lot to offer.**

The HFC conservation labs have had interns for a number of years. They have always been graduate students, working towards an advanced degree and generally in the third year of their studies. Students from nearby high schools have often held jobs in the administrative ranks. Now student interns are joining the media work groups. These interns are undergraduates and have come to Harpers Ferry Center from Humboldt State University, University of Cincinnati, University of Washington, and Shepherd University in nearby Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

Chuck Dunkerly, an AV editor, remarks that “their understanding of the interface between technology and media is very different and informative from our experience. This is the future of interpretive media, and the interns are a refreshing reminder of what is on the horizon.” Learning about the work process is something students do not see in the classroom.

Kris Klein of Shepherd says that “seeing the work process involved in producing something I created on the screen was not something we learned in the classroom.” Derrick Schultz, a Cincinnati student, says the experience of working made him “approach his classes differently.” Ryan Fazulak, also a Cincinnati student, added that “the attention to detail was imbued with a high degree of professionalism from which I have learned how to conduct myself in the workplace.”

Other interns found unexpected

benefits from the work experience at Harpers Ferry Center. Lauren Morrison, a Shepherd student, showed her professor examples of work she had done for wayside exhibit projects. Her professor, impressed with what she had done, asked her to prepare some orientation materials for the campus. Bob Clark, an HFC graphic designer, has worked with five students in the past few years. “The students bring a literacy of the current design world with them. Even if they do not know a specific software program, they have no fear about teaching themselves.” Clark says that he wishes he “had had such an opportunity when I was in design school.”

All students agreed that they would recommend the experience to other students. Shannon Reiss, from Cincinnati, explained how she had learned about the integration of design and illustration. “I never knew there was so much to keep track of in historical illustration.”

HFC staff were unanimous in their praise of the students and the STEP program. “Being able to bring these people in and work for us is a godsend,” Janice Wheeler explains. “I’m not sure who learns more, we or the students. And they do such great work.” Dunkerly echoes that sentiment and adds, “their questions are a constant reminder of what we are all trying to achieve.”

### **New Employees**

#### **Kathy Tustanowski-Marsh**

Kathy Tustanowski-Marsh has begun work at Harpers Ferry Center as the new deputy associate manager for programs and budget. She comes to the Center after two years as comptroller at Yellowstone National Park. What excites her about Harpers Ferry Center is the opportunity to blend her interpretation background with her knowledge of the workings of administration. She sees her job as “playing to everyone’s strengths and ensuring that everyone has the best available tools and knowledge to make informed budget decisions.” Kathy, her husband Steve, 12-year-old son Cody, a cat, and a dog will soon be moving into their new home outside Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

#### **Rick Jones**

Rick Jones has taken a position as an Interpretive Planner with Harpers Ferry Center. He will be stationed in Denver. Rick comes to Harpers Ferry Center with 26 years experience in the NPS, the Forest Service, and the BLM. He has had assignments at Saguaro, Lava Beds, Fort Frederica, Glacier Bay, Curecanti, and Glen Canyon where he worked most recently. Jones likes the job of planning. He sees that it is about “making connections” and ensuring that through “public service we can preserve the meanings of these great places we call parks.”

*“This is the future of interpretive media, and the interns are a refreshing reminder of what is on the horizon.”*

# The Long Range Interpretive Plan

**Planning is one of the most important things that we do. And interpretive planning is essential to the work of Harpers Ferry Center and the parks it works with, for it provides the framework upon which all interpretation hangs.**

Sam Vaughn, associate manager for Interpretive Planning, says that “in a nutshell planning assesses what our resources are and discusses how best to use them.” Sarah Smith, a staff planner with Amaze Design in Boston, Massachusetts, reminds us that we “must think how the visitor will benefit from having a unified set of messages. That cannot be achieved without careful planning.”

The Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP), therefore, is as much a lengthy discussion and brainstorming session as it is an actual document. It is the park staff—the managers and stewards of the National Park System units—sitting down with their cooperating association, concessioners, friends group, experts, and the professional interpretive planners from Harpers Ferry Center that begins the process. They come together to spend time thinking how personal services, interpretive media, and partnerships will address visitor needs and communicate the park’s stories and ideas. The LRIP is the critical piece of planning for interpretation, for it helps parks decide how to allocate their resources over the next ten-year period and how to fit this planning document into other aspects of park operations. The LRIP complements all park planning documents.

## Forging A Message

The workshops are facilitated by the HFC planner and help participants begin to see how they will translate ideas into interpretation. Having an outside facilitator means that every single person at the park can focus on the task at hand. Participants move through a three-step process: Foundation, Assessment, and Recommendation. In the Foundation stage, the team looks at the establishing legislation to ground themselves in the intent of the Congress. They look at previous planning documents. If the park is new or even relatively new, they talk to those who knew the area before it became a park. From this smorgasbord of ideas the group sifts and winnows and develops purpose and significance statements and decides on the primary interpretive themes. Once they have decided on the stories and messages that they want to tell, the time has come to step back and see what is already in place. Assessing current conditions is a key step. Agreeing on where you are is necessary for deciding where you want to go.

In the final stage the entire interpretive planning team makes recommendations. Park staff, planners, and media experts begin mulling over what aspects of the story will be taken care of by personal services, and which parts will

## Retirees

### Brian Jones

Brian Jones, an AV producer-director and chief, Division of Audiovisual Arts, retired December 2, 2004, after a 32-year career. In that time Jones has been involved in literally hundreds of different AV projects, and has watched the technology change from slide shows to high definition presentations. What has not changed over the years he says “is the commitment to and belief in the mission of the National Park Service.” Asked to single out some projects of which he was particularly proud, Jones declines to pick one over another. “I have been touched by all the projects that I have worked on, and hope that my knowledge and ability to create interpretive media has served all the parks where I have worked.”

### Bill Brown

Bill Brown, long-time Historic Furnishing specialist, military historian, and 2004 recipient of the Sequoia Award, retired October 29, 2004. He had 33 years of federal service. Bill believed strongly in the role of research and in the important of “visual responsibility” the National Park Service has to the American public. “Our credibility is on the line. Visitors know they can trust what they see in a national park. So we must keep intact that bond between Harpers Ferry Center and the parks to do the best and most honest job for the American taxpayer.”

### Kathy King

Kathy King, administrative technician at Harpers Ferry Center, retired December 2, 2004, after 29 years of federal service. Besides the National Park Service, she has worked for the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute. At Harpers Ferry Center King worked in Programs and Budget, Human Resources, Publications, and Media Development. Kathy said that she is looking forward “to doing what I want to do now, when I want to do it.”

*“In a nutshell planning assesses what our resources are and discusses how best to use them.”*

use interpretive media to meet visitors' needs. It is also the time to find ways of ensuring that visitors will get that personal connection to the park that is at the root of every single good park experience. This is a discussion that is framed by a park staff that knows its resources. Media experts know the strengths and weaknesses, costs, maintenance issues, and life expectancy of the various forms of media. They have been involved with evaluations from the beginning of a job through its completion and they have that body of knowledge to draw on. They have studied new approaches, new products, and they know what truly meets visitor needs and also what is only a gimmick. They know that wayfinding and orientation have come to be issues that parks must consider as they address what visitors need. Putting the pieces of this puzzle together, developing very basic cost estimates, and reaching recommendations result in a plan that will guide the park's interpretation.

That, in brief, is the Long Range Interpretive Plan. What is Harpers Ferry Center's role? What do we bring to this table? It is impossible to overemphasize the value of planning. Sarah Smith of Amaze Design says that the "planning done by the National Park Service makes my job so much easier because I can see what is truly needed. I do not need to go over old ground with the park staff."

### Requesting an LRIP

How can you get in line to do this and what does it cost? Typically a plan costs about \$30,000. This amount covers Harpers Ferry Center staff time and travel costs. The first step is to apply through the Servicewide Consolidated Call. The regions rank the requests and use a number of factors to evaluate the applications. Among the factors are these: Is significant development taking place? Is the park new to the system? Is

there a significant challenge or has the purpose or audience changed? Is the current Interpretive Plan obsolete? Are park needs media-related or will the emphasis be on personal services? All these questions come into play as the requests are evaluated. Some parks are fortunate to have other funding sources—fee money or cooperating association donations. If a park has the money and is ready to proceed, they should call the Harpers Ferry Center front door, 304-535-5050. Once a project is in the work plan, Harpers Ferry Center planners work with park staff to arrange the workshops, create agendas, and facilitate discussions. The planner writes and drafts the plans, all the while working closely with park staffs on every aspect. Every planner has significant and varied park experience. Besides interpretive planning experience they have also done value analysis, General Management Plans, and design charrettes. If you have any questions about Interpretive Plans, check the HFC website ([www.nps.gov/hfc](http://www.nps.gov/hfc)) or talk with Sam Vaughn.

Planning looks at the range of possibilities, at realizing what can realistically be done, so sound choices and decisions can be made. It is a careful, thoughtful analytic process, and Harpers Ferry Center is here to help parks make those choices, for ultimately the decision can only be made by the park because they implement the plans and live with the choices made. Harpers Ferry Center assembles the parties who have the knowledge that can be drawn upon, brings the people to the table, and facilitates the discussions. If you surround yourself with the best, you can make the best decisions and create what will be a memorable, engaging experience for visitors.



*Top: Lucy Walter (Glacier NP), Keith Morgan, (HFC), and Dave Dahlen (Glacier NP) ponder a point during the Interpretive Planning process at Glacier NP. They are standing in the Logan Pass Visitor Center, undergoing renovations.*

*Bottom: Jack Spinnler (HFC) leads a workshop at Smith State Park within Niobrara National Scenic River. The workshop focused on coordinating media development and personal services with NPS partners such as the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nature Conservancy, and Nebraska State Parks.*