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Legacy of the Yosemite Mafia can be viewed as a prequel of sorts to Paul Berkowitz's earlier book about National Park Service malfeasance, and even to Robert Danno's own account of how he was pilloried by agency superiors after he charged that his superintendent ignored well-established federal laws and agency policies and procedures in showing deference to a billionaire.

Mr. Berkowitz's latest effort comes as the Park Service struggles to deal with what appears to be a widespread issue of harassment -- sexual and otherwise -- in the parks. And while the book revolves around events that took place in Yosemite National Park decades ago, it exposes a troubling attitude by some rangers of being above the law, an attitude also reflected in Mr. Danno's 2012 book, *Worth Fighting For: A Park Ranger's Unexpected Battle*, Mr. Berkowitz's 2011 book, *The Case of the Indian Trader: Billy Malone and the National Park Service Investigation at Hubbell Trading Post*, and even Andrea Lankford's 2010 book, *Ranger Confidential: Living, Working, and Dying in the National Parks*.

Those previous books either looked in-depth at, or mentioned in passing, incidents and behaviors that showed a disregard for civil, criminal, and agency regulations and societal mores.

In *Legacy of the Yosemite Mafia*, Mr. Berkowitz casts a disturbing portrait of top Yosemite law enforcement rangers in the 1980s who not only bent laws but broke a few, reveals the power top concessionaires have in the parks, and shows the deeply troubling effect politics have on the Park Service. The author worked in law enforcement in Yosemite during that time and saw first-hand the way the park's top law enforcement officers were acting, and brought his concerns to both the Interior Department's Office of Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office.

While much of the contents in *Legacy of the Yosemite Mafia* are past history, today the Park Service continues to struggle with managers who use the system to their benefit, take advantage of employees under their control, or look the other way.

* Last December the Interior Department's Office of Inspector General released a report detailing how Mike Caldwell, then director of the Park Service's Northeast Region, ran up nearly \$11,500 in personal travel that he billed the Park Service for and also collected nearly \$6,000 in pay and per diem on some of these travels while not working.

* Jorge Acevedo, superintendent of DeSoto National Memorial, early this year was investigated by the OIG for both inappropriate behavior toward a female employee and violating NPS policies, misusing his position of authority, and creating potential conflicts of interest. More

recently, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility said Mr. Acevedo had been transferred to another park at his same salary after the OIG report came out.

* Sexual harassment continues to be a problem in the park system, with episodes reported at Grand Canyon, Canaveral National Seashore, Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, and Yellowstone National Park.

* Former Park Service Director Jon Jarvis ignored ethics regulations because he saw them as overly burdensome.

In *Legacy of the Yosemite Mafia*, the author details, among other things:

- How then-Yosemite Superintendent Robert Binnewies agreed to secretly tape-record a conversation with Charles Cushman, the head of the National Inholders Association who was seen as a threat;
- How informants with criminal backgrounds were sent through a law enforcement academy, at Park Service expense, and then hired in Yosemite "so that they could operate without constraints normally placed upon informants;"
- How drug tests were manipulated to protect those informants and "officers;"
- How Mr. Berkowitz agreed to turn over documentation of his allegations to the park's personnel officer only after being assured that the OIG was opening an investigation, which was not true but a scheme concocted in the Park Service's Western Regional Office, and;
- How he was demoted and how he and his wife, who worked in the park's law enforcement office, were harassed.

While some might view Mr. Berkowitz's book as a case of sour grapes, news coverage at the time supported many of his concerns, as did an OIG report that was finalized (though not publicly released) in 1985 several months before he delivered his concerns in testimony to the House Subcommittee on Parks, Forests, and Public Lands. The chairman of that committee, Rep. Bruce Vento, claimed in a January 1986 press release that the GAO investigation into Mr. Berkowitz's claims "found no evidence of criminal conduct and, more importantly, found no basis to support such allegations."

Ms. Lankford, who spent a dozen years with the Park Service, said her experience was similar to that described in *Legacy of The Yosemite Mafia*.

"In short, it is an extremely accurate and insightful perspective on an ongoing problem within NPS culture and the dysfunctional way the agency has viewed park law enforcement and other first response needs," she said. "And his book is timely in face of recent events. It will be interesting to see how aggressive or defensive the current and former ranger response might be.

"It is in the best interest of all if agency leaders and newbie rangers accept the realities of the past and future situation within the NPS and work towards excising these tendencies from NPS culture," Ms. Lankford added.

JT Reynolds, who retired after a long Park Service career that saw him reach the superintendent's job at Death Valley National Park and is a self-described, though retired, "Member of the Yosemite Mafia," wrote in a forward to Legacy of The Yosemite Mafia that the book should be required reading for Park Service employees.

...now, more than thirty years later, there is simply no excuse for this important information not to be included in the curriculum presented to every NPS employee, and especially the agency's supervisors and managers. They need to know what has gone on in the past if they are to avoid a repetition of the mistakes that others before them have made. For that reason alone, this book should be required reading for every NPS employee.

Many of my NPS friends and former colleagues will not like this book, and they will not understand or appreciate my endorsement of what Berkowitz has to say. So be it. I stand by my endorsement and urge all of those same friends and colleagues to read this book with an open mind and a willingness to challenge their assumptions.

If you have ever visited a national park, or if you simply care about public lands, government, federal law, law enforcement, conservation, or resource protection, then you, too, should read this book.