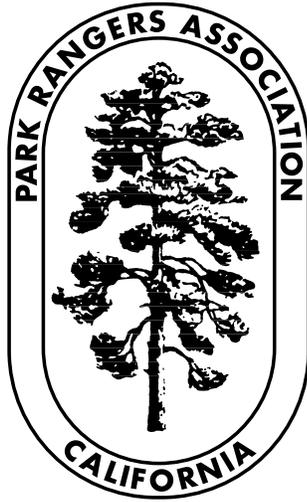


The Signpost

November–December, 2004



Save the Date

by Lee Hickinbotham Jr.

Pull out your calendars, get out your PDA's, log on to Outlook. It's time to set the date for the 2005 California Parks Conference. The conference is being held March 7-10, 2005 at the Sonoma Wine Country Doubletree Inn in Rohnert Park.

If you missed the Tahoe conference, you have a second chance to redeem yourself and attend a **great** conference! We have combined the planning teams from the Tahoe and Anaheim conferences, which will make for a great event.

Boy do we have some field trips scheduled for Monday! Do you like to play golf? There is a golf course, one of Sonoma's finest, located right across the street from the hotel. How about the pistol competition? There has been an on going rivalry between the Glendale boys and the MRCA guys. This year however the Grey Bears (the retired old guys) are going to give the young bucks a run for their money. Did I mention the interpretive possibilities that are also available? Would you like to take a tour of Alcatraz?

This year we are offering a Sunday/Monday opportunity, the Environmental Living Program (ELP). Th is an interpretive program that enables children to go back into time and become soldiers and learn about the history of the Angel Island. By taking advantage of this training, you get to stay the night on Angel Island in the Army barracks and experience the training through the eyes of a child.

I have not even mentioned the wine tasting tour. For roughly \$45 you can spend four-hours touring the wineries and tasting your favorite wines and the best part is you don't have to drive. A shuttle is included in the price.

I don't know where to begin in describing the sessions that will be offered so I won't. I will only say that you won't be disappointed.

You have heard me say it before and I am not afraid to say it again but I am so **excited!!!!** This is going to be such an awesome conference.

See you in March.

Important Notice!

Most of your memberships will expire at the end of December

Don't forget to renew your PRAC membership for the new year!

From the President's Desk

Winter is already upon us. I don't know about you but my summer sure seemed to fly by. As the year draws to a close, the time is also here to renew your membership dues. PRAC is a great organization that you can get a lot out of. PRAC is, however, a non-profit organization and operates almost entirely off of membership dues. The more members we have, the more funds we will have to do things for the members. Dues renewal notices and ballots will be going out to applicable members. Be sure to return your ballot and your membership dues as soon as possible to keep your membership benefits up to date, including receiving your new username and password for the member's only section of the PRAC web page. As an added incentive, members who renew their membership by January 31, will receive a cool special gift. So, hurry, cast your vote and renew your membership to do your part in keeping PRAC running smoothly.

It is election time for the director offices of regions 1, 3, and 5. If you are a voting member, you should be receiving your ballot soon. A big thank you to all who threw their hat in the ring to run for office. PRAC could not function without the hard work and dedication of our volunteer board of directors. It is a big commitment to run for the board and I commend all that are willing to run for an office. If you have not had the pleasure of serving on the board or a PRAC committee, I urge you to volunteer and become more involved with your association.

I am pleased to announce that we have awarded the 2004 scholarships. Ann Baldwin has been awarded the 2004 Thomas Smith Scholarship and Joseph Garbarino has been awarded the 2004 PRAC Scholarship. Congratulations to both Ann and Joseph. I wish both the best of luck in pursuit of your educational and career goals.

The 2005 Parks Conference is coming together nicely and should prove to have another excellent, action-packed program including excellent training sessions, field trips, and entertainment. Please mark your calendar, the dates are March 7-10 and it will be held at the Sonoma Wine Country Double Tree. You won't want to miss out on the spring event all park employees will be talking about well into the summer. Registration packets should be going out in the mail to members in late December. Check our web site for the latest information.

Speaking of conferences, the time is here to start selecting a venue for the 2006 Parks Conference. The 2006 Conference will be held at a southern venue. Directors Lori Charett and Dave Updike are on the site selection committee. Possible locations being considered are Laughlin, NV and Palm Springs. If you would like to be involved with the 2006 Conference please contact Lori, Dave, or myself.

Alright, that is all I have for now folks. I hope you all have a safe start to winter and a great holiday season. I will talk to you again next year!

Stay safe,

Mike Chiesa

Interpreter Corner

by Denise Edwards

PRAC recently had the privilege of hosting a successful and fun-filled Certified Interpretive Guide Workshop. The class was taught by MRCA's, Amy Lethbridge who is an Instructor for the NAI (National Association of Interpretation) based course. She has been responsible for bringing many new interpreters into the field from all sorts of backgrounds.

This class was comprised of folks from various county and city agencies, the National Forest Service as well as conservation organizations. The 40-hour class meets both certification requirements for NAI as well as for PRAC. The entire PRAC standards and training requirements for the domain of Interpretation can be met by taking this one class.

The workshop was hosted in the Saratoga hills at the Sanborn Youth Hostel in one of the many beautiful Santa Clara County Parks. The environment was perfect for letting imaginations run wild with ideas for the 10-minute interpretive presentations that each student was required to give on the last day. Congratulations to all you new CIG's!!!

A special thanks goes out to Amy for her time and dedication to PRAC and the folks at Sanborn Youth Hostel for allowing PRAC to continue to provide its services for those in the park profession who are looking to further their knowledge and abilities.

If you are interested in this course or have an idea for other classes or workshops, feel free to contact your Regional Director or visit the PRAC website to offer your ideas or suggestions.

When to Wear the Hat

by Lee Hickinbotham Jr.

What distinguishes a park ranger from any other park professional? Is it the uniform? No, maintenance, naturalists and interpreters all wear tan and green. Is it the truck? Not really, we all drive cool green or white trucks. So, you are probably wondering "what is it?" It's the hat!

The hat I am referring to is not just any old hat. It's not a ball cap, cowboy hat or hard hat. This hat is very unique and has many names. It has been called a flat hat, campaign hat, Stetson, Stratton, drill instructor hat, Canadian Monty hat but the most famous name is the "Smokey the Bear" hat.

The true origin of "the hat" is unknown. However, according to information I ascertained from the CSPRA web-page, the potential originator was a fellow named John B. Stetson. Stetson was a hat maker from Philadelphia. One evening while sitting around a campfire with some fellow men, Stetson made his first genuine felt hat. It had a four-inch brim, four-inch crown and a strap for a hat-band. (Sound familiar?) This hat evolved into what we as park rangers wear today.

So, when do we wear the hat? Well, whenever you are involved in a park related event, anytime you are doing an interp program and doesn't a law enforcement contact go smoother when you have on "the hat?"

It's a symbol of what a park ranger is and stands for. If you ask me when you should wear "the hat," I will tell you; "anytime you are in uniform, on duty and representing your agency and profession."

Be proud of what you do and wear the hat.

Letters from the 2004 PRAC Scholarship Winners

Statement of Interest

I was drawn to this field by my experiences as a Camp Fire Girl, which instilled in me a love for the outdoors and for the history of place, a desire to preserve and protect the land, and a commitment to pass on that respect to younger generations. I have a degree in Recreation Administration and wish to work directly with families in a natural outdoor setting, and so am pursuing an education in the Park Management field with an eye to becoming a park ranger with special interest in interpretation. To this end I have been volunteering at the historic Bernal-Gulnac-Joice Ranch in San Jose. I find the teaching and interactive aspects of this job enormously satisfying.

After a layoff in 2001, and subsequent economic downturn, I found it difficult to land another job. This scholarship would assist me to pay tuition, books and incidental costs for my continued education in Park Management at West Valley College, where I am maintaining a 4.0 GPA. I could take a full schedule of classes, graduate sooner, get a job more quickly, and become a very happy camper indeed.

Sincerely,

Amy Baldwin

Dear Committee;

I am currently a second year student in the Park Management program at West Valley College in Saratoga, California. I am 43 years old, and am returning to school to facilitate a new career with the National Service. After a successful career in the restaurant management, I wish now to become professionally involved in the outdoors.

My intentions are to pursue and obtain an Associate Degree in Park Management, supplementing my studies with an interest in Horticulture. I then intend to transfer to UC Davis or The University of Hawaii at Hilo for an advanced degree in ecological studies. Ultimately, I would like to apply the knowledge as a Ranger in the National Park Service specializing in sound ecological horticulture practices and interpreting such skills to the public.

I am particularly interested in this scholarship for financial reasons. I will not be working this summer due to an internship I have accepted with The Student Conservation Association. I will be a member of Exotic Plant Management Team partnered with The National Park Service. After training in Seattle at the SCA headquarters, I will be assigned to the Southwest Region; home-site in Carlsberg Caverns, New Mexico. I will spend the next 10 weeks traveling to 11 other National parks eradicating non-native plant species.

A PRAC Scholarship Award will greatly assist me in continuing with my education, and allow me the benefit of this tremendous opportunity that I have been given with this summer internship. I would certainly appreciate your consideration.

As I will be "on-the-road" until August 28th; I can best be reached at my above email address and will be honored to provide any other information to help facilitate your consideration.

Thank You Sincerely;

Joseph Garbarino

Developing A Low Stress Work-style

by Lori Charett Gerbac, Region 5 Director

Are you stressed? Join the club of millions of other Americans! More and more people I talk to have had or are currently experiencing the effects of stress from both their personal and/or professional lives and we all know that work stress carries over into our personal lives and vice versa. From personal experience, I can tell you that in the last couple of months I have had my dose of stress with handling the increasing demands of my profession all while purchasing a home, moving, setting up house, getting married, coping with an ailing relative, and a multitude of other things—I qualify as being “stressed” and beyond what I am accustomed to and my body has told me so! In talking with friends and co-workers, I find that of course, I am not alone and that in itself is sometimes comforting. As a result of the stress, I have also experienced a variety of inconvenient, sometimes troublesome effects. While trading stories with people, I have learned that our bodies react very differently and mysteriously to stress. It induces an array of reactions like acid reflux, headaches, jaw clenching, insomnia, anxiousness, hostility, increased heart rate and blood pressure, changes in appetite, and the list goes on and on. It’s likely that everyone reading this is or has experienced one or more of the effects I listed. I hope this article will help you identify your “stresses” and help you develop a healthier, low- stress attitude.

Stress is a fact of life—especially in the workplace, where you may be confronted day after day with deadlines, too much to do in too little time, conflicts with co-workers or the public, ever-changing job requirements and technology. The negative feelings of stress, irritability and frustration can make you unhappy and affect your job performance, hurt your relationships and even damage your health. So, what can you do about stress on the job? Though you can’t make it go away, you can learn to develop a low-stress work-style before stress overcomes you.

There is a difference between a bad day at work and being overcome by stress. One way to find out if you are overcome with stress is to ask yourself if the following applies to you:

- You have trouble sleeping because you are worried about work
- You feel like you don’t have enough time to relax.
- You skip meals, breaks, or vacation time because you have too much work to do.
- You feel anxious about not having enough time to get all your work done.
- You think about what you’ll say next while someone else is speaking.
- You frequently show a lot of frustration and impatience.
- You often look very tired.
- You seem to get angry easily, even over small problems.

How many can you relate to? If you experience even one

symptom, adopting a low-stress work-style will help put you back in control over job stress.

Think about how you react to stress. Perhaps someone you have an appointment with has not arrived yet – does this constitute as a crisis and ruin your whole day? It does if you have a high stress workstyle and in the long run it leads to being less productive, feelings of unhappiness, being overwhelmed and isolation. People who develop a low stress work-style will accommodate unexpected changes in their schedule without getting angry, they will seek explanations without accusing or judging others, they are calm, despite delays or interruptions and they listen and devote their entire attention to whomever speaking.

Develop a Low Stress Attitude

Once you are aware of the damage a high-stress work-style can do, you can begin to develop an attitude that helps you deal with high-stress situations in a low-stress way. Your new attitude enables you to feel more relaxed, get more done, and be more creative. Unfortunately, developing a low-stress attitude does not happen overnight—plan on several months to a full year for your low stress attitude to develop. But there is no time like the present.

Ask yourself if your reaction will help Will it make you more productive? Will it improve your relationship with the person? Is it worth potential damage to your health? Will it matter a month from now?

Find out what stresses you. Which events trigger your high stress reactions? This way you can spot potentially stressful events and avoid a stressful reaction to them. You can begin to choose how to respond to them.

Change how you see things. Changing how you see a stressful situation is the last and most difficult part of adopting a new attitude. It means keeping the “big picture” in mind without letting daily events trigger a high stress response.

Practice a Low-Stress Work-style

By practicing a low-stress work-style, it will help you overcome stress in two ways: you’ll develop skills that will help keep some stressful situations from occurring and you’ll create an organized work-style that will lessen the impact of unavoidable job stress on your well-being.

Set your priorities. Take a few minutes each day to list your priorities.

Take breaks and be sure to take vacation time. A break can go a long way to relieve stress. Time away prepares you to meet new challenges when you return.

Accommodate change. Try to leave yourself a little time each day to accommodate unexpected changes.

Coming to a Park Near You – Burl Theft

by Heidi Horvitz

Fall is upon us and like any good park employee, I anticipate the rains with a huge smile and knowledge that we can get a much-deserved break from heavy visitation. As the warm weather draws to a close we can look back on the impacts visitation has on our parks. In urban areas, the frustration may be from graffiti and vandalism. In rural areas, it may be impact on resources and our patience. With the rains come a decrease in the numbers (though gortex has changed that a bit!), but in the parks on the north coast where I am employed, we were hit by a new breed of “park abuse”.

One morning in early January, Ranger Bill Walton was driving to work on Fort Ross Road. This is a very rural 1+ lane road that is used more by pigs and turkeys than cars and bicycles. It is only 2 miles in length and very steep, wooded and narrow. Bill, being the ever-observant multi-tasking ranger, noticed mud in the form of tire treads leading out from a field that has no roads, or access. He stopped to discover some nighttime visitors had been hard at work stealing burls from a California bay laurel. “Burls?” asked the Sonoma County District Attorney’s office? Yes, burls. What for? Money.

Here is the recipe. You take a few guys (usually on meth), a winch, chain-saw, shovel, pick and a large pickup, put them in the woods at night in the winter in a rural area, and you will get - resource theft. And what do they do with the burls? Sell them. Depending on the quality and variety of the tree (walnut, bay or redwood), the cost can vary from \$0.80 to \$2.00 per pound. If your burl weighs in at 1000-5000 lb., it can be a very profitable, tax-free, highly illegal form of revenue generation. The burls can only be taken **during the wet season**. The burls must be transported to a burl purchaser while still damp (or the burl can crack). The burls are then sold for \$10/lb (quality dependent) to Europe to be thinly sliced and used as veneer for high-end vehicles.

Needless to say, the entire Fort Ross State Park staff was stunned and angry. We called in local resources from the Sonoma County Sheriff’s Department and Sonoma County Regional Parks Department to assist with the investigation and got to work. We were incredibly lucky. The thieves had a bit of equipment failure (broken winch) and we knew they needed to return for the 3000 lb. burl that they had wrapped in chains and ready to load.

Two men returned during daylight hours to the main day use area of Fort Ross State Historic Park in a pick up that didn’t quite fit in with our normal clientele. The County Park Ranger (your PRAC President, Mike Chiesa) was in the right place at the right time and very observant. A vehicle stop was made for “non-payment of day use fees” and identification of two men was established (we’ll call them Bill-Bob and Bob-Bob).

During the investigation an associate of Bill-Bob was mentioned (Jim-Bob) by a Mendocino County Sheriff’s Deputy,

a visit to Jim-Bob’s “house” was made, and Jim-Bob, the associate, was now a suspect. He was found within 20 feet of the buried, covered stolen burl. Unfortunately, Jim-Bob ran into the dark of a wet, redwood night fueled by the knowledge that he had just violated numerous probation restrictions and possessed stolen property. We chose not to give foot-pursuit because we knew who he was and where he lived. His home was an acre of trashed cars, extension cords, rolls of chicken wire spread out in the mud, uneven footing and numerous places to hide – not to mention drugs and stolen property. Jim-Bob is still being sought after by California State Parks for a \$100,000 warrant and the Mendocino Sheriff’s Department for two no-bail warrants. (You can hide for a very long time in the back-country of Mendocino County, though rumor is that he is down visiting the greater Los Angeles area).

The other stunned and angry participants were the Mendocino and Sonoma County District Attorneys. I was amazed at the time and interest they both had in this case. I easily got walk-through warrants, assistance in the investigation and a true desire for prosecution. We were very lucky.

The results of the crime:

Two burls recovered, one conviction (Bill-Bob – who had already done time in prison for the same crime and plead out to 1 year in county jail), and one suspect (Jim-Bob) still at large. The D.A. will attempt to get a third conviction (Bob-Bob) after Jim-Bob is taken into custody.

A much more aware staff.

Two 125 year old bay trees killed.

I honestly think that this was going to be just the start of the work by these men. The area that they were in was full of profitable trees. We were very lucky to lose only two beautiful bays.

My reason for this article is two-fold. One is for you to go out and evaluate your park for potential resources that could be violated. Do you have trees that have burls? Are they in areas that a 4x4 could access, with limited neighbors to hear late-night chain saws? If so, make daily, early morning patrols of those areas during the wet season. This type of theft is on the increase, especially in the valleys and walnut growing areas. The second reason is that if you do have to investigate a burl theft crime, I would be happy to provide you with a list of burl buyers. There are quite a few legitimate businesses who deal in burls and they, too, don’t like seeing their industry marred by thieves. These businesses were a great help in dealing with the investigation. Contact me at heidih@mcn.org if you need help from our experience.

Have a great winter!

Rangers Given OK to Write Tickets

by Norberto Santana Jr.

Reprinted from the Orange County Register (09/22/04)

SANTA ANNA—County park rangers will soon be sporting a new look that includes bulletproof vests, pepper spray, handcuffs—and ticket books. Rangers will be able to issue the civil citations, similar to parking tickets, to park visitors who drink alcohol, walk dogs without leashes, play radios too loudly or carve illegal trails, rather than call local police or sheriff's deputies. "This is a big change," said Supervisor Bill Campbell of Tuesday's unanimous vote, which followed discussion about safety for rangers and visitors. Supervisors stopped short of turning the rangers into full fledged peace officers, who would carry firearms. Turning park rangers into police has been a hot debate at parks throughout the nation in recent years.

Rangers typically work with the public as interpreters of the environment instead of as police officer. Some parks have created park police forces while other have combined the roles. Others, such as Orange County's parks, have depended on local police to deal with problem visitors. "A lot of park districts are in a quandary regarding what role they want," said Norm Lopera, past president of the California-based Park Law Enforcement Association. "It's a never-ending wrestling match."

Last month, exasperated members of the county's Harbors, Beaches and Parks Commission told supervisors that they had spent the last decade struggling with county staff to give rangers ticket-writing authority. Their public demands prompted supervisors to press the policy change. Kevin Thomas, who heads the county's Harbors, Beaches and Parks program, said his agency had opposed changing the role of park rangers because few incidents require more law enforcement. On Tuesday, he pointed to an internal study of park incidents over the past four years to make his point. "Out of 10 million visitors, very, very, very few were cited for violations," Thomas said after the meeting.

Yet, ranger Mike Reeder told Supervisors that department reports on incidents were wrong. He also said department managers weren't taking into account the effect of park vandalism. Reeder, along with three county parks commissioners, wanted rangers to get the ability to write misdemeanor citations and carry batons. Two supervisor Chris Norby and Jim Silva, said they would support such a move.

The action would radically change the nature of rangers, Thomas said. He added that sheriff's officials have advised that issuing criminal citations would require rangers to wear sidearms for their safety. "The whole thing just escalates," said county Supervisor Chuck Smith as he noted his opposition to criminal citations. "We might as well make them deputy sheriffs."

Other rangers say that's not what they want to see. "I don't want to be a ranger cop," said Linda Mayer, a supervising park ranger at Irvine Regional Park. Mayer, a ranger for 20 years, said she supports civil citations because it will give her a way to get people to comply without greatly increasing tension. "It will for chronic abuser" she said, saying that her toughest tasks include dogs without leashes and parking violations. "It's a tool." Mayer said that since 2000, her park has seen more than 3 million visitors, with sheriff's deputies issuing 55 citations. She said most have been issued during holidays, when sheriff's patrol parks, and center on alcohol, dogs without leashes, parking and skateboarding.

The changes will take a few months to institute as the county develops training methods, meets with union official on potential job classification changes and sets procedures and fines.

Park Patrol Statistics

53 rangers patrol 27 facilities at harbors, beaches and parks throughout more than 38,000 acres across the county.

15,316 park regulations violations since 2000. Tops on the list: alcohol use, followed by dogs without leashes, skateboarding, dirt bikers carving illegal trails and parking.

566 criminal incidents, with nonpayment of park fees accounting for 480.

64 incidents of vandalism.

12 assaults or batteries.

5 instances of indecent exposure.

County Harbors, Beaches and Parks Department

Developing A Low Stress Work-style (Continued from page 5)

Live well. Take good care of yourself. Eat well balanced meals; avoid tobacco, alcohol and/or too much caffeine. Exercise regularly and get enough sleep. Take time for "you" and your hobbies.

I can't say enough about that last one—"Live Well." I had taken a hiatus in my exercise regimen as I was overwhelmed with everything going on. Since I started working out again, I have noticed a considerable difference in my

stress level. I don't have any less work to do, or things to worry about but I am able to tackle it with more mental clarity and I find myself feeling a whole lot better. So, if you are stressed, it's normal, and you are in good company. Know that there are resources out there for you (library, physician, internet, workshops, etc) and you have the opportunity to change things right now - don't wait to make a new year's resolution! Oh... don't forget to **breathe!**

**Park Rangers Association of California
Board Officers 2004**

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.
(408) 356-2729
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

DAVE UPDIKE
(310) 858-7272 EXT. 1232
FAX: (310) 858-7212
E-Mail: region4@calranger.org

Region 5 Director

LORI CHARETT
(858) 538-8082
FAX: (858) 536-8334
E-Mail: region5@calranger.org

Region 6 Director

JOHN LUFRANO
(775) 586-7271
FAX: (775) 583-7273
E-Mail: region6@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

HEIDI HORVITZ
Office: (707) 847-3077
FAX: (707) 847-3077
E-Mail: office@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
(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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