



25th Anniversary Edition

2019 – Our 25th Anniversary Year

By Craig Swanson



Our 25th year of service to the Red Rock District began on a challenging note, with all work halted due to the record 35-day Government shutdown. Creative minds sprang into action and figured out how to reopen the Visitor Center under the auspices of the Arizona Natural History Association (ANHA). Our VIS support crew temporarily volunteered for ANHA instead of Friends of the Forest.

While all of our outdoor activities on forest land came to a screeching halt, back office tasks could continue. For example, at the turn of the year we unveiled our new and improved web site, implemented under the leadership of **Marilyn Painchaud**. The new site puts our very best face forward to members and particularly to the public. We also introduced our 25th anniversary logo.

Fortunately, on January 25, 2019 a budget agreement was reached, and business as usual resumed – except for the backlog of trail work and graffiti remediation. Thanks to **Jerry Checchia** and our incredibly hard-working Trail Maintenance & Construction team, the trail issues were soon resolved.

Jerry Piepiora and our graffiti crew performed their magic as soon as they could get back to work. Jerry

orchestrated a graffiti removal seminar where members learned and practiced techniques developed by **Nori Thorne** to 'repatinate' certain types of graffiti, effectively making it disappear. As I said – they're magicians. Their work is gaining such a reputation that the Flagstaff District asked them to come up, conduct training, and help them with some of their thorniest graffiti problems.

Bob Haizmann continued to create powerful new tools to support the work of our teams. He unveiled the *H2O Reporting App* that allows measurements to be recorded in the field and then later accessed for analysis.

On the management side, a team consisting of **Jennifer Young**, **Tom Cloonan** and **Joe Pokorski** worked with me to update our Standard Operating Procedures, many of which had not been revised in 10 years. Committee chairs and officers pitched in to create a full set of Job Descriptions, documents that will be of great assistance as new chairs take responsibility for coordinating the work of our teams.

In August, with the help of over 20 Friends volunteers, the Forest Service celebrated Smokey Bear's 75th anniversary with a well attended family event at the Visitor Center. A beautiful quilt was donated and raffled off to assist the families of fallen wildland firefighters. Our own **Manny Romero** won the raffle and promptly donated the quilt to the Visitor Center so all can enjoy it.

Smokey's party was the first opportunity for our new District Ranger to experience Friends in action. **Amy Tinderholt** began her tenure a few days earlier, replacing **Nicole Branton** who took a promotion to serve as Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest in Washington state. Amy comes to us from the Deschutes National Forest in Bend, Oregon, where she served as the Deputy District Ranger of the Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District.

We'll end the year in style, with election of officers and a slate of Board members at our annual members meeting. At that event, we'll recognize committee volunteers who have made valuable contributions, and we'll make our 'Rock Award' presentations for exceptional service. Finally, we'll celebrate our 25th year of service to the Red Rock District, and look forward to the next 25.

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR PRESIDENTS PAST AND PRESENT

MARY LEE DUNNING

1994—1996



"What is a Friend? Webster defines **friend** as a person who gives assistance, a patron, a supporter. Most of us think of a friend as someone who is supportive of us – someone who is there for us when we need them. A friend does not concentrate on what is wrong with us – instead he or she likes us for who we are.

Our National Forest in Sedona needs a friend, in fact it needs lots of them. It doesn't need friends who just want to sit around and talk about 'what's wrong'. It needs a group that will be supportive, non judgmental and there when needed - like a true friend - ready and willing to help in times of need.

We want to form a volunteer group to be there friends of our forest. We would like it to be a solution oriented group. It's easy to identify problems or issues in the area. Sedonans are awfully good at doing that. It's much more difficult to concentrate on those things that we can do something about. We need a solution implementer group. This group will have to give up their personal agendas and their issues and their tendency to concentrate on what's wrong - and become real supporters of our Coconino forest."

(Mary Lee's speech to Keep Sedona Beautiful)

Mary Lee



Mary Lee presenting FOF founding principles

DENNIS PARKER

1997—1998



I was elected by the Board of Directors, Friends of the Forest, to serve as the second President, from 1996 to 1998. I followed our founding President, **Mary Lee Dunning**, which was quite a position to fill. At that time we were still a relatively "green" organization, blazing new and exciting tasks for the Sedona Ranger District.

Ken Anderson was District Ranger and **Terry Adams** was Volunteer Coordinator. We had about 200 members and about \$10,000 in our bank account. What I remember most was the true spirit of volunteerism from the members, as nearly all were active in one or more of our committees, and we had no problem getting members to serve on the Board of Directors or as committee and subcommittee chairs.

We had a somewhat challenging opportunity to work side by side with the Forest Service employees, doing things like building trails and patrolling in FS vehicles, which had never been tried before with volunteers. As our organization matured and flourished, we assumed more responsibility generally reserved for the employees, and we handled that responsibility in a very professional manner.

It was indeed a pleasure to serve as the second President of the Friends of the Forest, and I will also have fond memories of that period. **Dennis**



Dennis in full Friends gear

JUSTINE KUSNER

1999—2000

Taking time to look back is an interesting experience! I haven't thought about my FOF Presidency (1999 - 2000) in a long time, so back to our quarterly newsletters I went. Oh, boy! There was a lot going on!! Here's a quick view of the action.

As with any new organization, getting people interested is key. What was the 'hook' that attracted Bill and me to the 'Friends'? The phrase "Get Physical!" (Yes, it was used in a very early newsletter.) Less talk, more work...that's our kind of a group.

The Palatki Warriors were just getting started, and even though we knew little about southwestern archeology or "cultural sites" we were eager to learn. The years, 1999 - 2000, was a period of expansion. The Trails Committee couldn't wait to go out every Friday morning, the Wilderness Horse Trails Committee supplied tools, water and equipment to teams working on more distant projects, and Palatki became the cornerstone of the Fee Demo project (the new concept of charging a modest fee to visit/see unique cultural sites).

The *glue* that helped hold us all together was our FS Volunteer Coordinator, **Terry Adams**. He was friendly, smiled all the time and loved everybody, (especially when we were all working!) **Terry**, you had the BEST job!

In June, 1999, the Friends of the Forest received the *Chief* (as in Chief of the Forest Service) *Volunteers National Award*. It was a great honor for such a young organization to receive this award but our willingness to work, enthusiastic members and involvement with our Ranger district was noticed and appreciated in Washington, DC.

One of the saddest moments during that period was the prolonged search for **David Miller**, a young Forest Service



member who went out for a hike and never returned. The FOF put in many, many hours searching for him and to this day, many of us 'old timers' never go hiking without thinking about him and what happened.

In his memory, and appreciation for our efforts, **David's** parents gave the Friends a very generous donation. Those monies were used by later Presidents for various projects that benefited the District and our forest lands.

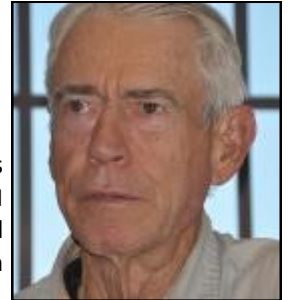
It was an honor to serve as President of the Friends of the Forest.

Justine

AL CORNELL

2001—2002

My experience as our organization's President was most positive. I inherited this well led, well managed group of volunteers from **Justine Kusner**, a truly dedicated, efficient and wise President.



Leading a group of volunteers, made up of almost all retirees, who now come and go when they please, and who now do what they feel like doing, is akin to herding cats. However, by the time of my presidency, the organization, consisting of a variety of Committees being led by devoted Chairpersons, was running on all cylinders. This was a blessing for me.

On top of this, we were working for and along side of some very talented USFS personnel, starting with the District Ranger, **Ken Anderson**. He was a real pleasure to work with and to know. Serving as a volunteer with the US Forest Service, I developed a deep respect for the level of commitment USFS personnel displayed to the Red Rock Ranger District and its missions.

Most notable during my presidency some 12 to 14 years ago were such outstanding standouts as **Bill Stafford, Janie Agyagos, Nina Hubbard, Cat Sampson, Terrilyn Green and Genny Riner**, to name only a few. However, my final words must be dedicated to a very special person during my presidency, the USFS Volunteer Coordinator, **Terry Adams**. He brightened up my day every time I met with him. His guidance and friendship were truly the topping on the cake. My time as president was made so much more enjoyable because of **Terry**, whose friendship I still enjoy to this day.

Since I joined the Friends of the Forest in 1994, I have watched it grow in both size and scope into the wonderful organization we have today. It makes me most proud to be a member.

Al

Weed Warrior
Justine
retired after
more than
20 years of
volunteer
service to
the Red
Rock
district.



HELEN CAMPBELL

2003—2004



Ten years ago the Friends of the Forest were celebrating their tenth anniversary. We were new and young and had imaginings of becoming.....well.....what we are today.

The first committee I joined was Visitor Information Services. It was opportune for me and that we worked in the very undersized station on Brewer Road. I could not help but get to know all the rangers, feel and understand what their challenges were. I felt like I was back in education learning something new every day. Working closely with the rangers, I quickly realized that I wanted to help the Forest Service and our forest in every way I could.

Four years later when **Al Cornell** said to me, 'I've been asked if I will be President. I will if you will be my Vice President.' How could I refuse such an offer and I was well aware of how difficult it is to find people willing to take on these responsibilities. I am so glad I did. As **Al's** vice president, I designed and introduced the first Welcome Packet to be sent to new members. But I wanted a regular assignment to go along with the title and suggested to Al that the Vice President have the duty of being the Publicity Chair. It has worked well and we began to have a regular presence in local publications and still do today.

Ken Anderson, District Ranger when the Friends began, considered the President of the Friends to be part of his staff. I saw this as a huge opportunity and learning experience. When I was president I attended every staff meeting, learning acronym after acronym and, sadly, learning how hard the FS has to struggle against the bureaucracy and an ever-shrinking budget. I left many a meeting with a heavy heart. I learned to recognize and accept unreservedly the officialdom under which the FS must operate. I came to understand what the hurdles are that the agency battles. I developed a deep and sincere respect for the men and women who have the titanic task of managing the Red Rock Ranger District.

During my term the National Forest Foundation started a new program of \$1000.00 matching grants. With the help of **Dale Robertson**, life member of the Friends and former Chief of the Forest Service, we submitted the first six requests and all six were funded. That was the humblest of beginnings for writing grants. President **Mike Ward** took grant writing to a whole new level!

Ken Anderson asked me to go to Albuquerque in his



Al sharing his expertise with ancient weaving exhibit for the Visitor Center above and fire starting below



stead to speak to the National Volunteer Conference about *Solving Problems with Volunteers*. After that meeting I was asked to speak on many other forests. I have spoken to many districts and am pleased to report that six Friends-like groups have developed as a result of my talks.

When I was no longer president I happily accepted an official title so I could continue to do that which I love; Ambassador at Large. I went to Portland, Oregon to speak to the Forest's Leadership Team. I was asked to speak about advocacy. The Friends of the Forest is a bridge from the FS to the community. Then District Ranger **Heather Provencio** said we give the public a much higher public trust level of the FS. We put an enthusiastic, positive and energetic face on the Forest Service. We are friendly, knowledgeable and diverse and the public sees that.

We are not just Friends of the Forest, we are Friends of the Forest Service. Below is a photo of a surprise visitor the Friends had at a board meeting. We were very honored!

Helen



Helen, Chuck and Al

CHUCK JENKINS

2005—2006



I had the privilege to be President during 2005 and 2006. 2005 was the Coconino National Forest's turn to conduct the yearlong National Visitor's Use Monitoring (NVUM) survey. The Friends helped the Red Rock District perform this important information gathering survey that helps determine use levels and patterns on the Forest for aid in planning and budgeting decisions. Also in 2005, **Dexter Allen** approached the Friends hoping to get a few people to drive Forest Service vehicles to take **Dex** and his crews and inflatable kayaks for put in and takeout on their Verde River inspection and cleanup trips. The Friends responded with their usual enthusiasm and the "River Rats" committee was formed with **Mike Vitek** stepping up as Committee Chair.

The year 2006 brought a whole new set of challenges. We said goodbye to District Ranger **Ken Anderson** and welcomed interim District Ranger **Larry Lesko**. Later in the year we welcomed new District Ranger **Heather Provencio**.

Early on it was clear that there was potential for serious fire hazard conditions. The Friends started by helping with vehicular patrol to contact visitors about fire restrictions and looking for abandoned campfires. The La Berranca and Brins fires saw the Friends helping by manning barricades, answering telephones, providing relief in the fire towers, guarding the firefighter camp at Sedona High School and acting as the repository for donations for the eventual rehabilitation of the burned areas. The Trail Crew later helped in that rehabilitation.

Chuck



Smokey and Friends at annual Board Meeting 2004

MIKE WARD

2007—2008

Prior to beginning my two years serving as President of the Friends of the Forest in December 2006, there had been many major changes in the Red Rock Ranger District. Long term District Ranger



Ken Anderson had retired and **Heather Provencio** had just become our new District Ranger. The Brewer Road Ranger Station had been sold and the district administration relocated to temporary buildings at the old Beaver Creek Ranger Station. Ground breaking for the new Red Rock District Ranger Station and Visitor Center had recently taken place.

Among my proudest accomplishments was writing a number of successful grants for the Friends on behalf of the Forest Service. Realizing in 2005 that funding would be needed for interpretive exhibits, the FOF Board authorized me, then FOF Vice President, to write a grant application for exhibit funding through the Sedona Community Foundation. The Forest Service and FOF identified a 3D interactive terrain model interpretive exhibit as a top priority for funding. The terrain model would serve to provide visitors with trip planning information for driving, hiking, biking and camping experiences as well as opportunities to explore cultural heritage sites in the district. In September 2006, FOF was awarded a three year \$24,000 grant from the Sedona Community Foundation (SCF) for the design and construction of the terrain model.

When the new visitor's center opened in 2008, funding shortages prohibited the installation of interpretive exhibits both inside and outside of the visitor center. Local Forest Service staff and FOF volunteers, using approximately \$6,000 in funding from ANHA, designed and built the temporary exhibits currently on display at the visitor center. I chaired a group comprised of **Paul Lindberg, Wayne Ranney and Ron Blakey** (area geologists) to create a geology exhibit. The new visitor's center opened in April 2008 and the temporary exhibits were completed in October 2008.

In early 2008 the opportunity presented itself to apply for a \$400,000 All American Scenic Byway

Mike provided invaluable support to the geology display at the Visitor Center

grant for interpretive exhibits at the visitor center. The grant required a 20% local match. The Forest Service and FOF agreed to partner in applying for the grant, with each partner providing \$40,000 toward the required \$80,000 matching requirement. With the endorsement of the SCF who encourages using their grant awards as leverage in applying for larger grants, FOF Board voted to apply the \$24,000 SCF grant along with \$16,000 of FOF funds for their \$40,000 match. **Sarah Belcher**, Landscape Architect for the Red Rock Ranger District and I wrote the grant and applied in early 2008. Finally as my tenure as President of the Friends was drawing to a close, the Friends and the Forest Service were notified that they were awarded the All American Scenic Byway grant in November 2008. It would not be until early 2010 that the funds for the project would be appropriated by Congress. A collaborative effort among the Forest Service, Friends and contractors produced the Interpretive Design Plan for the visitor center for both exterior and interior interpretive exhibits. These exhibits include Explore and Discover this Delicate Land, Help Protect and Conserve this Natural Treasure, Stories in Stone, Bio-diversity of the Ecosystem, and Sedona's Human History as well as a multi-media theater.

It was my honor to work directly with **Sara Belcher** and **Nina Hubbard** of the Forest Service on both the geology exhibit and collecting and organizing data for the interactive 3D terrain model. This past October 2013 after nine long years, the new interpretive exhibits at the Red Rock Ranger District Visitors Center was reopened to the public. Every time I see the interpretive exhibits in the visitor's center I feel a sense of achievement and in making a difference which is what the Friends of the Forest is all about.

Mike



ROY JULIAN

2009—2010

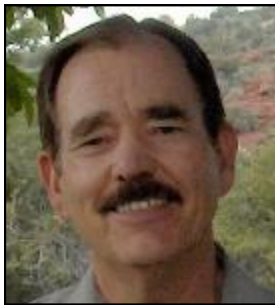
Certainly one of the benefits of living in the Sedona area and participating with the Friends is becoming aware of all of the archeological treasures which abound in our forest. Not only do we have the opportunity to assist the Forest Service in protecting the forest itself, but we are also able to help protect and preserve these archeological wonders as well.

One of my fond memories was going out with a group of Friends and some hard-working Forest Service personnel and building a small fence to keep ATV's from riding over the top of the 1000 year old walls of the John Heath Ruins. A very small act in and of itself, but very much representative of what the Friends do every day of the year--many small acts of service which in aggregate make a large difference in our community. We all came away from the project with a sense of accomplishment and purpose.

One of the pleasant discoveries I made early on and appreciated most as President was the generous, can-do attitude of the people in the Friends. There was virtually never a time that I asked someone to assist with a project but what the answer was "Yes."

It was a genuine honor to serve as President of such an organization, and I applaud all of you who serve or have served with the Friends in any capacity.

Roy



Roy presenting Buck Packard with award

CAROL WIRKUS

2011—2012

It was my honor to serve as President of Friends of the Forest in 2011 and 2012. You are a hard-working, devoted group of volunteers. I am in continuing awe of the time you give, the skills you share, and the joy you bring to our FOF activities.



So many members did so much during the time I was President. **Spence Gustav**, a man of infinite talents and energy, along with Cultural Resources Chair **Jerry Walters** and a team of volunteers, began a series of photography projects to digitize and catalogue old archeology prints and slides.

We created a new committee, chaired by **Mark Munsell**, to grind, scrape and wash away graffiti in the Forest. The indefatigable **Gene Rector** led the hardworking Hotshots Trail Crew--in February and March of 2011 alone, they removed 141 trees blocking our trails!

We instituted an annual Member Welcome Event, which has proven helpful in attracting and orienting new members, and we created a beautiful 3 ½ minute video to tell people about Friends of the Forest.

From 2011 through 2012 we donated more than 54,000 volunteer hours to the Red Rock District over a wide variety of activities, and we donated more than \$83,000, including \$58,000 specifically for the Visitor Center building and exhibits.

Friends of the Forest are a diverse group of special people who share a common purpose. We are twenty years and counting!

Carol



Carol with Susan Vitek at Carol's Presidential swearing in

SPENCE GUSTAV

2013—2014

Compared to many of our founders and active Friends members, I am a relative newcomer to Sedona and the Friends of the Forest. I retired here primarily for the benefits of the forest and various activities related to it. It was clear to me then and continues to be clear at this time that the best way for me to give back to the forest and the community was to take on a small role in volunteerism by the Friends of the Forest.

I continue to be amazed by the incredible effort put in by our members, their abilities, dedication and courtesy. I have made many new friends via the Friends and I am eternally grateful for both their friendship and all the support and knowledge they have given me over the years.

Approximately 4 years ago, **Carol** invited me to come in as Vice President during her presidency. In truth, I had no idea what I was getting into but in hindsight, I am pleased with having accepted. I hope I have managed to meet everyone's expectations of me.

My tenure as president has been during a period of time and activity that, in my view, has been enjoyable, successful and incredibly busy. The evidence is that the activity level will remain at these levels or increase. Any successes achieved during my presidency have been due to the incredible support of our members. I have no doubt that the Friends of the Forest, under the able leadership of **Jennifer Young** and those that follow her will meet the challenge and continue a record of excellence in support of the Forest and our community.

I am honored to be our president during this milestone year. Everyone should be proud of our 20 years of service. Enjoy our anniversary and start preparing for the next 20 years.

Spence



Jennifer Young

2015 - 2016

I have often said that it was our members' support, guidance and friendship which propelled me into the President's chair, and those same factors made my job easy. Nine months into my term as FOF President, I shared these words in the Newsletter - and they remain applicable today: "Your commitment and professionalism toward your chosen activities seems boundless. It is very rare that matters get 'kicked up the ladder' for help or resolution. Additionally, my interaction and work with Forest Service personnel is truly gratifying.

Yes, there is agency complexity, procedural requirements and sometimes a wait for answers or decisions. Yet, the shared purpose and love for National Forest lands among our Forest Service colleagues is always evident in our collective work. Perhaps the most daunting - yet awesome - aspect of the FOF President role is to see and support the growth of our organization. Not just in number of members and volunteer hours, but in the diversity and depth of what we are doing.

When I spoke to a group of Forest Supervisors visiting the Red Rock District, I myself was awed in describing the scope of knowledge, interests and talents that we engage in the Friends: indoors, outdoors, public contact, physical labor, computer geeks, photography pros, writers, gardeners, bakers, carpenters, engineers, accountants, biologists, geologists, drone operators, sawyers, educators, historians, communicators, designers, grant writers, leaders and heavy lifters... " And I have no doubt that we will continue to attract new members with talent, interests and energy to guarantee that Friends of the Forest thrives through the next 25 years

Jennifer



Spence (left) with photo documentation team.

Jennifer (right) with Smokey Bear and team during a school visit



Manny Romero

2017 - 2018

As we celebrate 25 years of dedicated service on the Red Rock District, I remain truly amazed at our sheer scope of activities.



I was fortunate to have Jennifer Young as a mentor. She invited me to be her vice president even though I was relatively new. Jennifer more than showed me the ropes, she demonstrated real caring, giving generously of her time and expertise.

During my time as president, Friends members went well beyond what had been done before. Not only did we donate more hours of service than any other volunteer Forest Service partner, but we developed remarkable new technologies and several new initiatives.

As a tribute to our accomplishments, the Friends earned two national awards—one from the Forest Service and a second from the Department of Agriculture.

In October 2017, we were selected by the Forest Service for the Chief's Honor Award as the best volunteer organization in the country. The award is the highest honor in the Forest Service. We were selected for outstanding work in the category of Fostering Volunteerism and Service (there are five categories).

The following August, we achieved more national recognition when Regional Forester Cal Joyner presented the Friends with the Department of Agriculture Under Secretary's Award. This award acknowledges our work in graffiti removal, trails, archaeological photo documentation and the smartphone trails reporting application developed by Bob Haizmann.

Other advancements on the digital front included the August launch of a new administrative and communication tool, NEON (Nonprofit Enterprise Online Network).

NEON is a secure, confidential portal that's useful across the spectrum of activities for both leaders and members. The NEON project team of Jennifer Young, Peg Kern and Marilyn Painchaud were immersed in research, customization, training, and phased implementation of the software since late 2016.

Mid-January 2018 became a milestone in Friends history, as a new wilderness trail named for long-time members Gene and Darl Rector was completed and dedicated. The Rector Trail is a beautiful connector between Bell Rock and Courthouse Butte

Lichen Studies. Friends lichen expert Garry Neil is working on an inventory of lichens on the Red Rock District and has established a collaborative relationship with the Lichen Herbarium curator at Arizona State University.

The District lichen collection will be housed at ASU and listed in the Lichen International Database. Garry's expertise is so highly regarded, the Forest Service paid his tuition to a sterile crustose lichen seminar at the Eagle Hill Institute in Maine.

Air Quality Testing for the Matazal and Pine Mountain Wilderness Area become our newest committee in 2017. The committee evolved from special project status under the leadership of **Marilyn Painchaud**, who soon recruited enough volunteers to make the project viable as a regular Friends committee.

She stepped down from that leadership position upon becoming webmaster and was instrumental in a months-long, complete revamp of the Friends website. Early this year, she responded to a request from District Wildlife Officer Janie Agyagos to help coordinate the vast array of wildlife, fish and plant projects.

Marilyn is not alone in volunteering for several activities. We have a true team spirit that leads to tight bonds among members. We live up to our name of "Friends" everyday.

I am proud of our organization and proud to be a member.

Manny

Friends of the Forest Presidents 1994 - 2014

(Not pictured Dennis Parker)



Craig Swanson

2019 - 2020

Keep the Fire Burning

It's a genuine honor to serve as President of Friends of the Forest during our 25th Anniversary year. Before becoming involved in the ongoing operations of the organization, I was of course aware of all of the important work that we're involved in like Visitor Center and Heritage Site staffing, trail work and trail patrol, graffiti removal, air and water quality monitoring and River Ranger support, as well as educational programs and citizen science projects.

I wasn't aware of the fact that almost half of our members volunteer time each year. This is extraordinary, and differentiates us from the vast majority of volunteer organizations.

This realization prompted me to wonder why Friends of the Forest has been so successful for so long.

Here on the Coconino National Forest, we appreciate the power of fire. We know that it has the potential to destroy if out of control, but we also know that fire is one way that nature rejuvenates the land. We also know the pivotal role fire played in the evolution of ancient societies. Harnessed right, fire is power.



I came to think of Friends of the Forest as an amazing controlled burn that has benefited the Red Rock District for the past quarter century.

In 1994, a group of citizens lit that fire. They made certain that the conditions were right, and that they had enough fuel to make it burn bright – talented and dedicated volunteers that were willing to donate their time in the service of a greater good.

Without proper tending by the organization and by Forest Service staff, the fire could easily have gone out. Instead, the cooperation of all parties coupled with the continuing desire to contribute good work simply provided more fuel for the fire. They also had a great time in the process, making it a welcoming environment.

So, the fire grew over time, from some 100 members in the beginning to over 550 today – from about 10,000 hours volunteered in 1999 to some 35,000 hours a year today. The constant infusion of new members means that our fuel supply is in fact increasing. Our fire can burn brighter and hotter than ever.

One of our responsibilities over the next 25 years is to tend the fire that is Friends of the Forest, and guarantee that it continues to be a glowing beacon to residents and visitors, inviting them to join us as we help maintain and improve our unique Red Rock District.

Craig Swanson



FOF: A LOOK BACK to 1994-1996

The small group of “**Pioneers**” who started the Friends of the Forest in 1994, were real “**go-getters**”. They not only accomplished all the necessary documents to incorporate the Friends and get 501 (c)3 status but they began to do projects right away. They created a Board of Directors and officers and committee heads were appointed by the Board. **Mary Lee Dunning** was President; **Tom Hutchinson**, Administrative Vice President; **Norm Herkenham**, Vice President of Stewardship; **Steve Mykytyn**, Vice President of Visitor Services; **Doreen Mykytyn**, Secretary and **George Tice**, treasurer.

District Ranger, **Ken Anderson**, and his staff also went right to work on making the Friends group effective by holding numerous kinds of training including CPR and First Aid so that volunteers could go to work on Trails, Visitor Information, Cultural Resources, Trail Patrol, Enhancement (preserving and keeping the forest clean) and Environmental Education. By February 1995, there were 126 members. **Terry Adams**, “**The Guru of Volunteers**”, was the Volunteer Coordinator and spent countless hours planning projects for the Friends and providing training. He never failed to shake your hand and say “Thanks”.

Their first project was cleaning up along Oak Creek at Crescent Moon Ranch. **Buck Packard** tells how they removed weeds, planted grass and put in an irrigation system. Unfortunately, much of this project was washed away in the next season by flood. (? pix) Their first trail project was on Soldiers Pass to create a trail for hikers that would take them off the jeep road and lead around and past the Devil’s Kitchen to the Seven Sacred Pools. Chavez Crossing campground was cleaned and renovated because of flood damage. In 1996, Cathedral Rock Trail was upgraded and marked with basket cairns

Al Cornell began Land Navigation and Map Reading, Survival Training, Animal Tracks, Geology, Botany and continues to this day. In addition, Al was Cultural Resources chairman and did training at Palatki for docents, encouraging all to become “**Palatki Warriors**”. The Friends kept a presence at Palatki four days a week. **John and Barbara Sturgis** had been working at Palatki since 1990.

Water quality in Oak Creek was a big concern. In 1996, the **SWIM (Special Water Information Management) Team** was headed by new arrival, **Justine Kusner**. Slide shows and field trips were done at schools and a poster contest was included. Water sampling began on Oak Creek, also, in 1996.

Our newsletter, “**Branching Out**” began in early 1995, the name was selected after over 100 names were submitted. Watch our upcoming “Branching Out” issues for more tidbits of FOF history.

FOF: A LOOK BACK TO 1997-2004

By 1997, **Dennis Parker** was President and **Justine Kusner** was Vice President. V-V opened on weekends and Palatki became a Fee Demonstration Project with 80% of the proceeds being retained for use at the site. Membership in Friends grew rapidly to the mid-two hundreds but not all were active members. FOF Volunteers became even more valuable to the Forest Service as visitation to Palatki hit 20,000 in 1998 and even though Fee Demo produced a total revenue of \$85,000, the Friends funds contributed \$6200 for start-up expenses. Palatki Warriors contributed 2500 hours at Palatki.

Amendment 12 was passed by the Forest Service allowing them to stop the disbursed camping all over the red rock area. “Car Camping” was a common practice along Schnebly Hill Rd, Long Canyon Rd and Vultee Arch Rd. In 1999, the Friends, along with several other groups, helped to clean Schnebly Hill of fire rings, trash, debris and “you name it”, filling a huge dumpster.

A young Forest Ranger, **David Miller**, disappeared while backpacking on the forest and has never been located. A connector trail from Secret Canyon to Bear Sign was begun and dedicated to him. Many Friends and a local Boy Scout Troup and AmeriCorps did a lot of work on the trail. The Dedication was on November 5, 1999.

A Wilderness Horse Committee began and packed materials and supplies to Forest Service trail crews working in Sycamore Canyon and other areas. The North Urban Trail system was begun creating a nearly complete circle around Sedona. Friends worked along with Tracs, Westerners and other volunteers on these trails which were designed by **Bill Stafford and Terry Adams**.

In June of 1999, the Friends were awarded the National Chief’s Award (one of two in the SW Region). This award was presented to President, **Justine Kusner**, by **Paul Johnson**, deputy of the SW Region and **Jim Golden**, Supervisor of the Coconino National Forest. **Terry Adams** did much of the paperwork to secure this award.

To give the Friends a respite from “all work and no play”, Doreen **Mykytyn** arranged some theater socials which were enjoyed by the Friends. Doreen also did the delicious treats we all enjoy at meetings for several years until **Ruth Cornell** and **Toni Raymond** took it over.

Justine organized the “Weed Warriors” to deal with noxious weeds with the help of FS Wildlife Biologist, **Janie Agyagos**, who did a training/workday. Bat counts and Peregrine Falcon surveys were also done by the Friends for Janie.

2001 to 2002, (during **Al Cornell’s** presidency) brought many new projects. A new roof was put on the Van Deren cabin along with chinking of the logs. Earl Van Deren and his wife were early settlers who raised cattle along Dry Creek. Sunday hikes began for Trail Patrol to encourage new members, helping them learn the trails and how to record information from their hikes for the

Forest Service.

Display cases and other items were purchased for Palatki. The shelter shed was moved to V-V. Grass seeding was done after a control burn at Palatki. Booklets and brochures for Palatki were created by **Bill Kusner** (our behind-the-scenes "Data Guru"). Weed Warriors continued to attack bull thistle and Dalmatian Toadflax.

Ed Ochtman did a tremendous project of photos of the archaeology sites in Boynton Canyon along with photos and description of the hiking trails. A CD of the trails was created which could be purchased. Trail maintenance by the Friday group concentrated on the new Huckaby Trail. The Trail Patrol maintenance group continued to do general maintenance on many trails on the District.

New Visitor Centers were opened at South gateway (Village of Oak Creek) and West Gateway (Cultural Park). Woo Ranch was acquired and a huge trash cleanup was done on Boynton Canyon Rd and Stoneman Lake. Friends helped with fire closures during the summer of 2002.

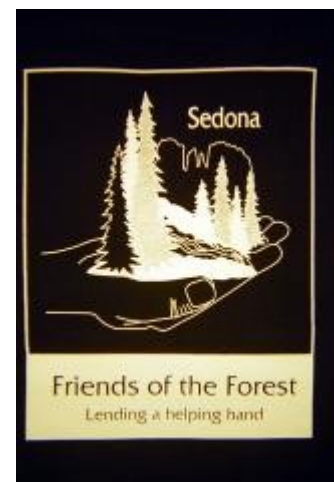
Al Cornell continued his many training activities and reinforcement of his famous quotes, "**If you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail**" and "**If you don't have an item when you need it, you may never need it again**".

During 2003-2004, **Helen Campbell** was President. A White House Grant from "Save Americas Treasures" was received for Honanki allowing a variety of stabilization and protection projects to be done. A viewing platform was installed, trail built and parking lot. The Friends contributed money and time to this project, paying for **Gavin Rose** (an Australian with rock building skills) to finish the rock work and renting a backhoe on which **Gene Rector** shaped and placed rocks and gravel for the parking lot.

Terry Adams praised the Friends for their "**Smiling, Can do**" attitude in his "Out on a Limb" column and described numerous projects that received Friends help.

The Apple Orchard at West Fork was pruned and cavities filled (by our very own specialist, **Dean Campbell**). Boynton Canyon TH was completed and dedicated. Parsons Trail (Sycamore Canyon) received a major overhaul by a Forest Service Crew with help from Friends volunteers. Back-O-Beyond Trailhead was completed. In 2003, **\$24,880** was spent on forest projects by the Friends. Funding for projects has been an amazing combination of grants, matching funds, donations, dues and the unique idea of **Dean Campbell** to place donation boxes at the Visitor Center and Archaeological Sites.

Dale Robertson, retired Chief of the Forest Service, who had joined the Friends early-on, proposed that the Friends might be able to get matching funds from the National Forest Foundation (NFF) and the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR). A project to place signage at trailheads was submitted and accepted. Another project for restoration of the apple orchard was submitted and approved by the NFF. The FOF was the first recipient of this matching fund totaling \$1750.



FOF: A LOOK BACK TO 2005 - 2014

A lot had been accomplished in the first ten years but the following ten brought tremendous change and challenges to both the FOF and the Forest Service as projects got larger, more sophisticated and visitor numbers ballooned. FOF continued to attract new people with many talents while keeping a basic group of original members. Ten years was celebrated with a green T shirt enjoyed by most of us.

Presidents didn't take it easy after they served their two years but went on to other committees or jobs. As **Chuck Jenkins** (2005-2006) became President, **Helen Campbell** (2003-2004) became "**Ambassador at Large**". **Friends of the Forest Sedona** was really "discovered" by other forests around the country who'd wanted to hear about starting their own group. She spoke to the National Forest Foundation meeting in Phoenix and to several forests in the Pacific Northwest and beyond. We continue to be the largest and most well known volunteer organization for the Forest Service in the nation. This summer while on vacation in Colorado, Helen will speak at the White Mountain Forest where **Heather Provencio** is Deputy Supervisor.

Vice President, **Mike Ward**, became the first official "Publicity and Outreach Chairman" and with **Susan Vitek's** assistance, helped to spread the word about FOF. **Susan** also became Secretary of FOF and just retired in 2014 after many years of service. **Darl Rector** took on the newsletter following **Dick Dunham**, **Dean Campbell** and **Bill Kusner** and continued until 2013 when **Jean Ober** became editor.

The **River Rats Committee** was instituted at the request of FS River Ranger, **Dexter Allen** with **Mike Vitek** as chair. The Friends supported the FS by hauling the rangers and their gear (in FS trucks and trailers) to the put-ins at Beasley Flat or Childs on the Verde River and retrieving them in a few days from Childs or Bartlett Lake. Some of these long trips on dirt roads in varied weather conditions create interesting tales. Mike continues in that job.

A small number of Friends began (in 2004) to man the fire towers at Apache Maid and Mingus Mountain when the FS employee had time off and this has continued. Their stories of sleeping in the towers, watching animals below or birds flying past are also interesting.

New member, **Ken Zoll**, offered to manage the website and it, along with e-mail, became major avenues of communication for committee chairs and members. Today, nearly all business gets conducted in this manner and greatly expanded with **Mike Ward** as webmaster. Now you will find information about the organization, how to join or contact us, all the newsletters, special announcements, merchandise available and calendars for members to sign up for Visitor Information, Docents at Cultural Sites or Encounter Monitoring.



River Rats find fun times putting boats in at the river and also some precarious situations on their river runs. **Gene Rector** said "it was a tail wagging the dog" as the trailer went over the edge. **Michael Campbell** using a jack in effort to put the trailer back on the road.



Friends of the Forest Cookbook Crew 2008

Joe Landholm and **Rick Zabor** took on managing the Trail Maintenance and Construction (TM&C) committee after **Norm Herkenham** retired. Later, **Mike Haboush** became chairman. The Trail Patrol trail maintenance crew led by **Gene Rector** decided it needed a name and became "**Hotshots**" since they respond rapidly to reports of down trees, etc. In June this year, the Trail Committees were combined. **Gene** retired from Hotshots and **Mike Ober** became chair with **Kurt Starbuck** and **Paul Ward** co-chairing the Friday trail group and **Mike** will take on general maintenance, focusing on Wilderness trails. Co-Chairs for Sign Construction and Placement are **Sam Serrill**, **Rich Spinelli** and **Garry Neil**. Co-chair for Sawyer/Tree Removal is **Jim Manning**. These crews work under the guidance of **Francisca Adrian (FS)**.

Original Trail Patrol Chair, **Buck Packard**, served for ten years followed by **John Moore**, **Jeff Dunn**, **Darl Rector** and **Roberta Stockman**. **Buck** still works at the FS Administration desk every Friday as he has for all these years plus helping gather the trail reports from trailheads and tallying them.

Visitor Information Services (VIS) continued under **Barb Zeschke**, **Genny Riner** and **Vilma Martinez** at the Ranger Station, West Sedona, Village of Oak Creek and Oak Creek Vista (during the summer.) **Janet Walters**, **Noreen Liskowski**, **Roberta Stockman** and **Jim Wilson** have handled those duties since 2008. Many FOF members faithfully work at the Visitor Center on Highway 179 helping visitors to find places to hike, bike or just view the beautiful Red Rock District.

In March of 2006, **Ken Anderson** took a new District Ranger job on the Wallowa-Whitman Forest at Baker City, Oregon. He left a big void which was filled temporarily by **Larry Lesko** from the Washington, DC office until the arrival of **Heather Provencio** in July of 2006. She was the first female District Ranger here and was previously Archeologist on the Peaks District in Flagstaff. Heather remained in the Coconino Forest for twelve years, six of them on the Red Rock District. In 2013 she transferred to the White River Forest in Colorado. The new District Ranger, **Nicole Branton**, arrived on September 22, 2013.

V-V Days was celebrated in March of 2006 with an agave roast which was prepared in a basalt lava rock lined pit and roasted overnight. **Al Cornell**, assisted by **Mike Vitek**, **Roy Julian**, **Sherman Loy**, **Dean Campbell**, **Joe Landholm** and **Will Hill (FS)** had dug varieties of agave from a ridge overlooking Beaver Creek Ranger Station, Page Springs and Sacred Mountain. **Wendy Hodgson** of the Desert Botanical Garden had guided their choices. The roasting and serving was completed under the expertise of **Albert Abril**. Docents and Visitors were allowed to taste and compare the different agave. V-V Days has continued to grow over the years and includes Mountain Men, Yavapai-Apache dancers, numerous primitive demonstrations and activities like throwing an Atlatl spear at an animal painting especially done by **Ruth Cornell** every year. The Cultural Resource sites, V-V and Palatki, continue to attract thousands of visitors each year and require numerous volunteers to guide them. **Al Cornell**, **Dean Campbell**, **Justine Kusner**,

Marilyn Bernhardt, **Ken Zoll** and presently, **Jerry Walters** have chaired this committee.

In 2011, **Jerry Walters** and **Spence Gustav** took on a major project for the Forest Service archeologists, **Peter Pilles** and **Travis Bone** digitizing 13,591 slides and printed images plus transcribing handwritten comments from the margins of the slides. A group of volunteers including the Verde Valley Archaeology Society have donated hours to this on-going project which is somewhere close to half completed. Another project recently undertaken is Cultural Site Photo Documentation to provide comparison to photos from 15 years ago and provide a baseline for the future.

Ken Zoll completed his year-long study of V-V panels in 2006 and published a book, [Sinaqua Sunwatchers](#). He documented the presence of an agrarian and ceremonial calendar on one of the panels. Book sales were very popular. Later, **Ken Zoll** spearheaded getting permission to place scaffolding at the site to allow **Dr. Todd Bostwick**, (**Arizona State University**) and **Paul Lindberg** to study closely the "shadow stones" and "sliver stone".

Al Gilson and crew started the renovation of Apache Maid Cabin in 2006. This entailed lots of work and many trips to the Apache Maid area. He had a number of FOF helpers and the cabin is now on the Forest Service rental roll.

Dry condition on the forest in 2006 caused the FS and FOF to make plans for a difficult fire season by continuing to man the fire towers and organize vehicle patrols to contact visitors regarding fire restrictions. The LaBarranca fire started in Jack's Canyon from a commercial welder and did a lot of damage but the Brins Fire really was everyone's nightmare. It was started by an abandoned campfire on the Brins rim and moved up onto Wilson Mt disrupting travel and threatening to go on up Oak Creek Canyon which had to be evacuated. Firefighters did an amazing job of keeping it from going up the canyon. The whole forest was closed from June 23rd to July 7th and many trailheads were closed beyond that due to fallen trees, rock slides and debris.

The fire was very disruptive to the whole area with displaced people and road closures. Many people wanted to help in some way and various funds were collected including a special "State of the Arts Collectors" evening at Tlaquepaque. The FOF was asked to manage these funds until they were disbursed. A total of \$12, 214 was collected and used to do rehab work on the burned areas. The CREC and FOF Trail crews did a lot of work rebuilding trails, reseeding grasses and placing straw for mulch. Five major trails were damaged.

At this same time, the FS was moving to temporary headquarters in a modular building at the Beaver Creek Station as the Ranger Station on Brewer Road had been sold. The Jim Thompson Trailhead was closed for a month while being rebuilt with new parking lot and restrooms.

These same conditions in 2014 resulted in the recent 22,000 acre "Slide" fire also in Oak Creek Canyon and on the Rim. Once again the firefighting effort was

successful in not burning structures in the canyon but left many trails and Oak Creek Canyon closed because of the dangers and possible flooding.

In 2007, **Mike Ward** became President and **Chuck Jenkins** became Special Projects Coordinator in addition to helping with the newsletter. **Mike** started an "Executive Council" composed of current officers and Past Presidents which provides guidance and leadership. He proposed a monthly speaker series and contributed to that with his "Why Are the Rocks Red", also the title of his recent book.

A new Horse Patrol Committee started with **Helen Campbell** as Chair. They helped with packing for the Chavez Trail rehab and were assisted by the Back Country Horsemen. Later the name became "Wranglers". Also a Fossil Creek Patrol group was formed at **Heather's** request. These patrols were done in vehicles to help control the crowds during the summer.

Everyone was excited about the new Forest Service buildings for Administration and Visitors being built along Highway 179 south of the Village of Oak Creek. Funds were needed for landscaping and interpretive furnishings for the Visitor Center. Fortunately, there were some donated funds which could be used to help get grants. Application was made and successfully received from the Sedona Community Foundation for a \$24,000 grant to cover the cost of 3-D Terrain Model. **Mike Ward** did a tremendous amount of work on these grants and the coordination of the terrain model. It was only finally placed in the Visitor Center in September 2013. Very nice temporary displays were done by **Mike** (Geology) and **Al Cornell** (Scat and Tracks). **Mike** had a lot of help over the years from **Sarah Belcher (FS)**, **Nina Hubbard (FS)**, **Genny Riner (FS)**, **Mike Vitek**, **Spence Gustav**, **Paul Lindberg**, **Wayne Ranney**, **Ron Blakely** and 24 FOF Volunteers who agreed to test the terrain model and make valuable suggestions. The Terrain model provides graphic information on our 300 miles of trail; scenic drives, picnicking, camping, directions to local museums and the Heritage sites.

A "matching funds" grant was applied for but not received from Arizona Community Foundation for landscaping around the two buildings. A combined effort by FOF and FS resulted in receiving an All American Scenic Byway grant worth \$320,000. The New Visitor Center was opened on May 7, 2008 by District Ranger, **Heather Provencio** and Coconino Deputy Supervisor, **Joe Stringer**. **Ken Anderson** made a special trip from Oregon to be at the dedication.

A fun project was the Red Rock Cookbook created by the FS and Friends at the suggestion of **Emma Peschke**. **Noreen Lisowski** was assisted by **Barb Zeschke**, **Sonya Landholm**, **Janet Walters** and **Emma**. The title (suggested by **Sonya**) was Red Rock Country Cooks. After it sold out, they created A Second Helping.

At the end of February 2008, **Terry Adams** retired and was feted at an FOF meeting at the KSB building where he received an FOF vest, cap and life membership and special cake and many good wishes for all his guidance

to the Friends. In October 2008, nearly 200 people gathered to wish "Banana Boat" **Bill Stafford** a good retirement. The party was held at the Beaver Creek Station where he and his family had lived when his children were small. **Jennifer Burns** returned to the district as Recreation Officer.

At the FOF Annual meeting in October, District Ranger, **Heather Provencio** thanked the FOF and said, "**Friends are the glue that holds the Red Rock District together**".

Roy Julian became president in 2009 with **Carol Wirkus** as Vice President. With the growth of the organization to over 400 members and over 20 committees, a Policy and Procedures manual was undertaken to clarify the functions of FOF. 25,655 hours were donated by around 100 active members.

In 2010 **Mark Munsell** and **Kevin Harding** headed a group who built cabinet work for the FS Fire Warehouse. **Al Gilson** helped the FS many construction projects including the large rock entry sign. **Chuck Jenkins** chaired the year-long NVUM study on visitation to the Red Rock District. **Mike Vitek** did most of the photography for the newsletter and other events. There were 30,282 visitors to Palatki and 12,938 to V-V. Fossil Creek became an increasing trouble spot with too many visitors at once. FOF donated 26,000 hours in this year.

Carol Wirkus started her presidency in 2011 with **Spence Gustav** as Vice President. The FS requested funds for Orientation Signs at put-ins along the Verde River. Graffiti on the Red Rock District is becoming a major problem. The Graffiti Committee was made official in 2012 with **Mark Munsell** as chairman. A three minute video of FOF activities was made by **Ron Melmon** and **Neil Margolin**. Wranglers had a number of activities such as looking for invasive weeds and mapping their location with GPS in addition to checking range fences and packing equipment for crews. 2011 ended with 27,212 volunteer hours and 192 active members.

Like most Past Presidents, **Carol Wirkus**, took on the overseeing of Encounter Monitoring when **Spence Gustav** became President and **Jennifer Young** became Vice President in 2013. Encounter Monitoring is a project of the FS to track hikers, bikers and equestrians on specific days on specific trails. Each year they have a different set of trails.

Work began on a special slideshow for the new media room at the Visitor Center. 1500 pictures were turned in and 300 were chosen for a DVD to be sold at the Visitor Center and Cultural Heritage sites. It was just completed in 2014 and is very well done. Members can buy them from **Suzy Dunn**, Merchandise chair, along with a 15 oz. mug with the FOF logo commemorating our 20th year.

The counters in the Visitor Center turned out to be quite awkward for the people trying to talk to visitors and show them maps so several members worked to "chop" them down to size. The crew included **Al Gilson**, **Kevin Harding**, **Mark Munsell**, **Mike Vitek**, **Mike Ward** and **Frank Wirkus**.

Carol Wirkus had the idea to have a New Member

Welcome Event. Several gals volunteered to help and it was held in the Visitor Center in April. Many of the committee chairs were asked to do brief summaries outlining the activities of their committee to help people decide what they would like to do in the FOF. Refreshments were served. This became an annual affair and has been well accepted.

Spence Gustav was instrumental in getting a \$2500 grant from Keen Footwear called "Boot it up for Red Rock Trails". It involves placing emergency marker signs on the trails which will be accessed with a QR code on smart phones giving people information about where they are.

2014 found us with a number of younger new members who were willing to take on committee chair obligations which was greatly appreciated. Plans for celebrating the 20th anniversary of FOF were begun by a small committee chaired by Vice President, **Jennifer Young**. Included were: **Buck Packard, Justine Kusner, Suzy Dunn, Noreen Lisowski, Spence Gustav, Jean Ober and Darl Rector**. After exploring a number of ideas, it was decided to have the main celebration at the annual meeting in October. An effort will be made to invite original members and those who are out of the area. Special slide shows and talks have been done at each Board Meeting, utilizing some of the early members and historical pictures from the archives.



Sawyer Class graduates ready for Trail Maintenance

Major projects this year included weeks of reconstruction of the Midgely Bridge Trail steps by TM&C, funding trash and old car removal from Fossil Creek, backup for the Slide Fire, continuing the photo digitization and a new committee chaired by **Dottie Correll** to create accessible venues for the handicapped.

Vice President, **Jennifer Young**, has done a wonderful job of the publicity for the Friends and has created an Interpretive Committee and coordinated bird walks, interpretive hikes including plants and wildflowers, ancient technology, photography to name a few programs put on by FOF members for the public. They were very popular and filled up rapidly. Her co-chair is **Bob Beltz**.

The Friends of the Forest Sedona is indeed an exceptional group of people with a singular purpose. It has been a pleasure to be part of this for many years and watch it grow and adapt to the needs of the Forest Service. Darl Rector



A beautiful holiday table set by Hospitality Chairs at a December Board Meeting. Toni Raymond, Ruth Cornell and Noreen Lisowski.



Parade time and time for a hike with the Friends



FOF History 2014 – 2019

In 2014 the Sedona Friends of the Forest celebrated 20 years of service to US Forest Service, Red Rock Ranger District. **Noreen Liskowski, Dark Rector, and myself** set about compiling the group's milestones and presented them in three issues of the 2014 Branching Out newsletters. To do this the group set down with 19 years of Branching Out articles, 5 CD's and 2 zip drives of photographs submitted by members and set about putting together the Friends history. From these we found the thoughts and words of our founding members and the determination, dream of the Forest Service for a volunteer group that would assist them to fulfill the monumental task of managing the column of visitors to the Red Rocks, and the determination of a large group of people to make it all happen.

It is 2019 and the Friends have reached their 25th Anniversary, the last five years have been filled with lots of changes in committee chairs, innovations, and awards. New committees have been formed and new opportunities for members to work side by side with the Forest Service staff.

Neon and Technology Improvements

The FOF implementation and customization of our new administrative and communication software NEON, the Nonprofit Enterprise Online Network, has streamlined the work of Treasurer, Membership Chair and various data related functions. A big step from the days when all of our membership and donation data was housed on a member's home computer, it is now contained within our secure database, accessible to committee chairs and board members. Our committee chairs no longer need to maintain email lists on their personal computer, it is all available and up to date on NEON. New members can now join via our website and automatically create their new member record. No more deciphering handwritten applications. Renewals and donations are quick and easy with the new system with minimal work required of the membership chair and the Treasurer. Members can log in to your own profile at any time to update your contact information, as well as your seasonal dates, skills/knowledge, and the expiration date of your Government Driver's License (for drivers of Forest Service vehicles).

Member have the ability to renewing their annual membership (or making an additional donation) with the "Renew/Donate/View" option. Members can pay on-line using a credit card via Pay Pal or can select to "Pay Later" and mail in a check. Members can view their total FOF hours by fiscal year from 2014 forward, with the current year updated on a quarterly basis. Along with many admin duties being reduced for committee chairs, it is now easier to retrieve and analysis data from the system. And yes, we do have members who love to play with numbers. A comment from Betty Parker, Membership Chair 2018 "For tasks previously done by phone and mail, NEON has reduced the time from 5 hours to about an hour a month."

Compiling data is a simple matter of creating a spreadsheet, giving us the total number of volunteer

hours for Fiscal Year 2019 of 35,723 with numbers broken down by committee or by member. It also shows that Administrative hours has dropped to 2,231.50 for the year. These numbers indicate a decrease in hours committee chairs spend in tracking activities, making their jobs better. Also new for 2019 was a redesigned Friends of the Forest website to kick off the celebration of our 25th anniversary. The new website will provide easy reading and navigation across a wide range of devices: desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone.

The Friends support the National Forest by making observations of abnormal conditions on the trails and making repairs. Since the beginning of 2017 the FoF Report mobile app has been used in the field to log over 1100 problems. Our maintenance chairmen along with the Forest Service use another app, FoF Manage, to view all observations including problem types, trail names, photos, and locations on a map. FoF Manage is used to assign maintenance work and document when the problems have been fixed. Our app programs have increased in 2018 and 2019.

Graffiti

Congratulations to the Friends of the Forest for 25 years of dedicated service to the Red Rock Ranger District!

The graffiti removal team is proud to have been a part of this effort for the last 6 or 7 years as a separate committee. For those who remember the 2012-2013-time frame, this specialized team was organized by a few long-time members of the FOF. Its purpose back then was to eliminate a series of similar paint markings which began showing up on many trails throughout the District. This removal effort occurred infrequently, only when a report was received. The number of annual hours initially spent on this one task was probably less than 100. The principal tools were chisel hammers, sandpaper, and wire brushes.

We now have 80 members on our team, nearly all of whom are FOF members. A few are Forest Service employees. Surprisingly, 59 of our 80 members contributed some hours in the field for FY 2019. This represents over 1700 hours removing and repairing all types of damage to our National Forest and Wilderness. Although the vast majority of hours are spent removing scratches on rocks, several hundred hours are involved in eliminating paint from rocks, building walls, restrooms, and bridges. We now employ everything from plain water to "Elephant Snot" and other paint removal liquids. Our primary tools consist of industrial scrubbies, wire brushes, and battery-operated high-pressure washers. Training is now required both in the classroom and the field. This allows individual team members some independence to clean on the spot. The reporting app has also been an invaluable tool in locating graffiti of all types.

The big question is, of course – are there that many more tourists (and locals) enjoying our trails or did we never see the graffiti those several years ago. Guess it's a combination of both. Back in the formative years, we were only responding to specific types of graffiti. We did not have the manpower to be everywhere. Today,

not only do we have our sizeable team regularly looking for this damage, but we frequently receive texts and emails from community bulletin boards, jeep drivers, other hikers, and directly from our visitors. This raising of the awareness is probably the most important tool we have. There are still many improvements needed to keep up with this effort, but we will always be ready to respond quickly to any sighting.

Keep the reports coming! **Jerry Piepiora**, Chairman

Photos of our Graffiti training class (below)



Visitor Information

December 2015, according to the Forest Service, the visitor center has chalked up one of the best years ever – over 259,000 visitors walked through its doors during the past fiscal year ending September 30th! an average of 733 visitors a day was seen during the first half of November compared to 822 the previous month. This was the big news for 2015 and visitation has continued to grow. Jim Wilson, wrote, “With the unofficial start to the summer season comes fewer visitors compared to previous months. A notable exception is Fossil Creek and answering the visitor center phones often means responding to questions related to directions and activities at this popular summertime spot.” The Forest Service has since made Fossil Creek a fee area during the peak summer season. Current VIS Chairs are Bev Jackson and Terry Orlick. Below - Special Assistant for VIS Frontliner Norm LaDuke from Smokey Bear.



Cultural Resources

Being a Docent is a wonderful opportunity for the Friends to provide an educational experience for the Sedona visitor, with opportunities to be a Docent at Palatki and V Bar V Heritage sites. Palatki Red Cliffs Heritage Site provides the visitor with the ability to see Early Archaic scratched designs, Red blob style (Western Archaic), Southern Sinagua, Yavapai Tradition and Historic Inscriptions. These rock markings cover a long period of history from the Paleolithic (10,000 – 9,000 BC) to the Pre 1950's. While V Bar V holds only Southern Sinagua markings it has 13 panels which contain 1032 elements including a solar calendar.

On October 5, 2018, V Bar V Docent Jim Wilson discovered one of the gnomons (shadow stones) had fallen. He recalls that day, “I walked out to the site with about 10-12 visitors, stood by the rope for about 20 minutes and talked about who the Sinagua were, where they lived, and even pointed out clan symbols and various glyphs on the wall. Then I turned around with my laser pointer saying, “we even have a world-class solar calendar” and stopped – something wasn't right, but it didn't register at first that the rock was missing. Then I looked down behind me at the fallen stone – I was close enough to have kicked it.....have to admit, a little embarrassing.” Jim felt that the gnomon fell sometime in the preceding 3 days before it was discovered. Sedona had been experiencing the rainy after-effects of Hurricane Rosa off the coast of Mexico and this may have been a final factor in the fall of the gnome. He did note that although the primary sun shaft is no longer available with the loss of the upper gnome the calendar the solar calendar still works. Missing are several corn plantings dates together with illumination of the corn symbols, the Niman ceremony symbol highlight, and a number of other images connected to the sun shaft. Visitors have asked if the rock will be put back, as the stone broke into multiple pieces when it fell and could not be put back into the exactly correct spot, and out of respect for the Hopi peoples, the rock will remain on the ground. It is now part of the story (history) of the V Bar V site.

Jerry Walters, Cultural Resources coordinator tell us that the photo documentation of the Heritage Sites provides a good historical reference which includes a 3-D model of the solar calendar. The lower gnome still remains so not all is lost. The equinox and winter solstice delineations are fully intact as the equinox only used the shadow of the lower stone and the winter solstice does not use either of those stones. The main and late corn planting (which coincides with the summer solstice) are mostly intact as the main reading is based on the lower stone. The upper stone shadow was for registration marks to fix the dates more accurately. The only marker totally gone is the early corn planting (April 21st) as it relied solely on the upper stone shadow to touch the upper end of the stair-step glyph. The photo documentation team has been in operation for a little more than 6 years and completed their first 3-D model in June of 2016. In that time, they have visited and photographed over 500 sites (over 100 were “new” sites to the Forest Service) and taken over 100,000 photos! They have also created over 1,600 3-D models that

have had over 26,000 views on the Sketchfab hosting site (<https://sketchfab.com/FOFSedona>). The current list of ongoing projects includes re-photographing major prehistoric sites using conventional, RTI, and 3-D technologies, similar photography for newly recorded sites, and periodic monitoring of the dust study images at Palatki and Honanki. The team has also been busy creating 3-D images of selected historical Forest Service structures in the Red Rock and Peaks districts. Activities have slowed down considerably over the summer months due to the heat. The team was able to complete 3-D modeling projects for historic structures at Crescent Moon Ranch and a project with the National Park Service (Montezuma Castle NM) to model a modern reconstruction of 4th level room. Cultural Resources volunteers' hours for 2019 are 8,560.65 hours.



Photo of the Upper Stone in situ before it fell in October 2018

New Committees

The Forest Service will ask the Friends for assistance with a new project or concern that they encounter. At times the request is fulfilled on a single volunteer outing. Others are found to be an ongoing need which requires oversight and coordination by one or more persons and new committee is formed with Board Approval. New Committees that have been approved are Special Projects chaired by Spence Gustav, Tech Team which comprises of Bob Haizmann who handles the Apps, Peg Kern Neon Administrator and Marilyn Painchaud who handles the Web design and support. The Lichen Project has expanded and is now a committee chaired by Garry Neil. Also new is Fossil Creek Air Quality which Marilyn Painchaud was instrumental in the start up and then Brian Painchaud took over chairmanship of the committee. Marilyn moved on to Coordinating the Janie Projects forming the new committee FOF Wildlife/Fish/Rare Plants.

FOF Wildlife/Fish/Rare Plants

Forest Service Biologist Janie Agyagos has found a treasure trove of volunteers to assist her with her many wildlife studies and activities with volunteers logging 4,206 hours in 2019 to assist her with these projects. How about a day spent planting milkweed seeds? Or a late-evening hike to a remote site with the purpose of counting the number of bats taking flight? Or taking binoculars out to check on the residence of Peregrine Falcon nests? Sometimes a new project just presents itself by a conversation about the special interest of a FOF member to start a Lichen Study or doing an Agave Inventory Project to determine, if possible, the connection of non-wild agaves to pre-historic cultures. Or the elusive search for the Arizona Toad Inventory in the Coconino National forest? If any of these tickles your fancy contact **Marilyn Painchaud** or watch for information in the newsletter or FOF e-mails asking for volunteers.

Trail Maintenance

Many photos have been shared of our Trail Maintenance crew in action throughout the 25 years in our newsletters. The team remains a favorite with our volunteers who put in 3,663.50 hours. The chairmanship has changed over the last five years with Mike Ober turning over the McLeods to Ernie DiMillo who then transferred them to Jerry Checchia. The crew still works Friday mornings, one change made is the suspension of trail maintenance during the dry, hot summer months with only activities done at the request of the Forest Service. Below the crew removing a felled tree from the trail.





Interpretive

Interpretive committee has seen many changes with Jennifer Young getting everything organized then turning the reins over to Bob Betz, who then turn it over to the current chair Bob Wych, the events are open to all our members and visitors to Coconino National Forest. You can find out what is currently scheduled by going to the Interpretive Program website www.friendsoftheforestsedona.org/events/ for all the wonderful activities that are being offered. These programs are presented by local experts in our area as volunteers for the Coconino National Forest Service in conjunction with the Arizona Natural History Association (AHNA) and Friends of the Forest.

Friends of the Forest, 25 years of service to Red Rock District.

Jean Ober, Branching Out Editor



A few photos of volunteers assisting with the Interpretive Programs

Debbie Wyche in 2014 with the 20th Anniversary commemorative coffee mug
2019 our 25th Anniversary commemorative insulated water bottles



Help us celebrate our 25th Anniversary at the Annual Membership Meeting to be held Saturday November 2 starting at 10:00 AM, at the Beaver Creek Work Center.