

ately available for self-defense."

As knowledgeable gun owners are aware, we have a constitutional right to keep and bear arms. Setting aside the constitutional argument (which seems to be fashionable in antigun circles), there is a large body of evidence that demonstrates that guns in the hands of law-abiding citizens reduce violent-crime rates. Widely available statistics also confirm that CCW permit holders are far more law-abiding than the public at large. They commit very few crimes of

any kind, let alone gun-related offenses.

I'm quite certain that the 4,400 victims of violent crimes last year in NPS units would have benefited from having a personal-defense handgun or at least someone nearby with such a weapon. Unfortunately, these people never had a chance to defend themselves because bureaucrats working safely in buildings protected by armed federal guards decided that, in effect, only outlaws will have guns in national parks.

Barna had more astonishing opinions to share on the subject of personal-defense handguns in NPS units: "On those occasions when our rangers need assistance, we need skills other than

simply the ability to safely and expertly handle a handgun. Thankfully, we have good relationships, and we can count on the cooperation of trained law enforcement officers from local, state and federal agencies when needed."

All concealed carry permit holders should be insulted by Barna's patronizing comments. Citizens from every walk of life, from every conceivable professional and educational background, carry legally concealed handguns. These individuals are not professional gunslingers. They include former members of the Armed Forces, ex-law enforcement officers, volunteer firemen, emergency medical technicians, search-