



Branching Out April 2024 A Look Back in Time 1994 - 2024

The Sedona Friends of the Forest are celebrating 30 years of service to the US Forest Service, Coconino National Forest, Red Rock District. In 1994 a group of civic minded Sedona residents wanted to find a way to assist with the maintenance of the beautiful Red Rocks that they called home. **Mary Lee Dunning**, a very active member of the founding group became its' first President serving until **Dennis Parker** took over the reins in 1997 - 1998, followed by **Justine Kusner** in 1999

- 2000. Chuck Jenkins served from 2005 - 2006. The FRIENDS have had thirteen Presidents over the past 30 years, each giving their own unique talents, expertise, and energy to the position. Mary Lee attended the 20th Anniversary celebration and here is a short video of her speech [Mary Lee Dunning](#). Rather than me recounting all of their contributions, here are their stories in their own words

Al Cornell 2001 - 2002

I joined FOF in the fall of 1994 and served as its president from 2000 to 2002. Looking back on my earlier time with FOF, I offer the following.

I wish to reflect on the two groups that made Friends of the Forest such a success in the early days. First were the Rangers of the Red Rock District, led by **Ken Anderson**. Ken represented the USFS in a most professional way and supervised the successful integration of the FOF volunteers into the RRRD as a workforce multiplier. Leading the coordination of these projects from the very beginning was Ranger **Terry Adams**, our first "Volunteer Coordinator." Terry not only led all of us in these efforts -- he was an outstanding leader -- but he also became friends with all of us. **Bill Stafford and Janie Agyagos** represented to us outstanding leadership and coordination for many, many successful projects and their roles in the history of the FOF, along with Terry, will not be forgotten.

The second group I wish to comment on were the volunteers back in those very early days. Their dedication to the mission of serving the needs of the

District was most noteworthy. All the volunteers stepped up to help in any way they could. Among these outstanding early FOF members, and there were hundreds, I would like to mention a few. I cannot say enough about the participation of **Darl and Gene Rector**. Their support for the early restoration of Palatki and the V-V archaeology sites was superb, as was their continuous maintenance of the Red Rock Ranger District hiking trails.

I must also mention the dedication and contributions to the FOF and the District by **Bill and Justine Kusner**. They played a major role in the early development and success of the Friends.

My final comments are in tribute to two outstanding FOF members who are no longer with us. **Norm Herkenham**, initial leader of Trail Maintenance as well as our "plant Knowledge" expert for over a decade and **Buck Packard**, our first Trail Patrol leader, who gave generously of his time and talents for many, many years. I am truly honored to have known and worked with so many dedicated FOF volunteers.

Al Cornell

Helen Campbell 2003 - 2004

Dean and I attended our first Friends of the Forest meeting the same month we moved to Sedona, October 1998. In November I started my first assignment as a proud member of the Friends. At that time the Forest Service's presence in Sedona was on property located on Brewer Road in the heart of Sedona. This group of buildings dates to 1917, a residence house, a secondary home, an immense barn and a pumphouse. The first time I drove to the property I felt transported back in time which amplified my entire experience. I felt like I should have ridden in on a horse. The Ranger Station was the former residence. Many different rooms formed the ranger's offices, the front parlor housed the information desk and a few maps and books, a counter and two stools. Since the entire staff worked in this "house" it made meeting and getting to know the rangers convenient and easy. I loved my time in that old station. **Debbie Terrion, Judy Adams, Terry Adams, Ken Anderson, Law Enforcement, Jerry Bradley, Connie Birkland, Janie Agyagos, Dave Coryn, Savio Serna and the rest of the fire crew.** Too many to remember all the names but I remember every amazing person.

Early on I met the Law Enforcement Officer. His name was Leo. He was only there a few months before taking a new assignment elsewhere. When his replacement arrived, I was introduced to him... Leo. I remember thinking "What a coincidence. Both named LEO."

Despite my gaffe, which we laughed about for years, in 2000 Al Cornell asked me to be his Vice President. The Vice President at that time did not have specific duties so I invented a few. I designed and introduced the first welcome packet to be sent to new members. I wanted a regular assignment to go along with my title of Vice President and suggested to Al that the VP have the duty of publicity. We began to have a regular presence in Sedona and Forest Service publications and still do today thanks to the many who continue to write about Friends.

In 2002 I became the President. Back then the President was entrusted as the keeper of the "boxes." I curiously lifted the lids of these identical white, corrugated file boxes. I realized that in front of me was the complete, yet short, written history of Friends from

the birth of an idea at the Sedona Forum in 1994, through four presidencies to January 1, 2003. One box was filled with "family heirlooms" thoughtfully packed, full of photos albums, loose photos, and framed awards. A veritable treasure! The other boxes contained the paper trail of the formation of the Friends. I smiled reading the different names that were suggested for the newly, minted group...Companions of the Coconino, Volunteers in Preservation, Red Rock Volunteers and Volunteers in Partnership of the Coconino National Forest. That's a big bite! Thankfully, the name Friends of the Forest was chosen. As much as those boxes did represent the Friends of the Forest, what was so obvious in its absence was the SPIRIT of the Friends: The people -the volunteers - the members. Energy, synergy, solution-oriented goals, the HEART OF FRIENDS. YOU.

Ken Anderson, District Ranger, realized the connection of the Friends of the Forest and the Forest Service ran deep. Ken considered the President to be a member of his staff. I attended every staff meeting, and often left with a feeling of despair as I learned how hard the FS had to struggle against bureaucracy and an ever-shrinking budget. I learned to recognize the officialdom under which the Forest Service must operate. I came to understand the hurdles that the agency battled. I developed a deep and sincere respect for the men and women who have the titanic task of managing the Red Rock Ranger District. At the end of my first meeting, I made a request. I needed a syllabus of FS acronyms! Everything had an acronym...everything.

As discussion of various and multi-faceted topics and conundrums were discussed sometime a light would flash...I had an idea! The first time it happened was the discussion of how the FS could control numbers at Palatki. The parking lot was overflowing as well as the site. Why not have a reservation system, I asked. My idea was met with furrowed brows. Ken faked a pass to me, I caught it, and he said the ball is in your hands. I took it to the Friends executive committee and the wheels began to turn. Our reservation proposal was met with enthusiasm and continues to be used today.

In early 2003, the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), the Forest Service and the Friends worked to improve habitat in the **Rattlesnake Quiet Area**. I felt certain this project was not literally as it sounded and listened to Janie explain. The project, located near Rattlesnake Canyon, was started by and explained by our Wildlife Biologist **Janie Agyagos**. The Rattlesnake Quiet Area is an area closure that prohibits the use of motorized vehicles within its thirteen square miles and provides a more primitive experience for Fall hunters. It acts as a refuge for animals. Hunting is limited to foot travel only.

The Historic Apple Orchard Rehabilitation, was spearheaded by Jack Norman, USFS, Watershed Staff. Joining forces were **Dean Campbell, Bill and Justine Kusner, Buck Packard, Mike Ward, Jed Fulkerson, Roger Holden, Chuck Jenkins and me**. More than one hundred trees! Where to start? We began with two overgrown, neglected, pitiful, crying-for-help orchards in West Fork. We followed behind the Forest Service Fire Crew who wielded chain saws and removed massive dead branches from geriatric trees. We hauled the heavy debris to a burn pile and stacked cord after cord of apple wood. By the end of that exceptionally long, tiring but always rewarding day the Mayhew Lodge Historic Apple Orchard already looked younger and revitalized and I dare say happier. It took more than a year to truly make a difference and of course remains an annual maintenance project still.

One remaining task; the huge, gaping cavities in the old, rotting trunks needed to be filled. What better person to fill the cavities than **Dean Campbell**, retired dentist and his able assistant Helen. Teamwork!

We are a diversified group! A dentist to fill tree cavities and a retired big equipment operator, **Gene Rector**, to build parking lots, move tons of dirt around, work at Honanki, work at Bell Rock ... wherever the FS needed his expertise. Gene volunteered well over a week, loading and hauling material at the Bell Rock Rehabilitation Project. **Terry Adams**, Volunteer Coordinator, said this is a perfect example of an amazingly effective partnership! Then Gene moved on to Honanki and operated a backhoe and loader for another week. I would venture to guess that Gene is the only Friend with these skills! I wish you

could have seen Gene's Cheshire cat grin on a very dusty face!

October/December 2003

Friends of the Forest come from a variety of individual backgrounds....nursing, computer science, zoology, biology, military officers, dentistry, big equipment operator, psychology, engineering, law, education, veterinarian. But when we moved to Sedona and became Friends of the Forest something interesting happened. We became something else. An enormous amalgam of energy, caring and giving. We became volunteers with a common goal – to be a constant and effective force in helping the Red Rock Ranger District and protect our National Forest. To provide the funds and workforce to complete a project that the FS did not possess.

In 2003 we invested **twenty-four thousand eight hundred and eighty dollars**. Equally impressive, approximately one hundred members volunteered over fourteen thousand hours!

Honorees at the **2003 Annual Picnic** and Meeting were **BUCK PACKARD** - Distinguished Volunteer, **MARILYN BERNHARDT** – Volunteer of the Year, **MIKE WARD** – New Volunteer of the year, **BILL KUSNER** – The President's Award, **JUDY COOPER** – The Vice President's Award.

At the **February 2004** Monthly Meeting our Guest Speaker was **Dale Robertson**. Dale is a life member of the Friends and Sedona resident. Oh. Did I mention the former **Chief of the US Forest Service**? Dale got our attention right out of the starting gate when he asked, "How would the Friends like to double their money?" The program he told us about was a collaboration between NFF...National Forest Foundation and NAFSR...National Association of Forest Service Retirees. The bottom line ... NFF and NAFSR will match FOF funds up to \$1000.00 per project! We took advantage of this dollar-doubling opportunity several times. The first three grant projects were the design phase of wilderness etiquette signs to be placed at wilderness portal trailheads. The narrow-headed garter snake education signs to be placed in Oak Creek Canyon. And the historic orchard pest treatment.

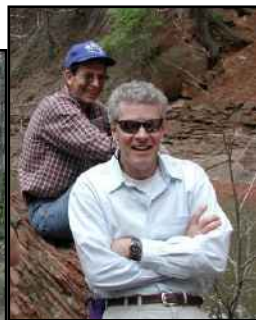
Fiscal Year 2004 Program of Work. Jim Thompson Trailhead Grant, Dad Jones Tank, Invasive Plant removal within the Red Rock District, Honanki Docents during Archaeology Awareness Month, Oak Creek Canyon Water Quality, new Trailheads, Bird Survey Assistance, Bat Roost Exit Counts, Plant Mounting, Installation of Wildlife Water Trough, Orchard Pest Treatment. The survey phase for the new Bell Trailhead, which will accommodate 39 passenger cars and 12 equestrian spaces.

I was just naïve enough to think that *everyone* knew about the Friends of the Forest. Imagine my dismay when talking to **Bill Possiel, President of the National Forest Foundation**, to learn while he knew we existed and NF was partnering in grants but knew little about us. Bill was kind enough to accept my invitation to come to Sedona and for two days heard so much about the Friends and our partnership with the Red Rock District his head was surely spinning when he returned to Montana. I knew Sedona would dazzle him.

In May 2004 the Friends of the Forest submitted its fourth grant proposal to the National Forest Foundation. The proposal was to repair and augment a livestock water tank in the Doe Mountain area which has not been maintained since the area was closed to grazing approximately ten years ago. Although a water catchment, water storage tank and some pipeline was in place, these structures required maintenance and a new drinker trough was needed for the water to be made available to Wildlife. **Janie**, our wildlife biologist, and **Lee Luedeker**, Arizona Game and Fish Game Warden led sixteen volunteers through the process. The list of what was accomplished is exhaustive. It was a continually active, full 8-hour day. I assisted with the early project development.



Bill Possible, Helen, Dale Robertson, Ken Anderson



Bill Possible and Dale Robertson

Other grants we received that year were \$24,000.00 from the Sedona Community Foundation for the **Visitor's Center Terrain Model**. \$30,000 from Arizona Game and Fish **for habitat protection of the Leopard Frog**. \$160,000 **All American Highway Grant** to complete landscaping at the Visitor's Center. The FS also received \$160,00.00 from the All-American Highway Grant.

Whenever I had a conversation with a ranger, I learned fun and interesting facts and stories about them and their dedication to the Forest Service. Why not share this knowledge through Branching Out? The first interview I did was with **Jerry Bradley**, Range Staff. In the small quarters of the station, it was uncomplicated to interact with the staff. I was humbled and intrigued with FS employees. Jerry wrote two pages about his life and career, including why he was at **ground zero**. **"On September 11, 2001, our FS Southwest Incident Management Team was the first of nine teams to be assigned to the World Trade Center Terrorist Attack."** They were there...Ground Zero. Chaos, Debris, Fire, Deafening Noise, Smoke, Darkness, Concrete, Ash. They were there.

Fiscal Year 2004 Program of Work. Jim Thompson Trailhead Grant, Dad Jones Tank, Invasive Plant removal within the Red Rock District, Honanki Docents during Archaeology Awareness Month, Oak Creek Canyon Water Quality, new Trailheads, Bird Survey Assistance, Bat Roost Exit Counts, Plant Mounting, Installation of Wildlife Water Trough, Orchard Pest Treatment. The survey phase for the new Bell Trailhead, which will accommodate 39 passenger cars and 12 equestrian spaces.

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Many thanks to the nine FOF volunteers; **Mike Ward, Joe Landholm, Dale Robertson, Dean Campbell, Chuck Jenkins, Mike Vitek, Walt Higgenbotham, Al Cornell and Sherman Loy.**

I always look forward to Fall. It is that time of the year to bring out warm sweaters and long pants to marvel at how the long shadows play on the red rocks, time to light a warm fire and a time to watch the trees dress themselves in bright colors of red and yellow. AND it is the time when the Friends of the Forest gather at the Beaver Creek Ranger Station for the Annual Meeting and time to bestow gratitude and honors upon many Friends for their accomplishments.

The year 2004 was quite a year for the Friends. Our accomplishments were diverse, we set new records, we celebrated our tenth anniversary, we established a relationship with the National Forest Foundation and thanks to that relationship we accomplished many projects with less money from our treasury.

I invited a special guest to attend my last annual meeting as President. I was more than pleased when **Dave Coryn**, my guest's Administrative Assistant, agreed to his visit. This special guest does not go just anywhere anytime he is invited! He is a terribly busy guy.

I was delivering what I am sure was a particularly important message when I became aware that no one, no one, was looking at or listening to me!! You should have been standing where I was and have seen the look on everyone's face when our guest came prowlin' and a growlin' and a sniffin' the air. **SMOKEY** came sauntering



Thank you Smokey Bear for making it memorable!

up the center aisle toward the podium. First a look of shock on faces, and then smiles and laughter lit up the morning. I was more than happy to share the spotlight with Smokey. As you are aware bears cannot talk but none the less, he assisted me in thanking **Terry Adams, USFS**, "a true friend among Friends" and a special thank you to **Christa Roughan, USFS**, our Volunteer Coordinator "whose enthusiasm is an inspiration to all." If I do say so myself, this, my last meeting as President of the Friends of the Forest, was THE best Annual Meeting of all.!

Although established after my presidency, at the request of the Forest Service I formed the Wranglers. This was an extremely important event for the Forest Service. Finally, the Forest Service horses and mules were being used to do projects that could not be done on foot or by truck. This article below was written by **Heather Provencio, District Ranger, Susan Johnson of the Red Rock News** with contribution from me.

Initiated in 2006 at the request of the USFS, the Wranglers were formed. Their mission is to carry out assignments given to them by Red Rock District Ranger Heather Provencio. "Horses are not cheap when they're just sitting around," Campbell said. "But they're a bargain when you put them to good use.

"The Wrangler program has provided valuable assistance in caring for our livestock. They also helped get the tack room in working order and generously donated quite a bit of equestrian equipment to the district," Provencio said. "In addition to exercising the animals, they provide patrols and public contact out on our trails where the horses are wonderful Forest Service ambassadors. The

group is also assisting with trash pickup in remote wilderness areas like Fossil Springs and assists us with packing materials for backcountry projects.” The Wranglers are expert riders who must pass an annual certification from the USFS as well as their own demanding tests of ability. They also must be able to ride hard in every kind of weather. Last fall, the all-volunteer division participated in a three-day joint agency project at Wupatki National Monument moving 11,800 pounds of fencing materials using horses and mules.

This month, the Wranglers are inspecting 130 miles of allotment fence. We are looking for breaks and damage and checking to see that every bit of it is wildlife compliant, meaning the bottom strand must be smooth, not barbed, and no less than 18 inches off the ground. That much clearance is necessary because while deer and elk think nothing of leaping the cattle barriers, the ever-fussy pronghorns will not, preferring to shimmy underneath,” explained **Janie Agyagos**.

To check on the fences, the Wranglers ride in pairs, using a Global positioning System, plotting the allotments and noting where repairs are needed.

At present, there are 14 certified riders in the group along with a non-riding ground support team, mostly comprised of people who no longer ride but still enjoy the pleasures of feeding and grooming the animals and maintaining their tack.

Five horses and three mules are currently ready to help, all of them shared resources among three ranger districts — Red Rock, Verde and Peaks. Three horses and one of the mules belong to the Peaks District in Flagstaff, wintering in the pleasant temperatures of the Verde Valley. Two other horses belong to the Verde District in Camp Verde and the remaining two mules belong to Red Rock, gifts from a local resident. The animals are also used by USFS staff members assisting in many departments including those devoted to biology, fire, range, recreation and law enforcement.

Craig Stevens and the Wranglers were honored when the Forest Service invited him to attend the 3-day Pack Training Class. Safely packing an animal is an art and one if not done correctly can lead to a disaster for both animal and rider.

The projects we accomplished for **Robert Garcia, Range Conservation** and **Janie Agyagos, Wildlife Biologist** were never dull, always challenging and definitely rewarding!

We Completed inspection of pipelines and tanks over thousands of acres of allotment land in the Beaverhead Flats Area. We photographed and documented the condition of all the tanks.

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Craig Stevens, Steve Rench, Jeff Upshaw and I packed supplies and herbicides into Sycamore Canyon where a stand of invasive Tamarisk had been located. Not a job for even the strongest of men. In 2008 the Wranglers gave 1163 hours of volunteer service and in 2010 we more than doubled the total to 2618 hours.

Besides being expert riders, the Wranglers attend six training courses a year. We are trained in GPS, map and compass, measuring grass on allotments, proper saddle fit, survival training, invasive weed identification.

One of those courses was given by the **Yavapai County Sheriff's** office and the **FS Law Enforcement Officer (LEO**

🙄) talked to us specifically about what to look for and what to do if we come upon a marijuana garden which, by the way, are manned 24/7 by armed Mexican drug cartels. It held our interest for over two hours, was fascinating and certainly nothing I and no other Wranglers had ever given a thought about. I knew nothing and it made the hair on the back of my neck stand up.



GPS-ing fence for Pronghorn compliance

Ambassador at Large

Ken Anderson was due to speak at a Forest Service Conference in Albuquerque. The conference was focused on volunteerism and advocacy. He asked me if I would go in his stead, and it seemed right up my alley.

“How would it be if there were one hundred people champing at the bit to volunteer on your district? You set the priorities, they manage themselves and each year give you about 21,000 hours? Sound impossible? Well, it is not impossible.” And so began many of my talks on volunteerism for the Forest Service. It is easy to get attendees to pay attention with that line.

As Ambassador at Large for the Friends I had the unique opportunity and privilege of spreading the news about an extraordinary group of individuals who together form an unrivaled volunteer organization. My challenge was to engage the citizens of our country in forest stewardship and to assist other Forest Service Districts to establish Friends of the Forest of their own.

As a result of people from all over the west have heard me speak, I was invited to Washington State on four different districts, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Utah, and the National Forest Foundation in Montana. **Terry Adams** and I went to

Portland, Oregon to speak to the Forest Leadership Team. After speaking to the Forest Leadership Team, I received a call from Lisa Machink. Lisa was headed to Washington, DC to develop a national volunteer and partnership plan! She said she needed to know everything about the Friends of the Forest. Everything!

The Friends is a homegrown organization which can and does serve as a role model for other National *Forest volunteer groups across the country. We recognize the enormous demands put on the resource and the unquenchable expectations of the visitors and locals alike. We presented the opportunity – the stage – to the citizens of the greater Sedona area to become involved in the caring of their backyards.*

“NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL, COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD: INDEED, IT’S THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS.”

Margaret Mead

Helen Campbell

 Mike Ward 2007-2008

I retired to Sedona in 2002 and immediately became a FOF life member. Both Sedona and the Red Rock Ranger District were very different then. The District Ranger, **Ken Anderson**, was instrumental in creating FOF in 1994 and promoting Forest Service staff acceptance of volunteer help. At that time, most of the Forest Service staff had worked in the Red Rock Ranger District for many years. Recreation Officer **Bill Stafford** raised his family in the home located at the Beaver Creek Ranger Station. Relations between the volunteers and Forest Service employees were personal and built on mutual trust and appreciation. The President of FOF was invited to attend the monthly district administrative staff meetings. The inclusion of the FOF President in staff meetings provided FOF Presidents with an intimate appreciation of the many administrative complications of the Forest Service at the Forest and Region III levels.

Because the Forest Service could not collect donations at that time, the donation boxes at Palatki, V Bar V, and the Visitor Center went to FOF. The funds were then used to purchase materials for specific Forest Service projects. When the Forest Service requested the FOF to purchase materials to protect the John Heath Ruins from ATVs, the volunteer membership became impatient with the multi-year timeline for installing the barriers purchased by the FOF. The presence of the FOF President at staff meetings allowed the President to give members the understanding that the project required approval clearance from the district hydrologist, archaeologist, and botanist. Each of those individuals had to have included making that clearance work in their Forest Service program of work submitted the prior year, which was causing the delay.

Many significant changes marked my 2007 to 2008 Presidency of FOF. District Ranger **Ken Anderson** had left Sedona for another Forest Service position, and **Heather Provencio** came to Sedona as the new Red Rock District Ranger. The Forest Service had sold off the old Brewer Rd. Ranger station in 2005 when I was FOF Vice President and moved to temporary quarters at the old Beaver Creek Ranger District facility.

In 2005, the Forest Service recognized that additional funding would be needed for interpretive exhibits in the new Visitor Center. The FOF Board authorized me, then the FOF Vice President, to write a grant application for

exhibit funding through the Sedona Community Foundation. The Forest Service identified a 3D interactive terrain model interpretive exhibit as a top priority for funding. The terrain model would provide visitors with trip planning information for driving, hiking, biking, and camping experiences and 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) to design and construct the terrain model.

The new State Route 179 Forest Service administrative and Visitor Center facility broke ground in 2006 and opened on April 16, 2008. The FOF board meetings moved from the Keep Sedona Beautiful (KSB) Pushmataha building, where they had met since the mid-1990s, to the newly opened ranger administrative building.

When the new Visitor's Center opened, funding shortages prohibited the installation of interpretive exhibits inside and outside the new building. Forest Service staff and FOF volunteers, using approximately \$6,000 in funding from ANHA, designed and built temporary exhibits at the visitor center. Because of my amateur interest in Sedona's geology, I chaired a group of area geologist comprised of **Paul Lindberg**, **Wayne Ranney**, and **Ron Blakey** to create the geology exhibit. The exhibit featured a large Sedona rock stratigraphy wall display printed on contact vinyl. The geologic history of Sedona was displayed on a seven-sided structure built by **Michael Campbell**



Mike with temporary geology exhibit

with printed epoch images from **Ranney's** and **Balkey's** newly published 2008 book [Ancient Landscapes of the Colorado Plateau](#). **Paul Lindberg** provided the geology rock samples from his personal collection for the seven major rock formations in the Sedona area. The temporary exhibits were completed in October 2008.

SR 179 was designated the Red Rock All-American Scenic Byway in 2006. The Federal Department of Transportation (FDT) announced a \$400,000 grant for scenic byways welcome centers. 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 \$80,000 matching requirement. With the endorsement of the SCF, which encourages using their grant awards as leverage in applying for larger grants, the 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 Federal Department of Transportation grant application, submitting it in early 2008. Finally, as my tenure as President of the Friends drew to a close, the Friends and the Forest Service were notified that they were awarded the \$400,000 All-American Scenic Byway grant in November 2008. However, the funding for the project would not be appropriated by Congress until 2010.

When the grant funding was awarded, the Forest Service awarded the contract for an Interpretive exhibit. A collaborative effort among the Forest Service, FOF, and the contractor produced the interpretive design plan for the visitor center for 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, Sedona's Human History, Trip Planning Terrain Model, and a multi-media theater.

I formed the FOF committee that developed the 3D Interactive Terrain Model. Volunteer committee members created GPS tracks for the Forest Service trails and scenic drives. Our committee also took hundreds of

photographs of the trails, scenic drives, and Forest Service visitor access facilities for the Terrain Model. These trails, drives, and locations would be projected onto the Terrain Model while the photographs were exhibited on the Terrain Model monitor.

I, along with Forest Service employees **Nina Hubbard** and **Sarah Belcher**, integrated all the photographs, GPS data, and descriptive narrative into forms provided by the Terrain Model subcontractor, **Gene Cooper**, Four Chambers Studio, to create a user computer program to interactively project the trail, scenic drive, and location information on the 3D Interactive Terrain Model.

The remodeled Visitor Center with the newly constructed exhibits was reopened to the public in October 2013. Although I have stepped back from many of my previous FOF volunteer activities, I still volunteer one half day a week in the Visitor Center.

As I concluded my remarks in the November 2019 [Branching Out Newsletter](#)

"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 Ward demonstrates the beta release of the terrain model interactive interface to **Garry Neil** Photo by **Jean Ober**

Mike Ward

Roy Julian 2009-2010

During my tenure as President of the Friends from 2008-2010 I had the privilege of working with an incredible group of dedicated people who were committed to the preservation of the Forest, as well as the spectacular archeological treasures that abound in the greater Sedona area. Anytime the Forest Service had a request, many, many people stepped up.

On Trail Maintenance and Construction **Gene and Darl Rector**, as well as many others, were always there. Seeing Gene swing a mattock while freezing to death in a light shirt in mid-winter way back in Secret Canyon comes to mind. Or Darl, all 120 lbs., wielding the 6 foot saw in Long Canyon. **Al Cornell** doing Water Sampling for years, **Jerry Walters** leading the Heritage Site Committee (again for years) or **Kevin Harding** doing Bird Watching and animal interpretive walks are just some of the important contributions that stand out. In the Forest Service, **Janie Agyagos and Bill Shoemaker** are

professionals who shine as genuinely committed to their specialties. One of the memorable activities was seeing Bill Shoemaker on his hands and knees digging dirt out of a rocky hole he had just been blasting with a heavy, portable jackhammer. With the help of a large group of Friends, he put up protective fencing to keep ATV's from running over the top of John Heath Ruins. The fence is still there. Bill is one of those quiet, hard-working people who never get the recognition they deserve.

I could go on and on about the Friends in Trail Patrol, VIS, Graffiti Removal, or the rehabilitation of Fossil Creek. Members of the Friends and the committed people in the Forest Service are the ones who make a difference. I thank all of you for your time, your patience, your numerous talents, and your willingness to deal with the many challenges facing our beautiful area. It was definitely an honor to serve as your President.

Roy Julian

Carol Wirkus 2011 - 2012

It was my honor to serve as President of Friends of the Forest in 2011 and 2012. Our members are a hard-working group of volunteers who generously give their time, share their skills, and create long-lasting friendships through FOF activities. During my two-year presidency, our members donated more than 54,000 hours to the Red Rock District over a wide variety of projects. So many members did so much.

Spence Gustav, a man of infinite talents and energy, along with long-serving 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. Of course, they have since moved on to awesome 3D digitalization of real-world archeology sites.

Graffiti was starting to become a problem back in 2012, so we created a new committee, chaired by Mark Munsell, to grind, scrape, and wash away graffiti in the Forest. Unfortunately, the need for this committee has

skyrocketed. A dozen years ago, who would have anticipated the many thousands of hours our members would spend removing scratches and paint from rocks and structures?

The indefatigable Gene Rector led the hardworking Hotshots Trail Crew. In February and March of 2011 alone, they removed 141 trees blocking our trails!

One of my goals as President was to start an annual Member Welcome Event. This would serve two purposes -- to attract new members to FOF, and to inform current members about the diverse activities with which they could get involved. This successful event has been held almost every year since 2011.

A beautiful 3 1/2 minute video was filmed by Ron Melmon and Neil Margolin to inform people about Friends of the Forest. This timeless video can still be viewed by going to the FOF website.

When District Ranger Heather Provencio asked us for a significant donation to cover the cost of planned, but unfunded, exhibits in the new Visitor Center, we came through in spades. FOF donated more than \$83,000 to the Forest Service, including \$58,000 specifically for Visitor Center interpretive exhibits.

Early in my personal journey with FOF, I learned what devoted volunteers we have. In June 2006, the Brins Mesa fire blazed atop Wilson Mountain. Somehow, I ended up organizing volunteer sign-ups for all the Forest Service road closures. I created a sign-up sheet showing each closed FS road, the days we were needed, and time blocks for manning the road barricades. My expectation was that we might be able to cover half the sixty or so time blocks. Miraculously, our amazing volunteers covered every road for every time block that was needed!

That initial positive experience carried through my time as President. It's not the leadership of the Friends that makes this a special group – it's the members.

A great example of our hard-working volunteers is my husband Frank. According to FOF statistician Alan Glickstein, Frank has contributed 4,725 hours since joining in 2005. The array of projects on which he has worked is too long to list, but includes fire tower lookout, River Rat hauls, collecting agave for VBarV Days, counting bats as they fly from their cave, and assisting Smokey Bear at school presentations. Frank's favorite volunteer times were when he and Mike Vitek assisted our volunteer contractor, Al Gilson, on special projects. This dynamic threesome built a new floor for the Overlook visitor center, constructed kiosks at Fossil Creek, and undertook many other projects across the District.

The point is that it is our members who make Friends of the Forest such an effective, impactful organization. It's our members who have a common goal of preserving the beauty of our National Forest through their wide-ranging volunteer activities. Our members are smart and skilled, and step forward when needed. Friends of the Forest is thirty years and counting!

Carol Wirkus

Spence Gustav 2013 - 2014

Wow, how time flies. Retiring to the Sedona area because of a memory of passing thru 40 years previously as a student. I remembered the scenery, archaeology, geology and climate which exactly matched my preferences. Almost 18 years ago, shortly after moving in, I visited Palatki and encountered FOF volunteer Frank Wirkus. I could never have imagined the eventual impact on my life that meeting created. Frank informed me, that by coincidence, the Sedona Friends of the Forest quarterly meeting was the next day. Frank, being one of the few people around here bigger than me, made it clear I did not have much of a choice about going. I went and signed up for a family life membership and immediately looked into volunteering at the Heritage Sites.

I initially trained at Palatki and V bar V by Dean Campbell and Ken Zoll and was a regular on site. For much of my first few years at Palatki, there were no resident site hosts and a typical day was Terrilyn Green, Charlie Steeger, myself and frequently other FOF members filled in for one or more of us. Besides doing a lot of hiking for Trail Patrol and experiencing much of the beauty and boundless nature along the trails, I periodically supported the front liners at the Ranger Station Visitor Center where the other volunteers and FS staff taught me about the region and how to maximize the visitors experience. I started using my background in geology, archaeology and technical photography for many projects for the Forest Service.

In late 2010, Frank and his wife Carol, by now close friends and co-volunteers with Verde Search and Rescue (yes they talked me into that also), somehow talked me into (there appears to be a pattern to this) being Carol's assistant, as vice president when she became FOF president in 2011. I honestly didn't know that this meant I would become president for 2013-2014.

The best way of describing my experience as FOF president is via one paragraph in the article in the 20th anniversary newsletter that was prepared during my tenure. That was 10 years ago and this is part of what I said and is still valid.

"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".

In my almost 18 years with the Friends, there have been 3 District Rangers and we are about to welcome a 4th. I also worked directly with 3 District Archaeologists and now a 4th and many other Forest Service staff. I managed to learn a lot and enjoy working with them, they miraculously survived working with me (so far).

The Graffiti Committee was approved and organized late in Carol's tenure as president but it formally came into being after I started as president. Prior to the Graffiti Committee, remediation of vandalism was directed by the Forest Service and they frequently called on the Friends for support. In part, the committee was created due to the increase in reporting of issues by Trail Patrol and Trail Maintenance activities. A significant factor was the plague of a large number of very large scale spray painted "LTTL Hearts" in remote areas. A small team of Bob Shuman, Rick Baldauf, Glen Buenning and myself with strong support from other volunteers organized trips to eradicate the hearts and ultimately other graffiti. In 2013, Elephant Snot was first approved and tested for use locally. Ultimately reporting and remediation activity became so frequent that a reporting "app" was developed by Bob Haizmann and Jerry Piepiora. It has been periodically updated and upgraded. It has led to similar systems for other aspects of reporting and documenting issues in the forest.

During that year, Al Cornell and Kevin Harding put in an incredible effort supervising the design and placement of 152 sand blasted animal tracks on the Visitor Center walkway. In the same year, Al took on a very different role assisting the Forest Service hosting and translating for South American government representatives studying Forest Service methods at the request of the State Dept. It has been stated that if there is a need, we will find some one who can do it. This is one of many examples that prove it.

Past presidents don't go away, they just get busier. Mike Ward's long term passion project the interactive 3D travel planning station at the Visitor Center and the various "Interpretive Displays" were formally opened. The trip planning station is a masterpiece of software and design. Perhaps the most fun part of creating it were the trips to acquire multiple photos from which 3 could be chosen for display for each trail, forest road, day use or camping site and many other locations included in the system. The memory of hanging on for dear life in the back of Mike's Jeep, driving the forest roads getting all the road photos, lingers on. Ultimately this was ported to a website such that it could be used remotely via the internet. The Visitor Center media and meeting room was completed and the Forest Service initiated the "First Friday" presentations program. FOF members, with diverse backgrounds and interests, alternated with FS staff and visiting specialists giving presentations. Jennifer Young, as Vice President and initiator of the Interpretive Program, organized much of this and promoted the expansion of scheduled organized nature and scenery hikes led by FOF volunteers.

At the urging of the Forest Service's Recreation Supervisor, Jennifer Burns, a small group of volunteers evaluated and planned a proposed Emergency Trail Marker system that would have provided visitors with a means of locating where they were via QR codes scanned into a smart phone and would help accelerate rescue activities when necessary. A Keen Footware Inc. grant was applied for and received in support of this project. Ultimately the funds were applied to the area maps that were developed for the trip planning system that was incorporated into a new website Sedona Red Rock Trails.org. One aspect of the grant process (Jennifer did all the work), was that a representative of each organization that received a grant were asked to participate in a group phone conference to discuss and elaborate on what each group was doing. Several representatives were given a chance to talk and when it came to be my turn, the shoe company representative interrupted and told everyone, to pay attention. The Sedona Friends of the Forest are famous throughout the country for what they do for the Forest Service. He talked more about us than I did!

Also at the request of the Forest Service, the FOF solicited photographs from members for a video they were planning to be shown on a regular basis in the media room. These showings continue over 10 years later. We collected thousands of photos, 50 or so of which are still used in the video presentations. The photo collection and additional submissions totaling over 11,000 photos were reviewed by a small "special project" team which resulted in the "Sedona Red Rock Memories" DVD which were sold internally to members and in the ANHA shops at the various Forest Service Visitor Center locations. Based on the number of DVDs made, and the very small number that I still have in a closet (ask if you would like one, while they last), approximately \$7000 came to the FOF coffers to apply to projects, etc. The best memory was a visitor at Palatki, buying one and enquiring if it was possible to buy more than the 5 remaining on the shelf. I rushed home for a supply, met them in Sedona and received the funds for 150 DVDs that they handed out the next day as gifts for the guests attending their destination wedding in Sedona.

A secondary impact of the DVDs was the need to update the FOF logo, especially in regard to the 20th anniversary events in 2014. An initial revision led to cloth FOF patches which members could add to their volunteer vests, hats etc. The 20th Anniversary celebration planning led by Jennifer Young, with assistance from many members created 3 FOF History videos. Chapter 1 "A Photographic Walk Through the Beginning 1994-1996" was narrated primarily by Buck Packard. Chapter 2, "The Early Years 1997-2004" was narrated primarily by Justine Kusner. Chapter 3, "the Second Decade 2005-2014" was narrated by Chuck Jenkins, Justine Kusner, Noreen Lisowski and Buck Packard. Jennifer created all the scripts. Noreen Lisowski, Jean Ober and Darl Rector did an incredible effort on the historical research to get it all correct. The closing credits indicated that the stars of the videos and all that had been accomplished were "The Men and Women of the Friends of the Forest and the U.S. Forest Service" followed by a montage of many of our members.



During the celebration event at the Beaver Creek Work Center, there was a suggestion to get a photo of all the past presidents together at one time. Look close, the miracle of photoshop has become a staple of many of our projects. Several of the presidents were actually not in the original photo. It will be interesting to see if this can be updated for the more recent presidents. The Trail Encounter Monitoring project led by Carol Wirkus was successfully completed by late 2013. This was an add on to the

regular and very extensive Trail Patrol efforts. Another offshoot from Trail Patrol efforts were Cornell, Wirkus and Gustav, ultimately joined by other members, doing Christmas and Thanksgiving Day Cookie Hikes. We would interact with visitors, who frequently during the holidays were foreigners, handing out cookies and looking stupid. We excelled in the latter. Sometimes we ate as many cookies as we handed out. If you want to see visitors really enjoy their visit, surprise them on Christmas Day with a free Oreo.



In 2013-2014 Dottie Correll proposed and completed, with additional volunteer help, a project to identify and promote locations in the forest for access by forest visitors with disabilities. This material is still available to visitors by the VIS front liners.

Trail Maintenance continued their ongoing legacy of improving safety and convenience for visitors and residents by doing all their other activities plus the major reconstruction effort for the Midgely Bridge steps project. A sub-group did multiple construction and repair projects at Forest Service facilities, trail signs and other locations. An additional sub-group the "Hotshots" worked as a smaller group to scout out and fix specific issues. My most significant memory is encountering Gene Rector on a remote trail, by himself, carrying saws (they were allowed in those days), shovel, pick, and other heavy equipment that was bigger and heavier than he was. I offered to help him carry it back the several miles to the parking lot. He declined and took off. My legs are twice as long as Gene's. He headed back down the trail and I never managed to catch up with him.

The Slide Fire, that occurred during this period, had a major impact on our volunteer activities, both positive and negative at the time. It set a standard for the pattern of our support for future issues of this nature. Setting and monitoring trail barriers played a large role in keeping people safe.

Some really fun things were also accomplished during this time. FOF volunteers on a regular basis started supporting the FS Fire Teams with frequent Smokey Bear appearances at parades and events. Smokey's Helpers had great fun seeing the sheer joy of young children and remarkably, also many "more mature" ladies. The Forest Services collaboration with local Fire Departments for LAFS (Life and Fire Safety) presentations to grade school students drew in more of our volunteers to support Smokey and the setups. This outreach effort typically resulted in encounters with 1500-2500 children during two presentation seasons each year. The Rangers and Fire Fighters are always a big hit, but Smokey is the star. The photo team managed to get video recordings of several of these events at local schools which were provided to the Fire Departments and can be seen on YouTube and Facebook.

The Adopt a Trail program was initiated in which volunteers hiked specific trails on a regular basis. The modern version of this is now akin to the Trail Ambassador program.

Prior to my tenure as president, we had initiated a number of photo projects for the Forest Service Archaeologists. These were substantial add-ons to the activities of the Cultural Resources Committee. Initially a small group of volunteers started scanning the archaeologists slides and prints to digital format. Ultimately over 100,000 scans were done of these data sets within only several months. The digital files were organized by site and subject. Jerry Walters, with a dedicated group of volunteers, then spent several years classifying and annotating the file information as a searchable database. The scanning project ultimately was expanded to imagery for the Forest Service Biologist, Recreation and Range groups. To date, several hundred thousand images and reports have been scanned to digital format and organized to be relatively easily recovered. This also resulted in the FOF purchasing multiple 4 terrabyte external hard drives to keep Forest Service up to date with incremental additions of digital data. With the recent assignment of a new District Archaeologist, the updates are continuing. The current hard drive data sets have on the order of 3 TB of data on each, including a substantial volume of FOF material. At the time of completion of scanning the initial archaeology image set, the project was identified as one of the largest projects of its' type in support of a Federal agency in the country. More recently this is the norm for almost all agencies, museums and organizations.

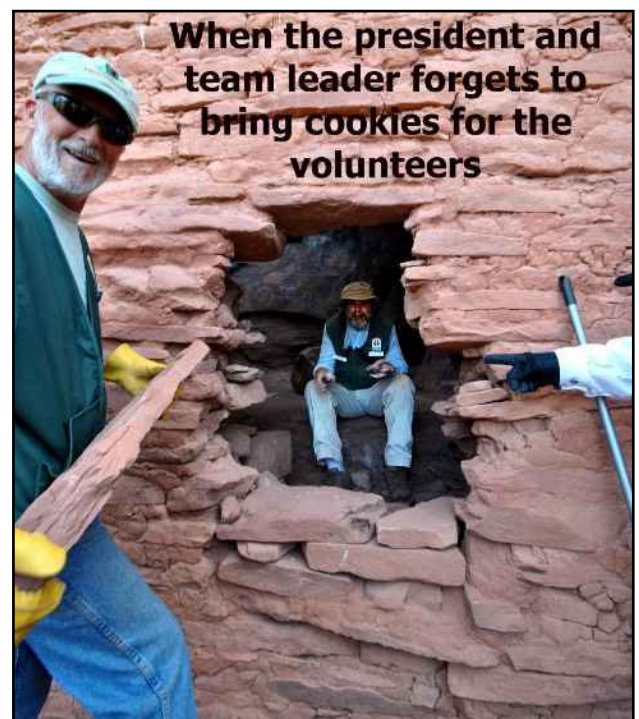
In early 2013, many of the volunteers who had been involved with the scanning project created a photo team to photo document rock art, structures and features at the Honanki Cultural Heritage Site. By the end of 2013 initial detailed photo documentation to the order of approximately 8000 photos at Honanki was complete and work was initiated at Palatki and then V bar V followed by Woo Ranch. All of which had initial data sets available by the end of 2014. The goal at the time, was to supplant the archaeologists data

set with imagery of every rock art panel, structure and feature at each site. Basically, cover every square meter of each site. For the most part, we succeeded. The decision was made (because it was not only valuable but also fun) to continue at other sites in the Red Rock Ranger District. As of today, over 500 archaeology sites have detailed photo documentation that can be combined with site surveys carried out by Forest Service archaeologists and volunteers. Due to several issues that were identified at Palatki and Honanki, the Forest Service requested the possibility of aerial coverage of parts of the sites. In 2013, with authorization, a drone was flown over both Palatki and Honanki to acquire aerial imagery, although flying at these sites is normally not allowed. The 2013 imagery was able to be used to create photogrammetric models (not planned at the time) of parts of the sites. Over the years, the initial data sets were the basis and training ground for expanding both the coverage and technology employed in these and other projects. 3D photogrammetry (due to District Archaeologist Travis Bone asking us to look into it in 2016) has been used for the Dust Impact Study, Graffiti impact compared to the original documentation photos and most recently the application of precise measurement via 3D photogrammetry to quantify lichen impact on rock art and rock fracture collapse impacting the sites. The Sedona Friends of the Forest is now one of the largest publishers of cultural resources related 3D models, via our Sketchfab.com account in the USA and possibly in the world.

One of the roles of the FOF president, is to directly interact with Forest Service representatives to make both their and the volunteer's efforts as easy and successful as possible. It is also to provide information when required. One of the biggest takeaways from research while president was to be able to answer questions on the impact of volunteerism. The average

participation rate of members of organizations, especially volunteer service organizations is typically less than 10-15% with a very high percentage under 10%. For most of its' history, FOF member participation in projects (volunteers with report-able hours benefiting the Forest and our community) is approximately 50%. This number is exceptional in our society. The value we provide to the community is not just high, it is priceless.

I appreciate the opportunity to be involved with many of our projects whether as a promoter, participant, leader or president. Having said that, the photo below shows how volunteers react when the president asks them to do a lot of work and forgets to bring cookies.....



Spence Gustav

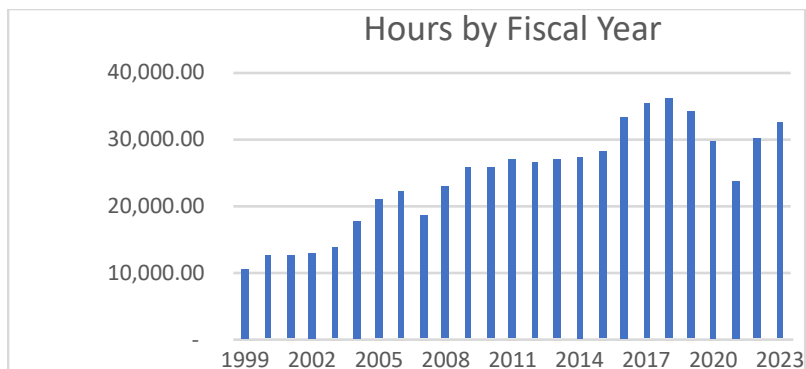
Jennifer Young 2015 - 2016

Joining the Friends was one of the first things I did when I moved full time to Sedona in 2007. In my early volunteering on the Orchard Committee, I met quite a band of Friends stalwarts. From there, I was drafted onto the FOF Board and later wrangled into the President role in 2015-2016. As I said many times, that job was made easy by all the support, advice and involvement of volunteer colleagues. Some highlights of those years included the startup of the Fossil Creek Air Quality Monitoring Committee, kick-started by Marilyn and Brian Painchaud. The Graffiti Removal Committee grew by leaps and bounds under Jerry Piepiora's leadership, introducing new work techniques

and growing membership. Expanding the Interpretive Programs at the Visitor Center was an area of particular interest to me, including several standing room only events. FOF took a few steps into the digital age in these years - taking the Branching Out Newsletter to digital only, offering online membership renewal and JHA renewals, as well as further work by Bob Haizmann with reporting apps supporting several committees. The research began which led to the full introduction of NEON in 2017 as well as website enhancements. I look back on my active years in FOF with great appreciation for being part of these efforts.

Friends of the Forest Sedona	
History of Volunteer Hours by Fiscal Year (all available)	
Fiscal Year	Total Hours
1999	10,619.20
2000	12,566.75
2001	12,723.00
2002	13,265.80
2003	14,008.30
2004	17,821.00
2005	21,074.25
2006	22,361.00
2007	18,840.85
2008	23,211.00
2009	25,655.00
2010	26,025.50
2011	27,212.25
2012	26,811.50
2013	26,895.25
2014	27,614.75
2015	28,157.25
2016	33,454.20
2017	35,464.85
2018	36,127.00
2019	34,322.95
2020	29,887.60
2021	23,990.66
2022	30,294.15
2023	32,593.82
2024 thru Feb	16,415.84
30 years	610,997.88

Jennifer Young



Manny Romero 2017 - 2018

As I look back on my time as President of the Friends, I am amazed both by the quality of our membership and the sheer scope of our activities.

We broke records for volunteer hours donated; we developed remarkable new technologies and new initiatives; and earned two national awards.

In October 2017, the Friends were selected by the Forest Service for the Chief's Honor Award as the best volunteer organization in the country. "This is a huge honor for the District and for Friends of the Forest," said Coconino National Forest Supervisor **Laura Jo West**. We earned this award (the highest in the Forest Service) for outstanding work in the category of *Fostering Volunteerism and Service*, commented Volunteer Coordinator **Justin Loxley**.

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. The award acknowledges work in graffiti removal (lead by **Jerry Piepiora**); trail lead by **Jerry Checchia**); archaeological photo documentation (lead by **Spence Gustav**); and a smartphone trails reporting application developed by **Bob Haizmann**.

Also in August, we launched a new administrative and communication tool called 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.

A milestone in Friends history was set in mid-January 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.

Air Quality Testing for the Mazatzal and Pine Mountain Wilderness Area became our newest committee in 2017. Webmaster **Marilyn Painchaud** stepped up to lead. A year later she responded to a request from District Wildlife Officer **Janie Agyagos** for assistance in coordinating assignments in wildlife, fish and plant projects.

Friends lichen expert **Garry Neil** began an inventory of lichens on the Red Rock District and 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.

In another first for the Friends, Graffiti Chair **Jerry Piepiora** organized a special training workshop on graffiti removal from patinated sandstone. Team member and artist **Nori Thorne** developed a technique that conceals graffiti on rocks covered with "desert varnish," eliminating abrasive sanding of the fragile rock.

It was truly an honor to serve such a talented, enthusiastic and creative group.

Manny Romero

Grace Under Pressure

The most lasting memory that I will retain from my term as President will be the grace we demonstrated under pressure.

At the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019, we experienced the longest government shutdown in our nations’ history – 35 days, during which activities on the Red Rock District stopped. 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. But our important outdoor work stopped.

After agreement was reached on the budget, we all got back to work and had a very productive year: we created Job Descriptions for various FOF roles, unveiled a new and improved website (thank you Marilyn Painchaud!), updated our Standard Operating Procedures, created the Wildlife/Fish/Rare Plants Committee, celebrated our 25th Anniversary (complete with a new logo) and resumed outdoor work.

2020 presented us with an even more difficult challenge, as COVID shut down all activities starting on

March 15. The safety of our volunteers, Forest Service employees and visitors took priority over all else, and activities came to a screeching halt.

We took the first step toward returning to normal in early July when District Ranger Amy Tinderholt authorized small groups from our graffiti and photographic teams to resume activity, following clear safety guidelines. Gradually, docent activity at V-Bar-V and limited staffing outside at the Visitor Center resumed, only to be shut down again due to a surge in cases. It wasn’t until Spring of 2021 that we were able to fully reengage.

The challenges of 2019 and 2020 demonstrated that our fantastic group of volunteers is ready, willing and able to perform our work whenever conditions allow. Through any adversity, we help keep the Red Rock District one of the jewels of the National Forest system.

Thank you all for helping make Friends of the Forest one of the very best volunteer organizations anywhere. You made the experience of serving as your President singularly rewarding.

Craig Swanson

PREVENTIVE SEARCH & RESCUE				
FOF Setup Location	FOF impact on visitors	2022	2023	Total
THE CRACK	Contacts:	2,193	3,492	5,685
	Turns:	401	315	716
DEVILS BRIDGE	Contacts:	5,681	6,771	12,452
	Turns:	772	986	1,758
Total contacts were		18,087		
Total "Turns" were		2,474		

Annie Glickstein 2021 - 2022

I remember walking through Walgreens and getting a phone call from **Craig Swanson**. I knew I shouldn't have answered it...he's good at convincing you to do something...like being President of an organization like Friends of the Forest. At that time, there were over 500 volunteers and/or donors listed on our books. I loved volunteering for the organization and I just hoped that I could keep it going. I love our volunteers and enjoy watching them get involved in things they love doing.

When I stepped up as President, I had **Bev Jackson** as my Vice-President for a part of my term. When Bev left I was thrilled to have **Jerry Checchia** step up to the task. My goal was to get all of our committees back up and running, post Covid shut down. Some chairpersons were ready to step down to let new blood in and I found a few. **Dale Evans** agreed to take on the then Trail Patrol (now Trail Ambassador). He worked with **Brady VanDragt and Jean & Mike Ober** to create the PSAR (Preventive Search & Rescue) portion of the Trail Patrol (which has now splintered off). Air Quality and Water Monitoring committees were combined into one and **Cynthia Malowitz** stepped up for that one. Under Cynthia's guidance, the water monitoring group with Friends of the Forest just recently won the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Ambassador Award for our work on Oak Creek and Fossil Creek. I don't understand how Craig talked me into the Co-Chair of Wildlife / Fish / Rare Plants, but I did that and took it over from **Marilyn Painchaud** while I was President. I still love it, but could use a co-chair...hint, hint, hint. **Alan Glickstein** (yes, my hubby) took on the role of NEON administrator from **Marilyn and Peg Kern**. **Ed Bustya** popped up out of nowhere and became our new webmaster which was really cool.

Our Mission has not changed in this long tenure of service. We are still a nonprofit, nonpolitical organization, with membership open to all who are dedicated to maintaining, protecting, and restoring the scenic beauty of our National Forest lands in the Sedona area for the enjoyment and use of present and future generations. We continue to build a partnership with the Red Rock Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest. The President and Vice President have pre-board meetings with the District Ranger, Deputy District

Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator. They also join us at our board meetings to keep the membership apprised of the gap between needs and resources. We provide teamwork and financial resources to assist the Forest Service in its day-to-day operations.

With that mindset, the Visitor Center started opening back up with tables outside. Limited numbers of visitors in the building started to be let in with someone counting at the door. We followed the FS federal rules since we are an extension of them, Brady and I watched the covid daily statistics of numbers of cases in our area to see if we could work or had to hold off.

TM&C was able to get back to work. It was decided to try 15 volunteers signing up and splitting them into groups of 5 with distancing. Docents started getting back to their jobs. Graffiti was able to get groups of five back out. Little by little the other committees worked their way up to full activity. River Rangers were able to drive in the vehicles with the employees again. There were so many details like masks in vehicles and not talking about whether or not someone was vaccinated or not. The Board Meetings became virtual and stayed virtual for quite a long time. Some members really enjoyed that because then they could listen in without going out. Others preferred being in person and didn't like the technology. We worked our way up to a hybrid method of in person / remote. Having to learn the phrase of "assume unanimous consent unless we see hands up" was necessary to get through the voting process. We had to look at the zoom audience and carefully monitor for hands up or waving and then turn to the audience in attendance and get their consent.

Covid caused the masses to want to get outside, and so they did. Preventive Search & Rescue was resurrected because of the onslaught of unprepared visitors to Devil's Bridge and Bell Trail (the Crack). The temperatures were high and the level of preparedness was very low. That committee took off and tents, tables, chairs, water, coolers, electrolytes, maps, and volunteers all came together. Every weekend from Memorial Day through Labor Day, visitors were greeted with information, common sense, and even redirection when necessary.

We had so many false starts and stops throughout my term. Wildfires, government shutdowns, monsoons and leadership changes. We didn't have a volunteer coordinator for a long time before **Brady VanDragt** came on board. Both the lightning sparked Backbone fire (40,855 acres burned) and the Rafael fire (78,065 acres burned) kept us out of the forest in June and July; a challenging time indeed. **Amy Tinderholt**, as District

Ranger was in disaster mode for months. By September we had flash floods during the monsoons in the burn scar areas which caused a lot of damage. Once we were back open, our TM&C crews were out clearing mud-clogged culverts with shovels and hard work. Trees were downed that needed to be removed on most of the trails.



Left: **Ernie DiMillo**
Right: **Jerry Checchia**
Digging for a drain on Bell Rock Pathway



The crew clearing the drain and a new channel on Bell Rock Pathway.



Front to back: **Ernie DiMillo, Annie Glickstein, Tim Fogarty, Melissa Pontikes and Jerry Checchia**

Cleared culvert drains on Bell Rock Pathway



Many in-person processes changed. For example, we started holding remote board meetings and purchased a zoom account, we began a process of remote requests for Red Rock Passes through emails rather than going into the Admin Building and meet with **Rochelle** to get our annual complimentary Red Rock Pass so we could park when out on projects. Just one more Covid change. Our in-person board meetings allowed us to have a rack of FOF branded clothing, water bottles, patches, etc. as merchandise we could sell. The merchandising process went to sleep as a result of these remote work attitudes. It looks like we are going to be starting up an on-line shop where it will be more convenient to purchase a FOF -branded things, including a dog scarf! Because we are a non-profit, they will be sold at cost.

As Craig told me when I took on the role, it's easy, just do what the Forest Service wants / needs and you can't go wrong. With that guidance, I always go back to our Primary Goals. I'm so glad our founders had clear goals in mind that we continue to look to 30 years later.

- **Help Forest Service maintain its trails and cultural resources**
- **Reduce environmental damage caused by increasing human impact**
- **Assist in education and improve communication with the community**
- **Enhance the forest experience for visitors and residents alike**

Annie Glickstein

Jerry Checchia 2023 -2024

When I was asked to be President I have to admit that I was very nervous and wondered how in the world a retired UPS driver from NYC was going to do it, but here we are in my 2nd year and it's been a wonderful learning experience and has gone by so fast.

I owe it all to an amazing support team, from my VP to former Presidents and long time members. This organization is top notch and runs like a well oiled Hydroseeder.

From the Board members to the committee chairs and all the technical stuff, I can't thank everyone enough for all their support & guidance. Someone always seems to

step up when we need them most and I am grateful for you.

I am honored and humbled to be a part of this organization and look forward to helping it continue to grow and support the FS as we've been doing since 1994. This year we celebrate our 30th year of partnering with the USFS so give yourselves a BIG round of applause,

YOU ALL ROCK!!!

Jerry Checchia

Forest Service

A few early FOF roles with the Forest Service. My earliest memories are of:

Al Cornell's orienteering and survival classes – still going strong and in demand today!

Volunteers helping at the front desk. As a collateral duty, **Justine Kusner** would faithfully clip out news paper articles that reference the Forest Service We used those binders frequently! Now, the Regional Office has someone that does this daily, electronically.

But also (a bit later): Our wranglers would help exercise the FS horses while making great public contacts – they'd get a truck, hook up a trailer, and

take horses to trailheads and mingle with the recreating public. Great relations!

Volunteers helped pack materials into remote sites. See attached pic of **Diane Greathouse** with Chili or Willie. Volunteers helped repair riparian enclosure fencing In my program, we used volunteers for surveys including bat roost exit counts (with red lights, way back then – so archaic!) and peregrine falcon surveys.

The FOF model was so successful and other folks across the nation wanted help starting similar programs, that **Helen Campbell** was assigned the role of FOF Ambassador and traveled all over the country to share the wealth. 4X4 and jeep training once we got the first jeep in the region!

Janie Agyagos, Wildlife Biologist

Diane Greathouse with packhorse



4 x 4 Training



Riparian Enclosure fencing