

Early Days of the Santa Catalina Ranger District Volunteer Patrol

This is a brief history of the patrol, how it was organized and some names of the "pioneers". A notebook with copies of minutes, letters from the F.S regarding duties, limitations and obligations is in the possession of the patrol secretary.

The background for volunteer groups starts with the Mounted Assist Unit. The MAU was formed in the 1980's to help patrol Sabino Canyon by a group of horse owners who bring their mounts to the canyon and ride the trails. They are in uniform and have radios. They have been more active in the past but the group still does some patrol today. In the floods during the 1990's they worked with the SCVP to keep people away from the overflowing stream. Patrol members observed from the picnic overlook and radioed MAU people when visitors tried to sneak into the water so the riders could intercept violators.

Next came the Bike Patrol started by Fred Blatt who still rides hard on the bike patrol though now it has been incorporated into SCVP. (a write up of the start up of the bike patrol is attached)

By 1997 Tom Quinn and after him Dean Mcalister, our District Rangers realized that there is a need for uniformed trail hikers to assist visitors, be the eyes for a small law enforcement staff and help where needed during events in the area. Word was put out to members of Volunteer Naturalists, Southern Arizona Hiking Club and other groups and the organization for SCVP commenced.

The oldest minutes of an organizing group are from 1/28/97, with notes from an organizing committee on 12/11/96. Tom Quinn was the District Ranger at that time. Original directors for SCVP at the 4/24/97 meeting were D. Tornback, J. Ettelson, D. Dobrin, M. Peterson, L. Klebdow, W. Borton, H. Wilhemsen, R. Mensching, M. Rudd and F. Blatt. A general meeting was held 5/29/97 with F.S. personnel to discuss Bear Patrol, USFS recreation, Law enforcement and Forestry techniques. Marilee Peterson reported on support from Friends of Sabino Canyon. (Friends donated \$3,475 as start up funds for the patrol)

A general meeting was held on 10/3/98. The patrol had 17 members and more were needed. Nominations for the board at that meeting were Fred Blatt, Marilee Peterson, Dick Dobrin, Ricki Mensching, Marilyn Hart and Peter Stotzheim. On 10/8/97 an interview committee consisting of R. Mensching, H. Wilhelmson and M. Peterson was formed to increase membership.

Patrol officers for 1998 were Marilee Peterson, President, Dick Dobrin, Vice Pres. Ricki Mensching, Treasurer, Fred Blatt, Secretary, Asst. secretary, Marilyn Hart and Tash Lawrence, director. Marilee served as President for several years, Dick served two terms as president and Marilee took back the position until the current board took over.

On March 6, 1997 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the USFS and The volunteer Patrol Association. It said "With its limited human resources the Forest Service cannot meet the increasing needs of the public. By entering into this understanding the Cooperator (SCVP) can assist the F.S. by providing information relative to trail and trailhead locations, outdoor safety practices, low impact resources practices, federal regulations and Special Closure Orders, natural and cultural history of the area, and other forest activities will be disseminated to the public. In addition, emergency situations and observed violations of federal regulations can be reported by SCVP allowing the F.S. to respond to these situations in a more efficient manner"

Bylaws were drafted in Nov. 1996, and the Patrol was incorporated. In 1997 the Volunteer Naturalists provided a handbook for members of the patrol who required reference to various plant, birds and animals in the area.

The first report of hours was from October 1997 to Sept. 30 1998 as follows: D. Bertelson 354; D. Dobrin 225; B. Cirrito 146; M. Koenig 113; M. Elkind 92; P. Stutzheim 90. Total hours for the year (the first in operation) were 1,342.

The above are dry reports typical of an organization getting off the ground. Much progress has been made since the start and there is a feeling of satisfaction from both the F.S. and the members of the patrol. The document mentioned can be viewed in the archives held by the Secretary of S.C.V.P.

We will try to add personal stories from members of the patrol from time to time. Dick Dobrin has submitted a narrative of three early events:

- It was reported that there were nude bathers at Anderson Dam (tram stop 8) A F.S. FPO and Dick responded to the scene and sure enough a couple were indeed frolicking in the pools there. After having them dress we discovered that they had bicycles hidden in the bushes. The F.S. employee drove his vehicle back and Dick walked the (now dressed) couple out of the canyon pushing their bikes.
- Another event took place when a group of students was having a wonderful beach party (including beer, wine and soft drinks) in Sabino creek near the Bluff trail. The Visitor Center Manager (a former LEO) but at that time acting as an FPO came to the site and had the students empty every bottle of alcoholic beverages into the sand and carry out the empties.
- Another time (on a holiday) we found two bicycles locked to a sign at tram stop one. A compliance officer (currently one of our LEO) brought his pick up truck to the site and the two of us lifted the bikes over the top of the sign; then we removed them from the canyon. When the bikers came to get their bikes they were very surprised to see the sign but no transportation for them. They eventually walked to the V.C. to report stolen bicycles and were relieved to get theirs back. Not even a ticket was issued, but I sure the observed the bike rules from that day on.