



Countdown to the Conference

by Lee Hickinbotham Jr

As I sit here writing this article I started dreaming about all the past conferences that I have been to. San Luis Obispo, San Diego, Van Nuys, Anaheim, Sacramento and Tahoe just to name a few. What has made each of these conferences successful? It has been the Chairs and the teams that they have put together.

PRAC and CSPRA has done it again! They have put together a dedicated and tenacious team that will give "the best conference ever" held two years ago in Tahoe a run for it's money.

The team has put together a conference package that will have any park professional begging to attend. At a reasonable rate the conference will offer field trips to Alcatraz, wine tasting, horseback riding, kayaking and a pistol competition and that's just on Monday.

Mike Chiesa and Joe Rogers have put together a plethora of sessions that include:

- Missing persons
- Interpretation on the go,
- Helicopter rescue operations
- Volunteer management
- OHV Jr. rangers
- Sudden Oak Death
- Capturing video for your Park

These are just teasers to get your mouth watering. You will wish that there were Teevo available to be able to tape the sessions that you will have to miss because of the other awesome session you will be attending. Bring your fedora and your magnifying glass so you will be ready for the Tuesday night dinner. This off site murder mystery dinner will have you suspicious of everyone at your table.

Get out your Sunday best for the Wednesday night banquet. Put on your black and burgundy threads and help to bring this wonderful conference to a conclusion.

So make reservations now at the *Sonoma Wine Country Double Tree Inn* for **March 7-10, 2005.**

See you in March!

Important Reminder!

Most PRAC memberships expire at the end of every December.

Don't forget to renew your PRAC membership for 2005!

From the President's Desk

Happy 2005! It is hard to believe that 2004 is now a memory. A lot has happened over the last year. Just as life goes, some things were positive and others negative. What I do like about the beginning of a New Year is the anticipation for more good things to come throughout the year. One very exciting event we have to look forward to is the 2005 Parks Conference which will be held in beautiful Sonoma County at the Sonoma Wine Country Double Tree in Rohnert Park, March 7-10. The planning committee has been lighting the afterburners to bring you an outstanding conference packed with great training sessions and wonderful field trips. I am excited about the upcoming conference and I hope you will join me at what will prove to be another historic conference. If you have not yet received your registration packet, it should arrive very soon. If you are as excited as me and cannot wait, just go to our web site and download the registration info.

I would like you to also join me in congratulating the Regional Directors that you elected in the last election. As I have said before, deciding to volunteer as Board members shows a tremendous commitment not only to PRAC and its members but also to the park profession in general. If PRAC is to continue to strive and excel we need more members to step up to the plate and assume a leadership role. PRAC is only as strong as its members are. If you enjoy the benefits and services that PRAC provides you, I urge you to consider becoming more involved with your organization. It will only be through the dedication, fortitude, and commitment of PRAC members that PRAC will be able to continue to soar.

The 2005 Park Advocacy Day, organized by the California State Park Foundation is also coming up this March at the Capitol in Sacramento. The date has tentatively been set for Monday, March 14. We will keep you updated of any changes. I am calling on all PRAC members to come that day to show the legislators how important parks and park funding are to their constituents. To help park advocates prepare for speaking with their legislators the State Park Foundation will be hosting training workshops throughout the state, including one at our conference, on Thursday, March 10. Even if you will not be able to attend Park Advocacy Day, I urge you to attend one of the training sessions that will help make you a more effective park professional and advocate.

Over the last 2 years, myself and other PRAC and CSPRA members have been answering a call for assistance from our brothers, the Marin Municipal Water District Rangers. It all started 2 years ago when the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) temporarily suspended the peace officer status of their rangers and had them turn in most of their peace officer protective equipment including firearms and batons. The MMWD did this at the time because they did not feel the district had the authority to appoint peace officers based on information they were given by an outside consultant. This was done after the program had been in existence for over 20 years with armed peace officer rangers. The MMWD Rangers asked for PRAC to help educate the MMWD management and Board on park ranger peace officer authority and training requirements. Letters were written and presentations were made to ensure the MMWD that they were a local agency and that they could appoint park ranger peace officers pursuant to California Penal Code section 830.31(b). Well, to make a long story short, the MMWD was not satisfied with this. Various actions were done including legal action by the MMWD against SEIU (the labor union that represents MMWD rangers). The MMWD was able to get a Marin County judge to rule that the MMWD did not have the authority to appoint peace officers, although he did state that it appeared that their rangers should be peace officers. SEIU chose not to appeal the judge's decision. Instead, a bill was carried as emergency legislation that amended California Penal Code, section 830.34, adding an authority section specifically giving a Municipal Water District the authority to appoint peace officer park rangers. The MMWD supported this legislation. After the bill had passed both the Assembly and Senate and was sitting on the

(See next page for more.)

Governor's desk awaiting his signature, the MMWD decided to reclassify the rangers to "Watershed Wardens" with public officer authority. The Governor signed the bill shortly thereafter.

On Monday, December 6, 2003, the MMWD Board of Directors met at a special public meeting to listen to public comment and vote on the fate of the trained and dedicated MMWD ranger staff. This was to be the first and last public meeting on the subject and the only opportunity the public would have to respond to the MMWD management report and recommendations after 21 months of closed session meetings. The report MMWD management had given to their board as their main tool for making their recommendations was full of erroneous and misleading information. The MMWD rangers/wardens were allowed to speak to the Board. Outside speakers such as John Havicon, Walt Young, Jeff Gaffney, and I were restricted to 3-minute presentations to address the erroneous information in a report that had been discussed and prepared over the course of months. Several members of the public spoke supporting the long-standing armed park ranger program, with only one person speaking against having an armed peace officer ranger program. The goal of the PRAC representatives was to try to get the board to delay a decision so they could make an informed decision based on factual information related to ranger training standards and authority.

At the end of the public comment phase of the meeting, a motion was made by one of the MMWD Board members. The motion was for accepting the recommendation of the MMWD management to keep the newly formed "Watershed Warden" public officer job class, thus eliminating the armed park ranger peace officer program, and to enter into a contract with Marin County Sheriff for 2 deputies to provide an armed peace officer presence. After some lengthy discussions between the MMWD Board with some dismayed reaction from the public, a vote was taken. The MMWD Board voted 3 to 2 to keep the MMWD rangers/wardens classified as Wardens with public officer authority to enforce MMWD regulations only. The recommendation included equipping the rangers/wardens with O.C. spray and body armor, and for the MMWD to enter into a contract with the Marin County Sheriff to provide 2 deputies for the watershed at the amount of around \$230,000 a year.

I wish the MMWD Ranger staff the best in their endeavors, as they will struggle to perform a job they were trained to perform with a level of authority and protective equipment they will no longer have. I am sorry that the MMWD rangers were not able to get the results they wanted. They put up a good fight but the deck was stacked against them. Remember that no matter what your agency decides to call you or what authority and equipment they choose to provide or not provide to help protect you, your agency's lands and your visitors, PRAC will always be your organization and here for you.

The last news I wanted to share is that Region 6 had its first PRAC Training workshop in November 2004 at the Nevada Department of Public Safety Training Center in Carson City, NV. The workshop was 8-hours and included a gang update instructed by officers from Reno P.D. and the Nevada Department of Corrections; a block on dealing with difficult people taught by an investigator with the Nevada Department of Public Safety; and the third block was a session by Carl Lackey from the Nevada Division of Wildlife on bears, mountain lions, and dangerous reptiles. I found all of the training blocks to be informative and the instructors to be very knowledgeable and professional. Attendees included park professionals from Nevada State Parks, Douglas County Parks, Washoe County Parks, Carson City Parks, Sacramento County Parks, and Sonoma County Regional Parks. All attendees seemed to enjoy the training as much as I did and the networking opportunity was awesome. I even signed up 14 members at the workshop. Thank you Region 6 Director, John Lufrano, for setting up this great training. Thank you for the enthusiasm of the park professionals that attended the training and I hope to see you at future events.

Well, I suppose I have wasted enough ink for now. I had a lot on my mind. I hope you all had a great holiday season, Happy New Year to you and I hope to see you in Sonoma this March.

Stay safe,

Mike Chiesa

To Be or Not To Be Armed

by Bill Orr

Every land management agency charged with the protection of natural and/or cultural resources, sooner or later faces the question of whether or not to arm its enforcement personnel. The arguments range from the excessive costs for firearms and the necessary training involved to the perceived “negative image” the firearm will create in the minds of the public. Seldom do administrators or managers consider the safety or comfort factor of the officers concerned, or the effectiveness and efficiency in accomplishing the basic protection responsibility.

Often park managers view the park ranger as an interpreter or dispenser of information rather than an enforcement officer and many have simply depended on other agencies to handle the law enforcement on park lands. When this occurs, the other agencies will usually only respond to serious or emergency events, leaving the devastating vandalism, littering, drug and alcohol abuse, dirt bikes, loose dogs, etc. to the park rangers to handle.

The consequences of this arrangement is that absent the proper authority, training and equipment, the park ranger may be reluctant to take action in these situations, resulting in a continuation and perhaps and escalation of the inappropriate or illegal activity. If, on the other hand, the rangers attempts to resolve or correct the destructive behavior, he/she may soon find his/her safety in jeopardy, and will be forced to retreat. In either of these scenarios the result is the

same. The offensive activity continues at the expense of the park resources and park visitors.

In most park settings a park ranger in uniform with a badge and driving a vehicle with light bar and siren is an authority figure and is generally expected by the public to be armed. However, experience has shown that there is also a certain segment of the public that thinks park rangers are without authority and are unarmed. In any case it would seem to be far better for the public to think an officer is **unarmed** when he is, than to think he is **armed** when he isn't. In either of these scenarios the result is much the same. The park ranger is at a disadvantage in his/her contacts with violators making it harder to successfully do the job. More importantly, the safety of the ranger may be compromised.

Public land managers need to consider the safety and welfare of the rangers as well as the safety and welfare of the visiting public. Is it reasonable to expect rangers to make enforcement contacts often at night and alone and in remote areas without the means to defend themselves? Do visitors to public parks, possibly having paid to enter, have a right to expect the protection personnel to be fully trained and equipped to provide for their safety?

A park manager's job is replete with awesome responsibility, fraught with crucial decisions, not the least of which is: **To Be or Not to Be Armed.**

Thank You for the Scholarship

After 16 years in the computer field, it was time for a change. My life long interests in the outdoors, educating youth, and story-telling finally came together in an “Aha!” moment when I discovered at San Juan Bautista Mission that there actually was a job field that combined all three—park interpretation.

Now I am enrolled in my second year in the Park Management program at West Valley College. I love what I am learning and am enjoying the challenges of the classes. I am fortunate to have a temporary job with the East Bay Regional Park District as a part-time Interpretive Student Aide for Ardenwood Historic Farm in Fremont. This gives me a wonderful opportunity to put theory to the test and expand my interpretive skills through practical application. Each season's activities and each visiting school class are different, so the job never grows old.

Due to periods of unemployment that my husband and I both experienced over the past few years, it was financially risky for me to return to school. This scholarship will help me pay for tuition, books and school fees for my spring schedule of classes at West Valley. I am so grateful to PRAC for supporting students and making this opportunity available. I eagerly look forward to completing the program and moving into the profession full time.

Amy Baldwin



Taking the Stink Out of Skunk **by John Havicon**

Recently I was given the task of removing skunk spray out of the interior of one of our patrol trucks. I am still not sure how this happened, as the ranger driving the truck was too embarrassed to explain and would not talk about it. The only remedy that I have heard of was tomato juice, which I had no intention of pouring on the seats. My solution was to leave the windows open and try airing it out until a veterinary friend suggested a mixture of household products that actually chemically alters the skunk spray to an odorless chemical.

With nothing to lose, except the odor, I gave it a try and was surprised how well it did work. The truck had a little residual odor in the air, which cleared within a day by the “open window” method.

The recipe for this skunk deodorizer is: 1 quart of 3% Hydrogen Peroxide; 1/4 cup of baking soda and 1 teaspoon of liquid dish soap, (Dawn, Palmolive, etc.). Mix these three items in an open container. The mixture will fizz, which is a clue not to store it in a closed container. The escaping gases may build up enough pressure to cause an explosion of the container. I put the formula in a spray bottle and sprayed the seats, which seemed to work. The veterinarian used it as a treatment for skunk-sprayed dogs. For dogs, thoroughly wet the dog with the solution, avoiding its eyes, nose and mouth. Knead the solution into the dog’s coat. After 5–minutes, rinse with water. Repeat if necessary. The solution may cause a bleaching of some fabrics and some dog’s hair, so it would be good to test the fabric before using.

Effective Court Testimony

by Lori Charett Gerbac

In our profession, it is inevitable that you will end up testifying in court someday, if you haven't already. It can be nerve wracking at times but if you are prepared and follow the following tips, you should be on your way to success in the court room.

What makes an officer an effective witness in court? According to several judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys and officers it is *professionalism*, which means being prepared, demonstrating impartiality, exercising restraint and avoiding traps.

The amount of preparation that is necessary will depend on the complexity of the case. Reading police reports before the trial or hearing and try to plan how to respond to questions you think will be asked. You don't want to sound rehearsed, so you don't want to memorize things like license plate numbers and quotes from the victim or defendant.

An officer's testimony will have significantly greater weight if the officer demonstrates impartial, unbiased attitude. Conversely, an officer's credibility will suffer if it appears he or she has a personal interest in the outcome of the case. An officer should convey the sense that his or her interest is to present the facts. An officer can also demonstrate impartiality by dealing with the defense attorney in the same manner as the prosecutor.

Just as an officer should not be evasive, they also should not volunteer information. Volunteering information could be interpreted as an attempt to help the prosecution. According to a defense attorney, "an effective police witness just answers the questions then gets out."

There are two reasons why officers should not demonstrate anger toward the defense attorney. First, the officer's image as an unbiased, impartial witness will be damaged. Second, the officer's anger will make it difficult to think clearly and to respond effectively to attorney's questions. Poise and self control are qualities that judges and jurors like to see in an officer.

There are various ways defense attorneys may try to reduce an officer's effectiveness as a witness. Sometimes there are inconsistencies between an officer's testimony in court and what he wrote in his police report. Defense attorney's commonly point out such inconsistencies in an attempt to create doubt about an officer's testimony. When this happens, it is important that officers do not become defensive. If there was an error, simply acknowledge it.

Top Ten Tips for Effective Testimony

- Listen to the question: If you don't hear it, say so. If you don't understand it, say so. Don't answer a question you don't hear or understand.
- If you can answer a question with "yes" or "no," then answer it with a "yes" or "no." Don't volunteer more than you have to in answering the question because it will give the defense attorney more information on which to cross-examine you.
- Answer out loud. Shaking or nodding your head or uttering "uh- huh" won't ensure an accurate record.
- If you hear "Objection," stop what you are doing. If you hear an objection when you are answering a question, stop answering the question and wait for direction from the judge. If you haven't started answering the question, don't answer it and wait for direction from the judge. After the judge makes a ruling, it is ok to ask whether you need to respond to the question.
- Be neutral, professional, and patient.
- Don't exaggerate or understate. Don't get angry, irritated, or frustrated. (Keep your cool with the defense attorney.)
- Do not let anyone put words in your mouth: If you are not sure about a point, don't let an attorney make you say something that you would not otherwise say.
- Use plain English. ("I got out of my car" v. "I exited my vehicle.")
- "Did you talk to the prosecutor?" Answer this question honestly. Although defense attorneys may try to insinuate otherwise, there is nothing wrong with prosecutors talking to witnesses about the facts of the case.
- Don't guess. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. If you once knew the answer but don't remember now, say, "I don't remember." You aren't expected to see or know everything.
- Include the jurors in your testimony. They are watching your body language, eye contact, and presence to measure your credibility.
- **And Above All:** Tell the truth, "honesty is the best policy" always! Testify accurately about what you know.

Conference Committee Seeks donations for the Silent Auction

by John Havicon

Every year at the annual conference, we hold a silent auction to help defray some of the cost of the conference. This has become a very popular event and members enjoy participating in it. This year, I have been asked to host the silent auction once again. (I think someone likes my banjo playing.) Letters have been sent out to various businesses and corporations for donations of books, event tickets, wines, local artwork and resource tools and I look forward to arranging them for you to bid. I don't want to leave anyone out and I know we have creative folks in our organizations that have also donated their works in the past. I would like to encourage your support by donating items for the auction. If you have a visitor center in your park, that sells items, they also maybe willing to donate something. If you had a "buy one get one free" coupon and now have an two items, here's a good opportunity to show support. I you have found a good book or useful item, and think that would be perfect for the auction, guess what? It is!

If you would like to make a donation, you can either bring it with you to the conference or send it directly to the *Conference Committee*: California Parks Conference; P.O. Box 161269; Sacramento, CA 95816-1269. If your mailing it, please send before March 1. If you have any questions, please call me at (916) 875-6672 or email parksconference@comcast.net I'll look forward to serenading you all at the conference and thanks for your support.



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