

# The Welcomer

Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association

Vol. 11 No. 1

## What I Did This Summer

(Second in a series)

By Nick Kovalakides

**A**s promised in my spring e-mail describing my jaunt through Mississippi, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Kansas, I checked off states 47 (New Mexico), 48 (Utah) and 49 (Idaho) after our wonderful conference at Texas A&M, in my retirement quest to step foot in all of our states. Hawaii will be my 50th, hopefully, next year.

Once again, I gravitated to college campuses if they were on my route. I dropped in on Prairie View (TX) A&M, because it was on the way from the Houston airport to College Station. While there is a good state highway sign announcing their campus, there is no directional sign at the end of the exit ramp. I guessed correctly!

Inside their main entrance is a small pull-off area with a few parking spaces, a booth with an up/down barrier and a small brick building (a gift of the Class of '41), that serves as their "Information Center."

Next to their booth is a large campus display map, but, unfortunately their buildings are listed in numerical order, rather than alphabetically, and the "You Are Here" label is the same size and color as the other building labels, making it a chore to find.

I learned that the booth and barrier only go into operation when there is a special event, like a rock concert, and they want to control who drives onto campus. Getting to Texas A&M is a breeze with good signs and an impressive campus entry from Texas Avenue, "Visitor Parking" signs are immediate and direct you to the parking garage across from the Aggeland Visitor Center. Raye Leigh Stone's friendly staff of students stand ready to help you in any way they can. Their center includes a glass-enclosed media presentation room and a variety of university-related videotapes from which you may choose to view.

Before returning my rental car to the

Houston airport, I had time to stop off at Rice University and visit with Sue Hutchings, a new CIVSA member I had met at the conference. I never saw a highway sign for Rice, so I had to use my map. (I found out later that highway construction prevented me from seeing the sign.) Their campus is in a residential area of Houston and I came upon it at Gate 17, near their maintenance buildings. There, I got directions to their main gate, which is striking.

Once inside, I saw signs to "Visitor Parking," but when I got to those spaces, I saw no other signs to Sue's "Welcome Center." I decided to drive around their campus loop road. I asked four people, one a maintenance man, for directions. Only one knew of Sue's office. He didn't.

Once I found Sue, she showed me the two signs I should have seen. I told her that I thought they were a bit far from the roadway and the print was too small for me to read from that distance. It seems that the university policy is for signs to not be intrusive.

I flew to Albuquerque and rented a car for my trip up the west side of the Rocky Mountains. On my way out of town, I dropped in to the University of New Mexico visitor center and found that for-

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And then there were four... Nick Kovalakides, Matt Weismantel, Sherry Case and Dave Waters are the only CIVSA members to attend all of our conferences.



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### This Summer

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my CIVSA member, Sheila DeLaney had retired in '96. Judy Myalik, her successor, gave me an hour of her busy schedule to tell me about their plans to be part of a new alumni center building at UNM's main entrance.

At this point, there are no signs to UNM from the interstate highway and no signs to get to their campus. When I asked how prospective students find them, Judy responded, "From our university web site."

[Am I showing my age that I need road signs? While road signs announcing your school may not be critical to finding you, to me, they serve a good purpose from a publicity standpoint. At least people will know that you exist and where. Furthermore, not all of your campus visitors have access to the Web.]

I gave Judy one of our CIVSA brochures and encouraged her to join. At the College of Santa Fe, in their quaint capital city, there are good signs to a beautiful main entrance. But, with no visitor center nor display campus map, they have a pull-off area with a large "Welcome" board, giving the names of key buildings with directional arrows. It looks like the list of names started out alphabetically, but as new buildings were built, their names were added to the bottom of the list. (Movable panels for each name would solve this problem.)

[I did other things, too! Got a haircut at "Clipper Jim's" in Farmington NM. Played golf there, too. Since I'm not good

enough to shoot my age, I shot the temperature, instead — 100! Having lived in the humid northeast all of my life, I now know what "dry heat" means! I also drove across southern Utah and toured several national parks, including Bryce and Zion canyons. Spectacular, stark, scenic beauty is around every bend in the road. While I knew I would eventually "return to civilization," I became concerned when my radio station began to fade. I pressed "seek" and it went through all of the numbers on the dial and came back to the same weakening station!]

I finally made it to Interstate-15 in southwestern Utah and dropped in on Southern Utah University's Jared Wikken in Cedar City. He had made a presentation at our Rutgers conference last year. While there are good signs getting to SUU, there is no visitor center.

Interestingly, their large campus display map highlights sidewalks and passageways that are accessible for those with disabilities.

Heading north into the Salt Lake City (SLC) area, I first came upon Brigham Young University in Provo. There are good highway signs and followup signs to BYU and campus signs to "Visitor Parking." Along the way, at a traffic control booth, I had to declare the nature of my business on campus. When I stated that I was visiting longtime CIVSA member, Derek Spriggs, they passed me through immediately! (Actually, having any kind of legitimate purpose for visiting will get you through!)

Since we missed seeing Derek at the conference, I had to ask. Turns out, several key events on campus required his attention and, then, on top of all of that, he had to return to England for the funeral of his 92-year-old mother. Derek hopes to rejoin us in Indiana next June.

BYU's visitor center is in the former home of the university president. It's warmly decorated with an inviting atmosphere.

The University of Utah has good signs on I-15 and wonderful signs throughout downtown SLC — the university's name is on colorful banners that also include directional arrows for the state capitol, Temple Square, Salt Palace and Delta Center. There's no campus visitor center, however, just signs to "Visitor Parking," which turns out to be a 200+ space lot in the middle of their campus and next to their student center. Parking is \$1.00 per hour with the first 15 minutes free. UU will host the opening and closing ceremonies and serve as the Olympic Village

for the Winter Games in February 2002.

Continuing northward to Weber State University in Ogden, once again, good signs off the interstate to their campus. However, when I turned into the first gate, I missed the immediate left turn, because the term, "Information" was part of a 10-item sign on the left side of the road — too many words for me to read while driving.

WSU's drive-up information booth is where CIVSA charter member, Colleen Grimsaw worked before leaving the university in 1997. I had a nice, but short, chat with her replacement and gave her a CIVSA brochure. (There was a car behind me.) WSU's campus map is an 8 1/2 x 11 colorful, glossy, real-looking aerial shot, but their buildings are listed in numerical order with no map coordinates.

Moving on, I cut through a mountain pass into a beautiful valley that includes Logan, site of Utah State University. While highway and followup signs are good, I was greeted by a four-paneled sign reading, "Athletic Center, Conference Center, Alumni Center, Athletic Events." They looked collegial and evoking that they belonged to USU, I followed them to the left. However, seeing no other signs, I had to ask directions from a gentleman in his front yard.

When I finally found former CIVSA member, Elaine Hyer, at her information center, I told her of my plight. When she told me that better signage has been a long-term project, I offered to write her a letter giving her some "visitor feedback." She said she knew exactly who she would forward it to!

[Terry Moore, another former CIVSA charter member, left USU several years ago to become a judge in nearby Smithfield. He was out of town when I stopped by to see him.]

Into Idaho, I stopped at Idaho State University in Pocatello. Good sign off the interstate, but nothing after that. I had to ask a neighbor and once on campus, I learned (by asking some folks along the sidewalk) that there was a mid-campus drive-up information booth run by Public Safety. When I met with Stephen Chatterton, the PS director, he knew of the sign problem, but asked me why I didn't react to the highway sign indicating that I should tune into their 1610 AM radio station, because that's where the directions are given. While I had no response for him, I tied the station as I was leaving town and found it difficult to understand because of the static. Still, the 4-minute recording, which repeats itself,

The Welcomer is published four times a year by the Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association. We would like to hear from you. Please send suggestions for articles and photos for publication, as well as news about current activities, to:

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