

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
HORACE M. ALBRIGHT TRAINING CENTER
Grand Canyon, Arizona

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.

SUGGESTED READINGS

(with Rocky Mountain National Park Library's call numbers)

I. Interpretation

Interpreting Our Heritage by Freeman Tilden (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1967). (973 Tilden)

The Fifth Essence: An Invitation to Share in Our Eternal Heritage by Freeman Tilden (Washington, D.C., The National Park Trust Fund Board, 1964). (973 Tilden)

National Park Service, Visitor Services Training Series: (At desk)
Yours to Preserve by Albert Manuzy (1969).

Talks by Howard R. Stagner and David D. Thompson, Jr. (1968).

Campfire Programs by H. Raymond Gregg, Douglass Hubbard, and William W. Dunmire (1968).

Say, Ranger: Or, How to Perform in the Information Center by Albert Manuzy (1968).

Keep It Alive! by William Kennon Kay (1970).

National Park Service, In-Service Training Series:
Conducted Trips (1964).

A Report on National Park Service Interpretation by William C. Everhart (March, 1973).

Acclimatization: A Sensory and Conceptual Approach to Ecological Involvement by Steve Van Matre (Martinsville, Indiana; American Camping Association; 1972).

In Touch. (Periodicals section)

Midwest/Rocky Mountain Region Interpretive Newsletter. (Periodicals section)

II. The National Park Service

The National Park Service by William C. Everhart (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1972). (973 Everhart)

The National Parks: What They Mean to You and Me by Freeman Tilden (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1965). (973.3)

Man and Nature in the National Parks: Reflections on Policy by F. Fraser Darling and Noel J. Eichhorn (Washington, D.C., The Conservation Foundation, 1967). (333 Darling)

Will Success Spell the National Parks? by Robert Cahn (Boston, The Christian Science Monitor, 1968). (333 Cahn)

National Parks for the Future: An appraisal of the National Parks as they begin their second century in a changing America (Washington, D.C., The Conservation Foundation, 1972). (917.3 National)

National Parks for the Future: The Next 100 Years (Prepared by the Rocky Mountain Center on Environment, 1972). (917.3 National)

National Parks and Conservation Magazine. (917.305 National)

National Park Service Newsletter. (Periodicals section)

Consider the Process of Living by William H. Eddy, Jr., Gonzalo S. Leon, and Robert C. Milne (Washington, D.C., The Conservation Foundation, 1972). (333 Eddy)

In Touch with People: United States Department of the Interior Yearbook, 1973. (333 USDI 1973)

III. Rocky Mountain National Park

Interpretive Prospectus, Rocky Mountain National Park (1973). (At desk)

Master Plan, Rocky Mountain National Park (1975). (At desk)

Publications, Road Guides, Maps and Relief Models sold by the Rocky Mountain Nature Association dealing with the National Park Service and various aspects of Rocky Mountain National Park: Ecology, Geology, Flowers and Trees, Wildlife, History, Mountain Climbing and Backpacking, etc. (See "Publications: IAS:").

"Rocky Ramblings" (At desk)

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 is 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 are 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.