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1983 SMOKY MOUNTAINS RECREATION CONSORTIUM

BY

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ABSTRACT

There are very few efforts that can be pointed to as a cooperative endeavor to improve the profession. The Consortium is an example to others of the type of effort that it will take to develop new ideas to place it in a leadership role.

1983 SMOKY MOUNTAINS RECREATION CONSORTIUM

"Creative Careers in Private/Commercial Recreation" was the title of this year's Consortium. Students from eight universities throughout the eastern half of the United States gathered at Camp Wesley Woods near Townsend, Tennessee to discuss current problems, issues and concerns in private and commercial recreation. As in the past, the SMRC was sponsored by the University of Tennessee and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The program opened on Friday evening, September 9, with introductions and a presentation on "Non-Traditional Careers in Commercial Recreation" by Jack Samuels of Montclair State College. Definitions were given for such terms as "tourism," "commercial recreation," "hospitality industry," and "travel" so there would be no misinterpretations in terminology throughout the consortium. It was stressed that recreators are generalists with some knowledge in all fields, as opposed to other professionals who specialize in one specific area. Therefore, recreators may fill many different types of jobs within the broad area of leisure services, including commercial recreation and tourism.

Dick Howell of Clemson University started Saturday's program with "An Overview of the Provision of Leisure Services by the Private/Commercial Sector." Four types of recreation were defined according to their traditional sources of funding: unstructured, commercial, private and public. These are distinguished from tourism which includes, in addition to a recreation component usually associated with a destination attraction, the tourist, transportation and a system

of information/direction. He then discussed the various needs of the tourism job market, concentrating on those which require a technical or college education.

There are two ways to book a special event or major attraction, according to Bert Sams and Tim Reese of the University of Tennessee's Student Services. The first mentioned was to solicit personally by calling the group directly and making arrangements with them for price, promotion, sound and lights. The second way is to negotiate through an events promoter. Regardless of the booking method, contracts for special events are quite extensive, with every minute detail clarified in writing.

Don Lindsey of the American Automobile Association explained the role of AAA in the recreation field. He stated that jobs are available if a person is able to "sell himself" to a firm which currently offers an incomplete "package." Hotels are sometimes such firms since the majority only offer food and lodging. A complete package would include entertainment, which is the recreator's responsibility.

Loren Van Oordt of Kiawah Island Company re-enforced the idea of selling yourself as he spoke on "Resort Management--The Role of the Professional Recreator." Knowing the differences between public and private recreation (marketing, clientele, delivery of services, and profit motive) as well as possessing four major skills and qualifications (programming, business, management, and experience) are essential to a professional recreator. He emphasized his belief in "making yourself available" as the key to landing a job.

In the presentation on "Contemporary Marketing Concepts--A Practical Approach," Jim Peacock of Bottom Line Marketing stated that the private sector of recreation is marketing itself in ways that the public sector should adopt. Many students were surprised by the mark-up on prices of merchandise and food at recreation facilities as well as the costs of advertising on television and radio. Alternatives to advertising, such as publicity, were explored.

A follow-up on the Knoxville World's Fair was presented by George Siler, former Marketing Director of the Fair. There were two goals which Knoxville had set and achieved by having the Fair:

1. rebuilding and improving the interstate highway system in and around Knoxville, and
2. recapturing the productivity of a deteriorated downtown area.

Al Kaye, of Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center, focused the students' attention on the problems of handicapped people. All consortium participants were asked to place a piece of paper on their heads and then draw a picture of a horse and rider next to a lake. Although the pictures were humorous and even unidentifiable, the participants were able to relate to the frustrations a handicapped person faces.

On Sunday, four problems were presented which related to earlier presentations. Each student chose a problem of interest to him or her and then worked with three other students--all from different schools--to solve it, utilizing information obtained in the problem statement and additional data provided by individual professors. Each team presented its solution to the problems at the end of the day. Each solution was critiqued by the audience. Problems included such topics as selling yourself to an employer, decision-making on leisure stock investments and resort development decision-making. (Ironically, it turns out, the resort development problem used Grenada for its data base.)

Al Borden of the Blount County (Tennessee) Tourism Commission spoke on the "Four P's of Marketing"--product, price, place and promotion. These, he explained, must be based on statistical data and projections.

In order for the students to visualize all that had been presented to this point, Monday included an all-day field trip to various recreation facilities in the Gatlinburg area. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park was the first stop. Resource Manager Stu Coleman gave an overview on the range of management problems confronting the Park Service--from plants to animals to litter to trails to humans. The Chamber of Commerce at Gatlinburg was then visited, followed by an exciting (and wet) trip to Oogle's Water Park in Pigeon Forge. The day's events ended with a tour, meal and presentation at Silver Dollar City (SDC). General Manager Ted Miller told students how a theme park operates, covered the philosophy of SDC compared to other parks, and explained SDC's management training program.

The Consortium ended on Tuesday with two presentations by Richard Maddock, a consumer psychologist with Maddock, Kenny and Associates. The first, "Marketing to the Mind," included how the brain works, the four areas of emotion, and the thrill-seeking aspect of life. This set the stage for his next presentation on how to effectively market a service or product by fulfilling the consumer's perceived needs.