New Signpost Format
Brooks Retires, Replacement Sought

by Jeff Price

We are trying out a new electronic format to bring you the PRAC Signpost while we search for a newsletter Editor.

Our sincere thanks to former Signpost Editor David Brooks, who retired from that task in November. (See detailed article on Page 2).

The PRAC Board is looking for an interested person to take over as PRAC's Signpost Newsletter Editor. If you have an interest and possess basic skills, please contact President Matt Cerkel to discuss the matter.

In the mean time, Matt will serve as Acting Editor and I will be helping him with layout and design, as Associate Editor. We encourage members to continue submitting articles of interest to Matt by the 15th of March, June, September and December, for the following quarter's issue.

Conference Registration

PRAC's 2018 Parks Training and Conference Registration information and how to make an Online Room Reservation. (More on Page 5)

We will also have many great sessions in our Public Safety, Interpretation, Park Operations/Resource Management Tracks. (Details continued on Page 5)

Coming March 4 through March 8, 2018
2018 California Parks Training and Conference
Yosemite South, at Tenaya Lodge

2018 Conference Details and Schedule

The Park Rangers Association of California's 2018 California Parks Training and Conference will be at the Tenaya Lodge, just outside the south entrance to Yosemite National Park. The conference will be held March 4 through March 8. March 4th is the first date the discounted room rate is available. March 5 registration/check-in will open. March 6 and 7 will be the training sessions and special speakers. March 7 will also see our general membership meeting and our awards banquet. Download a fillable REGISTRATION FORM here.

On Monday March 5 there will be afternoon class on Unmanned Aircraft Technology in Park Operations by Chris Cruz of West Valley College. There will also be field trips on Monday, check back after the New Year for further details on the field trips.

Our conference keynote speaker will be Frank Dean, president of the Yosemite Conservancy and former superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
President's Message

January 2018

by Matt Cerkel

As I write this, the end of the year is fast approaching and it will be 2018 before you know it!

Our Parks Training Conference is coming up in about two months, March 5th-8th at Tenaya Lodge. It will be a great conference with many great speakers and presentations. It will also be an opportunity to catch up with fellow rangers from across California and Nevada and that is another great aspect of the conference.

The Board is currently in the early stages of planning your 2019 California Parks Training Conference. We hope to announce the location of the 2019 Conference at our General Membership meeting on Wednesday March 7th. We will be returning to Southern California in 2019.

2018 will also mark some changes to The Signpost. The Signpost will become a quarterly publication and will be switching to a web-based format. We hope the members like the new look. We also hope more members will contribute articles to The Signpost. As rangers we have many stories and experiences to tell and The Signpost is a great way to tell those stories and share those experiences and we WANT to hear from you.

See you all at Tenaya Lodge in March 2018!

Signpost Editor Brooks Retires After 25 Years

Board Seeks Replacement

by Jeff Price

After 25 years serving as PRAC's Signpost Newsletter Editor, David Brooks is retiring.

David was born and raised in San Jose, worked as a Seasonal Park Ranger for Santa Clara County Parks in 1977, and graduated from West Valley College in 1978 with a degree in Park Management. From there he went to Cal State University in Sacramento where he graduated with a degree in Recreation and Park Administration.

In the fall of 1980 David graduated from the NPS Santa Rosa Law Enforcement Academy, and in 1982 accepted a job with the City of Santa Cruz Water Department as a permanent Park Ranger at Loch Lomond Lake Recreation Area.

David retired in December 2017, after 35 years in uniform as a Ranger II at Loch Lomond LRA. Looking back, he says his duties have included park operations, watershed protection, managing a drinking water reservoir, monitoring water quality, running a park store/boat rental, park maintenance, filling in as acting Chief Ranger, first aid, law enforcement incidents, being a public officer, working with volunteers, interpretation and anything else that came up.

David says he is proud to have been a field ranger working with the visiting public in such a beautiful natural area.

Brooks has served faithfully in every capacity he has been tapped to fill in PRAC. He always made sure every Signpost edition was a professional publication with useful information for PRAC members. His job is not always easy, as he had to constantly solicit articles from PRAC members and other sources. All he asked for in return was the occasional software upgrade.

David served a dozen PRAC Presidents and many different Boards with his editorial expertise. In the early 1990’s he also spent two years as co-editor of the Cal Ranger journal, and then steadily worked for 25 years as the PRAC Signpost Newsletter Editor.

Past President Bill Hendricks, 1988 to 1990, had several comments reflecting on Brooks. He says, “Every successful professional organization has an individual behind the scenes, who serves as the voice of the organization, subtly and gracefully moving the membership forward, constantly reflecting on the past, while adapting to the profession’s changing demands and evolution. For PRAC, that person has been David Brooks, the Signpost Editor and communication conduit for park rangers statewide for 25 years. While Boards and Presidents have come and gone, David stood sturdy, cranking out each and every newsletter like the sturdy redwoods of his Santa Cruz home.”

(continued on Page 14)

"Big Walls, Swift Waters"

A Book Review

by Matt Cerkel

I recently had the pleasure of reading Big Walls, Swift Water by Charles R. “Butch” Farabee. Having read other books by Farabee I eagerly looked forward to reading this one. Farabee, a retired National Park Service protection ranger and is a premier author/historian on the National Parks and the National Park rangers. This time Farabee tells the story of search and rescue in Yosemite National Park.

(continued on Page 10)
OC Park Rangers Swap Unions
Now Aligned with Deputy Sheriffs

by Candi Hubert, Vice-President and Region 5 Director

Orange County Park Rangers are now officially in the Association of Orange County Deputy Sheriffs (AOCDS). This is a big change and has been a long process. The Orange County Park Rangers had been in the Orange County Employees Association (OCEA), which represents approximately 18,000 Orange County workers and has been in existence since 1937. OCEA provided health and welfare benefits, MOU and negotiated on behalf of the employees. As of this month OC Park Rangers have started to switch their benefits over to AOCDS.

All sworn peace officers in the County of Orange are now represented by AOCDS. This includes OC Park Rangers, Coroners, Public Assistance Investigators and the Probation Department. This has increased the membership of AOCDS from about 2,000 to 3,000. So how did all of this come about and why the switch? The sheriffs union had been contacted for many years to take on these additional groups but it’s not an easy or quick process and can only be done during a certain time frame. This last year the Probation Department which has 800 members went to the AOCDS Board meeting to let them know they were ready and serious about changing unions and were prepared to do the work involved. The Sheriffs Union told them they could not request the change, Probation would have to do the administrative work to get the ball rolling which they did. Probation reached out to the other departments, OC Parks, Coroners and Public Assistance Investigators to request that all groups move over together.

I was initially contacted by another Park Ranger who had heard of the possible movement from OCEA to AOCDS. I attended three meetings; the first of which was held primarily by Probation to explain why they wanted to change and what they hope to attain. The main issues of all four groups were the need to be represented by sworn Peace Officers who understand the needs of our positions and what we do on the job. Everyone expressed that OCEA represents mostly administrative positions which are very different from our own. Many also expressed the need for commensurate pay and benefits that match the positions we hold that require enforcement, medical and fire response in addition to many other duties.

After the three meetings, OC Park Rangers voted as a group to join AOCDS by 88%. The Sheriffs union voted as a group to take all four groups by a vote of 90% which according to their spokesperson is unheard of. I don’t want anyone to think this was easy, there were many discussions by all groups and it took a few people to convince everyone that this was to the benefit of all four groups. OCEA also had meetings with all four groups and tried to convince us to stay with them. They focused mostly on the benefit of PORAC to us but could not give any details of a comparison of benefits.

We had meetings with AOCDS this month to explain how the process will work with switching the medical benefits over and they explained how their union works and the various ways their members contribute. They have a Political Action Committee (PAC) which they emphasized in their ability to provide the best benefits for their members.

Overall, this has been an interesting process to be part of and I’m hopeful it will work out the way all four departments intended.
Officer Safety is Not a "Thing"

by Charles Gillingham, Third Degree Communications, Inc.

Article submitted by Pam Helmke, Region 2 Director, from Third Degree Communications, Inc.
TDC provides comprehensive training programs designed to enhance the investigative skills of law enforcement, corrections and social services personnel. Seminars are POST Certified in CA.
http://www.tdcor.org/

Officer safety is not a "thing." Officer safety is everything for you as an officer and is the justification for almost all of your actions in the field. It is not a legal justification by itself, to do anything in the field. If you want to bullet proof your stops and searches remember to document and testify to ARTICULABLE FACTS. If you write in your report that you stopped or pat searched someone for "officer safety," welcome to a motion to suppress.

REASONABLE SUSPICION
Remember, reasonable suspicion is lower than probable cause-the information can be less reliable and more than that needed for probable cause. Bottom line, reasonable suspicion will exist if you can articulate one or more circumstances that based on your training and experience and based on common sense that criminal activity is afoot. It has to be more than a hunch but it can be otherwise innocent behavior that can lead you to reasonable suspicion.

OFFICER SAFETY
The United States Supreme Court has held that officer-safety concerns are legitimate and weighty due to officer's vulnerability. Some circumstances that the Court has upheld detentions:
- Suspect may have committed a violent felony;
- Matches description
- Running and hiding;
- Conduct-refusal to follow commands
- Jittery
- Nervous
- Won't show hands
- Prior contact
- Prior contact where suspect was armed
- Prior contact where suspect resisted
- Prior contact where suspect fled
- Location plus something else
- Multiple individuals
- Night time with no back-up close

(continued on Page 8)
2018 Conference Details and Schedule
(continued from page 1)

Our public safety track sessions will include:
- Documenting and Report Writing for Use of Force Incidents by POST Certified DT Instructor/MMWD Park Ranger Brett Pedisch
- The Use of Game Cameras for Park Law Enforcement by MMWD Park Ranger Matt Cerkel
- F&G inspection/enforcement/statutes by CDFW wardens
- CDFW Marijuana Eradication Team/Trespass-DTO Grow Officer Safety by CDFW Lt. John Nores
- Establishing a Peace Officer Park Ranger Program by Carol Belser, CMWD Park Services Manager
- Wildland Fire Evacuations by Deputy Matt Larson, Marin County Sheriff’s Office
- Yosemite Search and Search by National Park Ranger John Dill

Our interpretation track sessions will include:
- Story Telling Workshop by Ane Carla Rovetta
- From Earth to Art: Natural Pigments and Paints by Ane Carla Rovetta
- How to Answer Questions When You Have No Time to Prepare by Ethan Rotman
- Creating a Native Garden – On a budget and with NO budget! By LARPD Park Ranger Amy Wolitzer
- A Visitor’s Perspective on Park Rangers-Matt and Karen Smith, authors of Dear Bob and Sue, a story of their travels to all 59 of the national parks in the U.S.

Our park operations/resource management sessions will include:
- Strategies for Using Social Media for Park Management by MCP Open Space Park Ranger Mike Warner
- GIS / Mapping for Field Staff by MCP Open Space Park Ranger Mike Warner
- Best management practices of our parks
- Coyotes in our Mist by Marin County Parks Chief Ranger Rob Ruiz
- West Valley College’s Park Management Program by Chris Cruz
- Law Enforcement Ranger-Generalist Model by Captain Ken Brink, Larimer County, CO DNR

We will also have speakers from Yosemite National Park! Including Scott Gediman, Deputy Superintendent, Public Affairs- who will discuss how to handle high profile events and media events.

Conference Registration
by Matt Cerkel

PRAC’s 2018 California Parks Training and Conference will be returning to the Tenaya Lodge at the south entrance to Yosemite National Park, near Fish Camp.

The conference will be held March 4 through March 8. Check Detailed Conference Information to the right.

Make an Online Room Reservation.*

If you are interested in presenting at the conference in our Public Safety, Interpretation or Park Operations/Resource Management tracks, please e-mail me at matt@calranger.org and I will put you in touch with respective track chair.

Download and complete a Conference Registration Form, and pay online!

* Members and Guests unable to use the online reservation system may make reservations by calling (800) 635-5807, Select option #1 and identify the PRAC 2018 Conference, or use the group code 3199G4 to receive the group rate.
Managing the Resource
Christmas Trees for Special Families

by Andy Brown, Region 6 Director

Galena Creek Regional Park, founded in 1931, is the oldest regional park in Washoe County. The park consists of 460 acres of towering Jeffrey pines, white fir, Incense cedar, mountain mahogany, and green-leaf manzanita. As it is situated in the transition zone between the Great Basin to the Sierra, you’ll also find sage, bitterbrush and other typical high-desert species peppered throughout.

The park shares a boundary with a few thousand acres of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest below Mount Rose, the highest peak on the east shore of Lake Tahoe. Washoe County and the US Forest Service jointly manage the Galena Creek Recreation Area, which includes a visitor center and several miles of heavily travelled multi-use trails that link the park to an adjacent community across State Route 431, a main thoroughfare from Reno to Lake Tahoe.

As a park ranger in this desert-forest environment, I can say with certainty that the trees are the focus regarding public safety. We focus on the health of the trees themselves, and the hazards that they pose to the public (and each other) when they become unhealthy.

Drought and wildfires are also a major concern, and usually the driving force behind any decisions to cull the herd. (continued on Page 7)
Editorial Opinion

DJT Slashes National Monuments
Trims Smokey the Bear’s Ears

We had always thought that “protected lands” set aside for public enjoyment as parks, preserves, historic sites or monuments were permanently protected. Apparently not so much.

In reducing two national monuments by a total of two millions acres in December 2017, President Donald Trump may have pleased smaller government and business proponents in Utah — but touched off what promises to be a furious court fight over whether he overstepped his presidential authority. His opponents include many of the country’s most powerful environmental groups and five Native American tribes.

Trump’s unprecedented action sharply reduced, reconfigured and renamed the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments in southern Utah. A total of 3.25 million acres that had been protected by monument status were reduced to 1.23 million acres.

The president said his action was designed to reduce a massive overreach by previous Democratic presidents and to return more control over the rugged, sparsely populated region to locals. His administration has argued that plenty of other protections still exist to prevent misuse of what are some of the West’s last great open spaces.

Opponents, however, say the reduction would open irreplaceable sandstone canyons, red rock monoliths, sacred Native American lands and forested highlands to incursions by oil and gas drillers, coal and uranium miners and to a flood of off road vehicles. Two other lawsuits, by a total of 13 environmental organizations, have also been filed to block the redrawing of the Grand Staircase-Escalante, an action that reduced the monument from 1.9 million acres to just over 1 million acres.

Trump cited “past administrations” as having “severely abused the purpose and spirit and intent of a centuries-old law known as the Antiquities Act.” That act, signed in 1906 by Theodore Roosevelt, gives presidents the unilateral power to protect public lands — but nowhere does it grant the president power to reduce or remove previous designations. On these grounds, several environmental and Native American groups promise to bring lawsuits to stop this precedent-setting action by the Trump administration.

Hopefully reasonable members of the public will realize what is currently happening to our protected federal lands and speak out. In our professional opinion, this action is literally like cutting off one of Smokey the Bear’s ears!

Managing the Resource
(continued from Page 6)

A few years back, while working with the Nevada Division of Forestry on a vegetation management plan for Galena Creek Regional Park, it was decided that several areas of the park required thinning to reduce the number of trees-per-acre to increase drought resistance. It would require the removal of most of the built-up fuels in the understory, as well as any dead or dying hazard trees.

Several species of bark beetle and pine mistletoe have taken a toll on the Jeffery pines throughout the entire forest. White firs are very abundant, as they like to grow under the canopy, sheltered by the surrounding pines. However, they can take on an almost invasive quality, depleting water resources. Mistletoe are also a highly flammable ladder fuel that poses a threat to the Jeffery pines. This meant that dense swaths of white fir would need to be eliminated for the new strategy to be effective. (continued on Page 8)
Officer Safety is Not a "Thing"  
(continued from page 4)

Handcuff During a Detention does not constitute arrest. Again, you need a reason because handcuffing during a detention is not standard operating procedure. Must be brief and reasonably necessary. TELL the suspect s/he is not under arrest but merely detained.

Some examples of articulable facts to justify handcuffs during a detention:

- Suspect was verbally abusive to officer;
- Suspect refused to remove hands;
- Suspected of violent crime;
- Intoxicated and would not follow direction;
- Officer alone, late at night;
- Officer alone, outnumbered by suspects;
- Reasonable belief that suspect is armed;
- Suspect keeps reaching inside clothing;
- Appears ready to flee;
- Tenses up when touching suspect;
- Suspect transported to another location is a show up

When you detain a suspect, ARTICULATE why. If you pat search a suspect, ARTICULATE why. If you handcuff a suspect during a detention, ARTICULATE why. If you fail to do so, welcome to a motion to suppress, where hopefully you will remember the facts that led you to take the steps you did. Be safe . . .

Managing the Resource  
(continued from Page 7)

Not wanting the highly sought-after trees to go to waste, park staff devised a plan to make the project a dual-effort that would benefit the community in a creative way. The Christmas Trees for Special Families program, as it came to be known, was formed from this idea.

In early December of each year since the program began, Park Rangers, along with park maintenance staff, public works, and administrative staff from the Washoe County Community Services Department, all take part in the “harvest” of 60-80 white firs within the park. The trees are then transported by Roads division crews to Rancho San Rafael Regional Park for distribution. The trees are given free-of-charge to families with children in the local foster care system, as well as families with members in the Nevada Air National Guard and Army National Guard, to help ease the burden that purchasing a tree for the holidays would have placed on them.

Free recycling is even offered by local non-profit Keep Truckee Meadows Beautiful following the event. A few families even receive free passes to our swimming pools and splash parks, or free museum admission. A tree is also set up on display at the central county office complex to discuss the program and spread cheer among those who may be attending a county commission meeting.  

(Continued on Page 9)
Managing the Resource  
(continued from Page 8)

The program has been very successful, in that it has increased community engagement in Washoe County parks, as well as raised awareness about the vegetation management aspect of the project at Galena Creek Regional Park. It has demonstrated what efficiencies can be found from a simple forest management plan that can also have a large impact on the whole community. In 2016, the program earned letters of appreciation from U.S. Congressman Mark Amodei and U.S. Senator Dean Heller of Nevada.

Eventually, in theory, the ultimate success of the program would be a little bittersweet. The large clusters of firs would be reduced to less than a dozen per acre, to the point of sustainability. It would take several more years until the trees would return in sufficient numbers to cut Christmas trees for those families in need, while not eliminating that species entirely. This year, as the coordinator of the harvest, I looked at the way the Forest Service manages their Christmas tree permitting, and it gave me a great idea. Typically, the USFS only opens small, specific areas to firewood and tree cutting permits. The areas are then rotated every few years so that excess trees, mostly red and white fir, can be removed at a rate that is healthy for the forest at large. Those areas would then be allowed to recover for the next few years while new areas were opened.

In the spirit of the joint management agreement between the county and the forest service, I managed to obtain a permit that enabled Washoe County staff to harvest trees on USFS lands adjacent to the park. It not only provided the ability to continue the charitable aspect of our program, but increased the reach of our vegetation management strategy to include those adjacent areas, further increasing the chances of successfully maintaining forest health within the park.

While this example may not be relevant to every agency out there, it could provide a little insight into the possibilities that may arise from similar agency partnerships that can have effects that far outreach the primary goals.
"Big Walls, Swift Waters" (continued from page 2)

The book is a well-researched history of Yosemite Search and Rescue (YOSAR), an adventure anthology, and a guide on how to use Yosemite (and other parks) safely. As someone who has been involved in SAR for over 25 years I was interested in seeing how SAR evolved in Yosemite. The professionalism, courage and dedication of YOSAR is inspirational for anyone involved in SAR. YOSAR is one of the most elite SAR teams in the country and I’m glad their story is being told to a wider audience now.

The stories of rescues and recoveries performed in Yosemite as told in this book were both thrilling and at times sobering. The author puts you right there cliff-side on Half Dome or in the bone-chilling Merced River. The real-life rescues are far more compelling than any Hollywood “adventure” you’ll see on TV or in a movie. The level of skill the members of YOSAR have shown over the years is nothing short of amazing and as a park ranger something to strive for!

Big Walls, Swift Waters is also a guide to park visitors on how to use Yosemite safely, so YOSAR won’t have to rescue (or recover) you or a loved one. I just read a story on how more visitors are heading into our parks unprepared and how this gets them into trouble. I have seen this trend first hand and education is one way to deal with this. Too bad Yosemite can’t make this book required reading for visiting the park or to get a Half Dome or wilderness permit.

This book is a quick and enjoyable read. I recommend it for those interested in the park ranger profession, search and rescue, the Sierra Nevada or Yosemite. Big Walls, Swift Waters is one of the better park ranger related books I’ve read in the past few years and I highly recommend it. [On Amazon, Paperback, $15.63]

Under the Flat Hat

by Matt Cerkel

Having worked in the parks since 1991 and served as a park ranger since 1995, I have seen a lot of changes in the profession and in the parks. As rangers we see dramatic changes in everything from the uniforms we wear to the technology we use. Looking back now it’s amazing the see the changes.

When I started in the ranger profession the standard uniform was the gray or silver tan uniform shirt and green jeans. We had a summer jacket made from the same material as the green jeans, a winter jacket that was not waterproof or breathable, a cotton t-shirt, and of course the flat hat.

Now we have a choice of cargo-style pants (some which double as wildland fire PPE), softshell jackets, a choice of waterproof breathable jackets, uniforms shirts that are moisture wicking or more breathable, and moisture wicking t-shirts (some of which are flame resistant). Surprisingly, many agencies still use the cotton t-shirts as a base layer, despite knowing its limitation as a fabric in wildland and wilderness settings (“cotton kills”).

The only thing that really hasn’t changed is the flat hat. From a law enforcement aspect, we’ve seen armed ranger agencies transition for revolvers to semi-automatics. Tear gas was replaced with OC (pepper spray). Of course, some agencies that were armed when I started my career are no longer armed, while others have become armed. Some agencies are now adding Tasers to the defensive equipment available to their rangers.

(continued on Page 13)
“Getting to Know You”
Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency
Thousand Oaks Park Rangers

by Richard Weiner, Region 4 Director

On December 12, 2017, I took a ride along with Ranger Kari Stav to see the open spaces, trails and artifacts that lie within the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA). Having seen the hills from a distance, the up close and personal viewing of the parks and trails was amazing.

COSCA preserves, protects, and manages open space resources in the Conejo Valley. This open space system is a refuge from urbanization where trails are open to hikers, bicyclists and equestrians. COSCA is a joint power agency (JPA) between the City of Thousand Oaks (CTO) and the Conejo Recreation and Park District (CRPD). It is a Special District that is funded by Ventura County property taxes. COSCA was the first JPA of its kind in the State when it was formed in 1977. COSCA is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of two members of the CRPD Board of Directors, two members of the City Council, and one appointed member of the public.

An independent foundation (Conejo Open Space Foundation) supports the Agency via fundraising and volunteer programs. The volunteer programs are invaluable to the Rangers as they include Adopt a Trail (the adoptee helps to maintain that trail), Trail Watch and Trail Patrol (where volunteers check the trail, map boxes, mutt-mitt boxes, etc. and educate visitors on COSCA’s Ordinances).

The volunteers are the Rangers’ eyes and ears; they write up trail reports after each visit to the trails that go directly to the Ranger phones and alert the Rangers of when a tree is down or erosion is occurring etc. so that the Rangers can respond with the appropriate equipment.

The major duties and responsibilities of the Rangers are:
1. Maintenance of open spaces
2. Interpretation, public education
3. Law enforcement

Here are some facts about COSCA:
1. Population served: 129,000
2. Ranger program established: 1977
3. Number of Rangers: 6 Rangers, 1 Open Space Technician
4. Number of Contractors (Seasonal workers): currently none – if you know someone who’s interested contact the Rangers
5. Basic Requirements: Associates Degree with 60 filed units, PC 832, Wilderness First Aid / CPR, CA State Parks Basic and Intermediate Trails Maintenance and Management Programs or equivalent, Chainsaw Training (Wildland Fire Suppression 212 or equivalent)
6. 41 Open Spaces and 50 neighborhood / community parks
7. Over 150 miles of trail/15,200 acres of Open Space
8. Major open spaces: 2,600 acres (North Park), 1,765 acres (Wildwood), 1,673 (Conejo Canyon)
9. More than 600 plant species - 17 of which are either rare, threatened, or endangered.
10. Vehicles: 5 Ranger Trucks, 1 Pick-up, 5 bikes (some electric bikes), 1 water buffalo (water tender), 1 Trail Cat

One of the artifacts that we saw was an old cave used by the Chumash Indians. Entering into the shelter where they might have slept, were large rocks worn with holes (mortars) that might have been used to grind corn or plants to eat. There were markings (pictographs) on the walls of the cave made by the occupants. We also saw some fossils, an ancient riverbed and some new steps that were installed by the rangers for public use, going up a trail on the side of the mountain.

This ride along gave me a more in depth look at the make-up and responsibilities of the rangers that patrol in Thousand Oaks.

If you are interested in a “Getting to Know You” article highlighting your agency for the Signpost, please drop a line to your Region Director.
Marin County Parks
How It All Began

by Michael Warner, PRAC Region 1 Director

Marin County Parks origins began in 1939 with the purchase of Stinson Beach on the pacific coast. The beach was later transferred in 1950 to the California State Park System, and then eventually the National Park System. It would be another twenty years before Marin County would venture into owning parks or open space.

During that twenty year period Marin County would grow from a very rural outlaying area to a suburban cityscape with many settlements doubling or quadrupling in size. In the late 1960s several large developments including a city that was planned to be built along the west Marin County coast to include 125,000 people and to upgrade Highway 1 to a four lane freeway finally caused the public to take action. The public was asking “Can the last place last?”

After a series of elections that brought about a new set of county board of supervisors, Marin County adopted a new general plan in 1972. The plan limited development and provided for the creation of a parks department. The Marin County Open Space District was also formed that same year by public vote. The Marin County Open Space District would be managed by the Marin County Parks Department, but would retain its own separate budget funded by parcel taxes and its own staff.

Over the next 40 years the parks department added four regional parks starting with McNears Beach in 1970, and soon followed by Paradise Beach, McInnis Park, and Stafford Lake Park. The parks department also manages 27 other outlaying park facilities and two boat launches.

The Marin County Open Space District on the other hand, through the use of matching bond funds and public assistance, has acquired 34 Open Space Preserves totaling approximately 20,000 acres throughout the county. There are over 200 miles of roads and trails that traverse a wide diversity of landscapes including oak-savannas, bay laurel-madrone forests, conifer forests, chaparral, and open grasslands.

In 2012 the Marin County Parks Department merged with the Marin County Open Space District changing the face of the department completely. Also in Marin County, voters passed Measure A, a bond measure to improve County Park and open space facilities, and to expand staffing for both parks and open space. Today the department is continuing to expand and improve its facilities.

Recently (2014) the department completed its Vegetation and Biodiversity Management plan helping protect many of its rare native landscapes, for example Ring Mountain Open Space Preserve with its 12 endangered and endemic plant and insect species.

Marin County Parks is also in the middle of its Road and Trail management plan process which is adopting many “Social Trails” into the system network and helping provide more trail use opportunities for all user groups.

Back 1 Page
Under the Flat Hat
(continued from page 10)

When I started we were issued micro-cassette recorders to record our law enforcement contacts, now there are body cameras which I hope all ranger agencies with law enforcement authority adopt. The body armor some rangers wear is significantly lighter than what was issued in the mid-1990s. Some agencies are even using external carriers for body armor, sometimes for ergonomic reasons.

For rangers with wildland firefighting duties there have been many changes too. When I started there was GSA issued webgear or military surplus webgear to hold the fire shelter, canteens and a small gear bag. Now there is a new generation fire shelter, hydration systems (like Camelbak), and countless variety of webgear and Load Bearing Equipment for wildland firefighting. Gone too are the military surplus goggles, now replaced by a variety of wildland specific safety goggles. The PPE clothing has also improved in function and ergonomics. In the last few years there has also been the appearance of lighter weight “hiker” style boots for wildland firefighting.

EMS has changed too, AEDs have become common places and CPR has changed. Tactical medicine (Tactical Life Saver for Law Enforcement) has become a thing. The basic EMS skills have evolved, and standards have changed.

There are also many more choices of EMS bags, now and better options for EMS bags set up for the rural, park or wildland settings. Although the public’s expectation remains large the same, that we as rangers will be able to help them if they’re hurt.

We also have a lot more choices for patrol packs now than we did when I started. I wrote about my preferred patrol backpack last summer. I remember it used to be hard to find a good patrol backpack in a neutral or professional color. Now it is easy. Compared to 20 years ago, the choices are simply amazing.

I know there have been many changes, but I’ve saved what I feel is the biggest for last; electronics. When I started my career the most common electronic device we had were our portable and mobile radios. Cell phones were “bricks” and were not common.

Now think what we may have, digital trunked radios, GPS, MDC’s tied into CAD (computer added dispatch) and ARS (automated reporting system), regular laptops, FLIR, night vision goggles, digital cameras, digital motion-activated game cameras (some with cellular connectivity to text message you the photos as they occur) and smart phones/tablets.

With the right set up a ranger can have access to nearly ALL their electronic paperwork without having to set foot in the ranger station. Of course, with smart phones/tablets you have a camera, camcorder, access to your email, GPS, maps and many apps that are useful for park rangers.

One of my favorite apps is iNaturalist, which now allows you to ID plants and animals by uploading a photo! On my phone other Apps I commonly use are a PDF reader, Google Earth, Topo Maps+, AllTrails, Strava, CA Laws, NASA Field Guide, and Wildland Toolkit. The information and tools we can carry in a shirt pocket now is incredible.

Despite all these changes I’m glad certain things have not changed, such as our Flat Hat and our basic duties of Protecting the Park from the People, the People from the Park, and the People from the People.

In many cases the changes just help us do are basic duties in a safer and more effective manner.
Hendricks thought continued, "Serving as President of PRAC back in the dark ages, I recall, quiet, yet passionate conversations with David. He always struck me as the epitome of a park ranger, one who avoided the limelight, but made a difference on the biggest stage, always professional and confident that he was making a difference for us all. Now that he is settling into retirement, David is setting down his pen for the Signpost. Thank you David, for your dedication to the Signpost, editorial skills, professionalism, and enduring commitment to the park ranger profession. You have made the rest of us look pretty darn good all these years."

Past-president Russ Hauck (1996 to 1997) recalled, "One of my most vivid memories about serving on the board both as as a Regional Director and as President is that we never had to worry about the Signpost. Every other facet of the organization was discussed at least annually as new board members came and went. The Signpost was the one area that was a "rubber stamp." We just needed to confirm that our outstanding and dedicated editor was crazy enough to want to keep doing it. Saying that serving for twenty seven years is going above and beyond the call of duty just doesn't seem to be enough. What David did for the organization was legendary. I offer him the most heartfelt thanks, and a sincere wish for a happy and well-deserved retirement."

Our current President, Matt Cerkel, gave his thoughts on David's tenure as Editor and upcoming retirement. Cerkel says, "It's weird to think about the Signpost and not associate it with David Brooks!" Matt adds, "I've been a member of PRAC since 1992 or 1993 and that whole time David has been the editor of our newsletter and one of the constants with PRAC. His hard work and commitment to his duties will be missed." Matt adds, "At least for the short-term Jeff Price and I will step in and try to fill David's shoes, but we are also looking to a PRAC member to step up and come the new editor of the Signpost. In the mean time David thank you for all your years of service and dedication to PRAC and enjoy your retirement!!"

When asked about his most memorable improvements doing the newsletter, Brooks said computer technology advances in the publishing arena were amazing. He also was impressed with how much of his workload was lifted when the Board decided to stop printing and mailing the Signpost, and go to electronic distribution. He says that also allowed him to start using color images, rather than just black and white, which he feels greatly improved the professional look of the Signpost.

Brooks has received many PRAC recognitions and awards over the years, including:
- Professional Citation Award
- Founders Award (first recipient)
- PRAC's 2007 Honorary Lifetime Member Award

Brooks told me the best memory of his time as Signpost Editor was consistently and reliably putting out newsletters every year. He says remaining flexible was a major asset in doing his job as Editor working for so many different presidents and boards. His least favorite task was having to beg, cajole and pester members every two months to send him articles and photos focusing on their specific local agency or Rangers and parks in general. His biggest disappointment were those issues where all the articles were written by only one or two members. David still wants to encourage PRAC members to submit articles, photos and opinions to keep the newsletter a worthwhile communication tool for members.

Brooks has been an Active PRAC member for 35 years, with 25 years editing the Signpost, and he now looks forward to travel in the USA and Europe with his wife Patty, time at the beach as often as possible, maintaining his health, and going for recreational hikes in as many new locations as possible.

David says he wishes the interim Signpost team the best of success.

We want to wish David and Patty a superb retirement life, and give a huge THANK YOU to Brooks for his service to PRAC!