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**US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
and the
LEWIS AND CLARK
BICENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION**



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**“THE ADVENTURE BEGINS”
St. Charles, MO Signature Event
May 20-23, 2004
After Action Report**

Background: In 2000, the National Council for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial decided to highlight some of the more nationally significant festivals and events and call them “Signature Events”. These events were to be those of nationwide historical significance, have the potential of high visitation, and be multicultural in nature. The “The Adventure Begins” was designated as the fifth of these Signature Events. The weather for the event of May 20th–23rd was hot and humid with temps in the low 90’s. The event site was Frontier Park (the St. Charles Riverfront) and Bishop’s Landing (the parking lot of the Lewis and Clark Boat House and Nature Center).

Because of the nature of the annual event and the mix of reenactors present, it was suggested by the event organizers and agreed by the Corps that Captain Lewis’ Company (COE reenactors) would not attend the event. Therefore, with the exception of their programs in the Tent of Many Voices, all rangers attending were dressed in the Corps Park Ranger uniform.

In addition to Ken Wilk and myself, Corps personnel that worked in one or more of the venues at this Signature Event included: Dan Camden, Janet Mifflin, Tim Bischoff, Ashley Florey (all MVS); Craig Rockwell (NWW), Rick Magee (NAE), Harry Diesel (NWK), Dave Quebedeaux (SAS).

Action: The Corps was involved in only 4 venues during this commemorative event – COE Exhibit; Corps of Discovery 2; the Tent of Many Voices; The Foundry Arts Center.

COE Exhibit: The Corps exhibit was part of a contingent of agencies, communities, and vendors sponsoring a booth/exhibit. The exhibit was set up on the black Macadam parking lot of the L&C Boat House and Nature Center. After a shower on Thursday and spotty showers every night, the temperatures in the tent became unbelievably hot and humid. There were no fans running and the event organizers did not supply water until the last day. The only saving grace was that the Corps exhibit was near the opening of the tent, which allowed us to get the occasional breeze.

The Corps exhibit had four parts – (1) one backdrop of the historic Lewis and Clark Expedition and one backdrop of the modern Army; (2) a display of the Discovery Box;

(3) an information table that contained a variety of COE brochures and (4) a “trading center”. Items were placed into a brass cooking pot suspended from a wooden tripod. On the tripod was a sign made of wood and leather that said, “Trade Goods – Will trade for information”. This was an attempt to engage more people, especially kids, to peak their interest in the expedition. In order to get something from the trading center, visitors first had to answer a question related to the expedition.

Attendance at the exhibit was good as this Signature Event was held as a portion of their annual Lewis and Clark Days in St. Charles. However, because the annual portion of the event was held at Frontier Park, and because there was not adequate signage to bring people across a footbridge to the rest of the event, attendance was not as great as it could have been had everyone been located at Frontier Park. Although visitation to the entire event was listed as over 50,000, there were still only 3,137 visitors to the COE exhibit.

Corps of Discovery 2 – 200 Years to the Future (Corps 2) – The Corps 2 exhibit itself consists of approximately 32 panels with an associated audiotape headset that discuss Jefferson’s vision; Lewis, Clark, and the members of the expedition; with the remainder depicting the natural resources and the Native American influences on the expedition. In addition, Raystown Lake Project (NAB) constructed and donated a roughly ½-size land-based replica of a keelboat. Visitors were encouraged to come into the keelboat for interpretive programs about the expedition. During the Signature Event, all COE park rangers attending the event worked in their park ranger uniform to provide interpretive talks and information to dignitaries and members of the public visiting the keelboat exhibit.

The Keelboat exhibit was better utilized in this event than at the Wood River event. The Corps 2 coordinators did a better job of directing school groups to take in the keelboat display. This allowed us to do a better job of developing a theme and making a presentation that was not possible at other events. Roughly 3,512 interpretive contacts were made at the keelboat replica.

Tent of Many Voices (TOMV) – This is a venue associated with Corps 2 (same portable generator provides electricity for heat and lighting for both) but separate from it. TOMV has a small stage for presentations and seating capacity of 150. Tim Bischoff (MVS), Rick Magee (NAE), Dave Quebedeaux (SAS) and Carol Ryan (MVS) gave interpretive talks during the Signature Event. Mr. Bischoff, as George Drouillard, had audience participation to discuss the difficulty in conversing when the languages were unknown. Mr. Magee discussed the naturalist aspect of the expedition. Mr. Quebedeaux discussed the diplomacy of the expedition. Ms. Ryan used PowerPoint in a discussion of some of the other Lewis and Clark sites along the Missouri River. In total, there were 283 interpretive contacts at the TOMV.

The Foundry Arts Center: Several months before the event the Corps was asked to supply two speakers for a special lecture series. (At the time we did not know that was for the Foundry Arts Center). Although Ken Wilk and Jim Krause were requested very early, no other contact by the event organizers was made with the Corps. At the same time, these same two speakers had been requested for the Tent of Many Voices. The first day of the event, we found that they had been dropped off the TOMV schedule and

assumed that was what our first contact with the event organizer had been. However, after a frantic phone call from the Foundry organizer at the last minute, he assured us that the Foundry speakers were still on. However, Mr. Krause was unable to attend so Tim Bischoff agreed to stand in and do his own presentation about George Drouillard. Unfortunately, this was another venue that was very far removed from the main part of the Signature Event and was not very well advertised. As a result, there were only a total of 69 interpretive contacts for the two speakers combined over both days.

Lessons learned

1. Heat was an overwhelming factor in this event. On Friday, temps were in the low 90's and extremely humid. Water was bought by the National Team and made available for all the Corps workers. However, two individuals were still sent back to the hotel early that day because of heat-related problems. One individual was probably drinking too much water while the other was not drinking enough. After an evening in the air conditioning and a light dinner, both were feeling much better the next day. Until Friday, COE reps were assigned 4 structured hours either at the exhibit or the keelboat and 4 hours unstructured to wander, see the event, answer questions, and assist where ever necessary. After the incidents on Friday, we decided to go to a "2 hours structured, 2 hours unstructured" regimen. That seemed to work out much better for the rest of the weekend as it allowed workers to go to an air-conditioned building and cool off. Besides helping us to adapt to the climate, it also helps us to rest our feet, back, and voice, to recharge our mental batteries. This "2x2" split is definitely something we will incorporate into the KC and Nebraska Signature Events where the weather will most likely be hot - as well as the Bismarck Signature Event where the weather could be extremely cold and windy.

2. We need to better communicate with the organizers. We need to do a better job of following up when we find out that there may have been a change and finding out what our role is because of that change. Both parties were probably at fault for the initial misunderstanding at the Foundry.

Event coordinators have to communicate better - with us, with visitors, and among themselves. There shouldn't be separate coordinators for all the different venues. There needs to be one person in charge. This was a huge problem in St. Charles and definitely put us at a disadvantage. One organizer did not want Captain Lewis' Company while another did. The organizer for the Foundry event was not coordinating with the Corps II NPS organizers. Vendors and visitors have to know what is going on all over not just in the venues that are obvious. Information booth personnel have to know the latest information. Many times we asked someone for information and got a very non-committal answer. They just weren't informed as to where anything was, how to direct people, or what was going on in the different venues.

3. After the heat problems on Friday, all appreciated the unstructured time given. This allowed all COE participants time to cool off and see the many facets of the event as well as hearing many of the talks available.

5. One suggestion on working the keelboat was to have a handout and go over the types of interpretation that could be done on the keelboat at the opening meeting. Rick Magee has agreed to take this on.

Future outcome: The next Signature Event will be held June 18-July 4 in Fort Osage and Kansas City MO and Kansas City, Leavenworth, and Atchison KS. The nature of the Corps and Army presence at this event will be quite strong.

Final thoughts: We need to be mindful of our people working these events. Eight hours under a hot tent or in the blazing sun is entirely too much. We need to be extremely mindful of all types of adverse weather conditions so that our own workers are not at risk.

Respectfully submitted,

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