

Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation



*On
the
Edge!*



**Jack Sorenson with His Plein Air Painting of the Canyon,
Door Prize Given at Partners Membership Dance September 26
(The Lighthouse Logo on the Newsletters was Painted by Jack Exclusively for Partners.)**



Trail Heads

(Editor’s note: The following article was written by Matt Melvyn and Chris Podzemny, trail builders with the Palo Duro Corp of Engineers.)

Origins of the Origins of the Palo Duro Corps of Engineers



Matt Melvyn, Trail Builder
Photo by Chris Podzemny



Chris Podzemny, Trail Builder
Photo by Chris Podzemny

Red Spicer was the driving force behind developing the trail system in Palo Duro Canyon State Park. Red was an avid trail runner and over the years participated in most of the elite trail runs in the United States. It was his quest for more local trails to train on that inspired his trail building efforts.

When he started building trails in Palo Duro Canyon, he was “hooked,” by the lure of that special place, and building trails there melded his two loves—trail running and spending time in the Canyon. It became his life work, and, after he was no longer able to compete in those grueling, long distance runs, he turned all his efforts toward developing more trails in the Canyon.

Red started putting on the PD 50-25 Trail Run which allowed him to show off the

special beauty of Palo Duro Canyon and the trails he built to his many running friends from all over the United States and some foreign countries as well. That race continues to this day and keeps growing in size. The next PD Trail Run will be the 30th anniversary of the race.

Red, along with fellow trail runners Bob Givens and Tom Lowry, built the GSL Trail (named after them) in 1988-89. The trail connected Park Road 5 at what is now the GSL Trailhead to the Lighthouse Trail, which at the time was the only approved off-road trail in the Park. The Little Fox Loop was added to GSL in 1990-92.

It was about this time that Red started working to enlist volunteers to help him, Bob, and Tom, in their trail building efforts. Park Superintendents with whom Red worked

during these years were Elon Baker, Larry Scruggs, Hi Newby, and Randy Ferris.

Red began calling his trail building crew the “Palo Duro Corps of Engineers.” The name began as somewhat of a joke, but Red soon realized that being part of a group gave its members a source of pride, and he used this knowledge as an incentive to increase the number of people involved. He had laminated name badges made, and volunteers had to work 200 hours to earn a badge. Wherever he went and whatever he did—at the gym, at running events, at social gatherings—he would hit up all he came in contact with to spend time on the weekends to help build trails.

In addition to trail runners, Red began to enlist mountain bikers from a sport that was just beginning to become popular. At the time, few off-road trails existed for them to ride. Gary Wixom and Kirk Hill, from Hill’s Sport Shop began to develop the Capitol Peak Mountain Bike Trail which eventually intersected other trails in the Park.

Soon Red’s trail building continued to pick up momentum, and he became more motivated than ever before. His goal was always to have enough trails to put on his PD 50-25 on dirt and to keep the runners from having to run on pavement and to compete with cars. After Sunflower, Juniper Cliffside, Juniper Riverside, Paseo del Rio, and Rojo Grande were developed. And there are some foot and bike bridges on the trails so that users don’t have to cross the stream at the concrete water crossings.

In addition to his trail building, Red and his crew worked on many more improvement projects at the request of Park management. He was instrumental, as well, in enlisting other groups, such as local Eagle Scouts, to work on the trails. *mm/cp*

(Editor’s note: Even though Red is no longer with us, his legacy lives on in the trail system and on a plaque commemorating his contribution to Palo Duro Canyon State Park and, of course, to the founding of the “Palo Duro Corps of Engineers.” Partners has purchased equipment and two equipment storage containers for the PDCE.)



Shannon Blalock Park Superintendent

State parks are important for many reasons. A significant purpose which all state parks serve is that of an outdoor classroom.

Palo Duro Canyon State Park is a popular destination for many school groups during the fall months. I was fortunate enough to tag along with a great group of third graders from Lubbock recently on their fall field trip to the Park. These children sat on the porch of the Mack Dick Pavilion and learned about living as Comanche Indians from the Park’s interpreter. They used a bison tail as a flyswatter just as the Comanche did years ago. It was incredible to watch the excitement in their faces. At the conclusion of the program, students were asked to use one word to describe their day at Palo Duro

Canyon State Park. The words they chose were “fun,” “awesome,” “amazing,” and “exciting.” The staff of Palo Duro Canyon State Park agree.

Park staff has been entrusted by you to be thoughtful stewards of this incredible outdoor classroom, and we are all honored to do so. But, we cannot manage this responsibility alone. The success of state parks relies on the love and support of many people and organizations. It also depends upon ensuring the longevity of the parks for generations to come. We must grow the guardians of tomorrow—the next generation of conservationists.

During the last fiscal year, 5,963 public school students visited the Park. We all have a responsibility to these children to teach conservation. It is our job to share the Canyon’s stories and rich history with them, so that they will love and care for it as passionately as we all do.

Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation contributes greatly to sharing the Park with others, and the Park staff thank you for your involvement. With your help, we will continue to shape the face and future of Palo Duro Canyon State Park for all to enjoy.
sb



Bernice Blasingame
Park Interpreter

In September I was named the first Texas State Park Master Interpreter in Region 5. To achieve this goal, I had to apply for a spot in the Master Interpreter training class in Austin, Texas, and have a letter of recommendation from my direct supervisor. Once those were reviewed, I was accepted into the class.

The result was two trips to Austin for training with thirteen others from the other state park regions. I also had to successfully pass three online classes about various areas of interpretation, complete three projects, and create four new interpretive programs that would be of benefit to Palo Duro Canyon State Park.

One of my projects was writing an interpretive guide for the Lighthouse Trail with an emphasis on safety as hikers make their way to the base of the Lighthouse. Another project was rewriting parts of the colored Interpretive Guide for the Park and making needed corrections, including updating photos for it. The last project is still in the process of being completed by the Exhibit Shop in Austin. This project is that of the Palo Duro School of Art which existed



near the Visitor Center from 1936 to 1941. The project tells about a part of the Park's history that has not been told before. Once it is finished, it will be seen in the Visitor Center. I have hopes it will be completed before the first of the year, and I believe it will be a significant addition to the Visitor Center. All my interpretive writing had to be critiqued and suggested changes made before being approved for publishing.

I also had to successfully perform one of the interpretive programs for the Regional Interpretive Specialist and receive a high rating on it. The other participants were also evaluated and had to receive a high rating before they were approved. It was a challenging journey, and I am glad I was able to complete it. All of this training is of benefit to the Park so that Life's Better Outside for our visitors. *bb*

(Editor's note: Partners wishes to congratulate Bernice for her important accomplishments for herself and for the Park. Bernice has been a valuable member of the Park staff for several years.)



**Partners Dance with Young Country
Photo by Mary Fowler**

Membership Dance October 2014

Partners held a membership enrollment dinner and dance in the Mack Dick Pavilion the evening of October 12, 2014. A plein air painting of the canyon by Jack Sorenson was given as a door prize, won by Becky Phillips.

Jack's work can be seen in the Joe Wade Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. A painting by Jack is a valuable possession, coveted by all those who know him or know of him. His work has appeared on the covers of several western magazines. One of his paintings hung in the Oval Office of George W. Bush.

Congratulations to Becky and a hearty thank you to Jack for donating the painting. He and Jeanne are true friends of Partners and Palo Duro Canyon State Park. *cf*



Flood in the Park, September 2010



Photo by Erika McGee



Photos by Erika McGee
Before and After: Note the Picnic Table



PAINTING BY JACK SORENSON
MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM PARTNERS



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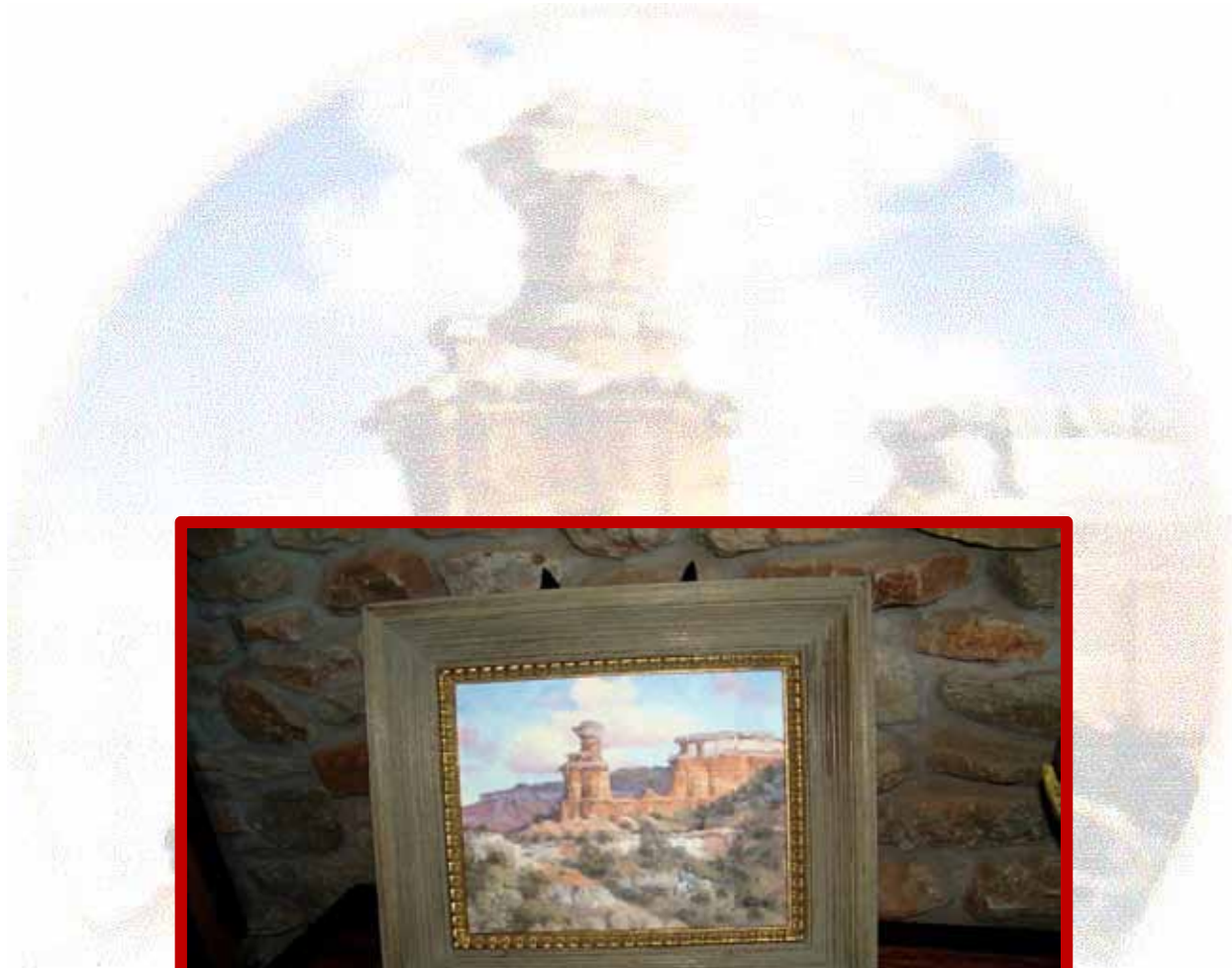


Photo by Mary Fowler

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