Summer Jobs, 1971

Ames Forestry Club

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11,000 miles of Subalpine Fir?

By: DARVIN MARTENS

Unlike many summer jobs, I considered my summer job unique. I was hired by the Western Wood Products Association in cooperation with the Forest Products Laboratory of Madison, Wisconsin to reevaluate the mechanical strength properties of subalpine fir. (Abies lasiocarpa). Although I didn't directly perform the testing of the specimens for the strength properties, I did collect the test specimens.

The range of species included the states of: Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Direct random sampling was used with a sample size of N equal 35. This simply means that 35 different locations had to be sampled within the range of the species. From sample size of 35, 17 national forests were picked and 2 private lands.

Another load of Subalpine Fir.

After a week of orientation at the Forest Products Laboratory, Arnie Okkenon (laboratory technician) and I were flown to Salt Lake City, Utah to pick up our motor vehicle. Luckily, it was a 1971 International Travelall because the species grows between 7,000-11,500 feet, and much of the time, mountainous driving was involved along with washed-out roads, snow drifts, and fallen trees.

Our day began by notifying the district ranger or the private landowner as to what we intended to do. Usually, they would give us maps and photographs to assure us that we would get as near as possible to our designated area. Upon arriving at our destination, our sampling area included everything within 1 square mile (section). At times we could not find a single subalpine fir tree within this area, therefore, an alternate area was used. If possible, 20 trees were randomly selected. From the selected trees, one would be selected with probability of selection proportional to the tree volume. The five-foot bolts were, also, selected the same way up to a 9-inch diameter. The bolts were either rolled, pushed, or kicked out of the forest back to the Travelall. Much of the time, the bolts would weigh between 250-400 pounds and distances of 1-2 miles would separate the area from the vehicle. The bolts were then end painted, tagged, and shipped by motor freight to the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin.

Altogether, 11,000 miles were covered in 2½ months. I met many interesting people with many different views of what forestry and the Forest Service meant to them.

Canoe Patrol

By: LOUISE ODEGAARD

My second summer of work experience with the Forest Service landed me with the Halfway Ranger District, Boundary Waters Canoe Area, Superior National Forest. Testing out their new idea, I was the first half of an all woman portage crew (clean-up!). My teammate was a forestry major from Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

My big thrills all summer included: flying by seaplane (yes, canoe and all) into the areas; getting used to paddling 20-30 miles in a day and then sitting for two days while it rained (we weren't allowed to go out on the lakes when it rained); having a moose wander through our camp one night; tackling a mile-and-a-half portage; seeing a big black bear swim across a lake towards our camp; shooting my first rapids as a stern-man and then shooting fifteen more in a row; getting used to seeing naked canoeists; all the while cleaning campsites and repairing signs. Unfortunately, I hurt my shoulder on a portage and retired after one month.

The rest of my summer, spent at a camp, wasn't half as eventful. Of course then, the Forest Service always does try to provide you with as much excitement as possible.
Kaunis Tyttoa, Paljon Ollutta, ja Hyvaa Sauna
By: DOUG KUEHN

KAUNIS TYTTOA, PALJAN OLLUTTA
Kaunis Tyttoa, paljon ollutta, ja hyvaa sauna
Pretty girls, lots of beer and the good old sauna

Bruce Senti and Doug Kuehn took a sixth month sojourn to Suomi-Finland to enjoy the land of the Midnight Sun, learn a little Finnish, partake in some of the Finnish Customs and work for Finland’s largest Pulp and Paper Company — Enso-Gutzeit Osakeyhtio.

Our first home was in the Virkailijakerho in Imatra, the company’s Clubhouse complete with our own sauna, bar, library, color TV, ping-pong, billiards, polo, guest rooms, our own maids and dining hall. We were given free room and board plus a monthly wage.

Towing logs down the coast of Finland

The first month we rode our bikes 3 miles every morning at 6 a.m. to the plant nursery, which produced 21 million seedlings per year. We worked transplanting seedlings and doing experiments with insecticides, herbicides, fertilizers and poisons. We learned early in our stay that every place we went we were going to have at least 3 cups of coffee, our host’s best rolls, cake or pastry, be asked the History of the United States; about our hippies, the drug problem, the Viet Nam War and Spiro Agnew, and if the meeting involved foresters, we would discuss first forestry matters, then drinking and women. At first many people were shy to speak English, but after 10 minutes we couldn’t get them to stop. We started out the season in fine fashion with a big sauna party the first week-end and from that time on we knew that Finnish girls liked foreign men.

One of our many Saunas

The Finn’s invited us along to every outing they went on so we partook in trapshooting, hunting for grouse and hiirvi (elk or moose), many volleyball games, flying in gliders, boating, dancing and on occasion, drinking. We never did get too good at the polka, waltz, or tango, but we liked the idea of girls asking boys for dates.

The Finns had 2 main TV shows in English, “Peyton Place” and Roadrunner cartoons. “Peyton Place” was on Wednesday night which meant that you might as well go out with the boys that night as all the women in Finland were catching up on the gossip.

Some typical Finnish meals were: Breakfast (in town) - coffee or tea, hard boiled egg, tomatoes and cucumbers with cold cut sandwiches, toast and marmalade; (in logging camps) - coffee, stewed prunes, potato and meatball stew, cucumbers and tomatoes, sour milk. Lunch - Fresh bread, milk or sour milk, beer, cold fish, blood pancakes, liver and onions.

We moved around to various towns in Finland and visited mills, cruised timber, thinned stands, planted learned different silviculture techniques and the problems facing the forestry profession in Finland.

Bruce and I enjoyed close to 100 saunas, our warmest was right at 300 degrees F. We conquered the language barrier at least to the point of limited conversations, as we spent many days with people who spoke no English.

We enjoyed the Midsummer Celebration when all of Finland goes drinking and dancing until the wee hours. In many instances we were the first “Yankees” the people had met, which meant they would go out of their way for us. We loved the reindeer meat, whortleberries, blueberries, cloudberries, brambleberries, mushrooms and took our time.
drinking sour milk, koskenkorva and vodka, and eating blood pancakes, pickeled seal and raw fish. Vegetables (corn, potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers), yogurt, fried fish, whortleberry pudding. Supper - cold cuts, cheese, cucumbers and tomatoes, bread butter beefstew, pancakes and strawberries, occasionally ice cream. The Finns had very good dairy products and pastries.

In addition to working in Finland we took a trip to Sweden, Norway and Lapland.

One of our enjoyable memories was hauling 3000 bundles of logs (18 cubic meters-bundle) a couple of hundred miles by tug boat. The boat, Enso, had its own sauna, cook and the Captain even spoke English.

Before leaving for home we spent a month in Helsinki where we visited the National Forestry Board, State Forestry Board, Forest Research Institute, Forestry Department of University of Finland, and the Finnish Foundation for Tree Breeding.

After Bruce went back to the states I took a trip to Russia, then rode one of Enso's boats, Finnhansa, down to Germany. I spent a week with former ISU foresters, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Noble, at Stuttgart, Germany.

The Forestry-Outdoor Recreation Resources Club's first international student exchange is being planned for this year.

A Summer at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Ill.

By: MICHAEL BARRY

The Forest Preserve District (FPD) is an urban forest and recreational area made up of 63,000 acres of land. The land is broken up into small acreages that form a green belt around the city of Chicago.

As a student forester with the FPD, the main task was to conduct 100 per cent cruises of the land for Dutch Elm and Oak Wilt diseased trees. Since these signs of these diseases do not show until mid June the student forester works in the main offices of the FPD and on the regular work crews. On the work crews the student is given the chance to participate in technical forestry such as tree cutting, roadside clearing and assisting in general nursery work. The job at the FPD gives the student forester a first hand look at the workings of urban forestry. The job as a student forester at the FPD is indeed interesting, fun and very informative.

Marking Memories

By: FRAN ECK

The air was brisk as the sun climbed to the top of Rattlesnake Mountain. It was 8 a.m. and I was coaxing vehicle 1925 to fire-up for another daily episode on the Spearfish District of the Black Hills National Forest. The daily drive up Spearfish Canyon to Roughlock Falls and Little Spearfish Canyon, followed by a 4-wheel-drive tug up Dry Gulch, was a sojourn that had a different mood every day. The rugged and majestic limestone canyons, covered by mature ponderosa pine, were steeped in western history — this was the land made famous by Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, Preacher Smith and Potato Creek Johnny.

The job was not a sightseeing trip, however. The first few weeks saw our timber crew thinning Aspen and pine. For the bulk of the summer we marked pine on two large timber sales. Each of us was expected to mark 1200 trees per day. A task which became second-nature later in the summer. As the latter part of July rolled around, fires started to pop up, and we were often shuffled between fighting fires and marking.

The ride home at night was very often more somber than the one eight hours earlier. Our paint-spotted hard hats bounced on the floor of the cab, the paint guns and fire tools clanked in the bed of the pickup, and the humming of the tires made up our evening music. Inside the cab, one of the guys finished off the last of his lunch while the others snoozed amidst the rank odor of tired, sweaty feet. A grinding halt at the work center in Spearfish, a quick stop at the Arrowhead, and thus the conclusion of another episode.

Managing the Bighorn

By: SAM CHARLES

Last summer I worked for the USFS Division of Timber Management in the Bighorn National Forest, Wyoming. The job was gathering data for timber volume estimates and for an overall management plan of the Bighorns. They gave my partner and me a folder of photos, a back pack full of goodies (angle gauge, flogging, steel tapes etc.) and a jeep, and then they told us to come back when the job was done. The job, involving much hiking and camping, was a lot of fun. We received GS-4 wages, $6 per diem and free room. It was an extremely rewarding summer.
**A BLM First**  
*By: Tom Dull*

I worked from June 7, 1971 to September 30, 1971 as assistant station manager at the Big Delta Fire Guard Station, Delta Junction, Alaska. This BLM Station was headquarters of the Fortymile Resource Area. Between fires, another ISU student and I worked up a wildlife resource analysis for the eventual Unit Resource Analysis book. I also had design privileges in the BLM campground. I set up the first nature identification system in any BLM-owned recreation area, including all the local tree and shrub species, plus some blurbs on fish and wildlife for the bulletin boards.

September 30 to October 31. Took over campground as Recreation Technician. During this time, 6 of us including the Area Manager surveyed the Taylor Highway, Fortymile River area for future recreation areas, possible historical sites, etc. This was for withdrawal use before the land freeze came off so that BLM could control these sites.

Plans after graduation — go back to Alaska, stay with BLM.

Other summer experiences—2 seasons with BLM as fire dispatcher.

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**Gunnison Inventory**  
*By: Paul Egeland*

I did timber inventory work for the U.S. Forest Service on the Gunnison National Forest in Colorado. The 9,000-12,000 foot elevation caused this "Flatlander" to gasp for air during most of the summer. Yes, the air was thin and the nights were cold. Over 1/4 inch of ice formed in our washpans one night in the middle of July.

Skiing, elk and mule deer hunting, rainbow and brook trout fishing and wonderful Rocky Mountain views make the Gunnison National Forest a valuable recreational resource. Numerous mountain meadows known as parks together with the grass covered stream valleys have made ranching one of the oldest occupations in the Gunnison. Large areas are either owned or rented by local ranchers to graze their herds of Hereford cattle. Timber is not as significant on the Gunnison as on many National Forests due to the lack of local wood processing plants and the growing recreational demands. But the Gunnison does have commercial stands of Engelmann spruce, Lodgepole pine, Aspen and Intermountain Douglas fir.

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**Des Moines Forestry Dept.**  
*By: Paul D. Meilike*

Like most students enrolled in the Forestry Curriculum at Iowa State, I was looking forward to my summer job. However, by March the job applications coming to the Forestry Department were moderately scarce to come by. Being a native of Des Moines, I'd heard the city had a forestry department and I decided to look into it. I soon discovered that Mr. Ray Bair was the man in charge of a band of about 25 expertise tree men that cured all of Des Moines’ problems from Dutch Elm disease to Oak Wilt to log jams on the Des Moines River. After a quick interview with the city personnel director, I learned that the city budget usually allows about 5 college students to work for a 500 hour time allotment, which at a 40 hour work week, amounts to 12 weeks work.

After a modest amount of red tape and my unbeatable qualifications, as an Iowa State Forester, I was to start work at 7:30 a.m. the day after Memorial Day. Like any other well organized business, the first order on the agenda was to assign me a safety helmet and a crew foreman. Within the city forestry department, Mr. Ray Bair was in charge of 4 crews, each consisting of about 4 or 5 men and the foreman. Shortly I was introduced to Mr. Vernon "Andy" Anderson who was to be my foreman which I soon found was to be literally interpreted.
Before giving a run down on how I helped run the Des Moines Forestry Dept. single-handedly, let me give you a run down on my crew and their expert qualifications. “Andy” (the foreman) was truly a great guy. Besides coordinating our efficient little crew, his other duties included card game coordinator, chief pop salesman (It was understood crew policy that H₂O was forbidden), and the first one to talk to when you wrapped the department dump truck around a tree. Next was “Belgy” — who could outdrive, outdrag, or run off the road anything with his 330 cu. in., 5 speed dump truck. Second on the list was a climber by the name of Truman, who along with Bob Connelly could butcher any tree beyond recognition after only 5 minutes with their chainsaws. Third on the list was the crew hippie who went by the name of Dave, who along with his side-kick, “Coop” could pull over anything under a dbh of 80 in. before his boom truck winched itself off the ground. Trees were the crew’s specialty but sometimes we managed to help out the power company and Northwestern Bell with a few unwanted lines that stood in our way.

Throughout the summer we spent most of our time taking care of diseased trees, pruning trees for aesthetics, trimming damaged trees, and removing dead trees killed by Dutch Elm, etc. You’d think the city wouldn’t have that much to manage to keep 25 guys going but you’re wrong. Our crew alone spent most of its time just taking care of publicly owned trees in areas such as public parks, public golf courses, cemeteries and numerous street problems, all of which are within the city of Des Moines.

Each day’s work varied, but most of the time I was running a McCullough automatic 10-20 chain saw. Projects handed to the foreman took us to every corner of the city. One day we were cutting large cottonwoods along the Des Moines River while the next day were removing dead oaks and elms from Wave-land Golf Course. Not every project afforded us as easy as dropping a tree. Have you ever had to drop a 200 yard tree 30-40 inches in between a row of grave markers in a cemetery? Or perhaps drop a 40 inch Cottonwood on the bank of the Des Moines River when it leaned over the water at a 45 degree angle. These were some of the easier problems that could be taken care of with a 60’ hydraulic bucket truck or a small bulldozer with an unreal power winch.

No problem seemed too big but what we couldn’t cope with it some how. From the mini to the mighty it was a great experience and I gained some insight to what the problems of city forestry is all about. With a great bunch of guys to work with and an understanding foreman and supervisor I had a summer which I’d be proud to duplicate anytime.

**Spearfish Y.C.C. Camp**

By: ANNLEE YOUNG

The Youth Conservation Corps is a new program, established by an Act of Congress in 1970. The pilot program was held last year, during the summer. Y.C.C. camps were established at National Parks and National Forests. The program is for high school students from 15-18 years old. It has three main purposes: to accomplish needed conservation work, provide practical environmental work and gainful summer employment for high school youth.

Our camp was in Spearfish, South Dakota, at Black Hills State College. We were part of Spearfish District, Black Hills National Forest. We had 30 high school girls, all from the Black Hills area. They worked for eight weeks, earning $8.50 per day. They soon found out that we three crew leaders were GS-4’s and our supervisor was a GS-3. They figured out how much we made, and then weren’t too happy with their own wages, even though room and board for the weekdays in the dorm was already extract-ed.

We worked on a number of projects, with a fair variety: we planted 5000 deer browse (half Prunus Caragena arborescens and half Prunus americana); constructed two environmental trails, one at a burn and one at a campground; worked on campground maintenance and improvement; staffed a visitor information center; improved the habitat of three creeks; and piled slash in two areas.

We were required to provide two hours per day of environmental education for the girls. However, it usually didn’t take that long, since the only lesson plans we could get were for first graders. Naturally, these weren’t too popular with the girls. My crew was eight to ten of the girls. Our first project was the planting of those 5000 browse. We had three weeks to do it in. It took us eight days, so the other seven we spent at Timmon campground, putting in posts and barriers to keep cars off the grass. We had the help of one of the forestry aides on the district, who made the girls put the barriers and posts in a straight line. After digging out and resetting a few, they learned. They gave him trouble, too, when they had to eat dorm-food sack lunches and he ate his wife’s fried chicken, among other things.

The next three weeks were spent over in Bear-lodge District, which is in Wyoming. The whole time was spent in putting up fence and rocking it in to stabilize the banks of Beaver Creek. The girls didn’t particularly like this project. They compared it to making little rocks out of big rocks at Leaven-worth.
The next two weeks were spent in Ward Draw, cleaning out a creek where a tornado had gone through a couple of years back. The only waders the district had were sized for men in the district, which made them about eight sizes too large. The girls didn't seem to mind, though. It apparently made it seem more like a game of playing in the water. They did mind the mosquitoes, however. They insisted to me that mosquitoes were unheard of in the Black Hills, while we swatted.

That two weeks was the last. The last day, a sort of commencement ceremony was held, with Ken Scholz, the Forest Supervisor, presiding. The girls of Commencement were sized for men in the district, which the North Western had been conniving all summer to keep their hardhats, however. They insisted to me that mosquitoes were unheard of in the Black Hills, while we swatted.

By: STEPHANIE JOHNSON

Surprise on the Kekekabic Trail

From the Land of Sky Blue Waters and Naked Hippies, that is to say the Superior National Forest and more particularly the Gunflint Ranger District is where I gained my first summer job experience. I learned so much last summer that I'm returning to further broaden my horizons with job experience No. 2 in the Gunflint, this summer, too.

Getting down to business, I mean Forest Service Business, my official job was public relations in Visitor Information. Since this title had previously been usurped by males, my work was cut and dry; I simply had to prove to my male peers the value of women in the Forest Service. The Gunflint District hadn't heard of Women's Lib, yet, can you imagine? I tell you, it was cut and dry.

When I wasn't giving slide programs and films to the home-people of Grand Marais and the tourists—who were either spending their leisure time in the BWCA or Canada — I worked with two Recreation Foresters. Which meant I didn't have to pretend to do office work when there wasn't any to do. This is where the Land of the Sky Blue Waters and the

Naked Hippies pop into focus. In their respective order, Lake Saganaga - the northern boundary waters between the U.S. and Canada — is actually where Hamms spot their commercials. During the summer months the Forest Service canvass these waters for tourists, camping on the islands and bordering U.S. shores, to enforce the new regulations of no bottles and cans in the BWCA.

Then there was the excursion on the Kekekabic Trail. The BWCA is accessible only by water or on foot. After a mile on the Kek path you officially enter the Boundary Waters Area. My immediate boss (male peer) and I were packing in nails, bolts, etc., to a crew doing treadwork on the trail. We found our crew all right — and 6 more naked bodies — camped next to them. To put things practically and simply there was nothing we could do about the situation. It was one of those unsurmountable obstacles or dilemmas. We were told that other districts were having similar problems and as yet the Forest Service hadn't materialized policy regulations against communes on federal land. That's that.

Grand Marais has the largest harbor and water break on the Superior West Side. You may have heard that as of this summer, Consolidated Paper, Inc., from Wisconsin, will no longer be transporting pulpwood from Grand Marais to Northern Wisconsin, via Lake Superior. Because of the northern location, increasing costs and time, and decreasing quality of pulp due to passage on Superior's water, pulp will be loaded in box cars and shipped south.

The Gunflint Ranger District was not only a job experience but as I pointed out earlier — a living experience — some good, some bad. But that's life.

By: WARREN FILBERT

Foreign Legion

The cultural center of the universe and garden spot of the Rockies, Garden Valley, Idaho, was my home during the summer of 1971. Garden Valley, located fifty miles north of Boise, is the headquarters of the largest district of the Boise National Forest.

The Garden Valley district has about thirty range and forest fires per summer, but due to a well trained and well organized fire suppression crew and staff, damage to the valuable resources of the district seldom becomes great. I was employed as a member of the District 12 man fire suppression crew. Our crew was divided into two smaller crews with different work weeks — the foreign legion (composed of all non-residents) and the elite local yokels. Our entire crew lived in a bunkhouse at the
When not concerned with actual fire suppression, the fire crew was busied with chores of fence building, pole peeling, house painting and other tasks befitting of sibling foresters. I was also fortunate enough to be given crash courses in timber sales administration, recreation, patrol, and balloon logging.

The highlight of the summer came in late July in the form of a six day junket to Southern Arizona. Our whole crew was flown there to help suppress a rash of fires. Upon arriving in Tucson, we found we were not needed immediately so were put on standby—sitting beside a swimming pool and relaxing in air conditioned comfort. After six days we flew home, relaxed and tanned but disgusted at not even having seen smoke.

Glenn Johnson joined our crew in early August, arriving too late for August and having to leave too early to get in on an early September fire bust. The only fire duty we were able to show him was a burning wrecked car on his first day of work. However, we were able to give him other valuable experience in the fields of litter patrol, log peeling, wildlife photography and just plain loafing.

To sum it all up, I must say that my summer on the Boise was truly a memorable one. What more could one want than living and working with wonderful people in a beautiful environment and gaining valuable practical experience in a profession that he hopes to one day be a part of?

Bob White State Park

By: Timothy C. Glower

I am in the Outdoor Recreation curriculum, and my summer work experience was directly associated with my education. For 3 months in the summer of 1970, and 3 months in the summer of 1971, I was sole manager of Bob White State Park in southern Iowa. The park is located in Wayne County one mile west of Allerton and contains a 115 acre lake within its 380 acre limits. My family and I lived at the park in a trailer provided by the Iowa Conservation Commission.

The experiences I gained while managing the park covered a wide range of park management subjects and were invaluable to me in the continuation of my education. Aside from the confidence I gained in myself and my abilities to handle a wide range of practical job situations was my experience with people. I hired Youth Corps help both summers and gained experience in employee management. I dealt with the townspeople in the procurement of supplies and dealt with campers and other park users in an increasingly professional way. I also obtained experience in law enforcement and violator prosecution.

Recreation use at the park consisted of boating, canoeing, sailing, fishing, picnicking, camping, hiking and swimming. There was a good deal of local day-use with many Des Moines area campers converging with the local users on weekends.

The park duties I performed included: mowing, garbage removal, building repair, painting, clearing new lands and trails, tree trimming and removal, water plant operation (lake water), equipment maintenance and operation, collection of camp fees, records of park attendance and operation and monthly operation and financial reports. I also assisted in fish population surveys with the state biologists, and tested a new latrine pit deodorizer under park use conditions.

Working for the Iowa Conservation Commission gave me an insight into the organization and policies of a large governmental unit where I hope to be employed upon graduation. I was given a free hand in park development and administration for which I am very grateful. The Commission is to be commended for their interest in student learning.

Dirt Forester

By: MICHAEL C. BONDI

My 1971 summer job was a Soil Study Project for the Iowa Conservation Commission at the State Forest Nursery in Ames, Iowa. The purpose of the project was to provide some basic soil data related to the growth of trees, in an attempt to aid in the management of the Nursery. Prior to last summer, no soil data had ever been collected.

Work began with a mapping of the various nursery blocks to be considered in the survey. For each block mapped, soil series boundaries and contours were included. Next, a sampling system was designed. The sampling design was stratified random. Sample points were then located on the block maps and given code numbers with respect to block number, section number, bed and irrigation riser number.

Soil sampling was the following step. The samples surface soil samples, collected, bagged and labeled. From the nursery, the samples were taken to the Forestry Department Greenhouse on the ISU campus. Tests were performed on the soil samples to determine pH, texture, and moisture availability. The data was collected, and recorded on the block maps referred to earlier.
The results produced by the pH analysis and textural determination offer excellent potential for improved nursery management. The pH data corrected some immediate mistakes in proposed seed species to be sown for the following year. For instance, prior to last year, all species were sown in a, more or less, random order throughout the nursery. It was found that black walnut was being sown in soils with a pH of about 5, whereas Scotch pine soil pH was about 7. Similar discrepancies existed with the textural data.

In conclusion, the need for basic soil data seems necessary. If production in the nursery, as well as on general forest land, is to be maximized from the existing resources, we will have to intensify our present management. Soil analysis data is apparently suited for a beginning solution to this future problem.

Washington Wilderness Ranger
(D.C., That Is)

By: KARIN VAN ZANTE

When someone mentions a Park Ranger, people generally think of a man dressed in a green uniform and a Smokey-the-Bear hat giving talks in Yellowstone National Park. For the past two summers I was a Park Ranger, a Park Naturalist to be exact, but my park was not out west. My park was in the southeast portion of Washington, D.C. No, I didn’t give talks at the Washington Monument, I wasn’t even downtown. My job was presenting nature walks and talks to the inner city children of the district.

There were four of us assigned to the southeast portion of the city. We had our own headquarters and even our own menagerie of animals to show the children. We worked with skunks (de-scented of course), opossums, a raccoon, a gray squirrel, a fawn, a mole, an owl, quails, turtles, and snakes. This last summer I was the snake lady.

Many things happened during these last two summers. There was the skunk with allergies and the taming of the squirrel; there was the bottle feeding of the fawn and raccoon and the injured opossum; there were the turtle races and the liberation of the mole. These memories are good, but there were more—memories that dealt with people.

The National Park Service (NPS) is recognizing the fact that within a few years a majority of the United States population will be living in metropolitan areas. Many of these people will never see a western park, and yet these will be the people deciding the future of our National Parks and Forests. These are the people who need to become acquainted with and appreciate nature.

To accomplish this task the NPS is adopting a new philosophy. The NPS is trying to bring the parks to the people instead of making the people go to the parks. This was my job — I brought a part of nature to the recreation centers and small parks in the southeast portion of Washington, D.C.

The children I talked to were culturally deprived Negroes. They lived near fairly nice wooded parks but most of them had never traveled outside the district. Often the only animals they saw were dogs and cats, the only wild animals were mice, rats and a few birds. I helped change that.

I told the children about my snakes, snakes that were actually native to the area. I explained how they ate and how they moved. I explained to them that the only reason a snake would ever bite a person was to defend itself, the same way a person would if he was being picked on by someone bigger. Together we discovered that snakes were really people’s friends because they ate rats and nobody likes rats. The children were even able to touch the snakes.

Granted, there was a lot of dramatization and I don’t know how much the children remembered (to this day some of them are probably still telling their friends how they touched a tamed ‘rattlesnake’), but I can’t help believing some good was done.

It’s something to remember while you study or teach about nature, nature is important, but people still hold the key. Only with an informed public (and that includes city people) will we be able to maintain America’s heritage of abundant natural resources.