

# Great Smoky Mountains



The following Incident Reports were extracted from the NPS Morning Reports/Coalition Reports from 1989-2023. They are not a complete record of all incidents which occurred in this park during this timeframe.

## INCIDENTS

Thursday, August 14, 1986  
Great Smoky Mountains - Suicide

Location: Between Metcalf Bottom & Elkmont Campground

Summary: Mr. B.A.O. parked vehicle in turnout. Walked to rear of his vehicle and shot himself in head with .22 semi-automatic. Visitors who were bicycling found him shortly thereafter; one was a doctor, and he began CPR. Rangers transported B.A.O. to Sugarlands VC, where he was flown out by Lifestar helicopter to Knoxville. Pronounced dead at 2:25 pm. Left a note saying simply that he was going to do...

April 8, 1987  
87-39 - Great Smokies - Structural Fire

Location: Oconaluftee Job Corps Center

The residence of D.R., director of the Job Corps Center at Oconaluftee, caught fire and was damaged beyond repair. The Cherokee Fire Department responded and had the fire knocked down within about two hours. Most of the interior furnishings were destroyed by smoke, water or fire, and the building itself - a mobile home with additions - is said to be a total loss (value not yet determined). The cause of the fire is unknown and is being investigated by park rangers Hobbs and Holland, who may be assisted by Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF).

June 12, 1987  
87-98 - Great Smokies - Suicide

Mr. T.L. was found dead in his van. A flexible hose ran from the exhaust into the passenger compartment of the van.

June 26, 1987  
87-39 - Great Smokies - Field Incident Update

A fire destroyed the home of the director of the Job Corps Center. The cause was not known.  
Update: The investigation is on-going, and the cause is still not certain.

July 14, 1987

87-157 - Great Smokies - Drug Interdiction

Location: Foothills Parkway

As a result of an overflight by Tennessee state drug agents, a patch of marijuana was found along the parkway. Investigation revealed that 148 plants, each about 8 feet tall, were being cultivated in the plot. Chief ranger Pete Hart and his staff removed and destroyed the plants. There were no arrests and there are no suspects.

July 17, 1987

87-161 - Great Smokies - Marijuana Eradication

Location: Hickory Flats, Deep Creek Area

A "fly-over" done by Swains County Sheriff's Office revealed a marijuana patch which was growing near Lands Creek. NPS and County Deputies eradicated 944 plants approximately 6 feet in height. All were turned over to Swains County authorities. No suspects, no arrests.

July 22, 1987

87-165 - Great Smokies - Fatality: Motor Vehicle Accident

Location: Route 41

B.K.K. was speeding on his motorcycle on a spur off Route 41 when he lost control and hit a bridge abutment. He was killed instantly.

July 22, 1987

87-166 - Great Smokies - Drug Seizure - Marijuana Eradication

Location: Peachtree Drainage off Lakeview Dr. near Bryson City, NC

Nine plots of marijuana were spotted growing at the above location by a Swain County Sheriffs Office aircraft. Swain County Deputies and NPS rangers pulled and burned 127 plants 8 to 12 feet in height, with an estimated value of 1.5 million dollars. No suspects, no arrests.

August 3, 1987

87-191 - Great Smokey Mtns. - Drug Seizure

Location: Greenbriar Area

Seventy-seven marijuana plants, approximately 12' in height were pulled, by NPS personnel. Green weight was 32 lbs. with an approximate value of \$77,000. Plants were then burned.

November 5, 1987

87-258 - Great Smokey Mtns - Fatality - Possible Drowning

Location: Little Pigeon River, Husky Grove Branch

A.N.M. generally went fishing every evening. Last evening when he did not return home his wife notified park personnel. A search was initiated at approximately 7:30pm which involved NPS rangers, state agencies, and local Emergency Services groups. At approximately 11:06pm A.N.M.'s body was found in a deep pool of water 200 yards south of the Husky Grove Branch. Cause of death has not been determined. No evidence of foul play has been found. A joint investigation is being conducted by NPS park personnel along with Sevier County officials.

January 11, 1988

88-5 - Great Smokies - Suicide

Location: Cades Cove

Four skiers discovered R.B.W.'s body lying in the snow about 200 yards from a pickup truck parked on the Cades Cove loop road. Evidence at the scene indicated that he had died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. Subsequent investigation revealed that R.B.W. had left home at 10:30 that morning following an argument with his spouse, and that he and his wife had a history of marital problems.

March 17, 1988

88-38 - Great Smoky Mountains - Search and Rescue

Location: Thomas Divide Trail

On March 14th, a Boy Scout troop on an overnight backcountry trip encountered 5 degree temperatures and snow, for which they were unprepared. On the 15th, J.H. began exhibiting symptoms of hypothermia and was unable to continue. One leader and the majority of the group continued on to obtain assistance; the second leader, who was an EMT, remained with J.H.. The group seeking assistance became lost and spent the night of the 15th on the trail. They finally reached a ranger station at 8:30 am on the 16th. Rangers responded and reached J.H. and the

remainder of the group about noon. J.H. was transported to the Swain County (NC) Hospital, where he was placed in intensive care with a body core temperature of about 92 degrees. J.H. was reported to be in satisfactory condition on the 17th and was to be released.

May 4, 1988

88-70 - Great Smoky Mtns. - Suicide

Location: Sugarlands Trailhead

The Jefferson County, Louisiana, Sheriffs Office advised park staff that W.L.P. had sent his wife a suicide letter from nearby Bryson City, NC and might be in the park. A short time after receiving the report, W.L.P.'s vehicle was found at the Sugarlands Mountain Trail trailhead; his body a short distance away surrounded by a large variety of empty pill containers. The labels on the containers indicated that W.L.P., a pharmacist, had issued the prescriptions to himself.

June 16, 1988

88-106 - Great Smokies - Assault on Non-Federal, Officer

Location: Little River Road

Ranger Kirk Tranchita attempted to stop a vehicle which was weaving down Little River Road, but the driver refused to pull over. Tranchita radioed for assistance; since no NPS unit was available, Officer Ron Suttles of Townsend PD provided backup. Suttles attempted to intercept the car Tranchita was pursuing by placing his cruiser across the road at an intersection known as "Townsend Y", which is about one mile inside the park boundary. Suttles stood next to the cruiser and signaled the car to stop, but the driver continued on, hitting the officer. Suttles was able to fire a single shot at his assailants; it penetrated both the rear and front windows of the car, but hit neither of the occupants. Suttles was not badly injured. The car was later stopped by Blount County officers. The two occupants were placed under arrest on a wide variety of charges, including assault, driving on a revoked license, and driving under the influence (DUI). Both men had prior convictions for DUI.

July 5, 1988

88-126 - Great Smoky Mtns. - Drug Seizure

Location: Tobes Creek

Park rangers and state of Tennessee drug enforcement agents discovered a plot of marijuana growing 1/2 mile inside the park near State Rt. 32. The plot, in the Tobes Creek - Cosby area, contained 811, three to four foot plants. The plants were destroyed. There are no suspects at this time and no arrests have been made as Rangers were unable to set up surveillance on the plot due to lack of manpower.

August 4, 1988

88-168 - Great Smoky Mountain - Fatal Fall/Helicopter Accident

Location: Charlies Bunion

On August 3, at about 11 am, T.R., 15, of Utica, Michigan, fell 500 feet to his death from Charlies Bunion Overlook in the park. T.R. had been attempting to jump from rock to rock at the overlook when the fall occurred. Rangers, upon notification, requested the U.S. Army MAST helicopter from Fort (Campbell, Kentucky to assist as it was believed that T.R. might still be alive. Efforts to reach the victim were hampered by loose rock and a severe thunderstorm with heavy rain. Park medics reached T.R. at about 4:30 pm and found that he had not survived. Body removal was delayed until this morning due to weather conditions.

Given the weather conditions at the scene, the Army helicopter was unable to assist with the removal of the victim and flew to the Sevier County airport near Gatlinburg to refuel. The aircraft landed and taxied to the fuel pumps where the main rotor struck a sign post flipping the helicopter. The six persons aboard, including ranger Bobby Holland were all injured. Holland assisted in removing three members of the Army crew. Two members of the crew were flown by Lifestar to the University of Tennessee Hospital in Knoxville. The remaining crew and Holland were transported to the Sevier County Hospital for treatment. Holland sustained head injuries, cracked ribs and cracked vertebrae. All the injured are currently in stable condition.

Friday, January 6, 1989

89-1 - Great Smokies - Homicide Conviction

On December 29, 1984, a family of hikers came upon skeletal remains near the loop road in Cade's Cove. The subsequent investigation by park rangers and FBI agents revealed that the victim was R.G. of Memphis, Tennessee, and that she had been murdered. The primary suspect was W.H., a convicted bank robber who was on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" list and who was being sought for parole violations, rape and social security fraud. Efforts to find him proved fruitless. Last September 4th, the television show "America's Most Wanted" aired a show on the case which they had filmed on location in the park. As a result, W.H. was spotted in Perlinton, Mississippi, and the FBI arrested him and his wife there on social security fraud charges on December 19th. During subsequent interrogations, W.H. confessed to the murder of R.G.. He said that R.G. had become friends with the W.H. family when all three were hiking in the park on September 26, 1984. Following a trip to town to drop off W.H.'s wife, W.H. and R.G. had returned to the park, consumed alcohol, marijuana and psilocybin, then engaged in sexual relations; during their tryst, R.G. became angry at W.H. and he strangled her in the ensuing fight. On January 5th, W.H. pled guilty to second degree murder and will likely be sentenced to 60 years in prison. (Pete Hart, Great Smokies).

Wednesday, April 26, 1989

89-77 - Great Smokies - Bomb Threat

A young man called the Oconaluftee ranger office at 9 a.m. on the 17th to report that a bomb had been placed in a park building and was set to go off. The park immediately initiated a standard bomb search of park buildings and evacuated the visitor centers and major office buildings. About a half hour later, the man called again and said that the detonation time was set for just after 11 a.m. No bomb was found. FBI offices in both North Carolina and Tennessee are investigating the incident. (Bob Marriott, GRSM).

Thursday, April 27, 1989

89-78 - Great Smokies - Burglaries

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 B.J.Z., 19, and J.E.C., 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. (Pete Hart, CR, GRSM).

Wednesday, May 10, 1989

89-87 - Great Smokies - Rescue of Hiker

On the morning of May 6th, H.K., 23, of Concord, Massachusetts, was hiking two miles south of Clingman's Dome when lightning struck a nearby spruce tree, passed through the ground and knocked her over. H.K. suffered a head injury in the fall. Fellow hikers carried her to a nearby shelter, then summoned help. A 20-person rescue team comprised of rangers and members of a local rescue squad carried her out because severe weather precluded air evacuation. H.K. was

taken to the Sevier County medical center, where she was treated and later released. (Pete Hart, CR, GRSM, through Steve Smith, RAD/SERO).

Wednesday, June 7, 1989

89-120 - Great Smokies - Fatality

Just before 11 p.m. on the night of the 5th, 19-year-old K.R. of Piney Flats, Tennessee, was riding in the passenger seat of a pickup truck on the Gatlinburg spur of the Foothills Parkway when the truck swerved and hit a rock outcropping. K.R., who had been leaning out the window, was killed immediately. The driver drove all the way through Gatlinburg with the victim hanging from the window before stopping to call for assistance. He has been charged with driving under the influence and unsafe operation of a motor vehicle; charges of vehicular homicide are pending. (Pete Hart, CR, GRSM, via phone report from RAD/SERO).

Tuesday, June 20, 1989

89-141 - Great Smokies - Shooting of Job Corps Employee

On the afternoon of the 16th, 21-year-old A.M. was walking with friends from the town of Cherokee on the park's east border to the Job Corps Center at Oconoluftee when someone in a residence along the way fired a .22 caliber pistol at A.M. and struck him in the left thigh. A.M. was admitted to the Swain County Hospital and is in satisfactory condition. The suspect is at large, and is being sought by the Cherokee Police Department. (Pete Hart, CR, GRSM, via telephone report from RAD/SERO).

Thursday, June 22, 1989

89-147 - Great Smokies - Armed Robbery

At 5:30 p.m. on the 20th, D.E., 66, of Trenton, Ohio, was in a restroom at Newfound Gap when a "scruffy" male approached him, pointed a small automatic pistol at him, and demanded D.E.'s wallet, when D.E. replied that he didn't have one, the suspect cocked his weapon and said he wanted cash. D.E. gave the suspect a credit card case which held his cards and \$20. The suspect then fled in a blue Chevy Impala sedan driven by a female accomplice. Rangers are investigating. (Pete Hart, CR, GRSM, via telephone report from Steve Smith, RAD/SERO).

Monday, July 3, 1989

89-164 - Great Smokies - Arson

Just before midnight on the 28th, the line to a diesel fuel storage tank in the Oconoluftee Job Corps Center was cut and the leaking fuel was ignited. The subsequent fire scorched several trees, but did no other damage. Following an investigation by park rangers, three Job Corps

employees - B.H., 18, J.C., 18 and a juvenile - were arrested and charged with arson. (Pete Hart, CR, GRSM, via phone report from Steve Alscher, RAD/SERO).

Friday, July 7, 1989

89-175 - Great Smokies - Fatality Caused by Falling Tree

On the afternoon of July 5th, a vehicle heading north on US 441 near the visitor center at Oconaluftee was hit by 10-inch diameter tree which fell without warning. The driver, 40-year-old R.A. of Saraland, Alabama, was killed when a limb ripped through the top of his car; his passenger, 29-year-old C.S., was slightly injured. (Pete Hart, CR, GRSM, via CompuServe message from Bill Sturgeon, RAD/SERO).

Thursday, July 13, 1989

89-181 - Great Smokies - Aircraft Crash

A Cessna 172 piloted by 38-year-old P.H. of Dayton, Ohio, crashed near the Appalachian Trail at Cold Spring Knob on the afternoon of the 11th. A Boy Scout troop from Alexandria, Virginia, witnessed the crash; the leader, an EMT, went to the scene of the accident, while the scouts returned to Derrick Knob shelter and reported the incident to a park trail crew. The victim suffered a separated shoulder, broken leg and head injuries. An Army helicopter was employed to fly park medics to the Derrick Knob shelter. Hughes was stabilized, carried to the shelter, then medevaced to the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where he is in guarded condition. During the evening of the 11th, the FAA in Dayton, Ohio, received an anonymous phone call stating that there were drugs aboard P.H.'s aircraft. The park is currently investigating that possibility. (Pete Hart, CR, GRSM, via telefax from RAD/SERO).

Wednesday, August 9, 1989

89-216 - Great Smokies - Marijuana Eradication

On the afternoon of August 7th, rangers in the Cosby Subdistrict destroyed 22 marijuana plants ranging in height from four to six feet and valued at \$22,000. The plants had been under surveillance for about two months. There are no suspects, and no arrests have been made. (Don Utterback, SDR, GRSM, via telephone report from Steve Alscher, RAD/SERO).

Wednesday, August 30, 1989

89-253 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Marijuana Eradication

On the afternoon of the 26th, rangers from Cosby Subdistrict raided a marijuana garden located within the park and eradicated 33 six-foot plants valued at \$82,000. Several containers of an unknown substance, probably fertilizer, were also found in the area and have been sent out for



analysis. The garden's location was revealed by an anonymous tipster. (CompuServe message from Pete Hart, CR, GRSM to RAD/SERO and RAD/WASO).

Wednesday, August 30, 1989

89-254 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Car Clouting Arrests

On August 27th, rangers arrested a man and woman who were suspects in a recent car clout (break-in) in the park. Upon further investigation, evidence was found which linked the pair to a number of other car clouts in the park and surrounding areas in North Carolina and Tennessee. The couple had a small child with them at the time of their arrest. Among the items recovered from their van were a .44 derringer, believed to be stolen, and several items which had been taken from a vehicle that had been broken into in the park. (CompuServe message from Pete Hart, CR, GRSM to RAD/SERO and RAD/WASO).

Thursday, September 21, 1989

89-286 - Great Smokies (Tennessee) - Car Clouting Arrest

On the afternoon of September 8th, a passing ranger observed two suspicious adult males in the Laurel Falls parking lot, the scene of a number of car clouts (auto break-ins). He began a stakeout, and saw the two look into several cars and loiter near the trailhead over the next 35 minutes. Their actions convinced the ranger that a car clouting was imminent, so he called for and received a backup. Shortly thereafter, one of the two men took a position where he could watch the road while the other opened the rear window of a mini-van and reached in with his arm. The two - later identified as J.P.M. and S.C.B. - were then arrested. Subsequent investigation revealed that they were using two vehicles, that each of them contained items from a larceny committed in the same parking area on August 23rd, and that one vehicle contained travelers checks stolen from Indiana on August 27th. It was also learned that S.C.B. was out of jail on bond for a similar offense committed in Florida. The vehicles employed were a dark blue 1978 Chevy van (Florida GPW-14Y) and a green 1976 two-door Ford LTD (Kentucky ACT-474). (CompuServe message from Capt. Steve Alscher, RAD/SERO).

Thursday, September 21, 1989

89-287 - Great Smokies (Tennessee) - Successful Search

On the afternoon of the 16th, six-year-old S.J. of Waynesville, North Carolina, disappeared from his home near Hempill Creek, just a mile outside of the park. S.J. was apparently with his two dogs and was reported to be barefoot and wearing only a T-shirt and jeans. Local authorities began a search, which continued throughout the 17th. Park rangers heard of the search indirectly, volunteered to assist, and put four trackers and a dog on the boy's trail. They soon found footprints and found S.J. around 5:30 p.m. at a point in the park about 300 yards from the Cataloochee Divide trail - about 10 to 11 miles from the point last seen. S.J. had spent the night

sleeping in a hollow log; he'd used a covering of leaves and his two dogs for warmth. (Telephone report from Steve Smith, RAD/SERO).

Monday, September 25, 1989

89-289 - Eastern Areas - Hurricane Hugo

The following is a brief summary of the impacts of Hurricane Hugo on several eastern parks as of Friday afternoon:

- Great Smoky Mountains - The park received about four inches of rain early on Friday morning. Water in local streams and rivers was reported to be rising over both bridges and highways. Several picnic areas were closed.

Monday, October 2, 1989

89-299 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Bear Mauling

On the evening of the 28th, P.M., 43, and her husband J.M., both of Blanchester, Ohio, were picnicking in the Chimneys Picnic Area when a black bear approached them. They withdrew to their van until the bear appeared to wander off, then got back out again. P.M. walked down to a river and squatted down to pick up some rocks. She heard a noise behind her and turned to find a bear about ten feet away. As she stood, the bear charged her. She attempted to run, but fell. The bear grabbed her on the back of the neck with his teeth and began shaking her. P.M. screamed for help; her husband and another visitor went after the bear with rocks and sticks and chased him off. P.M. was taken to an area hospital, where she is being treated for a fractured scapula and scratches and puncture wounds on her back and neck. The bear, known to park rangers as Bear #79, was caught and locked up. Bear #79 is six years old, weighs 200 pounds, and has a history of aggressive behavior. He was captured and released elsewhere in the park on June 18th, then again on August 12th. The picnic area, which is in the midst of prime bear habitat, has been the scene of considerable bear activity and visitor feeding of bears over the past few years. The future disposition of Bear #79 is undecided at present; the possibility of distant relocation is complicated by the local county commission, which refuses to let the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency remove bears from the county. Because of the bear's history, there is a high degree of local media interest in the incident and in the park's bear management policies. (Telephone report from Steve Smith, RAD/SERO; CompuServe message from Pete Hart, CR, GRSM).

Friday, October 6, 1989

89-299 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Follow-up on Bear Mauling

Bear #79, the black bear which attacked and injured P.M. on September 28th, was destroyed on the 29th. (Telephone report from Steve Smith, RAD/SERO).

Tuesday, October 10, 1989

89-311 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Drug Arrests

Late on the evening of the 29th, two rangers came upon a Lincoln in the Sugarlands Visitor Center parking lot. No one was inside, but the rangers could see open containers of alcohol and the remains what appeared to be marijuana joints in the car. A man and woman, each aged 20, soon appeared and admitted that the car was theirs. During questioning, the man escaped into the woods; despite assistance from local police during the subsequent search, he was able to escape. It was soon learned that there was a warrant outstanding for the man for aggravated assault with a lead pipe, bail jumping and destruction of county property. The woman was arrested and charged with underage possession of alcohol and possession of a controlled substance. The Lincoln was impounded. The man will be charged under Title 21 and the US Attorney is considering seizure of the car because evidence discovered in the inventory of the vehicle indicated that the subject is probably a dealer. (CompuServe message from Bob Marriott, GRSM).

Wednesday, October 18, 1989

89-323 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Fatality

On the night of October 15th, the B. family of Zachary, Louisiana, camped in Balsam Mountain Campground. When they checked their sleeping baby, nine-month-old D.B., at 11 a.m., they found that he was not breathing. CPR was begun and continued by a park medic who was summoned to the scene. Despite their efforts, the boy died. The cause of the death is thought to be SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome). (Telephone report from Bill Springer, RAD/SERO).

Friday, November 17, 1989

89-335 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Car Clouting Arrests

During the month of October, a series of car clouts (break-ins) occurred in the park. Although stakeouts were conducted throughout the month, rangers were not able to catch the thieves. A breakthrough occurred, however, through the work of Little River Subdistrict Ranger Bill Acree, who has investigated and tracked many of the car clouts which have occurred in the park. Acree noted similar elements in a number of the break-ins, and recognized them as typical of the car clouts once committed in the park by B.J.P., 46, of Conyer, Georgia. B.J.P. had been charged with and convicted of eight counts of larceny in the park. A records check revealed that he had been released from jail in June, that he had jumped parole on October 10th, and that he was driving a stolen car. A description of the vehicle and its license number were provided to rangers on November 8th; on the morning of November 12th, Ranger Pete Walzer spotted B.J.P. and a companion, R.G., in the park. Both B.J.P. and R.G., who was on parole for a misdemeanor, were arrested. During a search of the vehicle, rangers found a loaded .38 double derringer on the car's console and a large number of stolen credit cards and other items. At least 22 different names have since been found on the credit cards. B.J.P. has been linked with 15 car clouts in Great Smokies, and will likely be linked to several more in and out of the park before the investigation

is concluded. B.J.P. is currently incarcerated. He is known to have conducted car clouts in Athens, Georgia, and in Gatlinburg, Knoxville and Chattanooga, Tennessee. Following his first arrest, B.J.P. consented to a videotaped interview on his experience with car clouting, and he will probably be doing a second videotape in the near future. These tapes will be available for park training programs. Contact Bill Acree (615-436-1268, FTS 854-1268) for further information. (Pete Hart, CR, GRSM, via CompuServe report to RAD/SERO and RAD/WASO).

Thursday, December 14, 1989

88-269 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on Assault on Rangers

Late on the afternoon of November 18, 1988, rangers Rick Yates and David Little were assaulted by a trio of hunters while in pursuit of a poacher. The two rangers were forced to draw their weapons when one of the three men, later identified as T.L.B., Jr., pulled a knife. T.L.B. then fled the area, but took a .243 semi-automatic rifle from his truck and pointed it at the rangers before leaving. After a month-long investigation, T.L.B. and the other assailants were identified and a case was filed against them with the U.S. Attorney in Knoxville. Last June 22nd, T.L.B. was indicted on three counts of assaulting and impeding Federal officers. On December 11th, T.L.B. was convicted of two felony counts of assaulting a Federal officer and sentenced to four months in prison and one year of supervised probation and fined \$1,000. (CompuServe message from Bob Marriott, VPS, GRSM)

Thursday, January 4, 1990

89-369 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Rescue

On the morning of December 30th, the park received a report of a sick backpacker at the Spence Field shelter on Bote Mountain about five miles southeast of Cades Cove. Ranger and EMT Dave Little arrived at the shelter shortly thereafter and found a 25-year-old man semi-conscious, weak and dehydrated. The man was a diabetic, who had administered a smaller dose of insulin than normal, causing his blood sugar levels to fluctuate significantly. Ranger and Park Medic Rick Obernesser arrived before noon and administered intravenous fluids under the direction of a local doctor. Because driving sleet, rain and limited visibility precluded helicopter evacuation, a dozen rangers carried the ailing hiker out to the nearest service road, where he was transported to a Tennessee hospital. He is now in the hospital's intensive care unit. The park reports that the initial treatment of the patient by a doctor-directed EMS person was "instrumental" in saving Hardy's life. (CompuServe report from Bob Marriott, LES, GRSM, 1:30 p.m. EST, 1/3/90).

Monday, January 22, 1990

90-14 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Search

On January 13th, the park received a phone call from the wife of a 34-year-old Georgia man, saying that she'd received a letter from her husband bearing a Knoxville postmark which stated that he planned to commit suicide "in a high place." He was identified as a man who rangers had previously contacted for illegal camping and had transported to Elkmont Campground. The park

issued an alert, impounded his vehicle, and searched it. The search turned up an additional suicide note, a map with several of the park's highest areas circled, an empty case for a long gun and equipment used to load cap and ball pistols. A call to the man's wife revealed that he'd left his rifle at home, but that he was apparently in possession of a muzzle-loading pistol. The man was no longer at the campy round, so a dog was employed to search trails radiating from Elkmont. At the same time, the park's high points were checked, during which a ranger came upon the man on the Little River Trail. He'd apparently taken a quantity of over-the-counter medication and suffered a fall while hiking. He did not have the pistol. He was led from the area and kept in custody until his wife arrived and took him home. (CompuServe message from Great Smokies, 10:30 a.m. EST, 1/17/90).

Tuesday, February 20, 1990

90-33 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Assault

On the afternoon of the 15th, rangers were informed that an assault with a weapon had occurred at the Oconaluftee Job Corps Center. Investigation revealed that a student at the center had been loan sharking and had been having difficulty collecting from another student. When collection day came, the student was only able to pay back \$5 of the loan; the loan shark took the money, then punched the student in the face. The center staff brought the two together for a conference. After discussing the matter, the victim drew a concealed knife and attempted to attack the student loan shark. The attacker was subdued by center staff and arrested by rangers. He will be charged with assault with a deadly weapon. Investigation is continuing into the loan sharking. (CompuServe message to RAD/SERO and RAD/WASO from Bob Marriott, GRSM, 10 a.m. EST, 2/16/90).

Thursday, February 22, 1990

90-36 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Motor Vehicle Fatality

On the evening of February 15th, park rangers investigated two suspicious vehicles parked at the Cosby campground. The rangers had not seen either vehicle being operated prior to the contact. Investigation revealed that only one of the persons in the two cars had a valid operator's license and that all persons in the two vehicles were related by marriage. They were ordered to leave the area in one car, which was to be driven by the licensed driver. One of the rangers left the campground area and waited a distance down the access road. Shortly thereafter, he saw both cars leaving the area and pulled behind them. Both immediately increased their speed. Rather than risk a chase on the winding road, the ranger continued to follow at a normal speed. Near the end of the access road, he found one of the vehicles had had an accident and overturned; all four passengers had been ejected. The second vehicle fled the area. Subsequent investigation disclosed that both vehicles had been involved in the accident. The licensed driver, a 22-year-old female, was evacuated with head injuries, and died later that night. The investigation into the incident is continuing. (Bob Marriott, GRSM, via CompuServe message to RAD/SERO and RAD/WASO, 8:30 a.m. EST, 2/21/90).

Monday, March 19, 1990

90-34 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Bomb

Just before 10 a.m. on the 15th, the park's roadside clean-up crew picked up a canvas carry-all bag below one of the overlooks on the Gatlinburg - Pigeon Forge Bypass. Before throwing it onto the truck, they looked inside to determine the contents and found five sticks of dynamite, some fuse cord, and a one-quart, unmarked paint can with unknown contents. Rangers were called to the scene, the overlook was cordoned off, and the Knoxville PD explosives unit was summoned to the scene. A member of that unit examined the contents of the bag and determined that the explosive was gelcoate, a type of dynamite that is somewhat more stable than older types because it contains no nitroglycerine. The fuse was not connected to the explosives, and no blasting caps were found. The paint can was blown open remotely using explosive cord and was found to contain soil, fine gravel and other debris. The bag also contained the empty paper wrappers for 19 other sticks of gelcoate. The explosives were disposed of on-site by soaking them with diesel fuel and burning them. No bomb threats of any kind were received in the park, and there is no information available at this time on how the material came to be there. Investigators are now trying to determine the source of the explosives. (CompuServe message to RAD/WASO and RAD/SERO from Bob Marriott, Acting CR, GRSM, 5 p.m. EST, 3/16/90).

Wednesday, March 21, 1990

90-41 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Drug Arrests

A two-month long investigation into drug dealing at the Oconaluftee Job Corps Center resulted in two arrests on March 17th. Rangers had received information that two drug dealers were to arrive from Atlanta to sell marijuana to Corpsmen on pay day and staked out the location where the transaction was to take place. The dealers arrived as planned and sold a Corpsman \$200 worth of marijuana in twenty small packages. Two other Corpsmen then approached and purchased some of these packages. When the rangers moved in to make the arrest, the dealers fled the scene in their vehicle. They committed numerous traffic violations in their attempts to get away, but were stopped and arrested in nearby Cherokee, North Carolina. A drug-sniffing dog was brought in from the Swain County Sheriff's Office to search the car, and discovered another 26 packages of marijuana. The drugs, some cash, and the car were seized. The two men (one of whom is a minor) will be charged under 21 USC, and two Corpsmen will probably be charged at a later date. The investigation is continuing. (Bob Marriott, Acting CR, GRSM, via CompuServe messages to RAD/SERO and RAD/WASO, 4:30 EST, 3/19/90).

Thursday, March 22, 1990

90-43 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Incidents at Job Corps Center

Just after midnight on March 19th, the spouse of a Job Corps employee whose residence is near the center called a ranger at home and reported that a Corpsman was at her house and that he was requesting the immediate assistance of a ranger. Two park rangers responded, met the Corpsman and took him back to the Job Corps Center. An interview with him revealed that a

group of Corpsman had been conducting an initiation and had in the process threatened other Corpsmen. The latter left the center, recruited their own group, and confronted the original group. During that confrontation, the complainant was chased from the center. The groups were wearing colored headbands and employed gang terminology, but the park reports that no determination has yet been made as to whether actual gang activity is occurring in the center. The center staff remained on duty throughout the rest of the night, but no further incidents occurred. At 11 p.m. that evening, however, rangers were again called to the center. They found that two juvenile and one adult Corpsmen had been beaten, and that one of the juveniles was seriously injured. An investigation into the two incidents is being conducted, but there presently appears to be no connection among these incidents and the drug arrests reported yesterday. (Bob Wightman, GRSM, via CompuServe message to RAD/SERO and RAD/VJASO, 3 p.m. EST, 3/21/90).

Friday, April 6, 1990

90-41 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Follow-up on Drug Arrests

On March 17th, park rangers concluded a two-month long investigation into drug dealing at the Oconaluftee Job Corps Center with the arrest of two dealers from Atlanta. One of the dealers, 19-year-old T.A. of Newnan, Georgia, has been charged under 21 USC with 14 felony counts related to the distribution of controlled substances, including distribution of a controlled substance on or near a school (21 USC 845 [a]) and distribution to a person under 21 years of age (21 USC 845). One of the charges stems from an offense committed on March 2nd, evidence of which was gained during the investigation. Arnold remains in jail under a \$10,000 secured bond. The juvenile dealer has been charged with five felony distribution counts. He had been released to his parents under a \$5,000 unsecured bond. The investigation also resulted in the apprehension of five corpsmen who purchased marijuana. If they continue to cooperate in the investigation, charges will probably not be filed against them. (Bob Marriott, Acting CR, GRSM, via CompuServe message to RAD/WASO, 2 p.m. EDT, 4/5/90).

Tuesday, April 10, 1990

90-60 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - MVA with Fatality

Just past midnight on the 8th, the driver of a Mustang LX heading northbound on the spur between Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge lost control of his vehicle, went into a front skid which deteriorated into a side skid, and struck two trees. The right rear passenger, 22-year-old W.T., was killed. The driver, J.T., 18, suffered a depressed skull fracture and was flown by Lifestar helicopter to St. Mary's Medical Center in Knoxville. He is in critical condition. Two of the three remaining passengers, B.R., 20, and D.W., 14, were treated and released; the third, A.W., 20, remains hospitalized with a broken collar bone, broken shoulder and possible bruised kidney. All five were from Sevierville, Tennessee. It is believed that the vehicle was travelling at a high rate of speed when it went off the road, and investigators are looking into the possible involvement of alcohol. Charges are pending. (Bob Marriott, Acting CR, GRSM, via telephone message from Steve Smith, RAD/SERO, 7 a.m. EDT and CompuServe message, noon EDT, 4/9/90).

Friday, May 4, 1990

90-89 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Assault with Weapon

Over the weekend of April 21st and 22nd, two individuals became involved in an altercation on Newfound Gap Road while returning from the Rod Run Rally in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. The driver of the vehicle in which the two were riding pulled a knife and stabbed the victim two or three times. One wound penetrated the victim's neck and caused extensive bleeding. The assailant took the victim to a North Carolina hospital. The attack was not reported to rangers until two days later, when the victim was released from the hospital. An investigation is being conducted by rangers. (CompuServe message to RAD/SERO and RAD/WASO from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 2 p.m. EDT, 5/3/90).

Thursday, May 31, 1990

99-112 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Cave Rescue

On May 23rd, 24-year-old J.E.M. of Knoxville, Tennessee, and his companion, T.M., entered Bull Cave, which is just inside the park's north boundary near Townsend, Tennessee. They reportedly descended 60 vertical feet at the cave's entrance, walked 400 feet, then descended 45 vertical feet to a ledge and another 70 vertical feet from there to a point below, where they ran out of rope. At about 2:30 p.m., the pair started climbing back out. After an hour's effort, J.E.M. told T.M. that his legs were numb and he could not climb any further. T.M. completed the climb and called for help. The park called a cave rescue team from the Knoxville Volunteer Rescue Squad for assistance. J.E.M. was reached just after 8 p.m., evacuated, then transported by ambulance and helicopter to the University of Tennessee Hospital in Knoxville. He suffered from hypothermia, but had no other injuries. Neither climber had obtained the required permit to enter the cave, and legal action is under consideration. (Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, via CompuServe message to RAD/SERO and RAD/WASO, 5:30 p.m. EDT, 5/30).

Friday, June 1, 1990

90-118 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Self-Rescue

Although the following is not technically a reportable incident, it seems to point to SAR in the 90's and we thought you might find it interesting: At 11 a.m. on May 25th, the park dispatcher received a telephone call from a man who said he was lost in the backcountry and needed help. The caller had left the Appalachian Trail to hike cross-country to Wilson Falls, and had become lost while trying to return to his car on the Clingman's Dome road. Since he was in possession of a cellular phone, he called the park to find out how to get back. He was advised to continue uphill until he encountered either the Appalachian Trail or the Dome Road. He then hung up to save battery power. Just after noon, he called back to say that he'd found the trail and was headed out. (CompuServe message to RAD/SERO and RAD/WASO from Bob Wightman, GRSM, 5:30 p.m. EDT, 5/30).



Tuesday, June 26, 1990

90-156 - Great Smoky Mountains (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Lightning Victim

Around 10 p.m. on June 18th, a lightning bolt struck A.M. of Berea, Kentucky, at his backcountry campsite on a ridgetop near the state line and about three miles off the Appalachian Trail. Other campers at the site hiked off the mountain and reported the incident to rangers at the Abrams Creek ranger station a little after 1 a.m. Cades Cove rangers responded and reached the victim at 5 a.m. He was coherent and had a strong pulse, but had some localized burns and was experiencing same abdominal pain. He felt able to ride out, so evacuation by horse was begun around 7 a.m. A.M.'s companions drove him to a nearby hospital. A.M. told rangers that he was lying on a foam sleeping pad and reading at the time of the strike. For 10 to 15 seconds, he felt "welded to the ground", and could not move for some time thereafter, as he was paralyzed on his left side and right leg. He observed smoke in his tent, saw bits of down floating around, and smelled burned hair and flesh. It took about 20 minutes before others heard him yelling for help through the noise of the storm, and by that time he had begun regaining some feeling. Rangers found no signs of damage to the sleeping pad, but the tent floor looked "shot full of holes", with several quarter to half-dollar-sized burn holes. A tree about ten feet away had its bark blown off. A.M. said that he'd been shocked by a 220 volt charge before, but that this was much worse; he felt that any more would have killed him. His lower back and leg muscles were extremely sore, and the pain in his stomach was reported to be similar to that caused by a hernia. (Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, via CompuServe messages to RAD/WASO and RAD/SERD, 6/25).

Tuesday, July 3, 1990

90-170 - Great Smoky Mountains (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Fatality

On the evening of June 30th, 48-year-old R.C. of Gatlinburg was bicycling on the Cade's Cove loop road when he hit a deer that ran out in front of him. R.C. went over the bike's handlebar, hit his head on the ground and was killed. (Telephone report from RAD/SERO, 7/2).

Wednesday, August 1, 1990

90-214 - Great Smoky Mountains (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Arrest

On July 29th, rangers arrested 27-year-old T.L.G. of Huntsville, Alabama, after observing him burglarize a car in the Rainbow Falls area near Gatlinburg. Rangers had the area under surveillance after receiving reports of 15 similar incidents at nearby tourist attractions earlier in the weekend. Approximately \$500 in cash and jewelry were recovered. (CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/31).

Friday, August 3, 1990

90-227 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Weapons Arrest

On the evening of July 29th, Alan Householder, a backcountry volunteer whose position is jointly funded by the Appalachian Trail Conference, a local hiking club, and the park's cooperating association, was on routine patrol along the Appalachian Trail at Icewater Springs when he saw a man with a .22 magnum rifle. Householder followed instructions he'd received in training and took no immediate action; once alone, he reported his observation to backcountry rangers by radio. Two rangers responded at dawn the next morning and found 26-year-old R.D. of Eustis, Florida, camped illegally along the trail about a mile and a half east of Newfound Gap. R.D. said his intent was to camp for about two months in the park. He was carrying a rifle, 200 rounds of ammunition, a samurai sword, two large knives, two hatchets, a climbing rope, ten pounds of potatoes, a bag of rice, a bag of garden seeds, and books on survival and edible plants. He said he intended to kill small game, but would not kill bear or deer. He was arrested, charged with hunting, and is now out on \$1,000 bond. (CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/2).

Wednesday, August 15, 1990

90-254 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Successful Rescue

At 3:30 p.m. on the afternoon of the 8th, park dispatch received a call from a Wears Valley HAM radio operator and a member of the American Radio Emergency Service who in turn had been contacted by a Boy Scout leader on Mt. Guyot along the Appalachian Trail. The scout leader reported that a second leader, 51-year-old J.G. of Albany, Mississippi, was suffering from acute chest pains radiating out into his arms, was sweating and nauseous, and had a history of high blood pressure. Ranger George Minnigh arrived on scene by horseback at 7 p.m., transmitted preliminary vital signs to the park's medical control, and began to administer oxygen. Park Medic Steve Kloster arrived on scene at 8:15 p.m. and began administering sublingual nitroglycerine on radioed advice from a doctor. The two rangers then put J.G. on horseback and began down; they met the park litter team, who carried him to the trailhead, arriving at that point at 1:30 a.m. J.G. was taken by ambulance to Sevier County Medical Center where he is now in an ICU in stable condition. Virtually the entire rescue was conducted during heavy rains and occasional thunderstorms. Visibility was nil, precluding use of a helicopter at any point. (CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/14).

Tuesday, September 18, 1990

90-314 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Ginseng Arrests

Following receipt of information on illegal ginseng harvesting in the park, rangers began a stakeout of Lakeshore Trail near Fontana Lake on September 7th. Just before 3 p.m., they saw three men - R.W., 20, M.H., 19, and T.H., 20, all of Robbinsville, North Carolina - leaving the park from that area. Two of the men fled when the rangers attempted to stop them, but all were eventually captured. The trio had a total of 1,138 ginseng roots from the park in their possession. The roots, which collectively weighed just over 13 pounds, have a street value of between \$1,200 and \$1,500. All were charged with several violations of CFR and may be charged under the Lacey Act (18 USC 3372). (CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 9/17).

Tuesday, October 9, 1990

90-359 - Great Smoky Mountains National Park (North Carolina- Tennessee) - Hunting Case

On Friday evening, September 28, two-person teams of rangers were staked out at three separate locations on the North Carolina side of the Park. In addition, two officers with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission were in position to serve as backup. The team watching the Thomas Divide area, at which an unofficial trail entered the Park, observed two men with a weapon and several dogs enter the Park at approx. 2200 hours. Rangers jumped the men but they escaped. The stakeout team notified the others and called in one other team, a supervisor and the two North Carolina officers. Acting on a hunch they subsequently found two Jeep pickups parked outside the Park and initiated a stakeout at their location. While in position they heard a dog race and two shotgun blasts from inside the Park. They also caught three dogs which returned to the Jeeps.

At approx. 0400 hours, September 29, two men approached the Jeeps and deposited assorted bear parts in a dog box. Rangers stopped them as they started the vehicles and attempted to leave. They were NOT the same two men jumped the night before. At daylight two rangers and a North Carolina officer began backtracking the suspects. Approx. 1 1/4 mile from the Jeeps and inside the Park, they located a gut pile, the head of a bear and the upper torso of a second bear. Another team began tracking at the point of contact from the night before and located a .22 cal. rifle and a knife. All evidence was seized and the vehicles confiscated. On Sunday, September 30, rangers backtracked from the gut pile and found a second gut pile, another bear head and additional evidence within 250 yards.

A shotgun was used to first shoot the bears but has not been recovered. An informant has identified two other men involved in this hunt. Rangers have a suspect for one of the two who escaped capture-they were apparently involved in a separate hunt. The two men at the Jeeps were Sherman Ogle, DOB 1/18/48, of Bryson City, NC and William Paul Owl, DOB 12/20/33, an Indian from Cherokee, NC. No arrests were made but they were escorted home and their blood soaked clothing confiscated.

The bear skulls have been radiographed. One skull contained four .22 cal. bullets. A .22 cal. pistol was also found in one of the Jeeps. The Park is considering charges under the Lacey Act. The State is considering charges for hunting out of season, hunting without a license and wastage. Both bears were females. If they are found to have been pregnant the Park may ask replacement costs for both the bears and the fetuses.

A total of seven rangers from the South District and two North Carolina officers were involved in the incident. (CompuServe from Jason Houck, C.R.)

Friday, November 30, 1990

90-427 - Great Smoky Mountains (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Victim Found

On November 27th, rangers investigating a citizen's report discovered the wreckage of a pickup truck and the body of its driver, 37-year-old W.F. of Maryville, Tennessee, off the edge of the

Foothills Parkway about a mile east of its junction with US 321. W.F. had been missing since July 4th, when he failed to return home after waterskiing with some friends on Cherokee Lake. W.F. had apparently been driving westbound on the parkway when he went off a steep, 50-foot embankment. He hit a large poplar tree, which flattened the truck's cab, then fell over and concealed it for over four months. The accident occurred in an area of exclusive jurisdiction; the FBI is assisting in the investigation. (Bob Miller, GRSM, via telefax from Capt. Steve Alscher, RAD/SERO, 11/28).

Wednesday, December 5, 1990

90-434 - Great Smoky Mountains (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Poaching

At about 4:00 p.m. on December 1st, rangers heard shots fired within the park. At about the same time, an interagency stakeout team (NPS, USFS and North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission) which was preparing to begin a surveillance operation near the Twentymile ranger station saw a vehicle drop off a man near the point where those shots were fired. The man entered the woods with a light; he returned about five minutes later and appeared to be dragging something. The vehicle then returned to pick him up. Team members moved to stop the vehicle, but a previously unseen lookout vehicle tipped off the suspects that rangers were on their way. The suspect vehicle quickly left the area at a high rate of speed. When finally stopped about four miles away on U.S. Route 129, team members were unable to find either a weapon or a deer within. A deer carcass was later found on state land, but trackers followed drag marks to a kill site within the park. The driver of the vehicle will probably be charged with aiding and abetting, and the passenger with possession of wildlife. (CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 12/4).

Friday, December 21, 1990

90-449 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Apparent Suicide

A park maintenance worker found the body of R.T., 35, of Gautier, Mississippi, a short distance from his vehicle at The Sinks in the Little River Subdistrict on the morning of the 19th. R.T. apparently died from a single gunshot wound to the head. Suicide is suspected. (Telephone report from Capt. Steve Alscher, RAD/SERO, 12/20).

Friday, January 11, 1991

91-6 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Poaching Arrest

On January 7th, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency received an anonymous report that two Florida men were in the park to poach trophy deer. The men were said to be driving a Ford Bronco and to be armed with a silenced weapon. Rangers spotted the vehicle in Townsend on the 8th, and a surveillance team was assembled to monitor its movement. Around 10:00 p.m. that evening, the Bronco headed into the park, and a man was dropped off at the entrance to the Cades Cove loop road. The Bronco returned every two hours throughout the night, then picked up the man at 7:30 a.m. on the 9th. The Bronco was stopped near Townsend by rangers, and two

men T.M.W., 37, and C.L.N., 35, both of Fort Pierce, Florida were arrested. A .22 caliber rifle with a scope and silencer was seized along with the head of a 12-point buck. A consent search of their motel room led to the discovery of another trophy head. The two men have been charged with hunting in the park under 16 USC 403 H3 and are presently out on bond. A trial has been set for February 21st in Knoxville. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms will examine the silencer on the rifle, which appears to be homemade. The park will ask for forfeiture of the Bronco. [CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 1/10]

Thursday, January 31, 1991

91-30 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Drug Arrest

On January 26th, N.M.H., 26, wrecked his 1985 Audi sedan near Newfound Gap. The ranger who responded to the accident found controlled substances in the car and asked that a drug dog from Gatlinburg, Tennessee, be brought to the scene. A half pound of marijuana was subsequently discovered in the vehicle. N.M.H. was also found to have over \$2,000 on his person. He was arrested by park rangers and charged with violation of 21 USC 844 (possession of a controlled substance). [CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 1/30]

Tuesday, May 21, 1991

91-167 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Rescue

On the afternoon of the 19th, S.K., 61, of Knoxville, Tennessee, fell about five feet and struck his head while visiting Wilson Falls, which is about one mile from and 1,000 feet below the Mount Collins trail shelter on the Appalachian Trail. The shelter itself is about six miles from a paved road. S.K. sustained probable head, neck and back injuries in the fall, so a carryout was required. Over two dozen rangers were employed in the effort, which took place in a continuous rain storm at night and in rugged terrain. S.K. was to have reached the highway and a waiting ambulance early yesterday morning. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, via telefax from Steve Smith, RAD/SERO, 5/20]

Friday, June 14, 1991

90-359 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Followup on Arrests

Three men were arrested for hunting bears in the park late on the night of September 28, 1990, and the subsequent investigation resulted in federal charges against each of them. On April 30th, judgement was rendered by the U.S. magistrate in Bryson City, North Carolina. Both W.P.O. and S.O. pled guilty to violating the Lacey Act, and each was sentenced to five years probation, fined \$1,000, and ordered to pay \$1,035 in restitution for one black bear. H.L.R. was found guilty of aiding and abetting the hunters and was sentenced to two years probation and fined \$500. All three men were banned from all federal lands in North Carolina and Tennessee during the periods of their probations. Two vehicles and a firearm were seized in the case, but were returned to the defendants as part of the plea bargain. Although the state elected not to file

charges, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission was instrumental in the development of the federal case. [CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 6/12]

Monday, June 17, 1991

90-434 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Followup on Arrests

On December 1, 1990, rangers in a stakeout team heard shots from within the park and observed suspicious activity on a North Carolina highway near the park's boundary. Two men S.H., 19, and E.H., 25, both of Tapoco, North Carolina were subsequently found with a deer carcass which had been dragged from the park onto state land, and a third - I.M. was discovered in a lookout vehicle. All three were charged with various violations. Judgement was rendered on them by a U.S. magistrate on June 12th. S.H. pled nolo contendere to possession of a whitetailed deer and was fined \$200; E.H. pled nolo contendere to aiding and abetting in connection with the above and was fined \$400; I.M. pled not guilty to a charge of aiding and abetting, but was found guilty, fined \$1,000 and ordered to provide 40 hours of community service. This was I.M.'s third wildlife offense in the park in the past decade. All three men were ordered to pay restitution for the cost of the deer, received six month suspended sentences and two years probation, and were banned from all federal lands in North Carolina and Tennessee during their probation periods. Officers from the Forest Service and North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission were participants in the December stakeout and provided essential assistance in the development and prosecution of the case. [CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 6/13]

Wednesday, June 26, 1991

91-241 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - MVA with Fatality

D.S., 31, of various addresses in North Carolina, was killed in the early morning hours of June 21st when the car in which he was riding was involved in an accident near the tunnel on the Gatlinburg Spur. Alcohol was probably a contributing factor, and the female driver may be charged with driving under the influence. [Telephone report from Steve Alscher, RAD/SERO, 6/21]

Friday, August 2, 1991

91-360 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Successful Search

On July 28th, H.B. and his son M.B. were dropped off at Newfound Gap for an extended hike in the park. When they failed to return as scheduled on the evening of the 30th, H.B.'s wife called rangers at midnight and advised them that they were overdue. Investigators determined that the pair had spent the night of the 28th at Ice Water Spring and the night of the 29th at Tricorner Knob, and that they had received permission from the park to hike from there crosscountry from Mount Guyot to Ramsey Prong Creek and then on up Ramsey Cascade Trail. Accordingly, a hasty search of the trail was conducted on the morning of the 31st. When it proved fruitless, a team of four rangers began hiking up the Ramsey Cascade drainages that afternoon while

another pair descended from Mount Guyot. Both teams found footprints around night fall, and tracked the pair through the day yesterday. They were found in good condition at 3:00 p.m. and escorted out of the backcountry. [Telephone reports from Steve Smith, RAD/SERO, 8/1 and 8/2]

Tuesday, October 15, 1991

91-561 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Ginseng Arrests

Between August 16th and September 27th, rangers made seven separate cases against poachers who were illegally taking ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) from the park. The United States attorney in Asheville, North Carolina, has filed Lacey Act charges against five individuals, and two others have been fined \$800 for CFR violations. The rangers recovered over 800 roots (approximately four and a half pounds), all of which have been replanted. The commercial value of ginseng currently fluctuates between \$150 and \$250 per pound. [CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 10/10]

Monday, November 4, 1991

91-6 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Follow-up on Arrests

On January 9th, T.M.W., 37, and C.L.N., 35, both of Fort Pierce, Florida, were arrested by rangers for poaching in the park. They were each charged with violations of 18 USC 403h-3 and entered conditional guilty pleas before a U.S. magistrate in Knoxville on July 12th. Judgements were rendered on October 11th. Each defendant was sentenced to six months' incarceration with all but 14 days suspended, four years' probation, 200 hours of community service, and \$1,000 restitution, which is to be paid to the park. Each is prohibited from possessing any firearms or other dangerous weapons during the period of probation except what may be required in the line of duty. Hunting, however, is absolutely precluded. T.M.W. was ordered to pay a fine of \$500 and C.L.N. a fine of \$1,500. They were also ordered to forfeit the rifle, scope and silencer and the Ford Bronco (valued at \$7,500) used in the incident. The conditional plea of guilty allows the defendants to file an appeal on the merits of the magistrate's ruling regarding suppression of evidence. The defendants have filed an appeal on that basis. [CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 11/1]

Tuesday, November 5, 1991

91-601 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Structural Fire

Quarters #322, located near park headquarters, was completely destroyed by fire yesterday morning. A park employee detected the fire around 6:30 a.m. and notified the Gatlinburg fire department. By the time the department's engines arrived, the building was completely engulfed. It took firefighters about 25 minutes to control the blaze. The building, which was constructed in 1955, was generally employed as a bunkhouse for seasonal employees and SCA personnel, but at the time of the fire was being utilized by the park's cooperating association as temporary office space while another park building was renovated. The building's value was placed at \$35,000, but the association also lost computers and other items in the fire. Some records stored

in a fire-resistant file cabinet apparently survived the blaze; the association's financial records were kept in the auditor's office elsewhere and are safe. Initial investigation by the fire marshal indicates that the fire was started by a bathroom heater. [CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 11/4]

Wednesday, November 20, 1991

91-626 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Employee Suicide

G.W., 48, the secretary for the assistant chief ranger in Tennessee, committed suicide at her home on the afternoon of November 18th. Williamson was separated from her husband, had attempted suicide on three prior occasions, and was under psychiatric care at the time of her death. She leaves three children and a grandchild. G.W. had worked for the park for about four years. The funeral will take place tomorrow morning in Newport, Tennessee. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, via telefax from Steve Alscher, LES, RAD/SERO, 11/19]

Friday, January 17, 1992

92-9 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Air Crash

Lt. Col. B.B., 41, was one of four pilots from Dobbins Air Force Base flying F-15's on routine maneuvers over the park on the morning of the 15th when he collided with an F-15 being flown by Maj. B.T. B.T. was able to land his damaged plane at the airport in Knoxville, but B.B. was forced to eject from his fighter, which crashed at an unidentified location. B.B. parachuted to the ground near Clingmans Dome. Rescue workers reached him in midafternoon and evacuated him to a waiting helicopter. B.B. was able to walk out with rescuers. He was flown to a hospital in Knoxville, where he was held overnight for observation and was later reported to be in satisfactory condition. [Associated Press story, 1/16]

Monday, February 3, 1992

92-24 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Probable Suicide

Early on the morning of January 29th, a park ranger discovered the partially clothed body of a woman lying face down beside a pickup truck in the Metcalf Bottoms picnic area. The vehicle had been seen at that location the previous evening, but no one was found in the area. The victim was identified as P.W., 51, of Harrogate, Tennessee. Investigation revealed that she'd been reported missing by her husband the previous day and that the company truck she was driving was reported missing by her employer. She'd last been seen just after noon on the 28th. The initial autopsy results indicate that she had cut an artery in her left arm, but the exact cause of death has not yet been determined. On the 30th, a park maintenance worker found a large quantity of blood and footprints matching P.W.'s about 200 yards from the truck near the Little River. Rangers now believe that P.W. attempted suicide, then changed her mind and returned to the truck. She was too weak to proceed further, though, and died at that location. The FBI is



assisting the park in the investigation. [CompuServe message from Don Utterback, Acting CR, GRSM, 1/31]

Thursday, March 26, 1992

92-90 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - MVA with Fatalities

Two people were killed and three others were injured in a head-on collision on the Newfound Gap Road just after noon on March 25th. It took ambulance crews and park rangers over an hour to extricate all the victims from their vehicles and stabilize them for transportation to the Sugarlands visitor center, where both Medflight and Lifestar helicopters were waiting. At the time of the accident, snow and rain were falling. The accident is under investigation. Identities of the victims are unknown at this time. A follow-up report will appear when more information becomes available. [Don Utterback, GRSM, via telefax from Marcella Gibson, RAD/SERO, 3/25]

Monday, April 27, 1992

92-146 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Felony Arrests

Just before noon on April 23rd, rangers came upon two vehicles which had been driven into the park and crashed. Both were reported stolen. The two men who were driving them fled into the woods, and a search for them was subsequently begun employing dogs and a helicopter. Both were captured that evening. Both men, one of them a juvenile, were turned over to local authorities. [Jason Houck, GRSM, via telefax from Marcella Gibson, RAD/SERO, 4/24]

Friday, May 1, 1992

92-157 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Fatal Air Crash

On the evening of April 26th, Civil Air Patrol (CAP) authorities reported that they were receiving radio signals from an aircraft emergency locator transmitter which appeared to be originating from the park. CAP and park personnel drove park roads until 3:30 a.m. in an unsuccessful attempt to pinpoint the origin of the signals. At 4:30 a.m., the park received word from CAP and FAA officials that two aircraft had been reported missing and that either or both could be in the park. The search for the signal continued on the 27th. Due to an inch of new snow, extreme overcast and fog, the search was confined to the ground and efforts to pinpoint the signal continued to be unsuccessful. Early in the afternoon, a private helicopter spotted the wreckage of a Cessna 310 near Clingman's Dome, the highest point in the park at 6,643 feet, but was unable to provide detailed location information to the incident command team. Weather on Tuesday again precluded the use of aircraft. Ranger and CAP ground teams, hampered by fog, a foot of new snow, steep terrain and thick vegetation (known locally as "rhododendron hells") remained unable to locate the wreckage despite strong signals on directional finding equipment. Clear weather on the morning of the 29th made it possible for a Bell 206 helicopter to direct a ground team to the crash site. The wreckage was near the 5,800-foot elevation a half mile north-northeast of the Clingman's Dome observation tower. The ELT antenna had broken off on

impact. The pilot and sole occupant, M.W., 23, of Cartersville, Georgia, had been thrown about 75 feet from the wreckage and had suffered fatal injuries. The body was removed by helicopter long-line and was transported to a local hospital. A total of 28 park and 23 CAP personnel were involved in the search effort along with two fixed-wing CAP aircraft and two helicopters. Representatives from the FAA, NTSB, insurance company, and engine and aircraft manufacturers are on site to investigate the cause. M.W. had experience as a pilot and aircraft mechanic and was rated for IFR, but filed no flight plan and apparently remained at a relatively low altitude during the flight. Although an OAS-authorized temporary flight restriction was not put into effect over the area, an overflight by a local helicopter tour operator caused enough interference to warrant a contact by park authorities. Despite an agreement to comply with a request to maintain a two to three mile perimeter around the site, a second helicopter from the same business overflew the site later in the day. The FAA has been advised. (Note: The second missing aircraft reported by FAA was found near Mt. Mitchell off Blue Ridge Parkway on April 27th. Two people were killed in that crash). [CompuServe message from Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 4/30]

Wednesday, May 27, 1992

92-217 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Fatal Air Crash

A Cessna 172 crashed near Tri-Corner Knob around 3:00 p.m. on May 24th, killing R.B., T.D., and five-month-old S.B. The aircraft was headed to Rome, Georgia, in rainy and foggy weather when it crashed. Rangers have located the crash site in the mountains and were awaiting a helicopter to left them and the victims out at the time of the report yesterday morning. The FAA will be investigating the accident. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, via telefax from Marcella Gibson, RAD/SERO, 5/26]

Tuesday, March 16, 1993

93-114 - Great Smoky Mountains (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Search

Major search operations are underway for approximately two dozen missing students from Cranbrook, Michigan, and for up to a dozen other groups of hikers scattered throughout the park, but are being hampered by three to four feet of snow, drifts and downed trees. About 55 students from the Michigan school have been found to date. Four helicopters flew the park yesterday, primarily along the Appalachian Trail. Several hikers were lifted out of the woods. A number of military medics were also lowered into the park to treat hikers. Most treatment has been for hypothermia in the beginning stages; there have been no serious injuries. Between 90 and 100 park employees were involved in the search yesterday. Five helicopters will be working the park today. Weather conditions are expected to deteriorate today, with more snow tonight and Wednesday. Jason Houck, the park's chief ranger, is the incident commander. [Bill Springer, RAD/SERO, 3/16]

Wednesday, March 17, 1993

93-112 - Eastern Regions - Follow-up on Storm Impacts

More reports have been received regarding the impacts of the "winter hurricane" which struck the East Coast last weekend. Many parks, particularly in Southeast Region, reported minor damage, particularly downed trees. The more significant reports follow:

\* Great Smokies - The park is closed, and access to the neighboring towns of Cherokee and Gatlinburg is highly restricted. The area has been without power since Friday; it will probably not be restored until tomorrow. About 20 to 30 park employees are stranded in their residences, but there's little likelihood that any are experiencing anything more than normal storm-related problems.

[Bill Springer, RAD/SERO; Pat Tolle, EVER; Jason Houck, GRSM; Chuck Taylor, GUCO; 3/16]

Wednesday, March 17, 1993

93-114 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on Search

The search for the three groups of eight people from the Cranbrook School - each comprised of seven teenaged students and a counselor - who were missing in the park concluded successfully yesterday afternoon when they were found in good health and winched out by helicopter. Two of the groups were in the Upper Hazel Creek bunkhouse; the remaining eight were at a backcountry campsite about a mile away. Groups from the Cranbrook School come to the park each year for an "Outward Bound" type experience in which students hike with counselors through the park for several days. This year, ten groups of eight came to the park. Searchers found the other seven groups on Monday. Although some group members were suffering from hypothermia and frostbite, some of it severe, most were in good shape. The search continues for 11 other hikers who are still in the park. Many of them came to the park specifically for the winter hiking experience; some of those who have been contacted have waived rescue, others have walked out and are in good condition. The superintendent closed the backcountry yesterday, however; all those still remaining in the park will be found and evacuated. Six helicopters are scheduled to search the park today, but weather conditions may impede operations. It is currently very overcast and raining, and flash flood warnings have been posted for the area. If the hikers are not found today, then six Apache helicopters with infrared sensing equipment will fly over the park tonight. About ten rangers will also be sent in to high probability search areas on snowshoe today. Attention will be focused on the major trails between Cades Cove and park headquarters and the Appalachian Trail. There were about 150 to 175 personnel deployed on the search yesterday. They are operating under a unified command with Jason Houck, the park's chief ranger, serving as incident commander; members are the NPS, Forest Service, CAP, Tennessee Emergency Management Administration, and North Carolina Air National Guard. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 3/16 and 3/17]

Thursday, March 18, 1993

93-114 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on Search

The search for missing hikers continues. Searchers now believe that there are ten hikers still in the park and are focusing their efforts on reaching several shelters along the Appalachian Trail (AT). Flight operations were suspended yesterday because of poor weather but will likely resume this morning. During the night, a pair of Apache helicopters with infrared equipment flew the park, two rangers on snowshoes worked their way toward the Russell Field shelter, and two more rangers attempted to reach the Spence Field shelter. Because of "extremely rugged going" caused by drifts up to 12 feet high, the teams had difficulty making headway and still have, respectively, a half mile and a mile and a half to go to reach their destinations. Fourteen rangers with extensive winter skiing and camping experience arrived last night from seven parks (St. Croix, Rocky Mountain, Grand Teton, Voyageur, Apostle Island, Sleeping Bear Dunes, and Big South Fork). This morning, four of them will begin snowshoeing from Fontana Dam eastward on the AT toward the Birch Spring shelter; three others will be airlifted by helicopter to the Spence Field shelter and will move westward toward Fontana after checking the shelter. The remaining seven will be on stand by until the shelters are checked and revised assessments of search areas can be made. Four Blackhawk helicopters will be utilized on the search today. Boat patrols are also being conducted on Fontana Lake in case any hikers reach the shore line there, and a military tracked vehicle will work its way towards Clingman's Dome. Several park roads should be open again today for administrative purposes. The entire park and all vehicle access points remain closed. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSN, 3/18]

Thursday, March 18, 1993

93-114 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on Search

The search for missing hikers continues. Searchers now believe that there are ten hikers still in the park and are focusing their efforts on reaching several shelters along the Appalachian Trail (AT). Flight operations were suspended yesterday because of poor weather but will likely resume this morning. During the night, a pair of Apache helicopters with infrared equipment flew the park, two rangers on snowshoes worked their way toward the Russell Field shelter, and two more rangers attempted to reach the Spence Field shelter. Because of "extremely rugged going" caused by drifts up to 12 feet high, the teams had difficulty making headway and still have, respectively, a half mile and a mile and a half to go to reach their destinations. Fourteen rangers with extensive winter skiing and camping experience arrived last night from seven parks (St. Croix, Rocky Mountain, Grand Teton, Voyageur, Apostle Island, Sleeping Bear Dunes, and Big South Fork). This morning, four of them will begin snowshoeing from Fontana Dam eastward on the AT toward the Birch Spring shelter; three others will be airlifted by helicopter to the Spence Field shelter and will move westward toward Fontana after checking the shelter. The remaining seven will be on stand by until the shelters are checked and revised assessments of search areas can be made. Four Blackhawk helicopters will be utilized on the search today. Boat patrols are also being conducted on Fontana Lake in case any hikers reach the shore line there, and a military tracked vehicle will work its way towards Clingman's Dome. Several park roads

should be open again today for administrative purposes. The entire park and all vehicle access points remain closed. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 3/18]

Tuesday, March 23, 1993

93-112 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Follow-up on Storm

Maintenance crews worked throughout last week to clear a massive accumulation of snow and downed trees from park roads. Plans were to reopen only two roads by Saturday - the Newfound Gap Road between Gatlinburg and Cherokee, and the Laurel Creek Road from Townsend to Cades Cove. All other park roads and the park's 975-mile trail system will remain closed until park officials can determine that they can be safely reopened to the public. All park campgrounds and picnic areas will also remain closed until the roads can be cleared and hazardous trees removed. At the time of the report, the park's Sugarlands visitor center was still without power, but the visitor center at Oconaluftee was open. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 3/19]

Tuesday, March 30, 1993

93-154 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Search in Progress

On the afternoon of Sunday, March 28th, the park received word that 13-year-old B.L. of Adamsville, Alabama, had become separated from his family while hiking to Rainbow Falls on Mt. LeConte and was missing. Rangers and a dog team searched for B.L. on the three main trails to Mt. LeConte until 3:30 a.m. yesterday, then resumed efforts a few hours later. As of yesterday afternoon, there were 21 rangers directly involved in the search; they were supported by three helicopters and two search dog teams. Search officials are convinced that B.L. is not on a designated trail and believe that he may be on one of a number of unmarked side trails or off the trail system entirely. A three-pronged search effort was being utilized yesterday. One team was using dogs and man-tracking techniques to look for signs of the boy in the area where he was last seen, four teams were hiking cross-country up both sides of the two major watercourses that come down from Mt. LeConte, and other rangers were stationed at strategic trail junctions throughout the night in case B.L. emerged on a trail. According to B.L.'s parents, he is in good health and fairly well dressed to stay out overnight. He's reportedly clad in a polypropylene shirt, a jacket, an Army-green poncho and camouflage pants. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 3/29]

Wednesday, March 31, 1993

93-154 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on Search

The search for 13-year-old B.L. continued yesterday. Three helicopters - one with a helitack crew - flew the area, specialized tracking teams with air scent dogs searched near the point last seen (PLS) and in the Rainbow Falls area, ground searchers followed trackers to search the high probability search area around the PLS, and perimeter blocks were maintained on all trails. Despite these efforts and two alerts near the PLS, no trace of B.L. was found. The search will

continue today. About 150 people from eight federal, state and local agencies are participating in the search; just under 100 are from the NPS. [Incident Management Team, GRSM, 3/30]

Thursday, April 1, 1993

93-154 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on Search

On Tuesday, four Blackhawk helicopters and two Tennessee National Guard helicopters flew the park in the continuing search for 13-year-old B.L. During the night that followed, helicopters with heat sensing equipment also attempted to find him. None met with any success. Rain fell on the area yesterday, grounding aircraft. Ground teams worked nine search sectors, focusing on high probability areas; three dog teams, each accompanied by a highly-skilled tracker, were also deployed. Two more helicopters have arrived on scene to make a total of eight. Almost 200 people from about ten agencies are involved in search efforts. Rain is likely today. [Steve Smith, RAD/SERO, 3/31 and 4/1]

Friday, April 2, 1993

93-154 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on Search

The search for 13-year-old B.L. has entered its fifth day. An additional 40 searchers will be committed today, bringing the total number of ground searchers to about 190 and the total number of personnel involved in the incident to just under 300. Today's efforts will focus on a half mile by two-and-three-quarter mile search area containing about 700 acres of park land. The area covered by ground searchers yesterday included the entire zone from Rainbow Falls to the trailhead. This was the correct area in light of new information learned on Thursday morning. A public appeal made by B.L.'s parents to three college-aged males they'd seen at the Falls on Sunday paid off. The young men, all from the east Tennessee area and known by park personnel to be reliable sources, contacted the park to say that they'd never seen the boy in the falls area. It now seems likely that B.L. never reached the falls, which significantly limits the area to be searched and allows search personnel to concentrate primarily on locations below the falls. They will re-check areas to assure full coverage of boulder fields, cliffs and creeks. The five search dog teams committed to the incident will again be employed to search for signs of the boy. The weather forecast calls for cold weather (around 45 degrees) and possible rain or snow. Agencies and organizations involved in the search include the Forest Service, BIA, the United States Army (Fort Campbell), Tennessee Department of Forestry, Tennessee State Parks, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Tennessee Army National Guard, Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, and a number of local CAP, fire, and search and rescue units. The incident commander is ranger Bobby Holland. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 4/2]

Monday, April 5, 1993

93-154 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on Search

The body of 13-year-old B.L. was found at the base of a 100-foot cliff by grid searchers early on the afternoon of Saturday, April 3rd. He was found about a half mile uphill from the point last

seen above "some pretty significant geographical barriers", including rock bluffs and water falls. The apparent cause of death was massive trauma stemming from a fall from the top of the cliff. Demobilization of search operations is well underway. Two rangers were assigned to the family at the outset of the incident and spent the entire week with them, explaining all aspects of the search, providing necessary support, and helping to prepare them for all possible outcomes of the search. [John Garrison, Plans Chief, IMT, GRSM, 4/4]

Thursday, April 22, 1993

93-203 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Visitor-Employee MVA

Seasonal ranger Paula Rakes was responding to a motor vehicle accident on Highway 441 on the morning of April 20th when she lost control of her cruiser and collided head-on with a visitor's vehicle a mile and a half south of the Sugarlands Visitor Center. S.J., the driver of the other vehicle, received a mild concussion, but her husband was not injured. Rakes sustained a hairline fracture to her left tibia. The initial accident was minor in nature. [Dave Panebaker, ACR, GRSM, 4/20]

Friday, April 23, 1993

93-204 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Search

A search was begun on Tuesday for M.T., 24, a German national who was last seen leaving the Clingmans Dome area around 1:00 p.m. that afternoon. M.T. intended to hike a loop circuit on the Appalachian, Welch Ridge, Jonas Creek and Forney Creek trails, then return to the Dome parking lot. When he failed to reappear, a family member notified rangers and a major search effort was begun. Rangers found M.T. in good condition in the Steel Trap Creek drainage yesterday afternoon. [Steve Smith, RAD/SERO, 4/22 and 4/23]

Monday, May 10, 1993

93-204 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on Search

Further information has been received on the successful two-and-a-half day search for M.T., a German visitor who became lost in the mountainous terrain south of Clingman's Dome on April 20th. M.T., who was traveling with his mother, left the Clingman's Dome parking area around 1 p.m. that afternoon for a six-hour circuit hike on the Appalachian, Welch Ridge, Jonas Creek and Forney Creek trails. The total distance for such a trip is about 17 miles. When he failed to return to the parking area that night, his mother advised rangers that he was overdue. A hasty search was conducted in heavy rain until 3 a.m.; trail blockers, trail runners, trackers, and dog teams were deployed later that morning. Investigators were able to determine that M.T. had last been seen by backpackers around 7:30 Tuesday evening about seven miles southwest of Clingman's Dome. He was reported to have been wet, cold and shaking mildly, and his hands were said to have been white with a "prune-like texture." The backpackers offered him food and shelter; although he declined, he did drink some water, then headed off in the direction of Clingman's Dome. Searchers found possible tracks above the trail, but lost them in the evening

due to new snow and gusty winds. Temperatures dropped to 22 degrees at Newfound Gap that evening. On Thursday, search teams, including both dog teams and trackers, checked high probability areas. The main area was covered with four inches of snow, and gusty winds prevented the use of helicopters. At 2:10 p.m., a search team found M.T. sitting in wet clothes on his shoulder bag in four-foot high rhododendron about 30 yards from Steeltrap Creek a quarter mile above the Forney Creek trail. He was shaking, had a low blood glucose level, and was in an altered mental state. M.T. was dressed in dry clothes and ALS procedures were begun. A 101st Airborne Division Blackhawk helicopter with winch capability and a jungle penetrator was dispatched from Fort Campbell in Kentucky and arrived at the scene at 6:20 p.m. M.T. was evacuated and flown to the University of Kentucky Medical Center, where he stayed for five days. Follow-up interviews with him reveal that he lost the trail in the dark on Tuesday night, hiked cross-country all day on Wednesday, and traveled only a short distance before being found on Thursday. He said that he began having hallucinations of cabins and villages while hiking, and that he would periodically lose a hiking boot and have to hunt for it in the snow. When he got it on, he couldn't tie the boot lace. M.T. had no prior experience hiking in the Smokies. A total of 55 people and six dogs were involved in the search. [Dave Panebaker, ACR, GRSM, 5/3]

Tuesday, May 25, 1993

93-277 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - MVA with Fatality

A vehicle being driven by S.S., 45, of Sevierville, Tennessee, crossed the center line of Little River Road near the Metcalf picnic area on the afternoon of May 22nd and struck an on-coming vehicle with three people in it. W.S., 78, who was sitting in the back seat of the second vehicle, apparently went into cardiac arrest and died at the scene; his wife, M., 89, and daughter, M.M., 49, received severe injuries. All were taken by helicopter to the University of Tennessee Medical Center. M.M. was admitted with severe head injuries; M.S. is in intensive care; S.S. is listed in serious condition. S.S. is believed to have been driving under the influence. The accident is still under investigation. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 5/24]

Tuesday, June 8, 1993

93-328 - Great Smoky Mountains (N. Carolina/Tennessee) - Helicopter Crash

On April 16th, a Bell 204 helicopter registered to Ranger Helicopter Services of Roanoke, Virginia, crashed on the Little River Road three miles from park headquarters. The pilot, M.C., 51, of Midlothian, Virginia, was not hurt. M.C. told rangers that he was flying from Greenville, Tennessee, to Dalton, Georgia, at an altitude for from 600 to 700 feet when his engine shut down. The aircraft was outfitted for spraying operations, but no chemicals were aboard. FAA and NTSB conducted a cursory investigation of the incident. The aircraft was severely damaged. [Lois Bogle, GRSM, 6/7]



Tuesday, June 8, 1993

93-329 - Great Smoky Mountains (N. Carolina/Tennessee) - Car Clout Arrests

Between April 17th and May 30th, three vehicles were stolen and seven more were hit by car clouters in the Big Creek area. The total value of property stolen and damaged exceeded \$34,000. As a consequence, the park began a number of surveillance operations and arrested two men - S.S. and B.D., both 19 and from Cocke County, Tennessee - as they were attempting to break into vehicles at Big Creek at 2 a.m. on May 30th. Stolen property from a home burglary was recovered during the arrest. Investigators determined that the two men were responsible for some of the prior thefts. While processing the crime scene a half hour later, another vehicle arrived at the scene. The driver, B.D.W., 22, of Cocke County, was found to be in possession of burglary tools, stolen property, and marijuana. He was also arrested. The case is to be taken before the grand jury today. Felony charges are being pursued. [Lois Bogle, GRSM, 6/7]

Tuesday, June 8, 1993

93-330 - Great Smoky Mountains (N. Carolina/Tennessee) - Drowning

On June 5th, the body of C.W., 16, a corpsman at the Oconaluftee Job Corps facility, was found floating in the Oconaluftee River by two fishermen. C.W. was last seen at the residential compound located just outside Cherokee, North Carolina, on May 24th. Rangers learned of his absence from family members on May 29th. On June 1st, two search dogs from the North Carolina SAR Dog Association checked the roads, fields, trails and rivers near the Job Corps grounds. A missing person flyer was also assembled and distributed in the local area, and C.W.'s name was entered into NCIC missing person files. An autopsy was performed on June 6th and the preliminary indication is that he drowned. The investigation is continuing; more interviews with Job Corps staff and corpsmen are planned. [Lois Bogle, GRSM, 6/7]

Friday, July 23, 1993

93-513 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Motor Vehicle Fatality

W.M. and C.M. of Huber Heights, Ohio, were travelling on the Newfound Gap Road near Mingus Mill on July 20th when C.M. jumped from the vehicle and was run over by its rear wheel and killed. A medical examiner at the hospital in Cherokee confirmed that the tire pattern on M.'s body matched the tires of their vehicle. An investigation into the incident is underway. [Don Utterback, Acting CR, GRSM, 7/21]

Wednesday, July 28, 1993

93-528 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - MVA; Four Fatalities

Four people were killed and several more injured in a multiple car accident on U.S. 441 near Towstring Road at 5:30 p.m. on July 25th. Each of the three vehicles involved in the incident carried families of four comprised of two parents and two children. D.B., 35, of Chandler, North

Carolina, who was driving a 1990 Thunderbird, was heading southbound on the highway when he failed to negotiate a right-hand curve, crossed the double center line and struck a northbound Ford Escort driven by C.H., 36, of Morehead, Kentucky. A white Suburu sedan driven by N.N., 46, of Honaker, Virginia, also northbound, then struck the right side of the Thunderbird after it had come to a stop. D.B. was transported by Lifestar to the University of Tennessee Hospital, where he is in critical condition in the intensive care unit. His wife, L.J.G.B., 37, who was the front seat passenger, and his daughter, S.L., seven, were pronounced dead upon arrival at Cherokee Indian Health Service Hospital. The D.B.'s other daughter, A., 10, is in critical condition at Memorial Mission Hospital in Asheville. Both C.H. and her husband, G., 36, were pronounced dead at the scene. Their two children, T., 12, and S., 14, were taken to C.J. Harris Hospital in Sylva, where they are in stable condition and being treated for various injuries. None of the occupants of the third vehicle were seriously injured. They were treated at Swain County Hospital and released. There is no indication that alcohol was a factor in the incident. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/27]

Monday, August 9, 1993

93-578 - Great Smokies (N. Carolina/Tennessee) - Search; Attempted Suicide

Around 6 p.m. on July 28th, rangers at the Deep Creek received a message to be on the lookout for W.J. of Bryson City, North Carolina, who had left a suicide note in her home then departed for points unknown. Rangers found her vehicle parked at the Deep Creek trailhead ten minutes later. The car contained a second suicide note. Rangers conducted a hasty search and found W.J. near a creek a mile and a half up the trail. She had consumed about 120 one milligram tablets of lorazepam, but was still conscious. They evacuated her down the trail to a Swain County EMS ambulance, which took her to a local hospital. W.J. was treated and held at the facility for psychiatric evaluation. Two more suicide notes were found in her purse. [Dave Panebaker, ACR, GRSM, 8/5]

Monday, August 9, 1993

93-579 - Great Smokies (N. Carolina/Tennessee) - EMS Incident

A VIP in the Clingman's Dome area received a report of a man down on a trail about a half mile from the parking lot at 3:30 pm on August 1st. Two visiting emergency room nurses began performing CPR on the man, 60-year-old R.R. of Long Beach, Mississippi, and were assisted by responding rangers. R.R. was taken to the Collins Gap area, where he was picked up and evacuated by a Bell 412 Life Star helicopter from the University of Tennessee Medical Center. He later died at the center. Rangers subsequently learned that R.R. had been taking medication for high blood pressure. After the helicopter left the scene, the rangers were collecting used medical equipment and placing it in a red bio-hazard plastic bag when one of them was accidentally stuck in the leg by an unshielded epinephrine syringe needle. The ranger had completed his hepatitis B vaccinations and had a tetanus booster within the last year. The syringe had been used to administer medication to R.R. through an endotracheal tube. [Dave Panebaker, ACR, GRSM, 8/5]

Friday, September 3, 1993

93-277 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Follow-up on Fatal MVA

On May 22nd, J.S., 45, of Sevierville, Tennessee, was driving on Little River Road when he crossed the center line and struck an on-coming vehicle with three people in it. W.S., 78, who was sitting in the back seat of the second vehicle, died at the scene; his wife, Mamie, 89, and daughter, Faye Money, 49, received severe injuries. J.S. was subsequently determined to have been driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs. On August 24th, J.S. was found guilty of one count of second degree murder (18 USC 111) and two counts of assault (18 USC 113) in a jury trial in federal district court in Knoxville. J.S. was willing to plea to a lesser charge of involuntary manslaughter, but the U.S. attorney felt that the damage incurred by the victims was overwhelming and warranted a stronger penalty. Key elements that were important to the case were the language of 18 USC 111, which requires that "malice and aforethought" be proven to show reckless endangerment, and 18 USC 113, which stipulates that "willful intent" must be demonstrated to prove assault. Witness testimony and physical evidence obtained at the scene made it possible to show that these elements applied. The conviction has been deemed important to the area because of the minimal penalties that exist locally for DWI convictions which contribute to deaths. [Jerry Grubb, GRSM, 8/26]

Thursday, September 9, 1993

93-684 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Suicide

Rangers found 38-year-old R.J. of Morristown, Tennessee, lying on the driver's seat of a locked Mercedes 190 sedan in the Newfound Gap parking area on the morning of September 8th. They gained access by breaking a window and found that R.J. was alive but suffering from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. He was taken to the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where he died that evening. Further investigation lead to the discovery of a loaded .25 caliber semi-automatic handgun, four suicide notes, and a micro cassette tape recorder with a 37-minute-long tape to his family. The tape indicated that R.J. shot himself at 1:30 a.m. that morning. A fifth suicide note was subsequently located in the mailbox at his residence. Jefferson County officers had recently interviewed R.J. regarding some thefts that had occurred at his place of employment; larceny charges against him were pending. [Dave Panebaker, North Carolina ACR, GRSM, 9/8]

Friday, September 10, 1993

93-693 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - EMS Incident: Life Saved

M.K. of Nashville was hiking on the Little Bottoms trail when he went into anaphylactic shock from numerous bee stings. Two Adopt-A-Trail patrollers helped him reach the Abrams Creek ranger station. Ranger Al Voner administered epinephrine to M.K., who by that time had hives over his entire body and was in severe respiratory distress. The epinephrine relieved his life-

threatening respiratory problem. A local ambulance company responded, gave M.K. another shot, and took him to a local hospital. [Don Utterback, ACR, GRSM, 9/9]

Friday, September 10, 1993

93-694 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Marijuana Eradication

Between Saturday, August 28th, and Monday, September 6th, rangers seized 1,781 marijuana plants from 19 locations in the North District on the Tennessee side of the park. Several of these sites had been under 24-hour surveillance until September 6th. Rangers were assisted by Tennessee Army National Guard ground troops and Air Guard helicopters. All plants seized were healthy and up to ten feet tall; a significant number were sinsemilla. Search and arrest warrants will be pursued with the U.S. attorney in Knoxville. [Don Utterback, ACR, GRSM, 9/9]

Friday, October 1, 1993

93-746 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Car Clout Arrest

On September 21st, a lookout bulletin was posted in the park for B.J.P., 50, a known car clouter who was believed to be in the area. Rangers spotted B.J.P. in the Laurel Falls parking area on the afternoon of the 27th and held him for questioning. During an interview, B.J.P. confessed to the burglary of a vehicle in the park on the 25th. A consent search of his vehicle led to the recovery of stolen property. B.J.P. was arrested for theft of personal property (18 USC 661); parole/probation revocations are pending by federal and state authorities. This is the third time B.J.P. has been arrested for car clouting in the park. The two priors occurred in May, 1985, and in November, 1989. "Larceny from Motor Vehicles", a training film on car clouting which FLETC staff made in the park in 1991, was based loosely on B.J.P.'s prior criminal activity. [Bill Acree, CI, GRSM, 9/30]

Wednesday, October 6, 1993

93-755 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Ginseng Poaching

Rangers are investigating two significant commercial ginseng poaching operations which were detected in the Hazel Creek drainage in the Lake Subdistrict on the North Carolina side of the park - an area with a history of resource violations. Just after 8 a.m. on September 18th, rangers contacted two Cherokee, North Carolina, men at the mouth of Hazel Creek along Fontana Lake. They had a bag containing 1,654 ginseng roots, and told rangers that they'd been digging roots in the park for approximately four days. One admitted that they were going to dry the roots and sell them when the price went up. The second incident occurred on the evening of September 22nd when rangers spotted a boat leaving Ollie Cove near Hazel Creek. The five male occupants of the boat - all from Cherokee - were contacted on the other side of Fontana Lake at Cable Cove. The boat contained two ginseng digging tools and three backpacks containing 1,640 ginseng roots and a small quantity of ginseng berries. No one in the boat claimed ownership of the packs.

Investigations into both of the incidents are continuing and charges are pending. [Dave Panebaker, ACR, GRSM, 10/5]

Tuesday, November 9, 1993

93-798 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Search in Progress

A search was begun yesterday for 25-year-old M.R.A. of Hornell, New York. M.R.A.'s backpack was found along the Appalachian Trail by two backpackers who reported the find to rangers at Sugarlands visitor center on the morning of November 7th. A note on M.R.A.'s backpack said that he was injured and was heading out to "the Gap" for help. No one has reported seeing either M.R.A. or his vehicle. As of yesterday, 33 park personnel and a dog team from North Carolina had been committed to the search. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 11/8]

Wednesday, November 10, 1993

93-798 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on Search

The search for M.A. continues. No clues have been found by dog teams, trackers, or aircraft - including planes with infra-red detecting equipment. Trackers are now checking drainages radiating from the location where his backpack was found. Due to the absence of clues, efforts are shifting from ground searches to investigation. [John Garrison, IC; Steve Smith, RAD/SERO; 11/9]

Tuesday, November 16, 1993

93-798 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on Search

On November 10th, efforts to find M.A. concluded when he was discovered in Gunnison, Colorado. The search for M.A. began on November 7th when hikers reported finding his backpack on the Appalachian Trail. When no clues were found after several days of intensive searching, an investigation was begun into his whereabouts. M.A. and his vehicle were entered into the listing for missing persons on NCIC, and police in Gunnison got a hit when they ran his name. M.A., who has a history of mental and economic problems, turned himself in, saying that he felt a strong sense of guilt for what he had done. During a phone interview, he told rangers that he had faked the entire event. M.A. had been hiking on the trail when he fell and sustained a minor head injury. He left a note saying that he was injured and hiking out for help, then left the park and drove to Gunnison to visit a grade school friend. M.A. is currently receiving a mental health evaluation and will soon enter into a counseling program. [Dave Panebaker, ACR, GRSM, 11/15]

Monday, November 22, 1993

93-810 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Felony Vandalism

On the evening of October 30th, a ranger transported a suspected intoxicated driver to the Sevier county jail for a breathalyzer test. He parked his 1992 Crown Victoria patrol vehicle inside the Sallyport, a brick enclosure with steel entrance and exit doors where prisoners are unloaded or loaded. While inside the jail, the ranger heard a commotion outside; when he returned to the Sallyport, he discovered that his patrol vehicle was no longer there, but that its blue overhead lights were lying on the floor. He subsequently found his vehicle about 150 feet beyond the exit door with an older model Mercury resting against its rear. Damage to both vehicles was extensive. Investigation revealed that G.M., the driver of the Mercury, had driven through the closed Sallyport and pushed the Crown Victoria out the exit. G.M. was charged with driving under the influence, driving on a revoked license, felony vandalism, and reckless endangerment. The Crown Victoria, which had about 25,000 miles on it, sustained from \$6,000 to \$7,000 in damage. [CRO, GRSM, 11/19]

Wednesday, November 24, 1993

93-821 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Poaching

A three-day interagency stakeout operation involving four park rangers, five Forest Service officers, and a North Carolina wildlife officer resulted in the apprehension of four men in possession of four deer taken out of season along Fontana Lake. The hunt occurred during the weekend of November 20th on the Forest Service side of the lake, but there is a strong possibility that more deer were shot in the park and left there. The joint investigation is continuing. Items seized included four deer, two boats, seven firearms and two radios. State and federal charges are pending. [Dave Panebaker, ACR, GRSM, 11/22]

Monday, December 6, 1993

93-840 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Car Clout Arrests

On the afternoon of November 28th, Cades Cove rangers broadcast a BOL for a vehicle thought to have been involved in a car clout that had just been reported in that area. The vehicle was spotted and stopped about 15 minutes later. The female occupant of the vehicle had in her possession a small, handmade change purse containing cash which was similar to one stolen in the clout. The three suspects - J.A. and K.A. and S.S. - were escorted to the Little River ranger station, where the victims identified the vehicle, the suspects and the change purse. All three were taken to the Sevier County jail; they admitted their involvement in the clout the following morning. Larceny charges (18 USC 661 and 662) have been filed in federal court. [CRO, GRSM, 12/1]

Wednesday, January 5, 1994

94-4 - Eastern Areas - Storm Closures

Two reports of closures due to heavy snow, wind and rain along the East Coast have been received; others will appear tomorrow:

Great Smokies - Most park roads have been closed. Campers were being encouraged to leave the area yesterday. Although more snow was forecast for last night, the park does not foresee a repeat of last spring's blizzard. Precautionary actions are nonetheless being undertaken.

[Jason Houck, CR, GRSM; Bill Blake, CR, NERI; 1/4]

Wednesday, January 19, 1994

94-17 - Southeast Areas - Winter Storm Impacts and Closures

Although the storms and cold moving through the east have caused disruptions to many areas, two parks report significant problems:

\* Great Smokies - Most park roads and facilities are closed due to icing of roads and continued snowfall. A weather front stalled over the area yesterday and more snow was expected. Drivers on the Tennessee side of the park have been encouraged to stay at home. The park and local communities have used up existing supplies of sand and/or salt. Very few backcountry users are in the park, and there's no indication of any problems in the backcountry.

[Bobbie Hjelmgren, CRO, GRSM; CRO, MACA; 1/18]

Friday, January 21, 1994

94-17 - Southeastern Areas - Follow-up on Winter Storm

Additional reports have been received from the two Southeastern parks most affected by recent snow and cold:

\* Great Smokies - Most park roads and facilities remain closed due to ice and snow conditions. Gradual warming is expected to send temperatures soaring into the mid-20s, which will help clearing efforts. Road crews are continuing efforts to dig out the Newfound Gap Road; a delivery of sand was received yesterday. Two visitor centers are open, but most other facilities will remain closed for several more days. Most employees on the Tennessee side of the park had been unable to get to work until yesterday.

[CRO, MACA; CRO, GRSM; 1/20]

Thursday, February 3, 1994

94-46 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Search; Apparent Suicide

Rangers found the body of R.S., 45, less than a mile from his parked car and about 2,000 feet from the nearest trail at 3:00 p.m. on January 30th. A survival blanket, a hatchet, some empty prescription bottles bearing his name, a can of scent remover that hunters use to cover their scent while deer hunting, and several articles of clothing were all found near his body. R.S.'s car was

first noticed on January 25th, the same day that he mailed a suicide note to a girlfriend in Gatlinburg. An autopsy will be performed to determine cause of death. [CRO, GRSM, 1/31]

Thursday, March 31, 1994

94-137 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Drowning

A party of four students from the University of Georgia spent the night of March 26th at a campsite in the park, then started down the Jakes Creek trail the following morning. B.D. and T.C. were in the lead; J.B. and K.M. followed some distance behind. About a mile and a half from the trailhead, the trail crossed Newt Branch, which was swollen by rain to about 25 feet in width and two to three feet in depth and was also very turbulent. J.B. and K.M. crossed the waist-deep water by clinging to a quarter-inch thick rope that had apparently been rigged by earlier hikers. When they got to the trailhead, they found that the other two climbers were not there, and reported them as missing. Rangers hiked up Jakes Creek trail and found T.C. stranded on the far side of Newt Prong with two other hikers. By using hand gestures and sending a note along the rope, rangers confirmed that D.B. was still missing. T.C. and the other two hikers were instructed to remain overnight at that location rather than risk crossing the stream, which was still rising. They supplied the three men with dry clothes and food; two rangers spent the night at the location for support. All three were helped across on a tyrolean rope traverse on the morning of the 27th. D.B.'s body was subsequently found wedged under some vegetation about 50 yards below the trail crossing. T.C. said that the two had decided not to use the rope to cross the stream, that they'd hiked upstream in an effort to find a safer crossing point, and that they'd become separated in the process. T.C. eventually gave up and returned to the Jakes Creek trail, but D.B. failed to return. The 19-year-old victim was from Savannah, Georgia. During the weekend, the park received very heavy rains which raised streams to record levels and forced the closure of most park roads. [Bob Miller, GRSM, 3/30]

Thursday, March 31, 1994

94-138 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Successful Search

A search for three missing men concluded successfully on the afternoon of March 30th when all three were found in relatively good condition in the Elkmont area of the park. The search began on March 29th, when the aunt of one of a pair of hikers - L.B., 33, and F.C., 26 - reported that the two men had failed to return from their hike on Sunday, as scheduled. Rangers located the hikers' vehicle at the Little River trailhead just above Elkmont campground. Three teams of rangers began a hasty search of several trails that lead from that trailhead, and a helicopter and other searchers joined the effort the following morning. Meanwhile, the wife of J.P., 40, a University of Georgia professor, reported that her husband had also failed to return from a hike in the park. As noted above, the park received very heavy rains over the weekend, and many streams rose to record levels; it therefore seemed possible that all three were stranded somewhere in the area. Around 3:30 p.m. yesterday, ranger Steve Kloster found all three men, who had met and joined together, and escorted them out. Although suffering in varying degrees



from dehydration, hunger and mild hypothermia, the three men were in good shape. Further details will follow. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 3/31]

Friday, April 1, 1994

94-144 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Storm Impacts

The park is still recovering from the heavy rains which fell on Saturday and Sunday, during which time most streams left their channels. Most facilities inventoried through Wednesday showed no major damage, but three interior roads have been seriously undercut - Little River Road between Elkmont Junction and Townsend, Laurel Creek Road between Townsend and Cades Cove, and Tremont Road between Laurel Creek Road and the Tremont Institute. DOT and FHA engineers will be assisting with further assessments. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 3/30]

Friday, April 8, 1994

94-144 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Storm Impacts

The park is still recovering from the heavy rains which fell on March 26th and 27th and caused severe flash flooding. Teams of inspectors from FHWA and the park have been assessing the damage to public use roads. Two interior roads - the Little River Road between Elkmont Junction and the Townsend entrance, and Tremont Road between Laurel Creek Road and the Tremont Institute - will probably remain closed throughout the summer. Little River Road is the second most popular thoroughfare in the park and carries an estimated two million vehicles per year. The Laurel Creek Road leading to Cades Cove was also damaged, but should open later today. At this time, there's no estimate of the cost of repairing these roads. An estimate for repair to the park's trail system, campgrounds, picnic areas and other facilities has been completed, however; the sum has been placed at \$1 million. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 4/7]

Monday, June 13, 1994

94-289 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Significant Accident

On May 31st, a ranger stopped an 18-wheel truck at Newfound Gap, cited the driver - D.R., 35, of Gaston, South Carolina - for illegal commercial use of the highway, turned the rig around, and sent it back down the Newfound Gap Road on the North Carolina side of the park. As D.R. headed down the road, the truck's brakes became hot and ineffective, and it attained speeds of up to 50 mph as it passed through sharp curves. D.R. decided to drive the truck into the west road shoulder and up the hillside in order to stop it. The truck subsequently jack-knifed across both lanes of traffic and rolled onto its top, spilling its load of 25,000 feet of hardwood flooring along 500 feet of the highway. The road was closed for five and a half hours while the rig was removed from the scene. D.R. was treated and released from a local hospital that evening. It took the truck company two days to perform the roadside lumber salvage operation. There are multiple signs posted at all entrances advising that the park's roads are closed to commercial traffic. [Dave Panebaker, ACR/NC, GRSM, 6/10]

Monday, July 25, 1994

94-413 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Search

Ten-year-old P.R. became separated from his father while in the park on Tuesday, July 19th, and subsequently became lost. A full-scale search for P.R. was begun which employed ground searchers, several Tennessee Army Air National Guard helicopters, and an Army helicopter from Fort Campbell equipped with infrared detection equipment. Signs of the boy were found in the Goshen Prong drainage and the Huggins drainage on the 22nd, and he was found walking in the latter area about two miles west of Clingman's Dome early that afternoon. P.R. was in good spirits and physically unharmed despite spending three days and nights alone and without food or water. He was later reunited with members of his extended family at Clingman's Dome. A large media contingent witnessed and reported on the event. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/22]

Tuesday, August 9, 1994

94-448 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Falling Fatality

S.B., 16, was killed on August 5th when he tumbled over 300 feet from an unmaintained trail leading to Chimney Tops. S.B., who was part of a larger group of adults and teens from the Park Avenue Baptist Church of Titusville, Florida, apparently lost his footing; he also dislodged a rock which injured another member of the party. S.B. was reached by a park medic within two hours of the fall but was obviously beyond treatment and was pronounced dead at the scene by the park medical director. A 25-person extrication team was required to remove his body. The most recent edition of the park's compendium closed this "manway" to public use, but signs had not yet been erected and no public notice had been made. This incident is the eleventh such on that trail in the last three years and the only fatality. [CRO, BLRI, 8/8]

Friday, August 19, 1994

94-483 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Suicide

The body of S.A.J., 42, of Wilmington, North Carolina, was found lying in a wooded area approximately 100 feet from her automobile around 10 am on August 17th. Ranger Mike Farley was investigating the Foothills Parkway-West location when he discovered her body lying next to a .410 gauge shotgun. S.A.J. apparently died from a self-inflicted wound to the head. She had been traveling extensively during the past four months according to entries in her journal. No note was found, but one is thought to have been mailed. The case is under investigation. (Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/18)

Wednesday, August 31, 1994

94-510 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - MVA with Fatality

On the night of August 22nd, P.S., a 22-year-old nursing student from Royal Oak, Michigan, expired from injuries received in a motor vehicle accident which had occurred four days

previously on the Gatlinburg Spur. Her 58-year-old father, who had been on a heart transplant waiting list for four years, received her heart in an operation later that day. The donor match was described as extraordinary, and he is reported to be doing well. The driver of the vehicle involved in the accident has been charged with driving under the influence; other charges are to be discussed with the United States attorney. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/26]

Friday, September 16, 1994

94-555 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Drug Eradication

Between August 1st and 10th, aerial marijuana surveillance operations were conducted utilizing helicopters from the Second Army, Glenview Naval Air Station and the Tennessee Army Air National Guard. Fourteen cultivation sites were located in Tennessee, and a total of 193 plants were removed and destroyed. On September 6th and 7th, surveillance operations at another site were suspended and 123 sensimilla plants were eradicated. Four other sites were also found and another 103 plants were destroyed. Altogether, rangers have eradicated a total of 651 plants this year, with a combined estimated market value of more than \$800,000. Additional operations over the next few weeks will likely lead to the destruction of more plants. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 9/15]

Monday, October 3, 1994

94-581 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Car Clout Arrests

On September 17th, ranger Helen McNutt came upon two people leaning against a car at the Laurel Falls parking lot; since they matched the descriptions of a couple involved in two car clouts at the same location earlier in the month and were lingering in the parking area, a behavior common to car clouters, McNutt stopped to check them out. Neither was dressed for hiking, and their replies did not fit those of typical hikers. While talking to the couple, identified as T.H. and H.H., of Augusta, Georgia, McNutt observed a purse on the front seat of their vehicle and another on the rear floor - both in plain view. She asked and received consent to search the vehicle and called for backup. Identification in the purse on the rear floor indicated that the owner was Melanie Toups of New Orleans. A crowbar was also found on the floor near the purse. Neither of the H.s could provide information on ownership of the purse. The vehicle parked one space from the Hickman's vehicle, a black Nissan Pathfinder bearing Louisiana tags, was found to be unlocked. A short time later, a party of four returned to the Pathfinder. Toups was in the group, and she identified the purse as hers. Criminal investigator Bill Acree quickly tied the suspects to at least a dozen recent car clouts which had occurred at three trailhead parking lots. The method of entry in each was the same - the driver or passenger window was broken out or the trunk was pried open with a crowbar or similar instrument. At least 50 such car clouts have occurred at the three parking lots since July 31st, and the H.s are believed to be responsible for approximately 43 of them. The H.s were arrested for violations of 18 USC 2 and 662, possession of stolen property in excess of \$100. Thomas Hickman subsequently confessed to breaking into cars for a period of about a month; during each of these break-ins, Heather

Hickman served as the lookout. No car clouts have occurred in the park since September 17th. [Kenny Slay, DR, Little River District, GRSM, 9/26]

Wednesday, October 5, 1994

93-513 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Follow-up on Fatal MVA

On July 20, 1993, Oconaluftee rangers responded to a motor vehicle accident on Highway 441 at the entrance to Mingus Mill in which C.M. died from massive head and chest injuries sustained when she was run over by the right rear tire of her husband's pickup truck. Her husband, W.M., reported that she had jumped from their moving vehicle, but blood found within the truck contradicted his account of the incident. An eleven-month investigation involving the park, the North Carolina Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the FBI resulted in W.M.'s confession to physically assaulting his wife and pushing her out of the moving truck. On September 19th, W.M. entered a plea of involuntary manslaughter and was sentenced to ten months' home confinement, two years' probation, and a \$450 fine. Shortly after the fatal accident, W.M. was involved in a motorcycle accident in which he sustained injuries that left him paralyzed below the waist. Home confinement was granted because of the injury. [Dave Panebaker, GRSM, 10/4]

Friday, November 4, 1994

94-627 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Poaching

Park rangers have been actively investigating and/or prosecuting a variety of natural resource poaching cases over the last few months in conjunction with the U.S. attorney, state wildlife agencies, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and other agencies:

- \* On August 27th, ranger Pat Patten apprehended three suspects in the illegal taking of plants for commercial sale. A total of 235 ginseng plants had been picked in the park.

- \* Rangers Doug Ivey and Paul Williams investigated an illegal trophy kill of a large white tail in the Big Creek area on September 7th; that investigation continues.

- \* Officers from North Carolina's Wildlife Resources Commission were assisted by ranger Joe Ashley in apprehending one suspect in illegal black bear hunting within the park on September 10th. A second suspect eluded apprehension. An illegal firearm was involved.

- \* On September 14th, ranger Glenn Martin apprehended two suspects in the illegal taking of plants for commercial sale. A total of 250 ginseng plants were recovered.

- \* Rangers Garrett Moynihan and Jeff Smith apprehended one suspect in the illegal taking of 166 ginseng plants for commercial sale on September 15th.

\* Rangers Brad Headley, Al Miller, Jeff Smith and Bentley Tahquette apprehended two suspects on October 3rd for illegally taking plants for commercial sale. A total of 349 ginseng plants had been harvested.

\* Rangers Lamon Brown and John Garrison provided assistance to the area interagency resources protection task force in a sting operation targeting an illegal ginseng dealer on October 4th.

\* On October 7th, rangers Glenn Martin, Brad Headley and Lamon Brown conducted an investigation which lead them to a cache of 644 illegally taken ginseng plants.

\* Ranger Doug Ivey investigated an illegal trophy kill of a white tail deer in the Cataloochee area on October 20th.

[Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 11/3]

Tuesday, November 8, 1994

94-634 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - MVA with Fatality

On November 5th, T.L., 21, of Dandridge, Tennessee, was driving a late model Honda CRX northbound on the spur road that connects Gatlinburg with Pigeon Forge when he lost control of the car and skidded down an embankment into the river. He was taken to the University of Tennessee hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival. T.L. was the son of a Tennessee state trooper. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 11/7]

Thursday, November 10, 1994

94-635 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Homicide

Around 8 p.m. on November 6th, visitors reported a vehicle over the embankment at a popular overlook on the Gatlinburg bypass. Responding rangers found a late model Jeep Cherokee and one male occupant, K.J.L., 33, of Sevierville, Tennessee, who was pronounced dead upon arrival at the University of Tennessee Hospital in Knoxville. The ensuing investigation was headed by park criminal investigator Bill Acree and included officers from the FBI, Sevierville police department, Sevier County sheriff's office, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and the district attorney general's office. On November 7th, Brett Rae, 25, also of Sevierville, was arrested and charged with first degree murder. Rae was to be arraigned on November 7th. [CRO, GRSM, 11/8]

Tuesday, January 3, 1995

94-694 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Probable Drug Fatality

The body of a 42-year-old Knoxville man was found a short distance from the Newfound Gap parking lot on the Appalachian Trail on December 29th. Hikers reported the discovery by

cellular telephone to the Oak Ridge, Tennessee, police department; they forwarded the information to rangers. The victim, M.G., died from an apparent drug overdose. A toxicology screen will be performed by the county medical examiner. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 12/30]

Monday, January 23, 1995

95-20 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - MVA with Fatality

At about 6:45 a.m. on the morning of January 19th, a patrol ranger came upon a tractor trailer that had gone off the edge of the Newfound Gap Road about seven miles north of Cherokee. The driver, C.D. of Augusta, Georgia, was fatally injured. J.D., 16, the passenger in the vehicle, was flown to the University of Tennessee Hospital by helicopter. Initial investigation suggests that C.D. lost use of his brakes as he was traveling southbound on a steep section of road. The truck then went off the road and flipped on its roof, pinning C.D. inside. The road was closed for about three hours to permit removal of the wreckage. Cleanup of the sheetrock cargo will begin when weather permits. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 1/20]

Wednesday, January 25, 1995

91-xx - Great Smokies (Tennessee/N. Carolina) - Follow-up on Poaching Case

On December 20, 1994, C. "B." N. and T.W. were found guilty in jury trial for possessing a silenced weapon which had been used while killing a deer in the Cades Cove historic district in 1991. The charges had been filed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. They are to be sentenced later this month. The two men, both firefighters from St. Lucie, Florida, had driven to the area and taken a room in a local motel. Each night, one of them would drop the other off at the Cades Cove loop road before it closed, survey the area, then kill a trophy buck with a silenced weapon. When summoned by CB radio, the partner would then return for the pickup. Before heading off on their trip, however, C.N. and T.W. made the mistake of telling their co-workers about their plan to come to the park to shoot trophy bucks. One of them called the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency's toll-free number for reporting poachers, and TWRA in turn notified the park. Rangers confirmed their registration at the motel, staked out the area, and caught them on their way out of the park with a deer - the second they'd taken. They were convicted on the poaching charges on an earlier date. They subsequently lost their weapon, vehicle, jobs and wives, and are now looking at between 18 and 24 months in prison. District ranger Jack Piepenbring led the investigation. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 1/10]

Tuesday, February 14, 1995

95-59 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Air Crash; One Fatality

On the afternoon of February 11th, the Knoxville airport tower advised the park that an aircraft distress signal had been picked up from a point two to three miles south of Mt. Harrison in the park. Two Civil Air Patrol search teams were joined by an NPS team on a joint ground search, as weather conditions precluded use of CAP aircraft. The operator of a private tour helicopter spotted a small fire in the area at 7:30 p.m. and directed search teams to the location. They

arrived about an hour later, and confirmed that the single occupant of the twin-engine Beechcraft, Dr. E.M., 56, of Concord, Tennessee, had been killed in the accident. Two rangers remained on-scene overnight; the body was removed the following day. FAA and NTSB investigators are on scene. [Kenny Slay, GRSM, 2/13]

Thursday, February 23, 1995

95-75 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Suicide

While closing the Cades Cove loop road on the evening of February 21st, ranger Jeff Carlisle came upon a vehicle with two people inside in the Primitive Baptist Church parking lot. As he got closer, he also saw a shotgun in the back seat. Carlisle talked to the male passenger, then began to move around the vehicle to talk with the female driver. As he did so, the female reached for the gun, told her companion that she was going to shoot the ranger, then got out of the car. From his cover position, Carlisle watched as she instead shot herself. The female, who was 15 years old, had been reported as a runaway a week earlier. Her 18-year-old male companion is receiving a medical evaluation. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 2/22]

Wednesday, June 14, 1995

95-297 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Bomb Threat; VC Evacuation

Around 11:20 a.m. on June 10th, an anonymous caller reported that the Oconaluftee visitor center would be blown up at noon. Rangers evacuated the building and associated parking areas and rerouted traffic on a nearby section of Newfound Gap Road. They were assisted by the Cherokee fire and police departments. No bomb was found, and all areas were reopened to the public within two hours. There's no indication that the incident was related to recent threats and assaults against federal employees. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 6/13]

Friday, June 30, 1995

95-349 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Car Clouting Arrest

On the afternoon of June 27th, motorist K.H. was driving south on Newfound Gap road when he saw a man remove what looked like a woman's purse from the back seat of a car, then get into a nearby truck. K.H. pulled off the road and alongside the truck and told the man to put the purse back where he got it. The truck, with three occupants, instead sped away toward Gatlinburg with K.H. in pursuit. K.H. flagged down road foreman Gary Gassaway, who radioed rangers, advised them of the situation, and told them that the chase was heading into town. Maintenance man Duane Carr followed behind the vehicles and retrieved the purse and other objects thrown from the truck. Gatlinburg police finally stopped the truck at a roadblock east of town. The three occupants fled into the woods, but were eventually captured with the aid of a canine unit. K.H. positively identified the men and the property. All three have criminal histories; two were out on bond at the time. They have been charged with both federal and state offenses, including theft of

the purse, possession of personal property, resisting arrest, driving violations, and improper tag display. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 6/29]

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

95-452 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Drowning

Ten-year-old M.D. of Antioch, Tennessee, drowned at the Sinks, a popular swimming hole, on the evening of July 23rd. M.D. was last seen playing with friends and diving from the bank. A companion noticed M.D.'s absence and told his mother. His body was found a short time later. Responding rangers performed CPR, which was continued in conjunction with other advanced life support measures by park medics. He was taken to the University of Tennessee hospital by helicopter, but did not survive. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Tuesday, August 15, 1995

95-520 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Car Clouting Arrests

While traveling to work on August 5th, ranger Chris Green spotted suspicious activity in the Alum Cave parking lot, a popular day use area where there have been many recent car clouts. Four suspects immediately left the area, followed by Green in his own vehicle. Ranger Bobby Holland soon took up the pursuit and made a felony stop after a high speed chase. An adult male jumped out of the vehicle and fled into the woods as the vehicle slowed down. Green pursued. Burglary tools and purses were found in the vehicle, which was occupied by a second adult male and two juvenile males, ages 14 and 16. Shortly thereafter, a visitor reported that his vehicle had been forcibly entered while parked at Alum Cave and was able to identify personal property that was found in the stopped vehicle. The juveniles were charged and released to their parents. The driver, E.C., was arrested and charged with 18 USC violations. An arrest warrant has been issued for D.R., the man who jumped out of the car and evaded Green. D.R. has a lengthy criminal history, including burglaries, larcenies and eluding officers. Green's personal vehicle was damaged in the incident. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Wednesday, August 30, 1995

91-6 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Follow-up on Poaching Arrests

On August 28th, T.W., 37, and C.N., 35, both of Fort Pierce, Florida, who previously pled guilty to possession and use of a silenced weapon to poach deer in the park, were each sentenced to 18 months' incarceration in a federal prison and 24 months' supervised probation. The charges were filed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. T.W. and C.N. were arrested by rangers in 1991 for poaching in the Cades Cove district, were found guilty on those charges later that year, and have already served time in prison, performed extensive community service, paid fines and restitution charges, and forfeited weapons and the Ford Bronco used in the incident. The two men, both firefighters from St. Lucie, Florida, had driven to the area and taken a room in a local motel. Each night, one of them would drop the other off at the Cades Cove loop road before it closed, survey the area, then kill a trophy buck with a silenced weapon. When summoned by CB



radio, the partner would then return for the pickup. Before heading off on their trip, however, C.N. and T.W. made the mistake of telling their co-workers about their plan to come to the park to shoot trophy bucks. One of them called the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency's toll-free number for reporting poachers, and TWRA in turn notified the park. Rangers confirmed their registration at the motel, staked out the area, and caught them on their way out of the park with a deer - the second they'd taken. District ranger Jack Piepenbring led the investigation. [Jason Houck, CR, GRAM]

Friday, September 8, 1995

95-599 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Search in Progress

A search for D.W., 45, of Cleveland, Georgia, is entering its third day. D.W. has been missing since September 1st, but the park did not receive notification until his wife called and provided a description of his vehicle on the evening of September 5th. Rangers found the car at Newfound Gap just over an hour later. The car may have been there over the entire Labor Day weekend. Ground searchers and dog teams have been working the area but have not yet found any clues. A North Carolina ANG helicopter with night vision equipment was used yesterday. D.W. had reportedly been very depressed recently, and family members are worried that he may have gone to the park to commit suicide. Garrett Moynihan is incident commander. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Tuesday, September 12, 1995

95-607 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - MVA; Road Closure

Ranger Jerry Grubb encountered an 18-wheel tractor trailer on Newfound Gap Road around 1:30 a.m. on September 6th. Since the road is closed to commercial vehicles, Grubb cited the driver and sent him back to Gatlinburg. About two miles south of the Sugarlands visitor center, the driver lost control of the rig, crashed and overturned, spilling 50-foot lengths of steel on the highway. The driver was not seriously hurt. Clean-up crews worked through the night and were able to clear the road by 10 a.m. This was the second major incident in recent months involving Boyd Brothers Transportation trucks. Another driver lost control of his rig in late 1993 and crashed just above Cherokee. He was killed and his companion was seriously injured. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Tuesday, September 12, 1995

95-608 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - MVA with Two Fatalities

A southbound 1992 Chevrolet van with six occupants collided head-on with a 1994 Chevrolet Beretta with four occupants on the Newfound Gap Road above Cherokee on the afternoon of September 9th. Three medevac helicopters from two hospitals evacuated the four most seriously injured victims; three others were transported by ambulances. The driver of the Beretta, J.L., 29, and his mother, E.J.L., 58, both of Appalachia, Virginia, did not survive. The road was closed for three hours. Additional assistance was provided by rangers from adjoining districts and by

town, county and state EMS personnel. Ranger Glenn Martin was incident commander. As of September 11th, the van driver was the only victim still hospitalized. The investigation is continuing, but alcohol was apparently not a factor. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Wednesday, September 13, 1995

95-599 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Follow-up on SAR

The search for 45-year-old D.W., who has been missing since September 1st, continued over the weekend. A North Carolina ANG helicopter with night vision equipment overflew the search area for two hours on September 7th, but found no evidence of him. Dog teams and ground searchers have not found any clues, either, so the search effort has been scaled down accordingly. Local media have been provided with his description, and he has been entered as a missing person in NCIC. Garrett Moynihan is the search incident commander. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Friday, October 6, 1995

95-653 - Eastern Parks - Follow-up on Hurricane Opal

Reports have been received from more than a dozen parks affected by Hurricane Opal:

\* Great Smokies - Power and phone service are out in many areas of the park. Newfound Gap road is closed and will probably remain closed for several days due to trees and a rockslide that are lying across it. Campers were asked to leave Elkmont campground near Gatlinburg early yesterday because of high water. Many trees are down across roads and trails.

[Jason Houck, CR, GRSM; Mark Lewis, DR, GUIS; Steve Hickman, IC, JELA; Jerry Eubanks, Superintendent, GUIS; Steve Smith and Bill Sturgeon, RAD/SEFO; Pat Reed, CHCH; Mary Jones, HOBE; Barbara Goodman, DESO; Greg Stiles, SHEN]

Monday, November 13, 1995

95-653 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Follow-up on Hurricane Opal

The segment of the Appalachian Trail which passes through the park has been reopened. Trail crews from Great Smokies, Yosemite and Rocky Mountain worked for two weeks to remove over 1,000 trees from the trail, which was completely impassable. Hundreds more trees were removed from other trails, many with the assistance of volunteers. The park extends its thanks to all for their help in reopening the trails. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Tuesday, November 14, 1995

95-733 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Exposure Fatality

Two hikers discovered T.R., 34, lying on the Appalachian Trail about eight miles west of Newfound Gap on November 12th. One went to get help while the other stayed behind and shared a sleeping bag with the victim in order to keep him warm. Park medics Steve Kloster and Ron Parrish arrived at the scene after midnight and found that T.R. had expired. Criminal investigator John Mattox conducted a follow-up investigation and determined that T.R. had disappeared on July 31st and that he may have been on the Appalachian Trail since that time. When last seen at his father's home, T.R. weighed about 225 pounds; when found on the trail, he weighed about 125 pounds. T.R. was wearing tennis shoes and had used underwear and duct tape to fashion foot warmers. He was also wearing several layers of undershirts, but had no appropriate outerwear. T.R.'s family said that he had been suffering from depression for quite some time. An autopsy is to be conducted today; indications are that he may have died from exposure from the freezing rain and high winds that struck the park over the weekend. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Monday, December 4, 1995

95-756 - Great Smoky Mountains (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Car Clout Arrests

On November 25th, rangers Jim Hjelmgren and Steve Kloster began surveillance of the hiker parking area near Cosby campground in response to several vehicle larcenies at that location earlier in the month. All six vehicles in the lot were found to be locked. Just after 9 p.m., a vehicle entered the lot and two individuals got out and began inspecting each car with flashlights. They then entered a Nissan Sentra by twisting the lock with vise grips and began removing items from the interior and trunk. The two men, K.H. and M.B., both of Cocke County, Tennessee, were caught and arrested. They provided full statements and were placed on \$10,000 bond after their arraignment. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Monday, December 11, 1995

95-766 - Great Smoky Mountains (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Search and Rescue

On the evening of Friday, December 8th, rangers were notified that J.D., 18, a student at the University of Tennessee, had failed to return from a day hike to Rainbow Falls. J.D. had been hiking on the 5.5 Mile trail with three companions, but became separated from them at the base of the falls. Her friends thought she'd begun the downhill return hike ahead of them and expected to find her at the trailhead. Rangers immediately began a search for her in difficult terrain and through very treacherous weather - a mix of driving rain, sleet and snow, with temperatures below freezing. The search was halted at 3 a.m. on Saturday, then resumed a few hours later with an additional 20 ground searchers and eight dog teams. The first significant winter cold front arrived that evening, and temperatures plummeted into the single digits that night. Concerns for J.D. were high, as she was lightly dressed in corduroy pants, a fleece pullover and a toboggan cap. On Sunday, a Tennessee Highway Patrol helicopter with infrared detection equipment joined the search along with numerous state searchers and volunteers. The Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) provided logistical support. As searchers were deploying, J.D., to searchers collective amazement, appeared at a trailhead parking lot, suffering

only cold feet and dehydration. She was being debriefed at the time of the report. District ranger Kenny Slay was IC. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Monday, January 8, 1996

95-788 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Rescue

On the evening of December 28th, rangers at Cosby received a first-hand report of a young male backpacker vomiting blood and experiencing severe abdominal pain at the Tri-Corner Knob shelter on the Appalachian Trail. Rangers George Minnigh and Steve Kloster reached N.M., 19, at around 3 a.m. and began treatment while additional rescue personnel completed the 11-mile climb to the shelter. Four employees had to be called back from furlough status to form a marginally adequate rescue team. An Army Blackhawk helicopter was dispatched from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and picked up an NPS spotter before flying to the scene. N.M. and park medic Kloster were winched into the ship and taken to the University of Tennessee hospital, where N.M. subsequently had his appendix removed. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Thursday, April 4, 1996

94-635 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Follow-up on Homicide Around 8 p.m. on November 6, 1994, visitors reported a vehicle over the embankment at a popular overlook on the Gatlinburg bypass. Responding rangers found a late model Jeep Cherokee and one male occupant, K.J.L., 33, of Sevierville, Tennessee, who was pronounced dead upon arrival at the University of Tennessee Hospital in Knoxville. The ensuing investigation was headed by park criminal investigator Bill Acree and included agents and officers from the FBI, Sevierville police department, Sevier County sheriff's office, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and the district attorney general's office. Investigators identified B.R., 26, also of Sevierville, as the primary suspect; he was arrested within 24 hours of the incident and charged with first degree murder. S.L., the victim's wife, was subsequently indicted by a grand jury on the same charge. Both suspects were released on bond. B.R. fled to Mexico about two weeks before the trial was to begin, but was arrested while trying to reenter the United States in Miami. Investigators determined that S.L. had assisted B.R. by providing him with money. Both were held without bond. Under a plea agreement, B.R. and K.J.L. agreed to minimum sentences of 25 years and forfeiture of all appeal rights; K.J.L. also agreed to surrender custody of her children. Acree and rangers Helen McNutt and Jerry Grubb testified at the trial. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Tuesday, April 9, 1996

96-135 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Search and Rescue

On April 3rd rangers began a search for 37-year-old E.H. of Knoxville, Tennessee. According to his parents, E.H. ran into the woods the previous afternoon while the family car was parked near Newfound Gap. His parents also said that he had a handgun and a bag of ammunition, but that he lacked food and appropriate dress for the variable weather conditions. E.H. had reportedly "escaped into the woods" on previous occasions, and did not wish to be found. Rangers Al Miller and Helen McNutt located E.H. walking on Clingmans Dome road Saturday evening after

receiving a report from visitors of a person in the area matching his description. E.H. had hidden a revolver in the woods. He was in good condition and was released to his family, who were reluctant to come and get him. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Wednesday, June 5, 1996

96-258 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - MVA with Fatality

G.P., 44, of Miami, was traveling with friends on his Kawasaki motorcycle on Newfound Gap Road on June 3rd when he lost control of the cycle and struck a rock. One of his riding companions, a paramedic, performed CPR until ranger Gary Kubin and park medic Julie Parrish arrived on scene. They continued advanced life support until G.P. was pronounced dead at the hospital. There was no indication that he was operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs. [Kenny Slay, Acting CR, GRSM]

Friday, June 28, 1996

96-324 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Special Event

The Olympic torch caravan passed through the park on June 26th on its journey to Atlanta. The torch was carried via motorcycle from Cherokee, North Carolina, over the crest of the Smokies, and down into Gatlinburg, Tennessee. It was then passed back to runners, who headed to Knoxville. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Thursday, June 13, 1996

94-214 - Western Region - Follow-up on Arrest of Car Clouter

Following a three-year-long criminal investigation, H. "M." H., 53, was arrested in May, 1994, for numerous car clouts in more than 25 national parks and many other parks throughout the country. Since that time, he has been in federal custody for probation violations. This month, H.H. pled guilty to auto burglary charges in state court. The judge gave him the maximum sentence under law - 12 years - and denied him any credit for time served on the federal violation (the sentence may be increased to 18 years in the near future, however, due to the expected reversal of a current technicality which is limiting the sentence to a dozen years). H.H. has an extensive criminal history and has committed "serial" car clouts in the national parks regularly since the 1960s. H.H. got out of federal prison in May, 1991, after serving part of a 16-year sentence for assaulting a ranger at Great Smokies in 1982, and was committing car clouts in parks within a week of his release. Between that time and his arrest in 1994, H.H. is suspected of committing over 1,200 separate car clouts in national parks, California and Oregon state parks, and Forest Service campgrounds. That number is almost three times the total car clouts the NPS experiences each year. The total value of the property stolen has been placed at over \$1 million. A search warrant executed at his residence at the time of his arrest led to the recovery of over 8,000 stolen items with a minimum aggregate value of \$125,000. The three-year investigation involved criminal investigators and park rangers from a number of Western national parks and eventually involved the FBI, the IRS, the Forest Service, and numerous California, Washington

and Oregon state and local enforcement agencies. The NPS and California state parks will be working with the courts to get most of the 8,000 stolen items returned to the park visitors who were H.H.'s victims. [Paul Ducasse, CI, PWFDO]

Monday, July 1, 1996

96-328 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Rescue

On June 15th, ranger Walt West received a report of a seriously injured horseback rider near the Cataloochee Divide. The victim, J.B.D., suffered multiple injuries when his horse fell on him. Ranger medics and EMTs and county EMS personnel responded. J.B.D. was found to weigh well over 300 pounds, thus ensuring a prolonged carry-out. Due to this fact and his deteriorating condition, a night-time helicopter evacuation was attempted. The Army Blackhawk helicopter from Fort Campbell had to abort its first attempt, but was able to land at dawn and transport J.B.D. to the University of Tennessee hospital, where he was treated for a possible broken femur, possible broken ribs, hematomas and an injured arm. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Monday, July 1, 1996

96-329 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - MVA with Fatality

G.P., 44, was killed in a motorcycle accident on the Newfound Gap Road on June 3rd. According to witnesses, G.P. was northbound and entering a hairpin curve about a half mile from the Chimney Peaks picnic area when he was thrown from his Kawasaki ZX-11. Traffic was light at the time. Park medic Julie Parrish was on-scene within four minutes, but was unable to save him. G.P. was an experienced rider and was wearing his helmet. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Monday, August 26, 1996

96-488 - Great Smokies (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Insect Sting Fatality

A 51-year-old Maryville, Tennessee, man was fishing with his nephew near Tremont on Sunday when he was stung more than 100 times by yellow jackets. When ranger Mike Smithyman arrived on scene, he found several people employing CPR in an attempt to revive the man. Advanced life support personnel arrived within a few minutes. Resuscitation efforts lasted an hour and included CPR, defibrillation, and administration of epinephrine. The victim nonetheless succumbed. He had no previous history of allergic reactions. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Wednesday, September 4, 1996

96-513 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Horseback Riding Fatality

J.T., 39, of Hartford, Tennessee, was horseback riding with a group of friends along the Big Creek trail when he and his horse apparently fell about 25 feet from a bridge into the creek.

According to his companions, who did not witness the accident, J.T. became separated from them after dark as they were riding back to the trailhead. After waiting awhile, they retraced their route and searched for him for about two hours before contacting rangers around 11:30 p.m. Ranger Paul Williams discovered J.T.'s body near his horse, which was standing in four-and-a-half feet of water about two miles from the trailhead. He had suffered massive head injuries and expired. His horse received lacerations, bumps, bruises and an apparent shoulder injury, but was able to walk out. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Friday, September 13, 1996

96-527 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - MVA with Fatality

M.B., 25, of Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, was killed in a motor vehicle accident in the park around 3 a.m. on September 6th. M.B. was traveling alone in his Pontiac Fiero when he hit a stone wall, overturned, and skidded more than 80 feet. Excessive speed and alcohol are suspected as contributing factors. Ranger Jerry Grubb is investigating. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Wednesday, September 18, 1996

96-534 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Sexual Assault Conviction

A 17-year-old woman and a female companion were vacationing in the Gatlinburg area in early September, 1995. On the evening of September 2, 1995, they accepted a ride from a local bar to their motel from a stranger. The man drove them a short distance, then stopped at another nearby motel so that he and the juvenile's companion could use the bathroom. The 17-year-old, who was intoxicated, remained in the car. When the woman came out of the bathroom, she found that the man and her friend were gone. The juvenile was driven to a remote parking area in the park and forcibly raped. She attempted to resist and was able to run from the vehicle, but the man caught her and forced her back to the car. The man then headed back with her to Gatlinburg. At the first stop sign, his victim jumped from the vehicle, ran to a nearby motel, reported the rape, and provided a description of the suspect and his car. Gatlinburg police stopped the vehicle 20 minutes later. The driver, 41-year-old J.H., matched the description of the woman's assailant. Due to poor lighting and the victim's intoxication, she was not able to positively identify J.H. as her assailant, and he was released. The vehicle was located the next day and processed for evidence. A criminal complaint for aggravated sexual assault (18 USC 2241(a)) and an arrest warrant were issued on February 8, 1996. J.H. had already fled the area, however, and was a fugitive. He went to work for a land company in West Virginia, and stole a 1988 Lincoln and \$30,000 from his employer this past May 2nd. Warrants for grand theft were issued. On July 31st, J.H. was picked up in Holly Springs, Mississippi, and was subsequently indicted by a federal grand jury for aggravated sexual assault and kidnapping. Trial is set for October 17th. A search warrant for blood and hair samples has been served on J.H., who is currently being held in jail in Knox county; the samples are currently being analyzed by the FBI for DNA profiling and other information. Criminal investigator Bill Acree is the case agent. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Wednesday, September 18, 1996

96-535 - Great Smokies (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Overdose Fatality

On the afternoon of September 11th, T.C., 24, of Maryville, Tennessee, and a female companion were inhaling paint fumes to get high in the Middle Prong of Little River. T.C., who had also taken a prescription pain killer, apparently overdosed and collapsed. T.C.'s companion flagged down a motorist, who helped drag him from the water. When ranger John Stobinski arrived, a rescue squad volunteer and the motorist were performing CPR. An ambulance crew arrived, began undertaking other life support measures, and transported him to a hospital, where he expired in the intensive care unit. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Friday, October 4, 1996

96-577 - Great Smokies (Tennessee) - Car Clouting Arrests

Two men from Sevier County, Tennessee, were arrested while breaking into a parked car along the Roaring Fork motor nature trail just before midnight on September 16th. Rangers were monitoring several locations after a rash of car clouts over the previous three weeks. The men, both in their twenties, have extensive criminal histories. A warrant search of a residence resulted in the recovery of numerous items that have since been linked to more than 30 break-ins. More such linkages are likely. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Friday, October 4, 1996

96-578 - Great Smokies (Tennessee) - Search and Rescue

C.H., 63, became lost while hiking outside the park near English Mountain Resort on September 30th. Ranger/medics Steve Kloster and Ron Parrish joined in the search, managed by Sevier County rescue. C.H. was located around 5 a.m. the next morning; he was suffering from an ankle broken in three places. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Friday, October 4, 1996

96-579 - Great Smokies (Tennessee) - Rescue

On October 1st, B.P., 56, broke her ankle while descending the Alum Cave Bluff trail from Mount Le Conte. Rangers were unable to complete a helicopter evacuation because of weather conditions. Since extreme pain prevented B.P. from riding a horse, a litter team carried her more than seven miles downhill through the night to a waiting ambulance, arriving just after daylight. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Thursday, November 7, 1996

96-658 - Great Smokies NP (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Suicide



A park visitor reported the discovery of a body at an overlook on the western end of Foothills Parkway on the morning of October 31st. Ranger Mike Farley responded and found the body of F.H., 38. Preliminary investigation indicates that he died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. [John Mattox, GRSM]

Monday, December 2, 1996

96-669 - Great Smokies NP (North Carolina/Tennessee) - Apparent Suicide

Three backpackers found the body of a female hiker at the Le Conte shelter near the Appalachian Trail around 6:30 p.m. on Thanksgiving day. District ranger Kenny Slay and ranger Helen McNutt arrived at the scene before sunrise the following day and determined that the woman had died from a single gunshot wound to the chest. She was subsequently identified as C.W., 40, of Carrollton, Texas. The body was removed by helicopter and taken to the county medical examiner's office for further examination. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM]

Friday, May 16, 1997

97-199 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (Tennessee/North Carolina) - Rescue

On the afternoon of May 14th, park dispatch received a report of an emergency at Bull Cave. Four young men from Knoxville had entered the cave in the early afternoon and at least three were stuck inside. After interviewing the one member of the party who'd been able to get out, rangers called upon fire and rescue squads from Alcoa and Knoxville for assistance. Rangers lowered themselves 150 feet into the cave and comforted the three men, who were in various stages of hypothermia. After stabilizing them and rigging them for evacuation, they were hooked into a hauling system set up by the rescue squad and brought to the surface. One of the three was hospitalized for hypothermia. Television news coverage of the rescue was extensive. All four individuals were cited for entering the cave without appropriate permits. Bull Cave, which is 226 meters deep, is the deepest cave in Tennessee. District ranger Jack Piepenbring managed the incident. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 5/15]

Wednesday, May 21, 1997

97-208 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (Tennessee) - MVA with Fatality

Rangers Jerry Grubb and Julie Parrish responded to a report of a single vehicle roll-over accident on the northbound spur of U.S. 441 on the evening of May 20th. Two local men, both passengers in the vehicle, were seriously injured. One of the two died after being airlifted to the hospital at the University of Tennessee. The driver has been arrested and is facing a variety of charges. Alcohol was involved. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 5/21]

Monday, June 23, 1997

97-279 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Lightning Injuries

A violent thunderstorm passed through the Gatlinburg area on the afternoon of Sunday, June 22nd. Around 3:30 p.m., rangers responded to a report of hikers struck by lightning on the Laurel Falls trail. Upon arrival, they found six individuals being assisted to the trailhead by other visitors. Three different groups of hikers saw lightning run across the ground in front of them, knocking people to the ground. The father in a family of three from Michigan suffered burning feet and numbness; the mother had an elbow injury and numbness and their son had an elbow injury. A Louisiana man lost consciousness and had to be carried to the trailhead. And a woman who witnessed the incident experienced a stress reaction, including anxiety and high blood pressure. The injured were transported by ambulance to a hospital, but none had to be admitted. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 6/23]

Wednesday, July 23, 1997

97-340 - Great Smoky Mountains (TN/NC) - Rescue On July 2nd and 3rd, M.W., a 55-year-old backpacker from Gainesville, Florida, was evacuated from the park's backcountry in a major, 12-hour-long operation. M.W. suffered from debilitating stomach cramps and vomiting for more than 24 hours at the Appalachian Trail shelter at Silers Bald before a medic was able to reach her. Her condition by that time was too deteriorated to permit her to sit on a horse, and helicopter evacuation was not possible at that location. After further consultation with medical control and park medic Dave Panebaker, a litter team was assembled for the five mile carryout. Twenty-seven rescuers, including employees from park operating divisions, SCAs and VIPs, worked throughout the night to evacuate her. M.W. was transported to C.J. Harris Hospital, where exploratory surgery was deemed likely. Ranger Garrett Moynihan was IC. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/3]

Friday, July 25, 1997

97-355 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Slide; Road Closure

A massive rock slide closed all lanes of I-40 at the Tennessee/North Carolina border early on the morning of Tuesday, July 1st. The slide has not yet been entirely cleared, and the length of the closure remains indefinite. It appears at present that it will not be cleared until after Labor Day - and possibly not until the winter. Car traffic is being diverted to SR 25/70 through Newport, Tennessee; although the Newfound Gap Road through the park is not listed as an official detour alternative, it is being used as such and traffic has been extremely heavy on that highway since the slide occurred. Rangers have been brought in from outlying districts to provide public service and attempt to divert commercial trucks from entering the park (trucks are supposed to follow two other routes). Over the past two weeks, the rangers have dealt with three vehicle fires, a major accident involving two cars and an 18-wheeler in a park tunnel which backed up traffic for 18 miles, many fender-benders, and numerous breakdowns due to overheating, brake failure and similar problems. Although the situation is under control, the next 30 days are the heaviest traffic days of the year - even without the traffic diversion. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/24]

Friday, July 25, 1997

97-359 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Bear Incident

On July 22nd, a 150-pound black bear who was exploring a dumpster in Cades Cove was inadvertently picked up and dumped into a garbage truck, then transported to the Sevier county solid waste facility and deposited into a composter. The bear climbed up brackets along the composter wall and stayed in the highest corner of the building until a wildlife officer arrived, tranquilized the bear, and returned him to the park for release. The animal was not harmed. An employee of the facility said that they'd previously collected skunks, possums and raccoons, but that this was their first bear. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/24]

Wednesday, July 30, 1997

97-417 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Drowning

D.H., 20, of Decatur, Tennessee, drowned in Abrams Creek on the evening of July 23rd. D.H. was camped at the nearby Abrams Creek campground and had been fishing with his father and brother-in-law. The three men fished separately for about three hours. When D.H. failed to return to camp, his companions went looking for him and found him face down in the water. CPR was attempted, but was unsuccessful. It appears that D.H., who'd been taking dilantin to control seizures, may have forgotten to take his medicine, suffered a seizure, fallen, struck his head, then rolled into the river. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/24]

Thursday, July 31, 1997

96-534 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Follow-up on Sexual Assault

J.H., who was convicted by a Knoxville jury in January for the abduction and rape of a 17-year-old female in September, 1995, was sentenced on June 14th to incarceration in a federal prison for 216 months (18 years). Rangers Jerry Grubb and Helen McNutt and criminal investigator Bill Acree conducted the investigation. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/17]

Friday, August 22, 1997

97-355 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Follow-up on Slide; Road Closure

The massive rock slide which closed all lanes of I-40 at the Tennessee/North Carolina border on July 1st led to a major increase in traffic through the park. More visitors entered the park last month than during any previous month in its 63-year history. July entries totalled 1,743,996 visitors, a 25 percent increase over the total for the same month in 1996 and an increase of a bit more than four percent over the previous all-time monthly record of 1,669,578 set in July, 1988. Total vehicle entries increased from 556,482 last year to 696,457 this year. Once in the park, however, a much larger than normal proportion of motorists apparently passed through without stopping, as evidenced by the four percent decline in visitation at the Sugarlands visitor center and the seven percent drop at the Oconaluftee visitor center. Campground usage, however,

remained about the same. The increased traffic placed a significant burden on law enforcement rangers. During the month, for example, rangers responded to 531 calls for wreckers, about double the normal volume. Another major workload came from having to stop and turn around hundreds of tractor trailers and other commercial vehicles, which are prohibited from park roads for safety reasons. [Bob Miller, GRSM, 8/13]

Wednesday, September 10, 1997

97-548 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Drug Seizure; Arrest

Rangers Steve Kloster and Jim Hjelmgren arrested D.E., 39, as he was tending a marijuana patch in the park's East District on September 2nd. He has been charged with multiple felony violations of U.S. Code and could serve five years if convicted. A second arrest in the case is likely. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM 9/5]

Thursday, October 2, 1997

97-588 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Drowning

P.P., 39, of Knoxville, drowned at Abrams Falls near Cades Cove on September 27th. According to his brother and girlfriend, P.P. had made several jumps into the pool from the rocks before he made a head-first dive. When he failed to surface, his non-swimming companions hiked to their vehicle, then drove to a ranger station for assistance, arriving around 7 p.m. Rangers searched the pool and downstream area by flashlight. Local rescue squad divers joined them and recovered the body. The operation was directed by district ranger Jack Piepenbring. This is the second drowning to occur in the creek this year. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 9/29]

Wednesday, October 15, 1997

97-628 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Structural Fire

A kitchen fire caused significant heat and smoke damage to an unoccupied Cades Cove bunkhouse on Saturday, October 11th. A wildlife technician was heating paraffin and left the building to retrieve something from a nearby office. The paraffin apparently boiled over and caught fire on the stove's burner. Ranger Mike Smithyman and other employees extinguished the fire with water from a nearby standpipe. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 10/14]

Thursday, October 16, 1997

97-636 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Suicide

The body of S.B., 44, was discovered in Abrams Creek by passing hikers on the evening of October 10th and reported to the park via cellular phone. Her body was recovered later that evening. According to her spouse, who had filed a missing person report, S.B. had been

depressed and was spending several days away from her home in Knoxville. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 10/14]

Wednesday, October 29, 1997

97-669 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - MVA with Fatality

T.D., a 19-year-old resident of Alcoa, Tennessee, was killed in a motor vehicle accident on the Foothills Parkway - West around 3 a.m. on Sunday, October 26th. The vehicle in which T.D. was a passenger spun out of control and went off the road and down a steep embankment. T.D. was ejected from the vehicle and died at the scene. Alcohol is thought to have been a factor in the accident, which is under investigation. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 10/27]

Wednesday, December 3, 1997

97-725 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Airplane Crash with Fatality

A Cessna 182 crashed approximately a half mile east of the Russell Field trail shelter and 200 yards south of the Appalachian Trail near Cades Cove around 7 p.m. on December 1st. The pilot and sole occupant was killed. Civil Air Patrol volunteers attempted without success to pinpoint the emergency locator beacon during the night. A CAP aircraft spotted the wreckage shortly after 8 a.m. yesterday, and ranger Al Voner reached the crash site by 11 a.m. A Knox County Sheriff's Office helicopter evacuated the body yesterday afternoon. FAA and NTSB investigators will arrive in the area today to conduct an investigation. Skies were clear on Monday night and flying conditions were favorable. Identification of the victim is being withheld pending family notification. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 12/2]

Thursday, December 4, 1997

97-731 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Car Clouting Arrest

During October and early November, more than 30 vehicles were broken into at major trailheads near park headquarters. On November 21st, surveillance of the popular Alum Cave trailhead parking area resulted in the arrest of J.H. Shortly after midnight, rangers Lori Harris, Joel Ellis and Helen McNutt saw J.H. cruise the parking lot and walk from car to car, shining a light into each vehicle before forcibly entering one and removing valuables. J.H. was arrested and subsequently charged with violations of 18 USC 661. So far, more than a dozen other cases have been linked to J.H., and more will likely be added in the future. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 12/3]

Tuesday, December 30, 1997

97-208 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (Tennessee) - Follow-up on Fatal MVA

C.H., 26, of Sevierville, Tennessee, has been sentenced to six years in federal prison as a result of a drunken driving accident last spring that killed one of the passengers in the vehicle he was driving. In a plea agreement which dropped second degree murder charges, C.H. agreed to

accept the six year maximum sentence for involuntary manslaughter. C.H. had two prior drunken driving arrests, and had a blood alcohol level almost twice the legal limit following the accident. Under current federal sentencing guidelines, he will have to serve about five years and three months in prison before becoming eligible for parole. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 12/29]

Wednesday, January 21, 1998

98-25 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Search and Rescue

Eleven-year-old L.B. became separated from his parents and uncle while on a day hike and picnic near the Icewater Springs shelter on the Appalachian Trail on the afternoon of Saturday, January 17th. L.B. lagged behind his adult companions, then became disoriented; in a panic, he attempted to catch up with them, but ran in the wrong direction. He ran until he met two backpackers near the Peck's Corner shelter, which is nearly ten miles from his starting point. The backpackers convinced the boy to stay with them. They fed him and provided warm clothing to keep him from freezing in the bitterly-cold, single-digit temperatures and high winds. The parents returned to the trailhead and informed the park that the boy was missing; the uncle kept searching, and found L.B. at the trail shelter with the hikers. Rangers searched the trail system and finally located the boy and his uncle just before 4 a.m. on Sunday morning. Other than blistered feet, he was in good condition. Ranger Glenn Martin was IC. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 1/20]

Wednesday, February 4, 1998

98-48 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Winter Storm Impacts

An unforecast winter storm brought heavy snow to the area on Tuesday, January 27th, and disrupted utility service and travel in several counties in eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina. Nearly two feet of snow fell at Newfound Gap, almost a foot in Gatlinburg, and lesser amounts in surrounding areas. Interstate 40 was clogged for two days with jack-knifed trailer trucks and autos unable to wind their way through the heavy ice and snow. The interstate was effectively closed near the same location as the rockslide which occurred last July and closed the highway for three months. Office staff were released an hour early on Tuesday and many were unable to get to work on Wednesday morning due to the icy roads. The few who made it in were released because of insufficient electric power and lack of heat. Little River Road, which connects Gatlinburg with Townsend, was still closed at the time of the report due to hundreds of downed trees. Both sections of the Foothills Parkway were also impassable due to trees across the roadway. North District road crews worked through the night of the 27th to remove trees from the Gatlinburg Spur. As of January 30th, maintenance crews had punched their way into Cataloochee Valley, which remains without power. Employee residences and facilities at Cosby were also without electric power. the Newfound Gap Road was closed for only part of January 28th and has otherwise been open to connect visitors to Cherokee, North Carolina. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 1/30]

Tuesday, April 21, 1998

98-147 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Drowning; Searches

Rangers found the body of B.J.A., 18, of Summersville, South Carolina, floating near the river bank about a mile-and-a-half downstream of the Sinks in the Little River Gorge around 10:30 p.m. on April 19th. B.J.A. had been bushwhacking along the Little River with two companions that day when he decided to jump in and swim across the flood-level water. His companions tried to discourage him, but were unable to do so. B.J.A. immediately had difficulty staying afloat and was quickly swept downstream. His companions reported the incident to a passing motorist. Rangers and county river rescue and ambulance personnel had to employ a high line to recover the body. The operation was not completed until 4 a.m. the next morning. District ranger Kenny Slay was the incident commander. While the search and recovery effort were underway, rangers were also searching for two separate parties of Boy Scouts who were presumed to be cut off by flood waters. One group of ten scouts was finally located around 10 a.m. on April 20th, the second group of two scouts was brought to safety later that day. All were okay. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 4/21]

Friday, June 12, 1998

98-284 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Rescue

On the morning of June 7th, G.C., 38, of Maryville, Tennessee, was helping set up ropes for a rappel off Look Rock near the Foothills Parkway. One of G.C.'s companions reported that G.C. had a sit harness on but was not tied in and was standing on the edge when he fell about 35 feet. Ranger Al Voner responded and coordinated the rescue efforts. G.C. was conscious, but could not move. He was taken to an ambulance, driven to a nearby landing zone, then transferred to a medivac hospital for the flight to the University of Tennessee hospital, where he underwent emergency surgery. His spleen and a kidney were removed; he also suffered a major contusion on one lung, five broken ribs, a broken wrist and toes, and an injury to his head that required 21 stitches. [Jack Piepenbring, DR, GRSM, 6/11]

Monday, June 22, 1998

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Ranger Shot and Killed

Ranger Joe Kolodski, 36, was shot and killed by an assailant on the afternoon of Sunday, June 21st. Around 2:20 p.m., the park received a report of a man with a rifle along the Blue Ridge Parkway at Big Witch overlook about nine miles north of Oconaluftee. Since rangers from both parks provide enforcement on the southern end of the parkway, Kolodski responded along with Great Smoky ranger Al Miller and Blue Ridge ranger Tony Welch - each in his own vehicle. Kolodski was first on scene at 2:40 p.m. and radioed to Miller that he had spotted the man. Plans were begun by radio to cordon off the overlook. When Welch arrived on scene at 2:50 p.m., he reported an "officer down" and requested an ambulance. As he was calling this in, the gunman fired at his cruiser. The round smashed the cruiser windshield but did not hit Welch. Welch returned fire with his shotgun. The gunman then fled into the woods with the rifle.

Approximately 70 units converged on the scene, including rangers, Forest Service and North Carolina Highway Patrol officers, and deputies from five North Carolina counties. Rescuers found that Kolodski had been shot in the chest above his ballistic vest. A medevac helicopter was summoned, but Kolodski could not be revived. He was pronounced dead at the University of Tennessee Hospital in Knoxville. A suspect was taken into custody around 6:30 p.m., but it's not been confirmed that he's the man being sought, so his name has not been released. He is NOT Eric Rudolf, the man who's being sought throughout the Southeast in connection with several bombings. Kolodski, a resident of Bryson City, North Carolina, had worked in the Smokies for over five years, and had been a ranger at the Natchez Trace Parkway prior to that. He leaves his wife, F.T., also a park employee, and three young children. Parks are authorized to lower flags to half staff until the date of the funeral. That information will be provided as soon as it is available. Commissioned rangers are also authorized to wear black bands on their badges, as per the provisions of NPS-43, 11-2-d; other employees may wear them, as appropriate. Questions should be directed to Dennis Burnett in WASO Ranger Activities. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, via Dennis Burnett, RAD/WASO, 6/21; Bob Miller and Nancy Gray, PIOs, GRSM, 6/21; Dennis Burnett, Bob Marriott, RAD/WASO, 6/22]

Tuesday, June 23, 1998

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up on Shooting of Ranger

Additional information on the death of ranger Joe Kolodski has been provided by the park, the Department of Justice, and the FBI. The following contains particulars on the incident and the person charged with the murder; please see the end of the report for specifics on the funeral and ways in which you can express condolences.

J.L., Sr., 47, of Cherokee, North Carolina, was charged yesterday with the first degree murder of Kolodski (18 USC 1111) in federal court in the Western District of North Carolina. J.L., a gardener and maintenance worker for the Oconaluftee Indian Village, faces a maximum penalty of death or life imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. J.L. was ordered detained pending a detention hearing set for today.

The affidavit filed by the FBI establishes the chronology of events. At about 2:20 p.m. on Sunday, rangers from Great Smoky Mountains NP and Blue Ridge Parkway responded to a report of a man with a rifle walking along the parkway in the vicinity of Big Witch overlook near Cherokee, North Carolina. Kolodski arrived first on the scene and reported via radio that he'd spotted the man with his rifle. While other rangers were en route, Kolodski began to make plans via radio to cordon off the area. The next person to arrive was ranger Anthony Welch. Welch pulled his marked patrol car behind Kolodski's marked vehicle. As he pulled up, Welch saw Kolodski standing on the road next to his car's front door, talking on the radio. As Welch started to get his shotgun, he heard a loud gunshot. He looked toward Kolodski and saw him fall to the pavement. At 2:50 p.m., Welch called on his radio, reported that an officer was down, and that he needed an ambulance. He then took cover behind his car. From that position, he heard at least one more gunshot and saw his front passenger window shatter. Welch looked in the direction of the gunshots and saw a man standing in the woods about 25 yards away. Although bushes and shrubs obscured him from the waist down, Welch could see him clearly and made



direct eye contact with him. The man was not wearing a shirt. Welch fired his shotgun at the man once, then got back into his car and backed up about 100 yards. After he backed up, he heard several more gunshots, but did not see where they hit. Kolodski was evacuated to the University of Tennessee hospital, where he was pronounced dead from a single gunshot wound which had pierced his body armor and struck him in the chest. A massive search was begun for his assailant. Around 6 p.m., David Ensley, a game warden for the Cherokee Indian Fish and Wildlife Management Agency saw J.L. walking down the road near Bunches Creek on the Cherokee reservation. The location was close to the point where Kolodski had been killed. He had on blue jeans and boots, but was not wearing a shirt. J.L. was wet, scratched and had bug bites on him. Ensley detained J.L. until Welch arrived on scene and positively identified him as the person he'd fired at earlier in the afternoon. A crime scene search of the area near where Kolodski was killed led to the discovery of two expended 7.62 rifle casings on the ground at the point where Welch had seen J.L.. A tracking dog followed the trail left by J.L. from the scene of the shooting through the wooded areas near the parkway. Several quality footprints were observed in the dirt and mud and appeared to exactly match the boots which had been taken from J.L.. The tracking dog led searchers to a rifle located about 300 yards from the site of the shooting. It was a Finnish Caistlarvt Model 91, bolt action 7.62 caliber rifle; several spent rounds were on the ground nearby. The affidavit also reports two other related sightings of a man meeting J.L.'s description which had occurred that day at the overlook.

Two visitors from Florida saw a man sitting at a picnic table at the overlook prior to the shooting. The man had no shirt on, was wearing blue jeans, and had a rifle matching the description of the Caistlarvt. Sometime thereafter, Minnesota visitor John Yust and his two children were sitting in their car at the overlook when he saw a man walk toward their parked car. The man had no shirt on and was wearing blue jeans and carrying a rifle. Yust described the man as of Native American ancestry, about 40 years old, and with short hair. The man pointed the gun in the window of Yust's car; Yust grabbed the barrel of the gun, pushed it outside the window, rolled up the window, and drove away. He later called the police and reported the incident. Officers and agents subsequently conducted a consent search of J.L.'s house and found several spent rounds that appeared to be 7.62 caliber. Based on this information, the FBI filed the affidavit, stating that there was probable cause to believe that J.L. had killed Kolodski.

Participating in the joint investigation were the National Park Service, FBI, Forest Service, North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, North Carolina Highway Patrol, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Cherokee Indian Police, Cherokee Indian Fish and Wildlife Management Agency, and sheriff's departments in Jackson, Swain, Haywood and Buncombe Counties.

Arrangements for burial and memorial services are incomplete at this time. Although the family has expressed deep appreciation for all the support received from the NPS community, preliminary discussions with them suggest that their strong preference is for a small community service at the First Baptist Church in Bryson City, North Carolina, possibly tomorrow morning. Bryson City is a small, closely-knit community, and the family has many friends who will want to be with them at the church. The church has limited seating. Following the service, his body will be transported to the family home in Pennsylvania for a private family service, followed by cremation. The family has asked that NO flowers be sent to either ceremony. A memorial fund

has been established by the park's friends group for Kolodski's three children. Those wishing to make contributions should make out their checks to "Friends of GRSMNP" and specify that it is in memory of Joseph Kolodski. Contributions should be sent to: Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 130 West Bruce Street, Suite #1, Sevierville, TN 37862. Condolences may be sent to his wife, F.T., care of the park: Great Smoky Mountains NP, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738.

Critical incident stress debriefing teams are currently in the two parks meeting with park staff. Several meetings have already been held. You can express your support to them by sending messages to park staff.

[Jason Houck, CR, GRSM; James Russell, SA, FBI; Mark Calloway, United States Attorney, Western District of North Carolina; 6/22]

Tuesday, June 23, 1998 - SUPPLEMENTAL

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up on Shooting of Ranger

Funeral services for ranger Joe Kolodski will be held at the First Baptist Church in Bryson City, North Carolina, at 11:30 a.m. tomorrow. The family will receive close friends at the church one hour prior to the funeral. Interment will be in Kolodski's home state of Pennsylvania. Priority seating for the services will be given to family and close friends, but arrangements are being made to set up television screens outside the church for the overflow crowd that's expected. The Washington Office has authorized one employee from each park in the Southeast Region and one employee from each of the Service's six other regions to travel on official business to attend the funeral. Director Bob Stanton is expected to attend. The park requests that uniformed people be in short-sleeved, summer dress. [Karen Wade, Superintendent, GRSM, via SERO Public Affairs, 6/23]

Wednesday, June 24, 1998

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up on Shooting of Ranger

The memorial service for ranger Joe Kolodski will be held at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, June 25th, at the First Baptist Church of Bryson City, North Carolina. The church has limited seating, so entry during the 45-minute service will be limited to family, close friends, and National Park Service personnel, with first preference for seating being provided for staffs at Great Smoky Mountains NP and Blue Ridge Parkway. Delegations of NPS personnel from throughout the Service are also expected, as well as broad representation from the law enforcement and EMS communities. To accommodate this overflow, arrangements have been made for a large tent with 400 chairs to be erected adjacent to the church and equipped with closed-circuit television. Immediately following the service, a public visitation will be held inside the church. A private service will be held subsequently at Joe's hometown in Pennsylvania, so no motorcade is planned. The following information has been provided for those who will be attending: Bryson City is about an hour and a half's drive from the Asheville airport, two and a half hours away from the Knoxville airport, and three hours from Atlanta. Asheville and Knoxville have limited

flight schedules, so it will be very difficult to fly in and arrive at the service on Thursday morning. Overnight lodging is strongly recommended. A block of rooms has been set aside for NPS travelers at the Best Western in Cherokee, North Carolina, about 15 miles from Bryson City, for the night of Wednesday, June 24th. The number is 828-497-2020. When calling for reservations, please mention that you are calling for the National Park Service rooms. The rate is \$60 plus tax, but the per diem lodging rate is only \$50, so those travelling at government expense will need supervisory authorization for the higher rate. Wearing of the NPS uniform is encouraged; because of the hot weather, the summer, short-sleeve shirt should be worn rather than the dress blouse. In accordance with Joe's widow's desires, absolutely no flowers will be accepted. As noted in yesterday's Morning Report, a memorial fund in Joe Kolodski's name has been established by the Friends of the Smokies, with the proceeds to be directed to Joe's family. Checks should be made payable to: "Friends of the Smokies" and sent to Friends of the Smokies, 130 W. Bruce St., Suite 1, Sevierville, TN 37862. For additional details, call Great Smoky Mountains NP public affairs at 423-436-1207/8. [Public Affairs, GRSM, 6/23]

Thursday, June 25, 1998

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up on Shooting of Ranger

The memorial service for ranger Joe Kolodski will be held at 11:30 a.m. this morning in Bryson City, North Carolina. Secretary Babbitt and Director Stanton, both of whom will be at the service, have issued statements of condolence and support. Excerpts from each follow.

Secretary Babbitt: "I feel a profound sense of sorrow and outrage over the death of Ranger Joseph David Kolodski. Most Americans who visit our national parks know firsthand the dedication and professionalism of the National Park Service Rangers. Few consider the amount of courage and commitment that Rangers everywhere freely give to protect people whenever there is need: from daring mountain rescues to countless times where they have put their lives at risk to rescue others from natural disasters, treacherous waters, temperatures and terrain. However, it is a sad truth that this nation's most beautiful places cannot always be shielded from someone with intent to do evil. In this case, Ranger Kolodski gave his life to protect visitors to Great Smoky Mountains National park and motorists on the heavily-traveled Blue Ridge Parkway. It showed dedication enough that Ranger Kolodski went to work last Sunday instead of spending Fathers' Day with his three small children and his wife Florie Takai, also an employee at the Park. It is clear now that Ranger Kolodski was willing to sacrifice his life in the performance of his duty to apprehend a man threatening motorists with a rifle. He deserves our everlasting gratitude and respect. I would like to offer my deepest sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues in the National Park Service."

Director Stanton: "The death of Park Ranger Joseph David Kolodski has been a devastating tragedy, first and foremost, for the family and friends of Ranger Kolodski. It has also been a tremendous loss for the National Park Service. I have sent a personal message to his wife, Florie Takaki, who also works for the Service, to express my deepest sympathy on behalf of our National Park Service family...Ranger Kolodski was an exemplary Park Ranger and a credit to the profession and art of 'rangering.' Over the course of his NPS career, he made countless contributions to the Service and to the public. Park Ranger Kolodski was, without a doubt, a

dedicated and highly skilled Park Ranger who also gave his time freely in his volunteer efforts. I am told by his colleagues that he had a vibrant sense of humor. He was a devoted husband and doting father to his three small children. Park Ranger Kolodski will be greatly missed by all whose lives he touched...I hope each of you will join me in offering your thoughts and prayers at this most difficult time to the family and friends of Park Ranger Kolodski, as well as our own fellow colleagues. He deserves our utmost respect and gratitude, as he was truly one of the finest Park Rangers to wear our uniform and badge with such great pride, extraordinary dedication, and boundless commitment."

Wednesday, July 15, 1998

98-388 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Rescue

S.S., 25, of Concord, Tennessee, was swimming at the Sinks on the afternoon of Sunday, July 12th, when he went to the aid of another swimmer in distress. While doing so, he slid down a waterfall and jammed his foot and ankle between two boulders. S.S. was trapped at the base of the falls in water nearly four feet deep. Rangers and rescuers from local fire and rescue organizations worked for over five hours to free S.S. from the 55 degree water. Plywood was used to shield him from spray and constant splashing and to divert some of the flow. Intravenous fluids and pain medication were administered and he was finally freed around 7:30 p.m. S.S. was flown to University of Tennessee Hospital in Knoxville, where he was treated for hypothermia and possible broken bones in his foot or ankle. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/13]

Monday, July 20, 1998

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up on Shooting of Ranger

In early July, a federal grand jury indicted J.L., Sr., 47, for the murder of ranger Joe Kolodski. J.L. was charged with murder of Kolodski while he was performing his official duties; murder of Kolodski while Kolodski was assisting ranger Anthony Welch, who was performing official duties; attempted murder of Welch; and assault with intent to do bodily harm to a park visitor. On July 9th, a federal judge ordered a psychological exam of J.L. to determine if he is competent to stand trial. Attorney general Janet Reno is not expected to decide if she will seek the death penalty until the evaluation is completed. The case continues to draw extensive media attention, particularly regarding the possibility of the death penalty. Additional details have also been provided about the investigation. As was noted in previous reports, J.L. was apprehended on the day of the murder as he came out of the woods and onto a remote dirt road on the Cherokee reservation. He was captured - unarmed and without resistance - by two Cherokee game wardens. Rangers were able to backtrack J.L. to the crime scene. Additional evidence was found while establishing his trail. J.L.'s escape route was from the high elevation crime scene down a steep and densely wooded drainage to the base of the mountain. A significant amount of evidence was recovered during the investigation and is currently being evaluated by the FBI laboratory. A 7.62 bolt-action rifle was recovered which is believed to be the murder weapon. The FBI continues to serve as the primary investigatory agency; extensive assistance is being provided by Great Smoky Mountains NP rangers. J.L. refused to make a statement after being arrested and has made no comments to date. Both Great Smoky Mountains NP and Blue Ridge

Parkway are still being supported by rangers detailed to the area. Kolodski's wife and children are being supported by the NPS family and local friends as they attempt to cope with the tragedy. Cards and/or donations may be sent to the family in care of Friends of the Great Smoky Mountains NP, 130 West Bruce Street, Suite #1, Sevierville, TN 37862. Additional follow-up reports will appear in the Morning Report as the case progresses. [John Mattox, CI, GRSM, 7/17]

Friday, July 31, 1998

98-451 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Resource Violation, Arrest

On July 25th, ranger Joel Ellis was conducting follow-up investigative work on a case involving the illegal reopening of the Chimney Manway trail, an unofficial trail closed in 1994 because of a significant number of hiker injuries and associated rescues, when he heard a chainsaw being operated. Ellis followed the trail to its source and found T.G. actively cutting trees and other vegetation on the closed trail with the intent of reopening it. Ellis arrested him on several charges. T.G. is believed to also have been responsible for removing a number of closure signs and installing a homemade ladder for climbers to use at a difficult location on the trail. Rangers have been investigating this case since last November. T.G. is known to park staff. He has presented himself to the local media as someone who is providing a safe hiking trail for hikers because the park refused to do so. T.G. has been prohibited from entering the park until his trial in late August. [Keny Slay, ACR, GRSM, 7/29]

Monday, August 10, 1998

98-476 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - DUI; Assault on Ranger

Rangers Helen McNutt and Gary Kubin responded to a report of a vehicle being driven recklessly on the Newfound Gap road on the Tennessee side of the park on the afternoon of August 2nd. McNutt stopped the vehicle near the Alum Cave parking area. The operator, a 41-year-old male, refused to identify himself or produce a driver's license and was placed under arrest and handcuffed. He became belligerent after being arrested, broke free, and attempted to run off. McNutt and Kubin took him down with the assistance of two park visitors who identified themselves as off-duty officers. The man, who had by this time been identified as one H.V., resisted ranger efforts to put him in a patrol car. A full canister of pepper spray was used on him, but without significant effect. After being placed in the rear of the patrol car, H.V. used his feet to smash its rear window. He was then removed from the car and further restrained with leg irons connected to the handcuffs. H.V.'s final act of defiance was to bite Kubin on the forearm while being seatbelted. During the arrest, McNutt strained a ligament on her left hand. Both rangers returned to duty immediately after receiving medical attention. H.V. was ordered by the magistrate to remain in jail until a bond hearing scheduled for this week. [Keny Slay, DR, Little River District, GRSM, 8/7]

Tuesday, August 11, 1998

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up on Death of Ranger

The investigation into the murder of ranger Joe Kolodski continues, but there have been few developments recently. The attorney general has not yet decided on whether the death penalty will be sought. Joe's ashes were spread in the park last week in a very small, private ceremony. More than \$40,000 has been donated to the family to date. Cards and/or donations may be sent to the family in care of Friends of the Great Smoky Mountains NP, 130 West Bruce Street, Suite #1, Sevierville, TN 37862. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/10]

Thursday, September 17, 1998

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Shooting of Ranger

A group of park employees, spouses and friends from the Harpers Ferry area and Great Smoky Mountains NP have put together a cookbook as a fund-raiser for the family of ranger Joe Kolodski. Profits from this book will go to his widow, five-year-old daughter, and infant twins. The cookbook, entitled "Cooking by Design," contains over 350 recipes from around the world, grouped into seven categories. Director Stanton has endorsed the cookbook and provided a couple of recipes of his own. You can view the book's cover on the Harpers Ferry Center web page at [www.hfc.nps.gov](http://www.hfc.nps.gov). If you would like to order one (or more) and thereby make a contribution to supporting the Kolodski family, you need to submit an order prior to September 30th to assure that you will have it (them) by Christmas. It sells for \$10, plus \$2 for shipping, and will be shipped around December 4th. Send your orders to Diana Cummins at [montex@intrepid.net](mailto:montex@intrepid.net) (304-728-0345) or Juanita Gustines at [Juanita\\_Gustines@nps.gov](mailto:Juanita_Gustines@nps.gov) (304-535-6011). Or you can mail your order to Harpers Ferry Center, P.O. Box 50, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425, Attn: Juanita. Checks and money orders should be sent to that address as well, made out to HFCSAC (Harpers Ferry Center Social Activities Committee). Be sure to include a mailing address. Payments need to be made no later than November 13th. Parks submitting orders of 25 or more should do so in a single order to reduce shipping costs. [Diana Cummins, HFCSAC, 9/13]

Wednesday, September 23, 1998

98-617 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Rescue

On the morning of Sunday, September 20th, rangers rescued a 20-year-old Tennessee man who fell over 100 feet while climbing up one of the drainages of Mt. LeConte. C.P. and three companions were climbing up a steep slide area on the side of Anakeesta Ridge on Saturday afternoon when C.P. apparently lost his footing and slid, rolled, and bounced down the very steep slope. C.P.'s fall was halted when he hit trees and brush mid-way down the 300- to 500-foot slope. One of C.P.'s companions hiked out to their car and drove down to Chimneys picnic area, where he reported the accident to park maintenance personnel at around 3:50 p.m. A team of rangers responded. Ranger Joel Ellis, also a park medic, reached C.P. just before 6 p.m. and treated his injuries. Because of the precarious location and the long drop below, rangers decided

that hoisting the victim either up or down the slope would be extremely hazardous to both him and members of the rescue team. They instead elected to request a helicopter with hoisting capability. Ellis and two others remained on the scene all night with the victim, administering an IV and treating him for shock. An Army National Guard Blackhawk helicopter was scheduled to arrive on scene at first light. As a precaution, arrangements were made with local rescue squads to conduct a ground rescue if necessary. Good weather prevailed, however, and the helicopter arrived and hoisted C.P. out, then flew him to the hospital at the University of Tennessee. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 9/21]

Friday, December 4, 1998

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Murder of Ranger

J.L., who has been charged with the murder of ranger Joe Kolodski, appeared in U.S. District Court on December 3rd for a competency hearing. J.L. has been undergoing mental evaluation for the past two months. The details of the evaluation remain sealed, but the report did indicate that J.L. was competent to stand trial. The defense team accepted the evaluation without argument. The trial has been set for January 19th. No formal decision has been announced as to whether or not the government will seek the death penalty. [John Mattox, CI, GRSM, 12/3]

Monday, December 21, 1998

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Death of Ranger

F.T., wife of ranger Joe Kolodski, who was shot and killed on June 21st, has asked that the following letter be shared with all of you:

"Greetings to you this season!

"As you are aware, it has been a devastating year for the T./K. family. It is almost impossible to believe that December 21 will mark six months since Joe's death. As of this date, the man charged with the shooting has been deemed competent to stand trial and has plead not guilty. Trial has been set for January 19 here in Bryson City, NC, since it has a federal court. A lot of pre-trial preparation is ongoing and hopefully we will have more details soon.

"As for the children and myself, we are moving forward ever so slowly. The passing of time has been painful, but we are trying to resume a new routine of normalcy. Rachel is again interested in school and other six year old pursuits such as play dates, movies, and of course Christmas. The twins are really tornadoes disguised as children, but are basically happy kids. They all still have difficulty going into the bathroom Joe used, but as a whole they are dealing with the empty space in our lives.

"For the immediate future, we will be staying in North Carolina. We have good support in our community and the park. Our church has been terrific in helping us through daily crisis such as illness, yard work, and house repairs. Although I would like to be closer to both sets of parents,

the idea of moving and starting anew in a strange place is more than I can deal with at this time. I think the children and I need to wrap ourselves in familiarity and warm memories right now.

"I appreciate your support of us during this time. Your prayers, cards, and telephone calls have truly been of help to us. It seems a letter appears in the mail or the telephone rings at the most needed times. I can never repay your kindness, but you are in my thoughts and prayers. I am honored to have you as acquaintances and friends.

"Enjoy each other and the season. May your holidays bring you many memorable moments."

Wednesday, December 30, 1998

98-767 - Mid-Southern Areas - Winter Storm Impacts

Reports have been received from two more parks which were struck by the ice storm of December 22nd through the 24th:

- o Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - There was no snow accumulation in the park, but ice felled upwards of 200 trees. A number of park roads remain closed. Some employees are still without electricity.

Reports from other parks in the Mid-South that were affected by this storm are solicited. [William Nichols, VICK, 12/29; Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 12/29]

Thursday, December 31, 1998

98-774 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Car Clout/Felony Theft Arrest

During a routine contact at the Mingus Mill parking lot on Christmas morning, ranger John McCutcheon determined that the license plate of a vehicle he was checking had been stolen in a car clout last July in the Alum Cave area of the park. McCutcheon also found that the driver was using the same victim's stolen driver's license, and that the 1995 Jeep Cherokee he was driving had been stolen from Georgia. A search of the vehicle led to the discovery of numerous stolen items, including about 70 credit cards, cell phones, license plates, and a wide variety of other stolen property. The driver continued to maintain the false name until he learned that his fingerprints would be checked. He then identified himself as T.C., age 42. T.C. is a career thief with a long criminal record and a fugitive with three outstanding felony warrants from two states against him. His arrest will close numerous cases from the park and from Forest Service areas. At least two stolen vehicle cases will also be closed. T.C. is from South Carolina and has likely been committing thefts and credit card fraud throughout the Southeast. He remains in federal custody without bond. Rangers McCutcheon and Jon Murphy are continuing the investigation and coordinating their efforts with other agencies. [John Mattox, CI, GRSM, 12/30]



Thursday, December 31, 1998

98-777 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Suicide

Visitors in Cades Cove reported hearing a gunshot just after 2 p.m. on December 29th. Shortly thereafter, rangers found the body of C.M., 60, of Talbott, Tennessee, in his pickup truck. A twelve gauge shotgun was lying at his side. Family members report that C.M. had been experiencing business and personal troubles. He leaves his wife and two children. Ranger Ken Davis is the investigator. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 12/30]

Wednesday, January 6, 1998

98-767 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Winter Storm Impacts

Damage assessments completed since the last Morning Report entry from the park revealed that the December 23rd ice storm which struck much of the central south took a heavy toll on trees along sections of the Foothills Parkway, segments of which will be closed for the next two to three weeks. The 17-mile section from US 231 to US 129 in Blount County remains blocked by an estimated 6,000 downed trees; the six-mile section from I 40 to US 321 in Cocke County is also blocked by hundreds of trees. Park road crews are working to clear the debris, but progress has been slow due to the number of downed trees. Substantial tree damage is also expected along many of the park's trails and secondary roads, particularly at low to middle elevations in areas with many pine trees. The precipitation fell as snow rather than freezing rain above 3,000 feet, so most roads and trails there sustained less damage. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 1/4]

Thursday, January 21, 1999

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Death of Ranger

On Thursday, January 14th, attorney general Janet Reno announced that the U.S. attorney's office will seek the death penalty for J.L., who is charged with the murder of ranger Joe Kolodski. The trial begins next Tuesday and will be held in Bryson City, North Carolina. [John Mattox, CI, GRSM, 1/14]

Monday, January 25, 1999

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Death of Ranger

The trial of J.L., who is charged with the murder of ranger Joe Kolodski, began on Thursday, January 21st. Only one witness appeared on the first day of testimony. Ranger Tony Welch from Blue Ridge Parkway recounted the events of June 21st and identified J.L. as the person who fired the shots. The trial continues this week. The park will provide periodic updates on developments. [Jack Ramsden, Jason Houck, GRSM, 1/22]

Tuesday, January 26, 1999

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Death of Ranger

The trial of J.L., charged with the first degree murder of ranger Joe Kolodski, continues in federal court. Among those who have testified so far have been several civilian witnesses, a pathologist, and the two Cherokee game wardens who first apprehended J.L. The handler for the dog that tracked J.L. testified at considerable length on Friday and Monday, and was followed by FBI forensics experts. [Jack Ramsden, John Mattox, GRSM, 1/24- 25]

Thursday, January 28, 1999

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Death of Ranger

The trial of J.L. for the first degree murder of ranger Joe Kolodski continues. The jury was taken to Big Witch Gap on Blue Ridge Parkway on Tuesday to look at the crime scene. Several witnesses also appeared in the court room, including several FBI forensics specialists who testified on the boot prints found at and near the scene, the functionality and identity of the rifle, and the search for and processing of fingerprints. A ranger from Great Smoky Mountains was called on to testify about his involvement in the events of June 21st. Questions raised by the defense concerned the lack of blood alcohol tests on J.L. and the failure to collect alcohol containers from the area of the crime. There was an expectation that the prosecution would rest its case on Wednesday; the defense will follow. The trial is expected to last through the week. [Jack Ramsden, Communications Center, GRSM, 1/27]

Friday, January 29, 1999

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Death of Ranger

The trial of J.L. for the first degree murder of ranger Joe Kolodski continues. The prosecution rested on Wednesday and the defense began calling witnesses. The defense argued that J.L. was too intoxicated to either remember or commit the shooting. A forensic psychiatrist testified that the combination of alcohol, exercise, diabetes medication and lack of food could account for J.L.'s lack of recall of the events of June 21st and would also make it difficult for him to think and plan ahead. The first character witness for J.L. was the principal chief for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, who knew him as a quiet student in school and as a "quiet, church-going man." She acknowledged the sadness in the community over the loss of Kolodski, who worked and taught with Cherokee EMS, and the possibility that a member of the community committed the crime. The main witness for the defense, however, was J.L. He recounted events leading up to getting his car stuck in the mud near the scene of the shooting, but claimed to have no recollection of any event thereafter. J.L. said he remembered being questioned by the Cherokee game wardens who apprehended him on the evening of the 21st, about three hours after the shooting. Possible contradictions to his reported lack of memory were brought out by the prosecution with each of the witnesses. J.L.'s ability to plan an assault, his state of mind, and his

intentions on that day have been the major points of dispute between the U.S. attorney and the defense. [Jack Ramsden, Communications Center, GRSM, 1/28]

Monday, February 1, 1999

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Death of Ranger

The trial of J.L. for the first degree murder of ranger Joe Kolodski concluded on Friday, January 29th. On Saturday, following approximately nine hours of deliberation, the jury found J.L. guilty of the first-degree murder of Kolodski and the attempted murder of ranger Tony Welch. The jury did not accept the defense's argument that J.L. had been either drunk or hypoglycemic and therefore not capable of committing first degree murder. Nor did they accept J.L.'s statement that he did not remember the shooting. J.L.'s motive for the killing is still unknown. The ten-day trial was very intense and hard fought. Assistant U.S. attorneys Jerry Miller and Debra Ausburn prosecuted the case; U.S. attorney Mark Calloway and criminal chief prosecutor Bob Conrad also provided critical support. FBI special agent Jim Russell was the primary case agent. Their skills, leadership, and personal dedication resulted in the first degree verdict. Immediately following the verdict, Calloway met with Kolodski's wife, parents, and NPS representatives to discuss the penalty phase of the trial. The government subsequently withdrew its intent to seek the death penalty. Formal sentencing will occur in approximately 45 days. Conviction of first degree murder calls for mandatory life in prison without any chance of parole. It should be noted that the capture and successful conviction of J.L. was only possible due to the interagency cooperation among many law enforcement agencies. Many people deserve thanks, but the list is too long to include in this report. However, rangers Tony Welch, Al Miller, Keith Nelson, Walt West, Glenn Martin, Lamon Brown, and Cherokee officer Sam Reed deserve special recognition for their efforts to save Joe Kolodski after he was gunned down and while aggressive gunfire continued in the area from a concealed shooter with a high power rifle. While Welch was being shot at, the others risked their lives by pulling Kolodski from the shooting scene and then attempted to restore his life. The greatest recognition and honor is owed to Joe Kolodski for giving his life so that others could live. Joe was a great ranger and person. We will miss him. [John Mattox, CI, GRSM, 1/31]

Friday, March 12, 1999

98-476 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Assault on Rangers

On the afternoon of August 2, 1998, rangers received a report of a vehicle being driven in an aggressive manner, with the driver making obscene gestures at other motorists. Ranger Helen McNutt soon spotted the vehicle traveling north on Newfound Gap Road. It pulled into Alum Cave parking area, and McNutt followed, parking behind the vehicle with blue lights activated. McNutt approached the vehicle and determined that the occupants were H.V. and P.V. The V.s denied that they had either alcohol or weapons in the vehicle, but McNutt detected the odor of alcoholic beverages in the vehicle and on H.V., who was found to have a revoked driver's license. H.V., who is 6'3" and weighs about 250 pounds, was verbally aggressive, refused to follow instructions, and refused to perform field sobriety tests. McNutt arrested him, handcuffed him behind his back, and with some difficulty placed him in the rear of her caged patrol unit.

Ranger Gary Kubin arrived on the scene at this time. As the two rangers approached the V. vehicle to check for alcohol and weapons, H.V. kicked the rear passenger window out of the patrol car. When Kubin attempted to secure H.V.'s seatbelt by reaching through the broken window, H.V. bit him on his right arm. H.V. continued to be unruly, so McNutt sprayed him with OC-10, a pepper spray. H.V. calmed down and was removed from the patrol car so that the rangers could check on the effects of the OC-10. H.V. bolted and attempted to flee. After running around the parking area and across the road, H.V. fell into a roadside ditch; although he continued to struggle and kick, Kubin and McNutt were able to regain control of him. Two park visitors came to the rangers' assistance and leg chains were put on H.V. During the struggle, McNutt injured her hand. The V. vehicle was searched and a loaded .22 semi-automatic pistol was found in the front passenger area. P.V. was taken into custody and charged with possession of a loaded weapon. H.V. remained belligerent while at the jail and refused the intoximeter test. He was charged with DUI, refusal to submit to an alcohol test, driving on a revoked license, and possession of a weapon, and was subsequently indicted on two counts of assault on a federal officer (18 USC 111(1)(b) and 1114). The case went to trial on March 9th. After a day and a half of testimony and four hours of deliberation, the jury returned a verdict of guilty on the charges of felony assault on a federal officer and misdemeanor assault. The judge rendered a guilty verdict for the four petty offense charges. Charges against P.V. were dismissed. Sentencing will be held on May 6th. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 3/11]

Tuesday, March 16, 1999

99-84 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Arrests for Robbery, Carjacking

J.H. and T.W. were parked at an overlook on the Foothills Parkway around 11:20 p.m. on March 12th when two men approached on the driver's side and shined a flashlight into the car. J.H., thinking they were police officers, lowered the window. A man dressed in black and wearing a black mask over his face pointed a gun at the couple and ordered them from the car. J.H. and T.W. were directed to give up their money, then to walk around in front of the car and go over the nearby embankment. They did as ordered, and heard the vehicle being driven away - with another behind it - shortly thereafter. They flagged down a car about five minutes later and reported the robbery. A county deputy spotted the stolen car at a convenience store about a dozen miles away at 12:30 a.m. A high-speed chase ensued, with two sheriff's cruisers following the stolen car for nearly 20 minutes. The driver drove into a cornfield and attempted to flee on foot, but was captured by the deputies. The suspect, identified as B.F., 19, had a Ruger .357 magnum revolver loaded with six 9 mm cartridges in his possession. Ranger Al Voner interviewed B.F. just after 2 a.m. and obtained information about his companion. On March 13th, Voner interviewed J.B., 18, at a Maryville restaurant. J.B. admitted to participating in the incident, explaining that B.F. borrowed his .357 because he didn't want to use his 9 mm pistol, which would eject spent cartridges if fired. B.F. and J.B. were arraigned in federal court on March 15th. Their case will be presented to a grand jury today. The park obtained concurrent jurisdiction on the parkway in 1997 and the case may be transferred to state court. Bill Acree is the investigator. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 3/16]

Monday, May 10, 1999

99-166 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Search; Downed Aircraft

A search began on Thursday, May 6th, for a missing single-engine airplane that crashed south of the Appalachian Trail. Park officials were notified by the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) that a light blue Cessna 172 dropped from radar around 6:40 a.m. and subsequently did not complete its flight plan. The aircraft went off radar south of the Tennessee/North Carolina state line near the Jenkins Ridge Trail. Two Bell-206 helicopters from the Knox County Sheriffs Office tried to search the area on Thursday, but high altitude winds prevented an effective search. Just before dark, a CAP fixed-wing aircraft and a military helicopter located the crash site about two miles south of the Appalachian Trail. The wreckage of the aircraft was reportedly spread over a wide area. Ranger Randy Scoggins and four CAP members spent the night on the Appalachian Trail at the Spence Field shelter, about three miles from the site. A ground team of ten was headed up the trail from Cades Cove at the time of the report (Friday morning), along with a smaller group of rangers from Deep Creek. The Knox County helicopter was going to attempt to direct ground teams into the crash site if the weather cooperated. The incident commander is Cades Cove district ranger Jack Piepenbring. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 5/7]

Tuesday, May 11, 1999

99-166 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Follow-up: Downed Aircraft

A search began on Thursday, May 6th, for a missing single-engine airplane that crashed south of the Appalachian Trail. Ground searchers from Lake District located the crash site around 10 a.m. on Saturday morning and radioed that the pilot, F.T., 49, had not survived. Weather conditions continued to deteriorate, so a decision was made to transport F.T.'s body down Jenkins Ridge trail to Fontana Lake, load it onto an NPS vessel for a short boat trip, then transport it by ambulance to University of Tennessee Hospital. FAA and NTSB investigators were expected to arrive in the park yesterday. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 5/10]

Friday, May 21, 1999

99-194 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Search; Attempted Suicide

On May 17th, Cades Cove rangers discovered that a vehicle registered to J.W., 30, of Knoxville, Tennessee, had been parked for more than 24 hours at a well-known fishing access on the Laurel Creek road. They looked through the passenger window and discovered a suicide note left in a position where it could be read from outside the vehicle. Investigation revealed that J.W. was despondent due to a recent breakup with his girlfriend and had attempted suicide in the past by drug overdose for similar reasons. An empty prescription container belonging to the girlfriend was found in the vehicle. According to doctors at the University of Tennessee hospital, the medication, if taken at once, would result in a coma for several hours, but should not be fatal. Rangers searched the area near the vehicle until about 2 a.m. the following morning. The search resumed after daybreak on the 18th. J.W. was located near the West Prong trail by rangers Richard Jenkins and Ken Davis after being in the woods for almost three days. His physical

condition was good, but he remained suicidal and agreed to be hospitalized. District Ranger Keny Slay was the IC. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 5/20]

Thursday, June 24, 1999

99-299 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Drug Arrests

Ranger Lamon Brown discovered an unoccupied illegal camp in the Lake District on June 19th. Brown found marijuana paraphernalia and a book on how to grow marijuana in the camp, and began surveillance of the area with a North Carolina wildlife officer. Three men returned to the camp late in the day. Although they had a number of plastic growing pots and a GPS unit in their possession, they denied any involvement in marijuana cultivation. They were arrested for simple possession and camping violations. Their GPS unit was employed to find eleven marijuana plants in five separate gardens. Also seized was a shotgun without a serial number, marijuana seeds, growing lights, scales and many other related items. The three men, all from Lakewood, Colorado, are being held without bond and will be indicted next month. [John Mattox, CI, GRSM, 6/23]

Monday, July 12, 1999

99-364 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Car Clouting Arrests

Park dispatch received a report of an attempted car theft at the Ramsay Cascades trailhead just before 3 p.m. on July 7th. The side vent windows were shattered and the vehicle was splattered with blood stains. The would- be thieves escaped in a beat-up gray pickup truck with a red fender and a white door. A second unsuccessful vehicle theft was reported at the Rainbow Falls trailhead less than an hour later and 15 miles further east. One person drove off in a pickup; the other fled into the woods. Rangers and Gatlinburg police sealed off the Roaring Fork motor nature trail, and ranger Robert Harris stopped the suspect vehicle at 4:50 p.m. The man and woman in the truck were detained for questioning. A few minutes later, a man matching the description of one of the would-be thieves in the second burglary attempt was spotted in downtown Gatlinburg and also taken into custody. Both men were later identified by witnesses to the two burglary attempts and placed under arrest. The woman has not been charged. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/9]

Monday, July 12, 1999

99-365 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Drowning

At 3:30 p.m. on July 8th, ranger Lori Harris received a report of a possible drowning near Meigs Falls on Little River. A.S., 17, of Knoxville, Tennessee, had been inner-tubing with a group of friends after attending summer school for the day. Her friends subsequently found her tube, but there was no sign of A.S.. She'd been missing for 20 minutes when Harris received the report. A.S.'s body was found at 3:45. Her legs and lower body were trapped in rocks and held down by the strong current. Rangers worked for nearly two-and-a-half hours to free the body. Rescue

divers were available but not used. District ranger Jack Piepenbring directed the technical recovery. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/9]

Wednesday, August 4, 1999

99-415 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Drowning

A park maintenance worker spotted a body floating face down under the Deep Creek bridge on the afternoon of July 16th. Moments later, a second person was seen in distress at the same location. Two Swain County EMS units responded along with rangers from Deep Creek, Twenty-Mile and Oconaluftee. The second person, an adult male, was pulled from the creek and reported to be okay. The first person, later identified as M.W., 80, of Statesville, North Carolina, was retrieved from the water by maintenance workers and rangers. CPR was begun and her vital signs returned, but she subsequently died at a local hospital. Both victims were using rental tubes from vendors from outside the park. Rangers received reports that as many as three other tubers also experienced difficulties. The water level at the time was slightly higher than normal, but not unusually so. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/19]

Tuesday, August 10, 1999

99-439 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Rescue

Blount County EMS received word of a man trapped in the water at the Sinks on Little River just after 4 p.m. on August 1st. Ranger Kevin Moses arrived within ten minutes and found that the man was already being assisted by bystanders. His legs came free as rangers were rigging ropes for a technical evacuation, but he became cyanotic and unresponsive only minutes later. He was flown to the University of Tennessee Hospital, where he remains in critical condition. Alcohol was a contributing factor in the accident. The victim has outstanding warrants against him in California for a violent offender parole violation. Extradition awaits him when he recovers. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/5]

Wednesday, August 11, 1999

99-443 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Rescue

While on foot patrol at the Sinks on Little River, ranger Kent Kleman heard the shouts of a swimmer in distress. J.U., 27, of Powell, Tennessee, had gotten his foot trapped in an area near a small waterfall. Kleman was able to get a rescue rope under J.U.'s arms with the assistance of swimmers in the area, thereby keeping his head above water. J.U. was able to free his severely sprained foot after five minutes. Kleman subsequently cited him for public intoxication. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/11]

Thursday, August 19, 1999

99-485 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Car Clouting Arrests

Between July 27th and August 5th, there were numerous car clouts in the Little River District. All cases were similar in that there was little sign of entry and that only cash and travelers checks were taken. The primary method of entry was by punching a hole at the edge of the door handle assembly and manipulating the locking mechanism, usually on Chrysler or Dodge vehicles. On the afternoon of the 5th, ranger Jerry Grubb was watching the Grotto Falls parking lot when he saw J.L. and M.G. break into a mini-van. Both were arrested. Property from other car clouts was found in Gunn's purse, and a search of their vehicle resulted in the recovery of more than \$9,000 in cash and money orders. J.L. and M.G. were indicted in Knoxville on August 17th. They have been linked to 13 other crimes in the park and other jurisdictions. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/18]

Tuesday, August 24, 1999

99-513 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Attempted Suicide

Cades Cove rangers Ken Davis, Randy Scoggins and Steve Spanyer responded to a report of two gunshots fired in the vicinity of Sparks Lane just before 7 p.m. on August 22nd. Within minutes, they found a critically injured 51- year-old Knoxville woman in a parked car. A blood-stained suicide note was found nearby. The 300-pound woman had shot herself through the abdomen and in the hand with a .38 caliber handgun. She was conscious while being treated, and told rangers that she had also ingested multiple prescription drugs. She was flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center and is expected to survive. The incident took place at the same place where a 60- year-old local man committed suicide last December 29th. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/23]

Thursday, August 26, 1999

98-309 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Death of Ranger

J.L. has been sentenced to a mandatory life term in prison with no chance of parole for the 1998 murder of ranger Joe Kolodski. AUSA Jerry Miller also successfully argued that J.L. should be held financially responsible for the loss of future income to the Kolodski family. The monetary calculation was based on Kolodski's anticipated earnings until retirement. J.L. was ordered to pay \$900,000, which also includes funeral and defense attorney expenses. The money will be taken from the per capita payments J.L. receives from the reservation's casino operations, but it's nonetheless unlikely that full restitution will ever be made. This may be the first time that restitution of this type has been granted by a criminal court for loss of future wages. Defense attorneys said that they intended to appeal both the conviction and the sentence. The Kolodski family and staff at Great Smoky Mountains NP and Blue Ridge Parkway would like to extend their deep appreciation for everyone's support during this tragedy. [John Mattox, CI, GRSM, 8/25]

Friday, August 27, 1999

99-519 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Domestic Dispute; Assault



Shortly after 7 p.m. on August 24th, rangers were notified that two women were in the Sugarlands Visitor Center restroom, hiding from two men who had assaulted them with baseball bats. Ranger Helen McNutt requested an ambulance and passed on suspect and vehicle descriptions to other rangers. The two men - A.E.L. and his son A.C.L. - were under arrest within 30 minutes. One of the woman was airlifted to University of Tennessee Hospital; the other refused treatment. All four are from Cherokee, North Carolina, and are known to each other. They were apparently traveling in two vehicles, headed back to Cherokee, when the assault occurred. The L.S were charged with assault and are currently on bond. Alcohol was a contributing factor. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/26]

Thursday, September 2, 1999

99-530 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Contractor Fatality

J.I., 37, of Sevierville, Tennessee, was killed on the morning of September 1st when a backhoe he was driving overturned and crushed him. J.I. was employed by a subcontractor working for PCL Construction, the prime contractor on an FHWA contract to construct a portion of the Foothills Parkway. The cause of the accident is under investigation by the park, FHWA, and Tennessee OSHA officials. The victim's brother, D.I., is a forestry technician in the park's fire management office. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 9/1]

Tuesday, October 26, 1999

99-620 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Armed Robbery

During the early morning hours of October 16th, ranger Mike Farley took a report of an armed robbery on the Foothills Parkway. The complainant said that he and a friend had gotten off work and driven to the parkway after a late meal to unwind. When they tried to leave several hours later, they discovered that they had problems with their vehicle, so set off to get help. There was a blue Chevrolet S-10 idling at the next overlook. When they approached it to ask for assistance, a man emerged from the passenger side, pulled a bandanna over his face, pointed a revolver at them, and demanded money. The two men gave up over \$100 before the two occupants of the S-10 drove away. The victims were able to provide a detailed description of the vehicle and suspect to Farley and to the local county sheriff's office. The investigation continues. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 10/25]

Monday, November 1, 1999

99-634 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Pursuit; Arrest

Ranger Gene Wesloh attempted to stop a vehicle for speeding on the Newfound Gap Road just north of Cherokee on the evening of October 21st. The driver refused to stop and continued into Tennessee at an even higher speed. Other rangers picked up the pursuit near Gatlinburg, where the driver attempted to ram ranger Jerry Grubb's vehicle. Gatlinburg police took the lead as the chase went through that town; Pigeon Forge and Sevierville officers assumed the lead through their jurisdictions. When the driver headed north on I-81, the Tennessee Highway Patrol took

over. He finally crashed his vehicle about 80 miles from the point where the pursuit began and fled on foot. His twelve-year-old passenger was taken to a county hospital for evaluation. The suspect was arrested by state officers on the 23rd. Newspaper reports said that numerous vehicles were sideswiped and damaged during the chase, and that the driver was unrepentant and boastful at the time of his arrest. There were two outstanding felony warrants on him at the time of the chase. Multiple federal and state charges are pending. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 10/25]

Friday, November 12, 1999

99-666 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Death of Employee's Spouse

M.J.P., wife of ranger P.P., passed away on Tuesday, November 9th, after valiantly battling cancer for two-and-a-half years. M.J.P. was a wonderful lady who was loved by all who knew her. Her fantastic smile and warm personality will always be remembered. She will be deeply missed. A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m. on Sunday, November 14th, at the First Presbyterian Church in Sylva, North Carolina. P.P. asks that all NPS rangers and other law enforcement personnel attend in uniform wearing defensive equipment. He also asks that contributions be made in lieu of flowers to the "First Presbyterian Church Youth Program." Donations can be sent to First Presbyterian Church, P.O. Box 2152, Sylva, NC 28779. Condolences may be sent to Mr. P.P. If you have further questions, please contact rangers at the Deep Creek Ranger Station at 828-488-3184. [Brad Headley, GRSM, 11/9]

Tuesday, December 7, 1999

99-485 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Car Clouting Arrests

Between July 27th and August 5th, there were numerous car clouts in the Little River District. All cases were similar in that there was little sign of entry and that only cash and travelers checks were taken. The primary method of entry was by punching a hole at the edge of the door handle assembly and manipulating the locking mechanism, usually on Chrysler or Dodge vehicles. On the afternoon of the 5th, ranger Jerry Grubb was watching the Grotto Falls parking lot when he saw J.L. (a.k.a. J.S.M.R.) and M.G. (a.k.a. M.V.) break into a mini-van. Both were arrested. Property from other car clouts was found in M.G.'s purse, and a search of their vehicle resulted in the recovery of more than \$9,000 in cash and money orders. J.L. and M.G. were scheduled to go to trial in federal district court on a 30-count indictment for auto larceny and other crimes on December 1st. Just prior to trial, both entered guilty pleas. M.G. was sentenced to four months' in prison, three years' supervisory probation, restitution to all parties, and a \$400 special assessment; J.L. will be sentenced in February and held without bond until that time. Seventeen victims will receive full restitution from the money found in their possession. J.L. was identified through fingerprints and photographs as a Cuban deportee and illegal alien with an extensive criminal history. INS has placed a detainer on J.L. and he faces additional charges after he completes the pending sentence. CI Bill Acree coordinated the government's prosecution. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 12/6]

Thursday, January 6, 2000

99-769 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Poaching Arrests

On December 20th, rangers Richard Jenkins and Jonathan Murphy began a poaching surveillance operation along the north shore of Fontana Lake. They discovered a hunt underway around 5:30 a.m. Two of the three poachers fled; the third, who was operating a powerboat as a pickup vehicle, was taken into custody. Rangers from the Oconaluftee and Lake Districts and TVA police began a search for the pair. Rangers Lamon Brown and Pat Patten employed their tracking skills to run them down around 4:30 p.m. the next afternoon. Both were arrested; two dead hogs and four hunting dogs were seized. The hogs had been killed with a pocket knife after the dogs had pinned them down. The two men - N.B. and M.W. - have prior records for resource violations; the third, a juvenile, was released to his mother. A boat, truck, radios and other hunting-related items were also seized. Jenkins served as the IC and primary investigator. [John Mattox, CI, GRSM, 1/4]

Monday, February 7, 2000

00-033 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Rescue

Around 10:30 p.m. on the evening of February 2nd, park dispatch received a cell phone call from three backpackers near Clingmans Dome who reported that they were wet, exhausted and needed help. The three hikers - R.C., 18, K.H., 19, and M.H., 21, all from Tennessee - had parked at the Sugarlands Mountain trailhead along Little River Road, intending to hike up the trail and stay overnight at the Mount Collins shelter. Their itinerary called for a hike of about 12 miles through snow up to a foot deep, with a 3,000 foot elevation gain. During the night, two teams of rangers set out to locate the group - one leaving at 2 a.m. and heading up the Sugarlands Mountain trail from the Huskey Gap trail, the other departing at 4 a.m. and walking up to the trail via the unplowed road to Clingmans Dome. The two teams then worked toward each other. They reached the trio of hikers around 8:30 a.m. at a point about two miles south of the Clingmans Dome road. All were alert and conscious. Rangers hiked out with R.C. and M.H.; K.H., started to hike out, but was unable to continue and had to be carried out by a litter team through a foot of snow. Park snowplow operators opened a single lane up the Clingmans Dome road so that park vehicles could reach the hikers and evacuate them. Both M.H. and R.C. were okay; K.H. was examined by paramedics and released to her parents with advice to see her personal physician. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 2/4]

Friday, April 28, 2000

00-171 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - MVA with Fatality

M.L., 21, of Sevierville, Tennessee, was killed in a single-vehicle accident on the Gatlinburg Spur around 3 a.m. on Wednesday, April 26th. M.L.'s 1965 Jeep CJ left the roadway at a high speed and slammed into a rock wall. He was the sole occupant; there were no witnesses. M.L.'s

activities prior to the accident are being investigated by rangers Jerry Grubb and Bobby Fleming. [Keny Slay, DR, GRSM, 4/26]

Monday, May 1, 2000

99-364 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Follow-up: Car Clouting Arrests

On July 7, 1999, D.W. and R.S. were arrested and subsequently charged in a six count indictment for larceny from autos and auto theft. Both were found guilty at trial in federal district court in Knoxville last November. In March, D.W. was sentenced to 21 months incarceration and three years of supervised release and ordered to pay \$1,243 in restitution. On April 18th, R.S. was sentenced to nine months in prison and three years of supervised release and required to pay the same amount in restitution to victims. D.W. had been previously caught attempting to steal a vehicle by ranger Jerry Grubb in November, 1990. He was convicted of felony car theft and served seven months for that offense. [Bill Acree, CI, GRSM, 4/28]

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

00-177 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Rescue

Park dispatch received a cell phone call from hiker J.G. just before 7 p.m. on April 26th. J.G., who was at the Derrick Knob shelter on the Appalachian Trail, reported that he was an insulin-dependent diabetic and that he was suffering from high blood sugar and flu-like symptoms, both of which prevented him from continuing his trip. Chuck Hester, a resources management employee, was working in the area; he contacted J.G. and confirmed the report, then stayed with him until ranger-medics and carry-out team arrived just after midnight. They decided to wait until morning to bring the patient out after consulting with medical control. J.G. was admitted to the University of Tennessee Hospital intensive care unit just after noon on the 27th. His blood sugar was recorded at 580, which is dangerously low. Helen McNutt was the IC. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 5/1]

Friday, May 5, 2000

00-189 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Attempted Suicide; Life Saved

On the evening of April 30th, ranger Steve Spanyer stopped to investigate a pickup truck parked along Laurel Creek Road near Cades Cove - an area where resource violations had previously occurred. Ranger Helen McNutt joined Spanyer as he searched the densely wooded area nearby. The rangers heard noises below their location on several occasions and Spanyer briefly saw the legs and feet of someone moving about. They continued surveillance of the area until the noise and movement stopped, then returned to the pickup truck. The rangers found the key in the ignition and a note taped to the steering wheel. Now suspecting a possible suicide, they hurried back into the woods. Spanyer took a different route and immediately saw a man hanging from a tree with a rope around his neck. The man's legs were draped across a fallen tree limb which partially supporting his weight; his face was blue and swollen. Spanyer ran down the hill and cut the rope. The rangers then administered oxygen and intravenous liquids and summoned help.

The man was transported to Blount Memorial Hospital and interviewed four hours later. He told Spanyer that his wife had recently left him and filed a restraining order to keep him from his young daughter. He purchased the rope at a Walmart earlier in the day, then drove the eleven-mile Cades Cove loop road, making a tape recording to his family regarding his impending death and giving directions on what to do with his body. Emergency room doctors estimated that the man would have died within five minutes had the rescue not occurred. He was transferred to the psychiatric care unit on May 1st. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 5/3]

Monday, May 22, 2000

00-213 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Fatal Bear Mauling

A woman from Cosby, Tennessee, was killed in a bear attack yesterday evening. The woman and her companion entered the park around noon to fish along the Little River. The man last saw her around 2 p.m. when the couple separated and he went fishing. He went to look for her about an hour later, came upon her day pack, then found her body off the trail. There were two bears at the body, a large adult female and a yearling. Another fisherman hiked to Elkmont campground to report the incident around 5 p.m., and rangers were on scene at 6:05 p.m. Two bears were in the area and rangers shot and killed them. The bears are being taken to the University of Tennessee for necropsies to ensure that they were the animals involved in the attack. As a precautionary measure, park officials have closed backcountry campsites 21, 23, 24 and 30, all of which are in the Little River drainage. The woman's name is being withheld pending notification of family members. A news conference is scheduled for 11 a.m. this morning. This is the first-ever fatality from a black bear attack to occur in the park. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 5/21]

Tuesday, May 23, 2000

00-213 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Fatal Bear Mauling

The name of the victim of the fatal bear attack on Sunday has been released. She was G.B., 50, of Cosby, Tennessee, an elementary school teacher at Jones Cove Elementary School. Her companion was her former husband, Ralph Hill, 52, also of Cosby. Park officials are almost 100% certain that the two bears shot by rangers at the scene are the ones involved in the attack, but are still awaiting the results of the necropsy to confirm this assessment. It appears that the attack was unprovoked. G.B. was an experienced hiker who was familiar with the park. Her day pack contained food but was not disturbed by the animals. The adult female, which had been tagged in 1998 by University of Tennessee wildlife biologists for research purposes, had never shown aggressive tendencies towards people and was evidently a truly wild bear. Most bear-human conflicts in the Smokies result from a bear's having been fed human food and becoming habituated to it. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 5/22]

Friday, June 16, 2000

00-287 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - MVA with Fatality

On June 3rd, C.M., 10, of Knoxville, was killed in an accident on the Newfound Gap Road near the Collins Creek picnic area. C.M. was a passenger in the rear seat of her family vehicle, which was headed south when struck head-on by a car that had swerved into the on-coming lane while attempting to avoid a rear-end collision with stopped traffic. C.M.'s father, mother and sister were also injured in the accident, but none of the injuries were life-threatening. The three passengers in the other vehicle were uninjured. Ranger Derrick Maxey is the lead investigator. [John Mattox, CI, GRSM, 6/7]

Sunday, June 18, 2000

98-774 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Follow up on Car Clout

During a routine contact at the Mingus Mill parking lot on December 25, 1998, ranger John McCutcheon determined that the license plate of a vehicle he was checking had been stolen in a car clout the previous July in the Alum Cave area of the park. McCutcheon also found that the driver was using the same victim's stolen driver's license, and that the 1995 Jeep Cherokee he was driving had been stolen from Georgia. A search of the vehicle led to the discovery of numerous stolen items, including about 70 credit cards, cell phones, license plates, and a wide variety of other property. The driver continued to maintain the false name until he learned that his fingerprints would be checked. He then identified himself as T.C., age 42. T.C., a career thief with a long criminal record, was a fugitive with three outstanding felony warrants from two states against him. As a result of the arrest, about 60 cases were closed from around the southeast, including a number from NPS and Forest Service areas. T.C. was indicted for breaking and entering motor vehicles, larceny, interstate transportation of a stolen vehicle, possession of a stolen vehicle, possession of unauthorized access devices with intent to defraud, credit card fraud, and interstate transportation of stolen credit cards. On May 24th, T.C. entered a guilty plea to each of these charges and was sentenced to six years in prison and ordered to pay \$42,000 in restitution. McCutcheon and ranger Jon Murphy led the investigation. [John Mattox, CI, GRSM, 6/8]

Tuesday, June 20, 2000

00-213 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Follow-up on Fatal Bear Mauling

G.B., 50, of Cosby, Tennessee, was killed in a bear attack in the park on May 21st. The preliminary results of an autopsy on her show that her death was accidental and the result of blood loss due to injuries consistent with those inflicted by a bear or bears. The post-mortem report is consistent with the findings and observations of rangers and biologists who have been investigating her death. G.B. and her former husband, Ralph Hill, entered the park that day to hike and fish in the Little River about two-and-a-half miles from Elkmont campground. They split up for about an hour while Hill fished. When he went to rejoin her around 3 p.m., he found her body with two bears still nearby. Rangers arrived and shot both the 122-pound female and her yearling female offspring. A necropsy of both animals confirmed that both had preyed upon G.B.'s remains. The autopsy puts to rest rumors of possible foul play. [Bob Miller, PAO, GRSM, 6/19]

Sunday, July 2, 2000

00-346 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - MVA with Fatality

Taxi driver R.O., 82, of Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, died as a result of injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident on June 23rd. R.O. was transporting three hikers from Cades Cove back to their vehicle parked at Newfound Gap when he lost control of his cab and crashed into a stone retaining wall at Chimneys picnic area at about 3:45 p.m. Two passengers also were injured. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 6/30]

Tuesday, July 18, 2000

00-401 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Pursuit, Arrest

On the afternoon of July 15th, Gatlinburg police asked rangers to be on the lookout for a blue Honda Civic whose driver failed to stop for a bicycle officer who was trying to investigate an alcohol violation. Minutes later, ranger Kevin Moses spotted the car near Laurel Falls. The driver failed to respond to lights and siren and a lengthy pursuit ensued down Little River Road. Two other rangers joined the pursuit. The driver exceeded speeds of 80 mph and recklessly passed other cars on the narrow, low-speed road. Ranger Helen McNutt and Townsend police setup a roadblock; when McNutt motioned for the driver to stop, though, he attempted to run her down and kept on going. Townsend officers took over control of the pursuit when the car left the park and after it had rammed one of their patrol cars. The Honda finally stopped near Walland, about 30 miles from the point where the pursuit began. Rangers arrested the male driver and his female passenger. Numerous charges are pending, including a felony charge for reckless endangerment. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/17]

Wednesday, July 19, 2000

00-404 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Serious Visitor Injury

Park dispatch received a cell phone report of an injured horseback rider four miles from the Tremont Environmental Education Center just before 3 p.m. on Sunday, July 16th. Ranger/medic Ken Davis and a carryout crew responded and found T.M. of Sevierville complaining of intense pain in his abdomen and hip. MAST trousers were employed and T.M. received intravenous fluids and medications. Despite these measures, his blood pressure and other vital signs indicated the need for urgent action. Davis requested a helicopter evacuation, and a UH-600 Army Blackhawk was dispatched from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The litter crew carried T.M. almost a mile to a landing zone, where he was winched onto the hovering ship at 8 p.m. and took him to the University of Tennessee Hospital. T.M.'s condition was upgraded from critical to guarded by Monday morning. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 7/17]

Wednesday, August 2, 2000

00-443 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - MVA with Fatality

C.W., 50, of Maryville, Tennessee, was killed in a single-vehicle accident on Foothill Parkway West near Look Rock on July 30th or 31st. Ranger Al Voner found her van more than 100 feet down a heavily wooded embankment on Monday afternoon. There were no skid marks or other tell-tale signs indicating an accident. It appears that it occurred sometime on Sunday night or early on Monday morning. According to family members, C.W. was depressed. Numerous prescription drugs and alcohol were found in the van. Rangers were assisted by the Blount County Sheriff's Office's mobile crime lab. The county rescue squad employed the jaws-of-life to extricate C.W. from the van. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/1]

Monday, August 7, 2000

00-454 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Drug Lab

On the afternoon of June 5th, ranger Jonathan Holter came upon an unoccupied car with its windows rolled down in the Mingus Mill parking lot. Holter checked the vehicle and saw drug paraphernalia and a partially concealed pistol inside. Two men and a woman soon returned to the car. Holter contacted them and discovered that they had methamphetamine and other drug paraphernalia in their possession. The pistol was recovered and found to be loaded. Most of the ingredients and equipment for manufacture of methamphetamine were found during a search of the vehicle. One of the occupants was a fugitive from Kentucky, wanted in that state for a variety of offenses, including DUI, possession of methamphetamine, manufacture of methamphetamine, and fleeing to elude. The DEA and North Carolina SBI have been notified and have classified the operation as a "rolling methamphetamine lab." They will be processing the car as a hazmat scene and assisting in the investigation. All three were arrested and will appear in court today. [John Mattox, SA, GRSM, 8/6]

Friday, August 11, 2000

00-471 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Pursuit

Ranger Helen McNutt was on her way from Cades Cove to Maryville, Tennessee, on the evening of August 9th when she came upon a three-car accident about five miles from the park entrance. Since there were no other emergency vehicles on scene, she stopped to render assistance. An older model Dodge van pulled away almost immediately. Bystanders shouted to McNutt that the van driver was the cause of the accident and that he was drunk. After determining that there were no serious injuries, McNutt began to follow the van, which was being driven on a flat tire. An unmarked Blount County Sheriff's Office vehicle took control of the pursuit through Townsend, but McNutt took over the lead position when the van entered the park. Top speed during the pursuit was between 35 and 40 mph. By this time, the flat tire had been destroyed and the van was riding on the wheel rim. Heavy smoke was coming from the front end and sparks were evident as the rim gouged the road surface. The driver was riding the centerline of Laurel Creek Road. Fearing an accident, McNutt made the decision to ram the van, which was forced off the road into a pullout. The two occupants were arrested. The driver will be charged initially by the county; federal charges will follow. The female passenger will be charged by the county for public intoxication. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/10]



Wednesday, August 16, 2000

00-489 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Rescue

On the afternoon of August 2nd, rangers responded to reports of a woman stranded in mid-stream by rapidly rising water in the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River, a classic Appalachian stream with a very steep gradient and partially obstructed channel. J.B., 26, of Hershey, Pennsylvania, had waded across the river while the water was low, then tried to wade back after heavy rains had swollen the river's volume. She made it part way across before deciding it was too risky to continue on her own, then climbed onto a partly submerged boulder. Rangers threw her a line, used the line to shuttle protective equipment to her, then ferried an inflatable kayak across the river and set up a Tyrolean highline to raise J.B. off the rock and pull her to the near-side shore. J.B.'s parents and boyfriend were on scene and watched the entire rescue. [Kevin Moses, GRSM, 8/14]

Thursday, August 17, 2000

00-492 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Contractor Electrocution

R.B., 30, of Manitoba, Canada, the manager of a bridge construction project on Foothills Parkway, was electrocuted yesterday afternoon while trouble-shooting a machine used to mix concrete. R.B.'s co-workers performed CPR on him until emergency service units arrived. He was then flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where he succumbed to his injuries. R.B. was a manager for PCL, Inc., a Florida company that has a contract to build two of ten bridges in the "missing link" section of the parkway. This is the second fatality to occur at the same job site in the past year. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 8/17]

Friday, September 8, 2000

00-569 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Suicide

On the morning of September 4th, two hikers attempting to cross Mill Creek near the Abrams Falls parking area discovered a body lying near the stream. The hikers reported the discovery at the Cades Cove VC, then accompanied rangers to the scene. The 32-year-old male victim had died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. His car was found in a nearby parking lot and contained a recently-written will in which he left the car and its contents to an acquaintance. [Jack Piepenbring, DR, GRSM, 9/6]

Thursday, September 14, 2000

00-581 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Kidnapping Investigation

On the morning of Monday, September 4th, visitors heard a man yelling for help from inside the trunk of a parked vehicle. They entered the unlocked car and attempted to remove the rear seat to free him. As they were doing so, he found his keys underneath him in the trunk and passed them to his rescuers. They opened the trunk, helped him out, provided food and water, and called 911.

The 42-year-old victim told rangers that a "homeless" man had approached his car the previous Friday afternoon as he was getting onto I-81. He said that the man asked him for money and food, then struck him on the side of his face with a pipe, knocking him unconscious. When he awoke, he found that he was locked in the car's trunk and that it was in motion. He lapsed into unconsciousness, later waking up to find that the car was stopped. There he remained until discovered on Monday. He was taken by ambulance to a hospital for a precautionary exam and was found to be in good condition. He said that the only thing stolen from him was his cash. The FBI was scheduled to administer a polygraph examination yesterday. [John Mattox, SA, GRSM, 9/13]

Friday, October 6, 2000

00-581 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Kidnapping Investigation

On Monday, September 4th, visitors heard a man pounding inside a car trunk and calling for help at the Deep Creek overlook on the Newfound Gap Road and freed him from his confinement. Ronald Howard told rangers that he had been assaulted, robbed and kidnapped while returning home from work the previous Friday and that he'd been locked in the trunk since then. Howard's account of the incident and a medical exam led investigators to seriously question the validity of his story. On October 3rd, Howard declined to cooperate further in the investigation. Unless new information is obtained, the case will be closed. The FBI assisted in the case, but did not open an investigation. Lisa Jenewein and Derick Maxey were the investigating rangers. [John Mattox, SA, GRSM, 10/5]

Monday, November 13, 2000

00-692 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Drug Lab

On November 6th, ranger Albert Faria approached a 1984 Dodge Ram off Newfound Gap Road at the Thomas Divide trailhead regarding an out-of-bounds camping violation. The two occupants - W.B. and K.W., both 28 - were noticeably nervous, and Faria could smell the odor of ether in the truck. Faria asked if he could conduct a consent search of the vehicle, but was denied permission. W.B. said that his license was suspended and that he had a weapon in the truck. While retrieving the weapons, Faria detected a very strong odor of ether in the vehicle and saw cans of starter fluid on its floorboard. W.B. admitted to being an IV drug user and to having chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine in the vehicle. He also said that he'd been cooking meth for the past three months. Agents from DEA, the North Carolina Special Bureau of Investigations and Swain County responded along with a North Carolina decontamination unit and a hazmat unit from Knoxville. Investigation revealed that W.B. and K.W. were "cold-cooking" methamphetamine when Faria contacted them. Methamphetamine and enough ephedrine tablets to make about 25 grams of meth were found, along with a complete lab for production of the drug. W.B. and K.W. were charged with misdemeanor violations and with felony manufacturing of illicit narcotics (21 USC 841), which carries a prison sentence of ten years to life if convicted. [Lisa Slobodzian, DR, GRSM, 11/8]

Wednesday, December 27, 2000

00-767 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Rescue

South District rangers received a report of a 21-year-old man having a diabetic emergency at the Icewater Spring shelter on the Appalachian Trail late on the morning of December 20th. When ranger John McCutcheon arrived, he found that the man was suffering from hypothermia and diabetic ketoacidosis - a condition that can easily progress to diabetic shock and death if not treated. McCutcheon warmed him and began administering fluids. A carryout team staged at the Newfound Gap parking lot on Highway 441 while efforts were made to obtain a helicopter. The team had carried him about two miles north on the trail when a National Guard helicopter arrived and medevaced the man to Sevier County Medical Center. The operation was conducted in bitter cold temperatures and deep snow, but the weather was clear and there were no winds at the time. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 12/26]

Wednesday, December 27, 2000

00-768 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Body Found

Two hikers contacted a member of the park's road crew just before noon on December 21st and reported an unconscious man on the Alum Cave trail. Rangers reached the spot within the hour and found a 43-year-old man lying in the snow just below Arch Rock. After consultation with medical control, he was pronounced dead at the scene. It appears that he was on a day hike and simply went to sleep on the trail. A team comprised of a dozen employees carried the body out. [Jason Houck, CR, GRSM, 12/22]

Friday, March 30, 2001

01-019 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Death of Chief Ranger

Jason Houck, the park's chief ranger, died yesterday in a Knoxville hospital, apparently from complications following surgery for cancer. He had expected to make a full recovery from the operation. Jason's funeral will be at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 1st, at the First Baptist Church of Gatlinburg, 111 Oglewood Lane, Gatlinburg, TN 37738 (865-436-2885). The family will receive mourners at 1:30 p.m. at the church. The family has asked for a National Park Service presence, so uniforms are suggested where appropriate. The uniform of the day will be Class A winter, but without either the Ike or dress jackets. No decisions have been made yet on wearing of defensive equipment or on flowers or other memorials. A follow-up notice will likely be posted either late this afternoon or sometime on Saturday. If you are planning on attending or making a contribution or sending condolences, please check cc:Mail or the Morning Report web page ([www.nps.gov/morningreport](http://www.nps.gov/morningreport)) late today or tomorrow for additional details. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 3/29-30]

Friday, March 30, 2001

01-019 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Follow-up: Death of Chief Ranger

Jason Houck, the park's chief ranger, died yesterday in a Knoxville hospital, apparently from complications following surgery for cancer. He had expected to make a full recovery from the operation. Jason's funeral will be at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 1st, at the First Baptist Church of Gatlinburg, 111 Oglewood Lane, Gatlinburg, TN 37738 (865-436-2885). The family will receive mourners at 1:30 p.m. at the church. To reach the church from downtown Gatlinburg, head north on U.S. 321 for about two miles. Uniformed and other employees will have a reserved section. All employees will gather outside the church at 3 p.m. and enter together. As noted previously, the uniform of the day is Class A winter, but without Ike or dress jackets. Employees who do not wear the Class A uniform can come in either their normal uniform or civilian attire. Law enforcement rangers should not wear weapons and equipment. Employees with badges should wear the black band on them; those without badges will be provided with special ribbons. Burial will be in the Gatlinburg area on Monday, but no time or location has yet been set. It will be open to all who wish to attend. There will be no auto procession. Flowers are welcome and should be sent to the church at the above address. Memorial gifts may be made to Church of God Home for Children, PO Box 4391, Sevierville, TN 37864. Condolences may be sent to the family c/o Superintendent, Great Smoky Mountains NP, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738. [Bob Miller, PIO, GRSM, 3/30]

Thursday, May 3, 2001

01-184 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - MVA with Fatality

A three-car accident on Newfound Gap Road on the afternoon of Sunday, April 29th, killed one man and injured four others. J.L.R., 51, of Sevierville died of injuries sustained in the head-on collision near Smokemont Campground. A preliminary investigation was conducted by rangers and North Carolina state troopers. It appears that a southbound 2001 Dodge Intrepid being driven by a 29-year-old Georgia man drifted across the highway's centerline and sideswiped a northbound Jeep Wrangler, causing its left front tire to blow. The driver of the Jeep lost control, veered sharply into the southbound lane, and hit J.L.R.'s 1999 Chrysler convertible head-on. J.L.R. was pried from his car and flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where he died of his injuries about an hour after the accident. His wife Wanda, 53, was also flown to the hospital, where she's in stable condition with pain in her chest and abdomen. The driver of the Jeep and his passenger and a passenger in the Intrepid were taken to two local hospitals, where they were treated and released. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs, GRSM, 4/30]

Wednesday, June 13, 2001

01-274 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Car Clouting Arrests

On May 30th, rangers received a report of a vehicle break-in at the Fork Ridge trailhead on Clingmans Dome Road. G.O. and J.M.G. reported that the passenger side window of their vehicle had been broken and that personal items were missing from the trunk, including several

bank credit cards in J.M.G.'s name. J.M.G. obtained an activity report from her credit card companies, which showed charges being made at merchants in Cherokee, Canton, and Maggie Valley, all in North Carolina. One of the charges was to a motel in Maggie Valley. On May 31st, a telephone call to the motel revealed that the suspects had paid for two nights of lodging and that they were still at the motel. The owners of the motel were instructed to call the police immediately, while a second phone call was made to the Maggie Valley Police Department. Within the hour, the suspects were apprehended by police. During questioning, J.S. of Strunk, Kentucky, said that he'd taken items from a vehicle in the park and that he'd given the credit cards to his wife. R.S. confirmed that she'd made the purchases and that her husband had given her the cards. J.S. is facing state misdemeanor charges for possession of stolen property and federal charges for larceny (16 USC 661) and is being held without bond; R.S. is being held on state misdemeanor charges for possession of stolen property, with additional state felony charges pending for credit card fraud. The S.s had their three minor children with them at the time of their apprehension. It appears that most of the purchases made by R.S. were for items for their children. The children have been placed with state children's protective services. [Lisa Slobodzian, GRSM, 6/6]

Wednesday, June 27, 2001

01-306 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Resource Violation Cases

On May 20th, J.B. and M.L.P., both of Cherokee, North Carolina, were stopped by rangers following a visitor's report of possible hunting within the park. The rangers set up surveillance at a parking area on one of the headwater streams of Bunches Creek. J.B. and his juvenile son were seen driving off in the suspect vehicle. After driving about a mile, J.B. stopped and picked up M.L.P., who had been hiding in the woods with 22 endangered and federally-protected southern brook trout in his possession. Rangers were able to track M.L.P. and J.B.'s movements back to the small stream from which the trout were taken. The two were charged with fishing in closed waters and possession and taking of a protected species. On June 12th, ranger Tony Welch found a bait container that indicated possible poaching in the Balsam Mountain Road area. A vehicle was found parked on a private logging road adjacent to the park. Welch followed tracks from the vehicle into the park and across a paved park road to the location of the bait container. The trail continued on into the lower drainage of Bunches Creek, which is closed to fishing to protect the brook trout. Welch was joined by other rangers and surveillance of the stream was begun. About two hours later, three men came out of the woods and stopped at the edge of the park road. Each of them looked up and down the road, then ran across to the other side, one at a time. Each was carrying a fishing pole and a bag. Holter identified himself and ordered them to stop; Cary Moore complied, but his two companions - D.S. and B.S. - fled. They were soon stopped and all three were arrested. Moore had a dozen brook trout in his possession and was charged with fishing in closed waters, use and possession of bait, taking of a protected species, and possession of a controlled substance (marijuana); B.S. was found in possession of 21 brook trout and was charged with fishing in closed waters, use and possession of bait, taking of a protected species and failure to obey a lawful order; D.S. was found in possession of 32 brook trout and was charged with the same infractions as B.S. Since D.S. was found to be wanted for escape from a county jail in Waynesville, North Carolina, he was taken into custody and returned to that county. Welch is the case agent. Southern Brook trout live only in high elevation streams and are

the only native trout in the Smokies. They can't compete with non-native rainbow and brown trout and soon disappear when the latter are present. [Lisa Slobodzian, GRSM, 6/7]

Wednesday, August 15, 2001

01-444 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Rescue

Rangers from all three of the park's districts and a technical rescue team from Gatlinburg FD rescued a family from the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River on the afternoon and evening of August 10th. The family - David and Lori Hurt, both 36, and their boys Nathan, ten, and Noah, five - had been swimming in the river when the area received heavy rains and the water rose without warning. When rescuers arrived, the four Hurts were huddled together on a small jumble of boulders with rising Class III to Class IV whitewater all around them. Gatlinburg FD rescue swimmer Erik Preske swam to an island and rigged a far-side anchor, while rangers rigged a haul system on the near side, creating a Tyrolean highline over the family. Ranger Randy Scoggins was shuttled to the family on that line and secured each of them to a harness and to the line. They were then pulled to shore, one at a time. Ranger Jerry Grubb was IC and ranger Kevin Moses was ops chief. [Steve Kloster, Acting DR, North District, GRSM, 8/13]

Monday, September 3, 2001

01-486 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Ginseng Poaching

Ranger Larry Hartman spotted a Toyota pickup truck parked just outside the park's boundary on Highway 32 on the evening of August 26th. Over the past several years, East District rangers have arrested several ginseng diggers at this location who were poaching the plant inside the park. A check of the vehicle's registration revealed that it was associated with people who had been arrested before for natural resource violations on the North Carolina side of the park. Hartman and rangers Greg Wozniak and Steve Kloster set up a surveillance operation inside the park. All three rangers could hear two people walking and talking in the park above their location, but were never able to see or contact them digging ginseng inside the park. At 7:30 p.m., Hartman and Wozniak saw two people walking west on the highway outside the park. As they approached, one of them began to run, but was quickly apprehended. The men were identified as B.J.H. and D.W. The pair had 448 ginseng roots in their possession, some of them marked as having come from the park. This is the first ginseng investigation at Great Smokies in which the rangers did not see or contact the diggers inside the park. The prosecution will be based on a contact made outside the park with persons in possession of ginseng roots marked as having come from the park. [Steve Kloster, Acting DR, North District, GRSM, 9/1]

Thursday, March 7, 2002

02-051 - Great Smokies NP (NC/TN) - Assault with Vehicle

On March 4th, B.J. Jr., the manager of a local sandwich shop in Cherokee, discovered that he had received four expired gift certificates valued at \$20 from some female customers. At closing time several hours later, B.J. saw a car traveling toward the park; inside were women that

appeared to him to be the ones who had given him the coupons. He followed them into the park, recklessly tailgated the car in an attempt to stop them, then passed them and set up a roadblock, which the women avoided by driving onto the grassy road shoulder. B.J. pursued them again, rammed the back of their car two times while traveling at high speed, then illegally passed them again and attempted a second roadblock. The women stopped, turned their car around, and fled back to Cherokee at speeds near 90 mph. B.J. continued pursuit. The women stopped at a gas station, where they called 911. Prior to the arrival of police, B.J. followed the women into the gas station and demanded money for the expired coupons. The women explained that they had not eaten in Cherokee and had no idea what he was talking about. B.J. realized his mistake and fled before police arrived. Based on the information the women supplied, B.J. was identified as the suspect. He was located and confessed to the incident. Charges will be filed after consultation with the U.S. Attorney's Office. Ranger Lori Harris and special agent John Mattox are working the investigation. [John Mattox, SA, GRSM, 3/6]

Wednesday, April 10, 2002

02-100 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Suicide

A local resident who stopped to investigate a parked car about 50 yards off Highway 129 on April 8th discovered the body of a 36-year-old Maryville, Tennessee, woman inside. Blount County deputies were first on scene and determined that the car was within exclusive jurisdiction in the park; rangers Randy Scoggins and Richard Aldridge and special agent Jeff Carlisle accordingly responded and investigated. The woman died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the chest. She was last seen before leaving for work on Easter Sunday, March 31st. A suicide note was found that dated from March 31st. [Bob Wightman, GRSM, 4/9]

Friday, April 19, 2002

02-116 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Serious Employee Injury

Cades Cove district ranger J.P. was injured in an off-duty bicycle accident on Little River road in the Blount County section of the park at 6:30 p.m. on April 16th. Rangers and Rural Metro EMS responded. J.P. was taken to Blount Memorial Hospital in Maryville, Tennessee, where he was found to have fractures of the clavicle and the femur just below his hip. He underwent surgery to repair the femur on April 17th. J.P. rides regularly with an experienced cycling group and was accompanied by ten other cyclists at the time of the accident. He's expected to be in the hospital for several days and have an extended period of rehabilitation. The case ranger is Mike Siler. [GRSM Communications Center, 4/18]

Friday, April 26, 2002

02-130 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Suicide

Rangers found the body of a 47-year-old Cincinnati, Ohio, man in the woods near Little River Road and the Sinks just after 11 a.m. on the morning of April 23rd. A search had begun at dawn when a check of the parked vehicle revealed that the owner had been reported missing by

relatives the previous day. The cause of death was a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Acting DR Randy Scoggins is the case ranger. [Jack Ramsden, Communications Center, GRSM, 4/23]

Monday, April 29, 2002

02-131 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Burglary

Blount County officers investigating a power outage to their radio system equipment in the Look Rock area on April 22nd found that two air quality monitoring buildings - one belonging to the NPS, the other to TVA - had been broken into. All three agencies have equipment located inside a fenced enclosure near the Look Rock tower. Rangers responded along with a county crime scene technician. They determined that one or more people had climbed the fence to get into the enclosure, then broken into both buildings and removed various items. The thefts occurred between April 20th and the time of discovery. Items removed included an NPS laptop computer, a CD writer, various tools and tool kits, a fire extinguisher, and two clocks. Various items were vandalized in the buildings and the locks on both doors were destroyed. The investigation is being handled jointly by officers from the three agencies. The NPS case ranger is Steve Spanyer. [Communications Center, GRSM, 4/26]

Wednesday, May 1, 2002

02-138 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Camper Explosion with Serious Injury

R.C., 71, a campground host at Cosby Campground, was badly burned in a propane gas explosion around 5 p.m. on April 26th. Ruth and her husband, F.C., had just left the campground contact station and returned to their camper trailer. As Ruth started to prepare dinner, she turned the propane stove burner on, apparently leaving it on for longer than normal, and used a gas lighter to start the burner. The lighter ignited the gas vapors in the trailer, causing a huge explosion that consumed the entire kitchen, dining and sitting area of the trailer. R.C., who was standing over the stove, was badly burned on her face, forehead, ears, head, hands and arms. F.C. was sitting on the sofa in the sitting area of the trailer when the explosion occurred; he suffered only singed hair and was not injured. He ran to assist his wife, threw a coat over her head, extinguished the fire in her hair, and took her outside of the trailer. F.C. then called over the park radio for help; ranger Steve Kloster and visitor use assistant Bob Zydanowicz responded from the Cosby Ranger Station and provided medical assistance. After calling for help and making sure his wife was safe outside of the trailer, F.C. went back inside the trailer and extinguished a fire that was starting to burn in the cabinets and sofa. R.C. was transported to Cocke County Baptist Hospital, then flown to Elander Burn Center in Chattanooga. She remains in the burn center in critical but stable condition with second degree burns on her face, ears, head, hands and arms. [Rick Brown, DR, GRSM, 4/28]

Tuesday, May 28, 2002

02-184 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Stolen Vehicle; Weapons Violations



On May 19th, ranger Heath Soehn was on his way to backup a ranger who was making a DUI stop on the Foothills Parkway Spur when he came upon a van on the Gatlinburg bypass with its muffler dragging and shooting sparks along the roadway. Soehn called in the van's plate, then stopped it and quickly advised the driver, J.W., of his dragging muffler. Passenger Billy Runyuns jumped out of the van and hastily repaired the muffler. Soehn then cleared from the stop and continued to help the ranger with the DUI stop. Dispatch contacted Soehn just after he'd cleared and told him that the van was stolen. Soehn turned around, relocated the van, and followed it northbound on the spur, intending to pull it over near the DUI stop so that he'd have backup immediately available. The van did not stop, however, until just before Pigeon Forge and at the end of the spur. Soehn made his approach from the passenger side, surprising both J.W. and Runyuns. He then took Runyuns out of the van, handcuffed him, and put him in his cruiser without incident. By that time, a Pigeon Forge police officer had arrived as backup and assisted Soehn in handcuffing and arresting J.W.. Criminal history checks confirmed that the van was stolen and revealed that both men were fugitives from justice from North Carolina on the charges of burglary and forced entry while using a handgun. The check also revealed that Runyuns was a convicted felon and had served a prison sentence for a violent crime involving a firearm. A search of the van revealed a .40 caliber semi-automatic pistol with two loaded magazines under the passenger seat and a TEC-DC9 9mm machine gun type pistol with a silencer and two loaded magazines on the seat behind the drivers compartment. The TEC-9 pistol turned out to be stolen as well. Both Runyuns and J.W. have been arraigned in federal court on charges of being fugitives in possession of firearms; in addition, J.W. was charged with possession of a stolen vehicle and Runyuns with being a felon in possession of a firearm. Charges concerning the stolen firearm and possible illegal firearms charges will be pursued through assistance from ATF. [Rick Brown, DR, GRSM, 5/22]

Friday, May 31, 2002

02-194 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Car Clout Arrest

During the months of March and April, a number of car clouts occurred in the park, most of them at trailheads in the Sugarlands and Roaring Fork motor nature trail area. There was no visible damage to the vehicles in most of the break-ins, and in almost each case purses with credit cards were stolen. The credit cards were normally used to make purchases in department stores in the Sevierville and Pigeon Forge area; occasionally, bank cards were used to withdraw cash from ATM machines in the area. Department store video surveillance tapes were examined and video footage was found of a man and woman using credit cards that had been stolen from vehicles in the park. The video footage of the suspects was of good enough quality to identify them, but there were no leads at the time as to who they might be. On April 30th, special agent Jeff Carlisle set up a surveillance operation at the Rainbow Fall trails parking lot. After watching the lot for a couple of hours, Carlisle saw a pickup truck with three people pull in and a man and woman exit from it and begin looking into car windows. Carlisle identified them as the man and woman in the surveillance tapes. They got back into the truck and drove toward the Grotto Falls trail parking area. Carlisle followed and called for backup. The pickup was stopped with assistance from Gatlinburg PD officers and ranger Robert Harris. The three people in the truck were identified as M.V., M.G.V., and J.E.C. As a result of physical evidence, video tapes, and

good interviewing, all three were charged with four separate felony counts of theft from motor vehicles. Carlisle is the primary case agent. [Rick Brown, DR, GRSM, 5/23]

Thursday, June 20, 2002

02-251 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Methamphetamine Lab Arrests

On June 7th, ranger Brad Headley observed a pickup truck driving over the centerline on Lakeview Drive Road. Headley stopped the truck, which he found to be occupied by three men - J.W., D.S. and B.C. A used syringe was in plain sight; this led to a search and the discovery of 25 grams of methamphetamine, a propane tank containing anhydrous ammonia, a gas generator, and other chemicals and equipment commonly used to manufacture methamphetamine. Vapors were issuing from the generator and tank, so a DEA-approved hazardous material crew was dispatched to cleanup the vehicle. The subsequent investigation led to the search of a residence in the Bryson City area and the recovery of additional chemicals and equipment used to manufacture methamphetamine. The three men were arrested and have been indicted for manufacture and distribution of the drug. The maximum penalty is life in prison; the minimum penalty is ten years in jail. Rangers Tony Welch and Sam Brittain, special agent John Mattox, and DEA, SBI and Swain County officers assisted in the case. [John Mattox, SA, GRSM, 6/14]

Thursday, June 20, 2002

02-252 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Three MVA's

Rangers handled three serious motor vehicle accidents with injuries to visitors within an eight-hour period on June 15th. Two vehicles collided on Newfound Gap Road near the Oconaluftee VC just after four p.m. One occupant was transported to a medical facility in Cherokee by Cherokee Tribal EMS. At 7 p.m., two vehicles collided head-on near the Fork Ridge trailhead on the Clingmans Dome Road, injuring eight people. Three were transported by helicopter - two by University of Tennessee Lifestar and one by Mission Air Medical Ambulance out of Asheville. The other five were taken by ambulance to University of Tennessee Hospital in Knoxville and Fort Sanders-Sevier Medical Center in Sevierville. Assisting agencies included Gatlinburg FD and EMS and Cherokee Tribal Fire and EMS. One of the injured persons is not expected to survive. At 11:30 p.m., the operator of a motorcycle lost control of his bike on US 441 at Beech Branch and went off the road. The two people on the motorcycle were airlifted to UT Hospital by Lifestar. Gatlinburg PD, FD and EMS assisted. The case rangers for these three accidents are, respectively, Lisa Jenewein, Jonathan Holter, and Heath Soehn. [Jack Ramsden, Comm Center, GRSM, 6/16]

Wednesday, July 10, 2002

02-296 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Fugitive Arrested

On June 20th, backcountry ranger Gene Wesloh contacted a man regarding a backcountry permit violation at a remote location in the North Carolina section of the park. A check was run for "wants" via park radio; he came back as not wanted, so he was issued a citation and released.

Three days later, the Polk County Sheriff's Office in Florida entered a fugitive warrant against the man. Since NCIC runs what is called a "delayed Q" on all entries - search inquiries for the previous 72 hours to see if any agencies have queried the files on the person or item being entered into the system - park dispatch was notified of this entry and forwarded the information to rangers for follow-up. Rangers and county officers talked and determined that there was reason to believe that the man was still in the park. Searches over a wide stretch of backcountry north of Fontana Lake over a two-day period led to the man's apprehension on the afternoon of June 29th. He will be extradited to Florida. Charges against the man included use of juveniles in pornography, distribution of pornography, and numerous counts of sexual involvement with minors. The area where the arrest was made was so remote that rangers had to relay news of the apprehension through Swain County EMS dispatch, hike several miles with the prisoner, then transport him via park boat to a waiting cruiser. [Jack Ramsden, Communications Center, GRSM, 7/1]

Friday, July 12, 2002

02-301 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Special Event

EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman and Senator Bill Frist (R-TN) visited the park on July 1st to discuss air quality issues. They stopped at the park's Sugarlands Visitor Center to look at several real-time air quality displays, then proceeded to Clingman's Dome, the highest acid deposition and air quality monitoring station in the eastern US, where they and regional media were briefed by park staff on the impacts of poor air quality on human health, vegetation, soils and water quality. They also discussed an on-going NPS/EPA study on the impacts of high levels of ozone on human health involving high elevation day hikers in the park and answered questions from the press. Several organized groups were issued permits for public assembly demonstrations during the visit. Demonstrations were held at both the Sugarlands Visitor Center and at Clingman's Dome. Prior to the visit, the park had received information that some groups or individuals were planning to disrupt the visit, and that at least one would attempt to throw a pie in Whitman's face. Despite these threats, the demonstrations were peaceful and kept under control by park staff. The visit was managed under ICS; North District DR Rick Brown was IC. (CRO, GRSM, 7/2]

Friday, July 12, 2002

02-305 - Great Smoky Mountains (NC/TN) - Attempted Suicide

Park dispatch received a frantic call on the evening of June 28th from a woman reporting that she was at her husband's vehicle on the Foothills Parkway and that she'd found a suicide note from him inside. The vehicle was parked near an unauthorized trail, and she told dispatchers that she was going to head up the trail in an effort to find him. Ranger Michael Nash, SA Jeff Carlisle and a local ambulance service responded. About 15 minutes after the first call, the woman called dispatch again via cell phone and reported that she'd found her husband hanging from a tree. She'd cut him down with a knife that he'd left on the ground by the tree, and he'd resumed breathing. The ambulance crew arrived within minutes and took over medical treatment. He was taken to the road, a distance of about 50 yards, then conveyed to a hospital.

Investigation revealed that the victim had been despondent over his impending divorce from his wife, and that the divorce was being forced on him because he was still married to another woman. He's expected to make a full recovery. [CRO, GRSM, 7/1]

Tuesday, August 20, 2002

02-392 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Serious Employee Injury

Park firefighter Carly Pearson took a fall and injured her back while fighting a fire in the Tiller Complex in Oregon on Saturday, August 17th. She was taken to the Rogue Valley Medical Center in Medford, Oregon, where she will remain for a week or more before returning to Tennessee. She will have surgery on her back today. The surgery is expected to last about eight hours; the objective is to stabilize/repair crushed vertebrae in her lower back. Her parents and fiancée, Southeast Region wildland-urban interface specialist Clint Cross, are with her. Flowers and cards can be sent to her at Rogue Valley Medical Center, 2825 East Barnett Road, Medford, OR 97504. [Mark Taylor, GRSM; Ken Garvin, SERO]

Friday, August 23, 2002

02-392 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Follow-up: Serious Employee Injury

Firefighter Carly Pearson, 26, from Maryville, Tennessee, sustained a serious back injury while on assignment to a fire in Oregon on Saturday, August 17th. Pearson was dispatched from the Smokies to Umpqua National Forest as a helicopter manager to help suppress what is now a 69,000-acre fire. Her injury occurred when she fell onto a rocky riverbank. She was transported to the Rogue Valley Medical Center in Medford, Oregon, where she underwent extensive back surgery on Tuesday to support three fractured vertebrae in her lower back. She will remain at the hospital for about a week before she returns to Tennessee. Superintendent Mike Tollefson had this to say: "We feel terrible over this tragic accident and feel personal concern over her injury and circumstances. Unfortunately, accidents can happen at any time, whether on the fire line, en route, or at the fire camp. We understand that she is getting exceptional care and receiving great support from the hospital, the community, and those she worked with. This severe fire season, which started earlier than normal, has placed significant demands on the National Park Service as well as other land management agencies. So far about 100 Smokies employees, some of whom have been dispatched multiple times, have assisted in fire suppression efforts in the West. Currently, we have six employees who are involved in some firefighting capacity and a 20-person crew is getting ready to be dispatched and will be staged in Knoxville today (Thursday)." [Nancy Gray, PIO, GRSM]

Wednesday, August 28, 2002

02-392 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (TN/NC) - Follow-up: Serious Employee Injury

Firefighter Carly Pearson, 26, from Maryville, Tennessee, sustained a serious back injury while on assignment to a fire in Oregon on Saturday, August 17th, and has since undergone surgery and is recuperating. The park has set up a fund to collect contributions for Carly. Send them to

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, c/o Leon Konz, Fire Management Officer, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, TN 37738. Please make checks payable to E&AA (NPS Employee and Alumni Association). Questions should be directed to Leon at 865-436-1247. [Nancy Gray, PIO, GRSM]

Wednesday, November 27, 2002

02-608 - Great Smoky Mountains NP (NC/TN) - Auto Accident Rescue, Life Saved

J.F.W., 42, of Harriman, Tennessee, was heading south on Route 441 toward Cherokee on the afternoon of November 18 when he lost control of his vehicle on the snow- and ice-covered road. The vehicle plunged 20 feet over a vertical wall, continued down a steep slope for another 30 feet, then came to rest upside down in the West Prong of the Pigeon River. J.F.W. suffered serious injuries in the accident. Although he was able to free himself from the vehicle, he was unable to pull himself out of the river. The air temperature at the time was below freezing and the water temperature was about 45 degrees. Ranger Steve Kloster, a park medic, was first on scene and was able to pull J.F.W. the rest of the way out of the river and begin medical treatment. By the time Kloster arrived, J.F.W. had been in the water for 35 to 40 minutes. Kloster found that J.F.W. was extremely hypothermic and had suffered fractured ribs, a fractured clavicle, and a six-inch laceration to his head. J.F.W. was stabilized at the scene; rangers, with the assistance of Gatlinburg FD personnel, then conducted a technical vertical litter raise up the embankment and vertical wall to the roadway. J.F.W. was taken to the University of Tennessee Medical Center by helicopter and admitted to the neurological intensive care unit in critical condition. The treatment provided at the scene undoubtedly saved J.F.W.'s life, even though rangers were hampered by the fact that he spoke only Chinese. [Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Wednesday, December 04, 2002

02-618 - Great Smoky Mountains National Park - Rescue of Injured Hiker

R.K., 42, of Gatlinburg suffered a compound fracture of her lower leg while hiking on the Baskins Creek "manway" on the afternoon of November 15. The manway is an unmaintained trail leading into the park from a community in Gatlinburg. R.K. was about two miles up the trail, hiking with a group of senior citizens, when she lost her footing in a rocky area and fell. Ranger Greg Wozniak provided initial treatment and size-up of the situation. Other rangers and park personnel responded, treated R.K., and transported her out via a very demanding overland litter evacuation. This evacuation was complicated by the fact that the unmaintained trail was located in an extremely rough creek drainage. A chainsaw was required to clear trees from the trail in order to get through with the litter. R.K. was transported to the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where she underwent extensive surgery to repair the fracture. Supervisory park ranger Steve Kloster served as IC for the incident. [Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Wednesday, December 11, 2002

02-628 - Great Smoky Mountains National Park - Accident with Serious Injury

N.H., 26 of Sevierville, Tennessee, was traveling south on the Foothills Parkway Spur around 1:30 a.m. on December 4 when he entered a right-hand curve at a high rate of speed, lost control of his vehicle, went off the road and hit three large trees, coming to a stop just prior to entering the Little Pigeon River. The vehicle suffered major damage upon impacting the trees, requiring an extensive extrication operation to remove N.H. from the wreckage. N.H. was transported to the University of Tennessee Medical Center by air ambulance and was admitted into the intensive care unit in guarded condition. He is presently listed in critical condition with a subdural hematoma, lacerated liver, fractured knee, and other internal injuries. The investigation indicates that alcohol may have been a major factor in the accident. [Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Friday, December 27, 2002

02-648 - Great Smoky Mountains National Park - DUI Checkpoint and Arrests

A multi-agency DUI (driving under the influence) checkpoint was established and operated on the Foothills Parkway spur between Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge between 11 p.m. on Friday, December 20, and 2 a.m. the following morning. Eight rangers, three Gatlinburg PD officers, and three Sevier County deputies participated in the operation, which was coordinated and managed by the park. A drug dog was also employed. About 1100 cars were stopped during the three-hour period. Thirteen drivers were detained for further investigation, including field sobriety tests. Five were arrested for DUI; one was arrested and charged with DUI and possession of a loaded firearm while under the influence. The man had a loaded rifle and a loaded .357 revolver in his possession, with the latter cocked and lying on the front passenger seat under a jacket. One case was made for possession of a controlled substance, and two people were cited for operating without drivers licenses. Even though traffic was backed up for about three-quarters of a mile at one point during the first hour of operation, only one negative comment was received during the entire time period. The rest were very supportive, giving only positive feedback. Several local residents interviewed at the checkpoint said that they'd never seen anything like the checkpoint and that they were glad to see it. None felt that the wait in traffic was an issue. [Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Wednesday, January 08, 2003

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Two Hikers Found in Separate Searches

Park employees located two lost hikers in separate but simultaneous incidents beginning late in the afternoon on New Year's Day. At about 4 p.m., 16-year-old A.A., of Cedar Grove, Indiana, started the mile-plus hike to Laurel Falls, but he forged ahead of his family and was last seen at about 5:30. Rangers were especially concerned because A.A. has mild cerebral palsy and functions mentally on about an eight-year-old level. Incident commander Rick Brown assigned

eight rangers to establish containment points around the search area and to conduct a hasty search of the Laurel Falls trail and two intersecting trails. By daylight, searchers had covered all of the 16 total trail miles without contacting A.A. At daylight, another dozen searchers were deployed as trackers to cover the trails and some high probability creek drainages. The area was totally fogged in, preventing any aerial search. At 11:40 a.m. on January 2, ranger Scott Kalna found the boy about six miles from the Laurel Falls trailhead and five miles beyond the falls. He was wet, cold and hungry but unharmed. A.A. reported that he stayed on trails and hiked until dark, then slept on the trail until daylight. Dense fog throughout the night limited visibility to three feet or less at times, so rangers believe that it is possible that searchers could have walked past A.A. in the fog without seeing him. At about the same time the park was mobilizing for the A.A. search, rangers in the Cades Cove District received a report of a lost ten-year-old girl on the Abrams Falls trail. Through a series of miscommunications among family members, B.T. of Evanston, Illinois, became separated from her parents and sister and ended up hiking over three miles down the trail by herself. Based upon the parents' report of a suspicious-looking man at Abrams Falls, coupled with witness reports from other hikers, rangers were concerned for a time that B.T. may have been abducted. The witness reports proved to be inconsistent, however, so a contemplated "Amber Alert" was never issued. Ranger Ken Davis found B.T., still on the trail and uninjured, just after 10 p.m. on New Year's Day.

[Submitted by Bob Miller, PAO]

Thursday, February 06, 2003

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Fatal Rollover Accident into Little River

A vehicle was reported overturned and submerged in the Little River about three-and-a-half miles east of the Townsend Wye just before 11 p.m. on Sunday, February 2. Rangers and rescuers from three fire and rescue agencies responded and found a 1991 Ford Escort completely underwater and unstable due to the current and rocky bottom. Rescue workers got to the Escort and secured it by rappelling down and attaching a tow cable from a wrecker. They found C.C., 66, of Virginia Beach, Virginia, inside. He was flown by helicopter to the University of Tennessee Hospital, where he was pronounced DOA. Investigators are trying to determine whether C.C. died from drowning or from injuries sustained in the crash. Jack Piepenbring was IC; Scot Kalna and Michael Nash are the investigating rangers.

[Submitted by Jack Ramsden, Communications Center]

Friday, March 28, 2003

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Stolen Vehicle and Weapons Conviction

On March 25th, B.G.R. entered a guilty plea to several felony charges in federal district court in Knoxville. On May 19, 2002, B.G.R. and Jamie Wilson were found to be in possession of a stolen motor vehicle and two stolen firearms. B.G.R., who has prior felony convictions, was named in a five-count indictment. He entered guilty pleas to three of them - transportation of a stolen motor vehicle in interstate commerce, transportation of two stolen firearms in interstate

commerce, and being a felon in possession of a firearm. B.G.R. was sentenced to 15 years in jail and three years supervised probation upon release; he was also ordered to pay \$300 in restitution to the victim and complete a 500-hour drug rehabilitation program. Ranger Heath Soehn was the case ranger.

[Submitted by Jim Northup, Chief Ranger]

Monday, March 31, 2003

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Fatal Airplane Crash Near Clingmans Dome

The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) advised park dispatch of a possible downed aircraft in the vicinity of Clingmans Dome just after 10 p.m. on March 27th. Rangers working with CAP and the FAA determined that the aircraft was a Cessna 172 operated by C.W., 42, of Seymour, Tennessee. C.W. had flown out of Columbia, South Carolina, with one passenger on board. The passenger was dropped off in Pickens, South Carolina, and C.W. had continued on to his destination in Knoxville, Tennessee. Around 9 p.m., C.W. told FAA that he was having some problems. Almost immediately after the transmission, the FAA lost both voice and radar contact with C.W. Shortly thereafter, other commercial aircraft in the area reported a weak ELT signal emanating from the park. CAP began efforts to find the plane around 9:30 p.m. They confirmed the ELT signal, which was coming from the Clingmans Dome area, but had to terminate operations because of turbulence. Ranger and CAP members headed for Clingmans Dome, arriving around 1 a.m. They used handheld ELT receivers to pinpoint the location where the Cessna went down and found the crash site about a mile east of the dome and 40 yards south of the Appalachian Trail on the North Carolina side. They found that C.W. had been killed in the crash. At 6,643 feet, Clingmans Dome is the highest point in Tennessee and straddles the Tennessee/North Carolina border. This was the first airplane crash in the park since May, 1999, when another Cessna 172 crashed about two miles south of the Appalachian Trail. Park records show that there have been a total of 45 aircraft crashes in the park since record-keeping began in 1928. Rangers are working with the NTSB and FAA on the accident investigation. The aircraft owner's insurance company (C.W. had rented the plane) has been contacted and asked to arrange to have the aircraft removed.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Tuesday, May 13, 2003

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Rape and Homicide

On Tuesday, May 6th, A.L.S., 20, broke into the apartment of S.J., 25, in Maryville, Tennessee, and raped her. A.L.S. then kidnapped S.J. and transported her to the Look Rock area on the Foothills Parkway. At Look Rock, A.L.S. pushed S.J. off an overlook and she fell to her death. On Friday, May 9th, Maryville detectives arrested A.L.S., who confessed to the burglary, rape and kidnapping. Rangers were notified of the situation and responded to the spot where S.J.' body was found. Both the state and park have jurisdiction on the parkway; following discussion, it was decided that the Blount County Sheriff's Department would handle the death



investigation. After the scene was processed, S.J.'s body was taken to the University of Tennessee, where an autopsy was performed. The results of the autopsy revealed that she died from injuries sustained in the fall. A.L.S. is being held in the Blount County jail in lieu of bonds totaling \$725,000. A.L.S. has been charged with aggravated burglary, especially aggravated rape, especially aggravated kidnapping and first degree murder. Investigators have determined that S.J. and A.L.S. had never met prior the incident. S.J. was scheduled to graduate from the University of Tennessee on Saturday. For a related news story, go to <http://www.thedailytimes.com/sited/story/html/130784>.

[Submitted by Jack Piepenbring, District Ranger, Cades Cove District]

Friday, July 18, 2003

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Girl Bitten By Copperhead Snake

A 13-year-old girl was bitten by a 20-inch-long copperhead snake at the Sugarlands riding stables on the morning of July 13th. The girl was helping her sister, who is an employee at the riding stables. She was in a shed where a large pile of plastic floor grates had been stacked and was picking through the grates when she was bitten on the right ring finger. Another employee used a suction device on the bite in an attempt to extract the venom; she was then transported by private vehicle to a local hospital in Sevierville by her sister. By the time she reached the hospital, her arm was severely swollen. She was flown by medical helicopter to Children's Hospital in Knoxville, where she was last reported to be in critical but stable condition. Surgery may be required.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Tuesday, July 22, 2003

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Car Clout Arrests

Over the course of the past several months, more than 45 car clouts have occurred in the park, mostly in the Little River area. On July 11th, a special operations group was formed in an effort to apprehend the thieves. Area supervisor Michael Nash served as the incident commander. On July 12th, rangers conducted surveillance operations at five locations in the Little River area. Just before 2:30 p.m., ranger Jonathan Holter saw a man break into three different vehicles in the Alum Cave trailhead parking area and take items from them. Holter called for backup and continued to watch the man and his companion. When they got back into their car and appeared ready to drive away, Holter slipped out of the woods, approached the vehicle, and ordered the driver to stop. Holter detained the pair until ranger Greg Wozniak could arrive and assist with the arrests. N.E., 45, of Limestone, Tennessee, was charged with theft of property, unauthorized entry, possession of morphine, and possession of marijuana; B.P., 46, of Greenville, Tennessee, was charged with conspiracy to commit a crime (car clout) and possession of marijuana. The investigation is continuing. Leads have been developed that may tie N.E. and B.P. to other car

clout incidents in the park.  
[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Wednesday, July 30, 2003  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Visitor Killed in Moped Accident

J.C.G., 17, of Montevalo, Alabama, was fatally injured while operating a rental moped on Little River Road on the morning of July 28th. J.C.G. and his father, R.L.G., 42, were riding west on two separate mopeds they had rented from a Gatlinburg rental shop. They had ridden about 11 miles through the park and were about a mile east of the Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area when J.C.G. reportedly lost control of his cycle and dumped the bike on the roadway. He was thrown across the centerline and directly into the path of a minivan driven by a visitor from Missouri. J.C.G. was apparently killed instantly when at least one wheel of the van passed over him. The accident occurred as J.C.G. was coming out of a right-hand curve into a straight section. Both J.C.G. and his father were wearing helmets. Rangers were assisted at the scene by paramedics from the Gatlinburg Fire Department. No charges have been filed in the incident.  
[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Friday, August 01, 2003  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Drowning in Little River

On July 19th, the park was notified of a possible drowning in the area of the Sinks on the Little River. Rangers from Cades Cove and North District, campground personnel from Cades Cove and Elkmont, and rescue and EMS units from Blount County and Gatlinburg responded. They found that W.R., 15, of Canton, North Carolina, had fallen while crossing the river on the rocks above the Sinks and was swept over an eight- to ten-foot drop into a pool, where he became trapped underwater in the rocks. His father and bystanders worked to release him from the rocks; after being submerged for approximately 15 minutes, W.R. was finally brought to the surface. CPR was begun immediately. After several minutes of CPR, W.R. started breathing spontaneously about four times a minute, but remained unresponsive. Rescue personnel brought W.R. up a steep rock face to the road, where he was loaded into a Gatlinburg FD ambulance. He was transported to a landing zone in Wear's Valley, then flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville by Lifestar helicopter. On July 24th, the park was notified that W.R. had died without regaining consciousness. The case ranger is Helen McNutt, who was also IC of the rescue.  
[Submitted by Communications Center]

Thursday, August 07, 2003  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Operator of Rental Motor Scooter Killed in Accident

On August 4th, D.L., 48, of Kingsport, Tennessee, was operating a rental motor scooter on Little River Road when she crossed the double yellow line on a blind curve and ran into two Harley-Davidson motorcycles coming from the opposite direction. A car following the scooter then stopped to avoid the accident and was hit from behind by a pickup truck. Resource management personnel were first on scene, followed by rangers from Cades Cove and North District. Maintenance personnel assisted with traffic. D.L. and one of the motorcycle operators were taken by ambulance to Townsend, then flown from there to the trauma center at University of Tennessee Hospital. D.L. died there during surgery; the operator of the Harley was treated and released. This is the second fatality involving rental scooters on Little River Road in the past week. The case ranger is Bill Ramsey. IC at the scene was district ranger Jack Piepenbring. [Submitted by Communications Center]

Monday, August 11, 2003  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Drug Arrest

Ranger Greg Wozniak contacted W.N., 25, on the bank of the East Prong of the Little Pigeon River in the Greenbrier area on the afternoon of July 19th. W.N. had been swimming in the river with some friends just prior to the contact. The area is closed to the possession and consumption of alcohol beverages; as Wozniak approached W.N., he noticed he was drinking from an unmarked bottle, later found to contain beer. Wozniak was in the process of writing W.N. a citation for possession of alcoholic beverages when he noticed that Wozniak was acting suspiciously and seemed to be paying particular attention to his backpack, which was lying nearby. Concerned that it might contain weapons, Wozniak picked up the backpack and walked W.N. out toward the patrol vehicle. While carrying the backpack from the river bank to his patrol vehicle, Wozniak noticed that there was a very strong odor of marijuana coming from the backpack. He found a large plastic baggie containing several smaller baggies of prepackaged marijuana inside. W.N. later admitted that he sold the packages for \$90 to \$100. He was charged with possession of marijuana, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, and possession of alcoholic beverages in a closed area. [Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Friday, August 22, 2003  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Indictment for Assault on Ranger

On June 24th, ranger Joe Pond stopped a car in the park for traffic violations. The driver, D.H., 37, was acting suspiciously, so Pond attempted to frisk him. D.H. resisted the frisk and ended up struggling with Pond, who took D.H. to the ground. D.H. continued to resist, attempting to remove Pond's pistol. Pond sprayed D.H. several times with OC spray. D.H. continued his resistance for a short time, knocking the OC from Pond's hand, before Pond gained control and handcuffed him. D.H. was treated for OC exposure. A search of his car led to the discovery of marijuana and a number of firearms in the trunk. Investigation revealed that D.H. was a convicted felon who was wanted in Tennessee on several counts of attempted murder. The

incident was recorded on the patrol vehicle's in-car video system. On August 4th, D.H. was indicted for assaulting, resisting and opposing a federal officer, drug possession, and weapons possession by a convicted felon. The state of Tennessee will prosecute D.H. when the federal prosecution is completed.

[Submitted by John Mattox, Special Agent]

Wednesday, September 24, 2003  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Ginseng Poaching Arrest

While driving on Newfound Gap Road in the Sugarlands area of the park last week, ranger Heath Soehn noticed a man, later identified as M.C., 42, of Franklin, North Carolina, exit from the woods with his 16-year-old son and begin walking up the road. Based on his experience, Soehn judged that the two were not typical hikers, so he turned his vehicle around and drove back to talk to them. As he approached, the two quickly crossed the road and hurried down an embankment toward the Little River. Soehn followed and found them at the river, standing near a large boulder. Both appeared evasive and when questioned refused to discuss what they were doing in the area. The senior M.C., however, volunteered that they had not been doing anything illegal and did not have any drugs or firearms with them. Soehn looked around the immediate area and found a muddy backpack hidden behind the large boulder. Inside the backpack, he found 50 ginseng roots. Ranger Michael Nash arrived to assist Soehn, and began questioning the elder M.C., who eventually admitted ownership of the backpack and the 50 ginseng roots. He also admitted that they had dug up and collected several other ginseng roots and hid them along the trail when they ran down the embankment to evade Soehn. M.C. took Nash back up the trail and showed him where he had dumped another 150 roots. M.C. also admitted that he had been carrying a handgun with him; he took Nash back to the large boulder and showed him a two-shot, .38 caliber derringer hidden in a crevice on the opposite side of the rock from the backpack. M.C. was charged under 36 CFR for violations of preservation of natural features and possession of a firearm. The ginseng roots have been turned over to the Science and Natural Resource Division for preparation for replanting.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Monday, September 29, 2003  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Special Event: Hot Rod Rally

On the weekend of September 12th, the neighboring city of Pigeon Forge hosted the "Grand Rod Run," a hot rod rally which greatly impacts all of roads in Sevier County, including those in the park. Several rod runs are scheduled throughout the year in this area, but this event is typically the largest of them and brings higher than usual visitation to the county for the entire weekend. On Saturday night, following its usual pattern, traffic came to a complete standstill on US 441 from Gatlinburg to Pigeon Forge. The five-mile section of the Foothills Parkway Spur, which is within NPS jurisdiction, was the most affected by this backup. It took vehicles on the road more than three hours to cover the five-mile section from Gatlinburg to Pigeon Forge. Since the event

typically results in a number of traffic, drug, alcohol and disorderly conduct violations, the park this year supplemented its staff with two rangers from Blue Ridge and another two rangers from Shenandoah. On Friday evening, the park conducted an interagency sobriety checkpoint on the northbound spur near its Gatlinburg entrance. A total of nine rangers and three Sevier County deputies operated the checkpoint from 11:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. the next morning. About 1200 cars were stopped during that period. On Saturday evening, 15 rangers were assigned to work the spur to manage the traffic backups. Four bicycle patrol rangers and rangers on foot were employed; the rangers on bike proved to be particularly effective in patrol and enforcement. Over the course of the two-day event, rangers issued a total of 55 violations; there were six DUI arrests, three arrests for heroin possession, two arrests for public intoxication, 11 open container citations, and a variety of other cases, including disorderly conduct, weapons violation and possession of marijuana.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Thursday, October 23, 2003

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Ginseng Poaching Arrest

While on patrol on Route 32 on the east side of the park on September 27th, ranger Paul Williams came upon a car parked near Gilliland Cemetery. The area contains a large amount of American ginseng, which has been poached extensively in the past. Williams accordingly set up surveillance and asked ranger Steve Kloster to assist. Williams and Kloster concealed themselves in the woods and awaited the owner's return. Shortly thereafter, J.E.A., 32, of Sherills Ford, North Carolina, emerged from the woods and walked to his car. The ranger saw that he was carrying what appeared to be a pointed digging stick in one hand and plants in the other. They stopped him and found that he had American ginseng tops in his hand, 79 freshly-dug ginseng roots in his front cargo pants pocket, and 106 ginseng berries in his shirt pocket. He also was carrying a marijuana pipe and a small quantity of marijuana. Although he wasn't armed, the rangers found a loaded .22 caliber rifle during a consent search of his vehicle. J.E.A. admitted that he had camped at the Cosby Campground the previous night, but had not paid for his site. He and his girlfriend had vacated the campground that morning and had moved to a local motel. J.E.A. consented to a search of his motel room; although no additional ginseng was found there, the rangers discovered more drug paraphernalia. J.E.A. admitted that he had come to the park specifically for the purpose of digging ginseng. He was charged with gathering and possessing ginseng, possession of a controlled substance and driving on a suspended license and placed on a \$500 bond.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Friday, October 24, 2003

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Ginseng Poaching Arrest

While on patrol in the Big Creek area on October 4th, ranger Steve Kloster noticed what appeared a suspicious vehicle backed into a wooded area at Browns' Cemetery, just outside of

the park boundary. American ginseng is found in the area in quantity, so Kloster hid his cruiser and headed into the woods to begin surveillance of the vehicle. Kloster was about to put on his camouflage clothing when he heard someone walking toward him through the woods from inside the park. Kloster hid behind a large tree and watched two men in full camouflage clothing walk to within 25 feet of him, then drop to their knees and prepare to dig in the ground with a tool. Kloster came out from behind the tree, identified himself, and ordered the two men to stop and get on the ground. Both men immediately jumped up and starting running in opposite directions. Kloster followed one man, later identified as D.E.R., 46, of Boone, North Carolina. D.E.R. ran through the woods about 50 yards, exited the park onto State Route 32, then ducked into a large culvert that passed under the road. Kloster cut him off as he exited the culvert and placed him under arrest. He found a loaded .22 caliber handgun in the top pocket of D.E.R.'s overalls, but no ginseng. Kloster asked him if he'd taken any ginseng from the park; D.E.R. said that he hadn't. Rangers Cody Murphy, Kirby Stiles, and DeAnn Shults arrived to assist Kloster. Using man-tracking techniques, they backtracked D.E.R.'s movements and located a plastic ziplock baggie near Route 32 that contained 83 American ginseng roots. The roots were freshly dug and still had moist dirt on them. D.E.R. was arrested and charged with gathering and possessing ginseng plants, interfering with agency functions, and possession of a concealed weapon and placed on a \$5,000 bond. D.E.R.'s companion was not apprehended, but leads have been developed which may help in identifying him. The investigation is continuing under the lead of ranger Larry Hartman.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Thursday, October 30, 2003

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Vehicle Pursuit and Arrest

Ranger Scott Kalna was running radar on the Foothills Parkway Spur just before midnight on Thursday, October 23rd, when a vehicle passed northbound by at a high rate of speed. Kalna pursued and attempted to pull the driver over. The operator - later identified as J.S. of Wise, Virginia - slowed down and pulled into the right lane, but declined to stop. As he approached the first traffic light in the town of Pigeon Forge, J.S. sped up, pulled into the left hand lane, ran the light, turned left back onto the parkway southbound, and reentered the park. J.S. then accelerated rapidly, causing his car to fishtail several times, to the point where he almost lost control and wrecked. J.S. sped down the highway at speeds over 90 mph, driving very recklessly, with Kalna in pursuit. The chase continued onto the Gatlinburg Bypass, then out of the park onto Campbell Lead - a very narrow, windy road. J.S. almost crashed head-on into a Gatlinburg PD cruiser, but the officer managed to swerve out of the way. A bit further down the road, J.S. lost control of his car, which went off the road on a sharp curve and came to rest against a small tree that kept it from continuing down a steep hillside. J.S. jumped out and plunged down the slope. Kalna could hear J.S. tumbling noisily down the hillside, back toward the Gatlinburg Bypass and the park. A Gatlinburg PD officer immediately arrived to assist. Kalna and the officer secured the vehicle, called for a tracking dog, and arranged for other officers to set up a roadblock on the bypass. About 20 minutes later, other Gatlinburg officers called and said that they had J.S. in custody. J.S. had descended to the bypass, contacted two juvenile girls at an overlook, and told them that he'd wrecked his car and needed a ride back to his motel room. They had him in the backseat

when they were stopped at the Gatlinburg PD roadblock. Officers noted J.S.' suspicious behavior, the scratches on his face and arms, and his dirty clothing and took him into custody. J.S. was arrested, held without bail, and charged with a felony count of eluding an officer, driving while intoxicated, reckless driving, speeding, driving on a suspended license, and possession of an open container of alcohol. The total distance of the pursuit was 12 miles. Kalna's patrol vehicle is equipped with an in-car video camera; the entire vehicle pursuit was recorded on video.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Monday, February 23, 2004

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Search for Lost Runner

J.J., who was in training for a marathon, left his home in Knoxville on the afternoon of February 19th and traveled to the Tremont area of the park for a 12-mile trail run. When he started out, the weather was unseasonably warm, with a high around 60 degrees. J.J. left his wife a note at home, saying that he was going for a run in the park and would return around 6 p.m. When he failed to arrive, his wife called some of J.J.'s running friends, then called the park just after 9 p.m. A hasty search was immediately begun, and J.J.'s vehicle was soon found in a pull off about a mile up Tremont Road between the Middle Prong and West Prong trails. A ground team was put in place and trails in the area were searched throughout the night. J.J. was found the next morning when he returned to his car. He told rangers that he'd had a planned loop route, but that he started on the wrong trail and immediately got diverted onto an unmarked "manway," then ended up off trail. He bushwacked down a drainage and came out on the Laurel Creek Road. He was dressed only in running shoes, running shorts and a T-shirt. The low temperatures overnight in the Cades Cove area was 25 degrees. J.J. had numerous cuts and scrapes and possible fractured ribs, but was otherwise in very good condition.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Wednesday, February 25, 2004

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Woman Saved by Rangers in River Rescue

On the evening of January 1st, K.H., 57, of Knoxville was traveling north on Newfound Gap Road toward Gatlinburg when her vehicle went out of control on the snow and ice covered road, plunged over a steep embankment, and came to rest upside down into the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River. K.H. was ejected from the vehicle and landed in the frigid river. Air temperatures at the time were about 20 degrees, water temperatures were about 45 degrees. Other motorists found K.H. conscious and clinging to a large rock in the river approximately ten yards downstream from the vehicle and called 911. Ranger Scott Kalna arrived on scene first and put ICS into effect. Rangers Joe Pond and Tony Welch arrived shortly thereafter and reached K.H. by wading across the river in the knee-deep, freezing water. Several bystanders accompanied them. They found K.H. to be in very serious condition, suffering from hypothermia, a fractured tibia/fibula, fractured clavicle, and head and neck injuries. She was also

delirious, and began yelling "Where's my baby?" Fearing that an infant had also been in the car, rangers began a hasty search for the child. They soon determined, however, that the "baby" was actually a small toy poodle. Ranger Michael Nash established a technical litter raising system, which was used to extricate K.H. up the steep river bank — a vertical distance of about 20 feet. K.H. was transported to a helicopter landing zone in Gatlinburg by Gatlinburg FD paramedics, then flown by medical helicopter to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville. After the vehicle was removed from the river, the poodle was found alive under the car's rear seat.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Tuesday, March 16, 2004

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Head-On Collision with Fatality

Park dispatch received a 911 call just before 9 p.m. on March 12th reporting a head-on collision on the northbound side of Foothills Parkway Spur near Gatlinburg. Field training ranger Scott Kalna, trainee George Lewis and ranger Melody Morrison responded and arrived on scene within minutes of the collision. Both vehicles were blocking the northbound lanes. The driver of a Nissan, later identified as R.L.T., 57, of Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, was unconscious, not breathing and had massive head trauma. After unsuccessful attempts at resuscitation by Gatlinburg Fire Department paramedics, R.L.T. was declared dead at the scene. He was not wearing a seatbelt and his vehicle was not equipped with air bags. Evidence at the scene indicated that R.L.T.'s vehicle had been traveling southbound and had crossed over at least two lanes of traffic into the northbound lane, hitting head-on a northbound Mitsubishi driven by a 16-year-old woman with an 18-year-old male passenger. Both were wearing their seatbelts and suffered only minor injuries due to the deployment of the Mitsubishi's airbags. They were transported to a local hospital for observation and later released. It's believed that R.L.T. may have had a stroke and/or heart attack while driving. Gatlinburg FD, EMS and PD assisted. The parkway was closed to all traffic for approximately 30 minutes. Kalna was IC and is the lead investigator for the accident.[Submitted by Rick Smith, District Ranger]

Monday, April 26, 2004

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Seasonal Laborer Dies While Hiking To Job

Seasonal laborer Ricky , 50, of Newport, Tennessee, was hiking with two other employees up the Snake Den Ridge Trail to begin some tree-clearing work around 8:15 a.m. on April 22nd when he began lagging behind, then collapsed. His coworkers reported the incident via radio and began CPR. Rangers arrived around 8:40 a.m. and continued CPR until they were relieved by paramedics from Allied emergency Medical Services. Following consultation with the park's medical adviser, CPR was terminated at 9 a.m. and Campbell was pronounced dead. Rangers, paramedics and maintenance workers carried him out on a wheeled litter to the trailhead, where he was transferred to an ambulance for transport to Baptist Hospital in Newport. Ricky had been employed by the park as a seasonal laborer assigned to maintain and improve trails in Cosby



area. He'd worked in various maintenance operations at the Smokies for ten seasons, beginning in 1994. Acting superintendent Phil Francis had this to say about his passing: "All of us at the Smokies are in a state of shock over Ricky's death. Ricky was extremely well liked by his coworkers. He had worked here so many years and in so many different parts of our maintenance operation that he has many, many co-workers and friends who are grieving along with Ricky's own family."

[Submitted by Paul Winegar]

Friday, April 30, 2004

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Follow-up on Murder of Ranger Joe Kolodski

An appeal by J.L. to have his conviction for the murder of ranger Joe Kolodski overturned has been denied by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. On June 21, 1998, Kolodski, who was a ranger at Great Smokies, responded to a report of a suspicious person carrying a gun and harassing visitors in the Big Witch Gap area of Blue Ridge Parkway. While Kolodski was securing the incident scene, he was shot and killed by J.L., who fired on him with a high-powered rifle from a concealed location. J.L. also shot at ranger Tony Welch, who was not hit. J.L. was captured several hours later. In January, 1999, J.L. was convicted of the first degree murder of Kolodski and the attempted murder of Welch. He has been trying to have the convictions overturned ever since. J.L.'s case was heard by the appellate court last December. His appeal was based on a number of points, all of which he believed warranted a new trial. On April 26th, the court affirmed the convictions. J.L. will continue to serve a life sentence in federal prison in Florida. The court's opinion can be read by clicking on "More Information" below.

[Submitted by John Mattox, Special Agent] [More Information...](#)

Tuesday, May 18, 2004

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Follow-up on Car Clout Arrest

During the spring and summer of 2003, there were more than 45 car clouts in the Little River area of the park. On July 11th, a special operations group was formed in an effort to catch the thieves. Rangers kept close watch on five different sites in the area. Ranger Jonathan Holter, who was watching the Alum Cave trailhead parking area, saw a man break into three cars and take items from them. N.E., 45, of Limestone, Tennessee, was arrested and charged with theft of property, unauthorized entry, possession of morphine, and possession of marijuana; companion B.B., 46, of Greenville, Tennessee, was charged with conspiracy to commit a crime and possession of marijuana. N.E. has been in jail since his arrest. Special agent Jeff Carlisle has been leading an intensive investigation for the past ten months with the assistance of rangers Lorena Harris, Larry Hartman and DeAnn Shults. N.E. was recently sentenced after pleading guilty to one count of conspiracy, ten counts of aiding and abetting in the use of an unauthorized access device, and eleven counts of interstate transport/commerce of falsely forged security (unauthorized use of credit cards and checks). He was sentenced to 30 months in jail and ordered

to pay \$13,573.48 in restitution. He will serve his time in a federal penitentiary in Nevada. Through the hard work of the investigative team, two other people have also been charged — B.B., who was with N.E., and F.H. B.B. and F.H. will be sentenced in June.  
[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Wednesday, June 02, 2004  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Indictment For Assault on Federal Officer

In the early morning hours of February 27th, rangers Michael Nash and Deann Shults were providing traffic control for maintenance workers who were removing trees from the Foothills Parkway spur following a storm. Around 1 a.m., Nash saw a vehicle heading directly at them at a high rate of speed and realized it was not going to slow down. Nash jumped onto the road shoulder to avoid being hit, but was able to obtain a partial tag and vehicle description and radio it to Shults along with a warning to watch out. Shults was about 300 yards down the road and around a bend with two maintenance workers, and all three also had to take evasive action in order to avoid being hit. Shults quickly returned to her vehicle and pursued, stopping it in nearby Pigeon Forge. Investigation revealed that the driver, A.P., was under the influence (.19 BAC) and driving on a suspended license. A.P. failed to appear in court, so a warrant was issued for his arrest. He was picked up in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, and indicted in federal court in Tennessee on May 18th on charges of assault on a federal officer. He remains in federal custody. The trial will be scheduled in the near future.  
[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Tuesday, June 08, 2004  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Confrontation with Presumed Murder Suspect

Around 4:40 p.m. yesterday, rangers received a BOLO (be on the lookout message) for J.B.P., 27, who was wanted for first degree murder. J.B.P. had allegedly shot and killed an ex-girlfriend with a rifle on the evening of Friday, June 4th. A warrant was on file for the crime. J.B.P. was reported to be armed and dangerous, and had told friends that he would not be taken alive. At 11:15 p.m. last night, rangers encountered a man that they believed to be J.B.P. at Newfound Gap on the Tennessee-North Carolina state line. He was seen heading south on Route 441, so a roadblock was established by rangers and Cherokee Police Department officers near Collins Creek picnic area, about seven miles north of Cherokee. A vehicle matching the BOLO description approached the roadblock, but turned around and headed north. Gunshots were reported near the roadblock around 11:34 p.m. The vehicle was found wrecked a few miles north of the roadblock. Rangers found a male victim and a weapon in the vehicle. The cause of the man's death has not been confirmed, nor has he yet been confirmed to be J.B.P.. The area remains closed in order to secure the crime scene pending collection of evidence. Route 441 (Newfound Gap Road) is currently closed between Smokemont campground and Sugarlands Visitor Center. The FBI has been advised and is heading the investigation. No further details are

yet available. Follow-ups will appear as they become available.  
[Submitted by Bob Miller, Public Affairs, and Jim Northup, Chief Ranger]

Wednesday, June 09, 2004  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Follow-up on Confrontation with Murderer

Additional details have been released regarding the manhunt for and death of J.P., 27, who was a suspect in the June 4th shooting death of his former girlfriend, C.N., 22. The FBI, working with the New Hanover County Sheriff's Office and other state and local law enforcement agencies, pursued a series of leads that indicated that J.P. was heading into western North Carolina. They accordingly released a BOLO (be on the lookout message) to area enforcement agencies, alerting them about J.P.. The BOLO described J.P.'s vehicle — a dark green 2000 Toyota Four Runner — and provided the license plate number. It also emphasized that J.P. was reportedly armed with an SKS assault rifle and described him as armed and extremely dangerous. A ranger approached J.P. at Newfound Gap, on the Tennessee/North Carolina state line, and had a brief conversation with him at 11:16 p.m. on Monday evening. The ranger then reported that he'd been in contact with J.P.. Meanwhile, J.P. headed southbound on Newfound Gap Road (US Route 441). Rangers established two roadblocks — one at the junction of Newfound Gap Road and Clingmans Dome Road to prevent J.P. from traveling north into Tennessee and the other, established with the assistance of Cherokee Police Department, along Newfound Gap Road around the Collins Creek area, ten miles south of Newfound Gap. Tire spikes were employed at the latter. J.P. approached this roadblock but then turned around and began heading northbound on Newfound Gap Road at a high rate of speed. J.P. fired towards the officers and the gunfire was returned. Rangers and Cherokee PD officers pursued J.P. for about four miles, at which point the vehicle's lights disappeared. They approached using spotlights and were able to confirm that the vehicle had rolled down a steep, 60-foot embankment before coming to rest in a creek. J.P.'s body and vehicle were removed from the scene around 3:30 p.m. to allow law enforcement officials adequate time to conduct a thorough investigation of the scene. A rifle was recovered at the site. The Swain County medical examiner was at the scene to collect and gather evidence to help determine the cause of death. The body has been taken to Chapel Hill, where the state medical examiner will perform an autopsy that will determine the cause of death and will also validate the victim's identity. Said chief ranger Jim Northup: "We are very impressed with and grateful for the dedication and professionalism of our own rangers and the Cherokee Police Department officers. We sincerely appreciate the cooperation of the FBI, who helped locate J.P.'s whereabouts, as well as helping to document the crime scene. It's hard to overemphasize the courage and discipline it takes to approach an armed and dangerous subject in pitch darkness and in the woods. Their willingness to secure the scene under these conditions is a tribute to their concern over public safety. A lot of good decisions were made to allow us to bring this to a conclusion so quickly and without injury to law enforcement personnel."  
[Submitted by Bob Miller, Public Affairs]

Thursday, June 17, 2004

## Great Smoky Mountains National Park Sentencing for Assault on Ranger

On June 24, 2003, ranger Joe Pond stopped a car in the park for traffic violations. The driver, D.H., 37, was acting suspiciously, so Pond attempted to frisk him. D.H. resisted the frisk and ended up struggling with Pond, who took D.H. to the ground. D.H. continued to resist and attempted to remove Pond's pistol from its holster. Pond sprayed D.H. several times with OC spray. D.H. continued his resistance and knocked the OC from Pond's hand before Pond gained control and handcuffed him. D.H. was treated for OC exposure. The entire incident was recorded on the patrol vehicle's in-car video system. A search of his car led to the discovery of marijuana and a number of firearms in the trunk. Investigation revealed that D.H. was a convicted felon who was wanted in Tennessee on four counts of attempted murder. The attempted murder charges stemmed from a shooting incident that occurred several days before Pond stopped D.H.'s vehicle. On August 4, 2003, D.H. was indicted for assaulting, resisting and opposing a federal officer, drug possession, and weapons possession by a convicted felon. On April 29th, D.H. was sentenced to a total of six years and two months active time to be followed by five years of supervised probation for all three charges in the indictment. The state of Tennessee is pursuing their prosecution of D.H. on four counts of attempted first degree murder and one count of reckless endangerment stemming from the shooting incident that occurred in Tennessee. One of the weapons that ranger Pond secured from D.H. at the scene is expected to be a key piece of evidence in the Tennessee case due to its being ballistically matched to the Tennessee crime scene, and it was a key evidence item that enhanced D.H.'s federal sentence.  
[Submitted by Walt West, Supervisory Park Ranger]

## Tuesday, June 29, 2004 Great Smoky Mountains National Park Search and Rescue of Lost Man

Rangers began a search for a lost 48-year-old man from Cincinnati on June 17th. The man had arrived at Elkmont Campground on Sunday, June 13th. He left his vehicle in a campsite, but neither registered for the site nor setup any camping gear. When campground staff noticed the next day that the vehicle's owner hadn't registered, they advised rangers. On Wednesday, a relative was contacted and it was determined that the man had a mental health condition with symptoms similar to those of an Alzheimer's patient. The rangers also found that he'd wandered off in the past and had been the subject of a search, that he'd been despondent recently, and that he had attempted suicide in the past. Evidence in the vehicle showed that he'd recently purchased two large sheath knives; one was in the vehicle, but the other was likely in his possession. A hasty search was begun Thursday morning. A parallel investigation led to a backcountry camper who'd contacted a man meeting the lost man's description. The camper said that the man was very withdrawn and did not want to talk with her and her companions. He had no backpacking equipment, nor any food or water; his only gear was a large sheath knife. The man finally divulged his name after repeated queries (it matched the name of the person the rangers were seeking). He said that he'd hiked up from Elkmont Campground and that he'd been lost for a couple of days. The campers got him to accept a bottle of water and an energy bar. A search team was immediately redirected to the camping area where the meeting had occurred. Rangers

Sam Brittain and Larry Hartman discovered tracks, followed them to a rhododendron thicket up the drainage from the campsite, and found the man hiding there. He had the sheath knife in his hand. When told to drop it, he did so. The rangers walked him to a vehicle, then drove him out of the backcountry. He was taken to a local hospital for psychiatric evaluation and eventually placed in the care of his family.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Wednesday, July 14, 2004

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Rangers Rescue Children Stranded on River Rock

Four brothers and sisters between the ages of 8 and 14 years old were playing along the West Prong of the Little River near a picnic area on the afternoon of June 22nd. They began rock-hopping to get to the other side of the river, which is about 200 feet wide at this point. Although it was only raining lightly on the picnic area at the time, a major thunderstorm had hit the upstream drainage; as they were crossing the river, the water began to rise at an alarming rate. All four made it to a large boulder about 100 feet from the shore just before the water reached flood stage, about four to five feet above its normal level. Seeing the water rising swiftly, their father, James Swafford of Morgantown, North Carolina, hopped across on boulders toward them, shouting instructions for them to stay where they were. Swafford was on a boulder 20 feet from the shore when the river reached a level that barred his safe return. He was now stranded and barely within shouting distance from his children. Park maintenance worker Ray Green was working in the picnic area at the time and saw the river rising. A motorist also told him about flashflooding upriver along the Newfound Gap Road. Green went through the picnic area, warning visitors to move away from the river. He then learned about the four children stranded on the rock and called dispatch. Rangers arrived and employed a boat to bring Swafford back to the shore. Because of the steep, boulder-filled gradient, this section of the river is considered to be a Class V whitewater at flood stage. Although the rain had stopped in the immediate area, the forecast indicated that additional thunderstorms were expected within the hour, increasing the urgency of reaching the children. After two failed attempts to get to them by boat, rangers crossed to the opposite bank and made another attempt with the assistance of Gatlinburg FD. A rescue team, anchored by ranger "Big Dale" Culver, employed multi-person wading techniques to pass through the waist- to chest-high water and reach the children. They established a human chain, linked with safety rope, and brought all four to shore, finishing just before dark. Except for being wet, cold and frightened, all the children were in good shape.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Wednesday, August 11, 2004

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Burglary of Sugarlands Visitor Center

A person or persons broke into the Sugarlands Visitor Center around 2 a.m. on August 5th, smashed open two plastic donation boxes, and stole about \$450 in cash from them. Entry was gained by breaking a three by four foot thermapane window near the entrance door. A hammer-

like object was then employed to break open the two boxes. When maintenance worker Billy Lindsey report for work at 4 a.m., he discovered the damaged window and also found that all the lights to the building were off. Investigating rangers determined that the power to the building had been turned off at the main power shutoff located outside the building and that the phone cable coming into the building had been cut. There are no suspects in the incident at this time. Ranger Heath Soehn and special agent Jeff Carlisle are investigating the incident.  
[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Thursday, September 02, 2004  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Successful Search for Autistic Boy

A five-year-old autistic boy who was vacationing in the Gatlinburg area with his family was reported missing from the Westgate Resort near Foothills Parkway around 10 a.m. on August 15th. The boy's parents were packing the family car and getting ready to return home. Their son, who suffers from severe autism, was playing by himself at the side of the cabin. After making several trips to load the vehicle, the parents went to check on the boy, but could not find him. The cabin adjoins a densely wooded area with a steep uphill grade leading into the woods. The boy's parents frantically searched the immediate area for several minutes, then contacted the resort office for help. Members of the resort security patrol helped search for him for about 20 minutes before contacting Gatlinburg PD. City officers and firefighters continued the search, bringing in volunteers, ATV's, search dogs, and a helicopter. Horse and foot trails and the surrounding woods were unsystematically searched for several hours without any results. At about 2 p.m., the park was contacted and assistance was solicited. Under an approved memorandum of agreement with Gatlinburg, four rangers and a trail crew worker responded. A unified command was set up with Gatlinburg PD and Gatlinburg FD; supervisory ranger Steve Kloster served as incident commander for the park. By the time park staff arrived on scene, all signs and physical evidence from the point last seen (PLS) had been destroyed. By using standard search principles, however, a more systemic approach to the search operation was adopted. At about 4 p.m., four NPS employees were searching an assigned area about one mile from the PLS. Out in front of them was a dog and handler from North Carolina. The handler thought he heard a slight whimper up the hill in front of him and checked it out. He spotted the child up the steep grade and about 30 feet up a tree. Rangers arrived on scene within a few minutes; three of them climbed the tree, stationed themselves at intervals, and passed the child down to a ranger on the ground. The child was unharmed and was returned to his family without further incident. After walking away from the cabin, the boy had gone uphill through dense vegetation, traveled over a mile from the PLS, and climbed 30 feet up a tree. The dog handler said that the dog alerted on the base of the tree, but not until the handler climbed the ridge attempting to locate the whimpering sound. Lessons learned:

- Before saturating the area with untrained searchers, use a skilled man-tracking team to scout for sign.
- Conduct a thorough lost person profile (it was learned later that the boy liked to climb trees).

- Employ personnel trained and skilled in search principles early in the search operation, and
- Employ personnel familiar with the geographic area early in the search operation.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Friday, September 03, 2004

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Life Saved Through Prompt CPR

At 8:40 p.m. on July 20th, dispatch received a 911 call reporting that a visitor at Elkmont campground — B.A.L., 40, of Pompano Beach, Florida — was having trouble breathing. Rangers and a Gatlinburg ambulance were immediately dispatched to the campground. The caller remained on line and continued to provide updates on B.A.L.'s condition. Within minutes, she went into convulsions and lost consciousness. Ranger Scott Kalna arrived on scene at 8:47 p.m. and found B.A.L. in a sitting/lying position in the passenger seat of her car and unconscious. A friend, Jerome Rogowski, was attempting chest compressions on her while she was in the partial sitting position. Kalna had Rogowski halt compressions and help him move B.A.L. out of the car and onto the ground. Kalna determined that she was not breathing and repositioned her head using the head tilt/chin lift method. After opening B.A.L.'s airway, she began gasping for air and resumed breathing on her own. She was taken by ambulance to Pigeon Forge, where she was transferred to a medevac helicopter and flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Thursday, September 09, 2004

Southeast Region

Exit Frances, Enter Ivan

As parks in Florida and Georgia continue to clean up from Hurricane Frances, they're keeping a weather eye on Hurricane Ivan — characterized by the National Hurricane Center as "an extremely dangerous Category 5 hurricane" with maximum sustained winds of nearly 160 mph and a barometric pressure of 27.20 — lower than Hurricane Andrew and eclipsed only by Hurricane Camille (1969) and the Florida Keys Labor Day Hurricane (1935).

Meanwhile, parks along the Appalachians — particularly Blue Ridge Parkway — have been dealing with the deluge brought by the remnants of Frances. According to USGS, rainfall amounts of from 8 to 16 inches have been reported from western North Carolina (Phil Noblitt from Blue Ridge Parkway reports that the suburb of Asheville where he lives received 17 inches of rain in 36 hours). North Carolina DOT reports that more than 90 primary and secondary roads were impassable yesterday due to high water, and that I-40 was restricted in both directions due to a mud slide. Stream flows are very high in the area, some at hundred year levels.

Here are today's reports, beginning with the hardest hit area and moving south:

Great Smoky Mountains NP — Although the park received above normal precipitation during Frances' passage (for example, over 4 inches at Newfound Gap), no serious damage has been reported. One small slide was found and cleared and a few downed trees and scattered debris have been removed. Most facilities that were temporarily closed due to potential impacts from the storm have reopened. Still closed are Balsam Mountain Road, Straightfork Road and Mount Sterling Gap Road (from Cataloochee to Big Creek) in North Carolina, and Rich Mountain Road and part of Cades Cove campground in Tennessee.

Based on reports from Ken Garvin, SERO; Bob DeGross, BICY; Brian Loadholtz, TIMU; Gary Bremen, BISC; Jerre Brumbelow, CUIS; Gordon Wilson, CASA/FOMA; Charlie Fenwick, DESO; Phil Noblitt, BLRI; Nancy Gray, GRSM; Jeanne Robbins, USGS

Thursday, September 16, 2004

Southeast Region

Hurricane Ivan, Tropical Storm Jeanne

Parks along the Gulf Coast are battened down and waiting out Ivan's passage. The Service's Eastern IMT is on standby for callout to any park(s) needing assistance, and the national and other regional teams are on call if further help should be required.

Meanwhile, reports have been received from parks further inland that are facing the prospect of very heavy rains on top of all the precipitation dropped by Hurricane Frances. And Virgin Islands NP has sent a follow-up note about Tropical Storm Jeanne:

Great Smoky Mountains NP — Forecasters are currently predicting a major rain event in the southern Appalachians, as Hurricane Ivan will likely stall over the mountains, producing rain for 48 hours or longer. Up to a foot may fall. The National Weather Service is warning that "dangerous and significant flooding" may occur, and USGS has issued a landslide warning (see yesterday's editions of InsideNPS and the Morning Report). The park management team has accordingly begun making preparations. Signs have been posted at all backcountry permit stations and all campgrounds warning visitors of the expected heavy rains and advising them to take necessary precautions. It also warns backcountry travelers that they should not expect to be rescued if stranded by high water or injured as a result of the storm.

Friday, September 24, 2004

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Motorcycle Accident with Two Fatalities

Rangers responded to a serious motorcycle accident with two fatalities on the Newfound Gap Road (U.S. 441) in North Carolina on the afternoon of Sunday, September 12th. The victims were M.G., 29, of Hickory, North Carolina, and L.S. of Morganton, North Carolina. M.G., who was attending the annual Cherokee Survivors 2004 Motorcycle Rally and Concert, was the



driver of a 1999 Kawasaki motorcycle and L.S. was a passenger on the motorcycle. M.G. was heading north on Newfound Gap Road when he lost control of the motorcycle and failed to negotiate a curve. The two were killed instantly when the motorcycle crossed the center line, slid into oncoming traffic and were struck by a 1998 Plymouth minivan traveling south. Preliminary investigation indicated that M.G. was traveling at a high rate of speed when he veered into the opposite lane. The van that M.G.'s motorcycle hit had six passengers on board, but only one received minor injuries. The Swain County medical examiner pronounced the two dead at the scene. The road closed shortly after the accident and remained closed for four hours. The case ranger is Joe Pond.[Submitted by Chief Rangers Office]

Friday, October 01, 2004  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Accident with Two Fatalities

A two-vehicle accident in the park on Sunday, September 27th, resulted in the deaths of visitors J.H. and C.H., both 53, of Buford, Georgia, who were traveling along the Foothills Parkway about five miles west of its intersection with U.S. Route 321. Preliminary indications are that a 1993 Nissan Quest Minivan driven by 42-year-old J.J. of Maryville, Tennessee, drifted across the centerline while traveling east, hitting the couple's 1999 Gold Wing motorcycle car in a head-on collision. J.J. and a 17-year-old passenger in the van were taken to a hospital for treatment. The investigation is being conducted by rangers with assistance from a Blount County traffic reconstruction team. The case ranger is Richard Aldridge.  
[Submitted by Chief Ranger's Office]

Wednesday, January 19, 2005  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Fatal Motor Vehicle Accident

Park dispatch received a 911 call reporting an accident on the northbound side of Highway 441/Foothills Parkway Spur just before midnight on January 15th. Ranger Dale Culver responded along with Gatlinburg officers and paramedics. They found that Angel J.S., 30, of Sevierville, the driver and sole occupant, had been killed in the accident. Investigation revealed that one of the vehicle's wheels had dropped off the right side of the road, that J.S. had evidently over-corrected, and that the vehicle had then spun around and hit a tree on the left side of the roadway. The cause of the accident has not yet been determined, but neither speed nor alcohol have yet been ruled out. This was the park's first fatality this year; Great Smokies normally records about six accidental deaths each year, half of them on the five-mile-long spur.  
[Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Tuesday, March 29, 2005  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Five Killed in Auto Accident in Park

Rangers at Great Smoky Mountains National Park responded to a two-car collision that resulted in five fatalities and two injuries just after 10 p.m. on March 26th. Killed were G.N., 80, his wife, M.N., 64, A.D., 70, his wife, B.D. (no DOB available), and M.N.'s mother, Audrey Fentress (no DOB available). The N.s were all from Chesapeake, Virginia, and the D.'s from Virginia Beach. M.N. was driving the 1997 Chrysler. She had just emerged from the Legion Bridge and was crossing the northbound lanes of the Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge Spur (U.S. 441) en route to a condo at Westgate when her vehicle was struck on the passenger side doors by a 1990 Honda Accord driven by J.H., 18, of Lebanon, Tennessee, who was traveling north on the Spur. J.H. and his 16-year-old passenger, J.B., were flown by Lifestar to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville. J.H. was suffering from head and facial injuries. J.B.'s injuries were less serious and he has since been released from the hospital. M.N. and Fentress were in the front seats of the Chrysler; the D.'s and G.N. were in the rear seats. All five occupants of the N. vehicle were pronounced dead at the scene. Seat belt usage is uncertain in both vehicles. Responding along with rangers were Gatlinburg Fire and EMS, Sevier County Rescue, and police officers from Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, and Sevierville. Tennessee Highway Patrol investigators were also called in to conduct a joint reconstruction and investigation in conjunction with rangers. Ranger Ken Meyer is the lead investigator on the incident. [Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Friday, June 24, 2005

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Visitor Seriously Injured in Riding Accident

Around 8:30 p.m. on the evening of June 18th, S.N., 37, of Knoxville, Tennessee, suffered a fractured femur when the horse he was riding stepped off a narrow section of the Lower Mount Cammerrer Trail and fell. S.N. was on a horseback trip with his girlfriend and two juveniles at the time and was about six miles from the trailhead. Park dispatch received a 911 call at about 9:30 p.m. reporting the accident. Ranger/park medic Steve Kloster and VUA/park medic Bob Zydanowicz treated S.N. at the scene. A litter team of ten rangers worked all night to extricate S.N. via a wheeled litter to the trailhead, which they finally reached just after 7 a.m. S.N. was taken by ambulance to a helispot, then flown to the UT Medical Center in Knoxville. The hospital reports that S.N. sustained a very severe femur fracture, requiring seven hours of surgery and several plates and rods to repair.

[Submitted by Rick Brown, ]

Wednesday, August 17, 2005

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Rescue Of Seriously Injured Rappeller

At around 2:30 p.m. on the afternoon of July 25th, A.H., 23, was rappelling from a cliff above Rainbow Falls in the Cherokee Orchard area when he fell approximately 30 feet, sustaining serious injuries. A.H. had hiked three miles in to the falls, scrambled to the top, then solo rappelled down the face of the 80-foot-high cliff. He employed a very small (9mm diameter) rope with an anchor and figure eight descending device. Witnesses said that he took very long

bounds down the cliff, shock-loading the system, and that he was two-thirds of the way down the cliff when the rope severed and he fell about 30 feet to the boulder field at the bottom of the cliff. Bystanders employed a cell phone to call for assistance. Rangers arrived on scene by 5 p.m. Park medics stabilized A.H. and the rescue team conducted a semi-technical rescue operation to remove him from the boulder field and get him down to the trail surface. He was then evacuated by wheeled litter to an ambulance at the trailhead, transferred to a medical helicopter, and flown to the UT Medical Center in Knoxville. A.H. suffered a fractured femur, fractured vertebra in the lower back, and a fractured wrist. The investigation revealed that the rope was military surplus Kevlar material and that there was a melted/frayed cut where it crossed over a sharp rock edge during A.H.'s rappel. [Submitted by Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Wednesday, August 17, 2005  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Interference/Resisting a Government Employee

On July 25th, ranger April Lee responded to a report of "a noncompliant vulgar female" who was refusing to restrain her dog and had improperly parked her motor vehicle at Clingman's Dome parking lot. Lee located the vehicle at the Newfound Gap parking lot, and found the operator - R.O., 42, of Sweetwater, Tennessee - walking around the area. Lee observed that R.O. appeared impaired, as she was having trouble maintaining her balance, her appearance was disheveled, and she had a vacant stare. Lee made several verbal attempts to gain R.O.'s attention and compliance, placing herself in front of R.O.'s path of travel, but R.O. refused to acknowledge or comply with Lee's orders. R.O. stepped up onto a stone wall, which has a drop-off of over 20 feet onto a cement landing, then faced away from Lee and looked down toward the drop-off. Lee ordered R.O. to get down off the wall, and R.O. replied, "Which way?" Fearing that R.O. was contemplating jumping, Lee grabbed R.O. by her clothing and pulled her down from the wall. R.O. began to struggle with Lee, attempting to pull away and telling Lee to leave her alone. Lee had applied a handcuff to one of R.O.'s wrists when R.O. forcibly pulled away, yelled "don't touch me," and turned to face Lee. Lee sprayed one shot of OC pepper spray in R.O.'s face. This distraction allowed Lee to contain R.O., and, with the assistance of a bystander, cuff R.O.'s free hand and make the arrest. Although R.O. was feeling the effects of the pepper spray, she still remained uncooperative, refusing to stand or walk to the fresh water source. R.O. was carried to Lee's vehicle, where decontamination was begun, an EMS assessment conducted, and treatment rendered. Lee sustained no injuries during the incident. R.O. was charged with three 36 CFR violations - interference/resisting a government employee in the performance of official duties, unlawful possession of a controlled substance (marijuana), and dog off leash. Because of a concern for her competency, the judge agreed to a plea agreement allowing R.O. plead to one count of dog off leash, with the other charges dropped. [Submitted by Lisa Slobodzian, District Ranger]

Wednesday, September 7, 2005  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Injured Motorcyclist Extricated from Little River

On the afternoon of August 25th, P.S., 55, was traveling eastbound on Little River Road on his 2005 Harley Davidson when he drove off the roadway into the Little River. P.S. was traveling at about 35 mph at the time with a group of three other motorcyclists. While on a sharp, left-hand curve, he glanced back to see how his wife was doing on her motorcycle, missed the curve, then went off the steep embankment. P.S. and his motorcycle flew about 30 feet through the air, dropped 20 vertical feet, and landed in the river about 30 feet from the road's edge. A passing motorist called 911 on a cell phone. Rangers arrived on scene within 15 minutes and found P.S. still in the river, his leg pinned under the bike and his wife and another companion holding his head out of the water. Ranger/park medic Greg Wozniak, bystanders and a Gatlinburg FD medic moved the motorcycle off P.S.'s leg and began stabilization and emergency treatment of a very severe open tibia/fibula fracture and an open fracture of the finger. P.S. was splinted and immobilized on a long spine board, after which rangers Michael Nash, Scott Kalna, and Rick Brown conducted a vertical litter raise up the 20-foot vertical wall using a "V strap" technique. P.S. was taken by ambulance to Sugarlands Visitor Center, then transferred to a LifeStar Air Ambulance and flown to UT Medical Center. [Submitted by Rick Brown, Acting Chief Ranger]

Friday, September 23, 2005  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Fatal Motorcycle Accident

On the morning of September 8th, L.K.J., 65, of Blaine, Tennessee, lost control of his 2003 Honda 1800 XTR motorcycle and crashed while heading west on the Foothills Parkway. When rangers arrived on scene, they found Rural Metro Ambulance personnel, Blount County Sheriff's Department deputies, and a bystander performing CPR on L.K.J.. The University of Tennessee's Lifestar helicopter was dispatched to the scene. After being examined by Lifestar medics, L.K.J. was pronounced dead at the scene. The parkway is an area of concurrent jurisdiction, so the investigation is being conducted jointly by the NPS and the Blount County Sheriffs Department. Field training ranger Richard Aldridge and ranger trainee Brian Yetter are the lead case rangers for this fatality. [Michael Nash, Supervisory Park Ranger]

Thursday, October 13, 2005  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Plant Poaching

On September 17th, rangers stopped to check an unoccupied Toyota pickup truck parked in a pullout on Newfound Gap Road. As they did so, they saw an individual approaching them carrying a large white bag. The rangers obtained consent to look in the bag, which contained a large number of plants that had been pulled from the ground with the roots intact. These plants were later identified as downy rattlesnake plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*). Three more people eventually came out of the woods with bags of freshly dug rattlesnake plantain. The rangers obtained consent to search the pickup truck and found two more bags of the plantain. In all, the four individuals collected approximately 2,400 plants weighing a total of 14 pounds. All four were arrested and charged with possession of plant resources (major). Park resource technicians replanted the plantain and have been monitoring them to document the survival rate. Rattlesnake

plantain is a member of the orchid family and is listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Rangers are investigating the incident with assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the N.C. Department of Agriculture. Additional charges are being considered. [Walt West, Acting District Ranger]

Thursday, November 10, 2005  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Theft of Natural Resources

On October 29th, three Cosby Area rangers arrested two men and one woman when they caught them in the act of stealing moss from the park. Rangers had been tipped off by a local police officer that a week earlier he had observed a man walk out of the park in the Pittman Center area and load several trash bags into a pickup truck that was parked along Route 321. Rangers monitored the area for several days, looking for similar activity, and on October 29th they spotted a truck parked in the same general area that matched the description provided by the police officer. Three rangers entered the area and found signs of recent moss theft. The rangers kept the area and the vehicle under surveillance, awaiting the vehicle owner's return. About two hours later, one of them saw a man come out of the park and get in the truck. The man drove the vehicle about a quarter mile down the road and pulled over along the park boundary. The ranger was unable to reach the other members of the surveillance team by radio, so he started to move toward the vehicle on foot. As he approached the truck, he saw two other people come out of the woods and start loading large garbage bags into the pickup. The ranger was able to catch the three culprits before they pulled away. Backup came when the other two rangers overheard the commotion of the contact and responded by vehicle. Eight 30-gallon trash bags of moss were confiscated. The suspects said that they'd planned on selling it to a dealer in Cocke County and that they would have received about \$200 for the eight bags. The three persons were all related and were local residents from Cosby, Tennessee. They were charged with theft of natural resources. [Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Monday, November 14, 2005  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Motor Scooter Accident, EMS Rescue

On October 23rd, a 65-year-old man from Lexington, Indiana, was driving a motor scooter northbound on the Newfound Gap Road with his 12-year-old stepson as a passenger when he lost control and crashed head-on into a southbound mini-van. Earlier in the day, he had rented the scooter from a rental company in Gatlinburg and traveled up the mountain to Newfound Gap. On his return trip downhill, he entered the "Loop," a sharp, 360-degree turn, where he lost control of the scooter and crossed into the southbound lane. The operator of the mini-van in the opposite lane swerved to the right in an attempt to avoid the scooter, but struck it head-on. The scooter operator was knocked clear, and the scooter was run over and lodged under the mini-van. The 12-year-old passenger on the scooter was ejected over the handlebars, hit the van's hood, and was thrown over the top of the van, coming to rest on the road about 17 feet from the van. Two rangers were first on scene. One of the rangers, also a park medic, administered advanced

life support to the juvenile while the other ranger managed the accident scene. The juvenile suffered a very severe open fracture of the lower leg and possible internal injuries. He was stabilized on scene by the ranger/park medic and paramedics from Gatlinburg FD and was transferred by ambulance to the Oconaluftee Overlook, where a waiting Life Star Medical helicopter flew him to UT Medical Center in Knoxville. The juvenile was in intensive care for several days, but has since been stabilized. He is expected to make a full recovery. The boy was wearing a helmet during the accident, which probably saved his life. The scooter operator sustained minor injuries and refused treatment. The incident remains under investigation. [Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Thursday, November 17, 2005  
Great Smokies NP  
Dog Rescued from Sinkhole

On Wednesday, November 16th, rangers successfully rescued a trapped hunting dog that had fallen about 70 feet down a sinkhole cave entrance adjacent to the Cades Cove area of the park. The rescue began at 10 a.m. on Tuesday after a phone call the previous night from visitors camping at a backcountry campsite off the Ace Gap Trail in Blount County. The campers reported that they'd heard a dog barking on Monday and went to investigate. About 300 yards from their campsite, they found a 30-by-40-foot hole and determined that it was the source of the barking. The campers made contact with a local builder who was working on a residence just outside the park boundary and asked for his assistance. The builder took a rope and went to the sinkhole with the campers. Using the rope attached to his seat harness, the builder was able to get close enough to the edge to see the dog at the bottom of the sinkhole, about 40 feet straight down, but was unable to get down to it. The builder contacted the park on Monday evening; rangers responded to the location that night, but were unable to hear any response from the dog in the sinkhole. On Tuesday morning, four rangers returned to the sinkhole to investigate further. They could hear no activity from the top of the sinkhole, nor was there a response from the dog. A ranger then rappelled into the sinkhole. The first drop leveled off about 40 feet down, but no sign of the dog was found on that level. Off to the side of the first drop, there was a small opening that dropped down another 30 feet. Using a light, the ranger was able to see the dog lying at the bottom of the second drop. Apparently the dog had walked around during the night and fallen into the second pit. When the ranger called to the dog, he stood up and looked up at him and appeared to be in good shape. The ranger continued the descent down through the small opening. After reaching the dog, he fashioned a makeshift harness around him and held the dog in his arms while the other three rangers used a pulley system to haul them both out of the sinkhole. The dog was emaciated and had some bruising, but was able to walk around. According to the rescuers, aside from being emaciated, exhausted, and sore, the dog appeared to be in pretty good shape. The dog wore a radio collar and identification tag of with owner information. The owner, a Townsend, Tennessee, man, was contacted and the dog was returned to him for proper care. It's not known how long the dog was trapped in the cave, but the dog's owner said that the dog had "been missing for 16 days" after a hunting trip in the area. [Rick Brown, District Ranger]

Thursday, January 12, 2006  
Hot Springs NP  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Attempted Suicide

While conducting an early morning patrol of Newfound Gap Road on January 9th, a ranger came upon a white Dodge Dakota pickup truck backed into a parking space at Swinging Bridges parking lot. The ranger saw a black drainage hose running from the truck's dual rear exhaust up through the rear sliding glass window. The vehicle was still running at the time of discovery. Recognizing the situation as a possible suicide, the ranger approached the vehicle and saw what appeared to be a man lying across the front seats. The ranger radioed for assistance, then entered the vehicle and removed the 43-year-old man inside. The man regained consciousness; over the course of the following several minutes, he became increasingly responsive and his motor skills improved. He was transported to Swain County Hospital for treatment. Subsequent investigation revealed that he'd been involved in a domestic dispute with his girlfriend two days prior and had spent a night in jail for domestic violence. He had apparently become depressed over the events. This was his second attempted suicide. [Lisa Slobodzian, South District Ranger]

Friday, January 27, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Three Arrested for Homicide in Park

On January 15th, hikers found the body of a young woman in the woods approximately 20 yards off of Toms Branch Road, which is located in the Deep Creek area of the park. Rangers, a special agent, and Swain County deputies responded to the scene and began an investigation. The FBI joined in the following morning. The preliminary investigation found that she had been shot twice in the face and that the murder had occurred at the location where her body had been found. The woman's identity was unknown and there were no missing person reports matching her description. Cherokee tribal police joined into the intensive investigation, which led to the identification of the 17-year-old victim, an enrolled Cherokee tribal member. The investigation led to the January 20th arrest of a 20-year-old man, also an enrolled tribal member. The man confessed to the murder and said that he and another person had driven the woman into the park on January 13th and shot her with a .38 caliber revolver. On January 24th, two other men - one age 18, the other age 19 - were arrested and charged with being accessories after the fact to murder. A federal magistrate judge has ordered all three men to be held without bond. Additional charges may follow upon presentation to a grand jury. More information will follow as the case progresses. (John Mattox, Special Agent)

Thursday, February 9, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Employee Death in Auto Accident

Arnold "Arney" V. Kovic, Jr. was fatally injured in a single automobile accident on Monday, February 6th. Arney, 54, worked in the Facility Management Division as the park's fleet management specialist and was stationed in the South District in North Carolina. He was on duty at the time of the accident, returning to his office after a meeting at park headquarters. The cause of death is unknown at this time. Arney had 32 years of government service, beginning with four years of duty in the U.S. Air Force and followed by civilian service at Grand Canyon, Crater Lake, and Point Reyes before coming to the Smokies in May, 2002. Arney lived in Cullowee, North Carolina, with his wife, J., and 17-year-old daughter, M.. Arney also leaves a son, C., age 33. Funeral arrangements are pending and will be announced as soon as they become available. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Specialist]

Monday, February 27, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Visitors Rescued After Car Plunges Into River

On the afternoon of February 18th, a passenger car being driven westbound on Little River Road hit a patch of ice and skidded out of control. The vehicle hit the steep hillside on the left side of the road, careened across the highway, rolled over a very rocky, vertical embankment, and ended up twenty feet below in the Little River. It was snowing at the time, and park maintenance workers were in the process of plowing and sanding the road. The car landed upright in the river in very swift moving water that was about five feet deep. The NPS maintenance worker who was plowing the road saw the vehicle go into the river. He immediately radioed park dispatch, then found a route down the embankment to the river to assist the victims. By the time he reached the male driver and his wife, they had gotten themselves out of the vehicle and were standing in the swift current beside the vehicle about twelve feet from the shore. While assisting them back upriver to the path back to the roadway, the maintenance employee slipped and fell into the ice cold river, becoming completely submerged in a hole over seven feet deep. He was able to get out, though, and make his way back to the shoreline. Rangers who arrived on scene provided medical attention and warmed the couple and the maintenance worker. [Rick Brown, Acting Chief Ranger]

Tuesday, May 9, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Motorcycle Rally with Multiple Incidents

On the weekend of April 28th and 29th, the Cherokee Survivors Motorcycle Rally was held in Cherokee, North Carolina. This event brings thousands of motorcyclists into Cherokee, the surrounding area, and the park. Because of the party atmosphere associated with the rally, there's typically an increase in alcohol and drug abuse incidents in the park. Two interagency sobriety checkpoints were set up on Newfound Gap Road to stem some of this activity. Participating were rangers from Great Smokies and Blue Ridge, officers from Cherokee PD, Cherokee Corrections, the North Carolina State Highway Patrol and Jackson County Sheriff's Department, and medical personnel from Cherokee EMS. An estimated 750 vehicles were checked at the two locations over the course of the two days, with the following violations/arrests: two DUI, one



public intoxication, nine marijuana possession, thirteen open containers, six operating without a license, one concealed weapon, and three revoked licenses. [Rick Brown, Assistant Chief Ranger]

Wednesday, May 10, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Special Event: Hot Rod Rally

On the weekend of April 21st and 22nd, the neighboring city of Pigeon Forge hosted the "Grand Rod Run," a hot rod rally which greatly impacts all of roads in Sevier county, including those in the park. During evenings, traffic backups occurred on the five-mile Foothills Parkway Spur that lasted as long as three hours. The rally typically results in a number of traffic, drug, alcohol and disorderly conduct violations. The park managed the event under ICS, bringing in rangers from each district. Bicycle, vehicle and stationary patrols were employed through the length of the spur. Over the two-day event, rangers made four DUI arrests and cited people for numerous traffic and other violations, including 24 that were alcohol-related. Rangers also responded to two other significant incidents during the weekend. The first was a motorcycle MVA on the spur. The operator, who was driving recklessly, lost control of his bike and was thrown into the river, which was at flood stage due to heavy rains from the previous night. A ranger rescued him from whitewater after he'd floated about 100 yards downstream. He sustained multiple injuries, including compound fractures of both legs, a compound fracture in one arm, and internal injuries. He was flown to a hospital by air ambulance. The passenger on his bike was eventually located and found to be uninjured. The second incident was a report from Gatlinburg PD of a fight on the spur involving a large number of participants. By the time rangers arrived, the fight had ended and all parties had disappeared into the traffic in Pigeon Forge. [Rick Brown, Assistant Chief Ranger]

Friday, May 12, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Motorcycle Accident with Two Fatalities

A 68-year-old Mississippi man was heading down a park road on his Honda Goldwing three-wheel motorcycle on the morning of May 9th when he lost control of the bike, went off the road, and hit a tree head-on. Both he and his 59-year-old male passenger sustained fatal injuries. Eyewitnesses to the accident told investigating rangers that the motorcycle had rounded a curve and appeared to just drift off the roadway into the tree. One eyewitness also reported that the passenger was reaching around the operator, trying to gain control of the motorcycle when it ran off the road. A passing motorist immediately called 911 on his cell phone to report the accident and the first rangers were on scene within less than 15 minutes. They found that the operator had suffered massive head injuries and had evidently been killed instantly; his helmet had apparently come off upon impact. The passenger had extensive head, face and chest injuries and was pinned under the motorcycle and its trailer. After disconnecting the latter, three rangers were able to lift the motorcycle off him while Rural Metro paramedics pulled him out from under the bike. He was taken to a local hospital for emergency treatment, then transferred by air ambulance to the

University of Tennessee Trauma Center, where he died of his injuries in the early hours of the following morning. [Rick Brown, Assistant Chief Ranger]

Tuesday, May 23, 2006

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Man Arrested for Homicide at Abrams Creek Campground

A 42-year-old man from Alcoa, Tennessee, has been arrested and charged with the murder of a 24-year-old man at the Abrams Creek Campground during the early morning hours of Sunday, May 21st. The victim died from an apparent stab wound. Another camper called 911 and reported the incident to the Blount County Sheriff's Office around 4 a.m. Deputies responded and rangers were notified. The 16-site campground was closed during the day while investigators gathered evidence and interviewed several campers. Alcohol may have been a contributing factor in the altercation between the two men. The FBI, county officers and rangers jointly investigated the death. The man who was arrested was charged with one count of violating 18 USC 1111(a), murder within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States - specifically, second degree murder in a national park. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Specialist]

Tuesday, June 27, 2006

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Multiple Significant Incidents

Over the three week period between June 3rd and June 21st, rangers handled a number of significant incidents throughout the park along with 22 motor vehicle accidents, ten alcohol-related incidents, eight drug-related incidents, 20 SAR/EMS incidents, and numerous other frontcountry and backcountry incidents:

Visitor Seriously Burned in Accident - On the evening of June 15th, a 31-year-old man from Lewisville, North Carolina, was camping in the Cosby campground with his 10-year-old son and two 14-year-old nephews. He directed the boys to fill their camping stoves from a can of white gas, which they did in an open area beside a fire ring. After filling the stoves, the man attempted to light a campfire within the fire ring, unaware that the boys had spilled some fuel on the ground. He started the fire with the white gas can still sitting beside the fire ring. The fuel on the ground ignited and set the can on fire. The man tried to kick it to the road with his left leg, but instead knocked it over. He kicked it again with his right leg, causing the fuel to splash on his legs and onto the ground, setting both his pants and the ground on fire. He patted his pants with his hand, then pulled them off. Other campers showed up and helped put the fire out. Witnesses said that there was a wall of fire about eight feet high. After receiving advice from other campers, the man got into his truck with the three boys and drove to Fort Sanders Hospital in Sevierville, about 30 miles away. He received initial treatment there, then was flown to the Chattanooga Burn Center. Doctors determined that he'd sustained second and third degree burns over about 50% of his body. Both of his legs, both arms, and his left hand were burned. He was

scheduled to spend four days in the burn center, then to recuperate at home. Ranger Larry Hartman is the lead investigator for this incident.

**Pedestrian Hit By Car** - On Saturday, June 17th, a 47-year-old motorcyclist from Peoria, Illinois, stopped along the Newfound Gap Road and walked across the road to take photos of the scenery. When he turned to walk back to his bike, he stepped directly into the path of an on-coming minivan. Great Smokies rangers Melody Morrison, April Lee and KK Stuart and Blue Ridge ranger Chip Buchanan responded. When they arrived, they found that the man was semi-conscious and suffering from severe trauma, including a possible pelvis fracture, acute deformity in both lower extremities, probable internal abdominal injuries resulting in uncontrollable internal hemorrhaging, and severe deformity of his right shoulder. The rangers administered basic life support. The road was closed, making it possible for a LifeStar medevac helicopter to land near the accident site. Attempts to obtain an adequate airway were unsuccessful, so he was flown to the UT Trauma Center in Knoxville. He was at first in critical condition, but now has been upgraded to serious condition. The man was still wearing his motorcycle helmet at the time, which probably saved his life.

**Assist With Car Clout Arrest** - Ranger Carin Harvey saw three people in a vehicle in the Lakeview area of the park acting suspiciously, causing her to suspect that they were braking into cars. She contacted them and saw a crowbar in the vehicle. After the vehicle left the area, Harvey began surveillance of the parking lot in anticipation of their return. After a short time, they reappeared and Harvey saw some items thrown from the vehicle into a trashcan. The vehicle then quickly left the area. Harvey checked the trashcan, found a purse, and called the Swain County Sheriff's Office to report her suspicions. Swain County deputies stopped the vehicle in Bryson City and found other evidence of stolen property inside it. All three eventually confessed to breaking into cars and stealing items from them. All the thefts were outside the park and are being handled by the sheriff's office.

**Near Drowning, Life Saved** - Ranger Bill Ramsey received a report of a drowning victim on the Little River just outside the park in Townsend. Ramsey responded and helped Townsend FD personnel administer CPR. The CPR proved effective and rescuers were able to detect a weak pulse and respiration after a few minutes. The victim was flown to the UT Medical Center and didn't regain consciousness for several days. A full recovery is now expected.

**Multiple Car Clouts** - The park received a total of 13 car clout reports on June 21st. Each of the vehicles had a window shattered and each had pry marks under the window frames. The incidents occurred throughout the Tennessee side of the park - at Alum Cave trailhead on the Newfound Gap Road, Laurel Falls trailhead on Little River Road, Metcalf Bottoms picnic area on Little River Road, and Townsend Wye on the western side of the park. Purses with cash and credit cards were taken from each of the vehicles. Some leads have been developed and an investigation is underway.

[Rick Brown, Assistant Chief Ranger]

Friday, July 7, 2006

Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Drowning At Abrams Falls

V.K., 26, of Manchester, Connecticut, drowned in a pool below Abrams Falls late on the afternoon of July 2nd. V.K. and four others Indian nationals, all in the United States on work visas, hiked the two-and-a-half miles to the falls earlier that day. He took off his shirt and shoes, entered the pool, and was last seen swimming underwater toward the base of the falls. When he failed to resurface, his friends began looking for him around the edge of the pool and in the surrounding area. Meanwhile, other visitors hiked out and contacted a park employee near the trailhead. Rangers arrived on scene around 7 p.m. and began a search for V.K.. On the following morning, scuba tanks and other gear needed for the search were packed in on a string of four NPS mules. A dive team from the Blount County Sheriff's Department assisted in the search. V.K.'s body was found under a ledge at the base of the waterfall in mid-morning. The waterfall creates a strong hydraulic, similar to a low head dam, which tends to hold and re-circulate items. Since the ledge under the falls is undercut, the hydraulic action apparently pushed the body further under the ledge and held it there. The body was carried out by the rescue team, reaching the trailhead at about noon on July 3rd. The medical examiner has ruled the cause of death as accidental drowning. [Rick Brown, Assistant Chief Ranger, Operations]

Monday, July 17, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Rescue Of Seriously Injured Hiker

On the afternoon of June 28th, an 80-year-old man from Critterville, Ohio, was hiking on the Grotto Falls trail about two-and-a-half miles from the trailhead when he slipped and fell 80 feet down a near vertical embankment, landing in the rocky creek below. According to his daughter, he'd attempted to skirt a slippery, rocky section of the trail, but the trail edge had broken away, causing him to fall. He slid feet first for about 15 feet, then flipped over and tumbled head first down a vertical section and landed on his back. Other hikers used a cell phone to call 911 and rangers were dispatched to the scene. Ranger Heath Soehn was first to arrive and found the man lying on a large rock in the creek with lacerations and abrasions on his head, face, arms, hands and legs. He also complained of a sore shoulder. After about 20 minutes of keeping the man still and quiet, he insisted on climbing back up to the trail by way of a steep social trail. Unable to keep him from attempting the climb on his own, Soehn assisted him back up the steep embankment. When they reached the trail, the man was exhausted and sore. Within a few minutes, however, other rangers and a carryout team arrived. They treated him and carried him to the trailhead on a wheeled litter. At the trailhead, he was transferred to a waiting ambulance and taken to the University of Tennessee Trauma Center in Knoxville. [Rick Brown, Assistant Chief Ranger]

Tuesday, July 25, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Two Serious Accidents On Same Morning

Two separate motor vehicle accidents on the Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge Spur on July 21st required medevac flights to the University of Tennessee Medical Center and caused extended traffic delays. Just after 7 a.m., P.O., 54, of Sevierville was traveling south on the Spur when she lost control of her Ford Taurus. The car struck a rock embankment on the right side of the road, then flipped onto its top and land in a ditch. When rangers arrived at the scene, Gatlinburg EMS had already extricated P.O. from the car. Five hours later, Sevierville resident J.C., 59, was traveling north on the Spur in the right lane. His 1994 Toyota Corolla hit a retaining wall on the right side of the road just before the tunnel. A Brinks armored truck, driven by B.L., 54, of Knoxville, also was involved in the accident. B.L. was charged with an improper lane change. The exact cause of the accident is still under investigation. Both P.O. and J.C. were transported by a Gatlinburg ambulance to Pigeon Forge, where a Lifestar helicopter was waiting to fly them to the hospital. Their exact injuries were unknown at the time of the report. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Wednesday, August 9, 2006

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Park Medic Saves Life Of Anaphylactic Maintenance Worker

A park maintenance worker was stung by at least two bees or wasps on the morning of August 8th and experienced a severe anaphylactic reaction. The worker was cutting grass near the Smokemont riding stables with a group of other maintenance workers when the incident occurred. Immediately after being stung, he became nauseous and sat down at a picnic table, then asked for help from his co-workers when he began having trouble breathing. He became unconscious almost immediately, causing his co-workers to call park dispatch for assistance. Ranger/park medic Joe Pond was the first on scene. He found that the victim conscious but still in respiratory distress, with bronchial constriction, nausea, hives, flushed skin, and profuse sweating. Following medical protocol, Pond administered oxygen, epinephrine and diphenhydramine (benadryl). The worker was transported to Cherokee Hospital, then transferred to Harrah's Regional Hospital in Sylva, North Carolina. He is currently in stable condition. This is the eighth incident of bee stings causing anaphylaxis in the past three weeks. Five of these incidents involved severe reactions in which injections of epinephrine and other drugs were required. [Rick Brown, Acting Chief Ranger]

Tuesday, August 15, 2006

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Ranger/Medics Rescue Seriously Ill Hiker

The park received a cell phone call from an Appalachian Trail through-hiker at the Tricorner Knob shelter around 9:30 p.m. on July 11th reporting that another through-hiker was having serious medical problems. The victim, a 60-year-old Seattle man, was semi-conscious but able to tell the other hikers in the shelter that he was a diabetic and was having a diabetic emergency. The call was transferred to an emergency room doctor at C.J. Harris Hospital in Sylva, North Carolina. The doctor determined the man's probable blood sugar level and that he could correct the condition if the man had his insulin pump with him. Since the shelter is located nine miles

from the nearest trailhead over very rough and steep terrain, this was determined to be a true medical emergency. Park medics Greg Wozniak and Steve Kloster picked up 100 units of insulin from a local emergency room and began hiking to the shelter. A cell phone call was made to the hikers who were with the man, and they agreed to monitor him and administer his insulin as prescribed by the emergency room doctor. The rescue plan called for an extraction either by hoist or by direct transfer to the helicopter at a small landing zone about three miles from the shelter. At daylight, a wrangler started up the trail with four horses and equipment as a backup evacuation method. When Kloster and Wozniak reached the man, they found him semi-conscious, with a very high blood glucose level and exhibiting symptoms of shock, and stabilized him with fluids and drugs. A Virginia State Police helicopter made an unsuccessful attempt at a hoist, then landed at the pre-arranged landing zone. The man was brought to the LZ by horseback, then flown to a VA hospital in Mountain Home, Tennessee, where he was admitted to the ICU. Once stabilized, he underwent quadruple bypass surgery. It appears that he had suffered both a heart attack and diabetic emergency at the shelter. Ranger Michael Nash was IC. [Rick Brown, Acting Chief Ranger]

Thursday, August 17, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Potential Homeland Security Threat

A visitor and his family were returning from a hike on the Laurel Falls trail on the evening of August 14th when they came upon a group of a dozen young men, later described as appearing to be of Middle Eastern descent, hiking up the trail toward the waterfall. Several of them were carrying what the visitor described as plastic-type guns that looked like automatic weapons. When he asked what they were doing with the guns, one of them replied that they were "going to hike up to the falls and play war" and asked if he wanted to join them. The man used a cell phone to call park dispatch and report the incident. Rangers Scott Kalna, Lorena Harris, and Ken Meyer responded and contacted the group at the trailhead. They found that eleven of the men in the group were in fact of Middle Eastern descent, that they ranged in age from 19 to 23, and that they were college students at the University of Alabama. The twelfth man was 27 and from Florida. They had six weapons among them. All had the features of MP5 automatic rifles, but were actually plastic guns that shot plastic pellets. Except for orange tips on the gun barrels, all had a very realistic appearance, including pressure-activated laser sights, flashlights, and realistic looking ammunition that was visible through the transparent and removable magazines. The men also had a video camera in their possession with a tape showing them shooting the guns at each other in the area of Laurel Falls. They were cooperative throughout the contact, but some questions were raised while the rangers were attempting to identify each of them. An FBI agent on the joint terrorism task force (JTTF) in Knoxville was contacted and asked to assist in identifying the men and gathering any information pertaining to them. Because of the suspicious nature of the incident, the JTTF is following up on possible leads that the rangers uncovered during the investigation. In consultation with the FBI agent and NPS special agent Jeff Carlisle, the weapons were seized and the members of the group were given warnings for disorderly conduct and weapons use. They were then released. Photographs and video in their possession also showed that the students had been in the park most of the day and at various locations. They

had not been camping in the park, but were staying in a motel in the Gatlinburg area. [Rick Brown, Acting Chief Ranger]

Monday, August 21, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountain NP  
Marijuana Plantation Found, Plants Seized

A marijuana plantation was spotted during an overflight of the Cove Mountain area in early July. Rangers hiked to the site the next day and found over 100 plants in small patches in three separate areas. They also found evidence of very recent tilling and signs that the garden's tenders might have hastily departed just before the rangers arrived. When they revisited the sites a few weeks later, rangers found that nobody had been there since their first visit. They made the same finding again on August 9th. Since the plants were no longer being tended, they harvested the fields, seizing 165 plants ranging in height from two to five feet. [Rick Brown, Acting Chief Ranger]

Wednesday, August 23, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Ginseng Poaching

In early August, rangers Gene Wesloh and Pat Patten found signs of recent ginseng digging in the Lakeview area. The signs revealed that the poaching activity was ongoing, so they set up a surveillance operation. On the evening of August 12th, Wesloh was dropped off and had just set up a surveillance post off the Lakeview Road when he saw a man furtively cross the road about 100 yards from his location. The rangers tracked him through the woods while simultaneously attempting to monitor vehicles coming into the area. They found tracks and other evidence, including a ginseng digging stick that had been tossed a short distance into the brush from the road edge, but were not able to find the man. The rangers returned to the area on the following morning and found two distinct, parallel sets of tracks, revealing that there were two possible suspects. They also found a second ginseng digging stick. Next to it and hidden under a thick mat of honeysuckle vines was a daypack containing 103 freshly-dug ginseng roots. The pack also contained a handheld propane torch, a glass methamphetamine pipe with meth residue inside, and several other items. The park and North Carolina Department of Wildlife have set up a ginseng marking program to help identify plants poached from the park. The plants in the pack were examined by state plant specialist Jim Corbin, who confirmed that some of the roots contained orange marking powder that revealed they'd been dug up from within the park. Two roots were kept for evidence and the remainder were replanted. Rangers are continuing the investigation and follow-up patrols in the area. [Rick Brown, Acting Chief Ranger]

Tuesday, October 3, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Contractor ATV Accident With Four Injuries

Four Motorola employees who were installing the park's new digital radio system were riding a Polaris Ranger ATV up the Sterling Gap trail on the morning of September 14th when it slid off the trail onto the soft, muddy shoulder. Three of them were seated on a bench seat in the front and the fourth was riding in the bed (the machine is designed to safely carry just two people on the bench seat). All four remained on the ATV while the driver attempted to back the machine onto the trail. The ATV went about ten feet, then slid further over the edge and rolled over an embankment. The person in the bed was ejected almost immediately near the top of the slope; the remaining three people were ejected at different points as the ATV repeatedly rolled over down the next 100 feet down the slope. It then continued rolling down the embankment, finally coming to rest about 360 feet down the slope from the trail. All four were injured to varying degrees and the ATV was extensively damaged. None of the riders was wearing a helmet or seatbelt at the time of the accident. The park's radio technician was at the repeater site, about a mile from the scene of the accident, and advised dispatch after receiving a radio call from the contractors reporting what had happened to them. Rangers, members of a nearby park trail crew, and Haywood County and Fines Creek rescue squad volunteers responded. The driver and front right passenger were in the worst shape, with possible head, neck and internal injuries. They were treated, assisted up the slope with the aid of a 3:1 mechanical advantage haul system, placed in litters on ATV's, and taken to an ambulance waiting at the trailhead. They were then taken to a landing zone about five miles away, transferred to a helicopter, and flown to Asheville Regional Hospital. Both were admitted, treated and released the next day. The other two contractors were treated and released. The injuries consisted of sprains, contusions, abrasions and bruising of varying types and degrees. [Rick Brown, Acting Chief Ranger]

Wednesday, October 18, 2006

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Much Of Tennessee Side Closed Due To Storm Damage

Rain and winds peaking at over 100 miles per hour struck the park on Monday night, particularly on the Tennessee side, bringing down trees and forcing closure of major roads and public use areas. Areas on the North Carolina side were not affected. The park's status, as of yesterday morning, was as follows:

Major road closures included the Newfound Gap Road (U.S. 441), Little River Road from Sugarlands Visitor Center to the Townsend entrance, Laurel Creek Road from the Townsend entrance to Cades Cove, and Cherokee Orchard Road outside of Gatlinburg.

The Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge Spur remained open, and the Sugarlands Visitor Center was open, albeit with limited services to due to partial power failures.

Numerous trees were down in Tennessee campgrounds, including Cades Cove, Elkmont, and Cosby. Campers in the affected campgrounds were advised to vacate because of continuing hazards expected throughout the day. Trees were also reported down on camper vehicles. A six-year-old boy was injured when a tree fell on his family's camper in the Cades Cove campground. He was taken to an area hospital, treated and released.



Rangers and road crews were assessing the condition of public use areas in order to determine when they would be safe to reopen.

No reports had been received of injuries to backpackers or hikers, although those activities increase at this time of the year.

By late yesterday afternoon, several roads had reopened, including a portion of the Little River Road from its junction with Newfound Gap Road to Elkmont campground, the Gatlinburg Bypass, Greenbrier Road, and the Cosby entrance road. Still closed were the Newfound Gap Road from Gatlinburg to Cherokee, Laurel Creek Road from the Townsend entrance to Cades Cove, the loop road in Cades Cove, Foothill Parkway (both east and west), Cherokee Orchard Road, and the Roaring Fork motor nature trail. Also closed was the Metcalf Bottoms picnic area on Little River Road. Two campgrounds reopened - a portion of Elkmont campground, accessible via the Gatlinburg entrance, and Cosby campground - but the campgrounds remained closed at Cades Cove, Abrams Creek and Look Rock. Campers at Cades Cove were advised to vacate because of forecasts calling for more high winds. Widespread damage is expected along park trails, but park staff have not yet been able to evaluate backcountry conditions. Visitors can call the park's general information number at 865-436-1200 to check on the status of roads and facilities. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Thursday, October 19, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Park Continues Recovery From Storm Impacts

Rain and winds peaking at over 100 miles per hour struck the park on Monday night, particularly on the Tennessee side, bringing down trees and forcing closure of major roads and public use areas. Changes to the park's status, as previously reported in this publication, are as follows:

*Little River Road* - The road has been reopened from its junction with US 441 at Sugarlands Visitor Center to the Townsend entrance. It is therefore now possible to access Elkmont campground and many trailheads and scenic points. There are no restrooms along this stretch of road, though, because the Metcalf Bottoms picnic area remains closed due to downed power lines.

*Foothills Parkway* - The segment of the parkway in Cocke County has reopened.

Park crews are working to reopen other roads, with the top priorities being the Newfound Gap Road (US 441) from Cherokee to Gatlinburg, the Laurel Creek Road to Cades Cove, and the Cades Cove loop road. All were expected to reopen by late yesterday. [Bob Gray, Management Assistant]

Friday, October 20, 2006

## Great Smoky Mountains NP Recovery From Storm Impacts Continues

Rain and winds peaking at over 100 miles per hour struck the park on Monday night, particularly on the Tennessee side, bringing down trees and forcing closure of major roads and public use areas. Recovery efforts have been underway since then. Park personnel made substantial progress in clearing several areas of downed trees and storm debris on Wednesday. The park's status as of late that day was as follows:

*Roads* - Roads that reopened on Wednesday included the Newfound Gap Road (U.S. 441) between Gatlinburg and Cherokee, Clingmans Dome Road, Little River Road, and Laurel Creek Road. Cades Cove Loop Road was opened as far as Sparks Lane, creating a shorter, four-mile loop. The park hoped to open the road as far as Hyatt Lane on Thursday, thereby creating an eight-mile loop through the cove. Foothills Parkway East and West also reopened. Two roads remain closed - Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail and Upper Tremont Road.

*Campgrounds* - Elkmont and Cades Cove campgrounds, which are on the National Park Service reservation system, are open only to visitors who have already made reservations through the weekend. No new reservations or walk-ups are being accepted because only a limited number of campsites are available. Look Rock and Abrams Creek campgrounds off the Foothills Parkway are now open, as is Cosby campground.

*Facilities* - The Cades Cove riding stables have reopened for business. Facilities that are still closed at this time include the Cades Cove group campground, Cades Cove picnic area, Anthony Creek horse camp, and Metcalf Bottoms picnic area.

*Trails* - The condition of backcountry trails is still unknown, as park crews have been focusing on cleaning up developed areas.

[Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Monday, October 23, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Park Continues Recovery From Severe Windstorm

The park continues to recover following a storm with winds peaking at over 100 miles per hour that struck the park last Monday night. All major front country areas of the park are now open, including the scenic 11-mile Cades Cove Loop Road. Here's a status report on other areas, as of late last Thursday.

Cades Cove picnic area - Open.

Upper Tremont Road - This section of the road, near Townsend and past the Great Smoky Mountains Institute, has reopened.

Elkmont campground - The campground is fully operational.

Cades Cove campground - The campground is still operating on a limited basis.

Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail - The park expected to reopen this road sometime last Friday.

Wears Cove Road - Closed.

Rich Mountain Road - Closed.

Anthony Creek horse camp - Closed.

About 100 employees - trail and road crews, rangers, resource management and science and education division staff - worked throughout the week to reopen roads and public use areas. They are now focusing on backcountry trail assessments. The storm affected sites at elevations between 800 and 4,000 feet within three counties. Some park facilities and vehicles were also damaged, as were more than two dozen visitor RV's and other vehicles. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Tuesday, October 31, 2006

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Park Continues Recovery From Severe Windstorm

Recovery from the windstorm that ravaged the Tennessee side of the park on October 16th and 17th is expected to cost over \$500,000 by the time all the park's trails are cleared and damage to park vehicles and structures is repaired. Park managers have already submitted a \$350,000 storm damage relief request to offset the park's costs to clear roads and to repair buildings and vehicles. As of October 19th, all park roads had been reopened, just in time for the heavy visitor traffic that occurs during the fall color season. Park campgrounds and picnic areas had also returned to normal operations for this time of the year. The storm, which brought high winds gusting to a peak of 106 mph, left virtually all the roads on the Tennessee side of the park blocked by fallen trees and debris, totaled three park vehicles, and damaged several park buildings. The most serious damage was sustained by the historic Dan Lawson Barn in Cades Cove, which was blown partially off its footings when one wall buckled inward. Park personnel spent much of last week conducting a preliminary assessment of the trails on the Tennessee side and found damage to be widespread all the way from the Abrams Creek area in Blount County to Cosby in Cocke County. They found well over 1,000 downed trees, creating an obstacle course for hikers and prompting the park to close 24 trails to horse travel. Many trails also have hot-tub-sized holes where trees were uprooted. "Now that we have some idea what our impacts are, we have crews starting work to get trails reopened, beginning with the most popular trails first," said assistant superintendent Kevin Fitzgerald. "In the interest of getting the most miles of trail open as soon as possible, our crews will focus on cutting a path through blocked areas and removing any damaged trees and large limbs which are still hanging overhead and could pose a hazard. We only have about a six week window of weather to do trail work, so we will have to put off repairing the large holes and other major damage to trail surfaces until next spring. So there will

be a number of trails that will remain closed to horse use throughout the winter." The park intends to expand its trail crews next spring in order to get the remaining damage repaired as early as weather permits. Crews currently assigned to clear trails consist of about two dozen experienced Smokies trail workers and firefighters who'd normally be laid off by late October but have been extended until Christmas on an emergency basis. The park expects that their additional salary and overtime costs this fall will total up to about \$200,000. To provide up-to-date information on the condition of specific trails, the park has posted a trail status report to its website: [HYPERLINK "http://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/temproadclose.htm"](http://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/temproadclose.htm) <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/temproadclose.htm>. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Tuesday, December 12, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Theft From Motor Vehicle

Ranger Carin Harvey was patrolling the Deep Creek area on December 4th when she came across a vehicle with a smashed window parked at the Deep Creek trailhead. When she made contact with the vehicle owner, she learned that a purse and money had been stolen from the vehicle. Later that day, another vehicle was broken into outside the park in the Bryson City area. This time the theft was witnessed by a bystander. A "be on the lookout" message was broadcast for the suspect and vehicle, and a state trooper soon stopped the vehicle and arrested the driver, William J. Fowls. Harvey quickly learned of the arrest and questioned Fowls along with acting special agent Kirby Styles. Fowls confessed to the Deep Creek car clout. Since he was already under arrest on state charges, the rangers placed him on an unsecured field bond and charged him with misappropriation of property and damage to private property. [Rick Brown, Assistant Chief Ranger]

Friday, December 15, 2006  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Sentencing In Vehicular Homicide Case

On the evening of March 26, 2005, five elderly visitors from Virginia were killed instantly when their vehicle was broadsided near the park's welcome center by one of two vehicles drag-racing on the Foothill Parkway Spur (click on "More Information" for the original report). Just moments before the crash, J.H. of Lebanon, Tennessee, and S.W. of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, who were strangers to each other, met at a traffic light in Gatlinburg. They revved their engines and began a 90-mph drag race down the winding stretch of the parkway, which links Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge. S.W. was driving in the left lane and was narrowly able to avoid hitting the crossing vehicle by swerving left; J.H. was driving in the right lane and hit the crossing vehicle broadside, instantly killing all five people in the car and injuring himself and his passenger. S.W. fled the scene, but was later identified through a follow-up investigation. Both J.H. and S.W. pled guilty to one count of second degree murder in 2006. In November, Steven S.W. was sentenced to 8 years and 6 months in federal prison. Last week, Jonathan J.H. was sentenced to 21 years and 8 months in federal prison. According to the federal district judge, "the disparity (in

sentencing) arises from the choices and behaviors of the respective defendants both before and after these deaths. J.H. had a history of reckless and drunken driving. Mr. S.W. had no criminal history." The investigation is a result of excellent teamwork between several rangers and special agent Jeff Carlisle. [Rick Brown, Assistant Chief Ranger]

HYPERLINK "<http://classicinside.nps.gov/headline.cfm?type=Incidents&id=1832>"

Wednesday, December 20, 2006

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Teenager Injured In Serious Fall From Tower

On the afternoon of December 14th, D.H., 18, of Brentwood, Tennessee, fell about 30 feet from the Look Rock Tower, sustaining serious injuries. D.H. and three other teenagers had walked up the ramp to the top of the tower to take photos from the observation deck. The ramp has three landings on the way to the top. While returning, they stopped on the lower landing, which is about 30 feet from the ground. D.H., responding to a challenge from one of his friends, climbed up on the concrete railing, then jumped to the lower, sloping concrete railing while his friends took photos of him. The distance between the two railings is about five feet. D.H. twice jumped successfully from one ramp the other; on the third attempt, though, his foot apparently caught on the railing as he jumped, causing him to miss the second railing. D.H. hung onto the railing for a brief moment, then slipped and fell to the bottom, hitting the concrete railing at the bottom of the tower and coming to rest on the concrete ramp. He suffered severe head trauma, a fractured pelvis, four fractured ribs, and damage to the ligaments in both arms. D.H. was flown by air ambulance to the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where he remains in ICU in critical condition. [Rick Brown, Assistant Chief Ranger]

Wednesday, March 21, 2007

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Convictions For Armed Robbery

While sitting at an overlook on the Foothills Parkway last August 26th, two local college students were assaulted and robbed by A.R. and M.B., both residents of Maryville, Tennessee. A.R. was wielding a large tire iron when the two men approached the students, demanding their personal property. Neither of the students had any money, but they surrendered their wallets and a cell phone. A.R. then demanded that the woman take off her clothes, but she refused to do so. After a brief altercation, A.R. and M.B. fled in the latter's vehicle. Neither of the students was physically harmed. The two men went to a local Wal-Mart and charged over \$400 in purchases to a credit card taken from one of the wallets. Meanwhile, the students, who'd noted the license number on M.B.'s vehicle, drove to Maryville Police Department and reported the incident. Supervisory ranger Steve Spanyer and special agent Jeff Carlisle investigated the crime. Along with the lead on the vehicle, video footage was obtained showing the subjects at Wal-Mart purchasing items with the stolen credit card. M.B., who was driving his father's vehicle that night, was tentatively identified through the video footage. Following an intensive investigation, arrest warrants were issued for M.B. and A.R. on September 1st. Search warrants were also

issued for their residences. M.B. was taken into custody and confessed his role in the incident during a subsequent interview. A.R., who fled the area, was arrested on the warrant and unrelated charges on September 23rd by officers from the Knox County Sheriff's Department. A.R. was interviewed by Spanyer and Carlisle and confessed to his role in the crime. Both men pled guilty to armed robbery and assault in federal district court. At their March sentencing hearing, A.R., who was classified as a career criminal by federal standards, received 125 months incarceration, followed by three years of supervised release. M.B. received 24 months incarceration, followed by three years of supervised release. [Rick Brown, Assistant Chief Ranger]

Thursday, April 5, 2007  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Arrest For Theft From Campers

On March 26th, a camper hiked out of the park's backcountry, contacted a ranger, and reported that another hiker - later identified as W.B. of McComb, Mississippi - had stolen some food and equipment from him. He said that W.B. had appeared at the shelter from an off-trail area, that he was traveling with a young pregnant woman, and that he was carrying a large machete, an axe, a large filet knife and very little backpacking gear. He said that W.B. was "acting weird and was a bit scary." The camper and his wife were preparing to leave the shelter that morning when he noticed that a small stuff sack with freeze-dried meals, a cook stove and a mess kit were missing. He questioned W.B. about the missing items at the time, but W.B. denied taking them. The camper and his wife left the area, but he decided to return shortly thereafter to question W.B. further about the missing items. When he got back to the shelter, he found W.B. cooking one of his freeze-dried meals in his pot and on his stove. He confronted W.B. and got his stove back, but said that he felt uncomfortable about pursuing the issue further. Over the course of the day, an Appalachian Trail Ridgerunner contacted several other hikers who'd stayed at the shelter and had come into contact with W.B. and his companion. All were aware of the theft and concerned that W.B. was a threat to their safety. All indications were that W.B. and his companion were hiking toward the Pecks Corner shelter, so rangers Lamon Brown and Duane Michael hiked into the area on the morning of March 27th to intercept them. They were not at the shelter, though, and hadn't been there the previous night. The rangers then contacted hikers along the trail and found that the pair were at the Kephart shelter. They advised dispatch by radio, and rangers Pat Patten and April Lee hiked to the shelter. W.B. lied about his identity, but admitted to the theft of the camping equipment. He was arrested and hiked out of the area with his companion. W.B. was charged with misappropriation of property, providing false information, and backcountry permit violations. At the jail in Swain County, his identity was determined and he was found to have an outstanding warrant against him in Mississippi for credit card fraud. Further investigation revealed that W.B. had stolen credit cards and a vehicle from his companion's father earlier that month. He and his companion then drove to Knoxville, where he sold the car, used the stolen credit cards, and entered the park to hike the AT. He'd been on the run for about 21 days when he came to the Smokies. W.B. has been extradited to Mississippi under felony warrants for credit card fraud and motor vehicle theft. [Rick Brown, Assistant Chief Ranger]

Tuesday, April 17, 2007  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Newfound Gap Road Closed Due To Downed Trees

Newfound Gap Road was closed between Gatlinburg and Cherokee all day yesterday while park crews worked to clear an estimated 200 trees that were blown down overnight by high winds. Most of the trees fell within a mile of the state line just south of Newfound Gap in North Carolina. Crews worked until dark last night in an effort to get the road open by this morning. For current information on the road's status, the public can call 865-436-1200 and get an automated message that is updated promptly as conditions change. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Thursday, April 19, 2007  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Fatal Accident On U.S. 441

Rangers responded to a single-vehicle accident on U.S. 441 on the afternoon of April 15th. T.F., 45, of Gatlinburg was heading north on the road when his 2005 Dodge Caravan left the road just north of the tunnel and struck a guardrail on the left side of the road in the turn lane for the Flat Branch Road exit. The Caravan sustained only minor damage, but enough to make it necessary for Gatlinburg EMS personnel to break into the vehicle to reach T.F. He was taken by ambulance to the Fort Sanders Sevier Medical Center, where he was later pronounced dead. Given the very minor damage to the vehicle, rangers are investigating the possibility that a medical condition may have caused the accident and his death. The county medical examiner will conduct an autopsy to make that determination. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Thursday, June 7, 2007  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Man Drowns After Going Over Waterfall

On the night of Monday, June 4th, rescuers recovered the body of J.R., 24, of Maryville, Tennessee, who drowned and was trapped in the Little River in an area known as the "Sinks," a popular waterfall within the park. J.R. had reportedly slipped on rocks above the waterfall and was carried over the falls, which has a 12-foot drop with a large volume of water that plunges forcefully into the boulder-strewn Little River. After falling into the turbulent pool at the base of the falls, J.R. did not resurface. Two of J.R.'s companions witnessed the accident and other individuals drove to nearby Townsend, Tennessee, to use a cell phone to relay the emergency to Blount County 911. J.R.'s companions reported that he was scooting along rocks when he slipped and fell into the river. He was then carried over the falls and wedged into a submerged V-shaped log. Rangers were assisted by Blount County Rescue Squad personnel, who provided scuba diving and swift water rescue services. The rescue team, using technical equipment and ropes, located the body around 10 p.m. The operation to extricate the body from the water was challenging because of the swift whitewater and strong undercurrents that pinned J.R.'s body

below the surface. Rangers were assisted by personnel from the Blount County Sheriff's Office, Blount County Fire Department, Townsend Fire Department, and Rural Metro Ambulance Service. Drowning is one of the leading causes of accidental deaths in the park, second only to motor vehicle accidents. Since the park began keeping records in 1971, there have been 28 drownings, five of which occurred at the Sinks. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Thursday, August 09, 2007

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Three Badly Injured In Single-Vehicle Accident

Park dispatch learned of a serious accident on Newfound Gap Road south of Sugarlands Visitor Center on the afternoon of August 7th. Rangers arrived on scene about 10 minutes later and found that a 1998 Ford Expedition had gone off the road and hit a tree and that two of the occupants were trapped inside. A family of four — K.H., 53, his wife S.H., 50, and their sons S., 18, and R. — 13 — had been heading northbound on the highway when the Expedition, driven by the father, drifted off the right side of the road and down a ten-foot bank, then hit the tree. Four ambulances and two rescue units from Gatlinburg arrived just minutes after the rangers. Rescue personnel cut the sides off the vehicle to free S.H. and R., who were trapped in the wreck. They were judged to be in sufficiently serious condition to warrant medevac flights to the University of Tennessee Medical Center. Two helicopters flew to the park, landed in the VC parking lot, picked them up, and flew them to the hospital. S. was taken by ambulance to Ft. Sanders Sevier Medical Center. Newfound Gap Road was closed for about three hours while the Expedition was removed and rangers conducted an investigation.

[Submitted by Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Significant Car Clouting Conviction

During 2002 and 2003, the park was hit with a large number of vehicle larcenies at several locations on the Tennessee side. An investigation was begun that led to the identification of D.K. of Gadsden, Alabama, as the person responsible for the car clouts and the subsequent credit card and check fraud. She was indicted on eight state and federal felony counts, including theft of property from the vehicles (18 USC 661), unauthorized use of an access device totaling more than \$1,000 in a calendar year (18 USC 1029 (a)(2)), and transporting and using fraudulent checks affecting interstate commerce (18 USC 2314). D.K. was arrested in Alabama and subsequently pled guilty to six of the eight counts. She was then allowed out on a bond, pending sentencing in May, 2006. In February, 2006, NPS investigators received a call from detectives in Birmingham, Alabama. A new rash of vehicle larcenies was occurring in the Birmingham area and assistance was being sought in hopes of identifying the responsible party. Case information was provided to NPS investigators and D.K. was once again identified as the responsible individual. D.K. was subsequently apprehended and convicted on state and local charges. The assistant U.S. attorney decided to allow D.K. to serve her state time before bringing her to



Tennessee to be sentenced for her federal crimes. In May, 2007, D.K. was sentenced on her federal crimes. She received 30 months incarceration, which was at the high end of the sentencing guidelines, followed by three years of supervised release. She was also ordered to pay \$29,500 in restitution and assessed \$600 in special assessments. This case was made largely on the basis of handwriting analysis evidence, as the store surveillance videos were often poor in quality and physical evidence at the larceny sites was often minimal at best. It should also be noted that the plea agreement was drawn up in such a way that D.K. accepted responsibility for 29 car clouts, even though she was only indicted for her participation in two such larcenies. Investigators are sure that D.K. was involved in well over 100 larcenies in the park during 2002 and 2003. [Lisa Slobodzian]

Wednesday, March 5, 2008  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Ginseng Poacher Sentenced To Jail Time

On February 25th, D.F., 35, of Newport, Tennessee, was sentenced to 10 days in jail for digging up and taking protected ginseng roots from the park. D.F. was apprehended by rangers on September 8, 2006, in the Cosby area. When apprehended, he didn't have any of the roots in his possession, but an investigation of the scene revealed 37 freshly disturbed spots in an area where ginseng plants were growing. D.F. initially received a citation that required an appearance in federal court. When he failed to appear, a warrant was issued, and he subsequently pled guilty to the charge. D.F.'s conviction marks the third case this year in which ginseng poachers were sentenced to jail time. On January 24th, two North Carolina men were convicted for ginseng poaching in two separate incidents. N.M., 50, of Cherokee, North Carolina, was sentenced to 20 days in jail and fined a total of \$125 for possessing 18 wild ginseng roots, and N.B., 27, of Topton, North Carolina, was sentenced to 15 days in jail and fined \$135 for possessing 77 roots. Illegal harvesting of plants is a serious problem in the park, particularly ginseng, a favorite target of poachers for its high profit margin in the black market. Its roots have been a traditional ingredient in Chinese medicine for thousands of years. In the international and domestic legal trade market, wild ginseng roots can bring from \$500 to \$800 per pound. The larger and older the root, the more profitable. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Thursday, March 13, 2008  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Three Escape Serious Injury When Trees Fall On Car

On March 3rd, J.M. and two companions were traveling southbound on Newfound Gap Road in a 2001 Nissan Altima when it was struck by falling trees. The park was experiencing a strong wind event when three locust trees blew over in succession and landed on their car, hitting the roof and crushing the entire passenger compartment. All three were pinned in the Nissan for more than two hours while rescue efforts were underway. Ranger Walt West used a chainsaw to remove the trees from the car, and Gatlinburg Fire Department personnel cut the roof off of the car to access the interior. All three were alert and oriented throughout the rescue operation. They

were transported to a local hospital and found to have only minor injuries. Ranger Chuck Hester was the incident commander. [Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Friday, March 14, 2008

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Driver Killed When Car Crashes, Overtakes In Little River

M.J., 24, of Toccoa, Georgia, was killed in a single vehicle accident along Little River Road on Monday, February 25th. M.J. was heading east on the road sometime in the early morning hours in a 1999 Chevrolet Cavalier when his vehicle failed to negotiate a right hand curve, left the roadway, became airborne, then rolled into the river and came to rest submerged upside down in the water. The accident was reported to ranger Bill Ramsey around 8 a.m. When Ramsey got to the scene of the accident, he discovered the Cavalier on its rooftop and submerged in the river's frigid waters below a 25-foot-high rock wall. He called for a dive team from the Blount County Rescue Squad and additional support. More than 40 people from several agencies responded. The divers were able to attach a cable to the vehicle so that it could be pulled from the river. M.J.'s body was then discovered inside. There was no evidence that he'd attempted to take corrective actions to prevent the accident from occurring. The cause remains under investigation. Ramsey was the incident commander. [Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Monday, March 24, 2008

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Four Entrapped Men Rescued From Cave

Four young men who were trapped in Rainbow Falls Cave were rescued on the evening of Friday, March 21st. The foursome - D.B. and J.L., both 17, G.B., 24, and C.S., 20 - had set out to go caving around 10 p.m. on Thursday evening, with the intent of returning home by the early morning hours. Their descent into the cave went smoothly, but they realized that they'd become trapped when they attempted to climb back out. One of the ropes lead up an icy cold waterfall and they were so cold and exhausted that they lacked the strength to make the ascent. At that point, they retreated further into the cave until they found a dry spot where they could huddle together for warmth and await rescue. The park was notified of their failure to return from the expedition around 7:30 a.m. on Friday morning and immediately launched a rescue operation. Although there was some uncertainty as to which among several caves they'd entered, rangers found a pack belonging to one of the men at the entrance to Rainbow Falls Cave around 9 a.m. Park staff with caving experience and members of the Knoxville Cave Rescue Team entered the cave and extricated the four men. They were found to be in good condition. Only G.B. had any caving experience, and that was limited to some small caves in Oklahoma where he'd lived before moving to Tennessee. The men had four ropes and a single ascender with them and were clad mostly in cotton, which provides little warmth when wet. (Bob Miller, PAO, plus news reports]

Tuesday, April 1, 2008

Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Follow-up On Felony Vehicular Assault

On May 27, 2007, M.R.D.-M. was heading north in his Saturn on the southbound one-way section of Highway 441 when he hit a Lincoln Towncar head-on. Two of the passengers inside the Lincoln suffered serious injuries - an elderly woman lost vision in her right eye and an elderly man suffered permanent damage to his knee and hip. M.R.D.-M. fled the scene on foot soon after the collision. According to an eyewitness, alcohol was apparently a contributing factor in the accident. Special agent Jeff Carlisle took the lead in identifying the driver of the Saturn, whose name was not yet known. Carlisle determined that M.R.D.-M. had been driving the Saturn, that he'd immigrated to the U.S. from Honduras about 10 years previously, and that he was in the United States illegally. Carlisle also learned that M.R.D.-M. had been convicted on two prior occasions for DUI, with one conviction occurring less than a month prior to this accident. A two-count indictment was obtained, charging M.R.D.-M. with aggravated assault. He was found and arrested about three weeks after the accident. On March 18th, after changing his original plea of not guilty to guilty, M.R.D.-M. was sentenced in federal court to 48 months in jail, followed by three years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$600 in restitution to the victims. He was also notified that he will face deportation back to Honduras following his incarceration in a federal penitentiary. M.R.D.-M., who has fathered two young children in the U.S., sought a downward variance from the sentencing guidelines, stating that incarceration in addition to being deported was akin to cruel and unusual punishment. The district judge ruled in favor of the government and the variance was denied. [Lisa Slobodzian, Law Enforcement Specialist]

Wednesday, August 6, 2008  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Car Clouter Convicted In Federal Court

On August 6, 2007, two vehicles were broken into in the park - one at the Alum Cave trailhead and the other at the Laurel Falls trailhead. In both cases, the vehicles were entered in a manner that kept the victims from realizing that their cars had been broken into until the following day. The thief took only a credit card from one woman's purse, and stole a laptop computer and the rear license plate from the other victim. Usage of the credit card was tracked and a large amount of store video was obtained showing an older man who was driving a motor home. At a Wal-Mart, he purchased loadable cell phone minutes for a TracPhone. Information was obtained from the cell phone company which showed that he made a phone call to a small campground in Georgia. Special agent Greg Podany interviewed the owners of that campground and came up with the name of one R.P. as the possible suspect. Information was obtained about R.P. and it was determined that he was the person who had made the fraudulent charges on the credit card. Special agent Jeff Carlisle determined that R.P. had been recently arrested in Charleston, South Carolina, and was being held in a local county jail. Carlisle went to Charleston and interviewed R.P., who admitted his involvement in the theft of property from the two vehicles and the use of the credit card. The motor home R.P. was driving was also found to have been stolen from Florida, and the license plate from the second victim's vehicle was found on it. R.P. was subsequently indicted in the Eastern District of Tennessee for 18 USC 661 (theft), 18 USC 1029

(use of the credit card), and 18 USC 2312 (interstate transport of a stolen motor vehicle). R.P. pled guilty to the charges and on July 31st was sentenced to 16 months incarceration, followed by 36 months of supervised release. R.P. was also ordered to pay \$3,032 in restitution to the victims and a \$400 special assessment. [Lisa Slobodzian, Law Enforcement Specialist]

Wednesday, August 13, 2008  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Bear Destroyed After Attacking Child

On the evening of Monday, August 11th, eight-year-old E.P., of Boca Raton, Florida, was playing along LeConte Creek about 300 yards up Rainbow Falls Trail from the trailhead when he was reportedly attacked twice by an 86-pound bear. The boy suffered non-life-threatening cuts, scratches and puncture wounds. His father, J.P., was able to drive off the animal with sticks and rocks, but sustained some minor injuries himself. The P.s were treated at Fort Sanders Sevier Medical Facility in Sevierville and released later in the evening. Rangers arrived on scene within minutes of the incident and came upon a bear that matched the size given by J.P. The bear was shot and killed, then taken to the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine for a necropsy which will help to determine if it was carrying rabies or if there were any other health abnormalities that may have prompted the attack. Rabies, however, is extremely rare in wild bears and has never been documented in a park bear. Park wildlife biologists advise that there's been no bear activity reported at this location recently, though bears are active throughout the park, as they typically are during this time of the year. While several backcountry campsites are currently closed and bear warning signs posted because of known bear activity, park wildlife personnel have had fewer human-bear conflicts than usual reported so far this year. The bear that was shot did not have an ear tag or tattoo, indicating that it had not been previously captured. This was the first serious bear-human incident since a 2000 attack which resulted in the tragic death of a local woman who was attacked by a 113-pound female bear and a yearling cub. Visitor injuries by bears are uncommon in the Smokies, and, when they have occurred, have typically been minor bites or scratches resulting from a bear trying to obtain human food. Park biologists have documented seven minor human injuries over the past ten years, mainly involving bears trying to get at human food and injuring a visitor in the process. The Rainbow Falls Trail remained closed overnight to allow rangers to investigate and document the incident in the daylight. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Thursday, August 28, 2008  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Search For Missing Kayaker Culminates With Discovery Of Body

The body of a missing kayaker was found yesterday morning in a section of the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River. The victim, I.L., 27, of Hartford, Tennessee, was discovered by two kayakers who were not part of the search team that was looking for him, but were running the river on their own. I.L. was reported missing on Tuesday evening by his two companions. They'd entered the water near the Chimney Tops trailhead with the intention of running rapids on the lower section of Road Prong, a tributary to the West Prong. The plan was to takeout

before they reached the West Prong. I.L.'s companions returned to shore shortly after they entered the river when they realized how swift the current was moving, but I.L. continued on. His body was found about a thousand feet downstream from the confluence of Road Prong and West Prong. The stream level dropped about two feet yesterday, and his body was found above the water, entangled in vegetation. The area where the body was found is extremely rugged and heavily vegetated and not near a trail. At the time of the report, park personnel were still trying to reach the location. [Nancy Gray, PAO]

Monday, September 29, 2008  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Habitual Motor Vehicle Offender Convicted

When ranger Ken Davis stopped a car last November 2nd, he found that the operator - M.B. of Knoxville, Tennessee - was driving on a revoked license and that he didn't have either a valid registration or insurance. He was cited for all three violations. M.B.'s blood alcohol count at the time was 0.5%. Rangers later learned that M.B. had been classified as a habitual motor vehicle offender in the state of Tennessee and that his driving history included eleven DUI convictions, twelve instances of driving on a revoked license, and one case of reckless driving. M.B. was indicted in federal court for violating the state's habitual motor vehicle offender act. He subsequently pled guilty to the charge and on September 17th was sentenced to 24 months in jail, followed by 180 days in a halfway house and three years' supervised release. Southeast Region special agent Jeff Carlisle assisted in the follow-up investigation and in M.B.'s prosecution. [Lisa Slobodzian, Law Enforcement Specialist]

Thursday, December 4, 2008  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Hiker Dies Of Injuries Incurred In Fall

On the afternoon of Saturday, November 8th, J.F., 25, fell about 25 to 30 feet from the top of Grotto Falls, a popular hiking destination along Trillium Gap trail a few miles south of Gatlinburg. J.F. suffered apparent leg, back and head injuries in the fall. Rangers transported him a mile-and-a-half by litter to the Trillium Gap trailhead, where he was transferred to an ambulance, then flown by helicopter to the University of Tennessee Hospital in Knoxville. J.F. succumbed to his injuries on Tuesday. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Friday, February 6, 2009  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Suicide Victim Found Off Laurel Creek Road

On February 3rd, rangers determined that an unoccupied vehicle parked in a pullout along Laurel Creek Road belonged to Michael Day, a 61-year-old local man, who was listed with authorities as "missing/endangered." An investigation was begun and a hasty search of the area conducted. Around 4:30 p.m., the rangers found Day's body in a densely wooded area about 75

yards from the vehicle. He appeared to have died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to his head. Clues suggest he died sometime on January 31st. [Bill Wright, Chief Ranger]

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Two Lost Hikers Tracked Down And Rescued

On the afternoon of March 4th, park dispatch received a report that two hikers, both men in their 60s, were an hour and a half overdue from a 15-mile day hike in the Tremont area. They were reported to be experienced day hikers who were in the process of hiking all 900 miles of trails within the park. Shortly thereafter, dispatch received a call from one of the men, who reported that they'd mistakenly gotten off the Panther Creek trail while trying to navigate around a large downed tree. They'd walked for about three hours in dense rhododendron, but had been unable to relocate the trail. They were unable to start a fire due to snow on the ground and wet conditions, and one of the men was reportedly cold and shivering. Wildlife technician Rick Varner and ranger Steve Spanyer interviewed the men via cell phone and determined that they were most likely off-trail on a finger of Timber Ridge between Lost Branch and Panther Creek. Since one of the hikers was evidently in the first stages of hypothermia and since temperatures in the twenties were forecast for that night, IC Helen McNutt decided to begin an off-trail search after dark. Ranger Todd Roessner and wildlife technician Dan Nolfi hiked in to the Panther Creek trail and found tracks going off the trail. The tracks showed that the hikers had missed a switchback, gone directly into the woods, encountered the downed tree, then became lost after going around it. Nolfi and Roessner tracked the men through thick rhododendron and steep terrain until they made voice contact with them. Due to the dense vegetation, it took Roessner and Nolfi nearly two more hours to reach the two men. They led them back to the trail, where the foursome forded a stream, then hiked another two plus miles back to the trailhead. Both men were able to walk back to the trailhead, but one was taken to a nearby hospital, as he was displaying signs of dehydration and exhaustion. Although both men were experienced day hikers, they had no experience hiking off-trail and limited experience with backpacking and winter conditions. [Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Monday, April 13, 2009

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Kentucky Hiker Dies After Fall

R.L., 73, died last Friday evening after suffering injuries in a fall that occurred that afternoon while he was hiking in the park with his wife. The accident reportedly occurred on Schoolhouse Gap trail about seven miles from the Townsend entrance, but responding rangers were unable to find the pair on that trail. Shortly thereafter, R.L.' wife called to report that the accident had actually occurred on the Chestnut Top trail, about five miles from the originally reported location. When rangers got there, they found R.L. sitting by the side of Townsend entrance road. He said that he and his wife had hiked just a few hundred yards up the trail when a thunderstorm rolled in and they turned back towards their car. He then stumbled off the trail and tumbled about 20 feet down a steep slope, possibly suffering back injuries. He was able to continue down

the slope on his own and eventually reached the road. Due to his back pain, ranger summoned a Rural Metro ambulance, which transported him to a helicopter that flew him to the University of Tennessee Hospital in Knoxville. The park was later notified that he died of apparent blunt trauma to his chest late that evening. No autopsy is planned. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Monday, June 1, 2009

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Penn State Student Drowns At Abrams Falls

The Blount County Sheriff's Office received a broken cell phone call on the evening of Sunday, May 24th, reporting that a visitor had possibly drowned at Abrams Falls in the Cades Cove area of the park. Supervisory ranger/medic Steve Spanyer drove to the trailhead from the ranger station, then hiked the two-and-a-half miles to the falls, arriving at 8:30 p.m. He found that N.Z.N. had been underwater and missing for more than 90 minutes. N.Z.N. was with a group of 35 Penn State University students, all of them from Malaysia and members of the Malaysian Society at Penn State (this was not a school-sponsored trip, though). After arriving at the falls, many members of the group decided to go swimming. N.Z.N. and two others began walking in the water towards the falls. As N.Z.N. approached the falls, the water became deeper and the current began to pull him under. Members of the group saw that N.Z.N. was struggling and waving for help. One member of the group tried to rescue him, but was unable to do so and had to be pulled from the water. Due to the amount of time that N.Z.N. had been underwater and the fact that it was becoming dark, a decision was made to begin the search for him at first light the next day. Rangers Kent Looney and Trey Kelly remained at the falls all night. The Blount County dive team and rangers returned to the falls at 7 a.m. on May 25th. Divers found N.Z.N.'s body early that afternoon in the general area where he was seen being pulled under. Ranger Helen McNutt was IC. [Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Wednesday, July 29, 2009

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Motorcyclist Killed In Collision With RV

On July 17th, R.V., 73, of Chipley, Florida, was driving a motorcycle with a sidecar northbound on US 441 when he entered a right-hand curve. As he was negotiating the curve, the unoccupied sidecar started lifting up off the roadway. R.V. could not control it and his motorcycle crossed into the southbound lane of travel with the sidecar in the air. The motorcycle's windshield hit the front of a southbound recreational vehicle, causing R.V. to fall off. He was then hit by the RV. The motorcycle continued forward, ending up in the northbound lane of travel. R.V. was found to be dead on arrival. No other individuals were injured. Rangers had to close US 441 for almost two hours to investigate and clear the scene. Ranger Carmen Barnard is the case officer. [Tom Iandimarino, South District Ranger]

Wednesday, August 5, 2009

## Great Smoky Mountains NP

### Woman Sought After Jumping Into Little River Reappears

A ranger patrolling Little River Road on Friday, July 31st, saw a woman in her 30s sitting on a rock at the edge of the river and was sufficiently concerned about her intentions to stop and check on her. He spoke to her repeatedly, but she didn't acknowledge him. She then suddenly stood up and jumped into the swift-flowing water. The ranger ran down the river approximately 150 yards until he reached a place where he could get to the river safely and twice threw a float bag to her as she floated past. On one occasion, she picked it up and tossed it aside. Other rangers quickly gathered at the scene and searched the river bank intensively from 4:00 p.m. until it was too dark to see anything. Other rangers set up a stationary vantage point just above The Sinks, where they hoped to intercept her as she was swept past. Gatlinburg's Rescue Squad and Rural Metro Ambulance also responded. They were not successful, and suspended the search until the next morning. They were still looking for her on Saturday when she reappeared at the Townsend Wye, about seven miles downstream from the point where she was last seen. She was in good condition. Rangers say that C.S.M., 45, of Knoxville evidently got out of the river on the opposite side from Little River Road and walked up through the woods until she reached Round Top Trail, which leads to the Townsend Wye. She then crossed the river and walked into the parking area. Park volunteers who were directing traffic at the closed gate to Little River Road noticed her and notified rangers that she might be the individual they were looking for. C.S.M.'s vehicle had been found Friday night at the Metcalf Bottoms picnic area, so rangers suspected that she was the subject of the search. She was transported to Blount Memorial Hospital for evaluation. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Thursday, August 20, 2009

## Great Smoky Mountains NP

### Two Motorcyclists Killed In Head-On Collision With SUV

The operator of a motorcycle and his passenger were fatally injured yesterday morning when they were struck head-on by an SUV. The SUV was northbound on Newfound Gap Road when it crossed the centerline, sideswiped another vehicle, then hit the motorcycle. The driver of the second vehicle suffered non-life-threatening injuries and was taken to Swain County Hospital by Cherokee Tribal EMS. An investigation is underway. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Thursday, August 27, 2009

## Great Smoky Mountains NP

### Rangers Deal With Multiple Same Evening Incidents

Rangers dealt with a confrontation, a fatality and a medical emergency within a two-hour period on the evening of Sunday, August 9th. Ranger Jeff Duckett contacted the owner of a vehicle parked near the Bradley Fork trailhead just before 6 p.m. regarding the tags on his vehicle being revoked. He became belligerent, causing the ranger to draw his taser and call for backup. Two rangers and four Cherokee PD officers responded and took the man into custody. At about the same time, J.B., 61, was killed in a single vehicle rollover accident on the Northbound Spur near



the Little Smoky intersection. Ranger Jason March was first on scene and found J.B.'s 1999 Toyota lying on its side down a steep embankment at the edge of the river. Five rangers responded along with Galtinburg PD, fire and EMS units. The Northbound Spur was closed for an hour due to the prolonged extrication operation. While this incident was underway, dispatch received a report of a 22-year-old hiker suffering from a diabetic emergency on the Alum Cave trail. Seven rangers responded with the park's rescue vehicle. Rangers Adam Lucas and Todd Roessner found the man lying in the trail approximately two-and-a-half miles from the trailhead and administered oral glucose and oxygen. After completing a full assessment, the rangers determined that he was able to hike out to the trailhead under his own power. He was transported to a local hospital via private vehicle. Roessner was the IC for the incident. [Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Monday, August 31, 2009  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Backpacker Missing For A Week Found By Searchers

M.B., 70, set out on a planned four-day backpacking trip in the park's backcountry on Saturday, August 22nd. The trip included off-trail hiking in a remote and rugged section of the Smokies. M.B. became lost the next day when he became disoriented by the heavily vegetated and steep terrain and impeded by sheer rock bluffs, downed trees and dense rhododendron thickets. He made it to the top of 5,000-foot Porters Mountain on Monday and remained there until found. Since M.B. was supposed to hike out on Tuesday, his family reported him as overdue and a search was begun. M.B. had filed a trip plan and obtained the needed permits, so rangers and volunteers hiked all of the trails listed on his plan on Wednesday in an effort to find him. They were unsuccessful. The search continued through the balance of the week. Late on the afternoon this past Saturday, the pilot of a contract helicopter spotted M.B. waving his arms outside of a tent on a ridge. He was hoisted off the mountain on Sunday morning by a Tennessee Highway Patrol helicopter and flown to Sugarlands Visitor Center. M.B. was in good condition and did not require medical attention. He told rangers that he'd rationed his food - spam and fruit - and was able to capture rainwater during his long stay on the mountain. About 40 NPS personnel were involved in the search. [Bob Miller and Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officers]

Tuesday, September 15, 2009  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Motorcyclist Found Guilty Of Speeding To Elude

On the afternoon of Saturday, May 9th, Great Smoky Mountains ranger Jeff Duckett became involved in a pursuit of a speeding and fleeing sport Suzuki motorcycle southbound on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The operator, S.D., 24, refused to stop despite Duckett having activated his cruiser's emergency lights and siren. Within minutes, Smokies ranger Mike Scheid set up a stationary position near the junction of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. While posted with emergency lights and siren activated on his marked patrol car, Scheid attempted to stop S.D., but S.D. swerved around Scheid's vehicle at a high rate of speed and continued onto US Highway 441, entering Great Smoky Mountains. Rangers continued

pursuing S.D. southbound onto the Cherokee Indian Reservation. At the point where rangers were planning to defer the pursuit to the Cherokee Police Department units, S.D. was met by a Cherokee PD officer traveling northbound who attempted to block his escape. S.D. slowed to a very low speed and attempted to swerve around the officer's marked patrol car in a deceptive move, but he crashed into the curb and Cherokee PD car. Scheid and several Cherokee PD officers arrested S.D., who later confessed to his unlawful actions. In May, S.D. was indicted by a federal grand jury for violating, via the assimilated crimes act, a North Carolina general statute known as speeding to elude arrest - a felony. On August 5th, S.D. was found guilty as charged on all counts in a jury trial at district court. On August 25th, he was sentenced to a concurrent sentence of five months active confinement and a year's supervised probation, including seven months home confinement, and ordered to pay restitution to the government for damages incurred in the pursuit. NPS special agent Kirby Styles and ranger Joshua Frazier assisted with the investigation and follow up on this case. This incident was recorded on Scheid's in-car digital recording system, which proved to be critical trial evidence along with S.D.'s taped confession. Scheid was the case officer. [Joe Pond, Supervisory Park Ranger]

Thursday, September 17, 2009

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Rangers Successfully Intercede In Attempted Suicide

Field training ranger Ellen Paxton and trainee Sarah Cowell contacted what appeared to be an out of bounds camper at the Upper Overlook on the Gatlinburg Bypass around 2:30 a.m. on Sunday, September 13th. As the rangers approached the vehicle, they heard loud music coming from within and saw a woman who appeared to be unconscious in the driver's seat. A handgun was also observed underneath her right thigh. The woman was removed from the vehicle at gunpoint without incident. She was able to tell rangers that she had come to the park to kill herself by taking 20 sleeping pills. Gatlinburg EMS responded and took her to Ft. Sanders Sevier Medical Center for further evaluation. Ranger Michael Garner also responded and followed-up with interviews at the hospital. She is expected to be in the hospital under evaluation for at least a week. [Bobby Fleming Supervisory Park Ranger]

Friday, October 9, 2009

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Man Killed, Wife Injured In Foothills Parkway Accident

T.J., 50, of Maryville, Tennessee, was driving on Foothills Parkway with his wife, Mary, on the evening of October 7th when he failed to negotiate a curve about a mile from the parkway's intersection with U.S. 321. The vehicle left the roadway, rolled down an embankment, and landed on its top, collapsing the roof on the driver's side. Mary Rogers called 911 from the scene. Rangers responded along with personnel from Blount County Fire Department, Blount County Sheriff's Department, and Blount County Rural Metro. Emergency personnel extricated both T.J. from the vehicle. She suffered no life-threatening injuries, but he did not survive. Alcohol may have been a factor. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Monday, October 26, 2009  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Man Sentenced In Abusive Sexual Contact Incident

On August 30, 2008, a 16-year-old girl was visiting the Townsend Wye area within the park. As she was leaving the area and returning to her vehicle, a man came up from behind and sexually assaulted and threatened her. She screamed, and he fled in his car. The victim was able to get the license plate number and provide rangers with a detailed description of her assailant. An investigation conducted by supervisory park ranger Steve Spanyer and special agent Jeff Carlisle led to the identification of the suspect as one J.T. J.T. was subsequently charged with abusive sexual contact (18 USC 2244 (b)). On July 8, 2009, J.T. entered a guilty plea and was remanded into custody pending sentencing. J.T. had earlier been placed on home confinement with electronic monitoring and was under monitoring from January until his change of plea hearing. On October 7th, J.T. was sentenced to time served (three months), followed by an additional 90 days of home confinement. He was given 40 hours of community service and must participate in the sexual offender treatment program. He was also placed on three years of supervised release, and must register as a sexual offender for at least a ten-year period. [Jeff Carlisle, Special Agent]

Thursday, November 12, 2009  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Park Rangers Find Lost Hikers Unharmd

On the evening of November 9th, rangers located three lost hikers - J.H., 21, K.L., 19, and S.W., 19, all of Knoxville - in the Abrams Fall area following a short search. All three were in good condition. Park dispatch received a call from one of them at 3:30 p.m., reporting that they'd set down their packs and jackets on the Abrams Falls trail, left the trail to explore a social trail, then become lost in thick brush and steep and confusing terrain. County dispatchers were able to use the group's cell phone to provide rangers a location in an area called "The Shoe," so-called because Abrams Creek makes a long loop at that point. The Shoe is notoriously confusing, so searches in that area are not uncommon. Rangers located the trio at about 7 p.m. and guided them out to the trailhead. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Friday, November 20, 2009  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Man Apprehended In Bull Elk Poaching Case

Charges are pending against a Granville County, North Carolina, man who is a suspected of shooting a bull elk inside the park. Rangers found the carcass of bull #21 lying along the edge of one of the pastures in the Cataloochee area on the morning of November 13th. The animal was believed to have been shot and was taken to the University of Tennessee's College of Veterinary Medicine for a necropsy. That report is pending. An investigation was begun immediately by rangers, an NPS special agent, and North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission officers. A

vehicle description lead them to a man who subsequently confessed to the offence. The park is working with the U.S. Attorney's Office to develop the case. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Wednesday, December 23, 2009

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Hiker Dies Of Injuries Sustained In Fall Into Stream

The park received a 911 alert regarding a hiking accident just before noon on Monday. Cindy Hill and her husband, Ron, were hiking along the Greenbrier Road, which was temporarily closed due to snow. They walked about three miles from the ranger station, then stopped to take a photo on some rocks along a stream. Cindy Hill lost her foot on a rock and fell into swift-moving water. Her husband grabbed her, but she slipped from his grasp. He finally reached her again about 20 yards downstream, pulled her to the shore, and began CPR. She proved unresponsive. While running back toward the ranger station to get help, Hill encountered a visitor who made the 911 call. Rangers and Gatlinburg fire and EMS personnel responded, arriving at the scene simultaneously. Paramedics began advanced life support, but without effect. She was taken by ambulance to Fort Sanders Sevier Medical Center, where emergency personnel were able to establish a pulse. She was then transported by air to Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center for additional treatment, but attempts to revive her there were unsuccessful and she was pronounced dead. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Wednesday, December 30, 2009

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Park Recovering From Christmas Eve Wind Event

The staff at Great Smoky Mountains National Park is in the process of recovering from an extreme wind/rain event that swept through the area on the night of December 24th. Park weather stations recorded wind gusts of 70 to 100 mph during the night, and, by Christmas morning, thousands of fallen trees and debris blocked nearly all of the park's roads, including Newfound Gap Road (U.S. Hwy 441), Foothills Parkway East, Foothills Parkway West, Gatlinburg Bypass, Cherokee Orchard Road, Cataloochee Entrance Road, Old NC 284 (between Big Creek and Cataloochee), and Lakeview Drive. The wind event comes on the heels of a snow storm a week earlier that dropped up to 28 inches of snow, closing the Newfound Gap Road until December 23rd. Park road crews were called in at 3 a.m. on Christmas morning to clear the Newfound Gap Road, where several vehicles were trapped by fallen trees, including an elderly couple, both of whom were having medical issues. The male was short on bottled oxygen and the wife was having cardiac symptoms. Both were examined by Gatlinburg EMS, later recovered, and left by POV. The Twin Creeks Science Center greenhouse was badly damaged and all the native plant materials being propagated in it were destroyed by frost. The historic Caughron Barn in Cades Cove was totally flattened. A condition assessment of other park structures is still pending. As of December 29th, all park roads had been reopened except Old 284 between Cataloochee and Big Creek and the Cataloochee Entrance Road, which are still blocked by hundreds of trees. Crews are still at work to clear those secondary routes. Park managers expect damage to trails to be very extensive, because the wind was accompanied by up

to 2.69 inches of rain on top of snowmelt from the 20 plus inches of snow that remained from the December 18th-19th storm. They expect to find thousands of downed trees, as well as washouts and slides. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Wednesday, January 6, 2010

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Man Indicted For Vehicle Break-In And Theft

On December 15th, B.P. of Maryville, Tennessee, was indicted in the Eastern District of Tennessee for crimes committed in the Cades Cove District. On September 30th, a park visitor's vehicle was accessed while it was parked at a historic church parking area on the Cades Cove Loop Road and a purse belonging to one of the visitors was stolen. A short time later, B.P. saw the victims reporting the theft to a park maintenance employee at the visitor center, waited for them to leave, then approached a maintenance employee and reported that he had seen the theft of a purse from a person's vehicle. B.P., who gave the maintenance employee a fictitious name, provided a description of the "suspect" and a description of the suspect vehicle, including its license tag. Rangers subsequently located the "suspect" vehicle and made a vehicle stop. Meanwhile, B.P. was able to exit the loop road and leave the park. B.P. then used the victim's credit card in a nearby town to purchase gasoline for his vehicle. Ranger Helen McNutt and special agent Jeff Carlisle investigated the incident and were able to ascertain B.P.'s identity. B.P. later provided full admissions during interviews. He was charged with three felony counts in an indictment - larceny from a motor vehicle, theft of property, and providing false statements to a government official. B.P. was arrested without incident on December 16th. The case is set for trial in February. [Jeff Carlisle, Special Agent]

Tuesday, January 26, 2010

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Passenger Killed When Trees Fall On Car

T.E., 39, of Sevierville, Tennessee, was killed on Sunday night by falling trees that hit the Nissan Altima she was riding in on Newfound Gap Road. Several large trees fell from the west side of the road directly onto the front passenger side of the vehicle just after the car had passed the Chimney Tops picnic area. The Nissan was driven by J.S., also of Sevierville. A third occupant, J.S.'s juvenile daughter, was sitting in the back seat of the car. The incident was reported by a park employee just after 8 p.m. The Nissan was severely damaged by the fallen trees, which caused the roof to collapse on the passenger side. Both J.S. and his daughter were able to climb out of a window. Before rescue personnel arrived on scene, a motorist with a chainsaw stopped to assist and began cutting the trees in an attempt to free T.E. Gatlinburg paramedics assisted rangers in employing the jaws-of-life to extricate her from the vehicle. She was pronounced dead at the scene. The S.'s were transported by Gatlinburg ambulance to the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where they were treated and released. T.E. was transported by a second Gatlinburg ambulance to Ft. Sanders Sevier Medical Center. Although high winds with gusts up to 70 mph had blown earlier in the day, they'd diminished significantly

by the time of the accident. Soils, though, were highly saturated due to rainfall and snow melt. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Friday, March 19, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Slide Closes Little River Road

A rockslide has blocked the western end of Little River Road within Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The slide is about two miles west of Metcalf Bottoms, so an eight-mile-long portion of Little River Road is currently closed between Metcalf Bottoms picnic area and Townsend Junction. Traffic that would normally transit that section is being diverted out of the park unto US 321 in Townsend, then north on US 321 to Lyon Springs Road in Wears Valley, where motorists can reenter the park on the Wear Cove Road to Metcalf Bottoms and continue east on Little River to Newfound Gap Road and on to either Gatlinburg or Cherokee. Due to bridge weight limits, no large motor homes or buses can use this alternate route. These larger vehicles must continue on US 321 into Pigeon Forge. Park crews are evaluating the slide. No estimated time of repairs is yet available. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Monday, March 22, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Contractors Work To Remove Slide On Little River Road

A construction company has been hired to repair last Thursday's rockslide, which is currently blocking the west end of Little River Road. Heavy equipment began arriving on Thursday night and crews started work early on Friday. They plan to work from first light to sunset each day until the work is completed. Once the material at the base of the slide is cleared away, a crane will be brought in which will be used to scrape away at the material still clinging to the face of the slide to bring down any rocks that are likely to come down later. When the contractor has brought down all the loose material, park managers and a geotechnical engineering consultant will inspect the site to be sure it is safe to reopen the road. The park expected the road to be ready to reopen by Sunday evening, unless complications showed up that required installation of rock bolts to stabilize the rock face. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Monday, April 19, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Passenger Killed In Single-Vehicle Accident

A single-vehicle accident around 1:30 a.m. on the Gatlinburg Pigeon Forge Spur last Thursday killed the passenger and sent the driver to the University of Tennessee Medical Center with a number of injuries. The victim, I.C., 26, of Kodak, Tennessee, was pronounced dead at the scene. The accident occurred on the northbound spur just north of the Kings Branch interchange. The road was closed for two hours while rangers conducted an investigation and cleared the scene. Evidence indicated that the 2004 Ford Explorer hit a rock wall on the west side of the

road, causing I.C. to be thrown out of the vehicle by its impact. The vehicle then spun out of control and came to rest in the roadway. Rangers are continuing the investigation, which may result in charges against the driver, whose identity is still to be confirmed. The driver was treated and released from the hospital and taken into custody by rangers. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Wednesday, May 12, 2010

Great Smokies NP

Court Sentences Reckless Biker To Substantial Jail Term

A man who drove his motorcycle at speeds well over 100 mph through the park while attempting to elude arrest has been found guilty of reckless driving and been sentenced to six months in jail. Last September, rangers attempted to stop the operator of a motorcycle who was speeding on the Foothills Parkway spur in the early hours of the morning. Instead, the driver - N.O. 21, of Clintwood, Virginia - accelerated away on his Suzuki 600 motorcycle, despite having a female passenger on the back of the bike. During the pursuit, N.O. reached speeds up to 114 mph, crossed double-yellow lines, passed on curves and nearly struck another vehicle head-on. "We have been seeing an increase in the number of individuals who are fleeing to elude arrest over the last few years," said Bill Wright, the park's chief ranger. "This type of behavior presents enormous risks, especially in the park with its narrow, curving roads and heavy traffic. There seems to be a growing perception that fleeing into or through the national park will allow the offender to escape. However, due to the limited number of exits from the park, those individuals are nearly always caught. Their actions prior to being stopped seriously jeopardize the safety and well-being of unsuspecting visitors and fellow motorists they encounter, and place the eluder in great risk of injury or death." [Bob Miller, Public Affairs]

Thursday, May 20, 2010

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Illinois Man Killed In Motorcycle Accident

S.H., 37, of Huntley, Illinois, was killed on Tuesday evening when he crashed his 2003 Kawasaki motorcycle on Little River Road. S.H. was heading west on the road when he lost control of his motorcycle, failed to negotiate a curve, and collided with a rock wall. He was riding with three other friends when the accident occurred. A motorist stopped at the accident scene and began CPR on S.H., but was unable to revive him. Rangers were on scene within 15 minutes and were joined by county deputies. S.H. was taken by ambulance to Blount Memorial Hospital, but was pronounced dead before arriving there. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Thursday, June 24, 2010

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Former Concession Employee Pleads Guilty To Theft

On May 19th, L.L., a concession employee who'd been charged with the theft of over \$5,000 from the Cades Cove Riding Stables, entered a plea of guilty in federal court, changing it from a previous plea of not guilty. Ranger Todd Roessner, with the assistance of an agent from the Investigative Services Branch, had conducted an investigation into the theft of the money from the stables and found that L.L., who'd worked as a cashier for the company, had taken it over the course of a period of about four months. L.L. was interviewed and confessed to stealing the money. She will be sentenced in August. Roessner and the agent conducted an extensive review of the company's remittance records to obtain the necessary evidence to make the case prosecutable. This case was a fine example of teamwork between Great Smoky's protection ranger division and ISB investigators. [Jeff Carlisle, Special Agent, Investigative Services Branch]

Friday, June 25, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Sentencing Completed In Car Clout Case

In August, 2009, rangers Michael Garner and Jason Marsh, with the assistance of two special agents from the Investigative Services Branch/East, investigated a series of vehicle break-ins that had occurred in the park. Surveillance was set up and a man was apprehended after he was observed breaking into a parked motor vehicle. He was subsequently indicted on two felony and three misdemeanor counts for his actions in three separate vehicle larcenies. The man remained in custody pending the outcome of the case. On March 31st, after pleading guilty to three of the five counts, he was sentenced to time served (seven months incarceration) and three years of supervised release and was ordered to pay a \$150 special assessment and \$1,177.82 in restitution to his victims. He was then transferred to state custody to answer to numerous non-park related crimes which he committed in the local community. [Jeff Carlisle, Special Agent, Investigative Services Branch/East]

Monday, July 12, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Nine Injured In Van Accident

A Plymouth Voyager min-van crashed on the Pigeon Forge-Gatlinburg Spur early on the morning of Thursday, July 8th, injuring all nine people on board. All were foreign-born workers employed by area resorts. Two were flown by helicopter to the University of Tennessee Medical Center; two were taken to the same hospital by ambulance; the remaining five were transported to the LeConte Medical Center in Sevierville. No information is currently available on the condition of any of the nine. Language problems made the investigation of the accident challenging, but at least some of the occupants were Ukrainian nationals. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Wednesday, July 14, 2010



## Great Smoky Mountains NP Rangers Respond To Three Mass Casualty Accidents

Over the course of a five-day period, rangers responded to three mass casualty motor vehicles accidents in the park with a total of 20 people injured:

Sunday, July 4th - Park dispatch received a call reporting a single vehicle rollover accident on Newfound Gap Road on the North Carolina side of the park. The five occupants of a Chevrolet HHR rental car, all from Ohio, sustained a variety of injuries in the crash. One had a compound femur fracture and possible head injuries and had to be extricated from the car. Rangers from Oconaluftee and Little River responded with Cherokee tribal EMS, fire and police personnel. Four of the injured visitors were taken by separate ambulances to hospitals in Sylva and Waynesville. The most seriously injured victim was flown by Mountain Area Medical Airlift to Mission Hospital in Asheville. The highway was closed for over an hour. The case rangers are Josh Frazier and Mike Scheid; supervisory ranger Joe Pond was IC.

Wednesday July 7th - Supervisory park ranger Bobby Fleming and ranger John Sheets came upon a three-vehicle accident on the Newfound Gap Road near Sugarlands Visitor Center that had occurred just seconds before their arrival. A van had been rear-ended, causing six injuries. All six people were stuck in the van due to damage to the side door. Ranger/medic Ellen Paxton, supervisory ranger/medic Joe Pond, FLETC trainee Mike Hinchberger and personnel from Gatlinburg EMS and fire responded. Four of the injured were taken to a medical center in Sevierville for evaluation. The road was closed for about an hour. The operator of one of the vehicles was cited for failure to maintain control. Fleming was the incident commander and Sheets is the investigating ranger.

Thursday, July 8th - Dispatch received an initial report of a van accident involving children on the Spur near Norton Creek. Fleming and Steve Kloster, acting chief ranger, responded along with rangers Jacob Greene and Ken Davis and ambulance and EMS personnel from Gatlinburg and Sevier County. They found that nine adults - and no children - had been injured. Two were flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville with serious injuries; two were taken by ambulance to the same center; the remaining five were taken by ambulance to the medical center in Sevierville. All nine were from the Ukraine and were working in Gatlinburg. The road was closed for about two hours. Park maintenance personnel played a key role in assisting with traffic control and cleanup of the scene. Fleming was the incident commander and is the investigating ranger.

Meetings between supervisory staff from the park and local emergency service agencies throughout this past winter and spring have helped to assure a coordinated and effective multi-agency response to emergency incidents within the park. [Steve Kloster, Acting Chief Ranger]

Friday, July 30, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Drug Trafficker Arrested

In January of this year, a multi-jurisdictional law enforcement effort was launched to identify and prosecute drug traffickers operating in and around the Cherokee Indian Reservation and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. On June 3rd, an NPS agent, along with an agent from the ATF, saw a suspected drug trafficker traveling through the park. The agents followed the motorcycle from the park to a nearby barn on the Cherokee Indian Reservation, where they contacted the operator and found 30 pounds of marijuana in the bike's saddlebags. The man was arrested by the NPS agent and charged with one count of trafficking marijuana. He was indicted for possession and conspiracy to sell and deliver marijuana. As part of the indictment, the government filed a notice of forfeiture for his 2004 Harley Davidson and a personal monetary judgment in the amount of \$300,000, representing proceeds that he obtained throughout the course of the conspiracy. [John Mattox, Special Agent In-Charge, Eastern U.S.]

Monday, August 2, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Knoxville Man Killed In Single-Vehicle Crash

Rangers are investigating a single-vehicle accident that killed a 47-year-old Knoxville man last Tuesday. The man was driving east on Laurel Creek Road that morning when his 2001 Chevrolet van drifted off the right edge of the road, struck a tree, then slid about 15 feet down an embankment. He was wearing his lap/shoulder restraints and the van's airbag deployed. Rangers arrived within five minutes of the crash and found him unresponsive. He was pronounced dead at the scene. No evidence of alcohol or drugs was evident. The investigation continues. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Tuesday, August 24, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Six Injured In Motor Home Accident

A large motor home went off a park road and about 100 feet down an extremely steep embankment around noon yesterday, injuring six of its seven occupants - two seriously. The driver of the motor home was attempting to pull off the Newfound Gap Road onto the shoulder, but was unable to stop before the shoulder became too narrow to support the vehicle. The RV fell onto its side and slid about 100 feet down the embankment. The driver was uninjured, but all six passengers were hurt - two with severe injuries were flown to a hospital in Asheville, the other four were taken by ambulance to Cherokee Hospital with less serious injuries. The Newfound Gap Road was closed around 12:30 p.m. as emergency personnel from the park and several North Carolina agencies converged on the scene to provide medical assistance to the patients and conduct technical rescue operations. When emergency personnel arrived on scene, all but two of the passengers were alongside the road. The two victims who were airlifted out had to be hoisted up the embankment by medical personnel. Joining park staff in the operation were Cherokee Tribal Emergency Management Services, Bryson City Fire Department, Swain County Rescue, Cherokee Fire Department, and Cherokee Natural Resources. The road

remained closed through the afternoon to allow a crane service to remove the RV from the site.  
[Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Friday, September 24, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Rangers Conduct Proactive LE Operation At Rod Run

Each April and September, the city of Pigeon Forge hosts a car show known as the Rod Run. This traditionally has increased the volume of traffic into the park, specifically on a section of US 441 commonly referred to as the Spur. In past years, rangers have seen an increase in the number of alcohol, drug, DUI, reckless driving, simple assault and other disorderly conduct offenses during these events. Rangers have accordingly taken a proactive approach to decreasing these incidents, employing sobriety checkpoints, focused patrols, and deliberate traffic management plans. These enforcement efforts are aimed at increasing visitor safety and public awareness. In order to manage the increased law enforcement activity and other emergency incidents related to the Rod Run, the Tennessee District was managed under ICS on September 17th and 18th. An incident action plan was developed to provide clarity to the park's management team and field staff on what was being done and how it is to be done safely. The principles of operational leadership were incorporated into the plan and a GAR risk assessment model was developed for the event. On Friday, rangers conducted focused patrols on the Spur from 8 p.m. to 3 a.m.; on Saturday, they set up an incident command post and managed traffic starting at 6 p.m. on the Spur at the King Branch exit. On Friday, rangers made 36 vehicle stops and issued a total of 38 violation notices and written warnings. On Saturday, they made another 39 vehicle stops, issued a total of 43 violation notices and written warnings, arrested seven people for DUI, and arrested another three for public intoxication. Over the course of the weekend, Tennessee rangers also responded to several MVA's and other incidents, including a motorcycle that ended up in the Little River and a hiker who experiencing an allergic reaction in the backcountry. The park's management efforts have been supported by locals as well as park visitors traveling through the area. Supervisory Park Ranger Bobby Fleming was IC for the incident. [Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Monday, September 27, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
DUI Enforcement Operations Net Thirteen

A series of DUI enforcement actions in the park over the past three weeks resulted in 13 arrests - 10 for DUI and three for public intoxication. The initiative is part of a national effort funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to reduce the number of drug and alcohol-related traffic crashes. Rangers conducted enhanced DUI enforcement at two locations. Over the weekend of September 12th, rangers were assisted by the North Carolina Highway Patrol and the Cherokee Police Department in conducting sobriety checkpoints along Newfound Gap Road, just inside the park's Cherokee entrance. During the course of the contacts, three drivers were arrested for DUI. On the weekend of September 17th, rangers conducted saturation patrol along the Gatlinburg/Pigeon Forge Spur. This second round resulted in seven DUI arrests and two

arrests for public intoxication. In addition to these special operations, rangers made four other DUI arrests within the same time frame during the course of their normal patrols. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Tuesday, October 19, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Hiker With Severe Injury Evacuated From Park Trail

Ranger Brad Griest was heading up the Alum Cave Trail on the afternoon of October 10th to checkout a report of an ill hiker when another hiker told him that a man had fallen on the trail about three miles further on and that he'd sustained a head injury and was complaining of back and neck pain. Griest reached him about 45 minutes later. The man reported that he had no feeling below his neck, and Griest found an obvious spinal deformity in the upper back and confirmed that the man had no motor or sensory functions below the deformity. He put a cervical collar on him, administered oxygen, managed for spinal trauma, and monitored the man's vitals until a litter crew comprised of 13 park personnel arrived on scene. The man was secured to a rigid backboard and placed on a litter. The evacuation was complicated by steep and rocky terrain, deep creek crossings, a short section of technical rope belay, and darkness. The carryout was completed just before 10 p.m. The man was taken by Gatlinburg FD ambulance to the Sugarlands Visitor Center and flown via Lifestar helicopter to the Level 1 trauma center at University of Tennessee Hospital. Ranger Chuck Hester was the IC for the incident. [Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Wednesday, October 20, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Body Of Crime Suspect Found In Park

The body of a man wanted by local police was found just inside the park's boundary near the city limits of Gatlinburg yesterday afternoon. A Pigeon Forge Police Department canine unit found the body, later identified as that of M.C., 45, of Lebanon. Pigeon Forge PD was assisting the Gatlinburg Police Department in their ongoing search for M.C., who was wanted for unspecified reasons. The body was found at the base of a very steep slope, which investigators believe he may have attempted to climb. No weapon was found at the scene to indicate suicide and there was no immediate indication of foul play. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Thursday, November 4, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Three Nabbed In Auto Break In At Sugarlands VC

On September 12th, two local college students parked their car at Sugarlands Visitor Center and headed out on an overnight backpacking trip. When they returned to the parking area, they found that the vehicle had been entered and that personal property had been stolen. Ranger Michael Garner, with assistance from an ISB special agent, investigated the theft. It was determined that

credit cards belonging to each student had been used in several locations in cities adjacent to the park. Evidence was obtained and two suspects were identified. On September 15th, Garner, the agent and other rangers arrested D.B., who was residing in a hotel in Gatlinburg. During the subsequent interview, D.B. admitted her involvement in the car clout. R.D. was identified as the second person. R.D. was contacted by the agent and talked into surrendering. He was arrested approximately an hour after D.B. was taken into custody. During the subsequent interview, R.D. admitted his involvement in the incident and identified a third person involved in the break-in. R.D. and D.B. were indicted on charges of illegal entry into the victim's vehicle, the theft of property and bank fraud (18 USC 1344) for knowingly executing a scheme to defraud a financial institution by utilizing the victim's debit cards to attempt to withdraw money from a bank ATM. R.D. has been held in custody since his arrest. On November 1st, the third subject was identified and located. K.C. was interviewed and subsequently confessed to helping R.D. break into the victim's vehicle. K.C. will be indicted for crimes associated with his involvement within the next two weeks. [Jeff Carlisle, Special Agent]

Friday, November 5, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Man Arrested For Theft Of Vehicle From Parking Area

On July 7th, members of a Youth for Christ group parked their Ford van at the Mt. Sterling Gap parking area, which is in a remote area of the park, and started out on a backcountry hike. When a member of the group returned to the trailhead, though, he found the van gone. Rangers were notified and a vehicle theft report was taken. Detectives from a neighboring county who were serving an arrest warrant on unrelated charges at the residence of L.G. the next day found a Ford van parked in front of the house. They noted that the vehicle's door lock was missing and that the steering column was damaged. A query was made, and the detectives learned about the stolen vehicle. Ranger Tim Rand and Special Agent Jeff Carlisle were notified and headed to L.G.'s residence. L.G., who has prior felony convictions, was also found to have a sawed-off shotgun in his residence. Investigators determined that he was operating a "chop shop" for stolen vehicles on his property. Numerous stolen vehicles in varying states of disassembly were found on the property. Agents from many agencies, including the FBI, arrived on scene to join in the investigation, with Carlisle and Rand leading on the theft of the Ford van. L.G. was taken into custody by local authorities on existing warrants, with federal charges to be sought at a later time. On July 13th, L.G. was released on bond. A criminal complaint was completed the next day, and, on July 15th, Carlisle and FBI agents took him into custody on federal charges of prior convicted felonies, including possession of a firearm and interstate transportation of a stolen motor vehicle. He is currently being held pending trial. [Russell Roy, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Southeast Region]

Monday, November 8, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Two Arrested And Indicted For Vehicle Break-in

A Great Smokies employee parked her vehicle at a trailhead in late August and headed out into the backcountry on a hike. While gone, her vehicle was broken into and personal property was stolen; her credit cards were subsequently used numerous times at local establishments. Ranger Michael Garner and agents Jeff Carlisle and Kirby Styles began an investigation. A surveillance video of a man and a woman and their vehicle was obtained, and the serial numbers of the victim's camera and camera lens were entered into NCIC. A hit was received shortly thereafter showing that the camera was pawned at an area pawn shop. The suspects were then identified through the shop's records and were both interviewed. M.H. and C.H. confessed to the crime and were charged on a five-count indictment, including bank fraud for attempting to utilize the stolen credit cards to obtain funds through a bank ATM machine. The H.'s trial is set for January. [Russell Roy, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Southeast Region]

Friday, November 12, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Two Charged With Multiple Vehicle Break-Ins

Beginning on September 20th and ending on October 29th, approximately 15 vehicle larcenies occurred within the park at various trailheads, with the vast majority being in the Greenbrier area. Ranger Jared St. Clair led an investigation by his district ranger staff. They were joined by a Forest Service special agent because many larcenies were also occurring on Forest Service lands. Two suspects were ultimately identified - J.W. and Ja.W. of Cosby, Tennessee. On November 3rd, the W.s were arrested by local police on unrelated charges. When special agent Jeff Carlisle and the USFS special agent interviewed them at the county jail, they admitted to several of the break-ins. Carlisle and St. Clair again interviewed one of the W.s a few days later. During that interview, he admitted to all the break-ins and added two others. A presentation will be made to the assistant US attorney and both will be charged with multiple felony counts, including breaking and entering, theft of property and bank fraud. With the closing of these cases, the park has cleared the majority of open larceny cases. Three separate groups of car clouters have been arrested. [Russell Roy, Assistant Special Agent In Charge, Southeast Region]

Friday, November 19, 2010  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Driver Killed In Single-Vehicle Accident

Rangers were notified of a single-vehicle accident along the southbound lane of the Pigeon Forge - Gatlinburg Spur just after 9 p.m. on the evening of Wednesday, November 17th. When they arrived at the scene, they found a 2000 Jeep Grand Cherokee about ten feet off the road and resting on its roof. The driver - C.D., 50, of Woodstock, Georgia - was found about 40 feet from the Cherokee and was pronounced dead at the scene. It appears that C.D. failed to negotiate a right hand curve and that the Jeep went off the left shoulder and down a bank, coming to rest against some trees. Alcohol containers were found in the Jeep. A blood alcohol test is being conducted. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Specialist]

Friday, March 18, 2011

Great Smoky Mountains NP

### Construction Worker Injured On Foothills Parkway Project

At about 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 16th, J.L.P., 23, of Bessemer City, North Carolina, was struck by a rock measuring approximately four feet by two feet by two feet that rolled about 20 feet down a steep slope and landed on him. J.L.P. was clearing brush from the right-of-way along a section of the Foothills Parkway, which is under construction about ten miles east of Walland in Blount County. Rangers responded along with Blount County Sheriff's Office deputies and members of the Blount County Rescue Squad, Blount County Fire Department, and Blount Special Operations Response Team. J.L.P. was stabilized and lowered about 20 feet, then carried to a Rural Metro Ambulance. He was subsequently transferred to a Lifestar helicopter, which flew him to the University of Tennessee Medical Center. He was treated for minor injuries and released. Construction on the parkway is being carried out under by a Federal Highway Administration contractor, Lane Construction of Charlotte, North Carolina. J.L.P. is an employee of Phillips and Jordan Construction, a subcontractor of Lane Construction. An investigation of the mishap is being carried out by the National Park Service, the Federal Highway Administration and the contractors. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Tuesday, March 22, 2011

Great Smoky Mountains NP

### Missing Backpacker Reappears After Week-Long Search

A major, week-long search for missing backpacker C.H. came to a happy conclusion Sunday evening when he showed up at the Tricorner Knob shelter on the Appalachian Trail and hikers there notified park dispatch. A three-person NPS team, including two medics, immediately set out for the shelter, arriving there at 2:30 a.m. They treated C.H. for minor injuries and dehydration and provided him with warm clothing and equipment. Because of the remote location, a decision was made to evacuate C.H. on Monday by helicopter instead of via a large ground carryout operation. An NPS helicopter sent to the site was unable to land due to high winds, so a Tennessee Highway Patrol helicopter with a hoist was used instead. C.H. was lifted out, flown to the Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge Airport, and reunited with his family. He was then taken by Sevier County ambulance to LeConte Medical Center in Sevierville for evaluation and treatment. Rangers accompanied C.H. to the hospital to debrief him on his ordeal in the Smokies. C.H. told the rangers that he'd spent the night of Monday, March 14th, at Campsite 32 as scheduled and on Tuesday hiked into Greenbrier up the Ramsey Cascades Road to the Ramsay Cascades Trail to its end at the falls. He climbed past the falls and hiked cross-country along Ramsay Prong for about half a mile, but found the going very steep, rocky, and blocked by obstructions, so he decided to make his way up towards the ridgeline instead. By Tuesday night he realized that he was off course and he camped that night with his sleeping bag and other gear. On Wednesday, he made extremely slow progress due to dense rhododendron and estimated that it had taken him six to seven hours to cover just over a half mile. At that point he decided to abandon his pack because it was continually snagging on the heavy brush, slowing his progress. He hoped that without his pack he could make faster time and reach his goal of Tricorner Shelter

more easily. On Wednesday evening, he reached a relatively flat and somewhat open area, where he stayed until Sunday morning. During this time, he had only the clothes he was wearing plus a fanny pack with a little food and a headlamp - but no sleeping bag or other overnight gear. He said that he melted snow for water until Sunday, but had no other food after his small supply ran out. On Sunday morning, he set out first light; he considered going back down, but chose to continue up to the AT instead, ending up at the shelter. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

Great Smoky Mountains NP

City Sewage Tank Failure Causes Massive Spill Into Park

Personnel from Great Smoky Mountains National Park are working with emergency management authorities from the city of Gatlinburg, Sevier County, and the state of Tennessee in responding to a catastrophic failure of the equalization tank at the city's wastewater treatment plant, which resulted in a massive sewage spill yesterday morning. One wall of the main equalization basin, measuring 75 feet by 30 feet by 12 feet, failed, releasing an estimated 1.5 million gallons of untreated effluent into the West Prong of the Little Pigeon, a park-owned stream that bisects the Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge Spur of the Foothills Parkway. Two persons employed by the contractor that operates the facility are missing and feared dead. Rangers have been assisting the city with overall incident management and search and rescue efforts. Facility management personnel have been providing assistance with an assessment of the plant in hopes that it can resume safe operations in the near term and park resource management personnel will be working with Tennessee Department of the Environment and Conservation personnel to assess resource impacts and the development of short and long term cleanup and monitoring efforts. As of yesterday afternoon, all of the city's sewage was flowing untreated into the river. A major weather system moved through the area on Monday night, bringing heavy rains, high winds and snow/ice at the higher elevations in the park. Over two-and-a-half inches of rainfall fell, significantly increasing the flow into the equalization tank, which may have contributed to the wall failure at the facility. For more information and images, click on the link below. [Kevin FitzGerald, Deputy Superintendent]

HYPERLINK "<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2011/apr/05/two-die-when-wall-falls-gatlinburg-sewage-treatment/>"

Thursday, April 28, 2011

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Former Seasonal Sentenced For Poaching In Park

A former Great Smokies seasonal employee has been sentenced in federal court in Kentucky for taking a deer and a bear in the park while working there in 2009. J.T., 25, pled guilty in April to three counts of violating the Lacey Act by unlawfully transporting taken wildlife - specifically, a black bear skin and an eight-point set of antlers - from the park to his home in Edmonson County, Kentucky. He admitted that he'd shot the animals while working in the park. J.T. also aided and abetted the fraudulent use of a social security number to obtain a "confirmation



number" from the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources for the deer he killed in the park. Following a plea agreement, he was ordered to pay \$3,000 in fines and restitution and was banned from hunting or accompanying anyone while hunting anywhere in the world for two years. The case was investigated by the National Park Service, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. [Stephanie Collins, Department of Justice]

Monday, May 1, 2011  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Trails Closed Due To Trees Felled By Storm

The Abrams Falls Trail and the Beard Cane Trail near Cades Cove have been closed due to extensive damage from the wind and rain that occurred last Wednesday during the severe storm outbreak that hit the South. The trails are blocked by scores of downed trees and also have areas where trail surfaces were washed out. Abrams Falls Trail is closed from its trailhead at Cades Cove to the Hatcher Mountain Trail junction and will likely remain closed through Friday. There is no reopening estimate for Beard Cane Trail, which is closed from Cooper Road Trail to Ace Gap Trail. The trail blockages also caused the closure of a couple of backcountry campsites. Other trails may also be blocked; assessments are underway. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Monday, May 9, 2011  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Trail Damage Determined To Have Been Caused By Tornado

The park and National Weather Service have determined that a severe EF 4 tornado swept across the northwestern corner of the park on April 27th, causing extensive damage to park trails. The popular Abrams Falls Trail remains impassable due to numerous blow downs and over 40 areas where root balls were ripped out of the trail surface, leaving hot-tub-sized craters. The park hopes to reopen the trail by Memorial Day. After an inspection of other trails in the affected area, the park has announced the full closure of all or parts of seven trails totaling 27 miles. A survey by trail workers shows a total of more than 4,500 trees down on the closed sections, with stretches as long as a mile covered with tree trunks piled up like jackstraws. Over a thousand spots have been identified where trees were blown down and their roots tore gaps in the trail. In addition to all of the Abrams Falls Trail, the following trails are now officially closed to both hikers and equestrians until further notice:

Rabbit Creek Trail from its trailhead at Abrams Creek Ranger Station to the Hannah Mountain Trail junction (campsite 16 remains open)

Hannah Mountain Trail from Rabbit Creek Trail to Abrams Creek

All of Hatcher Mountain Trail

All of Beard Cane Trail (backcountry campsites 3 and 11 are also closed)

All of Ace Gap Trail

Little Bottoms Trail from campsite 17 to the Hatcher Mountain Trail junction (campsite 17 is open)

Rabbit Creek Trail between its trailhead at Cades Cove and the junction with Hannah Mountain Trail (campsite 15 is closed)

No park roads have been affected by the storm damage and the remainder of the park's 800 miles of trails remain open. Visitors can stop at any park visitor center for advice or check the park's website (below) for more information. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

HYPERLINK "<http://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/temproadclose.htm>"

Thursday, May 19, 2011  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Search In Progress For Missing Man

Rangers at Great Smoky Mountains National Park have begun a search for a North Carolina man who was reported missing on April 27th. Searchers are also asking that anybody who may have seen C.L.C., 45, during the last three weeks, whether in the park or elsewhere, contact the park. C.L.C. was reported missing to the Cary Police Department on April 27th. They then issued a missing person report, but it wasn't sent to the park because family members had no reason to suspect that he would go there. The park learned that C.L.C. was missing when they checked the license plate of C.L.C.'s 2009 Audi, which may have been parked at Newfound Gap Parking area for weeks. The popular Appalachian Trail crosses the park at Newfound Gap, so it's common for vehicles to be left there for weeks at a time. Rangers are mounting a search radiating out from Newfound Gap along the Appalachian Trail and connecting trails. They are looking for clues of somebody having gotten off the trail and are checking the logs at the shelters for any entries related to C.L.C. C.L.C. reportedly had been despondent and a handgun he owned could not be found at his residence, so there are concerns that he may have planned to take his life. C.L.C. is 45 years old, white, 5'10" tall and weighs 230 pounds. He has brown hair and brown eyes and a fair complexion. Anyone who may have seen him is asked to call Great Smoky Mountains National Park at 865-436-1230. NOTE: The online InsideNPS and NPS Digest versions of the story include a photo of C.L.C.. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Thursday, May 26, 2011  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Park Scales Back Search For Missing Man

Rangers have scaled back their efforts to find 45-year-old C.L.C. who has been missing since April 27th. For over a week, rangers and search dog teams combed the forest near the Newfound

Gap parking area where C.L.C.'s car was found, but found no sign of him. Searchers intensively covered an area of about two miles radiating out from the parking lot and from the hiking trails that pass through the area, and probed acres of steep, rocky terrain and dense brush. Up to 30 searchers, including as many as four search dog teams, covered the area each day and followed up on every suspected scent alert - but found no trace of C.L.C. The case remains open, and staff will continue to be on the lookout for signs of C.L.C. while engaged in regular duties. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Friday, May 27, 2011

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Searchers Find Body Of Missing Man

The body of a missing Florida man was found by searchers on Tuesday evening. The 58-year-old man's SUV had been parked for nearly a week in a pullout along Newfound Gap Road. The pullout, about a half mile from Smokemont Campground, serves no trailheads, so vehicles would not normally be there overnight. Rangers checked on the plate several times during the week, but no wanted notices were found from any agencies and there were no suspicious signs around the vehicle. On Monday night, rangers were finally able to locate family members, at which point they found that the man was missing. A search dog from the North Carolina Search and Rescue Dog Association was brought in and found the man's body in a steep, thickly wooded location about 250 yards from the vehicle. Investigators found a handgun at the scene, but no evidence of foul play. The Swain County Medical Examiner's Office has determined the cause of death to be from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Tuesday, May 31, 2011

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Section Of Tornado-Damaged Trail Reopened

A popular portion of the Abrams Falls Trail from Cades Cove to the waterfalls has been repaired and reopened on Saturday. An EF4 tornado extensively damaged it and eight other trails in the northwestern portion of the park in late April. Visitors are now able to access the trail from the Cades Cove trailhead and hike two-and-a-half miles to the waterfalls. The trails from the falls to Abrams Creek campground via Rabbit Creek, Hannah Mountain and Little Bottoms Trails remain closed. Over 33 miles of trails were severely impacted by the tornado. Thousands of trees were blown down and their roots upended, tearing huge gaps in the trails. The park hired a number of local people and is receiving assistance from 23 trail workers from six western parks to clear and rehabilitate the affected trails. The trails that are officially closed are:

Ace Gap Trail

Beard Cane Trail, including campsites 3 and 11

Cooper Road Trail from the junction at Beard Cane to Cades Cove Loop Road

Hatcher Mountain Trail

Little Bottoms Trail from campsite 17 to the Abrams Falls/Hannah Mountain Trails junction (campsite 17 is open)

Hannah Mountain Trail from the Rabbit Creek Trail junction to the Abrams Falls/Little Bottoms Trails junction (campsite 16 is open)

Rabbit Creek Trail, including campsite 15

Wet Bottom Trail

Abrams Falls Trail beyond the waterfall

There is no estimate as to when the repairs to these trails will be completed. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Wednesday, June 1, 2011

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Three Men Sentenced For Park Violations

On April 20th, three North Carolina men were convicted and sentenced in federal court in two separate cases, one involving ginseng poaching and the other theft. B.J.H., 42, and J.N.H., 34, of Bryson City, were both found guilty and sentenced to a jail term for illegal possession of American ginseng. On the same day in court, G.C., 35, also of Bryson City, pled guilty to one count of tampering in the theft of funds from a self-pay collection box located at a trailhead. He also received jail time. In the ginseng case, each defendant pled guilty to the poaching charges. B.J.H. was sentenced to 75 days in jail and fined \$5,540 in restitution to the park for possessing 554 wild ginseng roots, and J.N.H. was sentenced to 14 days in jail and fined \$2,510 in restitution to the park for possessing 251 roots. He has appealed his conviction. In late October 2010, as part of an ongoing investigation, a ranger apprehended the H. brothers in the North Carolina area of the park with over 11 pounds of freshly dug roots that had been poached in one day's time. The roots were later aged by park biologists. They determined that most of the roots were at least 10 years old, but that some of the larger ones were 30 to 40 years old. Each man was charged with possession of plants/parts (harvesting ginseng). The offense carries a maximum misdemeanor penalty of up to six months in jail and/or fine of up to \$5,000. "Due to the high market value of ginseng, the illegal harvest of this plant continues to be a serious problem in Great Smoky Mountains National Park," said Clay Jordan, the park's chief ranger. "In the international and domestic legal trade market, wild ginseng can bring between \$500 and \$800 per pound of dried roots. The larger and older the root, the more profitable and valuable it is." On the same day in court, Gregory G.C. was convicted of one count of tampering. After rangers determined that money was being stolen from a self-pay trail map collection box, an extended surveillance operation was conducted which netted G.C. as a suspect. A federal magistrate judge for the Western District of North Carolina sentenced G.C. to 57 days in jail and ordered him to pay \$57 restitution to the park, the amount he had stolen. G.C. has appealed the

case. Over the last several years, rangers throughout the park have observed an increase in thefts from these self-pay pamphlet collection boxes. Investigations into the thefts have resulted in convictions against numerous individuals. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Officer]

Tuesday, June 7, 2011

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Rangers Deal With Memorial Day Weekend Incidents

Over the Memorial Day weekend, rangers responded to a variety of incidents, including eleven motor vehicle accidents (six involving motorcycles and three requiring helicopter transports), five significant EMS calls (including a cardiac arrest and a snake bite), two searches for missing hikers, and four rescue operations. Highlights included:

Saturday - Dispatch received a report of a 60-year-old man suffering from a pre-existing heart condition. He was located at the Tri Corner Knob backcountry shelter on the Appalachian Trail, with the closest trailhead nine miles away. Rangers began an evacuation risk assessment utilizing a helicopter and a carryout team, while, simultaneously, Appalachian Trail ridge runner Caleb Grey and ranger/EMT Tabbatha Cavendish began hiking to the shelter. The Tennessee Highway Patrol responded with two helicopters, one of which was capable of hoist operations. The man was lifted directly from the shelter to the helicopter and flown to a nearby airport, where he was then driven via ambulance to a hospital. He was found to be in atrial fibrillation and ultimately needed electrical cardioversion in order to establish a normal heart rhythm. Ranger Ellen Paxton served as incident commander.

Sunday - Around noon, a volunteer Appalachian Trail ridge runner notified dispatch of an abandoned backpack on the AT about a mile south of Mollies Ridge Shelter. He expressed concern that the pack might belong to a through hiker who had been reported as suffering from a possible stroke or other medical emergency. The ridge runner searched the pack at the direction of supervisory ranger KK Stuart and found several thousand dollars in cash and traveler's checks, a wallet, and assorted backpacking supplies. He searched the surrounding area and found a 50-year-old man who was walking away from the trail. The hiker was reported to be disoriented and having difficulty walking. Rangers Kent Looney and Samuel Salter responded on horseback to assess the situation. They met the ridge runner and hiker at Mollies Ridge Shelter. They evaluated the hiker and consulted with medical control before determining that he suffered from an underlying medical issue but was not having a medical emergency. The hiker refused further assistance despite the rangers' strong efforts to convince him to exit the backcountry.

Monday - Supervisory ranger Steve Spanyer received additional information thru a series of conversations with the above hiker's family which led to the determination that he might be suicidal. Rangers Marc Eckert and Brad Griest were dispatched to the Appalachian Trail to search for the hiker. Eckert and Griest found him asleep at Russell Field Shelter. They watched the man throughout the night and contacted him when he awoke in the morning. Eckert and Griest were able to convince him to exit the backcountry voluntarily. They arrived at Cades Cove around noon on Tuesday. Rangers facilitated phone calls between the hiker and two family

members, which resulted in him agreeing to a voluntary psychological evaluation. He was transported to Blount Memorial Hospital. The ER physician and mobile crisis counselors determined that the man was likely a danger to himself and transferred him to Lakeshore Hospital for further evaluation. Spanyer served as incident commander.

[Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Wednesday, July 27, 2011

Great Smoky Mountains NP

DUI Operation Results In Seven Arrests, Many Citations

In conjunction with a two-year DUI prevention program, the park recently conducted special law enforcement operations on its roadways. The operation, which ran for two weeks, consisted of two sobriety checkpoints and four special "saturation" road patrols and resulted in seven DUI arrests and the issuance of 36 citations and 66 warnings for various violations. A ranger at the checkpoint on Foothills Parkway saw a driver throw a beer can out his window as he approached rangers there. He was pulled over and found to be operating under the influence. Also in the vehicle were two children under the age of three and a sober passenger. In addition to the DUI offenses, three people were arrested for public intoxication and citations were issued for open containers of alcohol, underage possession of alcohol, and possession of controlled substance to speeding, littering, and failure to wear a seatbelt. [Nancy Gray, Public Affairs Specialist]

Friday, August 5, 2011

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Teenage Girl Swept Over Falls To Her Death

Late in the afternoon of Saturday, July 30th, park dispatch received a report that a young women had been swept over the 15-foot-high falls at the Sinks, a popular swimming area on the Little River about ten miles west of the Sugarlands Visitor Center. Rangers arrived shortly after the call was received. Witnesses told them that the teenager had been wading across the river just above the falls when she lost her footing and was swept over the edge. At the base of the falls, she became entrapped and was held underwater by the force of the water coming down from above. Several park visitors had formed a human chain at the base of the falls and were attempting to pull her free, but were unable to overcome the force of the water. Rangers and rescue personnel from several agencies (Blount County Sheriff's Office, Blount County Fire Department, Townsend Volunteer Fire Department and Rural Metro Ambulance Service) worked for approximately three hours to recover the woman's body. A technical haul system and advanced swiftwater techniques were used to free her. There are numerous signs posted at the Sinks warning visitors of strong currents and hidden underwater hazards and advising caution in and around the water. Ranger Michael Garner is the lead investigator. Supervisory park ranger Steve Spanyer was incident commander. [Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Tuesday, November 8, 2011

## Great Smoky Mountains NP Pursuit Ends Through Deployment Of Stop Sticks

On the morning of Wednesday, November 2nd, supervisory park ranger Bobby Fleming contacted a man in a parked vehicle in the Chimneys picnic area. While talking to the man, Fleming saw drug paraphernalia in plain view and ordered the man out of his vehicle. He refused to do so and instead fled at a high rate of speed. A pursuit ensued down Newfound Gap Road and north toward park headquarters and Sugarland Visitor Center. Gatlinburg PD officers and district ranger Steve Kloster joined the chase. Kloster placed stop sticks on the highway just south of the Little River Road - New Found Gap Road intersection. The man swerved onto the shoulder, but the stop sticks still caught and flattened his left front and rear tires, which began to shred. He continued driving on the rims for another mile before stopping. He was taken into custody without incident. Several charges were filed and others are pending. For several years, the park has prepositioned stop sticks at its three main entrances; in 2011, the park purchased more of them for patrol vehicles and ranger stations. In this incident the stop sticks were critical in ending the pursuit quickly without a motor vehicle accident or injuries to anyone involved. [Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

## Tuesday, February 7, 2012 Great Smoky Mountains NP Rangers Investigate Two Suicides Within Ten Days

Rangers investigated two suicides in the park's South District during the last days of January. On the afternoon of January 20th, dispatch received a phone call reporting a vehicle parked in the Newfound Gap parking area with a suicide note on the dash and a body of a man lying on the ground below the overlook who looked like he was not breathing. Rangers responded and found the man sitting at the base of a rock wall with an obvious self-inflicted gunshot wound to his head. A large caliber revolver was recovered at the scene. A suicide note was found in the victim's vehicle parked nearby. Rangers were assisted on scene by Cherokee Tribal EMS and an NPS special agent. The victim was a 56-year-old man from Florida. Next of kin were notified later that evening. Investigators determined that he'd placed the telephone call to park dispatch just prior to committing suicide. They also learned that he'd been charged with 22 counts of possessing child pornography and that his trial was scheduled to begin in Florida the following week. Ranger Mike Scheid is the case officer. Ten days later, on the afternoon of January 30th, park dispatch received a report from two hikers of a man down on the Bradley Fork Trail and lying in a pool of blood. Rangers responded to the scene, which was a third of a mile up the trail from Smokemont Campground. They found a man lying face down in the middle of the trail with a large pool of blood on the ground to his left. He had no vital signs and had an obvious gunshot wound behind the left ear. A loaded .40 caliber pistol was found at the scene. Additional ranger staff and an NPS special agent responded along with Cherokee Tribal EMS and Cherokee Fire Rescue. The victim's vehicle was located at the Smokemont Baptist Church parking area and his wallet and a large sum of cash were found under the pulpit in the church. The victim was a 36-year-old man from South Carolina. No suicide note was found on his person or in the

belongings recovered from his vehicle or the church. Next of kin were notified later that day. Ranger Carman Barnard is the case officer. [Curt R. Dimmick, South District Ranger]

Tuesday, March 20, 2012

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Search In Progress For Missing Hiker

About 30 people are involved in a search for D.L., 24, of Louisville, Tennessee, who has been missing since last Thursday. D.L.'s car was found on Saturday morning at the Newfound Gap parking area in the middle of the park. On Saturday and Sunday, rangers hiked over 40 miles of trails that radiate out from Newfound Gap, looking for signs of D.L. and interviewing hikers they encountered to see if anybody had met him, but without success. Search managers now believe that he's off-trail if he is still in the park. Three search dog teams combed the woods yesterday along the Appalachian Trail and along an old, abandoned section of U.S. 441 that leaves the parking lot southbound. A Tennessee Highway Patrol helicopter has been assigned to search the area from the air. Searchers from Blue Ridge Parkway have joined Great Smokies staff in the effort. Cherokee Tribal EMS has a unit on scene, and three dog teams - two from the North Carolina Search and Rescue Dog Association and the third from the South Carolina Search and Rescue Dog Association - are also supporting the operation. Rangers have also considered that D.L. may have left the park and are asking anybody who may have seen him since Saturday to contact the park at (865) 436-1230. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant]

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Two Searches Underway In Park

Two searches are currently underway in the park - the continuing effort to find D.L., 24, missing since March 15th, and a search begun yesterday afternoon for a missing and despondent 23-year-old man. Approximately 30 searchers, three tracking dog teams and a helicopter were employed in yesterday's search for D.L. Park trackers and search dog team followed up on a couple of potential clues that might help determine his route after leaving his vehicle. Other teams worked the expanded search area, which now includes the overlooks along Newfound Gap Road and Clingmans Dome Road. A helicopter from the North Carolina Highway Patrol surveyed the areas along Newfound Gap Road and some of the trails that are accessed from the Newfound Gap Trailhead. Personnel were also posted at some of the park's other popular trailheads, such as Alum Cave, Chimney Tops, Sugarlands Visitor Center and Clingmans Dome. They are handing out flyers in hopes that somebody coming out of the backcountry may have seen D.L. A second search was begun yesterday when an abandoned vehicle was found along the New Found Gap Road. Investigation revealed that the 23-year-old operator was believed to be despondent. Hasty searchers and dog teams began looking for him yesterday, and the operation will be expanded today. [Bob Miller, Management Assistant, and Clay Jordan, Chief Ranger]

Friday, March 23, 2012



Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Two Searches Still Underway In Park

Two major searches are continuing in the park - one for D.L., missing since March 15th, and the other for M.C., whose abandoned car was found on Tuesday:

**D.L. Search** - The park had approximately 60 people and three dog teams assigned to the search yesterday. They were organized into 14 search teams and combed areas off of trails that surround the Newfound Gap Parking Area where Lueking's car was found on Saturday, March 17th. Trail search teams explored all areas along the trail where it would appear relatively easy to get off the trail and into the woods. Once off-trail, the teams look for tracks or clues that anybody had passed that way, then continue into the woods until they reach a point where it is either unsafe to continue or they reach a barrier, such as a rhododendron thicket, where D.L. could not have gone without leaving evidence of his passage. Other teams followed up on a possible sighting report along Newfound Gap Road, where D.L. may have entered the woods.

**M.C. Search** - A total of 14 Tennessee Department of Corrections officers joined rangers in searching the east bank of the Little Pigeon River on the far side of the creek from Newfound Gap Road. On Wednesday, officers and rangers covered the west bank of the river and the strip of forest between the river and the Newfound Gap Road which runs parallel to the river.

So far, no sign of either man has been found. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Monday, March 26, 2012  
Great Smoky Mountain NP  
Two Searches For Missing Men Scaled Back

The park has scaled back both of the extended searches it's been conducting - one for D.L., missing since March 15th, and the other for M.C., whose abandoned car was found in the park on March 20th. Despite having up to 60 searchers involved in the effort for almost a week, search managers have not found any single clue that they can conclusively tie to either man. Without any concrete leads to pursue, search managers have concluded that it is no longer productive to continue such intensive efforts. Both operations will therefore be scaled back to limited searches. The intelligence gathering portion of the investigation will continue and rangers will be available to follow up on any leads or reports of sightings that may surface either inside the park or beyond its boundaries. The park will also continue to disseminate information about the missing men at trailheads and high-traffic areas in hopes that one of many spring break visitors who will be in the park will come upon a clue or see one of them. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Wednesday, May 2, 2012  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Investigation Underway Into Armed Robbery

Rangers and special agents are investigating an armed robbery that occurred last Wednesday afternoon on the Foothills Parkway-East. A man and woman, both from Newport, Tennessee, reported that they were sitting in their vehicle at an overlook when they were confronted by two people dressed in dark clothing and wearing ski masks. One of them assaulted the man by spraying him with pepper spray and hitting him on the head with a silver colored handgun. They then took the victim's 2004 maroon Nissan sedan and drove east on the parkway towards I-40. A park employee came across the victims a short while after the attack and reported the incident. Cocke County deputies and rangers responded and recovered the car, which had been abandoned along the parkway. A search of the area, with the assistance of a sheriff's department search dog, resulted in the recovery of clothing articles and other forensic evidence believed to belong to the suspects. The man was taken by ambulance to Newport Medical Center, where he was treated and released. Park investigators do not believe this was a random crime against a park visitor - it appears that the victims may have been specifically targeted. Park officials are asking anyone with information concerning this incident to call park investigators at 828-497-1936. [Bob Miller, Public Affairs Officer]

Friday, May 25, 2012  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Three Arrested For Auto Break-Ins

Park dispatch received a report of suspicious activity from park employees at the Elkmont Campground ranger station on April 25th. Three men in a red vehicle had been seen at the Little River trailhead looking into the windows of unoccupied cars. Ranger Heath Soehn searched for and found the car, which was heading away from the trailhead, and got its license plate number. While following it, he saw an object being thrown from the front passenger side window. Soehn and Ellen Paxton, a special agent on detail from ISB, stopped the car for the observed littering violation and found that the item that had been thrown from the car was a window punch. Soehn and Paxton soon learned that three vehicles with smashed-out windows had been found at the trailhead. During a search of the car, Paxton found property that turned out to belong to people from all three of those vehicles. The person who phoned in the initial report also identified the three men as the ones seen at the trailhead. Paxton prepared a criminal complaint charging them with felonies and later testified before a grand jury. A trial is set for July. The three men are believed to have committed eleven other larcenies in the park before being arrested by Soehn and Paxton. [Russell Roy, Jr., Assistant Special Agent In-Charge]

Friday, July 6, 2012  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Severe Storm Leads To Two Deaths, Injuries, Other Emergencies

A severe thunderstorm swept through the west end of the park around 6 p.m. yesterday evening, causing significant tree fall in a line stretching from Metcalf Bottoms across Cades Cove to Abrams Creek. Several emergency responses were underway late last night and the situation was continuing to evolve. Two fatalities have been confirmed - a man who died in a motorcycle accident a half mile east of Townsend Wye and a woman at Abrams Creek who was killed by a

falling tree. There have also been reports of multiple injuries. At the time of the report around midnight, ambulances were en route to Cades Cove to deal with three injuries and a cardiac incident. Three people in the Abrams Creek area were also injured; one was evacuated by ambulance and two others by helicopter. Many trees are down on both the Little River and Laurel Creek Roads. One lane of each road has been cleared for emergency vehicles. The Cades Cove and Abrams Creek areas have also received significant tree fall. National Park Service crews have swept all roads in storm-damaged areas to identify stranded motorists and those in need of medical attention. Emergency crews from Blount County are assisting park crews in the area of the Townsend Wye and at Abrams Creek. At the time of the report, priorities for park crews were to continue to get emergency personnel to individuals in need of medical attention and to evacuate those individuals from the park. Once this was accomplished, the need for overnight clearing operations was to be evaluated. Rangers will continue to work today to ensure all visitors and staff are accounted for and begin to assess needs for emergency response in the park's backcountry. [Melissa Cobern, Public Affairs Specialist]

Monday, July 9, 2012

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Storm Recovery Operations Continue In Park's West End

Two people were killed, at least six others were injured, and major tree damage was inflicted by a severe thunderstorm that hit the west end of the park last Thursday evening.

R.F. of Buford, Georgia, was riding his motorcycle near the Townsend Wye when he was struck on the head by a falling limb; R.B., a resident of Corryton, Tennessee, died when she was hit by a falling tree in the Abrams Creek area. Several other visitors sustained injuries as a result of the storm. A seven-year-old girl who was swimming in Abrams Creek was seriously injured by the same tree that killed R.B. She was unconscious and not breathing when she was pulled from the water, but was resuscitated on scene by other visitors who administered CPR and was then taken by helicopter to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville. The girl's father and mother also sustained injuries from the tree fall and were taken to the same hospital. Two other visitors suffered eye and back injuries and a third had cardiac issues.

The storm left a line of destruction stretching from Metcalf Bottoms across Cades Cove to Abrams Creek. Crews have been working since Thursday to clear the tangled mass of hundreds of downed trees covering several roads in the west end of the park. On Saturday, park staff also began a damage assessment of backcountry trails in the area hit by the storm. Initial indications are that several trails received significant damage, including the Chestnut Top Trail, of which a two-mile section has essentially been lost.

The Cades Cove Loop, Laurel Creek Road into Cades Cove, the Cades Cove Campground, and Little River Road from Elkmont to the Metcalf Bottoms Picnic Area reopened on Saturday evening. Other roads in the storm-damaged area remain closed, including the Little River Road between Metcalf Bottoms and the Townsend Wye, the Rich Mountain Road, Parson's Branch

Road and the Abrams Creek access road. The Abrams Creek Campground also remains closed. Assessment and clearing efforts will continue through the weekend.

[Melissa Cobern, Public Affairs Officer]

Thursday, August 23, 2012

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Remains Of Missing Man Believed To Have Been Found

There has been a new development in the case of a M.G.C., a man thought to be missing in the park since last March. On Friday, park employees discovered items thought to belong to M.G.C. near the area where his vehicle was originally found parked along Newfound Gap Road. On Saturday and Sunday, searchers combed the area where clothing and other items consistent with those last seen on M.G.C. were located. On Monday, human remains were discovered in the area, but have not yet been positively identified. M.G.C.'s family has been notified of the new developments. The remains are being sent to the medical examiner for analysis and possible identification. [Molly Schroer, Public Affairs Office]

Monday, September 10, 2012

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Man Reports Being Shot While Hiking Off Trail

Last Friday afternoon, Cocke County dispatch received a call from a man who said he'd sustained gunshot wounds while hiking deep within the park in the Laurel Springs Road area near Cosby. Emergency medical services arrived on scene to find that the man had two gunshot wounds in his lower leg. He was flown to University of Tennessee Medical Center for treatment and later released. The man claimed to have not seen his assailant, but did hear two gunshots just before he realized he had been struck. Rangers worked with the Cocke County Sheriff's Office to secure the area along Laurel Springs Road, the closest road to where the shooting incident reportedly occurred. NPS rangers and special agents are investigating the shooting. [Molly Schroer, Public Affairs Officer]

Tuesday, September 11, 2012

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Reported Shooting Took Place Outside Of Park

S.L., 29, of Sevier County, who reported that he'd been shot while hiking in the park on September 7th, has confessed to park investigators that the gunshot wounds he suffered were sustained in an incident occurring outside of park boundaries in Sevier County. The county has accordingly taken the lead in the investigation. S.L. sustained and was treated for two gunshot wounds to the lower leg which he originally claimed to have received while hiking in the park,

off trail, in the Cosby area. He was flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where he was treated and later released. [Molly Schroer, Public Affairs Officer]

Monday, October 1, 2012

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Labor Day Weekend Operation Nets Numerous Drunk Drivers

Over the Labor Day weekend, the Foothills Law Enforcement Coalition Against Impaired Driving conducted a campaign to combat drivers operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Sixty-five people were arrested and charged with DUI by the 13 participating agencies; six of those arrests were made by rangers within the park. Rangers also issued 162 traffic citations, including 16 for possession of controlled substances. During the 18-day special operation, area law enforcement agencies conducted a series of saturation patrols and sobriety checkpoints throughout the Smoky Mountain region. This coordinated effort was part of the statewide Labor Day "Booze It and Lose It" campaign coordinated by the Governor's Highway Safety Office, with funding support from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In addition to the DUI arrests, more than 88 felony arrests were made, 25 fugitives captured, and nearly 2100 tickets issued by coalition officers for offenses that included reckless driving, seatbelt violations, and possession of a controlled substance. [Dana Soehn, Management Assistant]

Friday, October 19, 2012

Great Smoky Mountains NP

One Killed, Three Injured In Vehicle Collision

Rangers responded to a two-vehicle accident on the northbound side of the Pigeon Forge - Gatlinburg Spur near West Gate Resort just after noon last Saturday. The preliminary investigation revealed that J.M., 34, of Pittman Center, Tennessee, may have been attempting to cross the spur from Westgate when a vehicle driven by N.S., 19, of Kodak, Tennessee, collided with his pickup. J.M. was transported to Leconte Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead. N.S.'s vehicle carried two passengers, an 18-year-old male and a 17-year-old female. One was extricated from the vehicle by Gatlinburg EMS. Lifestar flew both to UT Medical Center, while N.S. was transported to the center by a personal vehicle. All three have since been released. [Dana Soehn, Public Affairs]

Monday, November 5, 2012

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Stranded Hiker Rescued From Backcountry

A 56-year-old North Carolina man was airlifted from the Appalachian Trail in Great Smoky Mountains National Park on the afternoon of Friday, November 2nd. He'd become stranded on a remote section of the trail as a result of the snowstorm that blanketed higher elevations of the park early last week. A Tennessee Highway Patrol helicopter that had been called in to assist

rangers with search and rescue efforts was able to retrieve the hiker from the backcountry and transport him to the Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge Airport in Sevierville, Tennessee. From there, he was taken by ambulance to LeConte Medical Center in Sevierville for medical evaluation. [Molly Schroer, Public Affairs Officer]

Tuesday, December 4, 2012  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Man Arrested For Breaking Into Cars In Park

While conducting a surveillance operation on the morning of Sunday, December 2nd, a ranger saw what a man breaking into a vehicle parked at Chimney Tops Trailhead on Newfound Gap Road. The man then left the area in a Ford pickup. When rangers attempted to stop the truck on Little River Road west of Sugarlands Visitor Center, the man fled and continued to elude rangers until he exited the park at the Townsend Wye. Once outside the park, rangers turned over the pursuit to Blount County Sheriff's Office deputies, who took the 38-year-old Tennessee man into custody after he crashed his truck. Rangers and special agents subsequently confirmed the theft of property from a visitor's Ford Explorer parked at Chimney Tops Trailhead. The investigation of the offenses occurring within the park continues; federal charges are anticipated. [Dana Soehn, Management Assistant]

Wednesday, January 16, 2013  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Woman Killed In Accident With Park Vehicle

A Chrysler SUV heading south on the Newfound Gap Road collided with a northbound park pickup truck yesterday afternoon, killing the Chrysler's 24-year-old driver. The driver of the park vehicle and his passenger were taken to a local hospital for assessment. The North Carolina Highway Patrol is leading the accident investigation at the request of the park. "Normally, we complete the investigation of motor vehicle collisions within the park," said Clay Jordan, the park's chief ranger, "but because two of our NPS employees were involved in the accident, we have asked the NC Highway Patrol to lead this investigation." [Dana Soehn, Public Affairs Officer]

Thursday, January 17, 2013  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Body Of Overdue Hiker Found In Trail Shelter

The body of an overdue hiker, a man about 50 years of age, was found by rangers at Tricorner Knob Shelter early yesterday afternoon. The hiker left Newfound Gap on Saturday morning, intending to hike 30 miles along the Appalachian Trail to Davenport Gap in North Carolina. He was reported overdue by a friend on Monday afternoon when he failed to show up at Davenport Gap. Rangers began an investigation and were searching trails in the area when the discovery was made. Rangers are investigating the incident with the assistance of the Swain County

Medical Examiner's Office. The cause of death does not appear to be suspicious. [Dana Soehn, Public Affairs Officer]

Friday, January 18, 2013  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Major Slide Cuts Newfound Gap Road

Newfound Gap Road has been closed due to a landslide that undercut the road between Collins Creek and Webb Overlook on Wednesday morning. The slide is estimated to have taken out about 90,000 cubic yards of material, destroying about 300 feet of roadway. The slide is still active and a team made up of park staff and Federal Highways employees observed debris continuing to fall during an assessment of the area yesterday. The closure is expected to be in effect for an extended period of time. The park is also evaluating the remainder of the roadway, but anticipates that Newfound Gap Road will reopen to visitors from the Gatlinburg entrance in Tennessee to Newfound Gap parking lot as soon as it is possible. The road will be open to Smokemont on the North Carolina side. Park staff are working with the Department of Federal Highway's Construction and Geotechnical Services to evaluate the slide damage and to begin planning for repairs. Additional details will be released as condition assessments are analyzed. As of midnight on Tuesday, the park had received 8.56 inches of rain at Cherokee, 7.40 inches at Newfound Gap, and 6.86 inches at LeConte. Rivers and streams have been running fast and high since Sunday, when the rains began. There are currently multiple temporary road closures throughout the park due to high water. For the most current road closure reports, please call 865-436-1200 x 631 or follow SmokiesRoadsNPS on Twitter. [Molly Schroer, Public Affairs Office]

Friday, February 22, 2013  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Rangers Join In Major Interstate Wildlife Operation

State and federal wildlife officials in North Carolina and Georgia have announced an undercover operation that involved about 80 wildlife violators and some 980 violations. Some of these offenses occurred within the park's boundaries and the investigation may lead to the filing of federal charges in coming weeks. Primary violations documented by Operation Something Bruin stem from illegal bear hunting, but include an array of state wildlife and game law charges. The four-year investigation, the largest of its kind in recent years, targeted poachers in North Carolina and Georgia, with work in some adjacent states. Officers with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission infiltrated poaching circles to document violations, that included bear baiting, the illegal taking of bears, deer and other wildlife, the illegal use of dogs, the illegal operation of bear pens in North Carolina, and guiding hunts on national forest lands without the required permits. Participation in the operation were officers and rangers from the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. For more information, go to this link: [HYPERLINK "http://www.operationsomethingbruin.org"](http://www.operationsomethingbruin.org). [Public Affairs Office]

Tuesday, March 12, 2013  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Missing Hiker Found By Searchers

During the early morning hours of Wednesday, March 6th, a 37-year-old North Carolina hiker made several 911 calls reporting that he was lost, cold, and out of food and water. He was not equipped for winter weather and had only a light jacket with him. The three calls he made were pinged and the last was found to be from Purchase Knob within the park, a site the man frequently visited. A hasty search of that area was conducted by rangers and volunteers. They found several items thought to belong to the man along with fresh tracks in the snow. The nighttime temperature in the area was in the teens and the wind chill was near zero. While this hasty search was underway, Haywood County deputies conducted searches of the other two GPS points determined from the 911 calls, but he was not found in either area. The search around Purchase Knob continued until 10 p.m. on Wednesday and resumed at first light the next morning. The man was found in good health early that afternoon, walking down a road close to the park's boundary. Also assisting in the search were Haywood County Search and Rescue and the North Carolina Search and Rescue Dog Association. [Carmen Barnard, Park Ranger]

Wednesday, March 13, 2013  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Seriously Injured Hiker Rescued

On the afternoon of Saturday, March 9th, park dispatch received a call from Jackson County 911 reporting an injured hiker on Alum Cave Trail approximately a mile above Alum Cave Bluffs. A 55-year-old man had fallen about ten vertical feet and then taken a tumbling fall of another 60 feet while moving over for hikers passing him on the trail. He suffered a three inch laceration to his neck, a five inch laceration to his leg, and a deep tear in his hand. He was able to make it back up to the trail, where he was assisted by visitors, although they were unable to control the bleeding from his neck. Rangers made a very quick response up the trail while park dispatch pulled together a litter crew of park staff and two AD hires. Trail conditions were treacherous due to recent snow and traction aid devices were required. The man's bleeding had been controlled prior to the arrival of the rescuers, though he had suffered a significant blood loss and a drop in his body temperature. He was packaged and removed by a combination of wheeled litter and sliding the plastic litter along the snow covered trail. A lowering system for the litter was used at Arch Rock. The litter team arrived at the trailhead at 2 a.m., where the patient was transported by ambulance to an LZ by Gatlinburg EMS. He was then flown to University of Tennessee Medical Center by Lifestar. [Clay Jordan, Chief Ranger]

Wednesday, March 13, 2013  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Visitor Dies Following Canoeing Accident



A 65-year-old Ontario man was seriously injured in a canoe accident above The Sinks early on Monday afternoon. He was visiting the area to attend the Ain't Louie Fest, which includes a series of river trips loosely organized by a group of whitewater enthusiasts, and became trapped after his canoe capsized and he was swept downstream. Many of the participants are well trained in swiftwater rescue and immediately began rescue operations. They'd pulled him from the water and begun CPR by the time emergency responders arrived on scene. Although he'd been underwater for about a half hour and was unresponsive when rescued, he resumed breathing and his heart again began to beat, but later expired at a local hospital. The Townsend Volunteer Fire Department, Townsend Police Department, Blount County Sheriff's Department, and Blount County Fire also responded to the incident. Little River Road was closed for over an hour to allow for emergency traffic. [Dana Soehn, Public Affairs Officer]

Friday, June 21, 2013

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Rangers Deal With Multiple Serious Incidents

Rangers responded to a string of serious incidents over a three-day period last week:

Thursday June 13th - Rangers discovered that a 63-year-old woman was stranded on the west side of the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River late in the afternoon. As rescuers assembled, a very strong storm system passed through the park. The woman and rescuers were forced to shelter in place until the storm passed. Rescue swimmers crossed the river, evaluated the woman and effected a swiftwater rescue. Rangers were assisted by Gatlinburg Fire Department and a park fire management employee.

Thursday June 13th - At about the same time as the above rescue was in progress, the National Weather Service issued a tornado warning for Cosby, Tennessee. Ranger Chuck Hester responded to the Cosby campground, alerted campers of the coming storm, and evacuated 25 to 30 campers to the basement of the maintenance building located in the campground. The storm was later confirmed by the NWS as an EF-1 tornado. Once it passed, they emerged from the basement to find hundreds of trees down in the campground. Many of the occupied sites had extensive damage and at least one tent was destroyed by falling trees. Due to Hester's quick action, there were no significant injuries reported in the campground.

Thursday June 13th - About an hour after the above, rangers and Swain County Rescue units responded to a report of two juveniles who had overturned their tubes in the fast-moving waters of Deep Creek. District Ranger Joe Pond and Supervisory Ranger Mike Scheid responded. The younger boy was able to escape to the shoreline prior to their arrival, while the older boy continued downstream until he was able to escape to the far side of the creek. A ground team hiked through thick brush for two hours to reach the boy and bring him to safety.

Friday, June 14th - Ranger Kris Laurie was evaluating the Cosby area trails and backcountry campsites for damage caused by the storm the previous day, when she came upon a 53-year-old man on the Low Gap Trail suffering from a compound leg fracture, spinal injury, and broken ribs. The man had been injured by a falling tree on the previous afternoon. A ground rescue team

was mobilized with a saw team to clear a path for a litter. At the same time, an Army Air National Guard helicopter was requested through Haywood County and North Carolina EMA. Two park medics were able to hike past the downed trees and began providing advanced medical care while waiting for the rescue teams. An Army Blackhawk arrived on scene and lowered two rescue medics and a litter. The injured hiker was packaged and raised to the helicopter and flown to Mission Hospital in Ashville.

Friday, June 14th - Ranger Todd Roessner made a traffic stop around 1 p.m. for possession of a controlled substance. A subsequent search of the vehicle revealed a large quantity of marijuana and several hundred pills. During the search, the operators attempted to conceal a small handgun under the car. Roessner observed this and immediately took the man to the ground and into custody. He was arrested and a variety of charges are pending. Special Agent Jeff Carlisle provided investigative assistance.

Friday, June 14th - Cades Cove rangers received a report of a man lying unresponsive on the riverbank at the Townsend Wye, a popular swimming area. The 63-year-old man was found face down in the Little River and was pulled to shore by a passing kayaker. When rangers arrived, he was being attended to by Rural Metro ambulance personnel and was breathing spontaneously. The man was transported by ambulance to a waiting Lifestar helicopter and then flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville. He is expected to make a full recovery.

Friday, June 14th - Park dispatch was notified of a single motorcycle collision with injuries near Newfound Gap around 4:30 p.m. Rangers Les Kwiatkowski and Jason Marsh responded. Gatlinburg EMS transported the operator to Leconte Medical Center.

Friday, June 14th - Dispatch was notified of a vehicle - motorcycle collision with injuries on Newfound Gap Road in the loop around 6:30 p.m. Rangers Les Kwiatkowski and Jason Marsh responded. Gatlinburg EMS transported one of the victims to the Sugarlands Visitor Center, where Lifestar airlifted the patient to the University of Tennessee Medical Center.

Saturday June 15th - Dispatch was notified of a possible car clout in progress at the Laurel Falls parking area just after 3 p.m. A handgun was one of the items reported as stolen. Ranger Dean Rinehart spotted the suspect vehicle at the Sugarlands Visitor Center a short time later. It soon left the area and headed west on Little River Road. Supervisory Park Ranger Bobby made a high risk stop, during which the driver initially refused to show his hands or follow commands. He was taken into custody with felony charges pending. Several stolen items were retrieved from the vehicle including the stolen handgun. Special Agent Jeff Carlisle provided investigative assistance.

[Steve Kloster, Chief Ranger]

Thursday, December 5, 2013

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Visitors Treated, Evacuated In Three Serious Medical Incidents

Rangers dealt with three serious medical incidents over the last week of November, two of them requiring evacuations by interdivisional teams.

Late on the night of November 22nd, park dispatch received a report from the concession-run lodge on Mt. Le Conte that a visitor had suffered a head injury after falling down a steep embankment and that the woman had become combative during attempts to render aid. Rangers Brad Griest and Mark Eckert hiked through the night, arriving at the lodge around 6 a.m. Air rescue was impossible due to high winds, so a carryout litter team was assembled that consisted of 16 employees from three divisions. The team arrived at the trailhead with the woman just after 4 p.m. She was transferred to an ambulance and transported to an area hospital. Supervisory Park Ranger Bobby Fleming was incident commander.

Rangers Jamie Sanders, Ryan Rohr and Steve Spanyer responded to an accident on the Cades Cove Loop Road on November 26th. They found that a 48-year-old woman had suffered an open humerus fracture with uncontrolled arterial bleeding. The rangers applied a combat application tourniquet (CAT) and provided basic life support until an ambulance arrived 35 minutes later. Weather conditions prevented air evacuation, so she was taken by ambulance to the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where she's expected to make a full recovery. Emergency room doctors reported that the timely application of the CAT saved the woman's life. CAT tourniquets had been issued to all park law enforcement rangers as part of special tactical EMS kits for personal use in event of a severe trauma.

Early on the afternoon of November 30th, dispatch was notified of a hiker with a possible broken leg on the Alum Cave Trail. A rescue team consisting of 15 employees from two divisions responded. The litter evacuation included a short technical lowering. The litter team reached the trailhead just after 9 p.m. The injured man was transported to an area hospital, where x-rays confirmed that he'd suffered fractures of the tibia and fibula. Rescue operations were complicated by temperatures in the single digits as well as ice and snow on the trail. Supervisory Park Ranger Bobby Fleming was incident commander.

[Clay Jordan, Chief Ranger]

Tuesday, January 7, 2014  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Three Hikers Rescued From Park Backcountry

On the evening of January 2nd, park dispatch began receiving reports of a three person hiking party in distress somewhere along the Appalachian Trail. The cell phone signal indicated that the group was between Mollies Shelter and Fontana Lake, approximately five to six miles from the nearest trailhead.

At the time, the park was experiencing heavy snowfall and single digit temperatures associated with a large storm affecting much of the East Coast.

Cell phone contact was established with the three men from South Carolina, who ranged in age from 21 to 32 years old. The three men indicated that they were ill prepared for the weather conditions, that they had no shelter, and that they were cold, wet, suffering from hypothermia and unable to move. Through a series of broken phone calls, they stated that one member of the group was shivering and had gone to sleep and could not be awakened and they were burning their clothes in an attempt to provide warmth.

Rangers Brad Griest, Kent Looney, and ranger/medic Phil Basak hiked throughout the night to locate the group. During the hike, the rangers experienced wind chill temperatures between -10 and -15 degrees. Due to the high winds and blowing snow, it was difficult at times for the rangers to locate the trail.

Early the following morning, rangers found the three men, all of them suffering from various stages of hypothermia and possible frostbite. While the rangers provided medical aid and attempted to re-warm them, a Blackhawk helicopter from the North Carolina National Guard with hoisting capabilities responded.

By early afternoon, all three men had been safely hoisted aboard and flown to Mission (Memorial) Hospital in Asheville, North Carolina, for treatment. The rangers hiked back out with assistance from a second rescue team utilizing UTVs on portions of the trail.

[Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Monday, March 3, 2014  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Man Indicted On Three Counts For Assault On Woman

A 48-year-old man has been indicted on one count of attempted murder and two counts of aggravated sexual abuse by force for an attack on a woman that took place on the Gatlinburg Trail in June 2012. He will be tried in April in federal district court in Knoxville.

The indictment alleges that W.S. attempted to kill the woman by stabbing her in the neck with a knife, and that he engaged in sexual activity with her by force, placing her in fear of death by holding her at knife point and stabbing and punching her when she attempted to flee from him.

If convicted, W.S. faces two terms of life in prison followed by an additional 20 years.

The indictment stems from an investigation by the NPS and the FBI. [HYPERLINK "http://classicinside.nps.gov/headline.cfm?type=Incidents&id=618"](http://classicinside.nps.gov/headline.cfm?type=Incidents&id=618) Click here for the original incident report; [HYPERLINK "http://www.justice.gov/usao/tne/news/2014/February/022714%20SeEVERS%20Indictment.html"](http://www.justice.gov/usao/tne/news/2014/February/022714%20SeEVERS%20Indictment.html) click here for the press release from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

[U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District Of Tennessee]

Monday, September 8, 2014 - REVISED  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Two Plead Guilty In Separate Ginseng Poaching Cases

Deep Creek Rangers Wes Mullins, James Latendresse and Jason Campos were conducting a backcountry patrol in an area of prime ginseng habitat on June 28th when they spotted a man with a history of ginseng poaching. The rangers were able to move in on him without being detected.

The man - B.J.H., 46, of Bryson City, North Carolina - was known to rangers as having a history of convictions for ginseng poaching and other offenses within the park. He was arrested for the illegal possession or harvesting of American ginseng from the park.

B.J.H. admitted to possessing 83 ginseng roots he had illegally dug from areas in the park and later pleaded guilty to the poaching charge in court - his fourth such conviction. On August 28th, he was sentenced to serve five months and fifteen days in prison.

In a separate case on August 6th, Mullins and Latendresse arrested C.I.J., 31, of Cosby, Tennessee. C.I.J. unsuccessfully attempted to flee from rangers upon being contacted, but was caught and placed into custody. C.I.J. pleaded guilty to the illegal possession of 298 ginseng roots; he was sentenced to 80 days in prison and was ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine.

American ginseng was recently placed in North Carolina's Watch Category 5B, which includes generally widespread species that are in commercial demand and are often collected and sold in high volume. This category was created to bring attention to the issue, since such high volume collection is unsustainable.

For details on these two cases, click on this link: [HYPERLINK](http://www.justice.gov/usao/ncw/pressreleases/2014/Charlotte-2014-08-28-hurley.html)  
"http://www.justice.gov/usao/ncw/pressreleases/2014/Charlotte-2014-08-28-hurley.html"

[Joe Pond, District Ranger]

Friday, September 12, 2014  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Five Ginseng Poachers Apprehended

Rangers came upon an unoccupied vehicle parked along Little River Road in an area known for ginseng poaching in July and began surveillance of the area. After more than two hours, three men returned to the vehicle with dirty clothing and hands, which indicated that they'd been crawling on the ground on their hands and knees.

Field Training Ranger Will Jaynes and Field Trainee Zebulon Whitaker contacted the men. During the ensuing interview, the rangers observed several digging tools in the vehicle. All three subsequently admitted to illegally harvesting ginseng from the park. Several bags containing

ginseng were located within the car. In all, 870 roots, more than five pounds, were recovered. All three men were issued mandatory appearance citations.

A week prior to this incident, Jaynes and Whitaker were working in the Greenbrier area of the park when they saw two men in possession of a tool that could easily be used for digging in the ground. An investigation revealed that both men were also in possession of illegally harvested ginseng from the park. In this case 29 roots were recovered. Both men were issued mandatory appearance citations. Acting Cosby Area Supervisor Chuck Hester assisted.

Over the past 12 months, rangers have seized 2,345 illegally harvested ginseng roots from both North Carolina and Tennessee areas of the park and charged 26 individuals in connection with these crimes. In each case, once the roots were processed as evidence, rangers worked closely with staff from the park's division of resource management and science to replant suitable roots elsewhere in the park.

[Jared St Clair, Acting Tennessee District Ranger]

Thursday, September 18, 2014

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Woman's Assailant Receives Lengthy Jail Term

On June 8, 2012, a Gatlinburg woman was walking the park's Gatlinburg Trail when she was abducted, brutally sexually assaulted, and stabbed numerous times in the neck, shoulder and hand. The woman was able to make it to the Gatlinburg Bypass and flag down a visitor for help.

Rangers and Gatlinburg EMS responded and found the woman covered in blood. Rangers and ISB agents were able to backtrack the victim's route from the bypass down an embankment, and through the woods to the scene of the attack.

After processing the scene and interviewing the victim and numerous potential witnesses, a suspect was identified through a DNA match in February 2013. The DNA, collected from the victim at the time of the incident, matched that of W.S., who was found to be incarcerated in Alabama for charges resulting from possession of a stolen vehicle.

ISB agents and an FBI agent interviewed W.S., who subsequently made statements linking him to the June 8th attack. He was charged with attempted murder and aggravated sexual abuse by force in federal court.

W.S. pleaded guilty this past April and last month received a sentence of 27 years in prison for his crimes. Successful prosecution of this case was the direct result of the ISB agents' investigative abilities, their ability to work closely with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, and the working relationship between agents and rangers at Great Smoky Mountains.

[Steve Kloster, Acting Chief Ranger]

Friday, April 10, 2015  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Rangers Rescue Seriously Injured Hiker

On the afternoon of March 29th, rangers rescued a hiker who had taken a fall onto a pile of rocks a little over two-and-a-half miles from the Ramsey Cascades Trailhead.

The hiker had sustained chest trauma and required evacuation by litter carryout from the backcountry over very rough terrain. The challenge of patient care increased when his airway became compromised subsequent to the chest injury.

In addition to the deterioration of his condition, the extrication from the backcountry required the park's technical SAR team to construct a Tyrolean traverse to get the patient safely across a river. The SAR operation took a total of seven hours from the time of injury to the waiting ambulance at the trailhead.

The injured hiker was flown by helicopter to the University of Tennessee Medical Center and immediately admitted to the OR. Prior to departing the landing zone, ambulance personnel and flight medics had to perform a surgical [HYPERLINK](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cricothyrotomy) "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cricothyrotomy" cricothyrotomy to secure the airway. The patient is expected to make a full recovery.

Ranger Brad Griest was the incident commander.

[Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Monday, April 13, 2015  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Three Appalachian Trail Hikers Rescued

On the morning of April 4th, a report was received of three Appalachian Trail hikers who'd become separated from each other during the preceding day's thunderstorms. Only one member of the party had made it to an Appalachian Trail shelter before nightfall; the other two independently spent the night out on the trail in the harsh weather with no shelter.

Rangers Phil Basak (medic) and Jamie Sanders responded to the Spence Field shelter on the AT and contacted two members of the party. One had a knee injury and was experiencing a diabetic emergency; he'd been helped into the shelter by other hikers along the trail. He was treated and evacuated by horseback.

The third member of the party, a man with an extensive cardiac history, was located just off trail approximately two miles north of the Spence Field shelter. He was reported as hypothermic,

unable to move, and not lucid. Rangers treated him and requested the assistance of the Tennessee Highway Patrol Aviation Unit in extricating him and taking him to a waiting ambulance. Both hikers are expected to make full recoveries.

Ranger Dan Wilson was the incident commander.

[Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Monday, April 13, 2015

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Employee In Cardiac Arrest Saved By Rangers

Rangers Phil Basak and Ryan Rohr were called to the scene of an ill employee complaining of chest pains at the Becky Cable House in the Cades Cove area of the park on Monday, March 16th.

Basak, a park medic, immediately recognized the seriousness of the employee's condition and requested an air ambulance. He then began providing advanced life support care to the employee, who soon went into sudden cardiac arrest. Basak and Rohr began CPR and applied an AED. The AED advised that no shock be given, so they continued with CPR.

After two minutes of CPR, the AED reanalyzed. This time a shock was advised and delivered. Basak and Rohr continued CPR. After approximately two sets of compression the man began breathing on his own. Within minutes, he went into cardiac arrest a second time. The rangers again performed CPR and again were successful in restoring a heartbeat. The man regained consciousness by the time he was transported by ground ambulance to a waiting helicopter.

He was flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center and is expected to make a full recovery.

[Steve Kloster, Tennessee District Ranger]

Thursday, June 25, 2015

Great Smoky Mountains NP

Cosby Area Temporarily Closed Due To Storm Damage

The Cosby area entrance road has been closed temporarily due to flood damage. On the afternoon of June 22nd, flash flooding along Rock Creek spilled over the banks, damaging road shoulders along 1,500 linear feet of the Cosby entrance road. Underground electric and phone lines were exposed along most of the road where the shoulder area was washed out up to six feet deep. All electric power and water service to the campground and picnic area have been shut off.

Park maintenance crews cleared rocks and debris from the roadway and coned off washed-out road areas to allow one-lane traffic to escort campers from the campground yesterday morning.



The campground, picnic area, and all roadways will remain closed until power and water services can be restored and the repairs are complete. Park crews are further assessing the condition of the road and will begin making repairs immediately.

Trails remain open at this time, but there is no trailhead access. Hikers are advised to use caution throughout the area. Crews are currently assessing the area for any damage to trails and foot logs. Roads are closed to all pedestrian traffic in the area throughout the closure.

For more information on road and trail closures, visit the park website at [HYPERLINK "http://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/temproadclose.htm"](http://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/temproadclose.htm).

[Dana Soehn, Public Affairs Officer]

Monday, July 6, 2015  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Kayaker Dies In Accident On Little Pigeon River

Rangers responded to a report of a kayak accident on the evening of July 2nd in the Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon River in the Greenbrier section of the park.

K.C.W., 53, of Apex, North Carolina, capsized his kayak and floated to the river edge, where friends pulled him from the river. Rangers, Gatlinburg Police Department officers, and Gatlinburg Fire Department personnel performed CPR on K.C.W. before he was transported to LeConte Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead.

[Public Affairs Office]

Wednesday, June 7, 2017  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Man Dies In Fall From Top Of Waterfall

A 37-year-old man died this past Sunday after falling from the top of the Ramsey Cascades, a 100-foot-high park waterfall.

The man was hiking alone and was seen climbing across the top of the waterfall on Sunday afternoon before falling. Rangers responded immediately and determined that he'd died in the fall. The man's body was recovered on Monday.

Ramsey Cascades is the tallest waterfall in the park. The park warns visitors on its website not to climb to the top of the falls because several people have died doing so.

Source: WSPD News.

Wednesday, June 20, 2018  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Woman Survives 40-Foot Fall

On the morning of June 11th, a 63-year-old woman survived a 40-foot fall from a point near Laurel Falls on the Tennessee side of the park.

The Florida woman was secured into a backcountry litter and lifted back up to the trail by the park's technical rescue team using ropes and pulleys. Sixteen emergency responders carried her more than a mile to the trailhead, where she was transported by Gatlinburg Emergency Medical Services to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville for the treatment of multiple injuries.

The woman remained alert throughout the rescue operation. Laurel Falls Trail was closed during the rescue operation and was reopened early in the afternoon.

Source: Asheville Citizen Times.

Wednesday, July 11, 2018  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Woman Dies In Bicycling Accident In Cades Cove

A 55-year-old woman from Florida died after falling off her bicycle on the Cades Cove Loop Road on the afternoon of June 29th.

The cyclist, S.H., of Sarasota, Florida, fell off her bicycle near the exit on the Tennessee side of the Great Smokies. She sustained injuries to the back of her head and was flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where she later died.

S.H. was riding a rental bicycle and was not wearing a helmet at the time of the accident.  
Source: Asheville Citizen-Times.

Wednesday, July 18, 2018  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Sentence Delivered In 2015 Murder In Smokemont

A Cherokee resident was sentenced to four years in federal prison and two years of supervised probation for his involvement in the 2015 stabbing death of a man in the Smokemont Baptist Church, located about three miles from the Oconaluftee Visitor Center.

J.H., who previously pled guilty to one count of accessory after the fact to second-degree murder in the killing of 25-year-old T.G., was sentenced on June 15th in federal district court.

J.H. was not the one who stabbed T.G. — that was F.D.H., 22 at the time of the crime, and also a Cherokee resident. F.D.H. pled guilty to second-degree murder in 2016 and was sentenced to 200 months — nearly 17 years — in prison and five years of supervised probation.

T.G. was killed in the early morning hours of Sunday, March 29, 2015, in the Lufty Baptist Church, also known as Smokemont Baptist Church. Built in 1912, the church remained in active use until becoming part of the national park in 1935 and has been restored since. It's typically left open for visitors to enjoy.

Authorities were alerted to the crime when a caller who identified himself as Raven York — authorities would later find out the caller was actually J.H. — called the Cherokee Indian Police Department through 911 that same day. Cherokee police and EMS responded to the scene and found T.G. dead. Because the church is inside the park, Cherokee officers notified the National Park Service, which then turned the investigation over to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Source: Smoky Mountain News.

Wednesday, September 19, 2018  
National Park System  
Hurricane Florence Updates

Reports are beginning to come in on Hurricane Florence's impact on parks, most of them pertaining to closures and reopenings. At the time of writing (Tuesday morning), however, the storm's remnants were still moving up through New York toward New England and hadn't yet brought anticipated heavy rains to a number of sites along its projected route. Over the weekend, the NPS mobilized an incident management team to begin coordination of recovery operations for affected parks. Plans called for it to move to a location in North Carolina sometime on Monday.

Here are reports from some of the larger areas in or near the storm's path — see the link below for further reports from smaller sites and additional details and updates from all areas:

Great Smoky Mountains NP — Park roads and facilities are quickly reopening. Maintenance crews have swept up light debris and removed a few large trees from roadways, and all primary roads are now open. Campgrounds, facilities, and outlying areas will reopen as soon as they are determined to be safe.

Source: NPS Hurricane and Severe Weather Response webpage.

Wednesday, September 19, 2018  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Body Of Ginseng Hunter Found Near Cades Cove

Rangers found the body of W.L.H., Jr., 30, of Louisville, Tennessee, off Rich Mountain Road, about two miles north of Cades Cove, on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 12th.

W.L.H. and a companion entered the park on Friday, September 7th, to hunt for ginseng (harvesting ginseng is illegal in the park). At some point during the day, the two separated and W.L.H. was not heard from thereafter.

Rangers searched the area until Monday, looking in drainages near the area where W.L.H. was last seen. On Tuesday, his body was found off-trail, about half a mile from Rich Mountain Road and near a residential area. They also found a bear that was near the body, which showed signs of having been scavenged. The bear displayed signs of aggressive behavior.

Wildlife managers trapped the bear for long enough to recover human DNA later that day, then placed a GPS collar on the bear and released it while they reviewed the evidence and mulled over whether to euthanize it. Once the decision was made to do so, they attempted to track it down. Though it still wears its GPS collar, the bear has so far eluded wildlife managers, who have shut down Rich Mountain Road and the surrounding area.

No determination has yet been made regarding W.L.H.'s cause of death. Source: KnoxNews.com.

Wednesday, October 3, 2018  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Search In Progress For Missing Hiker

A search is underway for a 53-year-old woman who disappeared while hiking near Andrews Bald on Tuesday, September 25th.

M.S."S."C., was hiking with her daughter when the two became separated. She is described as a 5-foot-6-inch tall white female with light brown hair and blue eyes. She weighs 125 pounds and was wearing a green zip-up sweater, black workout pants over black leggings, a clear rain poncho, and white tennis shoes when she was last seen.

The National Park Service is asking anyone who saw M.S.C. on Tuesday afternoon or since to contact the agency's investigative branch through email at [nps\\_isb@nps.gov](mailto:nps_isb@nps.gov) or to call them at 1-888-653-0009.

Source: ABC News.

Wednesday, October 10, 2018  
National Park System  
Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

Below are short follow-ups on incidents previously reported in this newsletter:

Great Smoky Mountains NP — Searchers have found the body of M.S."S."C., 53, who disappeared on September 25th during a hike with her daughter. The body was found two miles west of the Clingmans Dome parking area, three-fourth miles south of the Appalachian Trail. The cause of death has not yet been determined. Source: CBS News.

Wednesday, January 9, 2019  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Visitor Killed By Falling Tree

A mother of three was killed by a falling tree while hiking in the park on Thursday, December 27th.

L.J., 46, of Plano, Texas, died after part of a tree fell due to high winds and struck her. The accident occurred on the Porter Creek Trail.

L.J. was hiking with her husband and three sons. One of the boys, a six-year-old, was also injured by the tree, which broke his leg in two places and caused superficial head injuries. He was airlifted to the UT Medical Center with non-life threatening injuries.

Source: Knoxville News Sentinel.

Wednesday, January 16, 2019  
National Park System  
Government Shutdown Reaches Record Length

*Chipping In* — The wife of a ranger at Great Smokies NP started a GoFundMe page to try and raise money for the family's pressing economic needs, but then removed it due to concerns about the trouble it might cause her husband. Enter former NFL quarterback Ryan Leaf, who helped out by writing a check that covered the couple's January mortgage. Source: Tyler Whetstone, Knoxville News Sentinel.

Wednesday, February 13, 2019  
National Park System  
Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

Below are short follow-ups on incidents previously reported in this newsletter:

Great Smoky Mountains NP — Last September 7th, W.H. went into the park to hunt for ginseng, a root used for traditional home medicine that can go for as much as \$800 per pound. His body was found two days later in the woods north of Cades Cove. It had been fed upon, and a black bear nearby was acting aggressively toward rangers. After considerable thought and

discussion, the park decided to destroy the bear and did so some days later. The results of an autopsy on W.H.'s body, recently received by the park, show that he died of "accidental methamphetamine intoxication." Although the autopsy revealed "extensive postmortem animal predation," there were no indications that he'd been attacked by a bear. Source: Kurt Repanshek, National Parks Traveler.

Wednesday, February 27, 2019  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Park Roads And Trails Impacted By Heavy Rains

Heavy rains that fell last weekend caused a rock slide that closed U.S. 441 until all the debris could be cleared. The landslide occurred about two miles beyond the Sugarlands Visitors Center on the Tennessee side of the park.

Little River Road, which was also closed, has reopened as well. In Cades Cove, Sparks and Hyatt Lanes remain closed due to flooding, though the main loop road is open.

Rangers are working to assess all the damage in the park from weekend flooding, an effort that could take months due the number of trails in the park.

Source: WVLT News.

Wednesday, April 17, 2019  
National Park System  
Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

Below are short follow-ups on incidents previously reported in this newsletter:

Great Smoky Mountains NP — The 53-year-old Ohio woman who was the subject of an extended search after she disappeared while on a hike with her daughter last September died of hypothermia according to an autopsy report. The search for M.S.C. lasted a week and involved 175 trained personnel from five states and some 50 organizations, plus helicopters, drones and K-9 units. Source: Karen Chávez, Asheville Citizen Times.

Wednesday, April 24, 2019  
National Park System  
Weekly Weather Impacts Update

The increasing frequency of climate-change-related severe weather closures and incidents in NPS areas has warranted the creation of a weekly — or maybe intermittent — Servicewide summary:

Great Smoky Mountains NP — A flash flood warning issued for Sevier County last Friday prompted the evacuation of the Elkmont Campground. More than three inches of rain fell in and around the county before noon, with more expected that night. Water levels at the Chimneys Picnic area on the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River jumped three feet between midnight and noon Friday. In Gatlinburg, the river reached its minor flood stage. Source: Andrew Capps, Knoxville News Sentinel.

Wednesday, July 3, 2019  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Driver Killed By Falling Tree On Little River Road

P.E., 64, was driving through the park on Little River Road on the afternoon of June 24th when a tree fell on his car. He died shortly thereafter.

The accident occurred at a spot about seven miles from Sugarlands Visitor Center. P.E. was driving west in a 2016 Jeep Grand Cherokee when it was hit by the tree. The woman in the passenger seat was not hurt.

According to investigators, there were no obvious signs of blunt force trauma due to the impact of the fallen tree. The cause of death is under investigation.

Source: Mark Price, Charlotte Observer.

Wednesday, August 7, 2019  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Missing Man Found After Five-Day Search

On July 31st, a 58-year-old man who was the subject of a major five-day search was found "alert and responsive" in the southeast area of the park near the Cataloochee Divide Trail.

Earlier that afternoon, searchers found his hat and sunglasses southeast of the trail; a second team then found footprints leading toward Ferguson Cabin. Within a few hours, he was discovered after responding to searcher's yells — just three-quarters of a mile from the point last seen. He was taken from the park to Haywood Regional Medical Center, where his family was to meet him.

The man was last seen at the Swag Resort in Haywood County the afternoon of July 27th. Search and rescue workers from some 60 agencies and five states joined in efforts to find the man, who suffers from "significant dementia."

Over the five-day period, searchers worked in groups of about ten people in dense, steep terrain. They hiked all trails in the area looking for him, posting informational flyers at trailheads and interviewing hikers. Local officers and fire department personnel also went door to door notifying homeowners adjacent to the park boundary to be on the lookout for him. They

contacted more than 400 residents and also searched outbuildings and barns into which he might have wandered.

Source: Karen Chávez, Asheville Citizen Times.

Wednesday, August 7, 2019  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Visitor Killed In Rock Slide

A 73-year-old Georgia man was killed in a rock slide that occurred on the Gatlinburg Spur on the afternoon of Thursday, August 1st.

Although it's not clear whether the slide directly caused the accident, investigators determined that trees that came down the slope with it fell on the man's vehicle and caused his death.

The Sevier County area received four inches of rain in an hour on Thursday afternoon, causing the slide.

Source: WVLT News.

Wednesday, December 4, 2019  
National Park System  
Park Operating Status Summary

A summary of recent openings, closures and other changes in the status of parks and their facilities, mostly related to the recent spate of significant storms across the country.

Great Smoky Mountains NP — Several park roads were closed on Sunday due to a winter storm — US Highway 441 and Newfound Gap Road from Gatlinburg to Cherokee, Foothills Parkway East and West, Cades Cove Loop Road, and Cherokee Orchard Road above the Twin Creeks Science Center. Cades Cove Loop Road is scheduled to reopen this Friday, but will be closed again next week for tree work. Source: Allie Clouse, Knoxville News Sentinel.

Wednesday, January 8, 2020  
National Park System  
Park Operating Status Summary

A summary of recent openings, closures and other changes in the status of parks and their facilities,

Great Smoky Mountains NP — Laurel Creek Road, the seven-mile access road leading from the Townsend Wye to Cades Cove, has been closed to all motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians while the Bote Mountain Tunnel is repaired. It will remain closed until February 29th. The full closure,



beginning just past Tremont Road, is necessary to allow equipment set-up for the repair of the internal drainage system in the walls and ceiling of the 121-foot long tunnel. Crews will enclose and heat the tunnel, allowing the temperature-sensitive repairs to be conducted during the winter months when visitation is lower. Intermittent single-lane closures will be necessary between March 1st and June 15th to complete the tunnel repairs and to re-pave the tunnel area. The Cades Cove Campground, normally open during the winter months, was closed on December 30th and will not reopen until March 5th. To accommodate winter campers, Elkmont and Smokemont campgrounds will remain open year-round. Source: Kristy Kepley-Steward, WLOS News.

Wednesday, March 4, 2020  
National Park System  
Park Operating Status Summary

A summary of recent openings, closures and other changes in the status of parks and their facilities,

Great Smoky Mountains NP — The Bote Mountain Tunnel, which provides access to Cades Cove, reopened last week. The tunnel had been closed for two months for repairs. The work was done ahead of schedule, allowing traffic to head to Cades Cove in time for the first full weekend of the spring break season. The Cades Cove Campground is to reopen on March 5th. Source: National Parks Traveler.

Wednesday, March 11, 2020  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Teenager Killed In Fall From Jeep's Open Window

A teenage visitor was killed late on March 3rd in a bizarre traffic mishap that started when she sat in the window of a moving vehicle while it was on on the Foothills Parkway between Chilhowee Lake and Look Rock.

The victim was identified as 18-year-old M.R.-G. of Eddington, Maine, and she was a passenger in the vehicle. She was sitting in an open window"of a 2011 Jeep Patriot and trying to pull up the roof rack. She fell from the vehicle when the roof rack she was pulling up on disconnected from the roof.

Blount County deputies and park rangers performed CPR until an ambulance arrived and the medics onboard pronounced her dead. The driver and front-seat passenger, the only other occupants of the vehicle, were not injured.

M.R.-G. was a student at Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee, Source: Mark Price, Raleigh News and Observer.

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

## National Park System Coronavirus Response Update

There are far too many closure and modified closure notices from the 400+ units of the National Park System to summarize here. You can, however, find specifics on the status of just about any park by going to the Service's "Active Alerts In Parks" webpage and using the search engine to find information on a particular site. We will continue to limit our reporting to a listing of articles of note on the NPS response:

At Least Seven NPS Employees Test Positive For CV — As of a week ago Monday, seven NPS employees had tested positive for coronavirus. Although the NPS declined to identify the employees, other reports indicate that at least one is at Great Smokies and another at Grand Canyon. Source: Darryl Fears, Juliet Eilperin and Dino Grandoni, Washington Post.

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

## Great Smoky Mountains NP

### Private Plane Comes Down In Park

G.K. was piloting a small plane west of Clingmans Dome last Friday morning when the aircraft developed unidentified problems, forcing him to deploy the plane's parachute and make an emergency landing in the park (yes, planes now have their own parachutes — watch this unrelated short video to see how they work).

G.K. was found by a Tennessee Highway Patrol helicopter early in the afternoon and was picked up and flown to Gatlinburg Pigeon Forge Airport.

G.K. was not injured and left the airport under his own care. The park will work with the Federal Aviation Administration to complete an investigation.

Source: WVLT News.

Wednesday, May 6, 2020

## National Park System Coronavirus Response Update

Parks are slowly and carefully reopening following what appears to be the pandemic's peak. The summary that follows focuses briefly on articles of note on a few large parks and how they're dealing with the reopening. Click on the related URL's for details:

Great Smoky Mountains NP — The park is increasing recreational access and services and will reopen many roads and trails on May 9th. Park managers are implementing new safety measures in facility operations and services to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 as areas reopen to the public. Campgrounds, picnic pavilions, visitor centers, and many secondary roads will remain closed during the first reopening phase, which is expected to last for at least two weeks. During

that time, the park will conduct disinfectant fogging operations for restrooms and public buildings, install plexiglass shields at visitor centers, issue personal protective equipment to maintenance workers, institute new safety protocols for emergency services staff, and reduce group size limits. While many areas will be accessible for visitors to enjoy, a return to full operations will continue to be phased and services may be limited. Source: Alayna Clay, WCYB News.

For information on the status of other parks in the system, go to the Service's "Active Alerts In Parks" webpage and use the search engine to find information on a particular site.

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

#### National Park System Coronavirus Response Update

There was little news in the media on the parks' coronavirus responses last week. Summaries and links to articles on three of them follow:

Great Smoky Mountains NP — "The reopening of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was a little too tempting of a draw Saturday as scores of nature lovers from dozens of states crowded trails and trekked into blocked-off areas, a spokeswoman said," reports the Associated Press. "Even with some of the most popular trails closed, parking lots were packed and lines of cars snaked down tree-lined streets, in one case for about a mile leading up to a waterfall path, according to park spokeswoman Dana Soehn. Many people did not wear masks. 'It seemed like people were not respecting our suggestion that they avoid crowded areas,' said Soehn, adding that she counted license plates from 24 different states in one visitor center parking lot. Visitors also walked past heavy barricades on one of the park's most trafficked trails, Laurel Falls, which was closed off to heed federal social distancing guidelines, she said." Source: Associated Press.

Additional information on the pandemic response can be found at these locations:

- For articles on the reopening of the parks on a Systemwide basis, see "National Park System" below.
- For CPANP actions related to coronavirus and the planned reopenings, see "Coalition Actions" below.
- For information on the status of other parks in the system, go to the Service's "[Active Alerts In Parks](#)" webpage and use the search engine to find information on a particular site.

Wednesday, July 1, 2020

#### National Park System

#### Drownings Recorded Across The Country

Summer means a spike in visitors to NPS areas with rivers and lakes or bordering oceans, which unfortunately equates to a related spike in drownings:

Great Smoky Mountains NP — A visitor drowned while trying to rescue a child from the Oconaluftee River last Saturday. The man, 32-year-old B.M., jumped into the river to save a family member who was struggling in the water. Responding rangers found the child safe on shore, but there was no sign of B.M. He was later found unresponsive, about 10-feet underwater. Cherokee EMS and fire rescue also responded; life saving efforts were attempted but were unsuccessful.

Sources: Anna Beahm, Huntsville Times; Mack Jones, Deseret News; Jordan Gartner, KTNV News; Frances Ruth Harris, Pike County Courier; Katelyn Newberg, Las Vegas Review-Journal; Bailey Aldridge, News & Observer.

Wednesday, September 23, 2020  
National Park System  
Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

Below are short follow-ups on incidents previously reported in this newsletter.

Great Smoky Mountains NP — The National Park Service can be held financially responsible for failing to warn residents that a fire was headed toward Gatlinburg in 2016, a federal judge has ruled. The judge dismissed the Service's bid to escape a trial in lawsuits filed by victims and survivors of those who died in the Gatlinburg wildfires, which claimed 14 lives, damaged or destroyed 2,500 homes and caused \$2 billion in damage. The judge ruled that the NPS fell far short of its mandatory duty to warn Great Smoky Mountains National Park visitors and residents in nearby communities in the days and hours leading up to the fatal fires. Source: Jamie Satterfield, Knoxville News Sentinel.

Wednesday, September 30, 2020  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Camper's Body Found Being Scavenged By Black Bear

A man whose body was found being scavenged by a black bear in a remote area of the park on September 11th apparently had been camping alone.

Investigators have not yet determined whether P.M., 43, of Elgin, Illinois, was mauled by the bear or whether he died of some other cause.

P.M. had a backcountry reservation for a multi-night trip. He was scheduled to stay alone at campsite 82 in the Hazel Creek area on the night of September 8th. One tent and one sleeping bag were found at the campsite — no one else was scheduled to camp there either that day or the next three days.

On the afternoon of September 11th, backpackers hiking near the campsite found P.M. dead and a bear nearby. The backpackers left the remote, densely wooded area of the park to regain

cellphone service and notified park officials, who arrived shortly after midnight to find the bear "actively scavenging" on the man's remains. Rangers killed the bear.

Source: Travis Dorman, Knoxville News Sentinel.

Wednesday, November 4, 2020  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Searchers Find Lost Hiker

F.B., 56, of Powell, Tennessee, was reported missing just after 7 p.m. on October 27th when he failed to return from a day hike on the Middle Prong Trail on the Tennessee side of the park. The park started searching for him the next morning and found him later that day.

More than 30 people assisted in the operation, including members of BUSAR, an all-hazards search and rescue team that assists with operations inside the park. Responders searched over 20 acres of off-trail areas along with 30 miles of park trails.

The incident command team established a mobile base of operations in the Tremont area using a new ICS trailer donated by the Friends of the Smokies.

There are about 100 search and rescue operations a year in the park. [Click here for news article.](#)  
Source: Karen Chávez, *Asheville Citizen Times*. National Park System

Wednesday, December 2, 2020  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Visitor Falls To Death While Taking Photo

W.S., 48, fell to his death last Tuesday while trying to take a photo at one of the park's scenic overlooks.

Witnesses told investigators the incident happened at 1:40 p.m. at the Chimney Tops overlook along Newfound Gap Road. W.S. fell about 50 feet after stepping down a steep slope below the overlook for a photograph. He suffered severe head trauma and passed away as a result of these injuries.

Rangers and a rescue team had to rappel down by rope to reach W.S.

There is no fence, wall or guardrail at the top of the slope and park officials say no park rules were broken by W.S. prior to his fall.

Terrain around the mountain's bare rock peaks is considered very steep and the hiking trail rises 1,400 feet within two miles. To reach the summit, there is a steep rock scramble that can be slippery when wet or covered in ice.

Source: Mark Price, Charlotte Observer.

Wednesday, January 20, 2021  
Great Smoky Mountains NP  
Boy Attacked By Black Bear

A bear attack in the park four days ago has left a 16-year-old boy hospitalized in Asheville, North Carolina.

The attack occurred in the Hazel Creek section of the park at backcountry campsite No. 84. The camp is about 4.5 miles from Lake Fontana's shoreline on the national park's North Carolina side.

The boy and his father were camping with food and equipment properly stored when he was ripped from his hammock by a black bear. Park officials state that the incident happened around 10:30 p.m.

Following the attack, the boy's father forced the bear from the campsite and began administering first aid to his son.

After hiking to Lake Fontana's shore, they were airlifted by Graham County Rescue EMS to Mission Health in Asheville.

Source: Emily Morgan, *Outsider*.

Wednesday, August 25, 2021  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
2020 death confirmed to be due to bear trauma

On September 11, 2020, backpackers initially found an occupied tent at a backcountry campsite in the Hazel Creek Area. Later, they discovered what appeared to be human remains and they observed a bear scavenging in the area. When park law enforcement arrived, they saw a bear actively scavenging on the remains and the bear was euthanized. The Hazel Creek Trail and campsite were closed for a time, and have since reopened. Last week, the North Carolina Chief Medical Examiner released a final report confirming that the victim probably died from trauma caused by the bear. It is the second bear-related fatality in the history of the park. Source: Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Wednesday, September 8, 2021  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Visitor drowns at base of waterfall

On August 27, a 73-year-old got caught in a current near the base of Abrams Falls and did not resurface. NPS officials and personnel from Blount County and Army National Guard searched for several hours and found the victim entrapped in underwater debris. Source: Knoxville News

Wednesday, September 8, 2021  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Motorcyclist dies in crash

On August 28, a 57-year-old motorcyclist was killed in a crash while driving on Foothills Parkway between Walland and Wears Valley. The motorcycle veered off the road and into a drainage ditch. Speed is believed to be a contributing factor. No other vehicles were involved. Rangers, Blount County Sheriff's Office personnel, and American Medical Response were called to the scene and performed CPR before taking the victim to Blount Memorial Hospital in Maryville. The victim was pronounced dead while in transport to the hospital. 3 other people have died in motorcycle crashes in Great Smoky this year.

Source: Charlotte Observer

Wednesday, September 22, 2021  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
2016 Gatlinburg fire lawsuit on hold

A lawsuit filed on behalf of survivors, insurance companies, and family of deceased victims over the NPS' handling of the 2016 Gatlinburg wildfires has been put on hold while a judge considers a request by federal lawyers to dismiss the case. A previous motion to dismiss the case was denied in December, but new arguments in August are currently be considered. 14 people perished and there was \$2 billion in property damage resulting from the fires. Source: WATE

Wednesday, December 1, 2021  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Car crashes in river, passenger dies

On November 17, the driver of a 2019 Ford Fiesta lost control of their vehicle near the Gum Stand Road intersection between Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg, resulting in a crash into the river. The front-seat passenger, aged 22, died as a result of injuries from the crash, and the driver was transported to LeConte Medical Center by ambulance for treatment. The crash is under investigation by Tennessee Highway Patrol. Source: WYFF

Wednesday, December 1, 2021  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Insurance companies sue over 2016 fire

On November 29, 14 insurance companies filed lawsuits against the Department of the Interior for over \$200 million under the Federal Tort Claims Act "for damages arising from negligent acts or omissions" on the part of NPS employees in response to the Chimney Tops 2 Fire in November 2016, which resulted in 14 deaths and the loss of 1,400 structures. Source: WREG

Wednesday, December 29, 2021  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Cabin closes due to unstable chimney

The park has temporarily closed the historic Walker Sisters Cabin due to recent movement around the chimney. Noticeable cracks and buckling around the masonry needs to be repaired and stabilized before it can reopen. Renovations, including a roof replacement, are being funded by the Friends of the Smokies and will take place in the 2022 field season. The associated farmstead around the cabin remains accessible.

Source: WATE

Wednesday, January 26, 2022  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Hiker rescued in deep snow

On January 18, the park's Emergency Communications Center received notification that a 28-year-old hiker had become disoriented and lost due to heavy snow while hiking on the Appalachian Trail. They were able to use location data to identify the hiker's location well off-trail in a ravine. The hiker reported signs and symptoms of hypothermia. A medical UH60 Army Blackhawk was deployed by the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, and two medics were lowered to the hiker, who was found waist-deep in snow. The medics and patient were hoisted to the helicopter and the hiker was brought to the University of Tennessee Medical Center for treatment. Source: Smoky Mountain News

Wednesday, February 23, 2022  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Small fire contained

On February 11, a downed power line ignited a wildfire along Foothills Parkway. Pigeon Forge Fire Department, Sevier County Emergency Service, Tennessee Division of Forestry, and volunteer fire departments from Wears Valley, Walland, and Seymour assisted the NPS in suppressing the fire, which was kept to 1.7 acres. Source: Cherokee One Feather

Wednesday, March 9, 2022



## Great Smoky Mountains National Park Kayaker drowns

On February 24, a 34-year-old kayaker on the Ocanaluftee River went underwater, floated over swift rapids before being pinned between a fallen tree and the river bank.

Companions of the kayaker alerted authorities. The victim was freed by emergency responders after 40 minutes and was pronounced dead at the scene. Source: Fox 8

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

## Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

Great Smoky Mountains National Park — On February 28, a federal judge threw out the lawsuit by several hundred people against the NPS for failing to warn people about the 2016 Gatlinburg fires. The judge said that the families failed to include their core assertion in claims documents. The plaintiffs stated that they will be appealing the decision. Source: Knox News

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

## Great Smoky Mountains National Park Sick hiker rescued by helicopter

On March 16, a National Guard helicopter responded to reports of a sick hiker who could no longer stand. The hiker was air lifted from Double Spring Gap Shelter to the University of Tennessee Medical Center. Source: WBIR

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

## Great Smoky Mountains National Park Downed power lines start wildfires

On March 26, high winds caused trees to fell power lines, starting two fires, the Stone Pile Fire and the Cooper Creek Fire. The two fires have since merged and are called the Thomas Divide Complex Fire. As of April 1, the fires had burned 941 acres near the southern boundary of the park, and was close to complete suppression. No structures burned. Many trails and campsites in the area were closed, but have since reopened. Source: WSPA (3/27, 3/28), Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Smoky Mountain Times, Citizen Times

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

## Great Smoky Mountains National Park Wind event closes roads

On March 30, many roads were preemptively closed in the park in anticipation of wind gusts up to 90 mph that could cause hazardous conditions from fallen trees and increased risk of fire danger. Source: Huron Daily Tribune

May 4, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Hiker with medical emergency rescued

On April 22, a 74-year-old was hiking on the Appalachian Trail north of Fontana Lake, when they experienced severe chest pains. The NPS, North Carolina Helo-Aquatic Rescue Team, Graham County EMS, Swain County Search and Rescue, and the North Carolina Forest Service responded. The hiker was carried by rescuers to a location where they were taken out by helicopter and flown to Mission Hospital in Asheville. Source: WNCT

Wednesday, June 29, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Bear put down after injuring human

Early in the morning on June 12, a family was sleeping in their tent in the Elkmont Campground, when a black bear ripped into the tent, then scratched a 3-year-old and a parent. The other parent was able to scare the bear from the campsite after several attempts. They left a note at the campground office and sought medical attention. Both individuals received superficial lacerations to the head. Park rangers closed the area, interviewed the affected party and other nearby visitors, and set traps in the area. A bear matching the physical description of the involved bear later entered the campsite, exhibiting food-conditioned behavior and lack of fear of humans before entering the trap. The bear was humanely euthanized the following day. Source: Great Smoky Mountains National Park

July 27, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Flood damage

On July 12, the Porters Gap area received over eight inches of rain over the course of several hours. The area had already received five inches of rain over the previous week, which had saturated the soils. The rain caused flash flood conditions along the Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon River, resulting in road washouts and culvert damage along Porters Creek Road, and washed out sections of the Ramsey Cascades Trail. The park temporarily closed some roads, trails, and facilities in the Greenbrier area of the park to motorists and pedestrians. Part of the closure was lifted on July 15. However, another three inches of rain fell on July 21, creating additional road damage, including water below the road surface that has undermined its stability. The Greenbrier area is now closed to all use. Engineers will assess road stability and make

recommendations for repair. Source: Great Smoky Mountains National Park (7/13, 7/15, 7/18, 7/21)

July 27, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
National Guard rescues ill hiker

On July 19, a hiker at the backcountry LeConte Lodge on Mount LeConte was reported to have "life-threatening illness" needing immediate medical attention. A Tennessee National Guard medical flight crew was dispatched, but due to thick cloud cover, they could not reach the LeConte Lodge. Rescuers on the ground were able to transport the hiker down the Alum Cave trail to get below the cloud layer, where the aircraft could pick up the hiker via hoist. Cloud cover continued to delay the efforts, but eventually a break in the clouds allowed for successful evacuation and the patient was brought to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville. Source: U.S. National Guard

August 10, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Tree fall results in deceased child

On July 27 at approximately 12:30am, a red maple, two feet in diameter, fell on a tent in the Elkmont Campground, resulting in the death of a seven-year-old. The other family members in the tent, consisting of a parent and two siblings of the individual, were uninjured. Emergency responders from the NPS, and Gatlinburg Fire Department and Police Department responded to the site. The campsite and adjacent sites are currently closed. Source: Great Smoky Mountains National Park

August 10, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Hiker found deceased

A 23-year-old traveling from Knoxville, Tennessee, to University of North Carolina-Charlotte for a summer internship was reported missing. They had last been seen on July 31. NPS staff found the individual's car at Balsam Mountain Trailhead on August 4. They began a search and found the individual deceased the following day, about 20 yards off the trail and 1.5 miles away from the parking lot. Source: ABC11

September 18, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Motorcycle fatality

On September 9, an 85-year-old driving a trike motorcycle on Newfound Gap Road lost control between Chimney Tops Trailhead and Alum Cave Trailhead, crossing the centerline and hitting

an oncoming vehicle. NPS staff and Gatlinburg Fire Department emergency responders came to the scene. The motorcycle driver passed away, and a passenger on the motorcycle was flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center. No one in the other vehicle was injured. Source: Citizen Times

October 19, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Bear rescued after struck by car

On October 1, a black bear cub was struck by a vehicle on River Road at Elkmont Road. Rangers responded to the scene and the cub was observed to be still breathing. Rangers clapped their hands, and the cub got up, staggered to the side of the road, and climbed a few feet into the crook of a tree. A ranger was able to use an infrared scope to spot the cub's mother and two other cubs on a nearby hill, but the cub was no longer alert and unable to call to its mother. The cub was taken to the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine and staff from the Appalachian Bear Rescue took the individual into its custody. X-rays on the cub revealed that there were no fractures, only a bloody nose and blood in the back of its throat. The individual appears to be recovering well. It is unclear whether the bear will be released or stay in captivity. Progress on the bear's recovery (nicknamed "Myrtle") can be found on the Appalachian Bear Rescue website. Source: WAGM, Appalachian Bear Rescue

November 2, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Trail closed due to bears

On October 26, the park closed the Gatlinburg Trail between Gatlinburg and the Sugarlands Visitor Center, as well as the Twin Creeks Trail between Gatlinburg and Twin Creeks Science and Education Center due to a large concentration of bears feeding on acorns to build up winter fat reserves. Source: WYFF

November 2, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Bear killed by car

On October 21, a 220-pound female black bear was hit and killed by a vehicle on the Gatlinburg Bypass. The bear did not have any ear tags and was not suspected to be a bear with a history of habituation. Source: WVLT

November 16, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Wildfire

On November 6, a wildfire began along the western boundary of the park on Highway 129 near Chilhowee Lake. Many agencies responded and on November 9, the fire was considered 100% contained. It burned about 40 acres. Highway 129 and Parson Branch Road closed temporarily during the response. Source: WLOS, Knox News, Great Smoky Mountains National Park

November 16, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Follow-up on Previously Reported Incident

The park reopened the Gatlinburg Trail and Twin Creeks Trail. The trails had been closed due to a large concentration of bears feeding in the area. They are no longer feeding on the trails, but hikers are cautioned to be aware of bear activity. Source: Great Smoky Mountains National Park

December 28, 2022

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Kayaking fatality

On December 16, during high flow conditions, a 61-year-old disappeared underwater while kayaking above The Sinks, and did not resurface. NPS staff, as well as personnel from Townsend Fire Department, Blount Special Operations Response Team, and American Medical Response searched for the kayaker. On December 19, the individual was found deceased near where they went underwater. The individual's body was recovered and transported to Blount County medical examiner's office. Source: Citizen Times, Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Wednesday, January 11, 2023

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Habituated bear travels 1,000 miles

In summer 2022, a black bear called "Number 609," was observed eating food off picnic tables, stealing backpacks, and sniffing trash cans in the park. The individual was taken to the South Cherokee National Forest in Polk County and outfitted with a GPS collar. The bear traveled 1,000 miles across three states and Interstate 40, including getting hit by a car, before returning to the park six months later. It is the longest distance the park has tracked a relocated bear in its 40-year study. Source: WBIR

January 25, 2023

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Heavy snow

On January 13, a winter storm dropped 16 inches of snow on the higher elevations of the park, causing US 441/Newfound Gap Road to close for four days. NPS crews were able to clear the snow and reopen the road on January 17. Source: WATE

February 8, 2023

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Vehicular homicide conviction

On February 2, a 21-year-old was sentenced to 65 months in federal prison and \$5,000 in restitution for vehicular homicide and vehicular assault, in connection with a drunk driving incident in the park in June 2021. The individual was intoxicated, driving 90 miles per hour, and crashed their vehicle into an embankment on the Spur. Two 19-year old passengers were seriously injured in the crash. One suffered "life-altering injuries" and the other died shortly after the accident. The driver was treated for minor injuries. Source: The United States Attorney's Office: Eastern District of Tennessee

February 8, 2023

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Follow-up on Previously Reported Incident

On January 25, a panel of federal appellate court judges heard arguments from plaintiffs who were affected by the 2016 Gatlinburg fires about whether a federal judge correctly dismissed their lawsuits against the federal government. The plaintiffs allege that the NPS had inadequately warned the public about the fire's rapid approach to the town of Gatlinburg and other parts of Sevier County, resulting in 14 deaths and over \$1 billion in damages. The dismissal of the lawsuits pertained to inconsistent wording on a piece of federal paperwork called an SF-95. The decision is expected to be filed in "several months." Source: WBIR

March 22, 2023

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Sentencing for fraud

On March 3, two individuals, aged 55 and 49, were sentenced to federal prison terms of 48 months and 24 months, respectively, for three charges: wire fraud, conspiracy to commit wire fraud, and major fraud against the U.S. government. A money judgment will also come at a later date. From 2005 to 2013, the individuals fraudulently obtained federal contracts through the Department of Veterans Affairs' Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business program and the Small Business Administration's 8(a) Business Development program, even though their businesses were not eligible for these programs. They misrepresented the involvement of friends of theirs in the businesses, sub-contracted work in violation of program requirements, and utilized government money for "extravagant" non-business-related expenses. At Great Smoky Mountains, they falsely represented subcontractor costs by over \$400,000. The couple was found guilty of their charges on July 29, 2022 after a two-week jury trial in U.S. District Court. Source: U.S. Attorney's Office: Eastern District of Tennessee

Wednesday, April 5, 2023  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Storm closes roads

On April 1, storms and high winds felled several trees, requiring the closure of U.S. Highway 441/Newfound Gap Road and Little River Road between Metcalf Bottoms and Townsend Wye. Both roads were able to reopen by April 2. Source: Knox News, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Twitter Road Info

Wednesday, April 5, 2023  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Wildfire

On April 1, a fire ignited near Old Walland Highway and Foothills Parkway, outside the park. Blount County Fire Protection District and Townsend Area Volunteer Fire Department crews responded, with support from Tennessee Division of Forestry and the NPS. Embers from the fire jumped over Old Walland Highway and "into Great Smoky Mountains National Park territory near a new section of Foothills Parkway." By April 3, the fire was 100% contained at between 20 and 50 acres. The cause of the fire is currently unknown. Source: The Daily Times

April 26, 2023  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Missing person

On April 13, the vehicle of a person who was reported missing from another state was found at Cosby Campground. It had been parked there for about a week. NPS personnel conducted a hasty search that evening and gathered a larger search team the following days. Over 100 personnel from multiple agencies and organizations responded. On April 16, the individual was found deceased near Low Gap Trail. Foul play and environmental factors are not suspected in the death. The Cocke County (TN) Medical Examiner's Office will determine the person's cause of death. Source: WATE, Knox News

May 10, 2023  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Missing backpacker

On April 26, a 69-year-old was reported missing by their family. The individual was last seen on April 22 near a backcountry campsite in the Deep Creek area. The individual had reserved a campsite there for 14 days and was said to be possibly experiencing a mental health crisis. By May 3, the search included 288 people from 51 agencies from four states. The search focused on the ground with people, dogs, and horses due to the rugged nature of the terrain. The NPS also used a drone in less-vegetated parts of the area. On May 3, the search began to be scaled back,

and on May 6, the park announced it had suspended the active field search and changed the search to "limited, but continuous" mode. Source: Citizen Times (5/1, 5/3), Great Smoky Mountains National Park (4/27, 5/6) [Editor note: Both the age of the individual and the last-seen date were reported differently in the sources. The age and date listed here are those reported by the NPS press release.]

May 10, 2023  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Hiker rescue

On April 30, a hiker incurred a leg injury on the Middle Prong Trail. The hiker was brought out of the park and taken by LifeStar aeromedical transport to a hospital. Source: WATE

May 24, 2023  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
Hiker bitten by bear

On May 9, the park closed Cosby Knob Shelter on the Appalachian Trail due aggressive bear behavior. The bear "showed no fear of humans and bit a hiker." Source: Appalachian Trail Conservancy