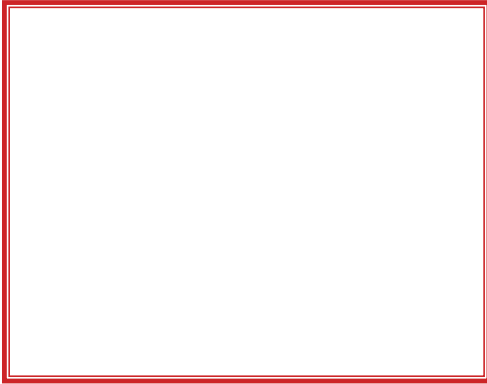


# PARTNERS IN PALO DURO CANYON FOUNDATION



## *On The Edge!*



Pioneer Amphitheater from CCC/Texas Trail. Site of  
the Play TEXAS

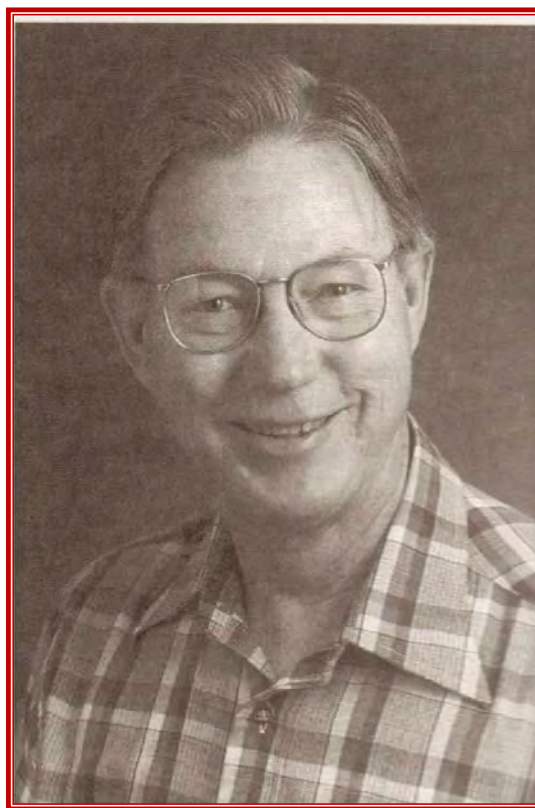
## My Friend Fred

Frederick W. Rathjen, professor of Texas and Western history at West Texas A&M University for many years and retired professor emeritus was also a founding member of Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation. He was a true friend of Palo Duro Canyon State Park and was on the Partners Board of Advisors until his death at the age of 80. He was also a friend to those of us who served with him on the Board. This column is about Fred, but not the Fred of the many professional accomplishments, honors and accolades which he earned as a professor of history. This column is about Fred, our friend, but especially about Fred, my friend.

I first met Fred when he was a guest lecturer in an English class of a colleague of mine at Amarillo College. When I asked him whether Larry McMurtry had plagiarized some of the material concerning the life of Charles Goodnight in *Lonesome Dove*, he responded with, "You can't plagiarize facts," a rather profound notion to me. Even though one can recognize elements of Goodnight in the character of Woodrow Call, he is not Charles Goodnight.

The next time I met Fred was at an art gallery in Dumas, Texas, some months later. Fred immediately knew my name, a fact which impressed me, since I was certain that I had not impressed him as he had impressed me at our first meeting. We had a pleasant discussion about some of the paintings, his observations much more thoughtful than mine. It was a pleasant visit.

And, then, we met again in, of all places, an operetta. The Amarillo College Department of Music presented *Der Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss II, and I was asked my Mila Gibson to dance the waltz in the production. (Mila eventually developed the Amarillo College Course into the Amarillo Opera, which now is nationally



Fred Rathjen

recognized.) Fred and Dr. Gerald Schultz, professor of geology at WTAMU and also a member of Partners Board, were vocalists in the chorus. Frankly, I would have rather waltzed across Texas than waltz in that production, but Mila was also a friend of mine. I mention this occasion and the others principally to emphasize the fact that Fred Rathjen was a man of many accomplishments other than that of his PhD in history. (Dr. Schultz is as well, but his story is a column for another time.) All of the foregoing brings me to the Partners Board.

Fred was instrumental in writing the by-laws for the Partners Foundation. He also served as president for two years, but my association with him came principally in sharing time with him in the Partners gift shop in El Coronado Lodge (the Canyon



Gallery Gift Shop/Visitors Center) when he wasn't working with his wife, Betty, who is still a volunteer in the gift shop.

Between customer lulls, Fred and I discussed a number of topics. He enjoyed hunting with his two sons, Eric and Kurt, especially hunting elk in Oregon. In fact, he furnished the meat for elkburgers at a Partners outing at Canoncita Ranch House a few years ago. We discussed the history of the area, or rather, I listened to him discuss the history. Once I mentioned that I admired him for his perseverance in obtaining his PhD in history. He responded with characteristic modesty that the degree was incidental to his interest in history and that he had never put much emphasis on the degree itself.

I could go on, but space limits this already lengthy discussion; so I come to my final point. Partners has shown its appreciation for Fred by dedicating an inscribed bench to Fred, to be placed on the CCC Trail in Palo Duro Canyon State Park. Inscribed on the bench is the following:

*In Memory of Fred Rathjen Historian and Educator by Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation.*



Betty Rathjen  
Photo by Jim Hester

If you have occasion to rest on Fred's bench, please remember Fred's legacy and his love for Palo Duro Canyon. Perhaps you will be inspired as well to purchase his book in the gift shop: *The Texas Panhandle Frontier*.

*Carl Fowler*



Photo by David Townsend  
(Bench in temporary location)

## Meeting the Visitors

(Editor's note: Folks who volunteer in the Canyon Gallery Gift Shop/Visitor Center have interesting stories to tell. These stories will be published from time to time. The following is by Betty Rathjen.)

Fred Rathjen had a number of interests—one being re-enactment during the time of the Santa Fe Traders. After he passed away, then the question was—what to do with the clothes and other items that were part of that period? I tried contacting people who might be interested but did not find anyone who was into that time period as re-enactors. Then, one day at the Visitors Center, a couple from La Junta, Colorado, came in. Before they left, an interesting exchange took place. The man gave me his card and told me of his interest in re-enactment activities.

To make a short story even shorter, I

found myself looking for boxes to mail all the items to him. Our son, Kurt had taken photos of the items and sent the pictures to Mr. Stafford, so he did not purchase the items unseen.

It pays, in more ways than one, to volunteer at the Palo Duro Canyon Visitors Center/gift shop

*Betty Rathjen*

### TO VOLUNTEER FOR GIFT SHOP

Call Tommy Nisbet (806) 355-4923

E-mail: [partners@midplains.coop](mailto:partners@midplains.coop)

### FOR PARK

Bernice Blasingame, Park Interpreter  
806.488.2227, ext.106

[Bernice.blasingame@tpwd.state.tx.us](mailto:Bernice.blasingame@tpwd.state.tx.us)



Cory Evans, Park Superintendent

### **Palo Duro's Past**

As we know, Palo Duro Canyon is the backdrop for an unbelievable heritage. I am always amazed at the evidence of past cultures found throughout the Canyon. From these ancient peoples that arrived some 12,000 years ago, to the CCC boys that

crafted the unique designs of the facilities we still use today, the cultural resources of the Canyon are vast and irreplaceable.

I have been reading through some of the archaeological studies that have been conducted over the years and find the immensity of the data that has been collected on human use of the Canyon to be both fascinating and overwhelming. While there is still much work to be done in formal study, we have a tremendous amount of information that helps us understand the intricacies of the human story over the centuries. Facts gathered from these studies are definitely interesting and help us to know how best to protect and manage these cultural resources, but why do we need to preserve these cultural features for future generations? What makes us want to be stewards of these relics? I think, to some extent, it is the same sense of awe that the first ancient tribes and pioneers must have felt when they first stood on the rim of the Canyon. I see this same reaction in visitors when they catch their first glimpse of the Canyon from the scenic overlook. For some reason the Canyon invokes in us a knowing that this is indeed a special place.

I believe we each have a responsibility in preserving the incredibly unique and important cultural history of the Palo Duro, and I see this being accomplished on a daily basis as park visitors interact with staff and volunteers to learn about the rich resources of the Canyon. This interaction furthers a sense of stewardship, and ensures future generations will continue to enjoy the cultural heritage that we know. The Canyon serves as a stage for an incredible legacy and one which we should all feel proud and honored to uphold.

*Cory Evans*



## CCC

(Another tale from the store)

On a very quiet day at the Visitor Center, two people came in. After looking at the displays and CCC Room, the man came to the counter and told me he worked in the Palo Duro when he was seventeen years old for the CCC. The man was Ed Davis, the lady his daughter. I told them I had a friend who was writing a Master's thesis on the CCC. Then I asked permission to give his name and address to Lisa Jackson [Partners Board member and Panhandle Plains Historical Museum researcher]. Mr. Davis lived in Happy, Texas, and this was the beginning of a memorable relationship.

*Betty Rathjen*

[Ed. Note: Mr. Davis attended the dedication of the CCC memorable plaque in front of El Coronado Lodge.]



Dedication of CCC Plaque  
May 2010  
Mr. Ed Davis in Center



Bridge on CCC Trail Built in 1934



Mary Fowler on CCC Bridge Built in  
1934





Frannie Nuttall

### **The President's Perspective**

We have finished another fiscal year for Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation and the Canyon Gallery Gift Shop. We have had a tremendous year with much excitement: plans coming to fruition and unbelievable records broken for the Gift Shop. David Townsend will tell you at the annual banquet of the records broken. He has had a fabulous year and has done a fabulous job with the Gallery. The greatest reward for me is to see the Mack Dick Pavilion open and being used during the summer. And now we have had our party to realize "Our Dream Come True." I want to thank Ann Coberley, Chair, David Townsend, Lisa Jackson, Cindy Meador, Lea Nelson, Henrietta Doss, and Mel Phillips for their outstanding job of planning and hosting the party at the Pavilion earlier this month. We certainly celebrated many years of dreaming of this facility and what it would mean to Palo Duro Canyon State Park. It was nice for Partners to have also our time of celebration.

This has certainly been a year of reflection. The beauty of the Park is

spectacular, but with the end of a year, we also celebrate the goals met and the dreams realized.

The history of this great place was celebrated in other ways as well, such as the return of Quanah Parker's family to celebrate the legacy of Quanah Parker and to remember the Battle of Palo Duro Canyon. . With the publishing of the new book, *Empire of the Summer Moon*, many visitors found a renewed interest in the lives of the Comanche Indians. Re-enactors of the U.S. Cavalry also commemorated the Battle.

Many tourists also learned about the legacy of the CCC and the workers who built the roads and many of the buildings. We also celebrated the installation of a bench on the CCC Trail in memory of our beloved Fred Rathjen, who spent his life teaching about the history of the Panhandle of Texas and the Palo Duro Canyon. We were privileged to have him on the Advisory Board of Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation. He, along with many others, gave expertise to assist Partners in the development of the story of Palo Duro Canyon that is shared with the thousands of tourists who pass through the Park every year. Fred served on our Board, helped train our volunteers, and, most importantly, shared much of his time and love for Palo Duro Canyon with those passing through.

It has truly been a year of the realization of many dreams. It is time to embark on a new year. We hope you will renew your membership with Partners and attend the annual meeting on November 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Park at the Mack Dick Pavilion. Thanks to all those who have given time, financial gifts, and, most importantly, themselves to continue to make Palo Duro Canyon State Park an outstanding tourist destination.

*Frannie Nuttall*

## **Interpretive Hikes**

**By**  
**Bernice Blasingame**

The summer season is drawing to a close and visitation is slowing down. Interpretive programs will now be on weekends and mainly in the evenings. Attendance for these programs is higher when they are scheduled in the evening, so that is the direction we are going.

Sunset hikes, full moon hikes, evening hikes, and new-moon gatherings are planned for the month of September. Parks across the state are encouraging visitors to enjoy the night skies, and programming is directed towards these Native American stories about the moon and constellations as part of the education and entertainment. Palo Duro Canyon will be no different. For the new-moon gatherings, we invite visitors to bring their own telescopes, binoculars, and lawn chairs

to enjoy a quiet evening in the Canyon. One never knows what will be seen and heard at an interpretive event when the sun goes down. Check out the calendar at [www.palodurocanyon.com](http://www.palodurocanyon.com). To see what is planned in the way of programs. All programs are for families, so come out and find why Life's Better Outside!

*Bernice Blasingame, Park Interpreter*

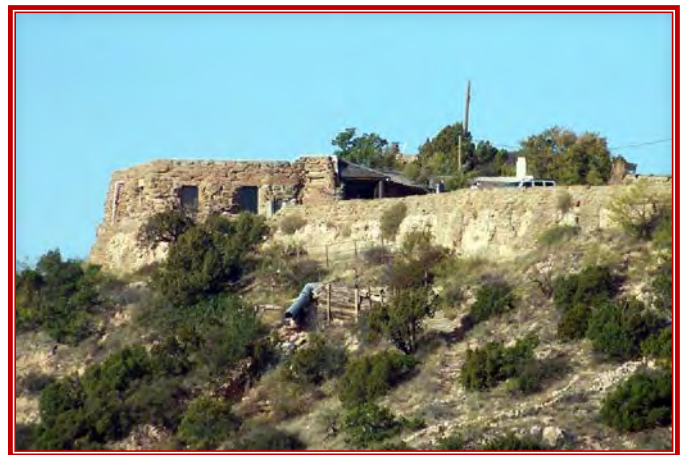


## **Horny Toad**

(Another tale from the store)

Henrietta Doss trained me in the Gift Shop, and I really enjoyed the time we spent together. One day near closing time, a man came in who said he had picked up a horny toad down in the canyon. We told him he couldn't take it out of the park, so he put it down over the fence near the entrance to the building. The horny toad crawled toward our window and stayed there until we closed. When we had closed the doors, Henrietta crawled over the fence, caught the horny toad and put him in a bag, crawled back over the fence and drove him back down to the floor of the Canyon. I was impressed.

*Ann Coberley*



Visitor Center Fence, Site of  
Horny Toad Adventure

View from CCC Trail



***On the Edge!***

September 2012, Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation, Inc. Editor: Carl Fowler

