

Superintendent's Annual Narrative Report, 2003  
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**Little Bighorn Battlefield started 2003 with our primary focus on: 1) Dedication of the new Indian Memorial; 2) Repair of the battlefield tour road; 3) Enhancement of visitor services and visitor experience.**

- **INDIAN MEMORIAL DEDICATION (1)**

A major accomplishment and highlight in 2003 was the long awaited completion, and the dedication of the new Indian Memorial on June 25<sup>th</sup>, and the 127<sup>th</sup> anniversary observance of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Entrance fees were waived June 24-26<sup>th</sup>, and in anticipation of the event and large crowds, we 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 on Battle Ridge led by Donlin Many Badhorses, and private pipe ceremonies at the Indian Memorial by members of the Lakota Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow, and Arikara nations. At 8:00 AM horse back riders from the Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Cheyenne River Sioux, Oglala Riders, and the Arapaho rode horseback along Battle Ridge to the Indian Memorial and amphitheater. At 9:00 AM the formal program began with a grand march from the Stone House to the amphitheater led by Acting MSG Lyndon P. Ramage and a color guard of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Seventh Cavalry, Ft. Hood, TX, and members of the Morning Star Chapter of Vietnam Veterans, Fort Peck Sioux Tribe Post #54, Arlow Stops American Legion Post of Lodge Grass-Crow Agency, and American Legion Post Arapaho Warriors.

After the color guards posted the Custer National Cemetery Garrison Flag to ½ staff, the units marched into the amphitheater and on to the Indian Memorial site to officially dedicate the Indian Memorial. The formal programs followed

in the amphitheater with introductions by former battlefield superintendents Barbara Sutteer, Gerard Baker, and Neil Mangum. Speakers included:

- Crow Chairman Carl Venne
- Montana Governor Judy Martz
- Secretary of the Interior Gail Norton
- U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, CO
- Fort Peck Sioux Tribe Councilman Leland Spotted Bird
- Northern Cheyenne Tribe Chairman Geri Small
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Vice Chairman Tom Iron
- Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Chairman Harold Frazier
- Rosebud Sioux Tribe President William Kindle

At 12:00 PM a complimentary buffalo barbeque luncheon was hosted at the visitor center by Little Bighorn Battlefield and Western National Parks Association. The afternoon program continued at 1:00 PM with an opening address by former U.S. Congressman Pat William, MT, followed by:

- Arapaho Tribe Chairman Burton Hutchinson
- Oglala Sioux Tribe Representatives Enos Poor Bear, Jr. and Ernie LaPointe
- Lower Brule Sioux Tribe representatives
- Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of OK Chairman Robert Taylor
- Three Affiliated Tribes (Arikara, Mandan & Hidatsa) ND representative Austin Gillette

One of the afternoon highlights was a fly-over by Montana Army National Guard Blackhawk Helicopters over Battle Ridge in honor of American veterans of all wars. Then an open forum at the amphitheater and Indian Memorial. 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 Second Battalion Seventh Cavalry really added to the Indian Memorial's theme of "Peace Through Unity".

Friends of the Little Bighorn Battlefield organized 35 volunteers to aid the NPS with interpretation along Deep Ravine Trail, Keogh-Crazy Horse Trail, and the Reno-Bentzen Defense Site. This was the sixth year that Friends has assisted LIBI in this way. This year was especially busy on June 25<sup>th</sup> as we had 7,000 to 10,000 visitors attending the Indian Memorial dedication and anniversary observance.

- **FEDERAL HIGHWAY PROJECT (2)**

We met with federal highway and NPS officials in July and September 2003 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. We also looked at widening (in the existing road bench) areas of critical concern with out actual earthwork. We also patched critical areas last spring that had deteriorated due to contractor deficiencies, including shaving asphalt overburden and improved the road shoulders.

- **VISITATION (3)**

We received 426,344 visitors to Little Bighorn Battlefield in 2003 which is down slightly (0.81%) from the 429,826 in 2002. Contributing factors may have been the high gasoline prices throughout the U.S., Montana wildfires, and record high temperatures and the fifth year of continued severe drought we experienced last summer.

- **NEW WARRIOR MARKERS (3)**

Two new red granite markers were dedicated during the 127<sup>th</sup> anniversary observance of the Battle of the Little Bighorn in June. At 1:00 PM on June 25<sup>th</sup> a marker was dedicated to a small audience by our Chief Historian John A. Doerner on Wooden Leg Hill (northeast of Last Stand Hill) for an unknown Sioux warrior killed during the fight with Seventh Cavalrymen positioned on Last Stand Hill. The following day at 1:00 PM, we dedicated a marker just northeast of the Field Hospital and Company H position at the Reno-Benteen Battlefield for Dog's Backbone, Minneconjou Lakota warrior killed on June 26, 1876 during the early afternoon fight with Major Reno's command. A Gay Kingman and family, who are direct descendants, former superintendent's Barbara A. Sutter and Neil Mangum, and a sizable audience, were in attendance at the emotional ceremonial which was

conducted by Chief Historian John A. Doerner. We now have five warrior markers throughout Little Bighorn Battlefield.

- **SEVENTH CAVALRY HORSE CEMETERY (3)**

An 1890 pattern marker and wayside exhibit for the Seventh Cavalry Horse Cemetery on Last Stand Hill were officially dedicated and unveiled on Sunday afternoon June 26, 2003. John A. Doerner, myself, and CBHMA President Kevin Connelly spoke briefly to an audience of over 100 people. Then cavalry trumpet calls were made which was followed by the unveiling by Norman Osterby, former 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalrymen of Troop B. The new wayside and marker are now very popular with visitors walking to the new Indian Memorial. The marker and wayside was designed by our chief historian and funded by the CBHMA.

- **DEVELOPMENT (3)**

**HVAC System-** A new central air conditioning and heating system was installed at the visitor center last spring. The air conditioner was put to the test this past summer with our record high temperatures and was a welcome improvement over our old swamp cooling system. The new HVAC system now provides year-round comfort for our visitors and staff, and maintains constant temperatures for the park museum collection. This was a Fee Demo Project. **New Administration Building-** Work began in 2003 on Phase One 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 bedrooms into offices, the living room into a reception and meeting room. The garage was also modified into a large conference and training room, that also included a wheel chair accessible ramp/entrance. Phase two is currently underway and will consist of a two story addition over the old garage. The new addition will feature new office areas, bathrooms, conference and training room, and will also be ADA compliant.

- **ADMINISTRATION**

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 being met, especially Fee Demo projects, and preparing for the dedication of 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 FY03 our ONPS budget was \$1,013,100 a slight decrease from \$1,014,500 in FY02.

Jeff Helmer, Park Ranger-Lead Interpreter transferred to Ft. Bowie NHS, and his position filled by Patrick Hill, former administrative assistant. Patrick's experience as an interpreter and his tremendous knowledge of the battle and Crow history is a great asset to our staff. Pernell Brown was selected to replace Patrick Hill as administrative assistant. Pernell worked at LIBI in 2002 with our curator and chief historian. In late 2003 Brown accepted a Law Enforcement position with Big Horn Canyon and was replaced by Rogene Whiteman on October 1, 2003.

- **COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

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.

- **COOPERATING ASSOCIATION/CONCESSIONS**

This is the eighth year Little Bighorn College has operated Apsaalooke Tours under a concessions permit. The one hour tours are very popular with visitors. 414 tours were given to 6,086 visitors. The success of the concessions is largely attributed to Latana Old Elk who managed the program, and the dedicated Crow students who shared the unique Crow history and culture with our visitors.

- **HISTORICAL RESEARCH & CURATION**

John A. Doerner, our Chief Historian processed over 250 research requests in 2003 (compared to over 150 in 2002) by email, mail, on-site, and telephone and received an average of 2.6 telephone inquiries a day! Eight researchers utilized the White Swan Library Collections. Kitty Deernose, Museum Curator processed over 150 research requests, and 24 used the battlefield's museum collection. The historian researched and designed two new warrior markers to denote the casualty sites for an unknown Lakota Sioux killed near Last Stand Hill on June 25, 1876, and Dog's Backbone, Minneconjou Lakota Sioux killed at the Reno-Benteen Battlefield on June 26, 1876. The historian also researched and designed a marker for an historic 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Horse Cemetery located on Last Stand Hill. Our historian, curator, Chief of Interpretation Ken Woody, and former superintendent Neil Mangum also researched and designed the temporary interpretive panels for the Indian Memorial which was a comprehensive endeavor and commendable achievement!

- **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (3)**

We had a GIS SWAT Team from our regional office provide us with assistance including GPS of roads, buildings, and other features. This helped boost our GIS Program which is just getting started. Another highlight of 2003 was the cleaning in early June of the historic Seventh Cavalry Monument (erected by the War Department in July 1881) by Jack Bailey, Bailey Masonry of Billings. After consultation and approval from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in Helena, the iron stain was removed on the entire granite obelisk, including the concrete base, and adjacent wayside base using a SHPO approved solution of hydrochloric acid and soap. I am happy to report that the monument looks like it did when it was beveled and refaced in 1883. The severe staining to the historic monument was caused by the high iron content used in our old water irrigation system (which has since been corrected). The CBHMA contributed \$1,000.00 toward the \$2,400.00 restoration. We also continued our exotic weed infestation program. Currently we have 30 acres identified out of LIBI'S 765 total acreage. Jane Bock, botanist from the University of Colorado spent 10 days here collecting data and then analyzed the results. LIBI staff also provided weed control on the exotic species and monitored and treated one new acre during the summer.

- **SEVERE SUMMER DROUGHT**

Despite a fairly wet spring, five years of continued drought in Montana and the west, has created extreme 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 (with 110 degrees recorded), and August. Our Maintenance Division is 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 ranger staff including interpreters, visitor use assistants and law enforcement staff 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 (3)**

We are currently at over 65% 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 expected to run into FY2004 with actual construction to start hopefully, by FY2006.

- **FEE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM**

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 HVAC system at the visitor center, rehabilitation of the Custer National Cemetery iron gates, and upgrades to the water irrigation system, and helped fund our wayside exhibits upgrades.

- **FRIENDS OF THE LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD**

FY2003 was very productive and successful year for Friends of the Little Bighorn Battlefield. The website ([www.friendslittlebighorn.com](http://www.friendslittlebighorn.com)) continues to grow and improve and provide monetary support for LIBI. Visits to the website ranged from 60 visits per day and 1,347 hits in late September FY2002 to over 200 visitors and 6,500 hits by September 2003! In May Friends added a gift store line of polo shirts, t-shirts, & other clothing, coffee mugs, mouse pads, greeting cards, and a 2004 calendar earning sales of \$150.00. A major fundraiser started in May was the sale of “Here Fell Custer” limited edition signed prints by the noted military artist Eric von Schmidt which sold out by August raising \$2,500.00. Friends donated \$2,500.00 toward the new Cheyenne Markers wayside exhibit unveiled on June 25, 2003. Friend volunteers assisted NPS with the Indian Memorial dedication activities with 35 VIP’s donating over 100 hours staffing trails June 25-26, 2003. Total hours contributed last year were over 500! Total membership now stands at 156 in good standing. International memberships have increased with members now from England, Scotland, New Zealand, and Spain. Friends also received national and world media coverage from newspapers and honored in the Spring 2003 issue of Texas Council for the Humanities for their strong support of the Indian Memorial.

- **INTERPRETATION**

The keystone of our operations has and will always be its interpretative program. More than 136,000 attended 2,772 interpretive programs. The division also processed 1,522 requests for basic park information, conducted 10 off-site programs to 400 people, and 16 outreach programs to 615 people. Volunteers are an important resource at the battlefield and donated over 1,135 hours. 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, and our dedicated seasonal Ranger-Interpreters.



Other significant developments in FY2003 include the placement of the Custer National Cemetery Register, 1876 Warriors at Little Bighorn, 7<sup>th</sup> 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 will be located at the visitor center bookstore. Installation is scheduled for May 2004. The project is being funded by our Fee Demo Project. **New Wayside Exhibits:** We installed five new porcelain enamel waysides in June including: Cheyenne Markers, Indian Memorial, Peace Through Unity, Seventh Cavalry Horse Cemetery, and Wooden Leg Hill June 25, 1876. Friends of the Little Bighorn contributed \$2,500.00 toward the Cheyenne Markers, and the Custer Battlefield Historical & Museum Association (CBHMA) contributed \$5,000.00 toward the Seventh Cavalry Horse Cemetery and marker. The balance was funded by our Fee Demo Project.

- **RANGER ACTIVITIES/LAW ENFORCEMENT-**

The Ranger Division purchased one new Law Enforcement vehicle and one GSA leased vehicle. The park had 66 case incidents, one runaway vehicle, and a burglary at the visitor center. We were able to hire one seasonal LE Park Ranger with ARPA funds and one additional ranger with special set aside funds targeted to Homeland Security. The additional rangers provided extra patrols for LE and resource protection. We also used a SET Team during the Dedication of the Indian Memorial with six rangers detailed from throughout the region, and five from neighboring Big Horn Canyon. **Suicide at Reno-Benteen Battlefield:** On April 2, 2003 at approximately 1600 hours, Michael Stops, Chief Ranger was making a final patrol to the Reno-Benteen Battlefield when he was contacted by a visitor. The visitor informed him that someone was lying out on the battlefield at Reno-Benteen Battlefield. On investigation Mr. Stops found an abandoned vehicle in the parking lot and a deceased white male adjacent to the field hospital wood post. The deceased male was later identified as Joe Dale Ballard of Minnesota, who had apparently committed suicide. The site was secured and the local FBI in Billings contacted. The Big Horn County Sheriffs

Office and Bureau of Indian Affairs Police Department also responded to the scene. The case is still under investigation.

- **MAINTENANCE**

Maintenance did a 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 new asphalt pullouts and parking on Battle Ridge at the Keogh-Crazy Horse and Cheyenne Markers waysides.

- **SAFETY**

Park safety continues to be a top priority. The superintendent initiated a new safety award program that was a complete success with staff. We had no lost time injuries or lost time in FY2003. Contributing factors may be attributed to the implementation of a Safety Award Program which helped to increase safety awareness and empowerment of our staff. We also had only minor heat related incidents, two minor first aid incidents, and one cardiac arrest which the visitor survived.