

Winter 1991
Interpreting the Future

Interpretation



Contributors

William E Brown
John Byrne
Don Goldman
Beth Hagler-Martin
Mark Herberger
Beth Houseman
Glen Kaye
William Penn Mott, Jr
Daniel O Murphy
Michael Paskowsky
Jerry Y Shimoda

The *Reckoning*, an account of the rise of the Japanese automobile industry and the fall of the American one, author David Halberstam brings forth an insight that strikes like a pole axe. "Thinking about the future was Amaya's particular responsibility," penned Halberstam.

Now what a remarkable thing to say. The practice, as Halberstam described it, was instrumental in bringing success to the Japanese. The approach included a herculean and systematic assembling of information (for the future is a very big subject) and the extraction of patterns, trends, and possibilities not previously recognized.

Halberstam's observation is striking because good interpreters reflexively think a great deal about the future. As with Amaya, they sweep the literature and mass media for information and insight. They evaluate events. They seek what can bring comprehension and suggest implications. They pounce upon the hint of new trends and digest the possibilities.

Trends are not destiny, but they are not irrelevant either. Predictions are not guarantees but they are usually predicated upon promising (or unsettling) conditions and events. Out of the universe of data (and pronouncements and interpretations and conjecture) interpreters filter the noise and create their own sense of the future. In turn they reapportion their time and effort to the betterment of parks and the shaping of healthier, richer lives. They become futurists, and cultivate this thinking in others.

Developing original visions of the future involves critical thinking. It requires a certain detachment and an ability to create new constructs. "Revolutionary thinkers are not, primarily, gatherers of facts, but weavers of new intellectual structures," wrote Stephen Jay Gould. And the new intellectual structures, inspired by science or spirit, are without end. Ecological islands. Global warming. Gaia. Mass extinctions. Spaceship Earth. Chaos.

The contributors to this issue are among the many who sift and weigh the input from the world about, and in their search for new constructs help us plot our way.

Glen Kaye

Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services
Southwest Region

Freeman Tilden Award Keynote Speech

Elsewhere in this issue, you will find an insert listing the National and Regional Freeman Tilden Award Recipients for 1990. One of the highlights of the Tilden Awards Ceremony at the National Association for Interpretation National Workshop in Charleston, South Carolina, was Deputy Director Cables' talk to the nearly 300 attendees. Mr Cables graciously substituted at the last minute for Director Ridenour who was suddenly called away to California to negotiate the sale of the Yosemite Park and Curry Company.

Immediately following Mr Cables' speech, National Parks and Conservation Association President Paul C Pritchard remarked, "What I just heard was one of the most significant speeches I have heard in my ten years of work at NPCA ... and I hope the Park Service will distribute the speech."

Following is the entire text of Deputy Director Cables' speech.*

Herbert S Cables, Jr
Deputy Director
National Park Service

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. It is an unexpected pleasure for me to be with you for the 1990 presentation of the Freeman Tilden Award. I am standing in for the Director of the National Park Service, James Ridenour, who was called away on urgent business and so could not be here himself tonight.

That the Director would try so hard to be with you himself, and then when that was not possible, that I would cancel my scheduled obligations to be here in his stead, is an affirmation to you of the esteem with which we hold this profession and this award.

On behalf of the Director, I thank the National Association for Interpretation for including the Freeman Tilden Award Ceremony in its ambitious and outstanding national workshop.

I know most of you are National Park Service interpreters since this is a National Park Service awards program. What occurs tonight, however, honors all interpreters, and I am happy to learn that NAI interpreters from all sorts of organizations are here tonight.

I understand that more than 700 interpreters are here this week, which is truly remarkable. Although I consider myself, in a broad sense, a part of your group, I am not so presumptuous as to imply that I am in your interpretive league. You are the true professionals — interpreters who have been trained and educated to make a difference with and for your publics.

I am convinced that an enormous amount of the credit rests squarely with you when we examine the reasons for the remarkable public support the NPS has received and must continue to receive as it enters its 75th year.

I congratulate all of you for the superb work you do.

* For the first time, a video of the entire Freeman Tilden Award Ceremony was produced by the Harpers Ferry Center. Copies can be borrowed from your Regional Chiefs of Interpretation.

In a few minutes, Paul Pritchard and Frances Buchholzer will tell you what a tough job it was choosing a National Tilden Award recipient. I am told that each year the judging becomes more difficult. This is a testimony to the fine work you all do.

Two areas of Park Service interpretation are of special interest to us at this time:

- the professionalization of the Park Service interpretive workforce, and
- the Presidential Education Initiative of which the Park Service is a part.

Both areas relate in important ways to our celebration tonight of the accomplishments of ten outstanding National Park Service interpreters. Both initiatives are, in fact, important for all of us.

First, let's consider the Park Service interpretive workforce.

As many of you know, the Director has asked our personnel office to look at the entire ranger workforce to see how restructuring positions might make them more professional, reward employees for the work they do, and help the Service compete better as it recruits new employees.

We want the most professional interpretive workforce possible!

We want interpreters with expertise in the subjects they interpret, **and** the necessary skills to interpret and communicate effectively! The "either-or" arguments of the past—that is, should interpreters have communication skills or subject-matter knowledge—offer an inadequate standard on both sides. Interpreters must have **both**. Without both resource knowledge **and** communication skills, interpretation cannot reach true professional stature.

Last year, we conducted a major survey of permanent National Park Service interpreters. More than half of all Park Service interpreters responded. Here are two of the findings:

- seventy-two percent of all current interpretive employees have four-year college degrees.
- The same number—72%—reported their wish was to make interpretation their career work in the National Park Service.

Almost all National Park Service employees here today are ranger generalists, regardless of their personal expertise or educational backgrounds.

Furthermore, many Park Service interpreters hold lower civil service grades than many of the other federal employees at this workshop because of the way the National Park Service has classified its ranger workforce over the past two decades.

It is time for us to assure that the personnel system benefits both the Service and its employees—especially the interpreters—so that Service careers can be more professionally rewarding. Those who want to stay in interpretation and have the skills and expertise deserve better opportunities to advance within their own field.

Our approach must include both better position management **and** better use of the various professional job series to create park

education specialists, recreation specialists, and history and nature interpreters.

Let me repeat what both the Director and I have said before: **as we look to improve, we will make conversions only** of vacancies or of individual positions that can benefit both the incumbent employee **and** the organization. There are instances where change is not needed—that is fine and good. But when change makes sense, we will go forward.

We know that tonight's ten Regional Tilden recipients are true professionals: the judging panel reviewed each of your nominations carefully. But we suspect each of you is officially a generalist who will not be recognized or rewarded from a position management perspective for your expertise and education.

The changes we expect will be reflected in future Tilden Awards Ceremonies over the years as we begin to see the evolution of the interpretive workforce—and, particularly its stars—to recognized professional specialists.

My second concern tonight is the Presidential Education Initiative.

I am struck by the obvious reality that every nominee is involved in educating people. As Paul Pritchard summarizes each Tilden nominee in a few minutes, note the emphasis in each upon education. It is impressive, and we want it to flourish throughout the system.

Recently, a Park Service Education Task Force report was sent to all parks, outlining recommendations for improving and expanding our education program. I am happy to say that some new money is available this fiscal year in the Division of Interpretation's budget. It should stimulate some of the activities outlined in the Education Task Force Report. I also know that it is not nearly enough, and we will pledge to work hard to perpetuate more funding in future years. We will also work with our Washington Office of Interpretation to explore creative ways in which we may get the maximum mileage out of the dollars we do have.

Of all the bureaus within the Department of the Interior, the NPS is uniquely qualified to help meet and support the education goals of the President and Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan. The Service has had a strong and continuing tradition of providing educational opportunities to park visitors and the general public through outreach programs.

Park sites lend themselves to serve as educational laboratories in history, social and cultural studies, and both natural and earth sciences.

Park interpreters are uniquely equipped to provide these services and generally consider education a key element of their career responsibilities.

The National Park Service can easily assume the lead among resource agencies in providing environmental and heritage education for both adults and children. To accomplish this goal, the task force offers the following observations that the Director has endorsed:

- parks need to know that it is “ok” to engage in educational outreach. For many years, managers were told that outreach was not appropriate unless mandated in the park's basic legislation.

I say to you and to all NPS managers, that it is not simply “ok”—it is, in fact, vital, to engage in educational outreach. And I am pleased to affirm that the mandate comes clear from the top—to the Service, through the Department, from the President!

- The National Park Service Education Program should not be driven from Washington. Washington should provide encouragement, support, training, funding, and other resources. The field areas are best equipped to identify needs and work with local schools and organizations.

Again, listen to what has been done by these award nominees in their parks. They perfectly exemplify how park areas work well at local levels.

Another point of the task force that I addressed earlier is:

- the NPS needs to reevaluate staffing needs; education is a professional series and program managers in the education field should be considered for the series.

Another point:

- equal weight should be balanced between cultural/heritage and environmental education. Whenever possible they should be blended together.

And:

- the NPS Education Program should be expanded to non-academic audiences such as scouts and boys/girls clubs.

As well as:

- it must be funded and strongly marketed.

We are not asking parks to do more with less in order to carry out the Service’s education objectives. These recommendations must have our financial and philosophical backing to have meaning and go forward.

Finally:

- the NPS has a great opportunity to move forward into the 21st century with an educational program that would serve not only this nation but other nations around the world.

We should really view the NPS Education Program as continuing and strengthening a philosophy that already exists. It is not a new, separate program: it is a way of thinking and doing that should permeate all of our programs. This philosophy strives to help the public and ourselves; to help us all find our position within the global natural environment and the global cultural/social environment.

As interpreters, you have the opportunity to have a very real and very substantial impact on the fate of our planet and our relations with its peoples. The rewards are not as material as those in some other professions—but they are immensely more satisfying than material rewards because they enlighten minds and impact actions for generations to come. And I haven’t forgotten our commitment to try to improve the material rewards associated with professional interpretation, either.

Regional Information Survey

Alaska

Keith Hoofnagle is a unique member of the Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services in the Alaska Region. For years he has been the creator of the affable "Rangeroons" who have cavorted across many pages of NPS publications. His talent is now fully employed in the Alaska Region in numerous projects that benefit visitors to Alaska. In cooperation with a local exhibit contractor he has been the designer and production specialist on airport exhibits in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Sitka, and the new Alaska Ferry Terminal in Bellingham, Washington. The demand for his input into numerous regional and park projects from publications to exhibits is a never ending flow. His fitting title is Visual Information Specialist and his creations are a pleasure to see. The blend of his many years of field experience and special talents offers the Alaska Region a rare opportunity for his indelible mark.

Western

The Western Regional Office has taken a step into the future. We have moved into a new building located in the financial district in San Francisco. That is right, no more demonstrations, no more protestors, and no more federal building. With the move came a lot of changes. Some of the changes have been good and some have been negative changes. It was interesting to observe the reactions of other employees. Many felt threatened by what the future would hold (less space, less privacy), some were reluctant to accept the change (new area, new office plan, new neighbors), and some were excited about the change (a view, new carpet). The first days were trials for all. It was wonderful to watch the attitude changes of people who were resistant to the change. As time passed, so did their doubt. I guess that is how some people deal with the future, they work with the change and finally accept it (with a few groans and grumbles). With our new location comes a new address and new phone number. Our address is 600 Harrison Street, Suite 600, San Francisco CA 94107-1372. Our phone number will be FTS 484-3910 or 415 744-3910.

Pacific Northwest

Planning has always been a work associated with futures and in the Northwest we anticipate the future with several large projects.

Currently, planning is underway for new visitor centers at North Cascades National Park Service Complex and John Day Fossil Beds NM. At Fort Vancouver, FY '91 brought planning monies for the Fur Warehouse which will greatly enhance the park story. Crater Lake National Park has been working for some time on the rehabilitation of the old lodge and the design of a new hotel and activity center. These projects guarantee a fine future for the park. On a more programmatic note, Nez Perce NHP plans an exhibit of Nez Perce art for November which will combine community, tribes, park and Northwest Interpretive Association efforts for the benefit of the public.

At the Regional Office we have anticipated the future by hiring Kathy Fuller as the new Interpretive Management Trainee. Kathy will complete a fast-paced two-year training program to prepare her for a GS0025-9 interpretive position.

Rocky Mountain

The future...the future!...When we think of all the effort we put into planning and operations it's an eye opener to see how often we fail to collect information on who our visitors are, what their expectations for visiting our parks are, and how well we're meeting those expectations!

With this in mind, our office continues to advocate the use of social science research to fill these information gaps. Regional gatherings, one-on-one conversations, and mailings with "how to" guides, constitute the core of our primary thrust—educating folks to what social science research can and cannot do in support of the NPS mission, present and future. With the realization that social science research can help identify visitor demographics, the impacts of parks on local economies, the effectiveness of park interpretive programs, future visitation trends and their impacts on park operations, etc., pressure will build to make such research an integral part of park operations and planning. This pressure will take us to the next hurdle—adequate funding to underwrite necessary research!

Midwest

Is dust gathering on your copy of "Biological Diversity Curriculum?" Since we distributed this environmental awareness workbook to every permanent interpreter and NPS area in the Spring of 1990, we have received many compliments about it, but would appreciate hearing how the curriculum is being applied in your park. Has anyone conducted teacher workshops; what did you do and how was it received by teachers? Have interpreters worked with teachers to adapt or modify any of the lessons to your site? Has anyone applied the lessons at a historical site? With what results? Has anyone given sections of the plan a reasonable test application? What happened? What are the curriculum's strengths and weaknesses? We have been asked these questions by interpreters and teachers and we don't know how the curriculum is being used around the Service. If you have had a chance to use the curriculum, please give us a call at 402-221-3477 and let us know how it went. Please call if you did not receive your copy of Biological Diversity Curriculum. We look forward to hearing from you.

Southwest

The trend of increasing international visitation at many parks in the Southwest Region is continuing. At Navajo National Monument, for example, international visitors, principally from Germany, Japan, and France, now constitute about 65% of the park's visitors.

Success continues to breed success. As more and more books and other educational materials are published in foreign languages, there is even more international interest and visitation. All of this, of course, contributes to the globalization of the tourism economy, and the integration of national economies. More parks are starting to use second language skills as screen out factors for hiring seasonal staffs and selecting permanent employees. Exhibits and waysides at a dozen parks are being produced in both English and Spanish.

Service Center Report

North Atlantic

"Partnership" is a key word for the Division this year, particularly as we implement the Region's mission statement. What does it mean? How can we input? What are the opportunities?

Several projects are underway. On March 9 we co-sponsored "Forging Partnerships: New Coalitions for Non-Profits" with the New England Heritage Center and the New England Museum Association. Later in March the annual meeting of the Bay State Historical League featured training on "Interpretation of Literary Sites", arranged by the NAR Interpretive Skills Team.

In July in cooperation with Bentley College, which will offer teacher credits, we will conduct a workshop to develop curriculum packages for five parks.

In September, Interpretive Skills 1 will be open to interpreters from the Blackstone Corridor sites, members of the National Association for Interpretation, the Appalachian Mountain Club and other affiliated cultural and natural resource partners.

Southeast

Interpretive skills training will maintain its high profile in the Southeast Region this fiscal year. In October, team members conducted a very successful Skills I class in spite of the angst created by the budget standoff. More than thirty participants will be attending a Skills II class scheduled for Pensacola, Florida in March. The Region will supplement these 40- and 80-hour courses with a series of mini-courses tailored to fit the needs of individual park staffs. One of two courses has already been conducted for parks in metropolitan Atlanta. Additional one- or two-day sessions for other parts of the region are in the planning stages.

The Regional Office funded the production of 12 X 16 inch 75th Anniversary logos for its 57 areas. By using the exhibit production facilities and talents of the staff at ANDE/JICA, costs were held to under \$9.00 per copy.

Mid-Atlantic

The Eisenhower Centennial Celebration at the National Historic Site concluded with a concert by the West Point Glee Club and a centennial ceremony at the Eisenhower Farm. Other events held throughout the year were an exhibit of Eisenhower's paintings, and Angus field day and cattle sale, a demonstration skeet and trap shoot and two agricultural field days. Successful interpretation of Eisenhower's diverse interests was possible because of joint sponsorship of events by twelve different organizations and more than 3,200 hours of volunteer time.

Over its 112 year history at Hopewell Furnace, blacks played a significant role in the production of iron. To highlight this contribution, staff members Rich Pawling and Ron Boice produced a site bulletin, "BLACK IRON", for use on and off site. More than 107 blacks have been identified on the Furnace's employee rolls.

National Capitol

For the first time, two winners have been selected to receive the Potomac Heritage Award for the most creative interpretive program in the National Capital Region. During the summer of 1991 both the National Mall (National Capital Parks-Central) and Ft Dupont Park (National Capital Parks-East) will receive a one-time budget increase to hire an extra summer seasonal interpreter. Both parks are to be congratulated for their achievement.

Interpretive training in the Region have taken a number of new twists in the past year. In addition to a highly successful Chief Interpreters Workshop at Chincoteague, VA, the Region created a new course which focused on the interpretation of slavery. Entitled "Breaking the Chains: Interpreting Slavery and its Legacy," the course brought together participants from several regions with historians and professors from institutions ranging from Howard University to Harvard University. The course was a cooperative venture with the Mid-Atlantic Region.

Denver

All natural systems include feedback, ways to stay on track, keep it in the road, and make needed corrections. The Denver Service Center is starting a pilot project—post Occupancy Evaluation—to evaluate how well visitor centers and other visitor facilities work. We will look at three or four facilities this year, and try to determine how well the buildings and interpretive media do what they were supposed to do. The goal is increased quality: identify what works and what doesn't, and improve our future efforts. This initiative will involve parks, regional offices and the Harpers Ferry Center. We welcome your input; call Bill Koning (303-969-2457) or Sam Vaughn (303-987-6605).

Harpers Ferry

"Learning in the Parks," an education program combining handbooks, videos, and study guides, is a forthcoming initiative of the Harpers Ferry Center. Target audience for the program is school-age youth, particularly those in urban areas.

The program is a joint effort of the publications, audiovisual arts, and interpretive planning divisions. It stems from three factors: (1) the System's 355 national parks are America's prime natural, historical, and recreational resources; (2) publications and videos exist interpreting these resources; and (3) the Center can help coordinate a cohesive education initiative to marshal these resources on behalf of the Service.

"Learning in the Parks" is a concerted effort to project Service interpretation beyond the parks. It targets audiences not being reached and is intended to complement the many excellent education programs that exist in parks.

Modules under discussion focus on John Brown's Raid at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Yosemite, Everglades, Glacier Bay, and the Statue of Liberty.

Tonight we honor ten interpreters who have made an impact and felt the personal satisfactions. We are proud of their work, and the work that you all do, not only as the leadership of the National Park Service, but as fellow humans. And I hope this event is a stepping stone to better paychecks, too.

Thank you.

Sequoia Award

A new award for NPS interpreters is the Sequoia Award. It is a clear plastic embedment of a Sequoia cone mounted on a base which recognizes the individual receiving it. The Sequoia Award is a discretionary award made by the Chief of Interpretation on recommendations received from Regional Chiefs of Interpretation. It is awarded to individuals on the basis of significant, long-term contributions to NPS Interpretation in one of five areas defined in *The Interpretive Challenge*: Professional Excellence; Evaluation; Education; Program Integration; or Media.

The fourth Sequoia Award was recently presented to Tom Danton, the new Chief of Interpretation at Saguaro National Monument, for his contributions to Professional Excellence in NPS Interpretation. He received the award for the superb work he did in the Midwest Regional Office as an interpretive specialist (1985-1990), specifically for the over 300 weekly issues he wrote and produced of his interpretive bulletin entitled "Sharing." Congratulations, Tom!

Others who have received the award are Gene Cox (Everglades NP); Alan Mebane (retired); and Ken Raithel (Denver Service Center).

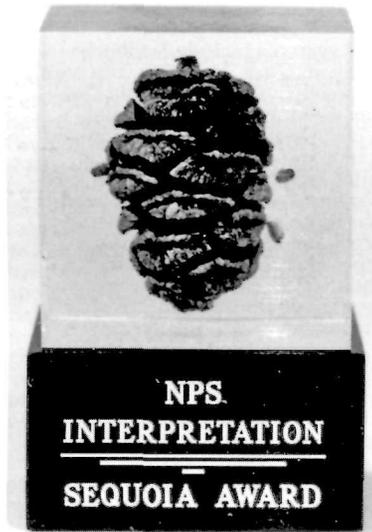
NPS Education Programs

Ninety-four requests for education funds were made in FY91, totaling \$5.25 million. Forty-one requests were partially or fully funded by the \$776,000 that was appropriated for the "National Parks as Classrooms" Program. Selections were based upon a set of criteria that were directly linked to the recommendations set forth by the NPS Education Task Force. Because there were so many outstanding projects, the selection process was sometimes a bittersweet experience.

Additionally, 24 projects were funded from Quincentennial funds (\$497,000). A total of 35 proposals totalling over \$6.3 million were received for these funds.

Although there is no guarantee that these funds will be available in future years, we anticipate similar amounts for distribution in FY92. Requests for proposals will be made this summer.

Here is the final list:



Robert Huggins
Natural Resources & Urban
Interpretive Specialist
Division of Interpretation,
WASO
202/523-5270

Sandy Weber
Cultural Resources Interpre-
tive Specialist
Division of Interpretation,
WASO
202/523-5270

Distribution of Parks as Classrooms Funds

Alaska

APLIC/ARO
Expand Urban-based Education Program
at APLICs

Mid-Atlantic

HAMP
Interpreting Slavery Education Program

MAWA

Richmond Education Outreach Program

PETE

Education Outreach Program

SHEN

Education Outreach Program

Mid-West

INDU
Education Specialist

LIHO

Pre-visit Materials for Teachers and Students

GEWA

4th & 5th-Grade Curriculum Development

VOYA

Boat Transportation for Education Groups

National Capital

NCR-East
Literacy Program for NPS Employees

ANTI

Education Coordinator for Tri-State Area

HAFE

Heritage Education Program

PRWI

Education Coordinator for New EE Center

North Atlantic

NARO
Regional Education Specialist

LOWE

Respecting Ethnic Diversity Video

GATE

EE Brochure; Ecology Village Curriculum

BOST

Boston: People & Places Teachers
Guide

CACO

Upgrade NEED Materials

Pacific Northwest

NEPE

Nez Perce Traditional Culture Teachers
Packets

WHMI

Teachers Guide & Outreach Program

CRMO

Travelling Workshop & Travelling Trunks

KLGO

Enhance Current "GOLD GOLD" Program

NOCA

Mountain School Outdoor Laboratory

Rocky Mountain

BADL

Black-Footed Ferret Education Module

RMRO/GLCA

Energy Impacts/Alternatives Education
Module

RMRO/WICA

EE/HE Adult Resource Issues Education
Module

RMRO

EE for American Indians Module

ROMO

Rocky Mountain Education Outreach Program

Southeast

SERO

NPS 75th Anniversary Poster for Schools

EVER

NEED Exchange Program w/INDU for
75th NPS Anniversary

Southwest

BAND

Development of Curriculum & Resource
Materials

BITH

Education Seminar Community Program

Western

GOGA

Mentor Education Program

SAMO

Native American Environmental Center
Program

SAFR

En. Living Program for Visually Impaired
Students

PEFO

Rural Schools Model Education Program

Harpers Ferry

HFC

NPS Education Video

WASO-NatlReg

WASO

Teachers Manual for using National
Register

WASO-DivInterp

WASO

Skills III Training

WASO

NPS Education Course

Distribution of Quincentennial Funds

National Capital

NACC
NPS Opening Ceremony for CQ

Southeast

BISC
Hispanic Education Programs

CASA

Education & Cultural Outreach

DESO

Educational Interactive Video

GUIS

On-Site Education Programs

SAJU

Education Outreach & Seminars

VIIS

Columbus Landing Site Interpretation

Southwest

AMIS

Native American Interpretive Programs

ARPO

Hispanic History Exhibit

BIBE

Mexican/US Cultural Demonstrations

CACH

Native American Slide Programs & Exhibits

CHAM

Hispanic Drama Festival & Exhibits

ELMO

Hispanic & Native American Education

JELA

Ethnic Cultural Centers Exhibits

PECO

Cultural Demonstration & Teachers'
Guide

PAIS

Hispanic Education & Outreach

SAPU

Special Events & Education Outreach

SAAN

Symposia & Interpretive Demonstrations

Western

CABR

Education Programs & Exhibit

CORO

Spanish Exploration Media Program

TUMA

Media Rehabilitation

WRO

Coordinated CQ Events for Bay Area

WRO

Coordinated CQ Events for South California Parks

WASO-DivInterp

WASO

Interpretive Materials and Training



Letters

Neal Bullington
Chief of Interpretation
Sleeping Bear Dunes NL
P O Box 277
Empire, Michigan 49630

As part of my Albright Development Grant this year, I have produced an A/V program on special interpretive techniques. I would like to let NPS interpreters know that this program is available for loan, and thought Interpretation might be a logical place to mention it.

The program is based on a poster session I gave at the recent NAI convention in Charleston, and is titled "Antique Stereoscope Views: Out of Grandma's Attic and Into Your Interpretive Program."

It consists of one tray of 35mm color slides, typewritten text, and a tape cassette narration with inaudible pulses for slide changes, suitable for use with a Wollensak 3M programmer or equivalent.

The program is available on loan from me at the above address.

A Moment with Mike

Michael D Watson
Chief, Division of
Interpretation, WASO
202/523-5270

I intend to use this space from time to time to communicate with NPS interpreters in the field about various issues and concerns. I hope to stimulate some thought and feedback, and will print pertinent thoughts from you.

- **Interpretation**—This issue of *Interpretation* marks the end of the technical bulletin's third year of publication. Thanks to the Regional Chiefs of Interpretation, the WASO Division of Interpretation staff, the Harpers Ferry Center staff, and the interpretive writers who have made it all possible.

I am very pleased with *Interpretation*—I feel the theme-related central booklet is reaching its potential. The outer cover is meant to convey timely information of interest to NPS interpreters that may or may not be related to the theme of the inside booklet. I do not feel the full potential for this outer cover has yet been realized, hence "A Moment with Mike."

Hopefully, all of you are filing the central booklets in your gray notebooks under one of the tabs relating to *The Interpretive Challenge*—Professional Excellence; Evaluation; Education; Program Integration; and Media. At this time, only enough issues of *Interpretation* are printed to go to all permanent interpreters, field offices, Superintendents, and central offices. Seasonals have to rely on the notebooks to see all issues.*

*

I know the gray notebooks are getting full. We will be working on sending out new notebooks for the next three years in the near future. In the meantime, we do have some extra gray notebooks. Drop a note to Debra Kelly, Division Secretary, here in WASO if you would like an extra notebook for old issues.

Regional Chiefs of Interpretation Meeting—By the time you read this, the Regional Chiefs of Interpretation will have met in Harpers Ferry (March 4-6). We also met for one day after the Charleston, SC, National Association for Interpretation Workshop last November. These meetings are critical to all NPS interpreters, because they often set policy and direction for NPS Interpretation. Your Regional Chiefs are able to share field concerns with one another and the Washington Office. The development of the five-year plan for NPS Interpretation entitled *The Interpretive Challenge* (April, 1988) was developed through such meetings.

Here are the major topics that are on the agenda for the March meeting:

- The Interpretive Challenge revisited
- The Revision of NPS-6, Interpretation and Visitor Services Guidelines
- Appendix A: The Annual Interpretive Program Report
- Appendix B: Minimum Core Training Program for Interpreters
- Interpretive Planning Process
- The Interpretive Prospectus
- The Statement for Interpretation
- The Official National Park Handbook Program
- NPS Ranger Workforce Issues
- The Revision of NPS-32, Cooperating Associations Guidelines

Not all of these topics will touch every NPS interpreter, but every NPS interpreter will be touched by one or more in the list.

A few comments on two of these issues that I know are on everyone's mind:

- **NPS Workforce Issues**—lots of apprehension, anticipation, and anxiety exist regarding the changes going on with the NPS Ranger Workforce as it applies to NPS Interpreters. Roy Graybill here in the Division of Interpretation and I are working closely with WASO Personnel Specialists to sort through the materials to assure that NPS Interpretation benefits from the changes that are occurring.

After the Regional Chiefs meeting in March, Roy will produce a "white paper" which will be distributed through *Interpretation* outlining the issues and direction NPS Interpretation should follow. Here is what I am sure of now:

- This exercise is nothing to fear. *The Interpretive Challenge* calls for the professionalization of the NPS interpretive workforce, and the Ranger Workforce Program gives us the best opportunity to accomplish it.
- NPS Interpretive Operations at all levels must understand the personnel process as it now works and take advantage of the "tools" that already exist for making the workforce more professional. We must learn how to practice sound position management in interpretation to open new avenues for utilizing and classifying interpretive personnel.

- Nearly all interpreters in the NPS are presently classified as generalists. Compared to professional series in the NPS and other federal agencies, we are not getting the pay and rewards we should for the excellent work we do.
- It will take a concerted effort by all NPS interpreters and managers to make this program reach its potential and work properly.
- **The Statement for Interpretation and the Annual Interpretive Program Report**—First, let me personally thank all Park Chiefs of Interpretation and your staffs for the excellent work that goes into your SFIs and AIPRs. Since the SFI program began ten years ago, nearly every park in the System is now aboard and uses the SFI to plan its yearly interpretive program.

I know there is some griping about the SFI, especially the statistical AIPR—I hear it when I attend Regional Park Chiefs of Interpretation meetings and visit parks. The Regional Chiefs meeting in March will spend a lot of time seeing what can be done to make the SFI/AIPR process less burdensome, more efficient, and more meaningful. Here is what I am sure of now:

- The primary value of the SFI is at the park level and will always be. Interpreters at the field level must make the numerous decisions that contribute to the success of a park's program, and the SFI is a major component of that process.
- The SFIs are useful in many ways. Besides the primary purpose as a park planning document, your SFIs were used to complete much of the Harpers Ferry Center's *Inventory of Interpretive Media and Assessment of Maintenance Needs* (July, 1989). For the most part, this inventory was performed without contacting parks—the information was gathered directly from SFIs on file in WASO. Individuals frequently come to WASO and study the SFIs for special projects—recently, one individual studied them to learn what the NPS is doing and not doing in the interpretation of Slavery and Black History. By studying the themes listed in the SFIs, he was able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our overall programs in these areas. SFIs are also being used as the basis to demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of Servicewide Interpretation to the Inspector General and Department of the Interior under its Management Control Process for NPS.
- Interpretation in the NPS must have good, reliable statistics. Everyone is interested in accountability and results, from the Office of Management and Budget to your Park Superintendent. We must find better ways to account for our significant accomplishments.
- There is certainly room to streamline the SFI process and avoid duplication of effort from year-to-year. We will be looking for ways to accomplish this.

I end this first "Moment" by thanking each of you for the excellent work you accomplish, often under adverse conditions. Your dedication, expertise, and energy are recognized and appreciated throughout the System, the visiting public, and the international conservation and preservation community. Have a great summer season.