

Vermillion, SD
September 14, 2007

Mr. Ron Laycock,
C/O Lewis And Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 3434,
Great Falls, MT. 59403

Dear Ron,

First of all, my compliments to you and the group seeking to develop and preserve the history of the LCTHF, Inc., hereinafter referred to simply as the Foundation. This is a truly worthy project. Such recollections as I have from my involvement with the Foundation will pretty much follow the outline (more or less!) you sent with your letter of July 12, 2007. While much of the next paragraph or so is of little relevance to the Foundation's history, it may be of some value in noting how I came to be involved administratively with the Foundation.

I have been a member of the Foundation since 1986 or 1987. My first knowledge of the organization came from a reading of Jim Large's article about the Foundation which appeared on the front page of the Wall Street Journal sometime in the late 1970s. In 1991 I saw a notice, from Bob Doerk, in WPO asking for volunteers to do some work for the Foundation in South Dakota. By way of reply I was startled to receive a letter and box of forms from Bob Doerk, then the head of a Foundation committee charged with inventorying the L&C Trail. The letter said I was in charge of an inventory of the L&C Trail in South Dakota. I did the work requested. I was elected to the Foundation's board of Directors at the Foundation's 1993 annual meeting, held at Collinsville, IL. I did not attend that meeting because of the very severe flood then underway on the Missouri. After having "gone through the chairs", I was elected president at the Foundation's 1997 annual meeting held at the Skamania Lodge, Stevenson, WA, succeeding Clyde "Syd" Huggins. David Borlaug was chosen as president-elect, with Cynthia Orlando as vice-president. Jerry Garrett was the treasurer and Barb Kubik was secretary.

Further active involvement in Foundation affairs came about in 1995 through the efforts of the late Dr. V. Strode Hinds, a past-president of the Foundation. He was contacted by Ken Burns who was then engaged in producing the PBS documentary about the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Ken Burns was seeking areas along the Missouri River still in a close-to-natural state and thus suitable for photographing for inclusion in his documentary. I am a "river rat", and the Missouri in my area is still relatively wild, and I spend much of my free time on and along the river. Burns' photographers visited the local Missouri twice, spending about ten days in the area. During that time over 6,000 feet of film was shot of the river from my boat. A Lewis and Clark-style camp was set up on the river by re-enactors from the Council Bluffs, IA-Omaha, NE area. They camped at a pristine site at the mouth of Bow Creek, near the location noted in the Journals. Dayton Duncan accompanied the photographers when the camp was being photographed. Using two boats, my son and I ferried the re-enactors to the site. (We are listed among the

“Boatmen” in the documentary “credits”.) My involvement in this enterprise led to a fine relationship with Dr. Hinds and my agreement to continue to serve on the Foundation’s board. He was a truly a superb mentor.

Prior to the time I became president of the Foundation, Jay Vogt, Pierre, SD, was hired as a part-time executive director. As I recall it, Bob Gatten was then the president. Jay worked for the State Of South Dakota. He was then involved with cultural preservation. With permission from his superior, Jay served the Foundation as a part-time ED for a year or more. I presume he has been contacted concerning his knowledge of Foundation affairs during his time as the ED. When William Janklow was again elected governor after having served two terms and “sitting out” for a few years, he ended Jay’s service by withdrawing the permission for Jay to serve as ED.

As the Lewis And Clark Bicentennial was drawing closer, it became obvious that the Foundation was going to need a full-time ED if it were to cope with the activity which would inevitably be generated by the Bicentennial. Funding enabling the Foundation to hire an ED was provided by the National Park Service (NPS). A nationwide search for an ED was conducted by an ad hoc committee the Foundation board of directors created. The committee’s first choice was Sammy Meadows, but she declined the offer. (I believe the salary offered was too little.) Michelle Bussard (Michelle) was the second choice. Syd Huggins was by then the Foundation’s president. He made an offer to Michelle, offering her a salary of, if my memory be correct, something in the nature of \$30,000.00. She accepted, or so it seemed.

The Bicentennial Council, established by the Foundation, held a meeting at Arbor Lodge, Nebraska City, NE, in 1997. Strode and Bev Hinds attended that meeting, as did I in my capacity as the Foundation’s President-Elect. Michelle also attended, and made it clear that she wanted more money. She asked me if the Foundation had the money to pay her more. I told her that such was not the case, and the fact that the Foundation was so-named did not mean that it had money. (Designation of the Lewis and Clark group as a “Foundation” has caused some problems over the years. I do not favor changing it at this date as the name-recognition developed over the years likely outweighs the occasional inconvenience the name engenders.) I never understood why Michelle accepted the offer if the salary were inadequate. As the Foundation’s headquarters at Great Falls, it was assumed and expected that whoever was chosen as ED would live there. Michelle soon made it clear that she did not want to move to Great Falls and that Vancouver, WA, was her preference. At that time, the Bicentennial Council was being led (??) or promoted by the tourism people from Washington and Oregon. I assume that is why the west coast was being touted as a possible location from which the ED would operate. The details of Michelle’s employment was not settled at the Nebraska City meeting.

Sometime between the Nebraska City meeting and the Foundation’s annual meeting, at Stevenson, WA, in 1997, Syd wrote Michelle a letter in which he minced no words about the propriety of her acceptance of the offer he had made her and her subsequent insistence on being paid more than was offered. That letter did not end the developing

relationship with Michelle, and she attended the annual meeting at the Skamania Lodge, in Stevenson.

At an ad hoc evening meeting between the Foundation's board and the Bicentennial Council board, the principal issue was Michelle's employment and salary. I do not recall who chaired that meeting, but it was Council member. The chair ruled that Michelle did not have to leave the room while her employment was discussed. After much discussion, the Council agreed to contribute enough money to raise Michelle's salary to around \$39,000.00. The Foundation board's vote to agree to this was not unanimous. (In retrospect, the vote did not well serve the cause of Lewis and Clark.) In any event, Michelle did move to the Vancouver area and eventually did begin to serve as the Foundation's ED. Finding office space, acquiring the necessary office equipment and "learning the ropes" required time. One of her children was injured, and this further delayed the effort to become an effective force in Foundation affairs.

It soon became apparent that the skills she claimed to possess when hired were lacking. She complained that the board did not give her any directions, She always seemed to be in need of more funding, and within weeks of her move to Vancouver she sought more money from the NPS via Dick Williams. Dick's contributions depended upon his budget, of course, and she got no more money.. She apparently was confused about the difference between the Foundation and the Council, a fact which was highlighted in the dispute over who was to host an annual meeting originally scheduled for Fort Leavenworth. KS. (More of that later.) In short, her value to the Foundation was minimal. And the Foundation still had no employee in the headquarters at Great Falls.

At the Foundation's 1995 annual meeting, Charlottesville, VA, Fort Leavenworth, KS, made a bid to host the Foundation's 1999 annual meeting. Matt Nowak, a Foundation member from Leavenworth and a member of the National Guard, spoke for Fort Leavenworth. He was joined in the "pitch" by Colonel Stan Evans, of Fort Leavenworth. The basic reasons for seeking to have Fort Leavenworth chosen as the 1999 site were the military nature of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Fort's historic site on the Trail, a brand new spacious, well-equipped facility for handling large meetings and the availability of on-the-base housing on the Fort's grounds. After hearing the presentation, the Foundation's board accepted the bid. I was present at the Charlottesville meeting. As I recall it, there was no mention whatsoever of the City of Leavenworth being the host.

Syd became the Foundation's president at the Foundation's meeting Sioux City in 1996. At some point he noted that little or nothing was being done by Fort Leavenworth in the way of preparing to host the 1999 annual meeting. He corresponded with officials at the Fort and eventually was advised that it was the City Of Leavenworth, not Fort Leavenworth, which would host the 1999 meeting. Syd rightly objected, but the Fort was adamant. The city did name someone to deal with the Foundation, but the city showed little real interest in the matter. As I recall it, no one from the City of Leavenworth attended the 1997 meeting at Stevenson.

Early in my term the issue of whom was to host the 1999 meeting became a matter of increasing concern. Efforts to get the Fort to honor its 1995 commitment were fruitless. The city of Leavenworth at some point had given the Foundation its thoughts as to how it would handle our annual meeting, together with a list of possible housing facilities. A renovated ATSF railroad depot was to be used for the meetings, and area motels, including some from nearby communities, as I recall it, were to house the attendees. In October, 1997, the Bicentennial Council held a meeting at Fort Leavenworth. Several of us from the Foundation were present. We did look at the renovated depot and talk to a city official about the needs of our group. It was obvious that there was no way the city could do a decent job of hosting the Foundation's annual meeting.

After the Foundation people reviewed of the facilities and discussed the matter, I spoke with Colonel Dessert, then the Post Commander, telling him that we had inspected the city's facilities, etc and found them inadequate. I asked the colonel to reconsider the refusal to honor the Fort's commitment. He refused, and I told him that the Foundation would likely seek another site for the 1999 meeting. I explained to him the nature of our meetings and the needs of our members. Our conversation was amicable. Later, I sent Colonel Dessert a formal letter asking him to honor to the fort's commitment. He advised me by letter that the Fort would not do so. I then wrote him stating Fort Leavenworth would no longer be considered as a site, and that the city's facilities were so limited we would not meet there. As I recall it, we never heard anything from the City Of Leavenworth. We never had any response to my letter *withdrawing our offer*.

Here I interject a personal opinion. In reviewing the Fort Leavenworth matter, I think that either the city pressured the fort to refuse to host the meeting so that the city could reap the benefit of hosting such a meeting. Or, it may be that those who sought Fort Leavenworth as a site lacked the authority to do so. It is truly unfortunate that this happened as the Lewis and Clark Expedition was a U.S. Army project and the Army should have been more closely involved with the Foundation than was the case. (I was appalled and angered that at the final Signature Event at St. Louis those who sponsored the meeting gave no recognition to the Army in the program on the riverfront. Inexcusable! General Martin, head of the Corps Of Engineers Missouri River Division, was present at the riverfront program.)

Shortly after the offer to hold the 1999 Foundation meeting was withdrawn, I received an alarmed call from Matt Nowak at Fort Leavenworth. He said that a letter Fort Leavenworth's Colonel Stan Evans had written to me did not reflect the feeling of the Army about the Foundation. He emphasized and reemphasized the point. At that point, Matt's call was the first knowledge I had of any letter by Colonel Evans. When Matt called, I had just taken my mail out of my mailbox and still had the mail in hand. I scanned what I had in hand and found a thick, hand-addressed envelope from the colonel.

It contained a lengthy hand-written letter in which the outraged colonel castigated the Foundation for the withdrawal, terminated his membership and promised that he would work to have blacks ignore the Foundation. The letter confused the Foundation and the Council. It was indeed an angry letter. Copies had been sent to a large number of people, including his commanding general. (A relative of mine, now deceased, was a West Pointer and a colonel. I told him of the letter. His response was that the author would never become a general.)

I did not respond to the colonel's letter. I did write members of the Foundation's board, sending a copy of the colonel's letter to every board member. I hand-wrote a letter to the board, and sent it to Michelle to make typed copies and send to the board. She tried to improve on my letter, garbled it, ----- and sent it out on Council stationery. I sent to the board a typed copy of the letter I had expected Michelle to send. (I never again entrusted her with any letter writing and used a friend at USD to type most correspondence.) Later, Jerry Garrett wrote a letter to Colonel Evans seeking to ameliorate his feelings toward the Foundation. I do not know if the colonel responded to Jerry's letter. I believe the colonel has since retired. (Fort Leavenworth's Colonel Stan Evans is not to be confused with the late Colonel Stan Evans, a leader in building the excellent Lewis and Clark interpretive center at Sioux City.)

During the latter part of 1997 it became quite apparent that the Foundation was deriving little of what had been expected of the new ED. As a result, a meeting of the Foundation's Executive Committee was held at Great Falls in January, 1998. (The weather was almost balmy.) Jane Weber generously provided fine facilities for the meeting. Dick Williams said enough additional federal funds were available to hire an ED for the Foundation alone. (Thanks, Dick!) It was agreed that Michelle would serve the Council as its full-time ED, and a search committee was set up to find a full-time ED for the Foundation. In due course Sammy Meadows was hired (she had declined the offer Michelle accepted.) and soon arrived in Great Falls, operating out of space the Foundation leased from the U.S. Forest Service in its then brand new interpretive center on the banks of the Missouri. Finally, the Foundation had a full-time employee at its headquarters.

A full-time ED was a position new to the Foundation and it required time to secure the needed office equipment, familiarize herself with the Foundation, decide if additional help for the ED's office would be of benefit to the operation and deal with a myriad of other details. In my opinion, Sammy performed really well. Lack of funds in hand handicapped Sammy's operation. David Borlaug and Ludd Trozpek advanced funds to resolve the issue; later, the board reimbursed them.

One of the problems which arose out of hiring an ED was the adverse effect the hiring had on some of the many volunteers the Foundation has so long depended on for most any kind of tasks. I was somewhat taken aback by some who did not want, e.g., to serve on a committee or undertake some other task. Occasionally, the response to such requests was that since the Foundation was now paying for things to be done, there was no reason to volunteer. One or two people contacted were mildly hostile. Fortunately, there were

(and are) still volunteers in the ranks, but it took time to discover them. I know there still lingers some feeling of "let the paid people do it".

With the approach of the bicentennial and the planned celebration thereof, correspondence burgeoned and a lot of time was spent tending to that. Sammy took care of more and more routine (and some not so routine) matters. In an effort to keep board members well aware of what was happening with the Foundation, I made it a practice to send copies of every letter I wrote to every board member. While there may possibly have been some lapse in this policy, nearly everything written went to the other officers and the board. I do not know if this had been done in the past. Times change, and today such a policy may well be impractical. Still, the more informed board members are, the better they can do their work.

An unusual problem arose when Steven Ambrose made a gift of \$10,000.00 (or thereabouts) to the Foundation for WPO. The then editor thought the money was for him, personally. David Borlaug met with Mr. Ambrose and they speedily clarified the matter.

Concern existed about WPO's content and quality. The WPO advisory board recommended changes, and eventually a new editor was chosen and WPO continues to be a publication the Foundation can be proud of. A former WPO editor, Bob Saindon, agreed to edit the various articles published in WPO and select the best for publication. This process was time consuming, but eventually the task was completed. As I recall it, the Steven Ambrose donation was used for that project.

I have attended eleven or twelve of the Foundation's Annual Meetings. Most of those I have attended have been well worth attending. A couple have been mediocre. In my opinion, the meetings sponsored by local chapters have been markedly better than those put on by the Great Falls office. I am certainly casting no aspersions on the Great Falls staff. Operating from a distance and being unfamiliar with the people at a chosen site makes it much more difficult to develop a top-notch product. "Locals" know the L&C history of their area, are eager to acquaint others with their area and are "on the spot" at the site selected. The board made the decision as to where the meetings were to be held. Some aspects of the "headquarters-put-it-on" meetings have been very good. It is probably unfair to compare the "locally-sponsored" and the "headquarters-sponsored" meetings.

In many instances there was real competition for the site of the meeting. I believe this was beneficial as being chosen for a meeting spurred the applicants to develop the best possible programs, and it also got local Foundation members involved in the process of

developing the best possible programs. Then, too, it likely was good "PR" for the Foundation. Bev Hinds and Jane Henley did a lot of work in producing a handbook, or guide, for meeting applicants to use. I understand that the handbook is little used.

Prior to the hiring of Jay Vogt as a part-time ED there was little in the way of centralized direction for planning annual meetings. The board usually met but once a year, so putting on an annual meeting necessitated heavy reliance on local members (or chapters, if any).

My term as president came at a time when interest in Lewis and Clark was rapidly increasing since the bicentennial was only five years away. Long-time members had been working for some time to see that there be an appropriate commemoration. Their foresight, zeal, dedication and efforts to mark the bicentennial were recognized by the federal government when the National Park Service designated the Foundation as its official liaison with the general public in matters relating to Lewis and Clark. Public awareness of and interest in the expedition resulted in the growth of membership. Many of the new members not only wanted to learn more about Lewis and Clark, but really wanted to help "the cause" in any way they could. We were not well prepared for the degree of interest; it was a new experience and required responses never before considered by the Foundation. A superb volunteer had been acting as membership secretary on a part time basis for a modest stipend. The rise in membership required more than part-time help, and one of the first things the new ED sought was someone to help with the membership. Such a person was hired during Sammy's tour as ED.

Questions about the quality of WPO had arisen even before I became president, and dealing with that issue was one of the ongoing matters of concern during my tenure as president. As you know the matter was ultimately dealt with by hiring a full-time editor. I believe that maintaining WPO as a truly high quality publication is essential to having the Foundation continue as a leader in matters relating to L&C.

One of the most interesting events during my tenure as Foundation prexy was an invitation by the White House to attend a reception President Clinton was having for Ken Burns and those who had helped in the production of his L&C PBS documentary. While I was actively involved in helping with the production of the documentary. I am sure that the fact that I was then the Foundation's president was also a factor in receiving the invitation. It was a most enjoyable experience. David and Cindy were also invited and did attend. Attendance was at our own expense, of course, but well worth it. It was most heartening to see the Foundation recognized.

In retrospect, I believe the principal challenge I faced was in trying to operate during a transitional period. It is my understanding that in earlier days the presidency was usually awarded to a member who had long been active and effective in making the (mostly) all-volunteer organization work. A president pretty much ran the show, and the board went along with the presidents' decisions. (So I have been told by past presidents.) This modus operandi had worked well in a small, closely-knit group. The growing membership, increase in funding by the NPS, with the attendant need for an accounting, an increase in activities the Foundation was undertaking and a more involved board

dictated a more structured approach to the operation of the Foundation. In one or two instances some of the "old timers" were irked by the delays necessitated by new conditions, but they still readily gave me a lot of help. I owe them much!

Regrets? None! It was a rare privilege and a truly rewarding experience to have been elected to the office of president of the nation's premier Lewis and Clark organization. I met a variety of interesting people and made some treasured new friends.

Today's Foundation has more members and more paid employees than it did during my term as president. It has become involved in more trail-related activities, seeks to provide more services for members and is encountering financial concerns unknown to the "old" Foundation. It also suffers to some extent from the vices known to afflict bureaucracies. The face-to-face meetings of the board are far more numerous.

Jerry Garret's service as treasurer during my term was superb. He has the all-too-uncommon ability to simplify complicated matters. This was of genuinely great value to me and the board. I do not know if the board is furnished with a detailed financial report now. It should be!

The question of what advice may be given to the board is one I will not respond to herein. I will likely offer my opinions in a later communiqué.

If you would like more details about any of the matters I have touched upon, please let me know. Should I think of any significant events or issues not covered herein, I will send them along.

I should note that my term as president was about a month shorter than usual. The Foundation's 1998 annual meeting was held at Great Falls. The opening of the Forest Service's new Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center was scheduled for a few weeks before the Foundation normally has its annual meeting. The board voted to hold the Foundation meeting earlier to more or less coincide with the formal opening of the Forest Service's new facility.

All Best Wishes,



J.M. Peterson
Past President, LCTHF, Inc.
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