

Eiken Retires as Longest-Serving Park Director

By B. H. Rucker

In Portland, North Dakota, population 600, Doug Eiken grew up around the Farmers Union Creamery, remembering his mother candling the eggs and his father making the butter. Even young boys like Doug worked on neighboring farms, hauling hay, feeding livestock, and performing a never-ending list of chores. The remembrance of his parents, neighbors, friends – working people and their everyday lives – never has been far from his mind.

In rural North Dakota, sports provided relief from the effort and tedium of the workaday world and, as a boy and a young man, Doug's



*Doug Eiken at Illiniwek Village
State Historic Site*

greatest interest in life was sports. Baseball was his passion, although ironically, it was basketball that first opened doors for him, beginning with a four-year athletic scholarship to nearby Mayville State Teachers College. After graduation in 1964 with his B.S. in math and physical education, Doug was drafted by the Eugene, Oregon, Emeralds, a minor league farm team for the Philadelphia Phillies. Although his zeal for baseball remained unabated, he was released after four seasons, and he returned to complete an M.S. in Phys. Ed. at the then Moorhead State College in Minne-

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Park Funding Still at Issue

This year's session of the Missouri General Assembly, which just adjourned on May 15, offered two exciting possibilities for major catch-up funding for the nearly \$200 million backlog of state park capital improvement needs, but neither met with success – a major disappointment for park supporters.

The bonds issued in the 1980s to establish the Third State Building Fund are nearly paid off, and Rep. Chris Kelly of Columbia sought to take advantage of that recurring budget item (revenue stream) to create a new State Building Fund with another bond issue. His HJR 32 would have supplied \$700 million in capital improvements monies, all dedicated to higher educa-

tion projects. The Third State Fund had included \$60 million for state park projects, and MPA leaders had been waiting fifteen years for a successor that could include more funding for parks. Park supporter Rep. Mike Sutherland was ready with an amendment to include \$75 million for state park projects in HJR 32 when it reached the house floor, but regrettably he was not recognized and the speaker rolled the bill without any discussion whatever.

A last chance for the bond issue came when the Senate Appropriations Committee heard HJR 32, and Senator Kurt Schaeffer of Columbia (who had served for a time as general counsel for DNR), having been approached prior to the hearing by

MPA leaders, introduced an amendment to raise the bond issue to \$800 million total, including up to \$250 million for state projects other than higher education, citing especially needs in state parks and mental health. The amended bill reached the senate floor, where it would likely have passed if not for a filibuster by a senator opposed to the state incurring further debt.

A second opportunity for state park capital funding was to try to include park system projects in some of the general assembly proposals for use of federal stimulus money. There were billions of dollars allocated for capital improvements and related infrastructure for

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MPA President's Message *by Terry Whaley*

Eiken Leaves Great Park System and Inspired Staff

Greetings, MPA members. I hope this issue of *Heritage* finds you out and about happily enjoying your great state park system. Many changes and challenges are in store for the system's future, which you can read about in this issue. I wish to take just a moment to comment on what has been one of the greatest gifts to our system, one that will be greatly missed.

On June 1 our state park director Doug Eiken started his well-deserved retirement. I attended his retirement reception with great excitement but with a sense of loss that often comes with change. Doug has been a great park director for Missouri, and we hate to see him leave. His accomplishments are well represented in additional parks, improved facilities, and new programs to enhance the park experience for all Missouri residents.

However, as I talked with park division employees whether in the Jefferson City offices, in the field, or even a volunteer campground host, there was an overwhelming and consistent theme that Doug was "the best boss" they ever had. Very often we get wrapped up in measures of park acreage, buildings and events, often forgetting that our greatest resource is the dedicated employees that care for our parks on a daily basis. A park system does not acquire and hold dedicated employees without leadership at the top. This leadership must build on existing skills, cultivate individual interest and initiative, and encourage people to give their very best. While Doug may have retired, he has given Missouri a gift that will continue to benefit our parks for many years, and that is an educated, inspired and committed professional staff who will continue the vision that Doug has instilled in them.



MPA President Terry Whaley presenting a Lewis & Clark print to Doug Eiken.

We will miss Doug and we wish him the best, but it is a comfort to know that, working with the current staff, together we can achieve the vision for our state park system that was inspired by Doug's fifteen years of service. Deputy director Dan Paige has been appointed acting director by DNR's Mark Templeton

while he conducts a national search for a new leader for the park system. MPA congratulates Dan and looks forward to working with him.

I invite you to join us in assuring that we continuing to live in a state with one of the top state park systems in the nation. Support MPA efforts to seek enhanced capital im-

provements through federal stimulus funds or a bond issue and the return of state park funding from state general revenue, encourage others to join MPA, and, most important, share your favorite park with others so they too can understand the value and importance of maintaining a great park system for future generations.

Save October 23-25, 2009 for MPA's Annual Meeting in St. Louis County

Plan now to join us for the 2009 annual meeting of the Missouri Parks Association to be held in St. Louis County near the Meramec River, October 23-25, 2009. The host hotel will be the Wildwood Town Center Hotel, with visits to several nearby state parks including Babler, Castlewood and Route 66. A visit to one of the region's newest state park sites nearby in Jefferson County is also being planned. The tentative calendar of activities includes:

Friday, October 23

12:00-4:00pm	Pre-meeting float trip or hike, Castlewood State Park
6:00-9:00 pm	Reception & dinner (location TBD)

Saturday, October 24

9:00 am-Noon	State park issues & programs
Noon-5:00pm	Visits to regional state park sites
6:00-9:00pm	Annual MPA dinner and awards

Sunday, October 25

9:00am-Noon	MPA membership & business meeting (Location TBD)
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Host Hotel: Wildwood Town Center Hotel—636-733-9100. **Camping available:** Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park, 636-458-3813

A more detailed description will be included in the next issue of *Heritage*, but you can reserve your room now. For more information contact meeting chair Ron Coleman at 314-451-6090 or ron@openspacecouncil.org, or MPA treasurer Eleanor Hoefle at ehoefle@sbcglobal.net or 314-869-6534.

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nearly every state agency and a number of local entities, but again nothing for parks, despite MPA testimony in a number of hearings, hand-delivering copies of the case for state park funding to every legislative office and talking personally with many members and their staffs—and despite all your phone calls, letters, and emails to your own representatives and senators. We still have not managed to build a coalition of representatives and senators who will consistently advocate for the state park system. So park supporters will have to redouble their efforts.

Our greatest problem is apparently one of our greatest successes. With the broadly supported 2006 renewal of the parks and soils sales tax still in many legislators' memory banks, there is a widespread perception that state parks are well funded and do not need additional support. In fact, the sales tax has been so diminished by diversions and exemptions that it is barely adequate for day-to-day operations (see *Heritage*, April 2009).

For decades park division staff, MPA leaders and other park supporters have been painfully aware of the increasing inadequacy of the park sales tax for anything other than general operations—however vital it is for that purpose—and have sought a gradual return of general revenue (GR) funds, which were stripped from parks during a state budget crisis after the first successful renewal of the sales tax in 1988. (Park director Doug Eiken had had very modest success in getting a small amount of GR for Civil War sesquicentennial commemoration in recent years, but that was completely stripped in the legislature this year.)

In the meantime, the park system has built up a critical backlog of nearly \$200 million in deferred maintenance and rehabilitation of facilities and infrastructure.

State parks suffer not only from the misperception of wealth but also from term limits, which incline legislators to deliver projects to their own districts, whereas the needs of the park system are statewide. Also,

much of the most pressing deferred maintenance, such as water and wastewater systems, is not sexy. In rural Missouri, where the most highly visited parks are located, some are the equivalent of a small city having to run its own water and sewer departments. Yet, though there were billions of dollars in the federal stimulus bill designated for such systems, state parks were eligible for none of it, as interpreted by DNR and the governor's office. The Katy Trail is highly popular but, again, the most pressing needs are for infrastructure—culverts, bridges, and trailbed. At MPA's request, the park division has prepared a prioritized list of about \$75 million in such projects, which may be viewed on the MPA website: <http://parks.missouri.org>. It is the staggering cost of this sort of infrastructure capital expenditures that requires periodic infusions of special funding. Thus, it was especially disappointing to have missed out on two such opportunities in the legislative session just ended.

However, there is another chance coming this summer that park supporters must seize upon. A Joint Committee on Capital Improvements and Leases Oversight will be meeting during the summer to prioritize projects that were not funded during the session just ended, in case there are additional federal or other funds next year. The committee, chaired by Representative Ryan Silvey of Kansas City, consists of four other mem-



The Memorial at Babler State Park, site of MPA's 2009 annual meeting.

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bers of the House Budget Committee—Allen Icet (west St. Louis County), Mike Cunningham (Webster County), Ed Wildberger (St. Joseph), and Shalonn Curls (Kansas City)—and five members of the Senate Appropriations Committee—Gary Nodler (Joplin), Rob Mayer (Dexter), David Pearce (Warrensburg), Tim Green (north St. Louis County), and Frank Barnitz (east central Ozarks). Regrettably, none of the house members has any state parks in his or her district, though all senators but Green do.

This is an opportunity, but at its first meeting May 29, House Budget Committee Chair Allen Icet recommended that the committee not consider any projects from three agencies with their own funding sources—Transportation, Conservation, and State Parks. Several members have since indicated concern about the exclusion of state parks in discussions with MPA leaders, so MPA will seek to have parks returned to the mix for consideration.

It is critical that we change this misperception that the park system is wealthy. It is of utmost importance that park supporters talk with legislators in their districts, because any solution to park needs will have to come from the Missouri General Assembly in one way or another. Letters to Governor Nixon would also be helpful. Though the governor has often spoken of his fondness for state parks, he has been arguing against using federal stabilization funds on capital improvements and he has not taken any position on the bond issue, because he is concerned about shortfalls in revenue to operate state government in the current financial crisis and he would like to reserve funds for that.

Meanwhile, legislators are being bombarded by their constituents and an array of lobbyists for local interests about numerous worthwhile projects in their districts to be funded by any available monies. The fifteen-year backlog of unmet capital needs of our state park system must be part of this discussion.

What needs to be understood by park supporters and legislators alike is that any good

state park system requires periodic infusion of capital funds from a bond issue or other special funding source, such as the federal stimulus bill. Our Missouri system has benefited greatly from two such significant infusions in its history—federal CCC and WPA funds during the depression and New Deal of the 1930s and the Third State Building Fund Bond Issue of the mid-1980s. As it happened, both types of funding were potentially available in the legislative session just ended, and such funds could be available again in the next session. **But after that, it could be decades before such special opportunities return.**

HJR 32 sponsor Chris Kelly has said that he will almost certainly reintroduce a bill for a Fifth State Building Fund Bond Issue in the next session and that it will include more than just higher education. The question is whether a specific percentage would be earmarked for state parks; MPA calls for ten percent in view of the large number of park units spread throughout the state and the nature of the most urgent needs. Legislators typically like to be free to pick and choose projects to support, but this could work to the detriment of high priority yet largely invisible infrastructure rehabilitation.

It is clear that now is the time for park supporters to make the case for an infusion of capital improvements funds for the state park system, and the case will have to be made one legislator at a time. It must be a case for maintaining and restoring the integrity of the statewide system, not just a plea on behalf of a particular project. And it must clearly distinguish between the excellent management our parks have enjoyed—owing

to dedicated state park staff, superb leadership, and the relative stability if modest amount of the sales tax funding for operations—and the critical need for an infusion of special funds to deal with the ever-growing and critical backlog of capital improvements.

Our state parks and historic sites are too much a part of who we are as Missourians to be allowed to deteriorate.

What You Can Do

Please CALL or VISIT your state representative and senator this summer (the earlier the better) to discuss the need for special funding for state park capital improvements. You can find more information about your legislators, often including their addresses and phone numbers in their district, at www.house.mo.gov/ or www.senate.mo.gov/.

For further information, including an article on park funding in the April issue of *Heritage*, the list of priority projects in state parks, and a list of legislators with parks in their districts, see the MPA website: <http://parks.missouri.org>.

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sota. After a brief stint as a high school coach in Rugby, ND Doug returned to Mayville as the assistant baseball and head basketball coach.

Although successful in his coaching career, Eiken says he "began to think I didn't want to spend a twenty-year career coaching one sport." He had been working in the summers assisting local communities in developing recreation programs, and in 1977 he attended the National Recreation and Parks Association meeting in Denver with a group of his extension service clients. For Doug, his 'Aha!' moment came in Denver, when he encountered for the first time the world of professional park and recreation managers. He decided on the spot to look into opportunities in the field.

As it happened, he was due to start a sabbatical year, and he was soon enrolled in a doctoral program in leisure services administration at the University of Utah, earning his Ph.D. in little more than a year. Although offered the director of athletics position back at Mayville State, he instead went directly from his graduation ceremony in Utah to the NPRA meeting in Seattle to seek a position more in keeping with his new interests. Blessed with both good luck and good timing, he was hired in Seattle for a position at the University of Kansas as assistant professor and coordinator of recreation studies. He was happy enough at KU, yet after three years he came to realize that he had enjoyed the 'hands on' extension part of university life more than the strictly academic side. Once again, he seemed to be well-aligned with fate; an old friend advised him that there was a job open 'up north,' and in 1981 he returned to his native North Dakota as director of the state park system.

For the next thirteen years he presided over North Dakota's state parks, expanding the system, seeking operational improvements, and bringing his education to bear on real

life problems. For a while he even doubled in brass and oversaw the state's tourism operations. And, he extended his interests beyond his home state, at one time or another holding nearly every office in the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD) and the National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers (NASORLO), including the presidency of both. He had a comfortable life in North Dakota. As director of parks, he was a member of the governor's cabinet and many of the leaders in state government were old acquaintances from sports activities, as athletic boosters, teammates or opponents. "I probably could have stayed there forever," he says.

But in 1993, an old mentor from his coaching days put a bee in his bonnet: "If you stay here until you retire, staying on the same easy path you've already walked, will you always wonder if you could have succeeded in a bigger job?" It was a nagging thought for a man with a competitive instinct and when, a month later, his old friend Ney Landrum, director of Florida State Parks, called and urged him to apply for the director's position in Missouri, Doug didn't need much convincing.

In March 1994, Doug became director of a Missouri park system that was staggering a bit; there had been unexpected changes in leadership—only an acting director for nearly two years—and massive devastation in the big river parks from the worst flood in the state's history. This was the challenge he had been looking for and it was as satisfying as he had hoped it would be. On June 1, 2009, he retired after serving as director for fifteen years, the longest-serving director in Missouri state parks history—in February even having surpassed the tenure of the legendary Joe Jaeger—and, counting his North Dakota years, the longest-

serving state park director in the nation.

What was it about the Missouri system that had attracted him? Of course it was a bigger job, larger than the North Dakota system in number of units and personnel by a factor of five or so. But there was more: "I liked the idea that Missouri's state parks were a more representative presentation of the state as a whole. The inclusion of historic sites and natural resource areas in addition to the purely recreational sites is not too common in state park systems. It makes Missouri's park system more reflective of the state's total culture and that interested me." And the clincher: The MPA book, *Exploring Missouri's Legacy*. There are several park systems that have books, but nobody has a book like that one." The existence of MPA, a statewide organization dedicated to supporting the park system, further convinced Doug that Missouri's state parks held a special place in the affection of Missourians.

In addition to the expected effort of managing a larger system, there were special challenges in those fifteen years. Doug served under five different governors and five DNR directors from both political parties. He led the park system through a massive rebuilding to meet the standards of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), and the sadly unexpected rebuilding of Johnson's Shut-Ins. And, of course, there was the critical need to secure renewal of the Parks and Soils Sales Tax (PSST), which was brought before a statewide vote twice during his tenure, in 1996 and 2006, each time winning approval by more than two to one, an astounding majority for a tax vote. However, there was also the vexing inevitability, about which he warned repeatedly, that before long the lines between park operating expenses and park revenues—diminished as they were by diver-

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sions and sales tax exemptions—would cross.

Doug's approach to the PSST renewals was bound up in his approach to park management in general. As he puts it, "Whenever I had to make a decision about the park system, I always thought about 'the little guy,' the moms and pops, the ordinary working people who use and need their state parks. How can we make

enhanced interpretation of Native American archaeology, history and culture at Van Meter State Park. He encouraged park and historic site managers to hold open meetings each year to solicit public input, kept political leaders informed of their constituents' wishes for their parks, saw that comment cards were furnished to concession operation users, and regularly compiled research and user survey

same short span of time, about ten years out." He took steps to reorganize the parks division, flattening the hierarchical pyramid so as to create an organizational structure with more mentor relationships and more opportunities for younger staff to assume management responsibilities. In the field he created clusters of parks and sites to enhance teamwork and allow more management decisions to be



It's been a great relationship! Doug Eiken, with MPA past presidents (l-r) Ron Coleman, Greg Iffrig, Susan Flader, Mary Abbott, John Karel and Terry Whaley.

the parks more welcoming, more service-oriented for them?" Ultimately, his management philosophy seems to have been informed by his boyhood in small-town Portland, the world of ordinary people and their needs for recreational refreshment apart from their workaday lives.

He saw the ADA not as a burden—though it cost more than \$12 million in park funds—but as an opportunity to be more inclusive, to make park resources available to a new clientele. He established offices in St. Louis and Kansas City to reach out to urban dwellers, and particularly to African-Americans. He encouraged and assisted MPA in establishing its Urban Populations Outreach Project (UPOP) to provide park-based educational experiences for disadvantaged inner-city youths. He made overtures to Native American tribes once resident in Missouri, seeking their involvement with the park system—and with the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, which he headed for Missouri—and supported the development of an

data. These surveys revealed that user satisfaction was approaching 99 percent.

Doug's time as director also saw the addition of seven new parks and historic sites—Route 66, Morris, Ted and Pat Jones/Confluence Point, Clark's Hill/Norton, Current River, Rock Island/Katy Trail, and Island Mound—and an agreement for public use of the 61,000-acre Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry. And he spearheaded the creation of the Missouri State Parks Foundation to provide an additional source of funding for special needs of the system.

But, what does he think was his most important contribution to Missouri state parks? "Not long after I came here, I saw there was a really big problem ahead. Almost all of the middle and upper managers were about the same age, having come to the system in the late 1960s and early '70s. With increasing state retirement benefits it was apparent that they would nearly all be retiring within the

made at the local level. He started the Joe Jaeger Academy, a training program to inculcate new staff with the heritage and traditions of the Missouri park system and to provide management training for more seasoned staff.

And how does he feel about the management picture now? And the effect of his leaving after fifteen years? Pretty good, it seems.

"We've got a great group of employees. The new generation of mid-level managers are

youngish, but professionally trained and very much in touch with the traditions of the Missouri park system.

The current economic picture is a little grim, but that will pass and I think they'll do just fine."

And Doug Eiken, what's in his future? "I want to spend time with Dorothy and I'll have more time to enjoy my grandkids. But I'd also like to teach part time, perhaps do some consulting, and work with other park systems ... share some of my experience in improving their planning and public involvement processes ... maybe write a bit. I'll continue to support the growth of the Missouri State Parks Foundation and I'd like to continue my involvement with NASORLO. And then, there's the horses. I think I'll stay busy."

The Missouri Parks Association congratulates Doug on his long leadership of the state park system and extends its best wishes for a long, productive, and happy retirement.

UPOP Partnerships 2009

MPA's Urban Populations Outreach Program (UPOP) began in Kansas City in 2001 as an initiative aimed at bringing youth from the inner city to Missouri state parks for interpretive programs and recreation. The success of UPOP-KC led to the development of similar programs in St. Louis, Joplin and Columbia. These programs have served some 5000 youths in the past eight years through an ever-expanding array of partnerships.

Longtime Kansas City UPOP coordinator Shalonn Curls now represents her inner city district in the Missouri General Assembly, but she remains passionately committed to UPOP. This summer Heather Pabst, an Independence school teacher, will help coordinate the program, along with staff at the Discovery Center and the various parks to be visited. A new feature this year, Wheels Can Take Me Places, is a January-June program for 22 students of Hispanic, African-American and Asian descent

from the Scuola Vita Nuova Charter School that will end with a week-long bicycle trip on the Katy Trail from Clinton to St. Charles in cooperation with DNR/DSP, the Kauffman Foundation and the Urban Kansas City Community of Cyclists.

The St. Louis UPOP is coordinated by Mike Nelson, who will lead a one-week program at Babler State Park for youth from eight different organizations and schools in partnership with the Open Space Council, and by the Green Center and staff from five St. Louis-area state parks that will be visited by participating youth. The Columbia UPOP, which continues to be led by Meredith Donaldson of Friends of Rock Bridge, partners with various area youth agencies and the Boone's Lick Chapter of master naturalists with funding from the Downtown Optimist Club as well as MPA. In Joplin, the program has been coordinated through the Wildcat Glades Conservation and Audubon Center in coop-

eration with staff at Roaring River Park and with funding from the Corkle Charitable Trust.

Members of the MPA board of directors who have spearheaded the programs and assisted with fund raising in the various cities are Mary Abbott of Kansas City, who conceived the idea, Ron Coleman of St. Louis, Tony Robyn of Joplin, and Julie Fisher and Mary Barile of Columbia.

These programs have added a rich diversity of conservation and outdoor recreation experiences to the lives of many youths and their families who ordinarily might not have had such opportunities available to them. ***If you would like to assist in helping to get more children outdoors, please consider a tax deductible charitable contribution payable to the Missouri Parks Association (for UPOP); send to Missouri Parks Association, c/o The Callaway Bank, P.O. Box 10, Fulton, MO 65251.*** No child should be left inside on a Missouri summer day.

Caves, streams, grasslands, picnics, biking — UPOP opens new worlds to inner city kids.



Save the Current River, Again!

Fifty years ago, Missourians banded together to save their pristine rivers, the Current and Jacks Fork, from a plan to dam their free-flowing, spring-fed waters. As a result, the rivers became the first congressionally designated national rivers in 1964. As part of the deal that created the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, three crown jewels of the state park system—Big Spring, Round Spring and Alley Spring state parks—were transferred to the National Park Service as focal points of the new national park. Hence MPA's continuing interest in the riverways.

Management by the National Park Service provided many important protections, but lax enforcement has led to overdevelopment, pollution, violation of public easements and serious off-road and equestrian damage. Other national parks that safeguard natural resources, like the Buffalo National River and Yellowstone National Park, have management plans that balance recreational use and sustainable natural resource standards. At long last, the National Parks Service is seeking public input for a new Ozark National Scenic Riverways General Management Plan.

This is a time when direct citizen participation is vitally needed. Your first opportunity is a week-long series of public meetings:

Monday, June 22, 5-8pm, Van Buren Community Center, Van Buren

Tuesday, June 23, 5-8pm, Eminence High School New Gym, Eminence

Wednesday, June 24, 5-8pm, Ozark Natural and Cultural Resource Center, Salem

Thursday, June 25, 3:30-7pm, Courtyard by Marriott, Columbia

Friday, June 26: 3:30-7pm, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Clayton

If you cannot attend one of the National Park Service public meetings, and even if you can, please review the plan and submit your comments in support of better management practices including implementation of appropriate usage standards. To view the ONSR 20-page "Preliminary Alternatives Newsletter" and submit comments go to <http://parkplanningnps.gov/ozar> and select the link "*Open for Comment" on the top line opposite Ozark NSR. The link to the newsletter is at the bottom of the comment page. You may submit comments in writing or, most recommended, electronically. **Comments are due by July 31.**

To learn more, you can view and share a new MPA and Friends of Ozark Riverways DVD entitled *Why We Must Save the Current River, Again* (<http://vimeo.com/4860397>), which was originally presented by John Karel as the keynote at the MPA annual meeting at Montauk State Park last fall. It tells the story of the riverways from the conservationist point of view, reminding us all why those who came before saved the Current and Jacks Fork rivers and why we must save them again. Then check the MPA website (<http://parks.missouri.org>) for a citizen's guide to the National Park Service alternatives prepared by leaders of MPA and Friends of Ozark Riverways.

Every comment counts, so please speak up.



July 2009

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