

Superintendent's Annual Narrative Report, 2004



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Little Bighorn Battlefield started 2004 with our primary focus on: 1)Enhancement of visitor services and visitor experience; 2)Consultation with the various tribes for the permanent interpretive panels for the new Indian Memorial, and public offering policy ; 3) Planning and Environmental Assessment Planning for the battlefield tour road.

- **128th ANNIVERSARY OBSERVANCE (1)**

A major accomplishment and highlight in 2004 was 128th Anniversary Observance for the Battle of the Little Bighorn June 25-27, 2004. Entrance fees were waived June 25-26th, and in anticipation of the event and large crowds, we again partnered with the Crow tribe and State of Montana to have parking about ¼ mile west of HWY 212 and contracted five buses to run continuously to shuttle visitors to the battlefield. The handicapped and elderly were allowed to park at the visitor center. The day began at sunrise with the traditional Prayer for World Peace at the new Indian Memorial led by Donlin Many Badhorses, of the Northern Cheyenne Nation. 8:00 AM: Great Sioux Nation Victory Riders – The descendants of Crazy Horse led a delegation of horse back riders from the Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Cheyenne River Sioux, Oglala Riders, and the Arapaho respectfully, rode horseback along Battle Ridge to the Indian Memorial for presentations by various tribal representatives. At 10:00 AM the formal program began with a grand march of various veteran color guard units (consisting of the Morning Star Chapter of Vietnam Veterans, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Fort Peck Sioux Tribe Post #54, Arlow Stops American Legion Post of Lodge Grass-Crow Agency, and American Legion Post Arapaho Warriors) up to the Indian memorial site to post the American and various tribal flags and eagle staffs. Then the units marched down into the amphitheater where formal programs followed with introductions and welcome from Darrell Cook. Speakers included:

- Ernie LaPointe, Great-Grandson of Chief Sitting Bull
- Geri Small, President of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe
- Harold Frazer, Chairman of Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe
- et.al

Descendants of Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Gall, and other warriors and Indian Scouts, including Curley and White Man Runs Him, combined with the support of the public added to the Indian Memorial's theme of "Peace Through Unity".

3:00 PM – Former Superintendent Neil Mangum presented a lecture on Gen. George A. Custer during the Civil War at the visitor center as part of the annual summer lecture series.

4:00 PM – Reburial Ceremony of the Unknown Soldier from Ft. Phil Kearny (discovered in July 2002 during construction on Last Stand Hill at the site of the original 1888 Ft. Phil Kearny interments) took place in the amphitheater with the posting of the National Colors and flag draped urn of the unknown soldiers remains by an honor guard from Ft. Phil Kearny State Historic Site and Reverend Jerry Jasmer. Father Vincent Heier gave the invocation followed by a brief welcome and formal remarks by LIBI historian John Doerner, Robert Wilson, curator Ft. Phil Kearny State Historic Site, and special guest William Carrington, descendant of Col. William Carrington who was commander of Ft. Phil Kearny. Graveside interment followed with traditional 19th century Episcopal grave service by Reverend Jasmer, with full military honors including 12lb. Mountain Howitzer and Honor Guard Salute and taps by Craig Fisher. The ceremony programs and bronze urn was funded by Friends of the Little Bighorn Battlefield.

Friends of the Little Bighorn Battlefield provided outstanding support of NPS activities and also organized over 30 volunteers to aid the NPS with historic interpretation for visitors along Deep Ravine Trail, Keogh-Crazy Horse Trail, and the Reno-Benteen Defense Site. This was the seventh year that Friends has assisted Little Bighorn Battlefield in this way.

INDIAN MEMORIAL CONSULTATION (2)

The Indian Memorial while officially dedicated on June 25, 2003, is only 75% complete. The remaining work involving the development (through consultation with all the Indian Tribes that participated in the battle) of permanent interpretive exhibits for the large interior granite panels still needs to be accomplished. We held several productive consultation meetings here in FY2004 with representatives from the Lakota Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Crow tribe. We are now awaiting feedback from all the tribes on how they would like to tell their unique stories.

I especially want to commend Kitty Deernose, LIBI Museum Curator, and Barbara Sutteer, former LIBI Superintendent for helping to plan, organize and coordinate the meetings. My administrative staff (Cathy

Not Afraid, Prudence Pretty On Top, & Rogene White Man), and my Chief Historian John Doerner have also been invaluable.

- **FEDERAL HIGHWAY PROJECT (3)**

Here at Little Bighorn we face many challenges including increase visitation and vehicular use (including tour buses and large RV's) of our internal road network. We met with federal highway and NPS officials on several occasions to discuss the status of the battlefield road project (Rehabilitate Route 10), and address safety issues and deficiencies in the existing road and parking lots. The original project which was initiated under Neil Mangum's watch in Fiscal Year 2000, was to rehabilitate poor pavement and drainage conditions along the existing 5.2 mile Battlefield Tour Road connecting the Custer Battlefield with the Reno-Benteen Battlefield. Among the alternatives discussed were 28' road width; 24' road width; and 22' road width respectfully. Realistically, we are now looking at construction of a 24' paved roadway (in FY07-FY08) to mitigate and minimize adverse impacts to the cultural landscape to meet present and future visitation usage. Ultimately we desperately need an Alternate Transportation System. However, this will not be realistic for some years to come so in the interim, a 24' roadway (11' traffic lanes and 1' shoulder) will help us to address federal highway standards and visitor safety at Little Bighorn Battlefield.

In September 2004 Douglas D. Scott, NPS Midwest Archeological Center led a metal detection survey (using trained NPS staff & volunteers) of the entire road corridor to help mitigate any adverse effect on the cultural resources, including artifacts pertaining to the historic Battle of the Little Bighorn and historic 7th Cavalry headstones which denote the approximate locations of the original 7th Cavalry burial sites. The week long survey recovered 350 battle related artifacts and preserved important historical artifacts within the proposed area of construction that not only enhances the story, but would have otherwise been lost without this mitigation survey. Scott's draft report was just submitted last month for review.

- **VISITATION (1)**

We received 350,140 visitors to Little Bighorn Battlefield in 2004 which is down from 426,344 in 2003 (-17.87%). Contributing factors may have been the high gasoline prices throughout the U.S., Western wildfires, record high

temperatures and the sixth consecutive year of severe drought in Montana and the Intermountain West.

- **DEVELOPMENT (1)**

New Administration Building- Work (originally started in 2003) continued throughout FY2004 on expansion and retrofitting of our new administration office building located at the southern most permanent residence (Neil Mangum's former quarters). The move from the visitor center provides me and my administrative staff with much needed expanded office areas, additional file space, reception desk, kitchen, and a large staff meeting room. The ADA compliant renovation included the conversion of three ground floor bedrooms into offices, a kitchen and adjacent staff meeting room. The garage was also modified into a large reception area complete with three offices (Superintendent, Administrative Officer, & Personnel Assistant). A second floor addition features ADA compliant restrooms, facility manager office, kitchen, large conference and training room, and rear fire exit. We plan to install a wheel chair lift, automatic ADA compliant entrance door, and handicapped parking pad and ramp in FY2005.

- **ADMINISTRATION (1 & 2)**

Administration is to be commended again for its ability to keep up with the requests from other divisions and the hectic pace of the LIBI operations. Increased demand for purchase orders and contracts are again being met, especially Fee Demo projects, and preparing for several tribal consultation meetings for the permanent exhibit panels for the new Indian Memorial. This often involved budgeting for consultation meetings for the various Indian tribes that were involved in the Battle of the Little Bighorn. In FY04 our ONPS budget was \$1,029,000 (a slight decrease from \$1, 013,100 in FY04) with 18 total FTE. A change in staff occurred as Rogene Whiteman entered on duty on October 1, 2003 as our new administrative clerk and receptionist (replacing Patrick Hill who was appointed as lead ranger in the Division of Interpretation).

- **COMMUNITY RELATIONS (1)**

We continue to have a strong relationship with the local community including the Crow Tribe, Cheyenne Tribe, city of Crow Agency, Hardin, Billings, and government agencies. Our outreach and educational programs along with initiated meetings have fostered and strengthened our community relations. I worked very hard with the local Crow Tribe and Custer Battlefield Preservation on boundary adjustments and land transfers that would be mutually beneficial to Little Bighorn Battlefield, Big Horn Canyon NRA, and the Crow Tribe. Additional lands gained would be ultimately transferred over to the Crow Tribe and managed by the NPS to help protect the fragile view shed surrounding Little Bighorn Battlefield.

- **COOPERATING ASSOCIATION/CONCESSIONS (1)**

Western National Parks Association – W.N.P.A. provided the NPS at LIBI with \$113,779 in financial aid in FY2004. WNPA published a biography of George Armstrong Custer, and updated their 16 page handbook with help from park staff including John Doerner, Chief Historian. WNPA continues to be vital to our interpretive operations and again provided funds to reprint our basic trail guide booklets including Custer National Cemetery, Deep Ravine Trail, and Entrenchment Trail. WNPA also provided funding for the LIBI Summer Program Schedule. I would like to commend Loreen Walks Crooked Arm, LIBI WNPA Field Manager for her professionalism and management of the battlefield bookstore which is a critical part of our operations, and would also like to commend her assistant Arlene Dawes.

Apsaalooke Tours - This is the ninth year Little Bighorn College has operated Apsaalooke Tours under a concessions permit. The one hour tours are very popular with visitors. The success of the concessions is attributed to the dedicated managerial staff and Crow students who shared the unique Crow perspective of the Battle of the Little Bighorn including their tribal history and culture with our visitors.

- **HISTORICAL RESEARCH & CURATION (1)**

John A. Doerner, our Chief Historian processed over 367 research requests in 2004 (compared to over 250 in 2003) by email, mail, on-site, and telephone, and received an average of 2.6 telephone inquiries a day! 12 researchers utilized White Swan Library compared to only eight researchers

in FY03. Our museum curator Ms. Kitty Deernose processed over 100 research and photo requests and was aided by two museum aids (Sharon Small & Evelyn Round Stone who also assisted with the inventory and accession of objects pertaining to the new Indian memorial. 10 researchers utilized the museum collection and the total objects cataloged in FY04 were 36,736! In June 2004 Ms. Deernose took a one-year approved leave of absence. Sharon Small and our Chief Historian John Doerner greatly assisted researchers requesting copies of historical items and photographs from the collection. The historian researched and designed two new wayside exhibits (Deep Ravine and 1984 Archeological Survey) that were installed along our interpretive trails and dedicated during the 128th Anniversary Observance.

- **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (3)**

We had one Fee Demo Project to restore native vegetation. This entailed hiring a seasonal bio-tech to record GIS records and spray noxious weed infested areas of the battlefield. LIBI actually exceeded our GPRA/PMDS Goals of one acre and treated approximately 41 acres of a wide variety of noxious and exotic weeds. Work is expected to continue in FY2005.

- **SEVERE SUMMER DROUGHT**

Despite a fairly wet spring, six years of continued drought in Montana and the west, has created extreme water shortage and fire danger conditions. As a fire prevention measure commensurate with Big Horn County, we enacted a no smoking ban outside of vehicles within the battlefield in late July, effective until conditions improved. Temperatures reached record high levels in July and August with over 100 degree temperatures recorded. Our Maintenance Division is once again to be commended for their incredible job in keeping the grounds watered including Custer National Cemetery, and the visitor center, and our water systems operable. The heat and drought also challenged our seasonal staff including interpreters, maintenance, visitor use assistants and law enforcement rangers who conduct most of their work outside. Despite the extreme temperatures, I am pleased to report that we had only minor heat related incidents with park visitors.

- **VISITOR CENTER EXPANSION/THEATER (1)**

We are currently at over 70% A&E drawings for the planned new visitor center expansion project. The current observation room is inadequate and will be enlarged into a multi purpose theater and interpretive facility to accommodate 200 plus visitor seating area for films and interpretive programs. The ADA compliant addition will have a separate HVAC system to provide an all-season auditorium that is sound proof, and free of climatic temperature extremes. We anticipate using our Fee Demo Program to fund the project. Planning is now expected to continue throughout FY2005-2006 with actual construction anticipated by FY2008-FY2009.

- **FEE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM (1)**

Fortunately, through the use of fee demo monies, we have made significant improvement to the park's infrastructure. Funds were used to complete the new irrigation system, new interpretive touch screen kiosk at the visitor center, and additional upgrades to critical maintenance equipment, and helped fund two new wayside exhibit upgrades (Deep Ravine & 1984 Archeological Survey).

- **FRIENDS OF THE LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD**

FY2004 was another very productive and successful year for Friends of the Little Bighorn Battlefield. Friends continues to grow as an organization and reached two major milestones in FY04: they surpassed the \$20K level in general funds and now stand at 190 members. Friends contributed \$7K to LIBI in FY04. The website (www.friendslittlebighorn.com) continues to expand and improve, and has undergone significant changes with membership enrollment throughout the U.S. and world including Great Britain, Spain, and Italy. In July 2004 alone they received a total of 9,714 hits (an average of 327 visits a day)! The LIBI interpretive Touch Screen Kiosk data was interfaced with the Friends webpage and now provides convenient public access to important historical data pertaining to LIBI, and the Battle of the Little Bighorn including: Warriors at Little Bighorn in 1876, 7th Cavalry Muster Roll-1876, 1876 Sioux War Roster, Frontier Military Posts-1876, Custer National Cemetery Index, Historical Photographs of Little Bighorn Battlefield Then/Now. Public feedback has been very positive about the on-line historical data, including descendants of

battle participants and Custer National Cemetery interments who often provide additional information for our historical files!

Friends renewed their MOA with the NPS on 02/24/2004; contributed 800 hours of volunteer time including 101 hours from 16 dedicated members who staffed the Deep Ravine and Keogh-Crazy Horse Trails during the 128th Anniversary Observance. They also contributed \$2,500.00 for the Deep Ravine wayside exhibit, and also covered the printing cost for the programs and bronze urn for the reburial of the unknown U.S. soldier from Ft. Phil Kearny.

Friends also held their general membership meeting in our new administration building and provided the NPS with important feedback and support for the federal highway road project slated here in 2006-2007. They continue to grow each year and are an important partner and friend of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.

- **INTERPRETATION**

The keystone of Little Bighorn Battlefield is interpretation and visitor services. In FY2004 we received an overall rating of 97% Visitor Satisfaction Rating which was the same as in FY2003. We also received a Visitor Understanding and Appreciation rating of 80% which was down slightly from our 84% rating that we received in FY2003. In FY2004 3,010 interpretive programs were presented to 108,754 visitors; 931 Jr. Rangers were signed up; 16 off-site programs were presented to 690 people, and 12 outreach programs to 742 people. Interpretation also processed 3,977 requests for basic park information (1,558 email, 724 telephone, 753 mail, 348 school packets and 268 telephone requests for educational info). More than 136,000 attended 2,772 interpretive programs. Volunteers are an important resource at the battlefield and donated over 1,135 hours (800 was from Friends of LIBI). Interpretive programs included talks on the battle, life in the Indian Encampment in 1876, the Cavalry Soldier in 1876, and our new 18 minute orientation film "Their Shot's Quit Coming". The continued success of our interpretive programs is attributed to Ken Woody, Chief of Interpretation, Patrick Hill, Lead Interpreter, Marvin Dawes, Jerry Jasmer, and our dedicated seasonal Ranger-Interpreters, and volunteers.

Other significant developments in FY2004 include the placement of the Custer National Cemetery Register, 1876 Warriors at Little Bighorn, 7th Cavalry Muster Roll, 1876, Great Sioux War Roster, 1876, and Frontier

Military Posts, 1876 on our Friends website. This monumental achievement now makes it possible for this important historical information to be accessed by people throughout the United States and the world! We are also finalizing work on a new Touch Screen Informational Kiosk (containing the information listed above plus Weapons at Little Bighorn) which was installed at the at the visitor center bookstore in early June (Fee Demo Project). **New Wayside Exhibits:** We installed two new porcelain enamel waysides in June including: Deep Ravine June 25, 1876 and 1984 Archeological Survey. Friends of the Little Bighorn contributed \$2,500.00 for the Deep Ravine exhibit; and the Custer Battlefield Historical & Museum Association (CBHMA) contributed \$5,000.00 toward the 1984 Archeological Survey exhibit. CBHMA also funded a CBHMA Board of Directors Plaque that was unveiled at the Stone House on June 27, 2004 by Joe Medicine Crow (one of the last surviving original CBMHMA Board members). The wayside exhibit balance was funded by our Fee Demo Project.

- **RANGER ACTIVITIES/LAW ENFORCEMENT-**

The Ranger Division purchased one new Law Enforcement vehicle (with Law Enforcement Package). One seasonal LE Ranger was hired (Ken Stewart) from April through October 2004. The parks annual Law Enforcement report recorded 52 case incidents. The additional ranger provided extra patrols for LE and resource protection, as well as Homeland Security. We also used a SET Team during the 128th Anniversary Observance with six rangers detailed from throughout the region, and five from neighboring Big Horn Canyon.

- **MAINTENANCE**

Maintenance did another commendable job of ground and lawn maintenance, custodial cleaning of our numerous facilities, and public restrooms, irrigation, snow removal, Custer National Cemetery interments, and trash removal. Maintenance operations also covered the gamut of projects including upgrades to our water irrigation system at the new administration building, stone house, visitor center, and restrooms, replacement of a water pump and valves, and remodeling and construction work on the new administration building. We also received tremendous support from the staff at Big Horn Canyon (our sister park) to assist LIBI with these projects, including expansion of the new administration building

parking and sidewalk network. We had 17 interments in Custer National Cemetery and one disinterment (at the request of the family) in FY04. Maintenance staff also installed a lighting system adjacent to the flagpole in the national cemetery to illuminate the American Flag at night and post the flag 24/7 in support of our nation, veterans and active duty military personnel throughout the world. Maintenance also purchased new equipment including new lawnmowers, snow blower, and several new vehicles including an electric cart, and four-wheel off-road Gopher. My thanks go out to Lonnie Hergenrider, Facility Manager, and Les Frickle, Jimmie Brothers, Wayne Not Afraid and the LIBI & Big Horn Canyon Maintenance staff.

- **SAFETY**

Park safety continues to be a top priority. The safety award program initiated by the superintendent in FY03 was a complete success with staff. We had one lost time injuries or lost time in FY2004 and a total of four employees that submitted accident case forms. Our Safety Program and safety awareness on the job/workplace has been very helpful in minimizing employee and visitor related accidents. We had only minor heat related and first aid incidents.