

Ramifications of 'Crater Lake Crud' still felt

When we first walked in the door we were confronted with eight moaning girls lying on the floor in the hallway, near the bathroom door. "It's too far to run from the sleeping porch," explained someone who could talk. "We all got it, just like that," said another girl en route to the second stall." (Oregon Daily Emerald—August, 1975)

The above is not a description of the aftermath of a mass murderer run amok. Neither is it an excerpt from a particularly violent science fiction movie.

Rather it describes the beginning of what was to become ten days of sickness and pure hell for over a hundred young employes and unknown numbers of tourists at Crater Lake National Park this summer.

They became victims of what was not-so-affectionately known as "The Crater Lake Crud," a particularly violent flu-like malady which was to eventually close the park for three weeks this summer.

The disaster, which was finally determined to be a direct result of raw sewage entering the park's water supply, had ramifications far beyond the bathrooms and hallways of Crater Lake Lodge.

A new park superintendent now occupies the desk of his unfortunate predecessor.

A new, filtered water supply now provides water to the tourist facilities at the park.

A congressional examination of the incident has produced new recommendations under which national parks, and the private concessionaires who run their tourist facilities, are to operate.

The vomiting ended seven months ago; the hearings, sponsored by Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.) wrapped up weeks ago.

But what about now? Has the notoriety stemming from those 10 days in July been flushed away?

"It should be just about forgotten," said Ryan Gilmore. "Most people feel it's cleared up, which it is. They're confident in applying to work there."

Gilmore, a recruiter for Crater Lake Lodge, Inc., the company which operates all visitor accommodations and services in the park, was on campus three days this week.

Gilmore said he interviewed over 90 applicants for jobs at the lodge and plans to hire "20 to 30" of them.

He said last summer's troubles, which included charges by newspapers and employes that the lodge management was trying to "cover up" the sickness, has not "at all" affected his recruiting of area students for work in the park.

By DENNIS PFAFF
Of the Emerald

He said he didn't tell the people he interviewed about the epidemic unless he was specifically asked about it. He stated, "Most of them (the prospective employes) didn't even bring it up."

On the other hand, he admitted the lodge received the kind of publicity that requires counteracting. He listed several changes in the lodge's operation making it more attractive for employes:

- Less people are being hired this year "so that the dorm is less crowded." Gilmore said only about 120 people are going to work at the lodge this year, as opposed to last year's 140 workers.

- As a result of fewer employes being hired, most jobs will entail 48 rather than 40-hour work weeks, making paychecks larger.

- The lodge operation is paying its employes the federal minimum wage (\$2.20 an hour). "We may have to pay state minimum wage eventually, but we're not sure about the law on that yet," Gilmore said. State minimum wage is \$2.30 an hour.

- While wages have gone up, room and board costs (which are taken out of employe's paychecks) have remained stable. Employes are still charged \$150 a month for dorm rooms and food.

The nearest health care facility is still over an hour's drive away, however, in Klamath Falls.

But Gilmore said he doesn't see that as a problem.

"In a normal year, we usually have three or four people who get sick, and that's usually only a cold," he said.

At the lodge itself, Gilmore said, several people trained in first aid are available in emergencies. In addition, a similarly-trained "house mother" is hired to keep watch on employes and determine who may be too sick to work.

The lodge hires no professional medical people, such as a nurse, though.

"We probably wouldn't be able to keep that person (a nurse) busy enough to keep them here," Gilmore said.

The new park supervisor, Frank Betts, said the Park Service is looking into the possibility of hiring a full-time nurse. "We're checking into it through the Public Health Service," he said.

Betts was not about to commit the National Park Service to finding and funding a full-time nurse for the facility, however.

He added, "I think it should be a joint effort between the Service and the concessionaire."

Betts contended that communication between his office and the lodge corporation, run by Ralph Peyton, is now "no problem."

He also said that a situation similar to last summer could not possibly happen again, given the fact that "the sewage and water

lines are now completely separated from each other." A full-time maintenance man is now on duty at the park to watch over the water

and sewage systems, Betts added.

"We hope to have a good summer this year," he said.



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