

Kah-Nee-Ta Employees of the Month

Oliver Peters: From Logs to the Lodge



Groundskeeper Oliver Peters takes a break from his litter detail in the Kah-Nee-Ta Lodge parking lot. CDS Photo

Groundskeeper Oliver Peters reluctantly traded logs for geraniums and is getting used to the idea. A veteran of the woods and the mill, Peters found it difficult at first to adjust to the light maintenance routine around Kah-Nee-Ta's Lodge and golf course.

Now he enjoys the independence of the work, so much so that he doesn't find it at all difficult to come to work everyday—often six days a week.

His good attendance is a big reason why Peters was chosen employee of the month, according to maintenance supervisor Bond Harmon.

Oliver and his little green 3-wheeled cart have been a permanent fixture around the Lodge during the summer months. He cruises the parking lot for trash, sees that the flower beds and lawns are watered and weeded, and generally keeps the grounds looking shipshape.

"It's so simple, an everyday routine. I enjoy it because I know just what needs to be done and Bond doesn't have to worry about it. I don't need anybody to tell me what to do."

He's even getting somewhat attached to the flowers. "I don't even know what species the flowers are," he admits. But he is concerned with their health and worries about such menaces as the fine sprays of wood stain that have been drifting down during the Lodge's facelift and smothering the well-cared for flowers.

In an interview punctuated with greeting from fellow staff-

ers, it became apparent that Peters likes people too. He has a good working relationship with his crew, including his boss. "We've got the best crew around," he says proudly.

He feels it works well because there's just one boss. "In some establishments you get too many bosses telling you different things."

Peters is a supervisor himself during the summer when he has young assistants through CETA or the summer work program. "It's not easy" being a supervisor, he found out, but he likes helping the kids "learn the value of a dollar."

Being out and about, Peters has a lot of opportunity to mingle with the guests. "The most interesting thing about this job is meeting people from all over the country," he remarks.

Peters is amused with those guests who don't know what Indians look like and ask him where the Indians are. "You're looking at one," he tells them with a chuckle.

A member of the Stalo Tribe from the Frazier River area in British Columbia, Peters has lived on the Warm Springs Reservation since 1957. He was on his way to California, "but this is as far as I got. I got hooked."

Not only did he get attached to the country and the weather but he found himself a wife. Velma, a tribal member, works in the laundry at Kah-Nee-Ta Lodge, where she has been for four years.

While still in Canada, Pe-

ters began gathering experience in the woods. He set chokers for rock bottom wages during the Depression, then sought his fortune in the States.

The timber on this reservation provided him with years of work as a thinner and in various positions at the Mill. Fifty-four year old Peters left the Mill a year and a half ago because "I couldn't handle stuff that the younger ones could."

Bond Harmon had a position open and asked Peters to come on board. Bond and Oliver are not strangers, having worked together at the Village several years before. This time around Peters feels the conditions are more ideal both personally and on the job.

Harmon sees it in his employee's work. "He's really been super good," he comments. "He has about the best record in my group, and he does a good job with the grounds."

The modest groundskeeper felt he might have been chosen for the honor of employee of the month "because I was here everyday or something. I never figured I'd be up for it."

Peters will winter at the golf course which must be maintained year-round. As at the Lodge, he will combine his concern for both the grounds and the guests.

"The most important thing is to keep the guests happy," he remarks, "to keep the grounds clean so they'll come back."

Lon Harmon: Resident (for a time) Free Spirit

A touch of hip jargon spices his tales and you might peg him as a youth in the blush of independence.

"He'll grow out of it," you might think.

But his carefully-groomed mustache is flecked with gray, and is that a hint of a double chin?

Maintenance man Lon Harmon is just this side of 40 and it is doubtful that he's just going through a phase. Being a free spirit seems to be his permanent state of mind.

Harmon survived the late sixties sandal-making scene on Cape Cod, Massachusetts after which he was heavily into tropical fish in Florida. His Temporary existence in Central Oregon appears to be a "straight" interlude in a rather offbeat play.

How he came to be an honored employee at Kah-Nee-Ta Vacation Resort is frightfully simple: "I came out to visit my brother Bond and he put me to work, the creep."

The eternal transient has stayed with the maintenance crew for thirteen consecutive months. Supervisor Bill Bennett commented, "He's been a real good, dependable employee."

His thirteen month visit has revealed this settled side of Harmon's character. Although the modest employee considers his recent honor an "accident," he has done much to prove his worth as a regular worker.

Harmon specializes in electronic maintenance which



Kah-Nee-Ta's electronic maintenance man the lobby's fountain display. Lon Harmon demonstrates how to blow a fuse in CDS Photo

means the audio system, the TV's and even the hot chocolate machine. One of his claims to fame is the installation of the paging system in the Appaloosa Room. Tinkering with stereo kits in earlier years paid off.

Even though Harmon is an electronics specialist, he explains that everyone on his crew knows a little bit about

everything. "You have to unplug a toilet one minute and fix the elevator the next." He speaks highly of his crew, saying, "Our crew is really tight. We all work together and help each other by sharing secrets."

He indicated that the men on the crew vie for the responsibility of checking the temperature in the pool, because the poolside scenery is so "out-

standing."

The "accident" of being chosen employee of the month was partly the result of the chief engineer's vacation. Harmon filled in for Bennett and "made a decision once in a while and answered the phone." Bennett also pointed to Harmon's willingness to come in after hours on emergency calls. "He never refuses," Bennett remarked.

Bennett said that his employee of the month "gets along very well with the guests at Kah-Nee-Ta." Harmon says he also enjoys hiding in the engine room.

While sojourning in Warm Springs, Harmon has made a hobby of restoring his classic 1955 trailer in the Mobile Home Court. He dreams of putting it "in the woods" one day.

But the land-locked fisherman still has the ocean roaring in his ears. "The ocean keeps my head straight, keeps me sane." He plans to return to his Key West home for a few months this winter and take up a fishing line again. Commercial yellowtail, a "basic" method of fishing with hand lines, is what keeps his body and soul alive.

Harmon will be happy to see his tropical fish again, which are being taken care of by a "lady-friend," (who is apparently taking care of herself too).

Kah-Nee-Ta must have captured at least part of his imagination though because he expects to be back. And while he's here he makes the most of being 200 miles from the ocean.

"The beauty of the Lodge and keeping it functioning is what I get off on," comments Harmon.

Free spirit that he is, Lon Harmon will most probably spend his life going wherever he likes and liking wherever he goes. Lucky for the fish and Kah-Nee-Ta's maintenance crew.