

Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation



On the Edge!



Be Wary of the Consequences

I volunteer several times each month in Partners' store, the Canyon Gallery Gift Shop located in El Coronado Visitor and Interpretive Center, a job I find extremely rewarding. If you want to see how the rest of the world looks and hear the stories of the citizens of other countries, to say nothing of our Continental sister states (and Hawaii), come join me.

For instance, one day four young men from the Netherlands (Holland) came in the store wearing wooden shoes, no doubt a statement of pride, much as non-cowboy Texans like to wear cowboy hats and cowboy boots. Pride or no, the clatter was LOUD. I welcomed it! We should take pride in who we are and in the nation (state) we swear allegiance to.

Then there were the Russian men who bought Texana mementos with wallets full of hundred dollar bills. No rubles here! (To guard against a wrong impression, I must add that they left with most of them.)

And then the Germans! Sometimes I wonder whether Texas is a colony of Germany. The fact that Texas was settled with many German immigrants is obvious from the German place names scattered throughout the state (Umbarger for example.) It isn't unusual to see German men come into the store wearing cowboy boots, hats, and big belt buckles. In fact, one day a man from Germany told me that he knows more about Texas than I do. I pride myself on my knowledge of Texas history, but I didn't argue with him. His big hat, bandanna, and handlebar mustache convinced me. Besides, the customer is always right.

This brings me to the title of this column. One day not long ago, I was working the afternoon shift. (Volunteers work either the morning or afternoon shifts. Never all day! And anywhere from a few days to several days a month, depending on their preferences.) The store is open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Closing time arrived, and I, in a hurry to make an evening appointment, herded the visitors to the exit. (You've heard about cats.) One middle-aged man (whether a gentleman or not, I do not know) protested my insistence that everyone leave, since he

wasn't ready to leave. Nevertheless, he complied.

A few weeks later, I decided to look at Partners Facebook page on the Texas Parks and Wildlife website. While browsing the internet sites on Palo Duro Canyon, I found the following: To paraphrase: *I was in the gift shop in Palo Duro Canyon a few weeks ago. At five o'clock, the old man running the place made me get out. I didn't want to leave, since I was still looking at things. I left, but I didn't like it.*

Ah me! You can't please everyone.

(And you thought the "consequences" had something to do with the picture above of the rim of the canyon, didn't you?)

But I needed to get your attention—Partners Membership Drive. Writing about a membership drive provides little fascinating copy, so the above picture and paragraphs direct me to tell you about our membership drive, a party for members who are encouraged to bring with them guests who, we hope, will become members themselves. If you've read this far, I suppose I have succeeded.

The Board of Advisors encourages you, the member, to attend the party in the Mack Dick Pavilion on September 26th from 6 p.m. until 10 p.m. Bring a guest or guests. A dance will be held with Young Country providing the music. Dancing to Young Country will make you young again if you are my age and younger if you are not. Food will be catered by the American Quarter Horse Association. A cash bar is also available. The cost per couple is \$50, single, \$30.

A Plein Air Painting of the Canyon, framed and ready to hang, by Jack Sorenson, one of the premier western artists of America, will be given as a door prize. How can you miss this event? Dress as yourself. *cf*

Please complete the appropriate information for our records:
 Personal donation Business donation

Mr. Mrs. Mr./Mrs. Ms. Miss Dr. Other _____

First Name _____ Middle Name or Initial _____ Last Name _____

Home address City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Home Phone _____

Business/Occupation _____ Business Address _____ Business Phone _____

Send mail to: Home Business (contributions are tax-deductible)

YES! I want to support Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation:
 \$35 Family Membership (husband/wife/child(ren))
 \$25 Single Adult
 \$10 Senior Citizens or Adult Students (those 65 years of age and older)

YES! I want to volunteer for:
 Gift Shop Trail Maintenance Park Host Other
 Call me at my home business and let me know when I can get started.

YES! I want to maintain, protect and preserve Palo Duro Canyon State Park.
 Please apply my gift where needed most.
 Apply my gift as follows: endowment group/family shelter
 trail maintenance other _____

If a memorial, name of person _____
 Please notify _____
 Address _____

THANK YOU! Please make your checks payable to: Partners in Palo Duro Canyon.

**September 26, 2014—Mack Dick Pavilion in Palo Duro Canyon State Park
 6 p.m. until 10 p.m.**

**Dance to the music of Young Country—Food catered by AQHA—Cash Bar
 Cost per couple, \$50; Cost for singles, \$30**

Door Prize: A Plein Air Painting of the Canyon by Jack Sorenson, framed and ready to hang. Jack Sorenson is one of the premier western artists in America. He grew up on the rim of the Canyon. He is a dedicated friend to Palo Duro Canyon and to Partners.

Membership envelopes are available in the Pavilion and the Visitor Center.



The Tale of the Ten-penny Nail

One day when I was volunteering in the gift shop, I suddenly noticed a rusty, bent ten-penny nail lying on top of the bags by the cash register. David Townsend, who happened to be at the front instead of in his office, asked, “Where did that come from?” I told him that I didn’t know, that I assumed he put it there to sell it, since he believes that everything is for sell. “You know me,” he said and took the nail. A while later, he placed the nail beside me with a tag and bar code of 0000 and a price of \$00.00. I placed it in the jewelry case. After thinking about it, I went to the back and told David that I was thinking of buying it and asked him how much of a discount he would give me. He told me that he was sorry, but that he had gone as low as he could go on the price. Disappointed, I returned the nail to the jewelry case.

I understand that David needs to make a profit, but it would have been nice to have the nail so that I could give it a Christmas present. After all, I must live within my budget. I’m sure it is an antique. *cf*

Partners Welcomes New Park Superintendent, Shannon Blalock



Park Superintendent Shannon Blalock Greetings!

Most importantly, I'd like to say thank you for kindly welcoming my family and me to Palo Duro Canyon State Park. Our Canonicita experience began July 20th, and grand adventures have filled our days ever since. [Ed. Note: Shannon and her family live in a house at Canonicita, formerly the ranch of the Gilvin family, which the Park acquired several years ago.]

Our first night included the enjoyment of birthday cake on the Canyon's edge in celebration of my husband's birthday—undoubtedly, an unforgettable birthday celebration. Our children have chased frogs, been tickled by walking sticks, and laughed uncontrollably at prairie dogs. We've wandered into the Canyon and stargazed in the huge Panhandle sky. Professionally, I've been focused on learning the Park, reviewing the operation, meeting staff, and volunteers, and integrating into the community. Throughout, I've been met with friendly offers of support and acts of kindness.

I was born into a love for the outdoors. My family owns land in Hamilton

County, and most weekends I could be found in my dad's hip pocket traipsing through a pasture, checking on our cows, or wetting a hook. My childhood shaped my adulthood in a way that I'm thankful for each and every day. Growing up and experiencing Texas's great places gives children imagination, strength, and independence found nowhere else.

I grew up in China Spring, Texas, where burgers are sold from the same place lawnmowers are fixed, small town living at its best no doubt. I graduated from Tarleton State University with a degree in Animal Science in 2005 and began working for Texas Parks & Wildlife in 2007 as the Administrative Assistant at Dinosaur Valley State Park. I held three positions while at the Park, ending my tenure as the Park Superintendent for a little over three years.

I married my high school sweetheart, Andy, in 2007, and since then, we've been blessed with two beautiful children. My daughter, Carly, is four, and my son, Gus, is two. They remind Andy and me daily to be joyful and excited about all of life's blessings.

Each day, I am learning more about the Canyon and about all the #1 state park in the nation has to offer. [Ed. Note: Palo Duro Canyon State Park has been named recently as the top state park in the nation by Fodor, a national travel publication.]

My focus initially will be on ensuring that the team responsible for stewardship of the Canyon is complete and has resources needed to be successful. Another focus will be on continuing the great project management work that Cory Evans began here. In order to do that, I am putting

tremendous effort into understanding each of the ongoing capital construction projects. The Park will soon begin work on construction of the Juniper Camping Loop, and work continues at the Gilvin Education Center at Canoncita. All improvements and projects will enhance the visitor experience and benefit Palo Duro Canyon for generations to come.

Just as the beauty and magnitude of the Canyon amaze me, the work and support Partners provides evokes the same amazement. You each make Palo Duro Canyon State Park a jewel in the Texas State Park system. For that, I am truly thankful. I am honored to be here, and I look forward to working with you to continue to steward our Palo Duro Canyon State Park. *sb*



**Bernice Blasingame
Park Interpreter**

When one reads “other duties as assigned” in a job description, there is always some trepidation as to what those duties may be. In the case of Park Interpreter, it can be any number of things. The focus of any interpreter is the park in which he or she works. In our case, the history, geology, native plants and wildlife are the main interest of visitors, so programs are built around those.

In Palo Duro Canyon State Park, and many other state parks, the interpreter is also responsible for the Facebook page. It takes a lot of time to decide on photos and information to place on it daily, at least hopefully every day. When anyone sees me driving slowly through the Park and campgrounds, I am always looking for photo opportunities. I may be seen on the side of the road tracking some critter with my small digital Park camera. Sometimes it is easy to spot something to snap a candid shot of and write a small entry on the page. Other times it is more difficult, and a daily entry may not appear.



Picnic Table at Canoncita



It is also my duty to make the calendar of events each month and send it to Amarillo Magazine, place it on the Park website, and, of course, enter it on the state website for Palo Duro Canyon.

Those paper calendars placed throughout the Park are also my responsibility. When we do have rain, it is up to me to check the rain gauges when the Resource Manager is unavailable. We have also a temperature station placed in the Park by the Amarillo Weather Bureau, and it has to be checked daily to report the high and low temperatures from the day before. Those are then sent by my e-mail to the weather service.

On days when there are emergencies, I am sometimes called on to drive rescue personnel to the area in the Park's UTV, for example, on the Lighthouse Trail. Occasionally, we have overdue hikers, and, again, I may be called on to help locate those visitors.

All interpretive literature about the Park is my responsibility to keep in stock and place in the Park or to mail as requests are received. The Junior Naturalist Program is also administered by me, and I have to make sure the booklets and sleeve patches are available in the Visitor Center and the Headquarters Office.

As anyone can see, being Park Interpreter is a position that requires much flexibility, and I love every minute of it. I can truly say, "Life's Better Outside," at least where I am concerned. *bb*

[Ed. Note: Bernice also writes a column for this newsletter]



**To Volunteer for Park
Call Bernice Blasingame
Park Interpreter**

(806) 488-2227, Ext. 106

Bernice.blasingame@tpwd.state.tx.us

**To Volunteer for Gift Shop
Call David Townsend**

(806) 488-2506

Partners@midplains.coop

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

Tommy Nisbet, long time Board member and chair of our membership and volunteer committees, has been quite ill. He has been an energetic and crucial member of Partners. We miss him and hope that he will soon be on the road to full recovery. Remember his wife as well, Mary Lou, who has also been ill.



Frannie Nuttall, President of Partners, has had knee replacement surgery recently and has been unable to attend Partners' functions. We wish her speedy recovery and look forward to her being able to participate in person with us again.





**Exterior and Interior of the Gilvin Education Center at Canoncita
Photos by Andy Blalock**

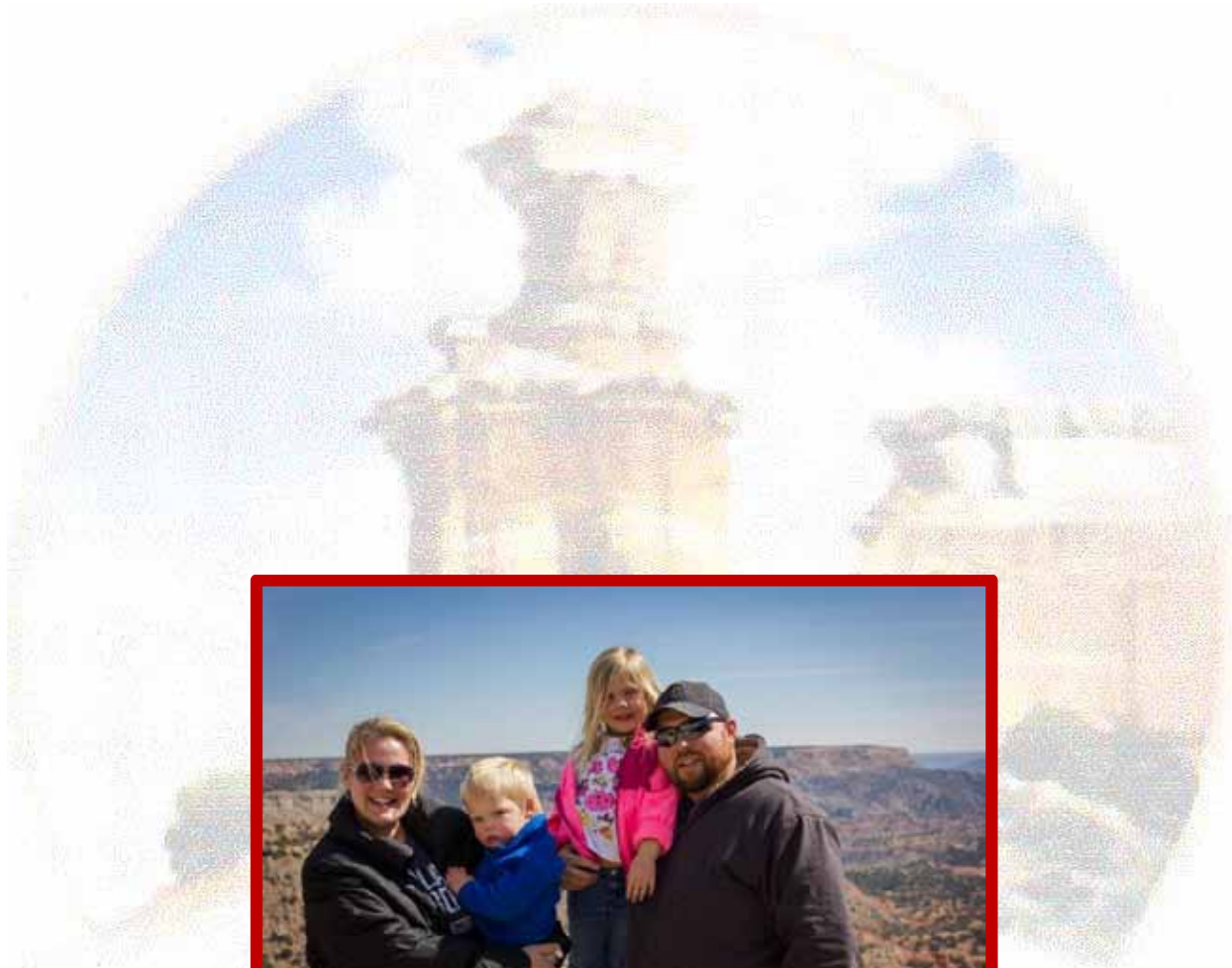


**Lea Nelson and Georgia King Tending Partners Booth on the Square in Canyon
July 4, 2014**



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**The Blalocks: Self Portrait
Shannon, Gus, Carly, Andy**

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