

FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

National Park Service and Michigan State University
Contract No. 8025P22393

Assessment and
Enrichment of Environmental Interpretive Services in
National Park Service Areas of the Pacific Northwest

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Selection criteria make no provision for interview. Past job experience and academic background are insufficient indicators for selection of a skilled public communicator.

Time and permanent supervisors are in short supply. The result is that seasonals are not audited enough either to help them improve or to make a decent evaluation for rehire.

The weight of the load for improved interpretation rests on the seasonals themselves. Improvement can be brought about through self-critique, group coaching with peers or coaching involving supervisors.

However, there is cause for hope. Seasonals and permanents alike seem desirous of developing and maintaining high quality interpretive programs. Critique from outside the Service may be of great help as it is free from many constraints and often lends a fresh viewpoint.

It is recommended that a second 6 week program of assessment and training be carried out during the summer of 1973, beginning later in the season to assure that all parks visited will have their full program in operation. By reduction of the number of areas visited, the time in each should be increased to allow rapport to develop.

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Final Report: Contract No. 8925P22393, Assessment and
Enrichment of Environmental Interpretive Services in
National Park Service Areas of the Pacific Northwest

Introduction

The following report is submitted in fulfillment of Michigan State University's Department of Park and Recreation Resources agreement with the National Park Service's Pacific Northwest Regional Office as detailed in the attached and above designated contract.

This report is prepared following a prime guideline of brevity. Although many praiseworthy interpretive efforts were noted in the areas visited, it is not the purpose of this paper to dwell on them. Rather, the emphasis is on those situations, conditions, and practices which it is felt contributed to less than desirable quality of the interpretive programs observed.

It should also be noted that the main thrust of this report is toward those interpretive services which involve direct visitor-interpreter contact rather than those dealing with self-guiding experiences, displays, dioramas, and visitor center displays.

In the interest of condensing these suggestions for those who may desire to scan the report rapidly, they have been prepared in two forms. (1) Synoptic or reduced form. (2) Narrative form. It is suggested that the synoptic form be scanned first to provide a general understanding.

At the outset, it should be noted that placing a label on the overall interpretive quality of programs observed necessarily draws attention away from the extremes of excellence and its opposite. The label merely focuses attention on the average or middle ground.

In addition, each park area was aware of our trip and probably had scheduled their better people for us to observe. If this is accurate, the assessment may in fact be too high.

Whatever the situation, observed interpretation represented an average which was just adequate to slightly below. There were no programs in the excellent category, a few very good, some adequate, some poor and a few of the worst ever witnessed anywhere.

Probably, the single most responsible factor in promoting low quality interpretation was lack of communication skill--poor delivery. Inhibiting the acquisition of these skills are inter-relating factors of weak administration, poor employee morale, lack of understanding of National Park Service goals, philosophies and values, insufficient training, recruitment and rehiring of incompetent personnel.

Abstract of Narrative Report, Assessment and Enrichment of Environmental Interpretive Services in National Park Service Areas of the Pacific Northwest Region

Interpretive quality in the areas visited averaged about adequate or slightly below. The single most important cause for this was lack of communication skills. But, inhibiting the acquisition of such skills are inter-relating factors of weak park administration, poor employee morale, lack of employee understanding of National Park Service goals, philosophies and values, insufficient training, recruitment and rehire of incompetent personnel.

A serious weak point is the fact that most of the permanent staff assigned the duty of operating interpretive programs have no experience themselves. Thus, they are ineffective in recognizing interpretive quality or taking adequate steps toward improvement. The answer lies in an intensive training program designed to improve the level of proficiency of permanent supervisors.

Seasonal training is too compressed and often emphasizes areas of administrative detail which are irrelevant to the immediate problems in interpretation. Demonstrations and improved, skill oriented formal training are needed. In addition, pre-season mail outs (mimeo and taped) as well as pre-season training sessions at central locations are recommended.

Seasonals tend to fail in taking advantage of lieu time to familiarize themselves with their areas and therefore are not as well versed as they should be. Assigned duty time ought to be utilized to remedy this.

Permanent and seasonal morale is at a low ebb. In the permanent ranks the causes are alleged lack of support from Region and WASO as well as dead-end career leaders in interpretation.

The low morale prevalent in the permanent ranks carries over into seasonal attitudes as well. Permanents, dissatisfied with their lot, spend inadequate time explaining NPS goals or building esprit de corps in the seasonal ranks. The permanent dissatisfaction is impossible to conceal and this causes a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the seasonals.

Worse, supervision on the park level tends to be weak. Leadership authority is handled with such caution that it is often invisible. This is especially true in the case of rehire evaluations for seasonals. Either because he doesn't want to hurt the seasonal's feelings or the hope that a miraculous transformation will occur during the winter and next season will be better, marginal or below employees are seldom terminated. They should be, and their place given to someone who can do the job.

There are definite steps which may be taken to improve the quality of interpretive programs. These revolve around four areas: training, quality control, administration, recruitment. A fifth area, critique from without, appears to have relevance and this will be presented in a separate section at the end of this report.

It is understood that some of the suggestions and solutions proposed will be beyond the limitations imposed by current budget and manpower ceilings. However, it is the intent of this report to propose not only immediately applicable measures but to address itself to more extensive and elaborate procedures which may be undertaken as funding, manpower, or other factors change.

Training engaged in was essentially the same in each area. Therefore, individual listings will be presented only when a variation occurred.

A demonstration evening program designed to include various points for discussion was given. In most parks the program was presented to the public as a part of the ongoing interpretive activities. Interpreters attending were thus able to see not only the program but also the interaction between audience and demonstrator.

Either immediately after the program or the following day during a training session, the interpreters discussed the program, probing its strong and weak points and examining audience reactions.

At some time during the stay in each park, usually after the evening demonstration program, a half-day formal training session was held and principles of effective interpretation were presented.

In addition, at Mt. Rainier, North Cascades, Lava Beds, and Crater Lake, a demonstration nature walk was conducted. At Mt. Rainier, Lava Beds and Crater Lake, the public was invited to accompany the walk which they were told was a training exercise. At each stop discussion took place regarding what was interpreted, how and why.

Narrative Report

A. Training - Areas of Special Importance

1. National Park Service Goals, Philosophies, Policies

A general observation was that seasonals appeared to have insufficient knowledge of Service Goals, philosophies and policies. Worse, several of those who indicated a knowledge showed an unwillingness to insert these into material used in their presentations. This was especially true with reference to goals and traditions with emotional overtones such as the Langford, Doane, Hedges Campfire. One seasonal interpreter was very strong in his expression of the feeling that presentation of such material, especially if done through the aid of emotional appeals was not only "hokey" but entirely inappropriate. His job was that of an educator and if the visitor was there to be educated, then he was the man for the job. Otherwise, the Park Service had better "...hire an actor." Thus, for some of the reasons mentioned, talks, walks, and other presentations were almost exclusively devoid of material which might be construed as having potential for helping visitors understand the basic reasons National Parks exist.

One of the major reasons seasonals seemed reluctant to discuss such matters was intimately tied to a general absence of what can only be described as esprit de corps. As a whole, seasonals felt no commonality of cause, no enthusiasm for the organization or identification with its goals and philosophies. Probably, the best assessment of the reason for this was that the only contact they had with these things was through mimeographed handout material. They received little reinforcement from their supervisors or indication that permanent personnel felt anything other than a workman's responsibility to put in the minimum hours required and no more work than he had to. In the absence of this strengthening influence, it is no wonder that the seasonals were unable to develop enthusiasm for an organization they only recently had joined and vaguely understood.

To solve this problem will require effort on the part of all concerned. However, it will be largely up to the permanent staff to overtly show seasonals, in word and deed, that NPS goals, philosophies and policies have important ramifications in the broad field of environmental sensitivity, awareness, comprehension, appreciation, enjoyment, and personal commitment. Visitors attending park areas often have no real idea of why tax dollars are being spent to maintain such areas. The one man-one vote principle coupled with increased numbers of urban dwellers whose lives are tied to non-park value systems dictates that interpreters must take an active and effective direction in explaining these

concepts. If intangibles couched in emotional overtones are entirely dropped from Park Service programs, interpretation can simply become an extension of our formal educational system, providing technical, sterile, deadly boring lectures on obscure details of the natural world to groups comprised of very polite individuals with the fortitude of professional interest necessary to tolerate such periods of cryptic instruction.

2. Communication Skills

Audiences to whom interpreters speak are made up of people from a wide variety of cultural, educational, employment and experience background. Effective interpretation hinges directly on efficient use of communication skills. The National Park Service is still caught in a situation as old as interpretation itself. That is the mistaken impression that training in academic fields related to the natural sciences automatically provides an interpreter with the tools necessary to deal effectively with the general public. This is not necessarily true. If an interpreter is truly effective he must be a master in the art of communication. His job is to transmit, with no loss in accuracy, through lay terms, the technical language of the land in such manner as to develop within the visitor awareness, sensitivity, comprehension, enthusiasm and personal commitment. However, rather than enthusiasm, he produces total anesthesia. As mentioned earlier, the single most important factor contributing to the lowering of interpretive quality in the programs observed was lack of communication skills. As a general rule, the observed programs ranged from very poor to some very good but none which could be considered excellent.

Specific difficulties were several. Interpreters, misunderstanding their role, gave presentations which were academic and technically oriented. Numerous flaws of the most basic nature were made, such as direct reference to slides. "This is a picture of...." Apologies were made at the beginning of talks for the lack of expertise and public speaking ability of the interpreter. "I'm not really very good at this, but...." Talks were developed with no apparent central theme, no clear beginning and absolutely no ending. They just appeared to trickle away and sink into the sand leaving visitors sitting in embarrassed silence unsure whether the presentation had ended or not. Presented with no interpreter enthusiasm, these programs elicited none from the audience.

Probably the worst example observed was observing interpreters reading talks from note cards or typewritten notes at a lighted lecturn! Needless to say, such performances are not conducive to the development or maintenance of credibility of either the interpreter or the Service.

Mechanical, affected, memorized or read, talk after talk, loaded with potential success, failed miserably short of the goal.

Communication ability is tied to more than the knowledge of how to

present a slide in professional manner. It also hinges on personality and confidence in dealing with people in a public contact framework. There were those whose personalities were such that it is doubtful that any amount of training, coaching or grooming would make them better than adequate interpreters.

Ideally, the selection of a competent communicator presupposes the ability of the employer to interview the potential employee. Until current seasonal (and permanent, as well) employment practices are modified, that will remain in the realm of impossibility. At least, it should be realized that it is only marginally possible to assess communication competency based upon experience and that a college or university transcript filled with courses is no indication whatsoever of proficiency in this area.

B. Training - General

1. Permanent Staff

Due to relatively recent changes in the administrative makeup of National Park Service areas, those who have direct responsibility for the operation and quality of interpretive programs are rather frequently those with little or no personal experience in the field of interpretation. This is a serious, two pronged problem. Not only are they unable, due to this lack of background, to accurately analyze the quality of programs presented in their areas, but they are also unable to provide support to interpreters under their supervision who are in need of training, evaluation, and coaching. Experience indicates that those lacking in experience recognize this problem and are earnest in their desires to find help. However, there are some, up to and including the level of superintendent who indicate a fervent hope that interpretation will simply die a rapid and noiseless death and let them get on with the really important business of maintenance and protection. They seem entirely unaware of the importance of interpretive services in park areas. They display an attitude which assumes these services to be a frill with no spin-off benefit to any other sector of park operation.

In addition, insidious attitude problems are in operation in some minds. A comment which provides an almost absolute guarantee of failure is, "I'm not really an interpreter, so....". It is most important that permanent personnel realize that from the minute they are given responsibility for interpretive programs they had better regard themselves as interpreters and perhaps even program themselves into the operation from time to time. Success is difficult, if not impossible, to attain from a tottering, excuse weakened foundation. The only permissible use of similar phraseology should be, "I have never been an interpreter, but I want to learn."

Obviously, the solution lies in the realm of training. However, training which takes place over a long time period and requires permanent personnel to trickle back to Albright or Harper's Ferry will not do the job. The problem has reached such a stage that it is now important to train or re-train permanent supervisors as rapidly as possible so that they do not continue to weaken interpretation.

A three pronged attack is recommended.

1. Each supervisor with responsibilities for interpretation should receive by mail, materials which will impress upon him the measure of importance attached by the Region and Washington Office to the area of interpretation as well as interpretive standards and guidelines which will assist him in making accurate assessments of interpretive quality in his area. (It is understood that such guidelines are now in existence.) These guidelines will help to

fill gaps in the supervisor's experience.

2. As rapidly as possible, supervisors would be scheduled to attend special interpretive management courses at Albright and Harper's Ferry. These courses should stress, along with administrative and management procedures, basics of effective interpretation.

3. A roving team of trainers specializing in the area of interpretive methods and management should be developed and scheduled into advantageous locations within the Region. This will reduce the costs of training by making it possible for personnel to be trained "closer to home" and should also increase the speed with which this training can be disseminated.

2. Pre-Season Training - Seasonal

Once the season is under way at the park, time is at a premium. Often the seasonals report and must be on the job almost immediately. What training they do receive is on a hit and miss basis and jammed into an already impossible schedule.

Therefore, it is proposed that effort be made to provide training prior to the season.

a. Information Packets

Prepared at the park and mailed to each seasonal during the winter, the packets would include: basic park statistics--how high, how long, how often, how many, how difficult, park area and NPS policies and regulations, administrative chains of command, plant and animal checklists, geological information, communication skills guidelines, uniform requirements, housing information. The use of such a packet could reduce greatly the material which needed to be presented in formal sessions during the season. Not only would this give the seasonal interpreter a head start but it would provide the basis for alleviating a major complaint. Large blocks of time taken up with administrative details which eat up training time in problem oriented areas.

b. Pre-Season Meetings

Group meetings should be scheduled in central locations for interpreters living close enough to attend. These could take place on weekends during winter months. It is recognized that this suggestion represents a difficult logistical problem. But, if such ideas aren't mentioned, they may go unconsidered.

Costs to seasonals might be defrayed through the use of VIP funds or standard per diem payments.

c. Tape Checkout

Park areas should (some do now) maintain a file of tape recordings

of example programs.

Such files ought to be enlarged by the addition of sufficient duplicates to permit a loan system to be worked out permitting seasonals to receive materials to be reviewed at home. This would go a long way toward easing the sharp transition which occurs when a new seasonal arrives at the park.

d. Audio-Tutorial Materials

As it becomes general knowledge that something must be worked out to better prepare incoming seasonal personnel, slide-tape copies of actual programs could be substituted for audio tapes. These too would be available on loan to seasonals at their homes before the summer entrance on duty.

3. Seasonal On-Site Training

a. Formal

Presently conducted training sessions are of assistance in promoting effective interpretation. However, there are several suggestions which might be considered.

Almost uniformly, seasonals mentioned that training would have more nearly accomplished its goals if less time had been devoted to long, detailed, and tedious descriptions of the administrative chains of command. The feeling was that more time ought to be devoted to subjects with immediate pertinence to the tasks facing the seasonal. For example, seasonals felt that it was important that they receive more training on communication skills useful in interpretation and the makeup of good interpretive programs.

However, if this training is to be made most meaningful, it must include not just recitations of the principles of effective interpretation, but actual examples through demonstration. Repeatedly, personnel indicated this facet was one of the most important parts of our summer's work with them. Walks, especially, should be demonstrated on-site. The seasonal should have the opportunity to witness demonstrators presenting evening programs to the general public in order to see the full scope of interpreter-audience interaction. Formal evening program and walk demonstrations can provide many opportunities to question, observe and ascertain reasons for the inclusion or omission of various material as well as approaches used.

During these formal training sessions, use should be made not only of experienced seasonal and permanent personnel but also of others from outside the Service who show a high degree of excellence.

Where an employee shows great ability, training should be scheduled to permit all seasonals to attend a program given by him followed by a discussion session at which program content and format could be discussed.

b. Informal Training

1. Area Familiarization

In most of the areas visited, some time was devoted during the initial phases of summer operation to assist seasonals in developing familiarity with the region. However, time constraints dictate that such activities must be quite limited. Any further on-the-ground knowledge must be secured through the initiative of the seasonals themselves. However, it became apparent that this type of activity was also limited in scope. Seasonals used lieu time to leave the park rather than spending portions of it looking around the places they were to interpret.

Therefore, it is recommended that, where possible, assigned duty time be allocated to allow seasonals blocks of time designated for this purpose. This can serve more than one function. Not only can the seasonal hike or drive into new areas and thus gain on-site experience but he can also obtain new slides for the files or his own talks and collect specimens for the park study collection.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that one of the measures which marks an employee as being a bit above the crowd in terms of enthusiasm and devotion to the job are activities he initiates independently during lieu time.

2. Tape Files and Audio-Tutorial Materials

As mentioned earlier in this report, it is unlikely except in the case of the truly exceptional employee, that a seasonal will reach optimum effectiveness and efficiency in personal interpretation until he has the opportunity to observe excellent, mediocre, and poor programs. However, time again becomes the limiting factor. It is unlikely that the seasonal will be able to attend a great many programs given by his peers simply because of conflicts with his own schedule. Therefore, it is recommended that each park area maintain and actively update a tape recording file of programs. These tapes should be made available at a central location where the interpreters can, at their leisure, sit down and listen to them. In conjunction with good formal training which emphasizes desirable characteristics in programs, this method will provide a needed exposure which can probably not be implemented as effectively in any other way.

Such a file need not be a burden to develop or maintain. Interpreters giving talks should simply be instructed to start the tape recorder now and then and record themselves. (The use of these tapes for self critique will be discussed later.)

Periodically, the file should be "weeded" to avoid an impossible buildup of material. This could be done by permanents during winter.

Audio-tutorial materials ought to be developed at Harper's Ferry on subjects pertaining to interpretation and distributed to parks. Interpretive topics would include: evening talks, guided activities, visitor center operation. In addition, materials for refreshment and enhancement of training in areas such as fire fighting, law enforcement and general visitor contact should be considered.

3. Park Reference Library

Serving an important informal training need, this is a source which is now used extensively in most park areas. It is especially needed if the trend toward using Technicians continues. These people are often seriously lacking in depth of understanding and the library should serve as a primary source to enhance their job effectiveness.

c. Quality Control

1. Personnel Morale - Permanent and Seasonal

This section should have been written in red and placed at the first of the report. It is of great importance as it has ties to all aspects of interpretive effectiveness. Moreover, its effects can also be felt in other areas such as protection and maintenance. However, remarks here will be directed toward interpretation.

In a nutshell, morale within the ranks is at a low ebb. Over and over we were informed that interpretation is not being supported at any level. Interpreters expressed the feeling that this lack of support was not localized at the field level but that it had its roots in high places within the Washington Office. Let me emphasize. It is entirely unimportant whether this situation is real or imagined. It is real to the people in the field who are involved and that is the point. Employees who are convinced that their efforts are not appreciated or worse, that their whole program and reason for being, is on the verge of extinction are not happy people. They are even less satisfied when they believe that there is a definite plan in operation somewhere "up there" to do away with interpretation. And, this is the belief. Cited as evidence are such things as the fact that the FOST program (which will be discussed later) has resulted in removal of experienced interpreters from almost all leadership and supervisory positions with any direct line contact and replacement with area managers who have little or no experience in interpretation. Also cited is the lack of possibility for promotion within interpretation.

Unless support in visible form begins to occur in Washington and filter down tangibly through active support from the region, interpretation can be expected to continue its pathetic floundering. Visible support means increased intake of GS-7 and 9 interpreters and increased upward mobility within the professional interpretive ranks.

Low morale in the permanent ranks can only have a deleterious effect on seasonals. It is unrealistic to expect seasonals to develop high morale in the face of supervisors who do not possess it.

Aside from these reasons, those who are too long in contact with an area, an organization, or a person may lose enthusiasm or assume that unspoken attitudes are apparent to those around them. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Overt methods must be used to demonstrate the existence of high morale and esprit. Strangely, this area seemed to be one which personnel were a little embarrassed about. They tended to act as though it was unmanly or inappropriate to show such tendencies openly.

The "new generation" would have us believe that such traditions and heritage are not modern and thus are undesirable. Bunk! It is upon the foundation of morale and esprit that superlative programs and organizations rest. Disneyland's success is largely correlated

with their maintenance of just such high morale.

2. Evaluation/Supervision

a. Selection and Rehire

The cream-of-the-crop is out there. But, for some reason, the National Park Service seems only marginal in their ability to select outstanding individuals with potential for excellence in interpretation. It is rare to find an interpreter who obviously was cut out for the job. Instead, most are just stumbling along exhibiting qualities which indicate that even with intensive training, their levels of proficiency can only be brought to "adequate". The reason for this is clear. The solution is not as easy.

Selection for seasonal opportunities is based almost entirely on academic background, job experience as a teacher, etc. this is entirely unsatisfactory. The job of interpretation is at least 2/3 personality and style and only 1/3 academic background. Interpretation is an affair of the heart. It is absolutely impossible to assess personality characteristics or communication skill from a piece of paper on which is printed a college transcript.

Some day, the Service is going to have to change to some method of interview or other technique for recruitment evaluation. Radio stations often require a tape recording demonstrating the applicant's ability.

In addition to poor selection criteria, supervisors exhibit a rather "soft-hearted" attitude toward rehire evaluation. Seasonals who are evaluated as marginal and even slightly below are kept on season after season in the hope that some kind of divine intervention will cause them to improve. There is little evidence that they do. They just become firmly entrenched in old, undesirable traits.

Let me re-emphasize. The best are still out there. The Park Service should be getting them. A seasonal in the marginal or lower category ought to be dropped and replaced by an interpreter who can do the job required by the National Park Service's reputation of excellence. Otherwise, the public will soon begin to reassess its evaluation of the quality of their park experience. Reputations of excellence are not carved in stone.

b. Auditing

This poses a particularly serious problem in parks encompassing large areas and providing many interpretive programs. In areas such as Mt. Rainier and Olympic it is almost impossible to handle.

It would require all of a supervisor's time for an entire season

to observe each program once. Therefore, the responsibility for determination of quality in programs is often given to a seasonal supervisor. It appears that the usual criterion for selection is tenure. He may not be a particularly effective interpreter, but he has been around for a long time.

The idea of seasonals supervising seasonals is highly undesirable. Not only is it like the blind leading the blind but it provides the basis for real personnel problems. "Why should this guy boss me? I'm just as good as he is----better!" It places the seasonal supervisor in the position of being considered a threat and a resented presence. Needless to say, this severely limits his effectiveness. Auditing should be carried out by permanent personnel. This is especially true when evaluations and determinations involving rehire are involved.

No matter what the problems, auditing is important. And, this means observing a seasonal's program more than once during a season. Granted, personnel ceilings will for a time make this recommendation fall into the realm of dreams. However, it must be realized that proper supervision is one of the keys to effective interpretation. Therefore, as interpretation regains support increases in permanent staff to permit this will have to take place.

c. Coaching

The idea of critiques, auditing, and evaluations in one with built-in implied threat. No amount of reassurance can eliminate this overtone entirely. Therefore, quality control and enhancement when wrapped in such titles often results in less than desirable success. It is with this thought that the concept of coaching is introduced.

The term itself implies far less threat and the techniques employed to carry it out tend to promote cooperative interaction. Coaching can be a very effective method for improving interpretation.

The groundwork for effective coaching must be laid in detailed and careful explanation to all concerned. The goal is enhanced interpretive quality, something "in which we are interested". "If we work together, sharing our insights and ideas, this park can have the finest interpretive programs anywhere."

Coaching implies interaction. It can involve, (1) seasonals interacting with permanents and, (2) seasonals interacting with other seasonals. Both types can operate during the season. The main problem associated with seasonal/permanent coaching is the inhibitory effect which the presence of the permanent may have.

It must be clearly established that he is only there to function as part of the group and make his own contribution to the improved interpretation which is the common goal of the group. In order to get the most out of coaching, seasonal/seasonal coaching groups ought to function as well.

Whichever arrangement is used, each member of the group must have contact with the subject under discussion. In other words, it is important for seasonals to observe each other in action. The whole idea of coaching is the cooperative exchange or discussion relating to programs and program content.

For example: What did you like or dislike about the programs observed in the last few days? What have you tried in your own programs in an effort to improve them? Did these innovations bear desired fruit? Why? Why not? What does the group think? What did observers notice about your audience responses which you missed?

Coaching can be a very rewarding enterprise. It not only has importance in terms of strengthening weak points in delivery but also has a great contribution to make in the building of rapport among personnel.

3. Self Improvement

No matter what action is taken on the part of trainers, supervisors, administrators and groups of seasonals, the burden for improved interpretive programs falls on the individual. After all, he is the one giving the programs, responding to feedback from visitors, innovating or not, familiarizing himself with the area or not, showing enthusiasm or not.

One of the most effective ways for an individual to assess the quality of his programs is to record them....and then listen to them. Difficulties arise because most of us do not like to listen to our own voices and tend to suffer it only for short periods and only if we must. The interpreter must make a definite effort--force himself to record and listen. Recorders do not lie, flatter, or mask. Personal peculiarities in delivery such as uh's and ah's, mispronounced or improperly used words, frequently repeated words and phrases stand out glaringly.

Another effective procedure is to ask a respected observer to criticize program content and delivery. And then be flexible enough to profit by the advice. Acceptance of criticism is probably one of the hardest things a person ever learns to do.

D. Administration

1. FOST

The FOST program seems to this observer to be at the heart of the separation of supervisory interpreters from effective line contact.

Area managers who are being given responsibilities for all facets of park operations usually have no experience in interpretation and are unable to accurately assess the quality of their area's programs or make effective suggestions regarding improvement.

It is entirely unreasonable to expect that a man who is not trained in a particular skill should be placed in a position which controls

the effectiveness of a program dependent on that skill.

A particularly interesting situation exists when chief naturalists are assigned to the superintendent's staff and have no line authority. Arrangements should be made by superintendents to delegate their authority in matters of interpretation in such a manner as to allow the chief naturalist to function more directly.

An area of special importance is that of the use of technicians in most interpretive roles. Most of those we contacted exhibited ability only on the level implied by the title. Questions which went into more than thumbnail depth struck bedrock. This was especially noted in discussions regarding National Park Service philosophies and goals as well as subjects in the natural sciences.

The technician concept may have potential, but it certainly should be used with a great degree of caution. The image of the Service is a fragile thing built upon personnel possessing a thorough knowledge of goals, philosophies, land use, natural science, public relations, and communication skills. To relegate large blocks of interpretation to technicians is a very hazardous enterprise and I believe unwarranted.

However, if the Service is going to continue to use them, then their training had better be greatly intensified.

2. Leadership

Again and again, it was observed that supervisors were not taking a firm leadership role in dealing with their seasonal employees. Some of the reasons for this appeared to be connected directly to the lack of background on the supervisor's part. "I really don't know what I'm doing, so why should I be telling them?" This is understandable and remediable through training.

Some of the shortage of leadership also appeared tied to low morale on the part of the permanent.

Whatever the reasons, this is serious and needs to be corrected.

E. Critique From Without

Any organization can become inbred and suffer from deterioration brought about by the perpetuation of practices which are not conducive to efficiency and effectiveness.

Groups within organizations can also suffer from the same malady. It is easy to say, "we've been doin' it this way for 15 years and there ain't no reason to change now". What is happening in such cases is that participants are too close to the action. They lose perspective. Their personal preferences, prejudice and concerns create tunnel vision obscuring a clear, evaluative look at the situation.

Observations this summer seemed to show that many of the programs possessed a certain sameness. Some of this is desirable. The park visiting public ought to hear about the Langford-Doane Campfire. But, when the humor, the jargon, the basic delivery takes on a sort of mirror imagery from area to area, some changes are in order.

Yet, almost a contradiction seems built into the fact that each park area appeared to regard itself as an entity unto itself with little or no relationship to the National Park Service or the nation as a whole. Pride in area is one thing but provincialism has no place in effective interpretation. This kind of attitude tends to isolate and insulate areas and prevent or inhibit the injection of better ideas and practices from outside.

Input from outside the organization can serve the important purpose of providing fresh perspective and new points of view. Therefore, it is the feeling of this investigator that such contact should be continued.

F. Recommendations for Future Action

Since other recommendations are contained in the body of the report, this section will deal entirely with recommendations relating to a second summer period of assessment and training to be carried out by this investigator during the summer of 1973 as follows:

The first time such a program is carried out, numerous areas are discovered which ought to be modified. This is no exception.

It is felt that a second phase of this program ought to be carried out during the summer of 1973 as follows:

1. No less than a week should be spent in each area visited. Effectiveness is directly related to the development of rapport between the investigator and Park Service personnel. Olympic and Mt. Rainier are too large to permit proper coverage in under 10 days each.

2. A mimeographed mail-out stating in detail the goals and purposes of the visit should be prepared during the winter and sent to each area in the spring.

3. Every effort should be made to provide the investigator with lodging in or very close to the park.

Loss of time and rapport both occurred due to physical distances involved. Much can be done during informal get-togethers in the evening over a cup of coffee and such meetings are impossible when the investigator has to travel 40 miles to a motel the same evening. A rental pickup camper might be the answer.

4. In the interest of time and efficiency, fewer areas should be scheduled. It is impossible to make the necessary impact when time is spread too thin.

5. The travel period should be planned later in the season. Several of the areas had not yet reached full operation while we were there. July 1 to August 15 or July 15 to August 31 might be considered.

Again let me say that this report has purposely dealt with the shortcomings observed. But, the conclusion should not be drawn that things are so grim in interpretation that there is no hope. There was a strong undercurrent of that. Seasonals and permanents alike want good interpretation. They just need help. If programs similar to this past summer's are continued and various of the suggestions contained in this report are implemented, interpretation within the Pacific Northwest Region can be the finest in the Service.

