Helicopter Landing Zones
by John Havicon

Helicopters have become very useful tools for rangers in many ways. They have assisted with searches of lost victims and of criminals by serving as an extra pair of eyes from above. Some help us fight fires, by dowsing the flames with their buckets of water. They also provide the transport of injured victims from our remote areas to hospitals. There are times when we are called to assist in landing these craft by setting up the landing zone for them. The following is a list of general guidelines provided by California Shock and Trauma Air Rescue (CALSTAR):

- When contacting a helicopter service, your dispatcher needs to provide information on: your agency; the location of the incident ("Thomas Brothers" coordinates); your radio frequency; the type of incident/injury; the number of victims; and a patient description.
- When choosing a landing zone (L.Z.), choose an area that has less than 10 degrees of slope and without any overhead obstructions (i.e., trees buildings, telephone or power poles and lines).
- The helicopter will need a landing zone area of about 75 feet by 75 feet for day time and 125 feet by 125 feet at night.
- Clear the landing zone of any loose debris.
- Identify any wires, trees, poles, houses or fences that may near the L.Z.
- If water is available, wet down the L.Z., (especially if it is a dry dirt area), this makes it easier for the helicopter to see it from the air and cuts down on the dust.
- At night, strobes or beacons are useful for marking the L.Z. Avoid using flares of police tape. Flares can start fires and the tape may entangle the rotor.
- If there are vehicles around, use the headlights to light up objects around the landing zone and not the L.Z. itself. Avoid using the high-beams.

I will discuss what you need to do for the helicopter’s final approach and when they are on scene in the next Signpost. If you need any further information, please contact me at 916-875-6672 or you can contact CALSTAR at 510-887-3063.

An Offering for Earth Day
by Russ Hauck

I realize that this is a little early, but you won't be receiving another edition of the Signpost before April 22, so I thought I would share this now in case you are preparing a program for Earth Day. This came from Friends of the Earth New Zealand and when I read it, it caused me to reflect, which I suppose is one of the purposes of the observance. Good Luck and Happy Earth Day!!

"If the Earth were only a few feet in diameter, floating a few feet above a field somewhere, people would come from everywhere to marvel at it. People would walk around it, marveling at its big pools of water, its little pools and the water flowing between the pools. People would marvel at the bumps on it, and the holes in it and they would marvel at the very thin layer of gas surrounding it and the water suspended in the gas. The people would marvel at the creatures walking around the surface of the ball, and at the creatures in the water. The people would declare it as sacred because it was the only one, and they would protect it so that it would not be hurt. The ball would be the greatest wonder known, and people would come to pray to it, to be healed, to gain knowledge, to know beauty and to wonder how it could be. People would love it, and defend it with their lives because they would somehow know that their lives, their own roundness, could be nothing without it. If the Earth were only a few feet in diameter."
From the President's Favorite Shade Tree
by Russ Hauck

Your newly elected Board of Directors met in January to set some goals for the coming year. One of the goals we agreed upon was to activate the long inactive committees.

In our policy manuals, there is a separate page for each committee, but there is a glaring blank space where the purpose of each committee should be articulated. None of the committees have a stated purpose. The Board would like to remedy this situation.

The goal of activating these committees has four objectives:

1. Establish a purpose for each committee.
2. Help establish standards for the Association/profession.
3. Involve agencies in our Association that we historically don't reach (example: BLM rangers sitting on the Resource Management committee).
4. Actively involve Association members to encourage them to become future leaders/Directors.

We will be setting some time aside at the general membership meeting at the conference in San Luis Obispo to discuss this issue and form interested members to meet. Please consider contributing. We are asking for a six month commitment, which will probably involve a few telephone calls, and some of your time to review the material that your committee is proposing. I don't believe that any travel or face-to-face meetings will be necessary.

Each Director has chosen a committee, and I have taken the ones that are more administrative in nature. The assignments are:

- Interpretation: Sandy Ferreira
- Nominating: Russ Hauck
- Resource Management: Samantha Moss
- Conference Planning: Russ
- Law Enforcement: George Struble
- Membership: Russ
- Fire Suppression/EMS: John Havicon
- Training: Jim O'Connor

If you are attending the conference, put some thought into this and come prepared to discuss your chosen topic. If you are not attending the conference but would like to contribute, please contact the respective Regional Director for that committee.

This is a real opportunity to take advantage of the power of group dynamics. Each of us has a speciality, whether it be by job assignment or by area of interest within our diverse occupation. Why not contribute that expertise back to your livelihood so that others may benefit? To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, "Ask not what your Association can do for you, ask what you can do for your Association."

Zap Those Weeds the Hightech Way
by Tom Smith

Agriculture has invented a new device to zap Russian Thistle in the inland Northwest. It is called, patchen's Weedseeker. It is a selective sprayer system that has sensors that emit thousands of light bursts a second as the sprayer moves across the field. A sensor is mounted in front of each spray nozzle. When the sensor senses weeds, it turns on its corresponding spray tip or bank of tips. By using this device, a manager could realize considerable savings. It has been estimated that the device will use 30% to 50% less herbicides.

Spectrum Technologies in Plainfield Illinois has invented "Plant Stress-Detection Glasses." These are special glasses whose lenses filter out certain wavelengths of light. Healthy green turf grasses (as an example) would appear black or dark gray through the lenses. Stressed areas, which reflect little or no green light, will stand out as pink or brownish red. Areas damaged by poor nutrition or insects stand out against the background as glowing red, coral, pink or other hues. As an example mineral deficient leaves appear coral colored. Not to be used for driving or sunglasses, the price is $49.95 a pair. (Farm Journal, Mid-January 1998)
Cupid, Combustibles, and Culverts

by Ken Miller

Another weird but true park story comes this time from Stevens Creek Park in Santa Clara County. Three strange but true events happened in only a few weeks time. The Ranger is flagged down by a citizen who says “you’re not going to believe this but there’s a naked man running around the archery range.” The Sheriff’s Department is called and responds but can’t locate the man who’s now hiding in the dark. The man comes out of the brush for the Ranger because she is “nicer” than the Deputies. The man said he had smoked a little marijuana before getting out the bow and arrow for the range.

A few days later the early Ranger discovers that someone had set a pipe bomb off on the parking lot dumpster. The square dumpster is now round and everyone is lucky that no one was in the area when it went off.

Finally, a man is stopped for riding his bicycle with a piece of aluminum culvert strapped to the back of his bicycle. He’s entered the room, each taking a side and clearing it, or so I thought. I moved into the room to check another bank of lockers and as I advanced, I felt a pain in my right side, just above my vest panels. I turned and located the suspect on top of the lockers, returned fire and retreated. My fatal mistake was failing to communicate with my partner to ensure that the top of the locker was clear before I moved.

The use of Simunition rounds drove home the point of planning and communication. It was a sting that I will not forget. There was no “I shot you first” talk. This training was as real as it could get. I think that should be the objective of training. Shooting at paper targets is a way to get a score, but it does not provide real world scenarios. By using training aids such as Simunition, officers get the best possible training to achieve the ultimate goal: going home at the end of each shift.

"Simunition"
The Training With a Punch

by George Struble

Remember when you were in the academy, and the scenario was building searches? Your heart rate increased as you entered the structure, sweat began to form on your forehead, and by the time you cleared the structure, you were drenched. New building searches are not as stressful. You have done a few, never found anyone, and might have become somewhat complacent. You conduct the search with less intensity than that first academy search.

I just experienced a training that heightened the intensity to the level of that first search. The old saying “train as if your life depends on it, because it does” was given renewed meaning during my most recent training session. The training involved building searches using Simunition (simulated ammunition), an ammunition that fires a colored soap pellet out of regular duty weapons. The instructors briefed us that the suspects, if encountered, would have the same ammunition that we did and would shoot if we failed to locate them. This was a change from those non-reactive paper targets during other scenarios. The conversation in the staging area reflected the new twist to training. Officers were making plans about how they would make entry and how they would clear the rooms, instead of the usual “What are you doing this weekend” or “When is this training over.”

As the day progressed, very few officers came out of their searches with paint on their shirts. I attribute this to officers pre-planning and discussing tactics as they progressed through the searches, something we should be doing everyday.

I was successful in all but one of my searches. I was searching with a partner and we were clearing a locker room. We entered the room, each taking a side and clearing it, or so I thought. I moved into the room to check another bank of lockers and as I advanced, I felt a pain in my right side, just above my vest panels. I turned and located the suspect on top of the lockers, returned fire and retreated. My fatal mistake was failing to communicate with my partner to ensure that the top of the locker was clear before I moved.

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The California Wood Duck Program

by Sandy Ferreira

It's that time of year, wood ducks have already paired up and have begun to search for suitable habitat and ideal nesting areas. Sometimes as a result of urbanization and agriculture, these valuable nesting sites are lost. Fortunately, wood ducks will successfully use artificial nest boxes instead of natural tree cavities as nest sites. This is where the California Wood Duck Program steps in. In 1991, the California Waterfowl Association founded the California Wood Duck Program as a means to further enhance wood duck populations in the Pacific Flyway. This program is conducted by a unique combination of volunteers and biologists who work together to benefit wood ducks.

Information collected by volunteers is submitted to federal and state agencies to assist them with wood duck management. In addition to wood ducks using the nest boxes, other species benefit too. Some include kestrels, barn owls, screech owls and opossums.

Volunteers are essential to the success of the California Wood Duck Program. They install, clean and repair nest boxes, collect biological data about wood ducks and other cavity dependent species. Volunteers can also help build nest boxes too, standardized plans are available from CWA. There are many ways that you can volunteer for this exciting and rewarding program. If you would like to learn more about the program or volunteer in a wood duck program in your area, you can contact the California Waterfowl Association at 1-916-648-1406. I cannot think of a better worthwhile and interesting program to be a part of.
A Unique Management Tool

By Sandy Ferreira

For many years, the City of Fremont has been challenged by an ever growing population of non-migratory Canada Geese. Currently, the population has grown to about one thousand Canada geese. In the summer months, as many as 1600 Canada geese can be seen foraging on prime grass in Central Park. The problem is with this many geese, they tend to leave all the droppings on park turf, soil picnic areas, denude the grass, and make it pretty unpleasant for park visitors. As you walk, run or bicycle along the pathways you can see the evidence everywhere. A mature Canada goose produces about one pound of droppings a day. That's a lot, considering the number of geese we have to contend with. This makes some park visitors pretty unhappy.

Park managers have been working on this problem and researching this issue. We may have come up with a solution. After much research, the City has begun testing the effectiveness of trained Border Collie dogs as a goose management tool. These dogs have been highly trained to herd and work livestock under voice and whistle command, and now to herd geese. Their objective is to herd the geese and continually keep them moving. On command, the trainer will direct the dogs to work the geese moving them towards the lake in an attempt to prevent them from grazing or resting on the grass. The dogs move towards the geese. They do not grab, bite or harm them. Once moving, the geese either scurry towards the lake or take alight and fly, landing on the water. Here they stay until they think it is safe to leave the water or want to feed. The trainer then calls the dogs back, reloads them in their kennels and continues on patrol. This method is repeated over and over throughout the day.

It's was interesting to watch the reaction from the geese. Just after a week of herding, the geese instinctively began to move towards the water when they saw the dogs even before their trainer commanded them to work. They seemed to know they had to get away. It was equally interesting to watch the border collies work too. These dogs are used to working sheep and cattle. These animals can not fly, the dogs had to adjust and be patient because the geese would leap and fly away. The dogs were probably confused at first...sheep versus goose...but in spite of the challenge it all seemed to work very well.

Public response has been good too. I spoke to many park visitors who have come to watch the border collies work the geese. At first, they thought the dogs might grab or injure the geese but once they saw them in action all those thoughts went away. They were happy to see the geese fly off and are pleased to see that only after a few short weeks of experimental goose herding, their park is becoming once again a clean place to visit. If this plan works, park managers are considering purchasing their own trained border collies who will work with park rangers several hours a day in an attempt to discourage the geese from foraging and force them to find food elsewhere.

Officer Safety Alert

John Havicon

An alert has been sent out by the A.F.T. to warn officers of a chemical product “Ricin.” Ricin is a white powder that looks like methamphetamine. It is highly toxic and if it contacts your skin, it can be fatal. The death process takes several days, depending on the dosage and is almost impossible to detect during autopsy.

Drug traffickers are using Ricin to “bait” law enforcement officers. When field tested, using the “Scott Re-agent” (Voltox) Kit, it will foam and bubble extensively. The test will also produce a gas that is very similar to mustard gas and can be lethal if inhaled. If this reaction does occur, evacuate the area immediately. Ricin is 6,000 times more lethal than cyanide and there is no antidote. The signs & symptoms of contact exposure to Ricin are: fever; cough; weakness; and hypothermia. The illness progresses to a dangerously low blood pressure with heart failure and death to follow.

Due to this situation, in the event of suspected drug seizures, do not come into direct contact with any powdered substances and use caution when field testing any powdered substance.
Geez, this one came on me too fast. Fortunately, I had stopped by my office at State the other day and my office partner had obtained a book that she wanted my opinion on. It came from the Sagamore Publishing Company in Champaign Illinois. They had sent it to her as a possible text for one of her classes. But alas, she does not teach the subject. One of the nice things about teaching is that you sometimes get free copies of books to consider as texts for classes. The title of this one is, Interpretation for the 21st Century, Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture. Wow, another new interp book! I took it home and curled up to the airtight and started to read. I immediately got engrossed in the book. Like a lot of my “recreational reading,” this one was almost a “can’t put it down” book. It is easy reading. The authors, Larry Beck and Ted Cable are both university professors. Beck is on the faculty at San Diego State, and Cable, at Kansas State. Both have extensive interpretive experience. Beck serves as Associate editor of the Journal of Interpretation, and Cable is the editor and in 1996, received the distinguished “Master of Interpretation” award from the National Association for Interpretation. So much for expertise. All of us that are or have been, involved with interpretation, are familiar with Tilden's Six Principles of Interpretation. At least, we should be, anyway. Tilden's Interpreting Our Heritage, was published in 1957, and has been the “bible” for interpreters nationwide. Enos Mills was one of parks first interpreters. Mills was an interpretive guide in Rocky Mountain National Park from 1880s to 1920. Mills wrote The Adventures of a Nature Guide, published in 1920, that eloquently put forth a number of principles that laid a philosophical foundation for effective interpretation. Many different books on interpretation have appeared over the years. I used Grant Sharp’s Interpreting Our Heritage, when I taught interpretation at West Valley. Grant’s book is written in a practical sense. It is a “how to” kind of book. This new book, Interpretation for the 21st Century, is one that can easily be used as a supplemental text. What the authors have done is to take the principles as brought forth by Mills and Tilden, and add to them what they consider to be twenty first century principles. I guess it would be quite proper to name the principles here. Each one is tastefully covered as a chapter.

**First Principle:** Lighting a Spark. If this book does not light a spark in interp, then nothing will.

**Second Principle:** Interpreting in the information Age. Modern interpretation

**Third Principle:** The Importance of the story. Using the story as an interpretive theme.

**Fourth Principle:** Provocation.

**Fifth Principle:** Holistic interpretation

**Six Principle:** Interpretation throughout the lifespan (Age groups). We read about interpreting to children. They cover this subject and all other age groups. Even mine!

**Seventh Principle:** Bringing the past alive. Living history and historical interp.

**Eighth Principle:** High-tech gadgetry

**Ninth Principle:** Enough is enough. (Interestingly enough, they talk about what might be too much interpretation)

**Tenth Principle:** Technique before art

**Eleventh Principle:** Interpretive composition. How to write interpretive brochures, etc.

**Twelfth Principle:** Attracting support and making friends

**Thirteenth Principle:** Interpreting beauty. This one and the fifteenth were my favorite chapters in the book. Had never read anything about this subject before.

**Fourteenth Principle:** Promoting optimal experiences

**Fifteenth Principle:** Passion. This had to be my favorite as I believed every line that was written. Passion is behind every successful ranger and interpreter. If you don't love what you do with a passion, or love nature with the same passion, then you need to sell shoes or do something else.

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