



# VIP2VIP



Season 8, Volume 5

Big Bend National Park's Volunteer Newsletter

March 2, 2009

## Current Volunteers

### Persimmon Gap

Carl & Arlene Redstone—Visitor Center (2nd)

### Castolon

Maryann & Ted Rowan—Visitor Center (3rd)

Barbara & Sam Tobias—Visitor Center (new)

Joan & Ray Kane—Camp Host (3rd)

Steve & Tina Ehrman—Backcountry (3rd)

### Rio Grande Village

Roy & Mary Urban—Visitor Center—(new)

Pat & Marshall McCall—Visitor Center (2nd)

Jane & Bill Berry—Camp Host (new)

Roy, Aletha & Kenny Ellis -Camp Host (3rd)

Kenn Sutton—Special Projects (3rd)

### Chisos Basin

Jim & Ginny Herrick—Visitor Center (11th)

Ed Davis -Camp Host (4th)

Tim Wolcott -Camp Host (new)

### Panther Junction

John & Mary Kelling—River Patrol—(2nd)

John & Elaine Jonker - River Patrol (2nd)

Linda Sutton—Dispatch (3rd)

Natalie Thompson (SCA)

Kellie Mattingly (SCA)

### Part-time

Jim Bishop—BBNHA

Kim Cutler -Horses

David Ewing—RGV Backcountry

Steve Harper- Resource Management

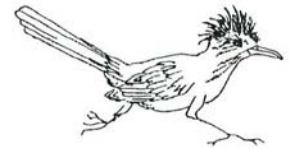
Christiann Tillman-Administration

Steve Wick- Resource Management

Reine Wonite- Administration

\*Number in ( ) indicates years of service at BBNP

## *Songs of Parting* By Bud Frankenger



Like many other older volunteers, I have already lived a relatively long and satisfying life. I have raised my children, completed my career, and departed from fulltime work. "So what are you doing at Big Bend anyway?" I'm often asked, especially by those who know that I spent many years camping and hiking here when I lived and worked in South Texas.

Usually, people expect practical answers: it's a fairly warm winter retreat; it's a way to cut expenses for winter travel; it's a means of giving something back to a park that has influenced my life; or it's an annual rendezvous with park friends I've known for years. There is, of course, some truth in each of these answers, but no combination of such practical reasons adequately accounts for my returning here. There are also many "intrinsic values" in living at Big Bend, reasons for being here that have no practical value such as being warm, cutting costs, making a contribution, or even visiting friends.

I'm also here for reasons that are whole and complete in and of themselves: the crimson skies at dawn over the Sierra del Carmen; the pink clouds and hillsides at sunrise and sunset; the evening shadows illuminating the tortured collapse of desert terrain; the heart pounding views of desert mountains and river flood plain from the South Rim or Emory Peak; the quiet murmur of a desert spring dripping over maiden hair fern; the startling flash of a cactus flower. Each of these is a "song of parting," for each is fleeting and ephemeral, gone almost as soon as it begins.

Such events remind me that perhaps there are no greater values than those experienced in the present moment, that life is actually wonderful (truly full-of-wonder). And there are reminders everywhere that such intrinsic values have enriched the lives of people for many centuries in the Big Bend country. It is not, I believe, an accident that the campsites and mortar holes of native peoples, some who passed this way ten thousand years or more ago, are located where sunrise and sunset and clear night skies could be enjoyed.

Ancient peoples whose names we never knew lived here. Seeing their stone hearths or finding their grinding holes in bedrock impart a sense of continuity and continuation. We are taking our place in the long hand of time that has scattered humans in the desert. In the evenings, I notice that even the mountains are melting, their hillsides and long alluvial fans resembling ice cream scoops on a summer day. The very ground on which we stand, the mountains upon which we hike are shape-shifters, no more permanent in geologic time than we are in historic time.

At Big Bend I am reminded that each of us is also a "song of parting," taking our place among a caravan of travelers who have come before. And so I am here, in these winter days just before another birthday, to celebrate, with laughter like the canyon wren's, that life is sweet, truly full of wonder, and best enjoyed in the immediate now. If I cannot stop time or recapture youth or unravel the mystery of life, I can at Big Bend embrace the gifts of creation, and express my personal and private gratitude for being part of the amazing phenomenon we call human life.

## **Understanding the Take Pride in America Program**

In 2003 the Take Pride in America program was instituted to seek, support and recognize volunteers who work to improve our public parks, forests, historic sites, and other public areas. Take Pride In America (TPIA) honors volunteers who have contributed a significant number of volunteer service hours through awards. In 2007 the Take Pride in America office joined forces with USA Freedom Corps, combining the awards programs of the two groups. This resulted in more levels at which awards can be received and also a certain amount of confusion in the naming of the awards, as you can see below.

Volunteer coordinators are responsible for tracking and certifying the hours of service for each volunteer and hours earned with the National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife, National Forest Service and BLM can all be included in the awards calculation. I do need the name of your supervisor at your previous volunteer location or a copy of an awards certificate stating the hours earned in order to include volunteer time earned in other parks. A volunteer can earn awards on a cumulative basis and does not need to achieve the award level during a specified length of time. I will submit everyone's hours to TPIA for recognition and the awards will be distributed as part of our Awards Ceremony on April 6.

### **Award Name and Number of Volunteer Hours Required**

The Presidential Volunteer Service Bronze Award 100-249 volunteer hours



The Presidential Volunteer Service Silver Award 250-499 volunteer hours

The Presidential Volunteer Service Gold Award 500-999 volunteer hours



The Take Pride Bronze Award 1,000 volunteer hours

The Take Pride Silver Award 2,000 volunteer hours

The Take Pride Gold Award 2,500 volunteer hours

The Secretarial Volunteer Service Award 3,000 volunteer hours

The Presidential Volunteer Service Award 4,000 volunteer



### **Volunteers at Big Bend that have received the 4,000 hour Presidential Volunteer Service Award**

Bill & Barbara Baldwin  
Royce and Royann Brockett  
Steve and Tina Erhman  
Bob and Sally Jones

Bob Wirt  
Mark Kirtley  
~This upcoming awards ceremony, Ginny and Jim Herrick will be receiving this honor

Another offshoot of the Take Pride in America program is the opportunity to earn an annual pass to all the federal lands (USFS, BLM, NPS, USFWS). Volunteer hours that have been earned since January 1, 2007 will be counted and 500 hours must be earned in order to get the pass. After you receive your first free pass, another 500 hours must be earned in order to be eligible for a 2nd pass. Of course, this is only of real value to folks that are younger than 62. The passes are not transferrable. The easiest way to obtain a pass is to come see me, however, there is a website (which I did not find very user-friendly) that is supposed to work. [www.takepride.gov](http://www.takepride.gov) (look at the bottom right where it says "Record 500 Volunteer Hours.")

## Where have you been since your last volunteer experience in Big Bend.....

**Pat & Marshall McCall** are back for their second volunteer experience at Big Bend and can be found at the Rio Grande Village Visitor Center. They are originally from Virginia, but have lived in Wisconsin for many years. They became full-time RV'ers in 2003, exploring state and national parks. In fall of 2007 and 2008 they volunteered at the LBJ State Park & Historic Site in Stonewall, Texas. Prior to their arrival at Big Bend, they volunteered at Fort Leaton Visitor Center (a part of Big Bend Ranch State Park). Past-times include walking their big dog, Blackie, easy hiking, exploring back roads, oil painting (Marshall), quilting & computers (Pat), meeting locals, NASCAR and football, especially the Packers (Marshall) and reading (Pat). In the last year they have also acquired an second pet, a Maine Coon cat named Bentley.



**John and Mary Kelling** are back to help with the Rio Rangers. Mary was the Pre-K teacher in fall of 2008 and they wanted to return this year. (The Pre-K Program ran out of four-year olds last month and is on hold until some more move into the park.) This is their third visit to Big Bend and their second volunteer experience here.

Mary and John left Big Bend shortly after Christmas, 2007 and returned to Connecticut. While at home, Mary continued with her Hospice visits, numerous church activities, and substitute teaching. John is a SAR pilot for the Connecticut Wing of the Civil Air Patrol, sings in the church choir with Mary, and is active in the Washington Lodge #70 of the Masons.

They traveled last summer to Norway, Sweden, and England with John's sister and brother-in-law. They returned to the United States by way of a transatlantic cruise to Boston from England. Shortly before their recent arrival in Big Bend, they had dinner with the Angelina Yost and her family in Las Vegas. The Moore/Yosts are all doing well, and asked John and Mary to say Hi! to everyone. Welcome back John and Mary!



Mary and the Pre-K kids Fall of 2007



John - 2009 ready for the river

## Where have you been since your last volunteer experience in Big Bend.....continued

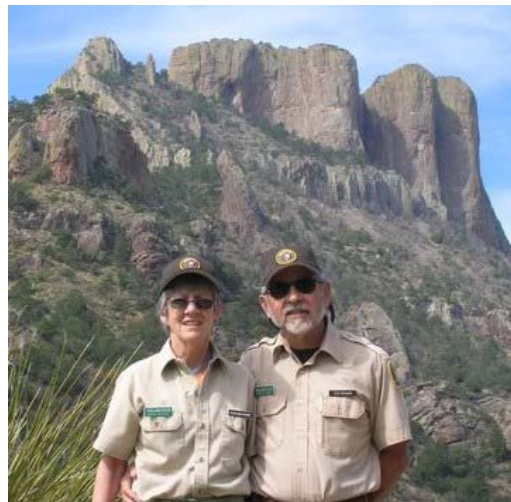
This is **Ginny and Jim Herrick**'s eleventh year of volunteering at Big Bend National Park and they start this season with an impressive with 4,000 hours of service. Ginny and Jim started their volunteer career at Rio Grande Village Visitor Center in 1999, worked a season at Persimmon Gap Visitor Center, and are now a familiar sight at the Chisos Basin Visitor Center. In addition to their excellent customer service in the visitor center, Jim assists in documenting oral histories, and Ginny is creating a reference notebook on the plants found in the Chisos Mountains. Over the years, Ginny and Jim have had the opportunity to become very knowledgeable about the park, and have also conducted interpretive programs. They are originally from Columbus, Ohio, but currently have a home in Las Cruces, NM. During their free time, Ginny and Jim enjoy hiking and bike-camping.

**Ted and Maryann Rowan** sent me this email around Thanksgiving....they did indeed arrive at Big Bend on January 23rd and are now settled into the Castolon Visitor Center routine.

"Maryann and I are getting excited about returning to the park. The travel plans have already started.

While the trailer is stored for the winter, the computer is working over time. Each year we try to find a different way to Big Bend. Always seeking the ultimate "warm route." So far we have had to deal with cold most of the way. This year we will travel along the Gulf Coast. To get to the Gulf Coast we must travel from Massachusetts, through Rhode Island, across Connecticut, touch New York and New Jersey, cut through Pennsylvania, nip Maryland, West Virginia to travel the long way through Virginia. All

that on the first day. The second day includes Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. We will try to get warm and rested in Mobile for a day. Then on to Louisiana and Texas. Another day in Texas, a big state, and we are in Fort Stockton. Here we will change the oil in the truck, wash the trailer, and stock up for Big Bend. After a couple of days we'll head down to Big Bend. A part of volunteering is the trip. The planning and the sight seeing along the way. Oh yea, were planning a trip on our way home. Last winter our total mileage was almost 10,000. From Big Bend we headed west and visited several park using our National Park Volunteer Pass. This year, who knows!"



## Spotlight on John Welsh and Diana Warner

by Jane Brown

Diana Warner and John Welsh may be first time volunteers at Big Bend National Park but they are not strangers to the west Texas region. They have spent the last seven winters escaping the Michigan winter while volunteering at several sites in Texas. The couple spent three winters at Hueco Tanks State Park near El Paso where they served as campground hosts and Diana received training as a certified rock art guide. The next four winters found them at Big Bend Ranch State Park where they worked as ranch hosts and wranglers.



In the summer, Diana and John teach classes on a science lab disguised as a tall ship, a 77 foot schooner. This sailing classroom is supported by the Inland Seas Education Association. Their mission is to use shipboard and onshore experimental educational programs to inspire young people to pursue academic interests related to the Great lakes, particularly the sciences and to enhance public understanding and stewardship of the Great Lakes and global freshwater systems. John and Diana instruct groups of students, 6th grade and up, about invasive species, navigation, fish, sailing, water quality, benthos (what lives in the muck at the bottom of the lake) and plankton. More information about the Inland Seas Education Association can be found at [www.schoolship.org](http://www.schoolship.org).

During three weeks every spring, Diana and John travel to Sanibel Island, Florida where Diana helps out at the Clinic for Rehabilitation of Wildlife. There she does whatever is needed...cleaning cages, feeding babies, and processing food for the residents. This wildlife shelter is one of three in the United States that will accept any indigenous wildlife; raptors, sea turtles, alligators, opossums and raccoons are their most frequent patients. She plans her arrival to coincide with the departure of the majority of the winter human visitors (and volunteers). This is also the same time that there is so much work to do as new animal babies arrive daily needing care and feeding.



John and Diana have been working in the East District here at Big Bend on backcountry patrol and John has been taking care of the horses at RGV. John has also been helping with other tasks, in the "other duties as assigned and agreed upon" category, as he helped the RGV Rangers prepare for the structural fire training. John and Diana's schedule has exhausted me just writing about it! We thank them for their volunteer services here at Big Bend this fall and winter.

### **Hiking Club will have an abbreviated schedule in March due to anticipated Spring Break Exhaustion**

March 10    Tuesday    9:00 am    Pine Canyon

We will try to squeeze in one hike to Pine Canyon on March 10th. I will need to know who is planning on attending so that transportation can be arranged.

Reserve your spot now via email at [Jane\\_Brown@nps.gov](mailto:Jane_Brown@nps.gov) or by phone 432-477-1195. Hopefully the heat will abate by then....or not!

## Events in the Area

**Wednesday, March 4– Community V.I.P Potluck Dinner**—Panther Junction Community Room-6:30 pm Bring a covered dish to share, your favorite beverage, plates and silverware. Iced tea provided.

**March 13-14 Fourth Annual Cactus & Succulent Festival** at the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, Ft. Davis—tour the greenhouse, browse special exhibits, participate in special events and workshops, and enjoy the desert in bloom. 432-364-2499 or [www.cdri.org](http://www.cdri.org)

**March 18 & 25th, 11 am-5:30 pm—Terlingua Artists Market** located at the Party Barn near the Laundramat at the Y junction of 118 & 170 in Terlingua.

**March 19-22**– Davis Mountains Nature Conservancy Open House - See article below for details.

A BIG Thank You to Claudia Arnberger for all the goodies that she provided for the coffee breaks during Spring Orientation!

### Ongoing Activities

**Yoga** – Thurs. nights, 6-7:15 pm at San Vicente School Gym. Drop-in class \$10 or monthly \$30. Instructor: Cynthia Hood (432-371-2877 or [cynthiahood1@hotmail.com](mailto:cynthiahood1@hotmail.com)).

**Real Life Fellowship Telecast** - 223 Bobcat Loop, Panther Junction, Sat. 7 pm.

### **NON-DENOMINATIONAL ADULT BIBLE STUDY**

Every Sunday from 10:00-11:00 am in the school meeting room

For more info please contact Rhonda Binion 477-2423

### We are looking for a few good stories!

There is now a blog on the Volunteer Page of the BIBE website and we are looking for stories, reminiscences and personal narratives about your volunteer experience at Big Bend. Email any contributions to me at [Jane\\_Brown@nps.gov](mailto:Jane_Brown@nps.gov) and I will post your musings and a photo.

## Davis Mountains Nature Conservancy Hosts Open House Weekend

Thursday, March 19 through Sunday March 22

By Jane Brown

If you have never been to the Davis Mountains Preserve, this is an opportunity that is not to be missed. I attended this event last year and it was great!

The 32,000-acre Davis Mountains Preserve will open to the public for picnics, self-guided hiking, birding, car camping, backpacking, bring-your-own-horse riding and more. Come visit one of the jewels of West Texas and explore these "sky islands" rising from the Chihuahuan Desert Trail. Activities vary so please call for more information. Reservations are not required for day use, but are suggested for overnight stays. Please, no pets are allowed at the preserve.

**Fee:** free and open to the public

**Directions:** From Fort Davis take Hwy 118 north. About 10 miles north of the University of Texas McDonald Observatory is the Lawrence E. Wood picnic area. The Preserve gate is about one-quarter mile north of the picnic area, on the left. There is a small Nature Conservancy sign on the gate. Please sign in at the Mclvor Conservation Center.

**Contact:** For questions, directions or more information, contact the West Texas Program office in Alpine at (432) 837-5954 or email Crawford Marginot at [cmarginot@tnc.org](mailto:cmarginot@tnc.org).