



Will Trade For Help

by Lee Hickenbotham Jr.

Are you ready to help? PRAC is calling on all members. *The Standards and Training Committee* has worked for over two years to put in place the Standards to become a certified "PRAC Generalist Ranger." We are now moving forward and putting together a subcommittee for documentation review.

We want to give the members an opportunity to be involved. The subcommittee will consist of at least three members. However, the more people involved the better. The subcommittee will meet once every quarter to review documentation to determine if members meet the PRAC Standards. The location of the meetings will be held in a area that is the most conducent for all involved.

Here is what I am willing to do. The first three members to contact me via email at region2@calranger.org and sign up for the subcommittee will receive a 2003 conference sweatshirt. This is what I am willing to trade for your help. The sweatshirts will be given at the first meeting.

Thanks in advance for helping PRAC and the park ranger profession to grow stronger for current and future generations.

Top Ten Arguments Opposing Legislative Budget Cuts To Rangers & Parks!

10. Can you really see a cop giving a campfire?
9. Nobody is sure what we do, but they sure are glad to see us at 10 p.m. when their car battery is dead.
8. If they're not playing in the park, they'll be robbing your house.
7. Most special events won't fit in your back yard.
6. Who will speak for the trees?
5. For some people, it's their only safe place to play.
4. Childhood memories for the children of the future.
3. Parks now or health care later.
2. Who else is going to volunteer to move a pissed off rattlesnake?
1. Park and recreation for millions of good people or jails for thousands of bad people.

Top ten reasons we're rangers and not cops!

10. We prefer granola bars to donuts.
9. We get to stop and smell the flowers.
8. We took a vow of poverty.
7. We like cleaning toilets.
6. Summer vacations are overrated.
5. Cops don't get to drive tractors.
4. Green is my favorite color.
3. It's hard to fit 15 55-gallon trash bags in a Chevy Impala.
2. Is there a better job?
1. The hat!!!!

Top ten bad excuses for park violations!

10. It's OK, I know the Director.
9. But I've been doing it 15 years.
8. The other ranger said I could.
7. But I can't shoot my gun in town.
6. I thought the tree was dead.
5. My dog can't read.
4. That's a baggie of oregano, I'm making spaghetti tonight.
3. He is on a leash. It doesn't say that I have to hold it.
2. That is my ice chest, but it's not my beer.
1. Signs? What signs?

Compiled by Amy V. Lethbridge with help from: Terry Rogoway, Jeff Price, Lee Hickenbotham, Andy Mink, Sandy Ferria, Steven Thompson, David Updike and Bruce Weidman

From the President's Desk

As we struggle to deal with the summer crowds and the strains they create on our parks, many of us must also contend with budget issues. As California faces the worse budget deficit in its history, many local agencies, as well as the stat, are feeling the sting. As park professionals, we are accustomed to operating on shoestring budgets and doing more with less. The current issues are creating an even larger strain on the operations of many agencies including positions being eliminated, services being reduced, and parks being closed. During these hard times, the value of a generalist ranger is even clearer and is important to emphasize. An employee that is able to handle most of the problems in a park from law enforcement to maintenance, perform interpretive programs, and is able to help visitors find the best hiking, picnicking, or tidepooling spot is invaluable to the agencies that have these employees. Whatever challenges you or your agency may be facing, remember that you are not alone. Your fellow park professionals whether from a city, county, special district, state or federal agency are facing the same challenges as you. If you would like to share with other members what issues your agency is facing or solutions to problems you have found please submit that information either on PRACNet or write an article for The Signpost. Your fellow PRAC members will only benefit from your input.

Membership levels continue to climb. We are very close to the 300 member goal I have set for the organization. We are also close to the 20 member goal from the State of Nevada I set so we can move toward the creation of a PRAC Region 6. The scholarship committee is reviewing scholarship applications. The results will be announced in September.

The 2004 Parks Conference Committee has been formed and the planning process has begun. The committee is off to a good start with some really good ideas. Several PRAC members from the Southern California area are involved in the process but there is still room for more help. If you are interested in helping plan the Anaheim conference, please let me know.

Your Board of Directors is working on presenting a training workshop in a region near you. If you are interested in a specific training topic, please contact you Regional Director. If you are not sure what region you are in, go to our web site for a map of the regions. Volunteers are still needed for some of PRAC's standing committees. If you would like to help out with the Interpretive, Maintenance, Resource Management, Fire/EMS, Law Enforcement or Marketing/Recruitment Committee please contact me and I will help get you going.

I hope you all have a great summer. I hope to hear from you or see you at one of the upcoming PRAC events.

Stay safe.

Mike Chiesa

The art of good customer service

by Don Pearson- Region 3 Director

Customer service; what does it have to do with parks. A common misconception is if we provide parks people will come! If that is our attitude and that is what we project to the public, then our parks will go unused and we as rangers will no longer be needed. The past few months I have met many new park professionals. A common theme has surfaced. The need for more enforcement training is very important to all of us. We need to blend in an equal amount of customer service as well. Have you ever wondered why some visitors never return to your park?

It is said:

- 1%-Die.
- 3%-Move away.
- 4%-Just naturally float.
- 5%-Change on a friend's recommendation.
- 9%-Can get it cheaper somewhere else.
- 10%-Are chronic complainers.
- 68%-Go elsewhere because the people they have dealt with were indifferent to their needs.

People have four basic needs:

- To feel welcome.
- To be understood.

To feel comfortable.

To feel important.

Although these needs are basic, we often overlook them because of our need to enforce park rules. No matter what level of enforcement skills we possess, our people skills should be first and foremost on our minds as we interact with our visitors.

I would like to share a brief quote that we use during our seasonal staff training. The following is the first thing they read regarding our agency's customer service.

*The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think, say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, church or home. The remarkable thing, is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past; we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. **The only thing we can change is our attitude!** It is up to you!*

Remember, attitude and good customer service can and should go hand in hand with any good training program.

Sale! Sale! Sale! Sale!

by Lee Hickinbotham Jr.

Have you seen the PRAC merchandise? Do you own any PRAC merchandise? Are you doing your part to promote our association by wearing a PRAC hat or polo shirt so that all can see?

Well, if you answered "no" to the above questions do I have a deal for you. PRAC has a new improved polo shirt available. No more boring tan or white. It's time to look sleek and professional. It is black with an embroidered PRAC logo above the left breast and come in all sizes. We also have hats in four exciting colors and two different logos. Coming soon we will have an all-new t-shirt. It will also be black with the PRAC logo above the left breast and the website address on the back across the shoulders. I can't wait!!!

But wait there's more... That's not even the deal I was speaking of. Here is what I am willing to do. I am going out on a limb without consulting the board and offering a deal that you simply can't refuse.

All 2003 conference sweatshirts and t-shirts are being marked down 50%. PRAC hats in the four exciting colors are being marked down from \$13 to \$10 and all PRAC pocketknives are just \$2.00. I am taking a huge risk so order now. The sale will end Labor Day weekend.

For information on our merchandise go to the website at www.calranger.org.

Hi-Tech Hide and Seek

by Pam Helmke

Geocaching, a hi-tech version of hide and seek, is becoming more popular and the number of participants seems to grow each year. Geocaching involves the use of a Global Positioning System (GPS) device to locate small caches hidden by others. Players go to a web site to find the coordinates and a few clues then it's off to find the prize. Once found you sign and date the log indicating you were there.

Caches come in a variety of sizes and shapes, although most are small, plastic food storage containers. Some, known as "microcaches," are as tiny as a 35mm film can and contain only a log. Others can be "virtual caches" where the seeker needs to find a specific location such as a benchmark.

Geocaching's popularity is growing, especially in the technology savvy areas of our state like Silicon Valley, and public parks and open spaces are the areas of choice to hide caches. Over the last year or so I've spoken to a few rangers who aren't sure if Geocaching is an appropriate use of public lands. They have shared concerns about people going into sensitive areas and leaving behind the caches (which some consider a form of littering). Geocaching, like any type of outdoor recreation, should be encouraged and participants educated in to ways to play without damaging resources or breaking park rules.

The simplest way to monitor Geocaching activity in your parks is to play along. Check the most popular game web site www.geocaching.com once or twice a month to see if there are caches in your area then go out and find them. You'll get practice using your handheld GPS device, mingle with visitors and enjoy your workday a little more. Once found go ahead and log in. My partner and I have even

created our own ranger web persona and add our finds to the web logs. The other players often comment on our participation and it seems to make rangers seem friendlier. We typically leave a junior ranger sticker in the cache when we sign in.

Problems with inappropriately placed caches can be handled through the web site. The site can connect a user with the person who hid the cache. Explain why the cache was removed and ask that person to contact your office to talk about a more suitable location to make arrangements to pick up the cache.

I've only experienced one problem with a player who refused to be educated and move their cache. I contacted the web-master by e-mail and explained the problem. They asked for copies of the information I sent to the player and the players response and quickly removed the cache from the web site. The game designers are very aware of the need to maintain good relationships with park management agencies. The site even recommends using virtual caches on National Park lands where the placing of a physical cache is specifically considered littering. Geocaching is a fun way to spend a day outdoors. While cachers try not to spoil someone else's hunt, once the find is made they will quickly come up and say "hi." I've meet cachers from other parts of the country and many locals. Even non-players are interested when they see the ranger walking in small circles with a hand-held electronic device. The time spent having one-on-one interactions with the visitors builds friendships and support for our parks and open spaces. Isn't that one of the reasons we're out here?

Heart Attacks & Aspirin

by John Havicon

If you have taken a recent C.P.R. for the professional rescuer course, you may have been introduced to using aspirin to relieve symptoms of a heart attack. You may have also seen the television commercials expressing the same. New studies have shown that aspirin can provide immediate relief for some heart attack victims. aspirin helps reduce the risk of a heart attack by diminishing the clotting action of blood platelets. Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen and other painkillers are not equal to aspirin and does not have the same affect.

Persons with a history of cardiac illness should consult with their physicians prior to using aspirin for a sudden heart attack as there can be other complications such as aspirin allergy, bleeding stomach ulcers or they may already be on some blood thinning medications.

As professionals, we are limited to the protocols of our agencies. More than likely, your protocols will not allow you to administer aspirin to cardiac victims, even though it is an "over the counter" product. Administration of aspirin will be similar to administrating the victim's "nitroglycerin" tablets to him/her. The basic rules to follow are: the cardiac victim

must be conscious; he or she must have the medication with him/her, (you should not provide it); and they have the ability to swallow. Only the victim can administer a medication to himself or herself. At our level of training, giving a cardiac victim a pill (nitro or aspirin) is beyond the scope of our training. Your role is to assist the victim. You can help retrieve medication, open the container and even pour the correct dosage into his/her hand, but the victim must consciously take their medication. The ideal aspirin to use is 2 chewable baby aspirin (81 mg each) or 1-(325 mg.), adult aspirin, with a small amount of water.

Remember, every heart attack is considered an emergency, even if the pain goes away. If the victim took aspirin and now is feeling relieved, continue the paramedics. Be prepared to perform C.P.R. as the victim's condition may quickly change.

If you have any questions regarding Aspirin therapy or sudden cardiac illness, please contact me at (916) 875-6672 or onbelay@attbi.com. Remember, you will protect yourself by following your local protocols and doing only what you were trained for.

Know the Signs

by Lee Hickinbotham Jr.

Over Memorial weekend I went camping in the foothills below Yosemite. Yes, I was fortunate enough not to have to work. While camping a friend asked if I wanted to go on a run. As we headed up the trail on a short 3-mile run, I realized how much different running at 3,000 feet elevation could be than running on the trails back home. I felt a little overheated and short of breath. However, I contributed the symptoms to the heat (85 degrees) and the altitude. At the end of the run I felt nauseous, overheated and slightly light headed.

Our bodies are made up of approximately 70-percent water. That water plays an essential role in our everyday living. Water gathers in our cells. Between our cells the water flows to every part of our body carrying oxygen and nutrients. When our kidneys work to remove the waste that accumulates in our body, the waste needs to be dissolved in

water. Without the water, there is a strain on the kidneys to work, which can be damaging.

Sweat, which is mostly water, is released from our body when our pores dilate. The sweat pools on the skin and is evaporated into the air. The evaporation of the sweat is the body's way of regulating its temperature. It is common for the body to release approximately a liter of sweat an hour during exercise in a hot environment. The body starts to show warning signs when we are putting out too much water and not replenishing our supply.

The first warning sign, which is minor, comes in the form of heat cramps. Heat cramps are characterized by spasms in the muscles being exercised. Massaging the muscles and drinking fluids usually alleviates the cramps. The next advanced signs steps you up into the heat exhaustion category. The signs associated with heat exhaustion are profuse sweating, rapid heart rate and breathing, nausea, dizziness, headache and exhaustion.

Treatment for heat exhaustion consists of moving the patient to a cool shady area and giving fluids orally. Fluids should also include electrolytes or at the very minimum a pinch of salt. If heat exhaustion is not treated it can lead to heat stroke.

Heat stroke is no longer a warning sign. If you have reached this stage start to worry. Heat stroke can be fatal. Signs and symptoms include dry, flushed hot skin, rapid heart rate, incoherent speech, disoriented and unresponsiveness. Treatment includes first checking the airway, breathing and circulation if the person is unresponsive. If the ABC's are clear then cool the person ASAP. If you have a hose try and concentrate a steady flow of water to the trunk of the body. Ice packs at the back of the neck, armpits and groin are also effective. If hosing the person with water or applying ice packs are not an option submerge the patient into a body of water. If submerging, make sure to manage the airway and look for signs of hypothermia.

Heat emergencies can affect anyone. The worst offenders are the people who know the signs and symptoms but ignore them or contribute their bodies warning signs to other factors. I had not consumed enough water before starting out on my run. I had one 16-oz bottle earlier in the day and I had pushed myself in the heat without taking in account the elevation and temperature of the mid day. So be smart and consume copious amounts of water. You can check your water intake by monitoring your urine. If it's clear and odorless you are doing fine.



Interpreter's Corner

by Denise Edwards

As the summer months approach and attempt to swallow up all of our valuable time and energy, it is easy to focus on the immediate demands of the parks: increased visitation which relates to more medical calls, more accidents, more law enforcement and of course more reports. It is easy to forget that more visitors equates to more opportunities to reach the public audience with your interpretive skills.

Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principals for Interpreting Nature and Culture by Larry Beck and Ted Cable provides a current perspective on the old traditional approaches to interpretation. If you don't have time to read this innovative and informative book or if you have read it but are a little fuzzy on the principals, I will summarize the key points and create a quick, down and dirty guide for you to take into your summer whirlwind.

1. Lighting a spark: To spark an interest, interpreters must relate the subject to the lives of the people in their audience.

2. Interpreting in the Information Age: The purpose of interpretation goes beyond providing information to reveal deeper meaning and truth. In other words, stay abreast of current information and understand how to get through to your audience.

3. Importance of the Story: The interpretive presentation—as a work of art—should be designed as a story that informs, entertains and enlightens.

4. Provocation: The purpose of the interpretive story is to inspire and to provoke people to broaden their horizons.

5. Holistic Interpretation: Interpretation should present a complete theme or thesis and address the whole person.

6. Interpretation Throughout the Life Span: Interpretation for children, teenagers, and seniors—when these comprise uniform groups—should follow fundamentally different approaches.

7. Bringing the Past Alive: Every place has a history. Interpreters can bring the past alive to make the present more enjoyable and the future more meaningful.

8. Modern Tools of Interpretation: Technology can reveal the world in exciting new ways. However, incorporating this technology into the interpretive program must be done with foresight and thoughtful care.

9. Enough is Enough: Interpreters must concern themselves with the quantity and quality (selection and accuracy) of information presented. Focused, well-researched interpretation will be more powerful than a longer discourse.

10. Technique Before Art: Before applying the arts in interpretation, the interpreter must be familiar with basic communication techniques. Quality interpretation depends on the interpreter's knowledge and skills, which must be continually developed over time.

11. Interpretive Writing: Interpretive writing should address what readers would like to know, with the authority of wisdom and its accompanying humility and care.

12. Attracting Support and Making Friends: The overall interpretive program must be capable of attracting support - financial, volunteer, political, administrative - whatever support is needed for the program to flourish.

13. Interpreting Beauty: Interpretation should instill in people the ability, and the desire, to sense the beauty in their surroundings—to provide spiritual uplift and to encourage resource preservation.

14. Promoting Optimal Experiences: Interpreters can promote optimal experiences through intentional and thoughtful program and facility design.

15. Passion: Passion is the essential ingredient for powerful and effective interpretation—passion for the resource and for those people who come to be inspired by it.

This last one sounds like the most important one to me. Without passion that initial spark will fizzle fast. Well, there you have it—the fifteen guiding principals. The book can be read cover to cover or used as a reference tool to focus on a few points of clarification. Hopefully this gave you a little insight as to what this book has to offer.

As with all disciplines, current interpretation methods are a product of evolution over time. To get a feel for how this book came into being you will have to start with Enos Mills' *Adventures of A Nature Guide and Essays in Interpretation* published in 1920. With the foundation laid for the philosophy of interpretation, next came a book called *Interpreting Our Heritage*, written by Freeman Tilden. This book provides the first 6 principals of interpretation that will be later elaborated on in interpretation for the 21st Century. A few others that should be added to your interp library are *Interpreting for Park Visitors* by William Lewis, *Environmental Interpretation* by Sam Ham and *Interpretation of Cultural and Natural Resources*. It may just be a matter of dusting off the old book shelves or taking a trip to Barnes and Noble but its worth taking a few minutes to refresh your skills for the season now upon us!! Have a great summer and stay safe.

The California Ground Squirrel

by Tom Malone

One of the most common wild animals visitors to parks and open spaces are likely to come in contact with is our very rambunctious and sometimes destructive California Ground Squirrel. It is identified in the scientific community as: *Spermophilus (Otospermophilus) beecheyi*

It is by far the longest animal in the squirrel and chipmunk family. An adult California Ground Squirrels can reach a whopping 19.75 inches long from the tip of its inquisitive nose to end of its bushy tail.

When you visit park sand wild areas you may recognize these “characters” by their grey coloration with a dark “V” pattern on the top of their shoulders. They have an attractive bushy tail of grey, edged with white. The *Peterson Field Guide to Mammals* can be a helpful tool in identifying this furry mammal. You will most likely notice these animals when they are in their “alarm mode,” usually sitting atop some object “chirping” or barking an alarm for all other neighboring squirrels to hear. The danger could be from a hawk, bobcat, a coyote, a snake or in of our urban parks, a dog. The alarm sound is known to change frequency and pitch with the type of perceived threat. Take a listen next time you hear it and try to determine what the squirrel is trying to communicate.

It was a recently discovered that adult ground squirrels are partially to completely immune to rattlesnake venom. It is not something they are born with as the young squirrels can become rattlesnake food. Adult ground squirrels have been known to harass, injure and even kill rattlesnakes threatening their dens. So much for the thought that these are helpless little fur balls! I have witnessed adult rattlesnakes with bloody tails exiting ground squirrel territory and one adult squirrel aggressively chasing a southwest long-tailed weasel out the squirrels’ den and 20 feet across an open field. “Feisty” comes to mind as an appropriate adjective to describe this rodent.

Another surprising fact about of the ground squirrel is that they are not entirely vegetarian. In addition to eating grass and herbs they eat seeds, bark, roots, fruit, but they are known to raid bird nests and eat birds’ eggs and young birds. They will also dine on insects, mice, lizards and do on occasion eat carrion. They in turn are prey animals for snakes, bobcats, coyotes, mountain lions, hawks and golden eagles.

Known as a ground squirrel you still might see one up a tree or shrub. When danger threatens they will usually beat a hasty retreat down and into their underground burrow however. These burrows can sometime reach 200–feet in length! That is lot of digging! This is where the ground squirrels and urban park managers seem to butt heads. There is no doubt that the hardy and adaptable ground squirrel can do thousands of dollars of damage to turf and trees. Agency liability due to trip hazards from open den holes is also another concern. The scariest threat is that occasionally the squirrels carry fleas which are infected with the bubonic plague pathogen (rare).

Like all wild animals ground squirrels will not make good pets. It is also good advice to not feed wild animals. Do not pick up any sick or injured animals, rather notify your wildlife rehabilitator, vector control or health official. If you must collect dead animals use a shovel and/or wear latex gloves, then “bag” the remains to prevent the spread of pathogens. Remember sick squirrels may carry many flea or tick borne diseases, for this reason protect yourself at all times.

Armed with the above information rangers and maintenance staff alike should be able to provide a basic but interesting interpretive talk that includes our most common park “critter” the California Ground Squirrel.

Help your visitors enjoy their outdoor experiences through awareness and understanding and eventually they will appreciate parks as the valuable asset they are.



**Park Rangers Association of California
Board Officers 2003**

President

Mike Chiesa
(707) 847-3245
FAX: (707) 847-3325
E-Mail: president@CalRanger.org

Region 1 Director

Denise Edwards
(707) 539-8092
FAX: (707) 538-8038
E-Mail: region1@CalRanger.org

Region 2 Director

Lee Hickinbotham Jr.
(650) 617-3156 EXT. 1633
FAX: (650) 858-2659
E-Mail: region2@CalRanger.org

Region 3 Director

Don Pearson
(530) 644-2545 EXT. 307
FAX: (530) 644-1003
E-Mail: region3@CalRanger.org

Region 4 Director

Walt Young
(310) 858-7272 EXT. 102
FAX: (310) 858-7212
E-Mail: region4@CalRanger.org

Region 5 Director

Don Web
(760) 244-1007
FAX: (760) 244-2744
E-Mail: region5@CalRanger.org

Past President

John Havicon
(916) 875-6672
FAX: (916) 875-6632
E-Mail: pastpres@CalRanger.org

The Signpost Editor

David Brooks
(831) 336-2948
FAX: (831) 335-1178
E-Mail: newsletter@CalRanger.org

Scholarship

Bill Hendricks
(805) 756-1246
FAX: (805) 756-1402

Executive Manager

Todd Kellog
Office: (707) 847-3077
FAX: (707) 847-3077
E-Mail: execmanager@CalRanger.org

WebMaster: Jeff Price

(805) 278-9201
E-Mail: webmaster@CalRanger.org

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EMAIL:
prangerd@ix.netcom.com

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Park Rangers Association of California
P O Box 153
STEWARTS POINT, CA 95480-0153
(707) 847-3077 FAX (707) 847-3077

Park Rangers Association of California
P. O. Box 153
STEWARTS POINT, CA 95480-0153

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