

# YOSEMITE

MARCH, 1974 VOLUME FORTY-FOUR, NUMBER 2

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**NEW NEWSLETTER.** This is the first issue of a 'member's newsletter' that we will be mailing to you. We intend to improve communications with the membership and we feel we can do this if we write more frequently. So, with this and subsequent issues, we will keep you informed on current matters about the Park and about Association affairs as well as the natural sciences and history of the region.



**ROUNDHOUSE NEAR COMPLETION** The Ceremonial Roundhouse in the Indian Garden behind the Visitor Center is approaching completion. It is the first of what will be one of the Park's most exciting interpretive efforts.

Come spring, the roundhouse will be dedicated and Indian people from California and Nevada will come to celebrate the opening. Ancient songs will be sung, prayers and orations of long ago will be offered, ritual dances will be performed.

After the dancing, there will be a feast of the like that has not been seen for many years. The *Pulaka* will be filled with steaming acorn soup, *Oolee* will be served on traditional basketry implements alongside the roasted *Ew-u-yeh*. There will be an abundance of post-Caucasian dishes as well, such as *Lowcaya*, and beans and coffee. There will be the Indian tea of the wild mint, boiled young shoots of the bracken fern with a taste similar but superior to asparagus.

During and after the feasting, *Hinowu*, the ancient hand game, will be played; teams will come from Nevada and the northern Sierra.

The roundhouse is but one of the projects ahead for Yosemite's Indian Cultural Program. Soon, there will be an entire Indian Village with a dozen or more homes along with a score of acorn granaries, a sweathouse and the new ceremonial roundhouse. Within the next few years a "Living History" development will take place. Imagine walking into a Yosemite Village of 1848!

With the help of the local Indian people, plans are in process for an Indian Museum, which will be housed in the old museum building. Using new and innovative techniques in sound and lighting, the room will give the effect of the out-of-doors and the many beautiful objects made by the first people of this Valley again will be exhibited.

With the many new ideas being brought forth every day, the future of the Indian Cultural Program is indeed a bright one.

It is a fitting tribute to the first people of the Valley of Ahwahnee.

**COMING SEMINARS.** The four winter ecology seminars with Dr. Carl Sharsmith filled promptly. We are pleased to note that about half of those enrolled are Association members. Warren White's Ostrander Lake Environmental Ski Tours (which Warren calls "Ski the High Country"), also are booked.

Looking a little ahead, Dr. Dave DeSante, Stanford ornithologist extraordinaire, will conduct two "birding seminars" for us . . . June 15-16-17 and June 29-30-July 1. The class is all field work with camp-outs at Henness Ridge and Crane Flat. Migration, population,

habitat, ecology, flight and field identification are covered. DeSante is a fantastic instructor and knows his subject intimately (he almost can fly himself!).

Plans for the July and August summer field seminars are all but complete. You will receive a folder on this program shortly.

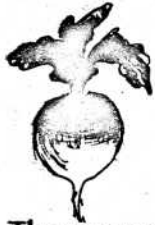


**SNOWMOBILES?** Snowmobiling never has been one of the more popular winter sports in the Park and has caused little trouble to the law enforcement people. However, it has caused considerable impassioned oratory on the part of the 'antis'.

When we have heard the matter discussed, the park service people have kept cool and objective. Why *not* snowmobiling in prescribed areas? There's lots of country, lots of beauty and lots of snow.

Noise and destruction of the fragile environment seem to be the concern of the antagonists. During one debate, a park service administrator asked if snowmobiles would be objectionable if they made no noise and traveled only on paved, snow covered roads in the Tuolumne area. The answer was "yes." No logical conversation could follow. It became analogous to "I do not like thee, Dr. Fell".

Presently, the National Park Service has a simple set of regulations governing snowmobiling and has designated the roads between Summit Meadows and Glacier Point and between Gin Flat and Tioga Pass as permissible areas.



**THE TURNIP OF INTERPRETATION.** The season never ends, and that is the way it should be. Visitors come to Yosemite in unending procession and winter, fall, summer or spring mean only a bit of shifting here and there regarding what they do. So it is that our interpretive program never goes into the deep sleep that bears and others seem to enjoy during the "off season".

The program continues in a Jello sort of way, changing and gently flowing as visitor interests seem to dictate. Now, people may be deeply interested in a knowledge of how a creature lives. Perhaps they were stimulated by literature such as *Jonathan Livingston Sea Gull*. A few years before, their greater excitement might have been aroused by a knowledge of how it all fits together, broad ecologic concepts being more important.

To keep abreast of changing visitor interest is fundamental to the success of the interpretive program, but this must be tempered by the knowledge of the important values to be interpreted in a park. Perhaps the public is suddenly excited about sea gulls. However, the park is Yosemite, and normally gulls are not conspicuously abundant. Therefore your program's reaction to the phenomenon does not involve seminars on sea gulls. Rather it involves an investigation of *why* the book excited people about one life form. How do you apply the author's success to your program approach? Perhaps it is to let people savour and wonder about some of the mysteries and magnificent achievements involved in the life of one creature. Perhaps it may be poetic expression in some of our interpretive work. But through it all, good judgment must be expressed. Anthropomorphisms important for "Jonathan" are not necessarily acceptable for us.

Changes in visitor interest also are manifested by *how* the visitor does things. About one third of the summer traffic in Yosemite Valley is on bicycles, and it is fair to assume that people enjoy that means of getting around. It logically follows that bike nature walks or nature "pedals" might be successful. They are.

On hot summer days people paddle around on air mattresses and inner tubes on the river. They like it. Why, then should fresh water ecology walks be conducted and enjoyed only by tired-backed, hip-booted mud splashers. The visitor on an inner tube is already

a part of the environment you are discussing—he *likes* it. Now you can literally immerse him in the subject you are discussing and he becomes a part of the environment of the fish, frog and caddis fly larva. It's fun, too!

The perception that people have of the good life also changes. This year, many may be querulous, questioning and perhaps irritated about the way things are going in their world. So, "behind the scenes" interpretation on what *really* happens in running the park becomes popular. Or it might be a fireside chat where visitors grill the interpreter and each other on what the park master plan implies. And the bear management program — how about that! These interpretive efforts often are hot, stimulating sessions to be conducted only by the best informed, most capable people on your staff.

The point is, you cannot stay with most program emphases for too long or you find that the audience is in mute anguish or they really don't have anything else to do. They endure your offering.

In planning the overall program, the configuration and spirit of an ever changing plastic turnip develops. As emphasis varies, the effort, money, time and quantity relating to the different types of programs also changes. This year perhaps the relatively small deep purple top of the turnip might represent in depth interpretive seminars. The montage of purple and white in the massive middle of the turnip shows enormous emphasis on general knowledge kinds of natural history programs. The small white tapering end of the turnip represents limited emphasis on sensitivity programs.

If you are alert to changing needs and interests, the shape of the turnip varies many times, and so does your program. If you don't use a colorful plastic turnip as your guide, your program probably isn't making it.—David Karraker.



**ZEN.** Howard Weamer, photographer, sometime park naturalist and a John Muir aficionado, returned recently from a five week journey through Glacier and Mt. McKinley National Parks in Alaska. He claims his primary object for the trek was simply to see the wonders of this dramatic land. However, he also was able to examine the landscape that Muir describes in his 1879-1899 Journals which he kept in part during his six trips to Alaska.

Howard has collected a fine library of glacier photos and has put these into a delightful and stimulating 90 minute program "Muir's Alaska" which he has presented at the Oakland Museum. We are attempting to arrange other 'outside' presentations.

Howard recently handed us a piece of writing describing and interpreting the Upper Yosemite Fall by Shunryu Suzuki, a Zen master and founder in the sixties of three Zen centers in California. This is from *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. We pass this along to you with a bit of Weamer's point of view and with a passage from Muir's *First Summer in the Sierra*. Do the two hang together?

**YOSEMITE FALLS: AN ORIENTAL VIEW.** Shunryu Suzuki was not an ordinary Japanese tourist. A resident of this country from 1959 until his death in 1971, he was a Zen master and founder of three Zen centers in California. In *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, he leaves us both a description and his interpretation of the impact of the upper falls:

"I went to Yosemite National Park, and I saw some huge waterfalls. The highest one there is 1,340 feet high, and from it the water comes down like a curtain thrown from the top of the mountain. It does not seem to come down swiftly, as you might expect; it seems to come down very slowly because of the distance. And the water does not come down as one stream, but is separated into many tiny streams. From a distance it looks like a curtain. And I thought it must be a very difficult experience for each drop of water to come



down from the top of such a high mountain. It takes time, you know, a long time, for the water finally to reach the bottom of the waterfall. And it seems to me that our human life may be like this. We have many difficult experiences in our life. But at the same time, I thought, the water was not originally separated, but was one whole river. Only when it is separated does it have some difficulty in falling. It is as if the water does not have any feeling when it is one whole river. Only when separated into many drops can it begin to have or express some feeling. When we see one whole river we do not feel the living activity of the water, but when we dip a part of the water into a dipper, we experience some feeling of the water, and we also feel the value of the person who uses the water. Feeling ourselves and the water in this way, we cannot use it in just a material way. It is a living thing.

Before we were born we had no feeling; we were one with the universe. This is called 'mind only', or 'essence of mind' or 'big mind'. After we are separated by birth from this oneness, as the water falling from the waterfall is separated by the wind and rocks, then we have feeling. You have difficulty because you have feeling. You attach to the feeling you have without knowing just how this kind of feeling is created. When you do not realize that you are one with the river, or one with the universe, you have fear. Whether it is separated into drops or not, water is water. Our life and death are the same thing. When we realize this fact we have no fear of death anymore, and we have no actual difficulty in our life.

"When the water returns to its original oneness with the river, it no longer has any individual feeling to it; it resumes its own nature, and finds composure. How very glad the water must be to come back to the original river! If this is so, what feeling will we have when we die? I think we are like the water in the dipper. We will have composure then, perfect composure. It may be too perfect for us, just now, because we are so much attached to our own feeling, to our individual existence. For us, just now, we have some fear of death, but after we resume our true original nature, there is Nirvana. That is why we say, 'To attain Nirvana is to pass away.' 'To pass away' is not a very adequate expression. Perhaps 'to pass on,' or 'to go on,' or 'to join' would be better. Will you try to find some better expression for death? When you find it, you will have quite a new interpretation of your life. It will be like my experience when I saw the water in the big waterfall. Imagine! It was 1,340 feet high!"

Through the translation, familiar ideas appear. To understand nature is to understand ourselves; our separation from our true nature occurs through needless fears of death; life and death are equally natural. Those who lose themselves in nature seem to come to similar conclusions. Whether in the writings of American Indians, Oriental sages, Western religious mystics or Yosemite's John Muir, an understanding of the oneness of all nature, what we now term ecology, appears. Muir himself, having absorbed some orientalism from Emerson and Thoreau, wrote during his first summer in the Sierra:

"On no subject are our ideas more warped and pitiable than on death. Instead of sympathy, the friendly union, of life and death so apparent in nature, we are taught that death is an accident, a deplorable punishment for the oldest sin, the arch-enemy of life, etc. Town children, especially, are steeped in this death orthodoxy, for the natural beauties of death are seldom seen or taught in towns. . . . But let children walk with nature, let them see the beautiful blendings and communions of death and life, their joyous inseparable unity, as taught in woods and meadows, plains and mountains and streams of our blessed star, and they will learn that death is stingless indeed, and as beautiful as life, and that the grave has no victory, for it never fights. All is divine harmony."



**THE ELECTRONIC RANGER** As Dave Karraker brought out in his "turnip" analogy, interpretation can't stand still . . . because people's interests aren't static. This is particularly true of the bulk of Yosemite visitors . . . 65% come from urban California and, as has been said so often, Californians are mobile, plastic, unconventional, independent and enjoy constantly great

doses of electronic communication and other urban amenities. Television, radio, motion pictures, street signs, school educational processes, business presentations, etc., are ritual for the city person. They are 'talked to' so much and in so many ways that they are quite sophisticated, so far as audio-visual experience is concerned. To plan an effective interpretive program, this phenomenon must be considered and turned to the advantage of the programmer and the individual.

So, while the programmers aren't swapping a push-button program for a living, breathing ranger naturalist, they are taking advantage of the visitors' pre-conditioning and the availability of electronic gadgets to present the myriad of interpretive possibilities and pleasurable experiences.

"Canned" programs — slides, pre-recorded messages and an automatic projector are convenient communication modes. In addition, the quality can be kept superior.

Naturalists have down days, when their presentations may suffer. The electronic program is always as good as its best. These programs are presented with a naturalist 'in the wings', so there is the opportunity for the important questions and answers after the show.

Among the 2 million yearly visitors to the park, a surprisingly large number of young people come here from everywhere to enjoy, to renew, to learn or for whatever. They respond strongly to the scene as they do to music, seemingly of all varieties. The sound and slide shows draw rewarding numbers to a tucked away place near Happy Isles. Once gathered, they reflect great concern for this and all environments and demand solid answers from the naturalist presenting the program. Here, the use of sophisticated pre-programmed electronic sound and multiple projectors has great value. The message is stimulating, the medium is contemporary.

Two National Park Service technicians have set up the "Mirikul Electronics" workshop. Here, surrounded by scopes, tubes, resistors, recorders, tapes, circuits, etc., they assemble the programs. Their skills last year saved the park service some \$40,000. Their programs have helped bring hundreds of young people together in a common appreciation and understanding of Yosemite.

Electronic interpretation is not a substitute for 'live' programming. Its value lies rather in providing the visitor quickly, accurately and clearly, a catalogue of what is available and to learn to what stimulus he responds.



**INDIAN RAID.** The office of the Yosemite Natural History Association is to become the location of a new and dramatic exhibit which will express the history of the Yosemite Indian, both prior to 1851, the coming of the white man, as well as after. Jack Gyer, formerly with YNHA and now Museum Curator, is directing the new installation, assisted by park interpretive people, the Indian community and the Mariposa Indian Council. The concept and the execution will be the products of local talent.

We have seen the sketches of the proposed gallery and found them attractive and interesting. The aim is to draw the visitor into a subjective experience, the life style and times of the Yosemite Indians, rather than simply to line the walls with relics. Murals will be painted on the walls creating a sense of depth. Within the walls will be free-standing trees, umatches with the appropriate tools.

The Indian Garden presently imparts the nature of an Indian village; the new exhibit will represent the family unit. The changes that have occurred over the years, mainly as a result of the impact of the whites, will be depicted.

On display, and in use, will be many of the fine baskets loaned to the National Park Service from the Jas. A. Schwabacher collection.

So, while the YNHA is (again) being relocated, we are very pleased that it is for so noble a cause.

Meanwhile, we have started on a new office in a building adjacent to the Indian Garden. It is a fine location, with a grand view of the garden and the north wall of the Valley.

The association is obliged to stand the cost of the construction, which is estimated at about \$5,500. This will deplete our reserves materially and we would welcome any financial assistance from the membership or elsewhere. As we are a non-profit organization, contributions made toward this project *probably* are tax-deductible although we would encourage anyone disposed to making a donation to consult his tax man. Also, we would welcome the loan or gift of a half dozen Indian rugs. While the Yosemite tribes were not weavers, we will have one long stone wall in our new quarters on which rugs would make handsome hangings.



**WHAT NEXT?** We understand an aggressive and enthusiastic fraternity is seeking ways to insure that the Yosemite Valley Rim may be used as a take-off point for "hang-gliding". Hang-gliding looks like a lot of fun and excitement and Glacier Point would probably be a dandy launch site.

It seems to us that there may be places nearly as good for the activity which are more isolated and not within an area of the character (and use) of the Valley. Rock climbers in their proliferation draw spectators and the climbers are very hard to spot. A man-carrying kite could cause all sorts of disturbances.

The National Park Service people here take in stride the business of rescuing visitors who have gotten themselves lost, injured, immobilized on a climb, and so on. Fortunately, many of the missions are routine. Sometimes they are perilous. There were many climbing rescues last summer which were fairly dramatic. All didn't end happily as on occasions lifeless, broken bodies were brought down.

There will continue to be car wrecks, bear bites, lost hikers and stranded rock climbers. The park people will go about their work expertly and unhesitatingly. So, if it should turn out that this new urge is a proper way for one to disport himself here, you may be sure that the rangers will find ways to help hung up hang-gliders.

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