

# Superintendent's Annual Narrative Report, 2006



Darrell J. Cook  
Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument  
P.O. Box 39  
Crow Agency, MT 59022  
(406) 638-3201  
[darrell\\_cook@nps.gov](mailto:darrell_cook@nps.gov)

Little Bighorn Battlefield started 2006 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 for the historic battlefield tour road; and 4) Planning for additional visitor service space.

- **130<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OBSERVANCE (1)**

A major accomplishment and highlight in 2006 was the 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Observance of the Battle of the Little Bighorn June 25-26, 2006. Entrance fees were waived June 24-26<sup>th</sup>, in special celebration for the event. Our role again this year was largely supportive as host to the public and the various support groups including Friends of Little Bighorn Battlefield, Northern Cheyenne, Lakota and Arapaho veteran organizations, and the Custer Battlefield Historical & Museum Association. The day began with a spectacular sun rise and traditional Prayer for World Peace which is open to the public along Battle Ridge led by Donlin Many Badhorses, and representatives of the Northern Cheyenne Nation. These groups and organizations commemorate the historic Battle of the Little Bighorn annually in their own unique and special ways.

After the Prayer for World Peace ceremony, a grand mounted procession of Great Lakota Sioux Nation Victory Riders and Northern Cheyenne arrived, led by actual descendents of Crazy Horse who retraced the route used by their grandfather to the Little Bighorn back in 1876, gathered at the new Indian Memorial for a special public program. Speakers including LIBI Superintendent Darrell Cook, Ernie LaPoint, great-grandson of Sitting Bull, Friends President Bob Reece, and Floyd Clown, descendent of the Crazy Horse family. An Honoring March from the entrance gate to the Indian Memorial followed, led by dedicated veteran color guard units including: Morning Star Chapter of Northern Cheyenne Vietnam Veterans, and the Ft. Peck Assiniboine Sioux Veterans Association who posted the American and various tribal veteran unit flags, and eagle staffs at the Indian Memorial entrance.

A special ceremony to honor fallen Cheyenne warriors in the battle conducted by representatives of the Northern Cheyenne Nation including Friends Board members Clifford Long Sioux Eagle Feathers and Winfield Russell followed in the amphitheater. At the conclusion of the ceremony, we had the official unveiling of four new Cheyenne warrior markers for Cut Belly, Closed Hand Limber Bones, and Little Whirlwind. Our appreciation goes out to Bob Reece, President of

Friends of LIBI for their generous donation of \$5,000.00 for the warrior marker project which was headed by John Doerner, Chief Historian.

The Anniversary Observance was enhanced again by descendants of Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Gall, Limber Bones, and other warriors and Indian Scouts, including Curley and White Man Runs Him, combined with the support of the public greatly added to the Indian Memorial's theme of "Peace Through Unity".

Friends of the Little Bighorn Battlefield once again showed their dedication and support of the NPS Mission here 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 is being finalized. I am pleased to report that we held several very productive consultation meetings here in FY2005 with representatives from the Lakota Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Crow tribe. We are now finalizing the graphic layouts for the respective panels that are being developed based on feedback from all the tribes on how they want to tell their unique stories.

I especially want to commend Barbara Sutteer, former LIBI Superintendent, and RoGene White Man, receptionist, for helping to plan, organize and coordinate the meetings. Cathy Not Afraid and Prudence Pretty On Top from my Administrative staff, along with James Charles, Vel Grinsteiner, and Chief Historian John Doerner have also been invaluable in the planning and design layout process.

### **• FEDERAL HIGHWAY PROJECT (3)**

Here at Little Bighorn, like so many NPS sites 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 former LIBI Superintendent 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.

The project is moving ahead on schedule. Public Review of the Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed with minimal comment. All Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance has been initiated through the NPS Denver Service Center. The finding of No Significant (FONSI) for Alternative B (Preferred Alternative) is being recommended by LIBI and was forwarded on to the NPS Regional Director for approval. The FONSI was posted on the LIBI website ([www.nps.gov/libi](http://www.nps.gov/libi)) in September 2005. A 70% review is pending with actual work expected to begin in the fall of 2006 or spring 2007.

- **VISITATION (1)**

We received 331,564 visitors to Little Bighorn Battlefield in 2005 which is down – 5.31% from 350,140 in 2004. Contributing factors for the decrease may be related to high gasoline prices throughout the U.S., Western wildfires, record high temperatures and the seventh consecutive year of severe drought in Montana and the Intermountain West.

- **DEVELOPMENT (1 & 4)**

**New Administration Building-** Work (originally started in 2003) continued throughout FY2005 retrofitting of our new administration office building located at the southern most permanent residence (Neil Mangum's former quarters). An ADA compliant concrete parking pad and ramp at the entrance was completed in FY05. This project provides direct and convenient access to the main entrance. A handicapped parking stall was added along with several addition parking stalls for

visitor and staff vehicles. We are also planning an automatic ADA compliant door, and wheel chair accessible elevator to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor training facility, facility manager office, and restrooms. We also added an ADA compliant restroom in the ground level in FY05 for visitors and staff.

- **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 overall LIBI operations. Increased demand for purchase orders and contracts are again being met with vigor, 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 FY05 our ONPS budget was \$1,052,600 as compared to \$1, 029,000 in (FY04), with 18 total FTE. Our FY06 ONPS budget is \$1,082,600. A change in staff occurred as Marvin Dawes entered on duty on October 1, 2005 as lead ranger in the Division of Interpretation, working under Ken Woody, our Chief of Interpretation. Jerry Jasmer, a long time seasonal ranger interpreter and Volunteer In Parks (VIP) also joined our Interpretive staff last fall.

- **COMMUNITY RELATIONS (1)**

We continue to have a strong relationship with the local community including the Crow Tribe, Cheyenne Tribe, Lakota Sioux Tribes, 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 \$172,360 in total financial aid in FY2005. WNPA revised their Little Bighorn Battlefield booklet (including updated maps) with help from park staff including Ken Woody, Chief of Interpretation, and 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 once again 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, along with her assistant Arlene Dawes and WNPA staff.

**Apsaalooke Tours** - This is the 10th year Little Bighorn College has operated Apsaalooke Tours under a concessions permit. The one-hour guided bus tours are a very popular interpretive concessions service for our visitors. 509 tours were given Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day with 8,538 visitors attending the tours. Apsaalooke Tours did not miss a single day during their 2005 operating season! The success of the concessions in FY05 is due 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 300 research requests in 2005 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 interim museum curator Sharon Small processed over 100 research and photo requests. 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 FY05 were 36,736! 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 four new warrior markers for Cut Belly, Limber Hand, Closed Hand, and Little Whirlwind, Cheyenne casualties of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. The red granite markers were installed through out the battlefield including by the Stone House, Indian Memorial, and at Reno-Benteen Battlefield. These welcome additions to the cultural landscape were dedicated during the 129<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Observance of the battle. LIBI currently has a total of nine warrior markers that have been erected since 1999, and plans additional markers in FY06 and in the future.

The LIBI Administrative History approved back in 2002 was finally completed by Jerome A. Greene, NPS Historian, and is now slated for publication by the

University of Oklahoma Press in FY06. Titled “Stricken Field –Little Bighorn 1876-2003” This work which covers the early history of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument up to the dedication of our new Indian Memorial in 2003, will be an important reference to guide park staff and management decisions well into the future. The work will also increase public awareness of the important history of the battlefield, and critical resource protection issues that we face. This important project was made possible by our Fee Demonstration Program.

- **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (3)**

We had one Fee Demo Project to restore native vegetation. We hired one term position and two seasonal positions. Work included spraying noxious weed infested areas of the battlefield and updating our GIS records. 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 FY2006.

- **SEVERE SUMMER DROUGHT**

Despite a fairly wet spring, seven 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 & 4)**

We are in the initial planning stages of addressing visitor services space requirements, improving handicap accessibility building codes, and museum space requirements. One of the alternatives may include expansion of the existing Visitor Center. The park held a public scoping meeting in June and December 2005 to assess public comments on the various alternatives. Work will continue over the next few years.

- **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**

FY2005 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 FY05: they surpassed the \$23K level in general funds and now stand at 190 members. Friends contributed \$6K to LIBI in FY05. The website ([www.friendslittlebighorn.com](http://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 2005 alone they received a total of 13,546 hits (an average of 371 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, 7<sup>th</sup> 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 contributed 500 hours of volunteer time including 54 hours from 14 dedicated members who staffed the Deep Ravine and Keogh-Crazy Horse Trails during the 129<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Observance. They also contributed \$2,500.00 for the purchase of two new web cams to replace the older unit, with \$1,000.00 contributing funds from LIBI.

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



Two new board members were also elected to replace retiring directors. Chuck Merkel is now secretary and Winfield Russell services as one of the new directors.

- **INTERPRETATION/VOLUNTEERS (1)**

The keystone of Little Bighorn Battlefield is interpretation and visitor services. In FY2005 we received an overall rating of 95% Visitor Satisfaction Rating which is down slightly from 97% in FY2004. We also received a Visitor Understanding and Appreciation rating of 72% which was down slightly from our 80% rating that we received in FY2004. In FY2005 2, 756 interpretive programs were presented to 103,671 visitors; 612 Jr. Rangers were signed up; 29 off-site school programs were presented. 101 telephone requests for information were processed in 2005. Volunteers are an important resource at the battlefield and donated 835 hours. Interpretive programs included talks on the battle, life in the Indian Encampment in 1876, the Cavalry Soldier in 1876, and our popular 18 minute orientation film "Their Shot's Quit Coming". The continued success of our interpretive programs is attributed to Ken Woody, Chief of Interpretation, Marvin Dawes, Lead Interpreter, long-term seasonal Jerry Jasmer, and our dedicated seasonal Ranger-Interpreters, and volunteers.

- **RANGER ACTIVITIES/LAW ENFORCEMENT- (1)**

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 additional LE assistance during our anniversary events and at other times as needed

- **MAINTENANCE (1)**

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 10 interments in Custer National Cemetery and one cremation scatter in FY05. 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.

Lonnie Hergenrider reports that he started a Fee Demo Project last fall that funded removal of dead hazard trees. Work included a Scope of Work Plan for future replacement of the affected trees with new stock that is already on site and acclimated to this area. Future transplants will be spaced further apart to minimize the possibility of disease transfer (old trees planted in the 1930-1940's were planted too close which probably contributed to the transfer of spider mite infestation).

My thanks go out to Lonnie Hergenrider, Facility Manager, and Les Frickle, Jimmie Brothers, Wayne Not Afraid, Dick Struck and Big Horn Canyon Maintenance staff .

- **LITTLE BIGHORN BATTLEFIELD HANDBOOK REVISION (1)**

Park staff including Ken Woody, Chief of Interpretation have completed updates to our Official NPS Little Bighorn Battlefield Handbook, including photo's of the Indian Memorial, warrior markers, and Custer National Cemetery. The revised printing will also feature updated battle maps that were produced by Western National Parks Association (WNPA), with the assistance of our Chief Historian. The popular number one best selling Handbook is slated for publication in FY06, and compliments the new WNPA Association Handbook on Little Bighorn Battlefield.

- **BATTLEFIELD WEB CAMS (1)**

LIBI partnered with Friends of Little Bighorn Battlefield and the Little Bighorn Associates to upgrade our web cam system. We now have two camera views that focus have multiple alternating views of the Indian Memorial, Custer National Cemetery, Little Bighorn Battlefield Landscape, and Last Stand Hill. Ken Woody, Chief of Interpretation spearheaded this important upgrade.

- **NATURAL RESOURCES (1)**

Chief Ranger Michael Stops reports that Melana Rapp, Biological Technician and staff have diligently targeted and sprayed noxious weed sites this past summer. We also started an additional project involving native plant seed collection including green needle grass, blue bunch, side oaks, and blue gamma from our unique grasslands. This project is part of our re-vegetation plan for the future tour road rehabilitation project. We also conducted a bat survey within the monument this past summer to determine what species live within the monument. The report will be available in early 2006.

- **FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN (1)**

In June 2005 we completed a Fire Management Plan stating management objects in outlining a policy of initial attack and suppression of prairie wildfires. The plan emphasis is on protection of life, health, and safety of visitors and employees as well as protection of our natural and cultural resources.

- **SAFETY**

Park safety continues to be a top priority here at LIBI. The safety award program initiated by the superintendent in back in FY03 continues to be successful here. I am very pleased to report that we had no work time injuries or lost time in FY2005. 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.

- **NEW MUSEUM EXHIBIT/MUSEUM COLLECTIONS (1)**

This summer we installed a new museum exhibit titled "Crazy Horse & Custer: Firearms of Two American Warriors at Little Bighorn". The exhibit was designed by our Chief Historian, Sharon Small, interim Curator, and Jerry Jasmer, Park Ranger Interpreter. The popular exhibit features authentic functional reproductions of a M1866 Winchester .44 Carbine used by Ta Sunke Witko (Crazy Horse), and a Remington Rolling Block No. 1 Sporting Rifle .50/70 used by Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer in the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

Sharon Small reports that we received our Administrative History Photograph Collection back from the Western Archeological Center (WAC) where it underwent cataloging, digital reproduction, and conservation. The historical photographs date from 1940 to the 1970's and document the early administrative

history of Little Bighorn Battlefield. The collection will be an important reference for staff, and researchers. As a result of FY04 Audited Financial Statement, a directive came out in May 2005 to correct several areas of non-compliance for museum collections throughout the NPS, which included: accessions, annual inventories, Collection Management Reports, and deferred maintenance needs and costs. LIBI is currently on task by having everything in the collection accessioned with condition assessments, and entered into ANCS+. In FY06 we anticipate additional ANCS+ condition assessments for all other LIBI catalog records.