



Another Weird but True Park Story

by Ken Miller

Rancho San Antonio Park is quite possibly the busiest park in Santa Clara County. The park closes one-half hour after sunset and it is always very difficult to get people to leave on time. The park entrance has an electric gate set on a timer to help control access. The entrance gate closes automatically at sunset and the exit gate is closed by rangers when everyone is out. The exit gate driveway also has tire spikes to prevent late visitors from driving in the exit when the entrance gate has already closed.

Recently two rangers stopped to check on a vehicle in the park after closing. A woman reported that she had returned from her run to find that her car had two flat tires. The rangers asked when she had driven into the park and the woman said around 5:15 PM. The only problem was that the park closed at 5:30 PM that night and the entrance gate had closed at 5:00 PM. After a few more questions the woman admitted to driving in though the park exit. Her explanation was that she had to go through the exit as the entrance gate had already closed. The rangers waited with the woman for a tow truck for her car. After the tow arrived the woman volunteered that the weirdest part of the evening was that the exact same thing had happened to her just a few months earlier.

25 Reasons to attend the 2002 California Parks Conference in San Diego

An opportunity to catch up with, commiserate with, and conspire with friends and colleagues you haven't seen for too long...much easier to see Kangaroos, Koalas and Kookaburras at the San Diego Zoo than booking a flight to Australia...learn verbal judo from experts without getting kicked in the groin...margaritas with or without salt...the possibility of riding a surfboard, building a snowman, and climbing a sand dune in the same morning...meet a man from Scotland who walked the entire length of the Baja Peninsula, voluntarily...meet the only Ranger in the state who patrols his beat in an airplane...visit one of the earliest aqueduct systems in the western United States, the Old Mission Dam...see a California Gnat Catcher...Guacamole & Chips in Old Town San Diego SHP...it's considered bitterly cold here when the temperature drops below 68 degrees...the Gaslamp Quarter National Historic District...the oldest operable merchant sailing ship afloat, the Star of India...fish tacos, sushi, falafel

Import Notice to All Members Don't Forget

PRAC annual membership dues are due.
If you have lost your renewal notice,
use the form on the back page
Do it today!

From the President's Desk

As I sit in front of my computer on this dark and stormy night, typing my first presidents message I am in somewhat of a state of disbelief. When I was first elected as the Region 1 Director 3 years ago, I had no intentions of running for president of PRAC. After some encouragement from John Havicon and other fellow park professionals I decided to run for the challenge. I now have the honor to serve as the president of PRAC for the next 2 years. I wish to thank the members for giving me the privilege to perform this duty for PRAC.

I look forward to the next 2 years and all that can be accomplished for PRAC and its members. The last election has created some changes on the board. John Havicon will now be serving as the Past President. Russ Hauck will now be leaving the Board, after several years of dedicated service. Lee Hickinbotham will be serving as the new Region 2 Director, replacing Jeff Gaffney who has decided to step down after serving PRAC well. I now must appoint someone to complete the remaining 1-year on my term as Region 1 Director. Walt Young has been re-elected and will be serving another term as the Region 4 Director. I encourage all of you to get to know your regional representative on the PRAC Board and share any thoughts or ideas you have for workshops or recruitment with them.

The 2002 Parks Conference will be taking place in San Diego on March 4–6. The PRAC/CSPRA conference planning committee has been working very hard on this conference. This conference will be another exciting opportunity to attend quality, park related training, network with fellow park professionals, and of course, have fun.

I have lots of ideas and many goals I would like to accomplish for PRAC in the next 2 years. I am very interested in hearing any ideas my fellow members have for PRAC. I would like to see the continuation of the implementation of the PRAC recommended training standards. The Standards and Training Committee has been working very hard for the last 2 years on developing these standards and the work continues with the implementation.

I look forward to working with you all over the next 2 years to keep moving PRAC forward. If you would like to volunteer to help with any of PRACs' committees or if you have any suggestions or concerns, feel free to contact me by phone at (707) 847-3245 or e-mail mchiesa@mcn.org. I hope to see you in San Diego this March.

Mike Chiesa

Region 5 Challenge

By Tom Ash

I was thinking just the other day why Region 5 and Southern California in general are not well represented in PRAC. I have heard a few things from some people about problems in the past but nothing that I would consider not staying involved or joining PRAC. One thing I hear all the time is that all the opportunities offered by PRAC are in Northern California. That may well be true but for a good reason. Involvement and membership is much higher in the northern part of our state. Almost everything done in PRAC is done by volunteering the time and effort to organize training and other events. Logistically, it is very difficult to offer anything in Southern California when you're up North. It takes help locally when such a large area is to be covered. I have met many fine Park professionals from all over the state since my involvement with PRAC and for that reason alone it is worth becoming a member.

This year the California Parks Conference is in Region 5 the theme is *Bridging Borders Partnerships Beyond Our Boundaries and Within*. It's time we bridge our own borders and create more partnerships right here in Region 5. Call me, write me, or email me anytime and I will give you many more reasons to join PRAC. I will always have an open ear to here from you. I'm proud to tell people that I work as a Park Professional and that I am a proud member of the Park Rangers Association of California. See you all at the conference in San Diego!

Dear fellow members,

Well this is it! My term is up as president. I want to thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to lead this organization. I thank all of you who have volunteered their precious time and worked on my team to keep this organization moving toward the future. This organization is run strictly by volunteers and would not exist without them. I am so proud to be one of them and give my time to help promote the "Park Ranger" profession.

I encourage you all to continue your efforts and be part of your new president's, (Mike Chiesa) team. There is still much to be done with the training standards and we are going to need your help on how to implement them. Hopefully within this next year, we will start to develop some specific programs for some of our standards. The Standards and Training committee has been meeting about every three months and will continue to do so. The next meeting is scheduled for January 9th at West Valley College, (Saratoga). If your interested in attending, please contact me or Mike Chiesa.

The San Diego Conference is on track Doug Bryce, Kim Duclou and the rest of the San Diego team has been working hard to develop a top rated event for us. Your conference package should have arrived in your mail. You can also follow updates on our website. I look forward to seeing you there for some excellent training.

Thanks again for the privilege of serving you. It's been a honor.

*Past President,
John Havicon*

Tales of the Urban Ranger The David Lynch Moment

by Teri Rogoway

I was patrolling my park, which consists of a flood plain, a series of underpasses, a carousel, and the downtown area which hosts Christmas in the Park. Christmas in the Park could also be known as "It's a Small World" meets the North Pole.

I had just passed an animated reindeer when my cell phone began to buzz. I pulled over and answered. On the other end of the call was the voice of Lisa, the Supervisor at the carousel. She said there was a man with no legs sitting on top of the dome climbing structure in the middle of the playground, drinking a beer. I was glad I was pulled over.

I called the dispatcher and reported the incident and put myself out as en-route to the carousel.

When I arrived. The disabled man was back in his wheelchair, cackling, and trying to let himself into a side gate to the carousel. The carousel staff declined to let him ride because it was posted that people under the influence may not ride. It was also posted that drinking is not allowed in the park. Since he couldn't ride, he wanted his money back.

So we followed him as he wheeled over to the concession stand and the staff gave him back his money. Any semblance of politeness ended.

He was quite animated, turning from side to side in his wheelchair, hollering obscenities and flailing his arms. At one point I was startled to see the chair start to tip. Seeing my face react to his near accident sent him into a louder tirade. He was not threatening at this point and he was

leaving the park. I followed him at a safe distance in order to report to PD. He was not amused.

He crossed the street and met up with a lady friend. Relating his story to her, he turned and bellowed many unmentionables back at myself and the employees. All the while, his long long long mustache was flapping in the breeze and his arms were flailing. I was amazed at his ability to stay upright.

He worked his way down the sidewalk until he was across from me and then proceeded to do an impersonation of myself. My eyebrows raised and I smiled. At one point, he started to stand. Considering he had no legs, I thought for sure he was going to fall. I reminded him from across the street to be careful because I feared he might fall into the street. He was not amused.

His female friend was through with her phone call and started to walk away. He decided to follow, turning on occasion to remind me of all the various body parts he thought I had become and several he felt I was lacking. I blinked and followed at a safe distance.

When PD arrived, they seemed to have previous knowledge of this gentleman and his methods. Since they had such a good relationship, the officer wanted to write the ticket. All this time I kept wondering what it was about this man that made him so familiar. As he wheeled away from the officer after signing his citation, I heard him below that he'd see him in court. It was then that I remembered. He was the first man I had ever cited. He had been intoxicated then as well.

Tales of the Urban Ranger

Squirrels that go squeak in the night!

By Teri Rogoway

It seems some rangers are a magnet for certain kinds of animals. Some rangers are gifted and no matter where you go with them, you are sure to see something interesting. Others just have a knack for attracting the odd. Ranger Holly has a special affinity for squirrels.

She was not having a particularly good day when it all began. The weather was clear and warm, the park was full of kids, and she was on her way out to the ticket booth to bring in the attendant for the day. As she got ready to cross a small bridge in her huge utility bed Ranger truck, a squirrel ran out in front of the car and sat down expectantly. She stopped, but the truck rolled forward enough that she could no longer see the squirrel. She waited a good 5 to 10 seconds and then figuring the squirrel was gone, rolled forward.

Thump...thump...

Her eyes widened and she hit the breaks. Mouth opened in disbelief she hesitated to get out of the car and look. Just then she heard a noise and looked in the rear view mirror. Behind her, about 200 feet up the trail was an entire class from the Youth Science Institute summer camp. They were walking straight toward her.

Images of horrified little kids in her mind, she jumped out of the vehicle and grabbed a shovel out of the bed of the truck. There was no place to put it in the truck that it wouldn't show. She called for backup. Ranger Doug arrived with a garbage bag just as the kids were approaching. They managed to scoop it out of sight just in time.

Her story continues....

Later that night, Ranger Holly was attending the local police academy. The guest lecturer was very dry and monotone. In other words, the class was fighting not to nod off. About half way through the class, they began to hear a noise.

Chirp! Chirp! Chirp!

At first no one paid attention. The longer it went on, the more it became noticeable. Pretty soon, the unknown chirping was

more interesting than the speaker and a few recruits fought not to snicker. Finally, the instructor gave up and asked in an exasperated voice,

“What is that noise!?”

Class was dismissed and the recruits filed out into the locker rooms and out to their cars. As Ranger Holly came around the corner, she noticed a group of recruits crowded around her personal truck. Realizing that these recruits in particular were prone to pranks, she was suspicious.

“Hey Holly! That sound is coming from your car!” One of the most machismo recruits, complete with big biceps, pointed to the hood of her car.

“Come on, pop the hood!”

She hopped in and unlatched the hood. He started to lift the lid, peeking under it at the same time. When it was about 1/3 of the way up, he screamed an ear piercing girly shriek and dropped the hood, which slammed shut but not before the squirrel darted out from where it had been trapped underneath. The squirrel ran one way, the recruit ran the other. The instructors came out to investigate the commotion.

As if that weren't enough, she had yet another episode.

She was in the Ranger Station eating lunch at her desk. Unbeknownst to her, someone had left the back door open. She was chewing away on her turkey sandwich when she felt something brush against her foot. She wiggled a little and ignored it. The sensation came again, a weird little skittish feeling. Slowly, she realized something was wrong.

She pulled back and looked at her feet and found a squirrel sitting on her foot. She hollered. The squirrel ran, peeled out on the vinyl floor in the visitor center and made the sharp turn out the back door.

Any of these incidents in themselves may have been amusing, except that they all happened within the same work week and that alone helps it border on the bizarre!



Star Gazing in Bidwell Park

by Steve Hogue

In November, 2001, the Kiwanis Club formally opened the new Community Observatory at Horseshoe Lake in Chico's Bidwell Park.

The Observatory, made entirely by volunteers with donated money, will be free of charge. The facility is expected to be open on Friday through Sunday evenings and will be staffed by volunteers from the North Valley Astronomy Club (NVAC). The main emphasis of the Observatory will be educational. School groups studying astronomy will be welcomed and invited to visit the facility to get a practical understanding of the science.

The Observatory boasts an interesting design. Rectangular in shape, only half of the facility is covered by a peaked rooftop. The other half is flat. When volunteers running the facility want to look at the heavens, they simply flip a switch and the rooftop rolls back towards the flattened portion of the rooftop. The volunteers can then sight either of the two donated, mega-telescopes at their target. One of the telescopes is electronic in nature and will even-

ually be hooked up to computers in the facility. The data from the telescope will then be displayed on the internet for the above mentioned school groups, or any other school groups in the world for that matter, to chart as part of their studies.

At the insistence of the Kiwanis Club and NVAC, they also constructed a small ranger station in the facility that utilizes a separate entrance way. Chico rangers also have a ranger station at a nearby fire station, so the new ranger station will likely be set up as an office area for the Chico Park Department's Park Watch volunteers, while still serving as a place for ranger's to fill out reports or take breaks.

Unfortunately, the Community Observatory is still short the money necessary to purchase solar panels for electrical power. The estimated cost at the time of dedication was \$10,000. Currently, the reliance for electricity is on generators and batteries. Hopefully that will end soon so that the Observatory can fully function and carry out its educational mission.



Dem Bones

by John Havicon

Here's an unusual story that I never imagined would happen. Last summer, I was patrolling on one of the wildlife preserves we have in South Sacramento County. This particular preserve has a large hole dug into the ground with a lake in the bottom of it. The hole was made by the construction crews building Interstate 5 years ago. They needed soil for building bridge abutments so they took the soil from this spot until it started to fill with water. As I was walking along the embankment of this hole, I noticed some bones sticking out of the ground. My minor knowledge of paleontology, lead me to believe I found some fossils.

When I told my fellow Rangers, I sure they thought I finally went off the deep end. We find cow bones frequently and that is what they thought these were. Determined to prove them wrong, I went back to the site with my Jr. geologist gear, (a screwdriver and a whisk broom), and scraped around the bones until they were free. One of the

bones was quite large, about a foot long and five inches in diameter. Another bone was obviously a socket from a "ball and socket." I carefully packaged the bones and sent them off to a local college that had a paleontologist professor.

A week went by before the professor called back to tell me what bones I had found. He was very excited about them. He said the large bone was a tibia of a giant ground sloth, another bone was a femur of a camel and the third bone was a musk ox. All three bones were from the Pleistocene era, 16,000 to 20,000 years ago. With visions of the La brea Tar Pits in my head, I led the professor to the site. He found two more bones, a rib and a vertebrate but that was it. I guess the rest of them ended up under some bridge.

The bones I found were curated and place in a natural history museum. Once again I learn how fun and interesting this job can be and it's amazing what you find when you get out of your truck and explore a little.

Oscar

by Teri Rogoway

Today I looked out the window and saw a bush go by. Yes, it was a bush, so I looked closer and discovered there was a man dragging and carrying huge branches and twigs around the edge of the construction fence to the edge of the plaza. I went to investigate.

As I approached, I noticed he seemed distressed. I asked the construction artists if he was with them and they said no. So I called PD on the radio and told them I was going to make contact. As I walked up on him, I shook up my pepper spray and had it behind my back. I sensed something was not right.

He was alone and he had constructed what looked like a huge teepee of wood and twigs. He seemed frantic in his building, as if he were on the verge of doing something that was a matter of life and death, that kind of frantic.

I said hello and asked him what he was doing. He looked at me and I saw that he was 18 or 20 at most. He was very distressed. He had a look of utter bewilderment and sadness in his eyes. Hopelessness.

I put away the pepper spray and with a gentle voice asked him what was wrong. He looked at me and broke down in tears. Ashamed of his crying, he tried to turn away from me.

“Hey, hey come here.... Come on it’s all right... Let’s sit down here and talk OK? Tell me what’s wrong, tell me why you’re so sad.” He cried like a little boy and opened his soul to me.

He said he’d been arrested. While he was in jail some man tried to play with him. And then he spoke in fragmented sentences of his childhood and I realized there had been abuse. He was crumpled up in a little heap next to me telling me in broken English that ever since he was born no one had liked him. They had always said he was different. They had always treated him bad. I told him that was not a very nice thing for people to do.

“It sounds like you’re having a bad day. It’s going to be OK. Everybody has bad days sometimes. Would you like a drink of water? Would you like to come into the Ranger station with me and have a drink of water? It’s warm inside.” Just then, a gust of wind blew past us and made me shiver.

He was covered in dirt and shaking from either cold or distress, or some form of withdrawal, but he looked like a little boy. He looked at me with such wonder, as if he couldn’t believe what I was saying. I beckoned him and he went with me inside.

On the way I noticed he had pulled a bunch of stuff out of the garbage and was sorting it. But he couldn’t keep his attention on it because he kept going back to making his Teepee. I asked him if he was building a house. He said yes, that he needed to make something. I said it was a nice house, but we aren’t allowed to build houses in the park. I asked him if when he was done, he could just lay the sticks flat. I told him that would be just fine.

Looking at the sorted garbage, I told him it was OK if he wanted to look in the trash cans. He could keep whatever

he wanted, but he needed to put back whatever he didn’t want. I asked him if he wanted a couple of garbage bags for his things and he looked at me like I was handing him gold.

We went inside to the visitor center. On the way I asked him his name. He said it was Oscar, in a shy voice. I smiled and said my name was Teri and I introduced him to Kyu-uk, the visitor center attendant. There was an awkward moment when he wanted to shake her hand and she said no, that it was OK. I said in a soft voice,

“We aren’t allowed to shake hands with anyone. They are afraid someone will try to hurt us so they don’t let us shake hands. It’s OK.” And he relaxed. I gave him a drink of water and for about ten minutes I treated him like a normal person and I gave him a tour of the visitor center. He really liked the king snake.

When it came time to go, I walked outside with him and I found him the largest, toughest garbage bags I could find. I gave him a few. He looked me in the eye and said thank you, thanks for the water and thanks for talking, that he really appreciated it. As he walked away, he smiled a little and he seemed a 100% better than that frightened little boy I saw when he first turned to face me.

I think he was just in need of someone to come along and treat him with kindness. I think he needed someone to pull him out of his despair and distract him from his sadness. So for a few moments he had a drink of water and got to look at a pretty snake and nobody hurt him.

I found out later, through describing him to my husband who is a psychologist, that he was probably schizophrenic. He was very mildly so, but ill all the same. He was so gentle and soft spoken. When I see people like him, I want someone to take them in and give them a hot bath and feed them and make sure they have clean clothes. These people should be in homes where people can watch over them and where they can have a safe place to stay and feel protected if they want.

Sometimes, as Park Rangers, I think we forget that we are dealing with people. I think it is easy to see the clothes, the dirtiness, the booze, or the disheartened, far away look and think... That’s going to be a problem later on. I think it’s easy to lose patience with homeless people since we see them so frequently in parks and when we tend to deal with them, it is not pleasant. As enforcers, I think we harden ourselves to them.

As Rangers, as multi faceted people, I think we should try to remember that this is somebody’s son, or somebody’s brother or sister or aunt. We should remind ourselves to take each person case by case and take the time to talk and treat them like normal people. We might be surprised to find they have entire stories or personalities or some kind of knowledge to share.

If there is one thing I have learned about this job, it is that it is not boring! We just need to remember to be human, too. Try not to be hardened by the tough nuts. Remember that there are kids out there like the one I met today. I hope wherever he is, that he is all right. Oscar. He was just a kid.

A Book to Report On

by Lee Hickinbotham Jr.

Resolutions, resolutions, resolutions. It's that time of year when we make a resolution to do something different. Lose weight, do more foot patrols or just take the time to read more books. If you do more foot patrols you will lose weight. Two problems solved easily. Reading more books is something I can help you with.

Recently we had an in the Senior Ranger position opening. Our superintendent decided to let the three in house candidates work out of class to try out the position. I was elected to do the first rotation. Now I have been in lead positions in the past. As a full time ranger often I am required to lead the seasonal employees, volunteers, and the CCC. However this time I wanted to do more then just lead. I wanted to motivate my staff while keeping them enthusiastic and excited to be part of my team.

I found this great book (by mistake) on outdoor leadership. As I read I became more motivated and confident in myself as a leader. This book provided information on all aspects of leadership, including finding courage, communicating effectively, making decisions, building teams, dealing with stress, and inspiring your team to be their best. The author is a mountaineer with thirty years of experience as a leader. He uses his personal experience to help the reader relate to real life leadership situations.

The book is titled *Outdoor Leadership: Technique, Common Sense & Self-Confidence* by John Graham. The cost is around \$17.00 and is easy reading.

As I use the information from this book with my own confidence I know that I will have the skills and knowledge to be a successful leader.

Remember to take the time to read and enjoy the book.

Another Book Review

Fire on the Rim

by Ken Miller

Fire on the Rim is the best book that I've read about working in a park setting. Stephen J. Pyne spent 17 seasons working as a seasonal fire fighter for the National Park Service on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. He is a now a professor at the University of Arizona. Pyne condensed his experiences into one season for the book. Although Pyne was a firefighter the book is about much more than just fire fighting. He was a ground level employee who pretty much called things as he saw them for the book. Highlights include the rivalry between the National Park Service and Forest Service at their mutual boundary. Each agency's management strategy created no end of grief for the other agency both to field employees and managers. The camaraderie between a small group of field employees is especially well written as well. The changing of park workers duties as the seasons change is also well written.

Pyne worked when fire fighting science was transitioning from suppressing every fire to using prescribed burns for vegetation management. He describes a prescribed burn that was scheduled for the fall instead of the spring because the powers that be didn't want to or weren't able to pay overtime in the spring. The fire ended up crowning, killing mature trees and leaving the understory untouched. Pyne is very positive about his work experiences but certainly calls things as he sees them. Each chapter is another adventure that would seem unbelievable to most but if you have worked in the parks field you know that everything is true. I got the book from the local library and fully intend to buy a copy soon.

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2002**

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