

A Splendid Setting for a National Celebration

William J. Whalen



The Festival of American Folklife has become an important tradition in the Nation's Capital. Thousands of Americans look forward to the opportunity to revisit this exciting program, while as many others find their first visit to be equally rich and meaningful.

The National Park Service is pleased to combine its resources and talent again with the Smithsonian Institution for the 13th edition. As in previous years, the Festival talks about, sings about, and dramatizes, America's unique cultural story. It brings together Americans from almost every walk of life for what has been described as "the great family reunion."

For more than a century our national parks, monuments and memorials have been called upon to preserve and protect America's greatest natural and historical treasures. We of the National Park Service have proclaimed this time as "Year of the Visitor" and we are delighted to welcome each of you to the Washington Monument Grounds, site of this year's festival. It is a splendid setting for this type of national celebration.

It is here that the life of George Washington, our beloved first President, is remembered daily by thousands of national and international visitors to the city of Washington, and nearby are remembered the lives of Presidents Lincoln and Jefferson.

At the National Park Service we believe that parks represent our nation's greatest features and resources. The parks serve not only to protect the best of our natural and cultural resources but also provide all Americans with matchless opportunity for human enjoyment, education, and inspiration. Certainly, it is these opportunities that visitors experience at the Folklife Festival.

The Festival has always been marked by growth; and this encourages our participation. The National Park Service is a people-serving agency, and our involvement in programs such as this one is typical of our commitment to provide new areas and facilities and existing ones for active outdoor recreation and reflection, regardless of whether the park population lives in or near urban centers.

Your participation and interest are to be applauded as well. We are grateful for the continuing and active support you have shown in the Festival and hope you find harmony and delight during your visit.

Welcome and enjoy yourself.

William J. Whalen is the Director of the National Park Service.