

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument Superintendent Update May 2007

- Darrell J. Cook

May is here already and summer is just around the corner. The battlefield is greening up nicely after recent rain showers helped to relieve the region from a fairly dry and mild winter. The Little Bighorn River is close to flood stage now and our Western Meadowlarks made an early appearance in March this year. A few weeks ago we had a surprise visit by a large flock of Wild Turkey's that toured Custer National Cemetery and the surrounding historic district.

The following is another update on Little Bighorn Battlefield that I hope will continue to be of interest to everyone:

131st Anniversary Observance – As you know, June 25 & 26, 2007 marks the 131st Anniversary observance of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Again, I intend that our role this year will be largely supportive as host to the public and our various support groups including Friends of the Little Bighorn, Custer Battlefield Historical & Museum Association (CBHMA), and Lakota, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Arikara Scout organizations.

Entrance fees will be waived again on June 25-26 in special honor of the anniversary observance.

Battlefield Entrance Fee/Hours – Entrance fee is \$10.00 per vehicle, \$5.00 for bus passengers or pedestrians. NPS Pass, Golden Access, or Golden Age Pass holders are free. Summer hours begin May 27, 2007. Memorial Day to Labor Day the visitor center is open 8:00 AM to 7:30 PM; Battlefield Tour Road is open 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM; and Custer National Cemetery & Last Stand Hill is open from 8:00 AM to 9:00 PM through July 31st; & then 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM through Labor Day. The Custer Battlefield trails & Entrenchment Trail are open from 8:00 AM until 7:30 PM daily.

Interpretive Division - Ken Woody, Chief of Interpretation announced that staff from Western Parks And Monuments (WNPA) is here updating and rearranging the bookstore based on visitor traffic flow and logistics studies to help boost sales. Seasonal orientation training is being finalized and will begin the week of May 21st. Due to the high percentage of returning seasonals, several field trips are planned this year to Deer Medicine Rocks, 7th Cavalry and Lakota/Cheyenne camp sites, Rosebud Battlefield, and then retrace the Sitting Bull/Custer Trail down Reno Creek. Lead Interpreter/Rangers are Marvin Dawes and Jerry Jasmer. Returning rangers include: Tom Smith, Steve Littleton, Mike Donahue (his 17th year), Francis Takes Enemy, and Rose Williamson who begins her first tour of duty.

Armed Forces Day Taps/Taps Echo Observance - In honor of our American Armed Forces, the National Park Service in partnership with the Veterans Administration is holding a national day of observance on Saturday May 19, 2007. At exactly 11:00 AM throughout all of the NPS sites with National Cemeteries, taps and taps echo will be played by volunteers across the United States. John Doerner, LIBI Chief Historian will represent the NPS at Custer National Cemetery and play taps with his old army bugle, and his echo will be played by Jerry Akers, United States Navy veteran of the Korean War, and a member of Bugles Across America, from Ronan, Montana. We hope that this important event will become a tradition here in future years.

Memorial Day Observance- Our annual Memorial Day Observance is on Monday May 28, 2007 at 11:00 AM in the amphitheater. Marvin Dawes is Master of Ceremony, Hardin American Legion Post #8 & VFW James Louk Post #7481 are the Color Guards/Rifle Teams, Our tentative Key Note Speaker is Captain Richard S. Newell of the U.S. Army Recruiting Office, Sheridan, Wyoming. The Reverend Jerry Jasmer will conduct the invocation and closing prayer. Kenneth Boggio of Hardin will play taps. The public is encouraged to participate in this important event to honor our American Military Service men and women who died in service to our country protecting the very freedoms that we all enjoy today.

Friends of The Little Bighorn Battlefield – Bob Reece, President of Friends reports the following news which will be expanded in their next newsletter:

- 2007 marks the 11th anniversary of Friends of Little Bighorn and we are very proud of our continued partnership with the NPS at LIBI.

I want to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to Bob Reece and the volunteers from Friends of LIBI for their annual help with interpretation along the Crazy Horse/Keogh and Deep Ravine Trails each year. These dedicated friends give freely of their time and work hard to make an important contribution each June 25-26, during the anniversary observance, providing one-on-one interpretation and assistance to our visiting public, and eagerly answer countless questions on the battle, and LIBI.

Battlefield Tour Road (Rehabilitate Route 10) – We are still awaiting important additional funding to finalize the Engineering specifications for the Battlefield Tour Road Project and hope to have the final drawings completed this year. We then plan to move forward into the actual funding cycle for construction. I still do not have a firm date for this, but will keep everyone posted.

Arikara & Corporal John Foley Marker Project – Our Chief Historian has been busy conducting historical research on Arikara Indian Scouts Sgt. Bobtail Bull, and Little Brave who were killed during Reno's Retreat. Little Brave was killed on the west side of the river near Isaiah Dorman, and Sgt. Bobtail Bull, who was killed on the east side of the Little Bighorn River below Reno Hill. Custer's favorite Arikara, Bloody Knife, employed as a Guide-Interpreter was killed in the clearing/park on the west side of the Little Bighorn river during Reno's fight in the timber. For the time being, their markers will be erected at the Reno-Benteen Battlefield below the first overlook on the Entrenchment Trail next to the marker for Little Whirlwind, Northern Cheyenne Suicide Warrior. Little Whirlwind and Bobtail Bull both shot and killed each other during a bravery run on horseback at each other. Their markers will fittingly overlook their actual casualty sites near the Little Bighorn River.

Corporal John Foley, Company C, 7th Cavalry will also be honored with a marker to denote his casualty site on the west slope of Medicine Tail Coulee. The white marble markers are being supplied by the Veterans Administration and are the same Civil War style that were first placed on the battlefield in 1890 by the U.S. Army to denote and preserve 7th Cavalry casualty sites. They will include the following information:

**U.S. INDIAN SCOUT
Hukos-ta-rikus
SGT. BOBTAIL BULL
FELL HERE
JUNE 25, 1876
WHILE DEFENDING THE
ARIKARA WAY OF LIFE**

**U.S. INDIAN SCOUT
Naahukoos ciripasiIt'
LITTLE BRAVE
FELL HERE
JUNE 25, 1876
WHILE DEFENDING THE
ARIKARA WAY OF LIFE**

**INTERPRETER/GUIDE
neesiRApat'
BLOODY KNIFE
FELL HERE
JUNE 25, 1876
WHILE DEFENDING THE
ARIKARA WAY OF LIFE**

**CPL JOHN FOLEY
CO. C 7TH CAVALRY
FELL HERE
JUNE 25, 1876**

Fee Staff - Fee staff (Visitor Use Assistants) during the winter season is reduced to Tamara Stewart. We certainly appreciate her

second year here as the long-term seasonal (VUI) under the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP).

Natural Resources - Melana Stichman, Biological Technician, and Mathew Bright Wings, are now in their second year here working on natural resources. Melana has taken the lead on many important natural resource projects, including preparation of the 2-acre Quonset Hut site for native plant re-seeding this May. Weed control treatment of Canadian Thistle infestation of the grassland prairie is continuing, along with roadside weeds throughout the monument this summer. We are also gearing up for several research projects in June including final stage work on a Vegetation Map, and monitoring of grassland/shrub lands as part of our NPS Vital Signs Monitoring Program. An informal bird survey for the riparian area of the battlefield is also slated.

Maintenance Operations - Our maintenance staff under Facility Manager Lonnie Hergenrider have been busy gearing up for the 2007 summer season of facility and grounds maintenance. They have been working on several upgrades to park housing including replacement of windows and siding on Quarters 13 (permanent house), and new windows, doors, and siding on the seasonal apartment units. STEP student employees Austin Dawes and Kenny Woody IV are on board to assist the Maintenance Division this summer. Work will also start on a Fee Demonstration Funded Project to replace damaged sections of the Custer National Cemetery sidewalks, and the Entrenchment Trail at the Reno-Bentzen Battlefield.

Curation - Sharon Small has been busy working on a new museum exhibit for Sitting Bull, and just ordered a new exhibit case. The exhibit will be located next to the Custer case and tell the important story of this great political and spiritual leader of the Lakota. Sharon is working with Ernie LaPointe, Great-Grandson and direct lineal descendant of Sitting Bull, and the Smithsonian to get Sitting Bull's M1866 Winchester on long-term loan for display in the new exhibit. More news on this exciting project will be available by the next update.

Medal of Honor Plaques – You may recall in the last update that I mentioned our new Medal of Honor Plaques in Custer National Cemetery. We now have three new Veterans Administration regulation bronze Medal of Honor plaques in Custer National Cemetery, at the grave sites of Medal of Honor recipients Sgt. Aquila Coonrod, Company C, 5th Infantry (formerly of the 7th Cavalry) Section A-372, Corporal John Haddo, Company B, 5th Infantry interred in Section B-2, the mass grave below the historic Bear Paw Battlefield Monument, and Sergeant Joseph Cable, 5th Infantry, installed at the base of the Ft. Keogh Monument adjacent to the flagpole in Section B. Their nineteenth century headstone or Monuments did not have their Medal of Honor Award listed, so the VA plaques finally acknowledge these three distinguished American Soldiers who gave their lives for our country. Please pay homage to these brave soldiers and all the soldiers and veterans interred in Custer National Cemetery when you visit. My thanks go out again Don Morfe, Baltimore MD (Medal of Honor Historical Society member), John Doerner, and our maintenance division for coordinating this important project.