

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
HORACE M. ALBRIGHT TRAINING CENTER
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SALESMEN OF KNOWLEDGE

The future of America is in the hands of two men--the investigator and the interpreter. We shall never lack for the administrator, the third man needed to complete this trinity of social servants. And we have an ample supply of investigators, but there is a shortage of readable and responsible interpreters, men who can effectively play mediator between specialist and layman.

The practical value of every social invention or material discovery depends upon its being adequately interpreted to the masses. Science owes its effective ministry as much to the interpretative mind as to the creative mind. The knowledge of mankind is advanced by the investigator, but the investigator is not always the best interpreter of his discoveries. Rarely, in fact, do the genius for exploration and the genius for exposition meet in the same mind. Many country women of the south can make a strawberry shortcake that would tempt the appetite of the gods, but they might cut sorry figures as domestic science lecturers.

The interpreter stands between the layman, whose knowledge of all things is indefinite and the investigator whose knowledge of one thing is authoritative. The investigator advances knowledge. The interpreter advances progress. History affords abundant evidence that civilization has advanced in direct ratio to the efficiency with which the thought of the thinkers has been translated into the language of the workers.

Democracy of politics depends upon democracy of thought. "When the interval between intellectual classes and the practical classes is too great," says Buckle, "the former will possess no influence, the latter will reap no benefit." A dozen fields of thought are today congested with knowledge that the physical and social sciences have unearthed, and the whole tone and temper of American life can be lifted by putting this knowledge into general circulation. But where are the interpreters with the training and the willingness to think their way through this knowledge and translate it into the language of the street? I raise the recruiting trumpet for the interpreters.

TWENTY PRINCIPLES

- Most people listen but few hear.
- Inability -- or unwillingness, to listen is the major cause of poor communication.
- Poor listening means poor concentration. Which means a large ego.
- A major index of emotional maturity is the ability to listen.
- Pretend you have no voice. Not only will you interrupt less, you will hear far better.
- Observe the good listener; even his physical posture shows concentration.
- If it's worth saying, it's worth listening.
- Notice how often a poor memory goes with a poor listener.
- Speak with enthusiasm but listen with calmness.
- A top professional at anything is a master listener.
- For one full day, speak as little as possible.
- If you must speak, ask questions.
- An interrupter is usually guarding a closed mind.
- Poor listeners shuffle paper, look away, change the subject.
- Good listeners look you in the eye, give you all the time you need.
- A great control for social or business tension is the practice of the art of good listening.
- Disastrous decisions have been made by key people because they "tuned in" on the other person's appearance or personality instead of on what that person was really saying.
- To listen with art, practice a listening attitude, a listening posture, and concentration.
- There is no such thing as an unpopular listener.
- To succeed, you must understand. To understand, you must hear. To hear, you must listen.

INCREASING PERCEPTION

"If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern."

Successful interpreters have a common trait. They practice the "art of seeing". They probe for the special significance of objects, landscapes, and events. They see things that are lost to the fleeting glance of the less alert, untrained eye. They see beauty in the commonplace, uniqueness in the usual, and meaning in the apparently meaningless.

Skilled interpreters bring all their senses into play. They share what they "see" with others whose acuity is not yet as sharp as their own. The casual observer may admire a landscape for its basic beauty. Interpreters go a step further. They are aware of contrasting textures, subtle nuances of light and shadow, color and form, pattern and line, composition and balance. They sometimes see landscapes within landscapes. They are aware of both sound and lack of sound. Movements catch their eyes. Fragrances do not go unnoticed. They may even taste certain elements of the landscape. These are things that give "dimension" to what they see.

It takes time to "see". Practice looking into your everyday world. The results can be exciting. Very small, ordinary things that you previously have overlooked take on new significance. You find yourself agreeing with the Oriental philosopher Su Tung-P'o that "All things are in some sense worth seeing, and are consequently sources of pleasure; it is not necessary that they should possess either rarity or beauty."

HOW TO LEARN TO LISTEN

To learn to listen effectively is an art. Listening well requires conscious attention on these things:

AWARENESS

The mind can direct itself to only one detail at any one time. Therefore, we cannot talk and listen simultaneously. Concentrate both visual and mental attention to the other person.

FOCUS

Keep the mind receptive to what is being said. Try to grasp the speaker's meaning and feeling. Avoid any negative aspects of the other person.

SUMMARY

Ask -- what has been said? What does it mean? Pause before responding. Think, then answer. If interrupted, stop and refocus on listening.

GOOD INTERPRETATION IS, OR SHOULD BE...

INFORMATIVE

- It conveys meaningful information or new knowledge about the park and the kinds of places and things it is representative of...it should reveal to the visitor the role and impact of man in the environment.

INTRIGUING

- It generates interest and curiosity...it captures the attention.

IMAGINATIVE

- It communicates in innovative ways...it stimulates or provokes new or different ideas or concepts... it causes the visitor to look at familiar things in different ways or from different perspectives.

INVOLVING

- It invites or encourages visitor participation... it draws the visitor into intimate personal contact with the environment or the object of interpretation...it involves the visitor as an active participant not just as an observer.

INFLUENTIAL

- It effects changes in visitor attitudes and behavior.

EMBERS FROM A PHILOSOPHICAL FIRE

Interpretation is the perfect union of art and science.

Interpretation is a special way of "knowing"...it is a process of stimulating, sharing, and guiding.

Interpretation is the process of "building bridges of understanding" over which the visitor can freely move from present to past, and from the synthetic to the natural world.

Interpretation is the art of enriching the visitor experience with understanding and meaning. Not unlike education, one of its principle objectives the modification of human attitudes about and behavior in the environment. In those areas that preserve vignettes of our prehistory and history, interpretation is concerned with strengthening our bond with the past... with developing positive ties with our traditions and heritage.

The task of the interpreter is difficult. He must first attempt to put aside the erroneously conceived notions of the visitor, and then attempt to provocatively build in them a sense of informed concern.

An effective interpreter is one who is well informed about the resource and the facts concerning it. Accurate information is one of the best tools of interpretation. In a fashion analogous to energy travelling from the bottom to the top of an ecological pyramid, information undergoes a form of entropic

decay when it passes from its primary source(s) to secondary, tertiary and higher levels. The further a fact is from its origins, the less reliable it is.

Interpretation is both an affective and a cognitive process...It speaks to both sides of the brain.

The real currency of interpretation is an amalgam of emotion and thought.

Interpretation can be a catalyst for sociocultural change...in a sense, the interpreter is a "guru" for the visitor who is "stalking the wild identity."

Interpretation and environmental education are cut from the same cloth... They are simply tailored to fit different size people.

An interpretive encounter should be imbued with a sense of discovery and exploration. The interpreter should be less a leader or guide than a member of the group.

Interpreters are alchemists of thought.

THE TWELVE COMMANDMENTS

(as given to Freeman Tilden on the mountain)

THOU SHALT:

- I. Aim for the heart, lest your tale be sterile.
- II. Reveal, not inform. Promote Aha, not Ho-hum.
- III. Learn the art; practice it.
- IV. Provoke, not instruct.
- V. Help the whole person from hopeless to holistic.
- VI. Sense the Wunder in the Kinder. Ja, youth!
- VII. Consider your co-respondents; what they want to hear.
- VIII. Promote participation in the past; bring it back to life.
- IX. Stop before you've said it all.
- X. Apply the above with love (with reverence for the place and respect for the receiver).
- XI. Not improve a weak story by putting it on tape.
- XII. Create happy amateurs, in spirit and in truth.