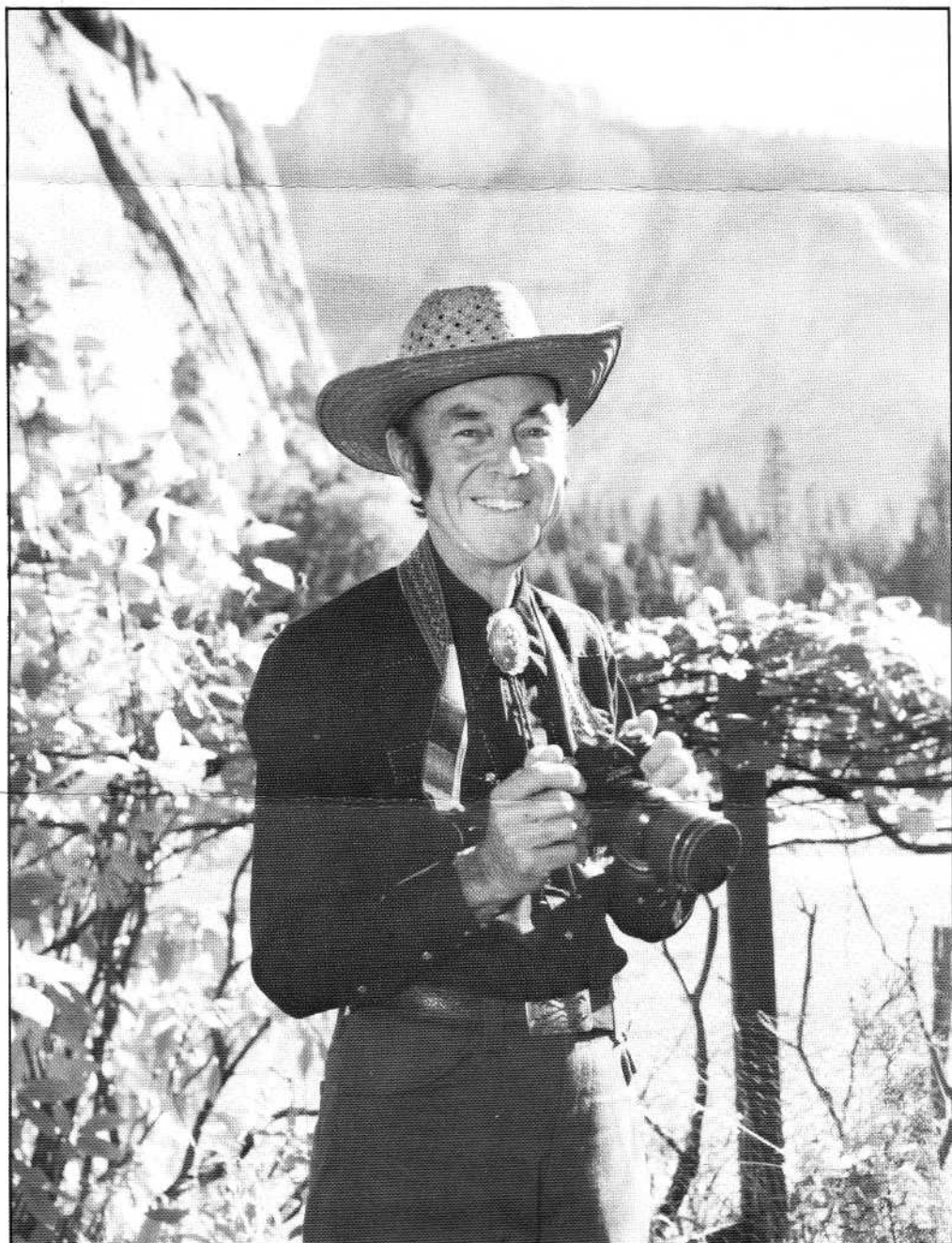


# YOSEMITE

NOVEMBER, 1980 VOLUME FORTY-SEVEN, NUMBER 10

*Published for members of the Yosemite Natural History Association*

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*Dana C. Morgenson, 1906-1980*

# DANA C. MORGENSON

## 1906 - 1980

Dana C. Morgenson, noted Yosemite photographer and naturalist, died at Olympic National Park on September 21. He was visiting there with his wife, Esther, following a trip to Alaska.

Dana had served on the YNHA Board of Trustees since 1946 and had been its Chairman since 1973.

Dana's career with the Yosemite Park and Curry Co. included a number of jobs in accounting, hotel reservations and hotel management. In all these assignments he was a competent and loyal employee.

But when he commenced his camera walks, he hit his stride — doing what he enjoyed most, and perhaps best, within clear view of the surroundings, photographing and sharing his feelings about them with his followers.

How many visitors went with Dana on his walks no one knows — many thousands, we suppose — the number isn't important. However, each one of them must have come away with a feeling of respect for Yosemite. For we think that among Dana's responses to the Park, reverence for its beauty, for its creation, and his insistence on its preservation may have been the strongest. These indeed are worth emulating.

A Dana Morgenson Memorial Fund has been established and YNHA was named as the administrator. A number of donations have been received: these have been deposited in a fund account. At this time, no decision has been reached how the money will be used, except that in some fashion the contributions made by Dana to Park visitors' enjoyment will be memorialized. Mrs. Morgenson and the YNHA Board of Trustees will decide upon the fund's use. Meanwhile, those wishing to participate may send their donation to YNHA.

Dana was a Yosemite institution. He left a stupendous legacy, a richness of experience few others have matched. His passing leaves a void that will be felt by many who shared that experience.

*The fine photo of Dana was made by Yosemite photographer, Brian Grogan.*

## **Some Observations on National Parks**

*by Alfred Runte*

### AUTHOR'S NOTE

Academicians are a curious lot; most write only for the eyes and approval of their peers, then wonder why the public neither understands nor appreciates their contributions to knowledge. In contrast, it was my good fortune this past summer to be invited to contribute to the *Yosemite Guide*, and while actually serving as a seasonal ranger naturalist for the National Park Service. Thus when Henry Berrey, editor of the *Guide* and editor for the Yosemite Natural History Association, asked permission to reprint my essays in the *Bulletin*, I was again delighted.

It has been said that authors are driven by the hope of pushing the world a little bit in their own directions. Indeed, if the following essays have a common theme, it is simply this — our national parks are too precious to be squandered needlessly. Accordingly, both the National Park Service and the American people must have the courage to reevaluate their park heritage, rejecting those emotions that are no longer valid, while holding fast to those

that are. It follows that every question, in the final analysis, comes down to the issue of national park standards, specifically, what kinds of activities are or are not appropriate in the national parks. Below are my attempts to interpret these issues for the tens of thousands of Park visitors who might not otherwise be exposed to them. I hope the essays are read with this purpose in mind.



## What Is A National Park

What is a national park? From this question follows one equally important: How should a national park be used?

A century ago, the answers were straightforward. National parks were conceived to save superlative examples of the American land. Accordingly, visitors were expected — indeed encouraged — to approach the national parks as a unique visual experience.

With the first glimmerings of concern for the environment at large, the national park ethic evolved to recognize the importance of saving representative examples of the American wilderness. No longer were national parks a purely recreational resource, but one of vital importance for the salvation of plants and animals as well as scenery. It followed that activities inconsistent with protection of national park resources as a whole no longer could be tolerated.

In Yosemite National Park, e.g., two popular attractions, the bear feeding “shows” and the Firefall, were abolished. The Firefall dated back to 1872, when an early Yosemite pioneer, James McCauley, pushed his campfire off the rocks at Glacier Point to the delight of spectators in the Valley. By 1910 the Firefall was displayed every evening under the auspices of the Curry Company. At about this time, garbage was collected from the hotels and campgrounds, taken to an enclosure near Camp Curry, and used to attract bears onto viewing platforms so that every visitor could see the animals “up close and personal”.

Shortly after World War II the platforms were removed, and in 1968 the Park Service also discontinued the Firefall. In each instance the Park Service acted with conviction that neither activity, regardless of its popularity, was in the best interest of the protection of Yosemite. Bears fed on garbage could hardly be called “wild”; similarly, the Firefall was attracting so many people into the meadows that the vegetation was being severely damaged.

During the 1970’s the issue of park standards became even more controversial. Thus today hang-gliding enthusiasts, skydivers, and even snowmobilers are asking for permission to pursue their interests in the Park. In the case of sky-diving and hang-gliding, the Park Service has determined (at least for the time being) that the impact on the Park is minimal and the seriousness-of-purpose of their participants genuine. Snowmobiles are and probably will continue to be forbidden as inconsistent with the needs of this park environment.

And so the issue remains — at what point do purely mechanical forms of recreation damage the park resource, both psychological and ecological? Put another way, should people come to national parks seeking activities that are both possible and more desirable elsewhere? If, in either case, it can be shown that any activity is either distracting or damaging to visitors to the Park, what is the responsibility of the National Park Service?

These and other questions underlie the transformation of national parks from a unique visual experience into a fragile biological as well as recreational resource. When parks were established to protect scenery only, such issues were neither recognized nor understood. Today some compromises can still be made, but compromise is not always effective. Sometimes the welfare of the park environments must take precedence if anything at all will be left to pass on to posterity.

It is with this standard uppermost in mind — that Americans yet unborn have an equal claim to the national park experience — that the National Park Service stands ready to make difficult decisions on behalf of resource preservation.



## National Parks: An American Idea

Eight years ago, when delegates from around the world convened to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the national park idea, obligation brought them to Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. For the national park idea, is an American original.

Much as ancient Greece gave the world the idea of democracy, and Italy ushered in the age of the Renaissance, so the national parks of the United States have come to be seen as a unique contribution to world civilization.

This gift has placed a special obligation on the United States to set the highest standards of excellence in park management and design. The destruction of plant and animal populations around the world is perhaps the primary reason for this duty. By the year 2000, for example, fully one-half of the world's remaining tropical rainforests will have been leveled, driving whole species of insects, wildlife, and vegetation — perhaps as many as three million species! — to the brink of extinction.

Such losses can be avoided only if the United States itself sets uncompromising standards in national park preservation.

But even in the lower 48 states, only one national park, Isle Royale, off the Michigan coast in Lake Superior, can be considered an integral biological unit. Every other national park, Yosemite included, is but a fragment of a major ecosystem, merely a piece of watershed or a small portion of wildlife range.

In Yosemite, historical indifferences toward wildlife led to the elimination of big horn sheep from the Park; meanwhile, the bald eagle and peregrin falcon are endangered. And it was years ago, in 1806, that the last California grizzly disappeared from this area.

These and other ecological problems can be laid to the traditional perception of national parks as a parade of natural wonders. Now that biologists understand the importance of including wildlife populations and rare plants in the management picture, the parks themselves, by virtue of historical concerns for spectacular scenery only, cannot live up to these needs.

In the years ahead, the national park system must reach into areas outside of the prime scenic attractions, the better to insure the survival of threatened biological resources. Worldwide, the seriousness of this need is borne out by the fact that 110 nations, representing upwards of 1200 national parks and "equivalent" reserves, are looking to the United States for help and leadership.

Granted, scenic parks such as Yosemite are beautiful, but scenery is not the sole reason for establishing a national park. Our awareness about future needs in park management, not only here but around the globe, will be instrumental in laying the foundations of a far more important crusade — the survival of planet earth itself.



## The Fulfillment of a Prophecy

Ten years ago the National Park Service, in cooperation with the Yosemite Park and Curry Co., began a major program to restore Yosemite Valley to its historical naturalness. This first effort resulted in the closure of the eastern third of the Valley to private automobiles and their replacement with a system of free shuttle buses.

This summer the project is being expanded with the removal of the large parking lot in front of the National Park Service Visitor Center. Following disposal of the blacktop, a new mall, planted with native vegetation, will be provided for the use of pedestrians, picnickers, and interpretive programs.

Undoubtedly Yosemite's pioneer ecologists, among them Frederick Law Olmsted, would approve heartily of this decision; it was Olmsted, after all, who challenged Americans to



appreciate that Yosemite Valley was more than a mere “wonder or curiosity,” simply a grandstand from which to look up at the great waterfalls and cliffs. The noted designer of Central Park in New York City realized that the magnificence of Yosemite distracted people from its trees, meadows, and wildflowers. But these, too, he argued, were an integral part of the Yosemite experience.

In August of 1864, when Olmsted first visited Yosemite Valley, preserving the Valley floor was aided by the difficulty and cost of travel, which restricted visitation to only a few hundred people annually. Yet “before many years,” Olmsted predicted with amazing foresight, “these hundreds will become thousands, and in a century the whole number of visitors will be counted in the millions.” Whether or not the park could serve that many people without sacrificing its beauty and integrity was the question uppermost on Olmsted’s mind.

When he returned east in 1865 to resume the direction of Central Park, his prophetic report to the Yosemite Park Commission was lost. Its rediscovery in 1952 coincided with a growing concern about the future of Yosemite Valley in an age of overpopulation and environmental decay. Years of debate followed; finally, in 1970 the National Park Service resisted a complete takeover of the valley by the automobile by closing Mirror Lake and its environs to all vehicles but the shuttle buses.

The move was in keeping with Olmsted’s prediction that laws to prevent Yosemite’s defacement “must be made and rigidly enforced.” Like the National Park Service today, he defended everyone’s privilege to see the Valley; in providing access, however, he hoped to restrict roads and buildings to “the narrowest limits consistent with the necessary accommodation of visitors.” In short, the alternative to some standards would be developments which “would unnecessarily obscure, distort, or detract from the dignity of the landscape.”

Wherever blacktop has erased Yosemite’s gentler beauties, the National Park Service is moving to restore a proper sense of balance. We therefore ask your understanding while the restoration takes place, and thank you for your patience and support.



### **Yosemite’s 116th Anniversary As A National Park**

Almost every American knows that Yellowstone was the first national park. However, few visitors realize that the national park idea began right here in Yosemite.

In May of 1864, fully eight years before the creation of Yellowstone, Congress debated a bill to set aside the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove of Sierra redwoods “for public use, resort, and recreation,” and to hold both areas “inalienable for all time.” Congress approved the measure with little fanfare, and on June 30, 1864, President Abraham Lincoln signed it into law.

Because Yellowstone, and not Yosemite was the first to be called a national park, the origins of the national park idea in Yosemite often have been overlooked. Still, the object of both Yosemite and Yellowstone was identical — the protection of unique scenery in the national interest.

The confusion about the origins of the national park idea arose because Congress gave Yosemite Valley and the big trees to California to be managed. In 1872, when Yellowstone came into being, no such gift was possible because Wyoming was still controlled by the federal government as a territory. In this largely accidental manner, Yellowstone instead of Yosemite won the honor of being the first national park.

Beginning in the 1850s, tourists and correspondents wrote with unbridled enthusiasm about Yosemite’s great cliffs and waterfalls; with the opening of Yellowstone a decade later, only the objects rather than the words to describe them had changed. Yosemite and Yellowstone were landmarks of great national pride, proof that the United States was

predestined for a grand and glorious future. Thus schemes to remove from public ownership Yosemite Valley and the big trees — and later the wonders of Yellowstone — met strong disapproval from those Americans who hoped to see these wonderlands stand as mileposts to the nation's culture.

The idea of a monument, whether man-made or natural in origin, implies that it should be held as a public trust open to everyone.

And so it was that a small group of Californians launched the campaign to protect Yosemite Valley and the big trees from falling into private hands.

Eight years later, in 1872, a similar effort led to the preservation of Yellowstone. But Yosemite was the precedent. The national park idea, in fact if not by name, began here.

Now 116 years old, the national park idea remains an American original, our gift to the peoples of the world. Today more than 100 nations around the globe manage upwards of 1,200 national parks and equivalent reserves, each one of which must be traced back directly to Yosemite and Yellowstone. It is this achievement, this contribution, that the National Park Service and its friends in Yosemite invite you to commemorate with us.



*Alfred Runte is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Washington, Seattle, where he teaches courses on the Pacific Northwest, American West, and Environmental History. A specialist on the origins and development of the national park idea in the United States, he is the author of National Parks: The American Experience, published in November, 1979 by the University of Nebraska Press. His articles and essays, most dealing with national park subjects, have also appeared in a wide variety of books, magazines, and scholarly journals. Seeking a more personal understanding of national park problems and administration, Mr. Runte served this past summer in Yosemite Valley as a seasonal ranger naturalist for the National Park Service.*

**THE MEMBERS MEETING.** About 200 members attended the Association's September 13 meeting at Parson's Lodge in Tuolumne Meadows. The weather was fair — a bit windy but bright, clear and sunny — a typical fall day in Tuolumne.

Highlight of the afternoon program was a talk by N.P.S. Western Regional Director Howard Chapman. Chapman referred frequently to the contents of the "State of the Parks 1980" report which had been requested by Congress. It is, he stated, the National Park Service's first systematic servicewide attempt to identify threats to park resources. These threats, he explained, lie in these seven categories:

1. Aesthetic degradation (land development, timbering, etc.)
2. Air pollution (acid rain, hydrocarbon pollutants, etc.)
3. Physical Removal of Resources (mineral extraction, poaching, etc.)
4. Exotic Encroachment (animals, plants, blasing, noise, etc.)
5. Visitor Physical Impacts (campfires, trampling, etc.)
6. Water Quality Pollution and Water Quantity Changes (oil spills, toxic chemicals, etc.)
7. Park Operations (facilities, employee ignorance, political pressures, etc.)

MEETING SCENES...



*YNHA Board Member Tom Shephard introduces  
N.P.S. Western Regional Director Howard Chapman.*



*Howard and Mrs. Chapman*



*Lunchtime*



*Yosemite Superintendent  
and Mrs. Bob Binneweis*



*UCD Professor David Robertson and  
Larry Early, whose firm is a Corporate  
Member of YNHA.*



*David Gaines  
discusses the Mono  
Lake Committee's effort to  
stem the lake's drainage.*

We felt his appraisal to be accurate, if disturbing and certainly it demands that those who cherish the country's parks and monuments be alert to all destructive process.

Mr. Chapman provided us with the text of his talk. We'd be pleased to send a Xerox to any members so requesting.

IN THE JULY MEMBERS' BULLETIN we published the names of those who had contributed to the fund for naturalist Jeff Samco. Since then, contributions have been made by the following members.

Roger Williamson	Ruth Crane <i>Los Angeles, California</i>	Robert B. Caldwell <i>Sunnyvale, California</i>	John Luscombe <i>Australia</i>
Simon P. Maybury <i>Scotland</i>	Robert Tracy <i>Irvine, California</i>	David Korchek <i>Los Angeles, California</i>	

**NEW MEMBERS.** We welcome to membership in YNHA the following good people.

Lynn Amaya	Thomas F. Grose	Holli and Walter Pfau
Dr. Herb Andrews	Mary Gutierrez	Ari Lee Pollard
Steven Arriaga	Mr. and Mrs. David P. Hagerty	Donald C. Prevett
Geoffrey R. Austin	Lila Harp	Judy K. Prigley
Jonathan Babcock	Paul A. Hartman	Phyllis R. Rapp
Mary D. Baker	Carole Hewitt	John Rasche
R. Wayne Ball, M.D.	Karolyn K. Hirsch	Shelby Rector
Donna S. Balsler-Spencer	Dr. and Mrs. J.T. Hollister	Kristina M. Redoble
Anne M. Barror	Robert and Debra Howard	Karen Reed
Dr. and Mrs. Jon Beck	Carolyn Hoyman	Gwen Reuben
Catherrine M. Berbach	Eleanor Huggins (L)	John W. Robinson
Jean Berensmeier	Christopher Hull	Marian Santillan
Lee J. Berg	Marjorie Hynes (L)	Dr. Wayne Savage
Arthur J. Bettini	Richard Josephson	Dorothy Schlossman
Alfred Bowie	Lois R. Keele	Kathleen Senckewitz
Cindy Bowler	Vince Kehoe	Erik Sevik
William and Imogene Burgen (L)	Glenna Klepac (L)	Lora Shank
Joanne Burgess	Ronald Konklin	Marty A. Sheppard
Kathy Bussey	Debra Kroon (L)	Patricia A. Sherrow
Carol Calder	Lawrence Krumm	Harold Silverstein
The Charleston Family (L)	Marla LaCass	Nadine C. Smith
Ilene Chazan	Haswell and Edna Leask	James B. Snyder (L)
David A. Church	Darlene Leonhardt	Chris Stephens
Donald G. Coelho	Joe Lopez	Karen Taylor
Kathleen Collier	James A. Luke III	Bill Tilley
Michael W. Connolly	E. R. Maisen, Jr.	Judith Troy
Mr. and Mrs. James Copes	Sandra Menachof	John W. Wallace
Christine L. Coulombe	Craig F. Miller	Marcia B. Warrecker
Mrs. Elsie Currie	Holmes O. Miller	Don Warzecka
Charles I. Daniels (L)	K. E. Mueller	Arthur and Estelle Wedner
Linda Degnan	Arleen Navarret	Jack Wilson
Charles R. Dickinson	Mr. and Mrs. Gene Nelson	Aletha A. Wojcik
JoElla Domingues	Lance E. Norton	Mrs. Edward P. Yettke
Don Doran	Teresa Page	
Mr. and Mrs. Horst Eltner (L)	Alan Palisca	
Barbara Eniti	James Panos	(L) indicates LIFE member
Patricia Enright (PL)	Barbara M. Parker	(PL) indicates PARTICIPATING
Kathleen Galbo	Mary Catherine Paulus	LIFE member
Lisa Gilbert	JoAnn Pearson	
Melissa Gomes	Anita Petranich	



WE HAVE A FEW "Pelican Pouches" yet on hand. They're 8"x5"x2½", just right for carrying your favorite field guides. Made of heavy, weather-proof nylon; belt loops, or a shoulder strap is available. Comes in navy or beige. Usual retail \$10.95 — price to members (15% discount) \$9.31, plus \$.56 tax (California) and \$1 for postage and packaging. If you'd like a shoulder strap, please add \$1.12.

Quantity	Amount Enclosed
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Dan Anderson