Chief Ranger's Comments

Following the Western Region's chief rangers' meeting in San Diego this spring, I had the opportunity to tour the Federal Interagency Communication Center, located in San Bernadino, California, with the chief ranger from Joshua Tree. I hadn't known before that this facility existed, and was extremely impressed with both the center's concept and its operational capabilities.

The center was established by an inter-agency agreement among the US Forest Service (San Bernadino National Forest), the Bureau of Land Management (California Desert District) and the National Park Service (Joshua Tree and Death Valley National Monuments). The objective of this jointly-funded center is to "provide more effective dispatching and communications service for fire, law enforcement, employee protection, administrative tasks, public service and cooperation...than each of the three agencies could provide individually for their respective operations."

The center now provides state of the art communications dispatching capability 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The area served includes over 17 million acres of federal lands intermingled with 28 million acres of forest and desert lands in southern California and Arizona. In an average year, the center handles 575 fires, 7,500 law enforcement incidents, and 1,600 public service (SAR, EMS, etc.) incidents. A "closest resources" policy for sharing fire and law enforcement equipment and personnel provides the cooperating agencies with a much more-cost-effective use of limited resources. Regular cooperation among the agencies has also greatly improved through working together and sharing resources on a regular basis during emergencies.

This would seem to be an approach that has potential for implementation in other areas. By pooling resources, we accomplish more jointly than we sometimes do individually. The chief rangers at Joshua Tree and Death Valley are extremely pleased with this cooperative program. Anyone interested in more information should contact those park areas directly.

The current deadline for submitting paperwork for consideration of past work that might qualify for "6c" (twenty-year) retirement is September 30, 1989. We have been working with the Department to see if that date can be moved back. That would require the Department to request the additional time from OPM. Those who think they have qualifying past work should not count on the date being changed, however; it may happen, but you're out of the running for consideration of past work if it doesn't. According to WASO Personnel, only one law enforcement package has been submitted so far, and it received credit for some past years' service. Decisions can't be made without individuals submitting packages for consideration.
Field Incidents

Great Smokies: On the evening of March 18th, park dispatchers received a report of burglaries in the Wonderland Club complex. The responding ranger checked one of the club's cabins and found that it had been burglarized and that two people had stayed overnight in the cabin for one or two nights. Since it was likely that the suspects were still in the area, the ranger called for a backup; when the second ranger arrived, a full check of all the remaining buildings in the complex was begun. Evidence of forcible entry or attempted entry was found on another nine cabins and the Wonderland Club Hotel. An investigation was begun to gain evidence and determine whether any items had been stolen. While the investigation was underway, a Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) officer confronted two young men who were in the process of burglarizing a store near Douglas Dam. One of the two men fired a shotgun at the officer, but missed him. The two were arrested and confessed to having spent time in the park, and evidence gathered by the rangers tentatively identified them as the persons who'd broken into the Wonderland buildings. The two men were subsequently identified as Bobby Joe Zollman, 19, and Joseph Edward Clegg, 18, both of Jeffersonville, Indiana. They confessed to having been in the area for four days, and said that they had come from Indiana in an attempt to flee from pending charges of grave robbing in New Albany, Indiana. The two were charged by Sevier County and TVA with felonious assault with intent to murder a police officer, possession of a firearm in commission of a felony, possession of stolen property, grand larceny and third degree burglary; the park will also file burglary charges against the two men.

Whiskeytown: On the evening of May 4th, a group of six California State Parks and Recreation rangers were conducting a training exercise on a range in the park when ranger Roger Titus accidentally shot himself in the leg while drawing his weapon. Titus was taken to the Redding Medical Center, where surgeons removed most of the fragments of the bullet from his leg. He is reported to be doing well. Titus was participating in a drill which required the rangers to quickly draw and fire at a target three yards away. Preliminary investigation indicates that he was using a top draw holster with an unshielded trigger guard, and that he inserted his finger into the trigger while drawing and discharged the weapon before pointing it down range. No NPS rangers were on the range at the time. An investigation into the incident continues.

Glacier: Cecil Sutherland, who was arrested for shooting at and hitting several vehicles and one employee in Glacier in October of 1987, has been convicted of the kidnapping, sexual assault and first-degree murder of a ten-year-old girl by a jury in Jefferson County, Illinois. Sutherland's conviction was based on information developed by the NPS during the investigation of the Glacier incident. The entire murder case rested upon the legality of an inventory of property which a seasonal commissioned ranger had conducted of Sutherland's abandoned vehicle. The property was allowed as evidence in the trial because of the Service's mandatory requirements for inventorizing the contents of impounded vehicles. Sutherland has been serving a term of 15 years in federal prison for the offenses committed in Glacier.
Gulf Islands: At 9:30 on the morning of June 8th, a tornado completely destroyed the Fort Pickens entrance station at Gulf Islands. Seasonal ranger Amanda Rhodes, 26, who was in the building at the time, was taken to the hospital and treated for shock, bruises, cuts and a possible broken wrist. The contents of the entrance station were scattered over the area; although the safe remained attached to the entrance station's concrete base, the cash register could not be found. Rhodes' car was also demolished by the tornado.

Yellowstone: Just after 3 p.m. on the afternoon of Friday, June 9th, 18-year-old Brett Hartley of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, walked into the visitor center at Old Faithful, drew out a .30 caliber Ruger revolver, and ordered everyone inside to lie down. Women and children in the building were released within a few minutes, but Hartley held eight hostages for the next three hours. The hostages included an employee of the Yellowstone Natural History Association, two seasonal interpretive rangers and five male visitors. Park rangers responded, cordoned off the area and employed rangers trained in hostage negotiation to talk with Hartley via phone. Ranger Joe Evans served as incident commander. Ranger Bundy Phillips conducted telephone negotiations with Hartley, who had his gun trained on the hostages much of the time. Although Hartley was calm while on the phone, a check with the Baton Rouge sheriff's office revealed that he was listed as a missing person who was suicidal and had threatened to take someone with him when he went. At 6 p.m., Hartley suddenly told everyone to leave, and the hostages quickly left the building. At 8 p.m., he put his gun down and walked out of the visitor center. Hartley was taken into custody and transported to Jackson, Wyoming. Hartley told rangers that he had planned the incident, and that he had intended to carry it off at either Grand Canyon or Yellowstone.

Shooting Incidents at Lake Mead and Canyon de Chelly

In the last issue, we reported on an incident which occurred on March 4th at Lake Mead in which ranger Tom Valenta shot and killed Brent Miller in defense of himself and park visitors. Since that time, rangers at Lake Mead and Canyon de Chelly have been placed in similar situations and have had to shoot assailants. Although you may have read the initial accounts of these incidents in the Morning Report, the following versions are based on supplemental information provided to this office and more accurately depict the events which took place.

The incident at Lake Mead began on the morning of May 13th, when a fisherman saw a swamped canoe in Devil's Cove and reported it to the park. While rangers Don McBee (Lake Mead) and John Peterson (Grand Canyon) were en route in their boat to the cove, two other fisherman in the area also spotted the canoe and recognized it as one which was owned by 33-year-old David Noftser of Westoff, Texas, who had been living in a little shack in a narrow canyon near the cove since January.

Noftser was known to rangers at Lake Mead. Sometime earlier this year, a family camping in the cove awoke to the sounds of Noftser loudly chanting at an altar near his hut and had complained to the park. Since Noftser had exceeded the 90-day limit on backcountry camping at Lake Mead, he had also been warned more than once that his permit had expired and that he would have to leave.
The two fisherman found Noftser on shore and asked him if he wanted to go out fishing with them. Noftser joined them, but spent most of his time sleeping in the bottom of the boat. When he awoke, he began talking irrationally, picked up a rifle he'd brought into the boat with him, placed it against the back of the head of one of the fisherman, then, when questioned by the other fisherman as to what he was doing, swung around and fired at him, just barely missing him.

At about this time, McBee and Peterson arrived on scene and approached the boat. Peterson took possession of the rifle, which was in plain view. The two boats headed toward shore side by side; when they neared the beach, the two fishermen jumped out and Noftser pulled out a hunting knife and began making threatening remarks to the rangers. Both rangers drew their weapons. The two rangers then spent over 20 minutes unsuccessfully trying to get Noftser to put down his knife, at the end of which time Noftser abruptly jumped onto the bow of the rangers' boat, a 20-foot Boston Whaler.

McBee continued talking with Noftser, telling him to drop the knife. After another ten minutes, Noftser suddenly jumped into the operator's section of the boat, brandished his knife and said to McBee: "I'll cut your guts out."

McBee picked up a life ring, fended Noftser off and retreated through the open windshield onto the bow of the boat. Noftser followed after him. McBee fired four shots in rapid succession and hit Noftser with all of them, but Noftser kept coming. McBee then fired two more shots, both of which hit; Peterson, fearing that McBee's shots would not stop Noftser, fired simultaneously, and also hit Noftser with two rounds. Noftser fell back into the seat of the boat, but continued to try to come after McBee.

A Flight For Life helicopter was called for medical assistance, but Noftser was pronounced dead on arrival. The Las Vegas Metro PD homicide unit investigated the incident. Following the shooting, a check was made of Noftser's shack. Investigators found sheets of notebook paper with strange inscriptions posted on the walls, a six month supply of canned food, several potted marijuana plants, and 1200 prescription pills which were identified as common medication for disturbed mental patients. It was later discovered that Noftser had been arrested at one time for an attempted sexual assault on his mother.

Both McBee and Peterson received strong support from the park and from the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's police employees' assistance program. The Clark County coroner later held an inquest on the shooting and ruled that McBee and Peterson acted within their authority and that the shooting was a justifiable homicide. The National Park Service's board of inquiry also found that the shooting was justified and in conformance with NPS-9 and Service policies.

Two weeks later, on the evening of May 29th, the second shooting incident took place near Antelope House ruin overlook at Canyon de Chelly. Before presenting a summary of the events which took place, however, some background information on the history of car clouting in that park is in order.
Until the early 1970's, the only paved road in the park was the South Rim Drive from the Navajo town of Chinle (the entire park is on land owned by the Navajo) to Spider Rock overlook, 25 miles away. During that period, a number of dirt roads in the park were paved to improve access to other points of interest. The park began experiencing thefts of money and property from vehicles shortly after the roads were completed, and rangers were able to trace the thefts to juveniles living nearby. Because of their youth, it proved difficult to gain convictions against them. As time passed, these juveniles grew older and more sophisticated and were joined by others; over the past few years, the park has received reports of from 40 to 50 auto burglaries per year, and it is thought that just as many such incidents go unreported each year.

Rangers have arrested several of these individuals and have been assaulted in the process. Three years ago, two suspects assaulted a ranger and broke his leg after immobilizing him with his own mace. Rangers have been assaulted with pipes, fists, clubs, feet, rocks and knives, and have been threatened with death on many occasions. Some of the members of this group have boasted of carrying sawed-off shotguns, and on one occasion a visitor was shot at when he found his car being burglarized. When car clouts occur, rangers are now aware that long chases and fights are highly probable.

On the 29th, rangers Kelly McIver and John Stobinski received a radio report that a car clout had taken place at the Antelope House ruin parking lot, and that the victims - Eric and Jane Force - were in the visitor center. The Forces reported that another visitor had told them that he'd observed a man break into the vehicle with a coat hanger. Stobinski, McIver and ranger Calvin Bahe then drove to the parking lot and soon spotted one of the suspects in the car burglary ring, a man who'd previously been arrested for assaulting a park ranger. Although unable to catch him, Bahe and Stobinski soon flushed three other suspects, pursued them, and called for assistance. Chief ranger John Miller and rangers Wilson Hunter and Wilson Davis responded; although the Navajo police department also sent two units to the scene, they left when they found that the suspects had temporarily eluded the rangers.

A search of the area ensued, and Hunter soon spotted suspect Phillip Claw climbing through some boulders on a ledge just below the canyon's rim and advised Miller. Miller positioned Stobinski, who was carrying a shotgun, at the only access from the ledge back up to the rim and joined ranger Bahe on the ledge below. Hunter was a few feet from Stobinski and McIver was at a vantage point some feet away. After Hunter spotted Claw hiding under a large boulder, Stobinski climbed down to a point where he could see Claw and ordered him out, stating that Claw was under arrest.

Claw came out from under the rock, yelling that the rangers should shoot him. He had a rock in his hand which he threw at Stobinski, striking Stobinski in his right hand and breaking his thumb. Claw then grabbed the barrel of Stobinski's shotgun, and the two struggled for a few moments until Stobinski fell backward over a rock and landed on a huge boulder. Hunter advanced on Claw and struck him several times with his baton; Claw then dropped the shotgun barrel, grappled with Hunter for the baton, and ripped it from Hunter's hands as he (Claw) fell back over a rock.

5
Bahe and Miller approached the fight with weapons drawn. Miller, who was downhill from Claw and standing on the edge of a dropoff, twice ordered Claw to drop the baton. After the second order, Claw turned, raised his baton to strike Miller, then advance on him. When Claw was about two feet away, Miller shot him in the right shoulder in an attempt to knock Claw down without killing him. The shot had no visible effect. Claw then struck at Miller with the baton; Miller parried the blow with his own baton, which he held in his left hand. Claw closed with Miller and grabbed him with both arms. Miller shot again at point blank range into Claw's midsection. Claw leaped, carrying Miller some 30 feet down to a talus slope; after impact, Miller quickly regained his feet while Claw tumbled another 30 feet.

Rangers bandaged Claw's wounds, then administered CPR when Claw stopped breathing shortly thereafter. They continued until they were relieved by members of a rescue squad some 15 minutes later. The Navajo Police soon arrived and assumed control of the scene; FBI agents and representatives from the regional office later came to the park and began a follow-up investigation.

The coroner has since ruled that the cause of death was Miller's second shot, which struck Claw in his midsection. The coroner also found that Claw's blood alcohol level was .107 at the time of the shooting. Although a board of review has been held on the incident, the final report has not yet been prepared.

Uniform Program Update

This fiscal year is the fifth and final year of the Service's current contract with R & R Uniforms. Accordingly, a request for proposals (RFP) for a contract to begin on October 1, 1989 was published in January, and a number of vendors submitted offers in response. Since the new contract will be for three agencies (ourselves, the Corps of Engineers and the Fish and Wildlife Service), a nine-person evaluation team representing our respective organizations met in April to evaluate the proposals. Following a seven-day-long review of the technical merit of these proposals and a subsequent analysis of prices, the contract was awarded to R & R Uniforms. This decision has since been protested by one of the other offerors, and GAO has issued a stop order for the new contract (not the current contract) until a decision is made on the appeal. GAO has until mid-September to arrive at its decision.

Because of this, it is not yet possible to discuss the new contract and related changes in the uniform program which should take place in October. We can, however, talk about several changes that are taking place which concern recent developments in the program and the impending closeout of the current contract:

1) Closeout - Each year, it is necessary to close off ordering for a two-week period in September in order to take inventory, close accounts and initiate new accounts. Because this is the fifth and final year of the current contract, this period must be extended in order to complete a major inventory check and related closeout activities. R & R will therefore be closed to ordering for a period of from four to five weeks, and we will be terminating FY 1988 orders on August 25, 1989. Although a separate memo to this effect will come out in July, we strongly encourage all employees to expend the remainder of their FY 1988 allowances immediately.
2) Telefax ordering - A memorandum went out in March which terminated the telephone ordering system used for seasonals in past years, but authorizing the telefaxing of uniform allowance authorizations (UAA's) and orders for seasonals to R & R. Telefaxing was initially limited to seasonals in order to assess potential problems with the system; since there have been no problems, we are pleased to announce that all UAA's and uniform orders may now be telefaxed to R & R. We ask, however, that parks make use of time zones in order to minimize demands on R & R's fax machine, i.e. western parks should fax late in the day after close of business in eastern areas. R & R has also asked that UAA's and order forms be clearly and darkly typed, since illegibility has been a problem on past transmissions. R & R's telefax number is 615-885-4154.

3) Uniform items - Several new uniform items have been under evaluation and should be available to the field later this year or next year:

- Maintenance hat - Two years ago, several employees recommended the inclusion of a wide-brimmed, Western-style maintenance hat in the uniform program. This suggestion was endorsed by the Servicewide uniform committee, regional safety officers and management in Washington, but we have since had considerable difficulty in identifying and acquiring a hat which would meet our standards. The components of virtually all straw weave hats are made overseas, and hat manufacturers consistently report serious problems in finding dependable suppliers. After several unsuccessful efforts, we have finally found a source for the hat which would meet our needs. That's the good news. The bad news is that internal problems in the country which manufactures the hat body have seriously delayed the arrival of initial samples. Rather than again seek alternatives, however, we have decided to await shipment of the model we have selected. Unfortunately, this means that another summer will pass before the hat becomes part of the program. In the interim, superintendents are reminded that they have the authority to make an administrative determination that certain clothing or accessory items are required for safety purposes (in this case, protection from the ultraviolet rays of the sun), then authorize and acquire them with park operating funds through the park's purchasing agent.

- Law enforcement leather goods - Once the new contract goes into effect, holsters (both break front and top draw), utility belts, handcuff cases and speed loader cases in standard cordovan color will be available from R & R Uniforms. These may be acquired through either direct purchase by parks or private purchase by individuals; they may not be acquired with uniform allowance funds. Parks will not have to replace all existing leather gear immediately, but will be required to purchase replacement leather from the contractor. The specifications for the equipment have been reviewed by NPS law enforcement specialists and have been universally endorsed. The items will be manufactured by A.E. Nelson, a company known for the quality of its workmanship.

- Boat shoes - Several models have been presented to us for review. Over the course of the summer, we hope to wear test them in the field, then make a determination as to which model to include in the program.
We will provide you with further updates on the uniform program when significant developments occur. Further information on placing direct orders will be disseminated through administrative channels to all NPS contracting officers after the protest is resolved.

Search and Rescue Statistics for 1988

Here are some of the highlights from the search and rescue (SAR) stats for the National Park Service for calendar year 1988: Overall, rangers responded to 3,551 incidents, up from 2,913 in 1987. There were 174 fatalities, and 1,327 injured or ill persons were rescued. Park and non-park searchers logged just under 70,000 hours of time and spent over $1.75 million on SAR's in the parks; both figures represent decreases from 1987 (about 87,000 hours and $2 million). There were also 1,152 saves, i.e. situations in which people would not still be alive without significant outside intervention.

Ranger Grades

The following table is a break down of the grades of the 3,182 permanent park rangers in the Service as of March 20th. The table also shows the change in the number of rangers at each grade since the implementation of the new standards and classification guidelines in 1986:

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Briefly...

- Within the last six months, the Department has approved EMS protocols for about a dozen parks throughout the system. If you're going to be renewing your local EMS agreement in the near future, remember to include an approval line for the Dr. Pimentel and forward a copy to Butch Farabee in this office.

- NPS-9 is now in its final form and is in the process of being reviewed and surnamed. Once the Director has signed it, it will go to the printer and then to the field for distribution.

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The Ranger Activities Information Exchange is produced by the Washington Division of Ranger Activities. Walt Dabney, Chief Ranger. Address letters, comments and inquiries to: Ranger Activities (650), Stop 3310, National Park Service, Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127; FTS 343-4874 or (202) 343-4874. Attn: Bill Halainen, Editor.