



A Challenge for the Membership

by Lee Hickinbotham Jr

I have a challenge for all of you members. I would like to challenge you to become PRAC certified as a *Generalist Ranger*. Since the PRAC standards were developed, we have had 15 rangers become PRAC certified. That is an awesome achievement, however, we have a membership of close to 300 members. That means that only approximately 5 % of our membership are PRAC certified. At the minimum, I would like to see another 15 member's be certified by the 2006 conference in Laughlin Nevada.

It's really easy to meet the minimum standards, especially if you have work experience. Don't worry about not having all of your documentation. Just have your supervisor write a letter stating that you attended an in house training and attach a syllabus showing the contents of the training. PRAC has even created an easy to follow, fill in the blank guide. Go to www.calranger.org, click on standards and training and print pages 5-12. This will help you to see what documentation you need.

All recipients who complete all five domains will be awarded a nice plague at the conference banquet. This will ensure that you will walk away from Laughlin with something to show for your trip

So who's up for the challenge?

Got Morale?

by Lori Gerbac, Region 5 Director

According to Webster's Dictionary, morale is the "mental or emotional condition (as of enthusiasm, confidence, or loyalty) of an individual or group with regard to the function or tasks at hand." Simply put, it's "how we feel about working around here."

As rangers working for government agencies, we have mastered the art of doing more with less. We develop our creative side by learning how to stretch a nickel into a dime. We are often shameless for groveling for resources, funding, or fighting over volunteers. Although we are disappointed when we don't get the support we want or need, we often accept is as "the way it is in government."

In reality however, the pressure to do more with less, the "waiting for the other shoe to drop" survivors syndrome among those who haven't yet lost their jobs, and smaller paychecks stretched to meet higher costs of living, contribute to poor morale. Does this sound familiar?

Story continues on page 7.

From the President's Desk

September is here and I am very excited! This means we are approaching fall, and then winter. I always love the fall and winter months. I hope you all have survived your summer. It was one of my most difficult summers both on a professional and personal level. I am looking forward to the changes a change in season brings. Speaking of changes, elections are just around the corner and nominations are being accepted for the offices of President and Directors for Region 2, 4, and 6. Any regular, retired, or honorary member is eligible to run for office. Ballots and dues renewal notices will be going in late November so be sure to cast your vote and renew your membership.

Planning for the 2006 Conference to be held Laughlin, NV, is coming along fine. A lot of hard work has gone into it from the joint CSPRA-PRAC planning committee led by Pam Armas and Dave Updike. They hope to be pulling together park professionals from California, Nevada, and Arizona. The conference should be another good time for all that you will not want to miss.

PRAC is turning 30 next year! Many of you may not know that PRAC started in 1976 with the first meeting of PRAC at West Valley College that included a handful of forward-thinking, wise, park professionals, our founders. Today PRAC enjoys membership of 300 park professionals from across California and Nevada. Please be sure to stay tuned over the next few months for developing plans for the anniversary celebration. If you have ideas or would like to help plan anniversary events, please feel free to contact me directly.

Do you enjoy reading the Signpost? Do you look forward to receiving it each month to find out the latest news in park world? If so, then isn't it about time to see your name in print? David Brooks, our newsletter editor, always works diligently to produce an excellent, high-quality newsletter 6 times a year. As skilled as David is, he cannot create a newsletter from thin air, he needs content. If there is news in your park, you learned something that might be of interest or use to others or you just have a funny park story, please share it with your fellow members. The Board members are expected to submit an article for each newsletter but there is nothing saying that ANY member can't submit an article. I encourage each of you to make a submission to the newsletter at least once in the following year. Besides doing something for your organization and fellow members, you will also get your 15 minutes of fame and see your name in print! Anybody who submits an article to David by March 1, will receive a special gift of appreciation from the President (of PRAC). You can submit articles directly to David at newsletter@calranger.org.

Well folks, that's all I have for you this time. Thanks everyone for your continued support, dedication and hard work you provide for your parks and park visitors.

Stay safe,

Mike Chiesa

Study Finds Park Rangers Facing Increased Violence Fugitives are drawn to isolation of parks, putting rangers at risk.

Submitted by John Lufrano, Region 6 Director

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A 12-hour manhunt in Yellowstone National Park leads to the arrest of two fugitives wanted for a crime spree in Wisconsin and Minnesota; three anti-government drifters stage a stand-off in Death Valley National Park that includes bringing down a police helicopter with gunfire; a park ranger is shot dead after responding to a call about loose dogs in Kaloka-Honokohau Historical Park. These are just a few examples of the growing violence that endangers national park rangers and diverts them from protecting the parks' natural, cultural, and historical property.

A study released in August by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, a national alliance of federal, state, and local employees, showed that violence against federal land management employees rose significantly in 2000. The incidents range from threats and vandalism to assaults and shootings. The Park Service recorded the highest number of incidents in a five-year period, including 65 against park rangers and 34 against park police. The Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service all recorded increases of 22 to 50 percent over last year.

Approximately 1,550 park rangers work throughout the system, and an independent study done last year by the International Association of Chiefs of Police suggested that more than 600 new rangers who work in law enforcement are needed. A separate study commissioned by Sen. Craig Thomas (R-Wyo.) as part of the 1998 National Parks Omnibus Management Act indicated that more than 1,200 new rangers are needed to address the problem.

Border parks such as those in Texas and Arizona are particularly at risk because of a rise in drug trafficking. At Organ Pipe Cactus National Park, Chief Ranger Dale Thompson said that he needs two or three times the six to eight rangers he has throughout the year to fend off a constant stream of illegal immigrants and drug smugglers.

"Every one of my rangers has been assaulted by a vehicle at least once, some of them twice," Thompson said. Rangers are sometimes chased by speeding cars whose occupants are trying to return to Mexico after illegally crossing into the United States. Thompson's officers patrol 330,000 acres, and usually only one

officer is on duty at a time. Last year he estimated that the park needed to hire six rangers, a resource manager, and a maintenance worker—at a cost of \$800,000—to protect personnel, visitors, and natural resources.

Cheto Olias, chief ranger at Zion National Park, said that some of the violence arises because of the parks' remote locations. "Parks tend to be places where people hide out because the places are isolated. Many of these people are extremists who have survivalist skills and are used to living off the land," he said. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Olias said that, as national icons, parks are always possible targets. "We have international terrorists, but we also have domestic terrorists."

In 1991, Olias initiated the Special Operations program to provide additional training to rangers who are most likely to encounter violence in their parks. The program is funded by the Department of the Interior but is offered only once a year to fewer than 30 rangers. So far, about 250 rangers have completed the program. "Obviously, we have a lot more to do," Olias said. Although only a fraction of rangers have completed the two-week program, he said that those rangers report increased confidence and success when dealing with dangerous situations.

While rangers are handling these difficult situations, the parks' property is simply disappearing. "The resources are just walking out of the park because we don't have the people to protect them," said Dennis Burnett, who oversees law enforcement for the Park Service. Along the Appalachian Trail, poachers are killing black bears and digging up ginseng to be sold in Asia and for alternative medicinal purposes. At Organ Pipe, drug smugglers created 30 miles of new roads through the desert this year, crushing rare desert vegetation.

Even though rangers are dealing with more dangers, the parks are still a safe place to visit. Burnett said that his law officers are stretched thin, but visitors should not worry about coming to the national parks. "The parks are very safe, but people need to be aware of the dangers and take precautions just as they would in a city."

Officer Safety

by Lee Hickinbotham Jr

Are you always safe? Do you think about officer safety with every contact? Do you pay attention to your surroundings with every contact?

Recently I was riding along with a new seasonal ranger; offering tips, advice and knowledge. As we made contact with visitors, I would watch the ranger's officer safety. I noticed that during a few of the contacts, the ranger was flat footed, up close and not thinking about her safety. After the contact I would offer constructive criticism on the way to stand, where to keep your hands and what to look for to insure that you are prepared for anything. I explained that we need to treat every contact as if it could escalate in minutes.

For example, an incident in Crater Lake National Park escalated from the point of making contact to a fatal shooting in a matter of minutes. "Authorities say it took less than two minutes for a California man's encounter with park rangers to escalate from a domestic disturbance to a fatal shooting." (*Mail Tribune 2005.*)

Thankfully the Crater Lake Rangers were aware of their safety because of the nature of the contact, so when it escalated they were prepared. Change the scenario to a routine dog off leash call. At times we may approach this type of call with a lackadaisical attitude or with our friendly ranger attitude thinking it's a routine contact. The type of call where you walk up, give your dog off leash speech, ask the visitor to put their dog on leash and possibly issue a citation. However, this type of contact can easily escalate to a fatal contact as well.

Park Ranger Makuakane-Jarrell was shot and killed in Kaloko-Honokohau National

Historic Park, Hawaii Island, Hawaii. His body was found by a visitor to the park in a brushy area, with his service weapon missing. Ranger Makuakane-Jarrell had responded to a visitor's complaint of a man with three unleashed dogs. Upon confronting the suspect, a struggle ensued in which Ranger Makuakane-Jarrell used his pepper spray. The suspect gained control of Ranger Makuakane-Jarrell's service weapon and shot him several times, including a fatal shot while he lay on the ground, wounded. The suspect was arrested several days later and is charged with murder of a United States park ranger. (From *The Officer Down Memorial Page 1999.*)

Upon opening the parks, how many times have you come across an illegal camper? Are you always thinking about your safety or do you think that since it's so early in the morning nothing ever really happens.

California State Park Ranger Galligan was shot about 7:45 a.m. after approaching Melberg, who was in a black Toyota pickup. She was investigating a reported illegal camper in a closed campground near the park's southern boundary off Graham Hill Road near Santa Cruz. The man seemed nervous as Galligan questioned him, according to Kim Allyn of the Sheriff's Office. Melberg apparently showed a false ID, then shot Galligan in the leg, officials said. She returned fire, but police do not believe she hit him.

We are rangers, interpreters, resource managers, educators and law enforcement officers. It doesn't matter what role you are in. We need to put our safety first from the time we come on duty until the time we go 10-7 OD (out of service/off duty).

I'm Just a Seasonal

*The Life of a Seasonal Ranger in
Yosemite National Park*



By Thomas A. (Smitty) Smith

Foreword by Jack Morehead

**Our very own Tom (Smitty) Smith has published his book;
“I’m Just a Seasonal.”**

You can purchase his book at Amzon.com for \$11.16.

Don’t forget that a portion of the money goes to the PRAC Scholarship fund.

Election Time!

Election for the Regions 2, 4, 6 Board of Directors and the President’s position are coming up again this fall. I am seeking the individuals in our membership that can keep this energy going that we have in the PRAC board. If you are a member in one of the three regions, you are qualified to run as a director. All voting members are qualified to run. We need our members to get involved.

We have all enjoyed Mike Chiesa’s devotion and leadership as our President but unfortunately he is stepping down this year. So this is your opportunity to move PRAC to new heights and share your talents with your peers.

Region 2 consists of members from Monterey, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties.

Region 4 consist of members from Inyo, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Tulare and Ventura counties.

Region 6 consist of members from the State of Nevada.

All voting members may declare candidacy for President.

The Signpost

Duties of the Board of Directors are to attend quarterly Board meetings and provide direction to the organizations affairs; Plan future activities for their region members, including training workshops and social events; Write articles for the *Signpost* newsletters; Provide support for individual members; Provide PRAC’s direction with state legislative issues, Attend job fairs or environmental fairs. Terms of office last two years, starting January 1, 2006. Travel expenses are reimbursed for the Board functions.

If you would like to be a candidate in you region, please contact me, John Havicon, at johnhavicon@comcast.net or 916-875-6672. I will send you a candidate application. Election ballots will be sent out in November. If you know of someone in your region that you think would be an excellent candidate, let me know. I’ll contact them for you and ask them to run.

Thank you

John Havicon

Park Rangers Association of California
Nominating Committee

Ranger Safety News

by Matt Cerkel

Within the past two weeks there has been several reminders of the dangers rangers potentially face performing their duties. Two of the incidents should be additional wake up calls to those, including some park administrators, who choose to put their heads in the sand about the dangers ranger may face when performing their law enforcement duties.

The first incident occurred in Crater Lake National Park in Oregon. Two rangers responded to a domestic dispute at a “park campground. Immediately upon arriving, they were confronted by a man brandishing a large club (later identified as a commercially available “war club”). When the rangers attempted to talk with him, he became increasingly hostile and argumentative and ignored their repeated orders to stop and remain still while he wandered around the campsite. The man, still brandishing the club and ignoring warnings to stop, then directly approached the rangers and threatened to kill them. One ranger attempted to subdue him with pepper spray after he had approached to within ten feet, but he was unaffected by the spray and continued to advance. He was then shot twice by the second ranger. The man was pronounced dead at the scene by EMS personnel.”

The second incident occurred on a Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District preserve in Santa Clara County. A Game Warden and a suspect were both shot during a raid on a large marijuana farm in the preserve. The warden was wounded in both legs, but is expected to recover. The suspect died at the scene. Another suspect eluded an extensive manhunt after the shooting. The most recent report I’ve read indicated up to 50,000 marijuana plants were found at the farm. What could happen if a ranger, especially an unarmed ranger, locates a similar farm while on a foot patrol in the remote area and comes across the growers? I know there are agencies out there that expect their rangers to patrol in remote inaccessible area and even investigate reported marijuana farms, but fail to provide them with the proper safety (defensive) equipment.

The final incident, and the most tragic, occurred in Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. A National Park Ranger on backcountry patrol was reported overdue. An extensive search was conducted, sadly the body of the ranger was “found by a group of hikers ... near Spectacle Lakes in the remote and rugged Mummy Range. The park continues its investigation, but it appears at this time that he died from a fall.” While this incident was a tragic accident it goes to

once again prove there is no such thing as a “routine” patrol. My sympathies go out to the ranger’s family.

While our profession will never be 100% safe, there are things we and our employers can do to increase our safety. We as rangers can make sure we use the PPE that our agencies provide us for our various duties and never needlessly place ourselves in danger just because we have PPE. Our employers can make sure they provide us with the proper PPE for the duties they expect us to perform and NEVER expect or require us to perform duties we are not properly equipped or trained to handle.

Briefly I’ll mention what I view as the minimum level of PPE for EMS, wildland fire and law enforcement.

EMS:

- Body substance isolation equipment including, but not limited to gloves, eye protection, N95 mask and gown.
- CPR mask
- Biohazard disposal bags

Wildland Firefighting:

- Nomex or FR cotton shirt and pants
- Wildland gloves
- Wildland helmet with goggles and shroud
- Fire Shelter
- All leather lace-up boots, nonsteel toed

Law Enforcement:

- Handcuffs
- Pepper spray
- Baton
- Sidearm (if peace officer)
- Body armor

Remember, I feel this is the minimum level of PPE for those duties. In the law enforcement area I would like to see a state law passed requiring all but the sidearm for any ranger performing law enforcement regardless if they are a peace officer or a public officer. Such a law would be a step in the right direction and would help deal with those park administrators who choose to have a “close their eyes, can’t happen here” attitude. A similar law already exists for police officers (Government Code Section 50081). This would also go along way in improving the safety of rangers performing law enforcement duties.

I’ll close out this article with a brief update on the MMWD rangers. In June the MMWD reinstated the ranger title. This was a positive development.

Got Morale?

(Continued from page 1)

Why does it matter?

Research experts say it's difficult to pin down exact indicators of morale, but studies have shown that there is a link between customer perceptions of an organization, its products or services, and the attitudes of employees toward that organization. So, as a Supervisor, you can bet that the services your group provides will be affected by how your people feel about working for you and for the organization.

What can you do?

Ask yourself some questions: How do I feel about working here? What could my boss do to make me feel better? Chances are, you'll say you don't feel so good about everything, and that you'd feel better with changes such as being asked what you think once in a while, more involvement in decision-making that affects you, a little recognition, and a greater sense of control over and input into your work and your work life. You might say a raise would help, but the fact is, money won't improve long-term morale.

Next, ask yourself if you have the ability to make the kinds of changes in your own organization that you'd like to see your boss make in his/hers? For example, when was the last time you actually asked your people about their job satisfaction? You can do an informal poll if your organization has not taken an annual employee attitude survey.

Your people will likely want the same kinds of things you want to improve your own job satisfaction- involvement, information, a modicum of input and control, and occasional praise. So, once you've got a list of their suggestions, involve them in prioritizing and implementation.

Maybe you're simply not getting your people together enough. Maybe they don't have a good enough sense of the department's overall goals and direction. It's easy to fix that with an occasional staff meeting and sharing.

Maybe your people don't feel they work together as a team enough, and there's too much competition and distrust. Team building can take the form of simply working together to come up with your work groups yearly goals; it can also involve forming a sports team.

Maybe your people would like some recognition for their contributions once and a while, i.e. a mention of a particular success in a staff meeting or pizza after work to celebrate the completion of a project.

Other things you can do:

Communicate clearly and openly with your people and "walk your talk" with regard to what's expected of them. Be available to your people and not just in your office. Get out among the troops on their turf. Make sure you participate in team building activities.

Uncertainty is one of the leading causes of low morale in the workplace; employers need to be truthful about how changes will affect employees. When communicating with employees, clearly define where certainty exists and discuss the areas of uncertainty rather than brushing the issue under the carpet.

Some things you shouldn't do:

Don't take all the responsibility for your group's morale. At some point, it becomes an individual choice to continue working in an environment that, for whatever reason, isn't satisfying but you should let your people know you are willing to help if you can. Don't promise what you can't deliver. You may have absolutely no control, for example, over job security.

Lastly, the bottom line on morale is sort of like the golden rule: Treat people as you'd like to be treated, and things should improve. Improving morale ultimately improves production, services and reputation.

**Park Rangers Association of California
Board Officers 2005**

President

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

Region 1 Director

MATT CERKEL
(415) 609-3863
FAX: (415) 945-1171
E-Mail: region1@CalRanger.org

Region 2 Director

LEE HICKINBOTHAM JR.
(408) 356-2729
FAX: (408) 354-8623
E-Mail: region2@CalRanger.org

Region 3 Director

VACANT... VACANT... VACANT... VACANT

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 GERBAC
(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

MARCIA JOYCE
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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