

EDITOR'S CORNER

This issue of Heritage of the Great Plains is special, although technically not a special issue. Commemorating the Lewis and Clark expedition, it is our contribution to the bicentennial of that momentous and astounding feat of exploration.

Just how astounding can be measured by the reception the party received upon its return to civilization over two years after setting out: surprise that they were alive! Having been gone so long with no word of their activities reaching the East, nearly everyone had assumed they were all dead. In fact, only three people died during the mission. One was Sergeant Charles Floyd, and the other two were Blackfeet Indians killed in the only really hostile skirmish of the exploratory party.

Contrast this with the history of exploration in Australia. Every member of Ludwig Leichardt's expedition vanished without a trace, and while Burke and Wills, the antipodean counterparts of Lewis and Clark, did manage to become the first to cross the continent from south to north, they died in the effort. Other exploratory parties often lost members to privation or hostile interaction with Aborigines.

This Lewis and Clark issue contains a nice variety of reading material, from personal essay to scientific study, from the weather and the stars to the fate of Sacagawea and the death of Sergeant Floyd. We are pleased to have you join us in this celebration of the Lewis and Clark bicentennial.

Jim Hoy
Editor