

The courage of liberty

There is a very old staircase in New York Harbor, and I felt a deep sense of responsibility as I climbed it the first time. The metal steps clanged with each step, creating a tinny echo within the hallow chamber as I ascended.

It was my first day working at the Statue of Liberty, and one of the daily duties was to climb to the crown and back to ensure all visitors were out.



Outdoors

By Paul Zaenger

Working in the nation's largest city was not my idea of a great career move. A strong, but short-lived, recession had taken hold in the fall of 1982, and I was begging for a job in any national park or monument.

I called the supervisor at "The Statue" every week. Maybe I wore her

down. She offered me a job to start right after New Year's.

The big city was intimidating, but I was determined to get work and would go anywhere in the U.S. I would be bold and have a positive impact in this job, even though I was out of my element.

It's not unusual for rangers to have an impact on parks, but it's also true that a park can have strong impacts on rangers. This was the case for me with the Statue, and the strength I gained from her is the kind of strength and courage we need today.

There are, of course, all types of symbols associated with "Liberty Enlightening the World" as the monument was originally named. She was a gift from France to America on the Centennial of the Declaration of Independence. Although she wasn't finished until 1886 – 10 years late – due to fundraising in the U.S. for a pedestal, she almost immediately received national fame.

My trips to the crown were not unusual. Clanking away as I hiked up, it was easy to see the pylon-like shape at the center of the structure. Designed by Gustave Eiffel (before he planned the famed tower in Paris), the four gigantic iron posts, running from base to crown support the weight of the entire structure were originally made of iron and copper.

To make the statue full size, many lattice-like wood forms were fashioned from smaller models. Craftsmen pressed and hammered thin copper sheets onto the forms.

In some cases the copper was forged with heat to make the sheets more flexible. Thus refined, molded and shaped, each piece, starting at the base and working upwards, was attached by bolts to the center structure; feet, robes, arm, shoulders and so on. Assembled first in Paris, the pieces were crated and shipped to New York.

Views from the crown are limited, but people gain a strong sense of purpose being there. Witness her face: eyes fixed, jaw squared, brows firm. This is the look of fortitude.

She is not standing idle, but is in stride, noting that freedom is always on the march. But most importantly, you can see the torch.



At the time of her dedication, Liberty was the tallest structure in New York at 305 feet. The thickness of each copper sheet is 3/32 of an inch (the thickness of 2 pennies placed together), and if you total the weight of all the copper in the statue you'll have 31 tons. (Courtesy National Park Service)

IF YOU GO:

Any visit to New York offers many activities, but allow a day to visit the Statue of Liberty. A ferry will take you to Liberty Island from either New York or New Jersey. Summer is a very busy time. To visit the base of the pedestal or climb to the crown requires advance registration, and booking months in advance is recommended. Wintertime reservations are more available. Learn more at www.nps.gov/stli.

From the start she was designated a beacon of light. Her arm thrusts the lamp more than 50 feet into the air. The flame, illuminated poorly with electric technology of the 1880s, has become more visible and prominent over the decades.

The torch led President Grover Cleveland to utter these words at the dedication: "... a stream of light shall pierce the darkness of ignorance and man's oppression, until liberty enlightens the world." It begs the question, 130 years later, of how we see the light of liberty.

World circumstances have cast us into a cauldron of fear. The 24-hour media cycle hammers us with dread.

But liberty is not about fear. Although fear is instinctive, so is courage. We should not be paralyzed by dwelling in the netherworld between fight or

flight.

A national contest on "What the Statue of Liberty Means to the American People" was conducted at Liberty's 50th birthday (concluded in 1938). The winning entry was from Sheila Crooke of Urbana, Ill. On the eve of World War II, after having been issued a gas-mask, most of Europe seemed gripped by fear.

Crooke wrote, "All over Europe they said: I'm afraid, I'm afraid. When we steamed into New York Harbor the other day, I got up very early so as to be sure of getting a good long look at Liberty, standing there. So proud, so peacefully reassuring, so – God bless you, old girl! So unafraid!"

This time of the year offers each of us a chance for reflection; to step back to look at our lives. Everyone is here by the actions of our ancestors who faced troubles as great, or greater than ours. They were determined people.

Maybe we need to cast our gaze into the world with light shed from Liberty's torch. Rather than hide it under a bushel of fear, we should answer her call to honor those ancestors and their resolve.

She lifts her lamp to serve as an ever present reminder that the people of freedom are filled with bold courage.

Paul Zaenger has been a supervisory park ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park since 1993. Other park assignments include Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

When it is cold, try a warmer

The traditional way of trying to stay warm in the outdoors is to bundle up with layers of heavy clothes. When you are outside, and you feel a chill coming on, the response is to put on more clothes. This all works well, but

relies on preserving and holding in, the heat that your body produces. This is all well and good as long as you are producing body heat.

Many years ago, someone invented a hand-warmer. One of the early types I remember was the Jon-E warmer. You filled a reservoir with petroleum naphtha (lighter fluid) and lit a wick. The device was somewhat similar to a cigarette lighter.

The warmer was then placed in a pocket where you could place your hands and get some relief from the cold. The Jon-E lasted around six hours before needing refueling. Zippo currently makes a similar device that runs up to 19 hours before refilling is necessary.

Both of these had their drawbacks. One was the fumes they gave off while burning. Sometimes the fumes were

so strong that it could give you a headache. The second drawback was that you had to carry a can of lighter fluid around with you for refilling purposes.

Another type of warmer used a solid stick of fuel. This fuel stick was made of a charcoal. You lit one end of the fuel stick and placed it in a holder. I had one of these for a while and its drawback was it would become unbearably hot.

The temperature was not adjustable and could actually burn your skin in a fairly short time. Both of these types of hand warmers had an open flame, or lit end. This could cause other obvious problems if you happened near flammable fumes.

A rechargeable battery operates another type of hand warmer. One called the Energy Flux claims to reach temperatures of 130 degrees and that a charge lasts up to six hours. The drawback to this type is having a way to recharge it while outdoors. It requires a wall outlet or a computer charge port. This is probably not something I will have along on my next outdoor excursion.

The next method of warmer uses a supersaturated solution and crystallization method. Basically, it generates heat through the exothermic crystallization of a solution released by breaking a small packet of a chemical, usually sodium acetate. These are very effective as heat is generated almost immediately.

The pack can be placed on almost



Doing projects and recreating outdoors in the winter months can be much easier when you use handwarmers. There are several options you can choose from. (Photo courtesy of Clipper Klingsmith)

any part of the body and provides heat over a large area. Rescue personnel often use this method to help treat hypothermia patients. The bad part of this method is they are effective for a very short time, usually 20 minutes to a maximum of two hours.

Probably the most convenient and cost-effective warmer to use is the air-activated packet. Several companies, including Hot Hands and Grabber Warmers make these. They contain cellulose iron, activated carbon and several other dry ingredients. They produce heat from the exothermic oxidation of iron when exposed to air.

The warmer is packed in an airtight container. Upon tearing it open, give it a shake to mix the ingredients, and heat will begin shortly. These warmers work for 5 to 18 hours, but begin

to slowly diminish after a few hours. These all have an expiration date printed on the package and usually will not work past the printed date.

The toe and foot warmers average around 97 degrees but can reach 115 degrees while the hand and body size warmer average 135 degrees but may reach as high as 158 degrees. Because of the possibility of the higher temperatures, it is recommended that the warmer never be placed directly touching the skin.

The air-activated warmers are very lightweight. A package of several can weigh just a few ounces and they take up very little space in a pack. These are also relatively inexpensive, costing around a dollar and change each. Warmers are available in several sizes for toes, hands and a larger one called a body warmer. The body warmer can be placed on your chest, outside the base layer of clothes. It has an adhesive strip to hold it in place.

The warmer should not be overlooked by anyone outside in the winter months. I find them especially useful when sitting in a stand or ice fishing. When being physically active, your body produces more heat. When you are outside, but not physically active, these can be the ticket to comfort. Try using a few warmers on your next outdoor adventure. Until next time, stay warm and see you on the trail.

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse.



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

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