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Grand Canyon News Release

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“Holiday in the National Parks” Celebrated at the White House Grand Canyon National Park Ornament Displayed on the Official White House Christmas Tree

Grand Canyon, Ariz. – A Grand Canyon National Park ornament is prominently displayed on this year’s official White House Christmas Tree. The tree is the centerpiece of elaborate decorations celebrating the theme of “Holiday in the National Parks.”

“It is an amazing honor for the National Park Service to be selected as the theme for the White House holiday decorations by the President and Mrs. Bush,” said National Park Service Director Mary A. Bomar. “Mrs. Bush is the best champion for our national parks, and the beautiful decorations in each state room showcase the natural and historical treasures found in parks throughout the country.”

The tree, located in the Blue Room, is adorned with handmade ornaments representing the country’s 391 National Park Service sites. “Each ornament on the magnificent 18-foot Fraser fir was designed by an artist selected by the park,” said Bomar. “The ornaments tell the stories of our parks, just as our parks tell the stories of our nation.”

The ornament representing Grand Canyon National Park was painted by local artist Bruce Aiken, who attended a reception at the White House hosted by First Lady Laura Bush on November 28. Aiken recently retired from the National Park Service after more than 30 years, all of which were spent at the Grand Canyon. The painting on the ornament depicts a view from the North Rim of Grand Canyon including Deva, Brahma and Zoroaster Temples as well as Oza Butte all of which are covered in a blanket of snow.

“Over the course of my career I have had many unique and interesting opportunities. Without a doubt, painting this ornament depicting the Grand Canyon for the First Lady and the White House Christmas Tree has been a highlight,” stated Aiken.

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The holiday displays incorporate the wide variety of natural, cultural, and recreational features preserved by the National Park Service. Models of icons such as the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and the Statue of Liberty share space with paintings of scenic vistas from Grand Canyon, Zion, and Rocky Mountain National Parks. Holiday garlands intertwined with park objects including seashells, pine cones, and gold aspen leaves add to each room's festive feel.

A highlight of the decorations is a scaled-down, but architecturally accurate, gingerbread reproduction of the south view of the White House, a unit of the National Park Service. The edible masterpiece includes Bush family pets Barney, Miss Beazley, and Willie frolicking on the lawn with moose, elk, raccoons, and other animals found in national parks.

“National Parks commemorate the people, places, and events that define the American experience,” said Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne. “I am so appreciative of President Bush's efforts to recognize the important role of national parks in American society. Our country will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016 and the President has been instrumental in establishing the National Park Centennial Initiative to prepare the parks for the next century.”



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