

Perspectives on the History of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
by Bob Gatten
(President, 1994-1996)

During the decades in which I have been a member of the Foundation, I have witnessed a tremendous amount of change in the size and scope of the Foundation and in public awareness of the story of the Expedition and the need to preserve the Trail. The commemoration of the Bicentennial brought the Lewis and Clark story to millions of people who now have a better understanding of their heritage. I am proud to have been a part of the organization during this exciting era.

I joined the Foundation in 1983 after learning of its existence while reading Roy Appleman's National Park Service book (*Lewis and Clark, Historic Places Associated with their Transcontinental Exploration (1804-06)*, 1975). My first committee work was on the Bicentennial Committee, as noted below. The first annual meeting I attended was the 1989 meeting in Bozeman, where I presented an oral report to the group on the work of the Bicentennial Committee. I was elected to the Board in 1991, and moved into the officer track, serving as Second Vice President (1992-1993), First Vice President/President-Elect (1993-1994), President (1994-1996), and Immediate Past President (1996-1997). I was the second person to serve two years as President, the first being Bob Doerk.

My first encounter with the Trail and members of the Foundation was in 1986 when I traveled the Trail by car from the mouth of the Marias River to the Washington and Oregon coast. I was deeply impressed with the geography and topography, and greatly enjoyed being, in some cases, in the exact spot where the Expedition walked or camped. During that trip, I called met Bob Doerk and Bob Bivens (in Great Falls), Barb Kubik (at Sacajawea State Park), Bob and Ruth Lange (in Portland), Ralph and Jackie Rudeen, Roy Craft, and Frenchy and Fritz Chuinard (in Longview), among others. I was amazed at the dedication and enthusiasm they showed, and their kindness in meeting with me (and, in the case of Bob Bivens, spending an entire day taking me to Lewis and Clark sites around Great Falls) was a very great inspiration to me, and surely led me to my future work for the Foundation.

Prior to my term as President, all the work of running the Foundation was done by members, Board members, and officers, working on a voluntary basis with no compensation. There were many committees that worked independently during the year and reported to the Board and members at the annual meeting. The Board met only once a year, at the annual meeting, and significant decisions were made by the Board only at that meeting. Most communication was by post, as communication by email was then at a very early stage. Thus, the Foundation work was done slowly, in comparison with today when we have faster communication.

During my term as President, I led the movement to hire the Foundation's first Executive Director, a move that was opposed by some in the Foundation because they thought the character of the Foundation would be changed for the worse by the hiring of executive staff. The amount of money available for the salary of the Foundation's first employee (other than the editor of *WPO*, who was considered an independent contractor) was very small. The Board was very concerned that we not outstrip our resources by creating and funding the position of Executive

Director, so the position began as a half-time one, with the understanding that the person would carry out the Foundation's work in his or her own office or home, wherever that would be, regardless of the knowledge that we should really have a headquarters somewhere.

In order to strengthen the ties that already existed between the Foundation and the National Park Service, I wrote the Foundation's first application for a Challenge Cost Share Grant to the NPS, and those funds were awarded. The encouragement, financial support, and highly-cooperative working arrangement we have had with the NPS has been a source of immense satisfaction for me and many others; the feeling that we are all part of a team working to preserve the Trail and promote public understanding of the Expedition is most gratifying.

Annual meetings, during my years on the Board and as President, tended to have fewer attendees than they did during the Bicentennial, and had very much the feel of a family reunion, with most attendees being long-time members who had been to many prior meetings. They welcomed first-time attendees, and that friendly atmosphere encouraged repeated attendance. The meetings were, until 1990, typically planned, organized, and led by the President of the Foundation, so that person had very great, dual responsibilities during his or her year in office. We thankfully had the good sense to realize that we should separate those duties, and allow the Chair of the Annual Meeting to concentrate on the planning and execution of the meeting while the President dealt with the leadership and administration of the Foundation.

During the late 1980s, Foundation members became aware that time was drawing near to begin planning the Bicentennial. On December 19, 1987, Foundation member Jerry Garrett wrote to Foundation President John Montague with the following words: "I would like to offer one item for consideration. The 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition is less than twenty years away. That is a long time, but I don't think it is any too late to develop a planning/long range committee that can look to that event." On December 30, President Montague responded to Jerry by asking that he consider being chairman of such a committee, and Jerry thus began the work of planning the Bicentennial by outlining the purpose, duties, makeup, goals, and potential projects for the committee. The minutes of the August 6, 1988 meeting of the Foundation's Board of Directors noted the early work of the committee. Thus began the planning for the Bicentennial.

On December 12, 1988, I wrote to Jerry to volunteer to serve on his committee, and for a while, we were the only members. Gradually others joined the group as it became apparent that planning for such a large commemoration would take a lot of time and thought. The Bicentennial Committee made a number of recommendations to the Board for action in planning the Bicentennial, but because the Board received and considered those recommendations only once a year at the annual meeting, the pace of progress was slow. We realized that we simply could not take the necessary action at the needed pace if decisions continued to be made only once a year. With the leadership of Harry Hubbard, the Bicentennial Committee received (reluctant and grudging) permission from the Foundation's Board of Directors to spin off a separate 501(c)3 corporation to plan the Bicentennial. Thus, in 1993, Harry Hubbard, Stu Knapp, and I incorporated the Bicentennial Council, later to be known as the National Council of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. We envisioned that the benefits of having a separate organization to plan the Bicentennial would include (a) being able to make plans and decisions at a more rapid

pace than if the Foundation were doing the planning and making decisions only once a year, (b) allowing the Foundation (with no staff at that time, and all work done by volunteers) to focus on trail stewardship, and promoting and preserving the history of the Expedition, and (c) bringing a wider range of people into the planning process (see below). Many people worked very hard to bring the Council's vision to fruition.

In 1993, the Foundation was composed almost entirely of people who joined because of their love for the Lewis and Clark story and the desire to have the Trail preserved for future generations. Most of the members were not professional historians and were self-recognized as "Lewis and Clark buffs." Harry Hubbard, Stu Knapp, and I knew that in order for the Bicentennial to be successful, we would need to have input from a wider range of people, including, first and foremost, American Indians from nations that Lewis and Clark encountered. We knew that their participation was vital, for two main reasons: (1) their perspective on Lewis and Clark had not been widely shared or even understood, and (2) we had just witnessed the disastrous quincentennial of the arrival of Columbus, which took place with little or no participation of American Indians, with the result that the "celebration" of the arrival of Columbus was a gigantic flop and a public relations nightmare. Early in the process we decided to refer to the Bicentennial as a "commemoration" rather than a "celebration" in order to make clear our understanding that not everyone thinks that the successful completion of the Expedition was a good thing. We put a major effort into contacting Indians from many tribes, and explaining why their participation in the planning was extremely important; those efforts paid off handsomely.

Harry Hubbard, Stu Knapp, and I also recognized that we would need to have the active participation and support of professionals from many walks of life who could help us plan what we hoped would be a major and successful series of events over three and a half years. We recruited historians and the directors of historical societies from several states, among many others. From the very beginning of the Council, it was our conviction that a successful Bicentennial observance should be nationwide in scope; involve participation by as many Indian tribes as possible; promote historical accuracy, multicultural representation, scholarship, and education; involve as many federal, state, and local agencies and organizations as possible; and promote stewardship of natural, historical, and cultural resources along the Trail.

I am grateful to Dan Jordan, then President of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, for his sound advice and help over the years leading up to the Bicentennial and his cooperation in planning and carrying out the initial Signature Event in Charlottesville in January of 2003. Harry Hubbard and I conferred with Dan on a number of occasions, and his wisdom about what to do and what not to do was of much benefit to us in planning.

At the first meeting of the Board of Directors of the Council on July 29, 1994, Harry Hubbard read a statement made by John W. Warner on the day he was sworn in as the Administrator of the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission. Warner had said: "The success of the Bicentennial will be judged by the number of participants, not spectators," and it was Harry's vision that millions of Americans would participate in the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, not just observe it. I believe that Harry's vision was fulfilled.

One of the highlights of my term of office was presiding at the 1995 annual meeting in Charlottesville, VA. Two and a half years before, on January 19, 1993, I had hosted a luncheon meeting in Charlottesville for Foundation members in the area. The purpose of the meeting was to stimulate them to establish a local chapter of the Foundation, and thus the Home Front Chapter was born. At that meeting I also expressed the Foundation's hope that they would host an annual meeting, as such events east of the Mississippi were rare and we had never met in Charlottesville. The 1995 meeting was the result. Jane Henley was present at the initial meeting that I hosted in January of 1993, and it was her leadership that was the spark that led to the formation of the Home Front Chapter and the hosting of the 1995 meeting; I remain extremely grateful for her leadership then and during her subsequent term on the Board and as President.

The 1995 meeting included a day trip from Charlottesville to Caroline County, where I was privileged to unveil a Virginia Historic Highway Marker near the location of William Clark's birthplace on the 225th anniversary of his birth. I had conducted research over a number of years into the location of Clark land in that area, and was happy that my work resulted in approval by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to establish that marker near the Clark land in Chilesburg, VA and a second marker about the Clark family on US Highway 1 in Ladysmith, VA.

In 1999, I served as the organizing president of the Carolina Chapter, and continued in that role for a couple of years. In subsequent years, I have served as chair of the Trail Stewardship Grants Committee (2008, 2011, 2012) and Awards Committee (2013).

In 2011, I decided that action was needed in order to preserve the Foundation's history in an on-line file. Thus, I started the Foundation History project, and compiled the following files that are updated periodically and are available on the Foundation's website:

- Annual Registration Reports
- Essays, Articles, and Letters
- Histories of Foundation Chapters
- Lists of Officers, Directors, Editors, Executive Directors, Annual Meetings, and Awards
- Obituaries of Officers and Directors
- Profiles of Officers, Directors, and Executive Directors

I have prepared these recollections without the benefit of referral to my archives of Lewis and Clark papers dealing with the Foundation and with the Council; several years ago, I donated them to the Foundation's archives. I hope others will make similar donations, so that important papers will be available to researchers in a single place.

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