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# The History of the Association of National Park Rangers

During the weekend of Sept. 30 - Oct. 2, 1977, a group of rangers and technicians met in Jackson, Wyoming. While the primary purpose of this ranger rendezvous was strictly social, talk, as it always seems to do with us, turned to the state of the National Park Service. As we discussed topics like seasonal evaluations, the service EMT program, and the law enforcement task force report, we began to perceive that what we were really talking about was a way for rangers/technicians in the field to share their concerns and their expertise with those in leadership positions. Equally important, we agreed, was to find a method of communicating among ourselves, to share solutions to problems that existed throughout the service. Finally, we determined that one important way to maintain esprit d'corps among us would be to plan periodic social reunions.

Having reached agreement on these three general objectives, we then turned to the consideration of how they might be realized. We concluded that perhaps a loose federation of rangers/technicians could serve as a means of accomplishing our purposes. We voted unanimously, then, to form the Association of National Park Rangers. Also adopted unanimously was the following statement of purpose:

*"A servicewide organization to communicate for, about, and with Rangers; to identify, promote, and enhance our profession and its spirit; to support management and the perpetuation of the National Park Service and to provide a forum for social enrichment."*

Two other considerations characterized the overall "spirit" or expectations that prevailed among the Teton group. There was virtually total agreement (which among a group of 35 rangers from 15 different areas is of itself notable) that group "whimpering" or "sad song" syndrome was not going to be acceptable. Rather, that as a matter of association philosophy and intent, only positive approaches to problem-solving be advocated. Secondly, there was strong group consensus that the association's communications (informational and opinion sharing) efforts strive to utilize and strengthen the supervisory lines and levels of command that exist within the service today.

Butch Farabee, Yosemite, agreed to serve as interim chairman; Roger Rudolph, Yellowstone, as secretary-treasurer. The following volunteered to be members of a steering committee: Rick Hatcher, Kings Mountain; Walt Dabney, Mount Rainier; Rick Smith, Albright; Mike Finley, Tetons; Larry Van Slyke, Rocky Mountain; and Roger Rudolph, Yellowstone.

The first task was to determine if there was sufficient interest among other rangers across the service to support such an organization. A letter was sent to solicit comments from those in the 025/026 series. We were particularly interested in response from areas in the eastern part of the country. While the impetus to form the Association came mainly from rangers stationed in the west, we believed that our concerns were shared by all professionals, regardless of location. Those feeling strongly about the association were asked to please direct correspondence to Butch Farabee or to the temporary headquarters address in Yellowstone.

A follow-up meeting was planned in Estes Park, Colorado, in April 1978. At that time, responses were assessed to determine if others felt as we did that an association would be a positive force in the National Park Service.

We had already agreed that the next Association meeting would then be held at the Smokies or some other location in the East. On that September weekend in 1977 the Association of National Park Rangers was formed.

-Rick Smith and Jim Brady