

PARK INTERPRETERS —

"To Preserve and Illuminate American Heritage"



SPECIAL ISSUE

Office of Interpretation
Midwest Region NPS
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! Hurrah For Good News !

SHARING

The NPS grapevine is a wonderous mystery. I walked in from lunch yesterday, and the secretary mentioned that Mike Watson of Mather Training Center was the new Chief Interpreter of the Park Service. I was thrilled by the news and called Mike to congratulate him. Mike was in a daze, sort of. Overwhelmed? Bowled over? He had been offered the job, but he had not accepted or declined. He had asked for time to consider it. The mystery is how I, in Omaha, had heard about Mike's fate from a secretary who heard it from someone in another regional office, who had heard it from ? . Well, why destroy the mystery of the NPS grapevine!

Mike hesitated because after so many years as an interpretive instructor at Mather, Mike and his family were hoping to return to a park area and field work. Mike is neither a power-monger nor a hopeless bureaucrat, doomed to spend the rest of his days away from the field. I would not be at all surprised to see Mike contribute several very dynamic years as the NPS top interpreter and then return to a major park as a division Chief of Interpretation.

Back in the mid-70's, Mike and I met at Albright Training Center where we were members of the same nine-week long Park Intro Class. For over two months, we trained together, hiked together, learned together, jogged together, dieted together, and made friends of other wonderful rangers like Woody Harrell, Arnold Schofield, and John Fekete. Mike was stationed at Everglades National Park, and he was quickly gaining a reputation as an interpreter, especially in environmental studies. He shared with our class many of his ideas and creative tricks-of-the trade in promoting environmental awareness.

In 1979, when I was asked to plan and coordinate a two week Interpretive Skills Workshop at Albright Training Center, I got Mike to present a full day's session on environmental interpretation. As I anticipated, Mike did a superb job.

During his many years at Mather, we have talked frequently about training needs, interpretive problems and needs, where interpretation is going, and about our roles in the future of Interpretation. Mike's a good listener and a concerned professional who understands what makes Interpretation special.

Now, Park Ranger Mike Watson, has been handed the reigns of leadership. He has been asked to climb onto the shoulders of Enos Mills, Josh Barkins, and Freeman Tilden, and to carry their visions of Interpretation along with his own toward the 21st Century. His reluctance to accept reflects a true interpreter's cautious fear of being swallowed by the bureaucracy, but his acceptance confirms his determination and conviction that he can contribute substantially in meeting this challenge.

Mike is a friend and a fellow-interpreter. I know he has the intelligence, creativity, and sound professionalism required by the highest interpretive position in the land. I just pray he will have the stamina demanded by so overwhelming a responsibility to lead, inspire, and represent the thousands of interpreters throughout the land.

With all other interpreters, I wish Mike the greatest success possible, - and hope he will call if he can use our help.

Lead on, Mike.
Tom

appeals to the imagination

lights the path of education

more inspirational than informational

thought-compelling

master of the art of suggestion

gives a magic spell to existence

appreciates the eloquence of silence

aims to illuminate and reveal