



# *THE SIGNPOST*

## First Quarter 2024

### President's Message:

Hope you all a great holiday season and good New Year.

We are just over a month away from our annual conference. For more information go to <http://www.calranger.org/conference.html>.

Book your room soon for the conference to guarantee a room at the conference rate. Please make sure to register for the conference by February 1<sup>st</sup> to avoid any late fees.

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at the conference!

Until then, stay safe and remember Ranger First.

President,  
Matt Cerkel





## **2024 California Parks Training Conference** **Candi Hubert, PRAC Vice President, Conference Co-Chair**

I started attending the PRAC Conferences 16 years ago and have attended all the conferences since. My first conference was in Cambria and each subsequent gathering has inspired me to become more involved with PRAC. I become co-chair for a few of the conferences over the years. And I recently had some correspondence from a former co-worker, friend and one of our instructors who said that PRAC is her favorite conference. This a great compliment to our organization as my colleague has attended many other conferences and has been very involved with CPRS among others. It's always been my favorite conference too, and I hope all of you will be as inspired as I have been for many years.

We hope to see you at the 2024 PRAC Conference in Oxnard for informative and inspirational sessions and a great opportunity to network with park professionals in California and Nevada. As we get closer to our 2024 conference, I encourage you to make hotel reservations and send in registration as we rapidly approach the due dates. Please RSVP for the Bomb Squad Demo on Monday and the Thursday field trip.

**Bomb Squad Demo** (hosted by the Ventura County Sheriff's Office).

The following items will be discussed, visual evaluation of suspected items, securing suspicious areas, tools used to approach suspected items; and an explosives demonstration.

Monday, March 4, 12pm

- Location: 1401 Aviation Drive (Sheriff's Range), Camarillo, CA
- **RSVP required for all attendees.** Email: [rwwainer@gmail.com](mailto:rwwainer@gmail.com).
- Note: There is limited parking, please carpool.



**Field Trip:** (hosted by the National Park Service).

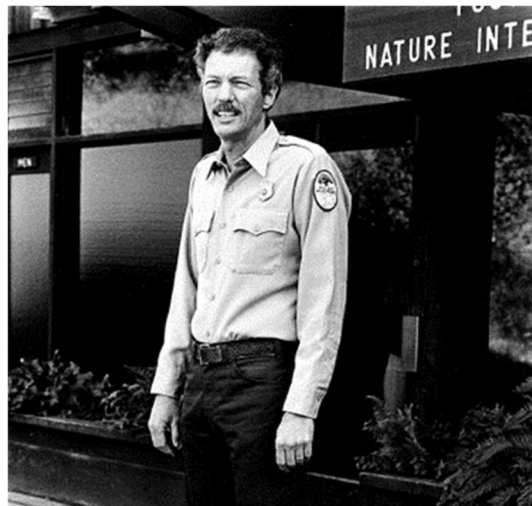
- Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 9am-12pm
- Location: Wildlife Crossing & King Gillette Ranch at

*On Ventura Fwy (101), exit Las Virgenes Rd. Go 3 miles south on Las Virgenes Rd to Mulholland Hwy intersection (traffic light). Turn left on Mulholland Hwy. Park entrance is 0.1 mile on right.*

- **RSVP required for all attendees.** Email: [Candi@calranger.org](mailto:Candi@calranger.org)

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## **Passing of PRAC's First President Mike Warner, Northern California Regional Director 2**



Recently the Park Rangers Association of California's (PRAC) Board of Directors was made aware of the passing of Jerry Lawrence, PRAC's first president. In 1976 Jerry, along with Tom "Smitty" Smith, & Walter Cacace were elected as the first executive officers for the organization. This first meeting was held in Raleigh Young's yard at Santa Clara County's Stevens Creek County Park. Jerry served in the position until March of 1979.

Jerry spent approximately 32 years working as a Park Ranger, first with California State Parks and then later with the City of Palo Alto, where he later retired as the Superintendent of Open Space. He met Barbara Capell while working in Yosemite



National Park, who became his beloved wife of 62 years. Jerry’s hobbies included writing and creating stained glass windows, and enjoyed camping, traveling, and finding beauty in nature.

He is survived by his wife Barbara Lawrence; his two daughters, Lisa K. Lawrence, and Kristin Lawrence; and his two grandchildren; Myles and Lilly Lawrence-Briggs.

## **Tech Industry Attempts to Reinvent the Park Ranger** **Mike Warner, Northern California Regional Director 2**

**Police robot told woman to go away after she tried to report crime – then sang a song**



A high-tech police robot told a woman to go away when she tried to report a crime – then trundled away while singing a song (Pictures: ABC7/Huntington Park PD)

Recently a 2019 incident involving a robotic patrol of Salt Lake Park in Huntington Beach has gone viral on social media. The Huntington Beach Police Department had deployed a Knightscope Robot in the park to help detour crime and serve as a way for folks to request help for emergencies. Unfortunately, the robot was either deployed without all the necessary programing, or there was a

discrepancy on what it should do when an emergency was reported.

On September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019, park visitors attempted to contact police via the robot’s call button when a fight broke out at the park. After numerous attempts to get the button to work (it was ringing but not connecting to dispatch), the robot told the reporting parties to “step out of the way”. The





robot then carried on with its duties while making a humming noise and reminding other park visitors sitting nearby to “keep the park clean.” Police were eventually summoned to the park via cell phone and the fighting group dispersed. One person was transported to the hospital.



Huntington Beach’s robot is not the only “Robo Ranger.” Singapore has also instituted a park patrol during the pandemic using robotic dogs to “traverse through various terrains autonomously and aid in ensuring safe distancing in parks and gardens.” Known as SPOT, the robotic patrol dog is produced by Boston Dynamics and has been proposed to fill a few different roles in parks and open spaces. One such proposal, a contractor operating in the San Francisco Bay Area, was trialed in Foster City in 2022 included using the robot for hazing geese.

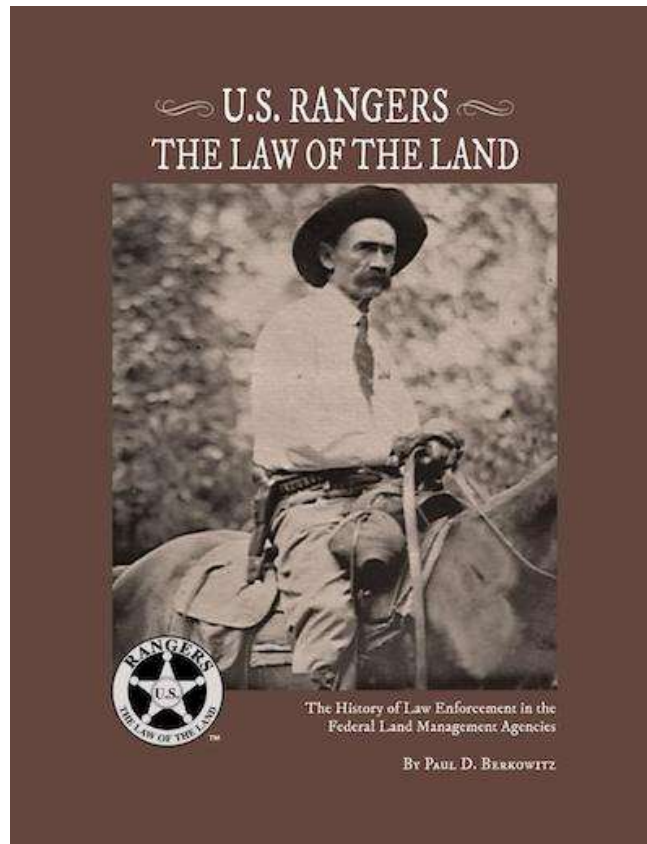


It's clear that these robots are still a long way from replacing a Park Ranger or uniformed staff in our parks and open spaces. Though the technology is likely to continue to develop, agency and governing bodies should still choose to invest in their people, which is their best resource (a lesson Huntington Beach took away from its incident). In April 2022, the City contracted with Lyons Security to provide a private "Park Ranger" [1] security officer for its parks. The City's press release stated that the Ranger "will maintain high visibility to provide first class customer service, deter illegal activity and nuisances, and will assist as witnesses to incidents. They will follow the City's philosophy to address public nuisances promptly and diplomatically through an education first approach and will not be armed with any type of weapon. The Huntington Central Park ranger will wear a unique uniform that is visibly different and patrol Central Park in a marked Lyons/park ranger vehicle, on a bicycle, and on foot."

*Note [1] : **California** Public Resources Code Section 4022 states:" The titles of ranger, park ranger, and forest ranger, and derivations thereof, may only be used by persons who are peace officers under Chapter 4.5 (commencing with [Section 830](#)) of Title 3 of Part 2 of the Penal Code, employees of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or employees of the Department of Parks and Recreation classified as State Park Ranger (Permanent Intermittent... OR... positions and titles of agencies of the United States government or to any local agency which is officially using any title specified in subdivision (a) as of January 1, 1990. <https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/public-resources-code/prc-sect-4022/>*



## **U.S. Rangers -The Law of the Land A Book Review Matt Cerkel, President**



In 2020, just before the pandemic disrupted our life and challenged park rangers across the country for record levels of visitation, Paul D. Berkowitz was one a featured speaker at our conference in Reno.

Paul is the nation’s leading authority on the history and evolution of law enforcement in the National Park Service (NPS). He has authored several books about NPS law enforcement, including his revised 6<sup>th</sup> edition of *U.S. Rangers – The Law of the Land: The History of Law Enforcement in the Federal Land Management Agencies*.



During Paul's 33-year law enforcement career, he worked for the Boulder County Sheriff's Office and then as a law enforcement officer for the

National Park Service at Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Yosemite National Park, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Washington, D.C., Grand Canyon National Park, and finally on the Navajo Indian Reservation in northeastern Arizona. He retired as a supervisory special agent for the National Park Service in 2007.

*U.S. Rangers* is an important book for park rangers at all levels of the profession and in its pages, Paul tells the actual history of law enforcement in the National Park Service, dispelling many of the myths surrounding the "ranger image."

The book covers how the history of law enforcement responsibilities for rangers with the appointment of Galen Clark as the guardian of the Yosemite Grant. It also covers the evolution of law enforcement park rangers in the National Parks and how the image of the park ranger has changed over time. These changes have resulted in widespread misunderstanding of the law enforcement role of rangers and has exacerbated the dangers they face in the performance of their duties. The book also covers the law enforcement history of the other federal land management agencies. All park rangers are impacted by the inaccurate image of being a park ranger that the National Park Service and others have perpetuated.

The last part of the book covers violent encounters and deadly threats federal rangers and land management employees (and even volunteers) have faced since 1900. 700 examples are given, and they are informative and eye-opening. The incidents show the threats ranger may encounter and





can serve as a great tool for law enforcement training in the academy and in-service training. I have a copy of the fifth addition of this book, which I loaned to my agency's defensive tactics (DT) instructor. I now plan to provide my agency's DT instructor and our newest rangers with copies of the book.

I highly recommend this edition of *U.S. Rangers* to all park rangers, especially those with law enforcement duties, those interested in the national parks/national park service and their history, and those interested in the park ranger profession. *U.S. Rangers* should be mandatory reading at park and land management law enforcement agencies, as well as for new rangers, rangers with law enforcement training duties, and park supervisors and managers at all local, regional, state and national levels.

Learn more: <https://thelawoftheland.net/u-s-rangers-the-law-of-the-land/>  
Purchase the book: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/BoCDJWZWWP>

We will also have a copy as a raffle prize at the Conference.





## **Under the Flat Hat Matt Cerkel, President**



This year marks my 29th anniversary of becoming a park ranger, and I'm likely entering the last few years of my career before I retire. I can truly say the time has flown by and I feel like I only started a few years ago. Looking back on my career, while I've had my ups and downs, I can say there have been far more positive experiences than negative. In my 29 years on the job, I built up a tremendous knowledge base about the park and about the profession. I've also discovered I love to share my knowledge and passion.

Guiding new and perspective rangers into the profession is something I really enjoy. I've also discovered it's something I'm good at. Since 2011, I have mentored and trained about a half dozen people entering the ranger profession. They've all gone on to become park rangers across the Bay Area. Some are now field training officers or even Ranger Supervisors. Guiding their earlier years in the profession and seeing them succeed in their careers ever since has been very rewarding.

This past year I've served as the primary field training officer my agency as we put two new park rangers through the program. One had previously served with us as a ranger aide and the other was a lateral from a traditional law enforcement agency. Setting the tone during



Phase 1 and helping them establish a good base to work from helped both, and they are now solo patrol rangers excelling at their jobs.

Now I'm helping establish my agency's new ranger trainee program that was established in part to prepare for retirements likely to occur in the next three to five years (including my own). We currently have two ranger trainees, one with non-sworn ranger experience and the other with wildland fire and natural resource management experience. Both seem to be on the path to become good rangers.

If you have a chance to guide, teach or train new or perspective rangers take full advantage of the opportunity. Learn the history and stories of your park, your agency, and its rangers, know the resources you are protecting, hike all the trails and find the hidden spots. Be the person to pass on institutional knowledge. Understand and believe in the "Ranger First" philosophy. Become the person who shapes the future of the ranger profession.

When I do retire, I know that I've created a legacy with the rangers I've mentored and trained. They will in turn do the same. Knowing this will make taking the flat hat off for the last time just a little bit easier.





## **Death Valley National Park Reopens Additional Roads** **Michael Warner, Northern California Regional Director 2**



The National Park Service announced the reopening of approximately 95 miles of roads within Death Valley National Park on December 23<sup>rd</sup> of last year. By August of 2023, the remnants of Hurricane Hilary had caused widespread flooding and debris flows that impacted all roads, trails, and campgrounds throughout the park. The Park was closed until October 15<sup>th</sup>, when several paved roads and limited facilities reopened.

The National Park Service called on mutual aid from other park sites to assist with the recovery efforts and road repairs over the last few months. It is expected that this year hiking and wildflower season (December – February) will be spectacular due to the record amount rainfall in August. Additionally, there is now a lake at Badwater, a reproduction of ancient Lake Manly.



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Thanks for reading! Please [let us know](#) if you have ideas for what you would like to see in future issues of *The Signpost*.