

# VIP2VIP



## Season 2, Volume 3

## Big Bend National Park's Volunteer Newsletter

February 10, 2003









Please bring the recipe for your dish to the next potluck. Several requests were made for the recipes of the delicious dishes we enjoyed in January!

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In the midst of the laughter, words of encouragement were heard as volunteers caught the ball and then struggled to name a Big Bend related item in the chosen category.



"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

— "Mahatma" Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

#### Persimmon Gap

Mark Kirtley- Visitor Center

Joan and Jack Lamkin- Visitor Center

#### Castolon

Carol Hines- Interpretation

Norma & Lloyd Burgi- Interpretation

Steve Harper- Camp Host, Backcountry, Archeology

Samantha Schroeder and Whit Hibbard- Camp Hosts and Backcountry

#### Rio Grande Village

Wayne Strevel & Jennifer Dyer- Visitor Center

Gail & John Kamaras- Visitor Center

Barbara & Richard Engle- Visitor Center

Barbara and Bill Baldwin- Camp Hosts

Linda and Steve Dettinger- Camp Hosts

Erv and Sam Drabek- Backcountry

### <u>Basin</u>

Ginny and Jim Herrick- Visitor Center

Dana and Les Over- Camp Hosts

Kay and Richard Gordon- Camp Hosts

Suzanne Cable- Backcountry

#### SCA's

Maria Lavender- PJ Interpretation

Katrina Jensen-PJ Interpretation

Casey Parks-PJ Interpretation

Adessa Schwartz-Castolon Interpretation

#### River District

Steve McAllister- Backcountry

Carol and Bob Huber- Backcountry

#### Panther Junction

Becky Reiger- Volunteer Coordinator Assistant

Fran and Bernie Heyman- Interpretation

Bud Frankenberger- Resource Management

Camilla Rondina- Resource Management

Bob & Scarlett Wirt- Resource Management

Jessica Sherwood- Fire Management



Still learning about the local plants? Attend Wayne Strevel's walk up the RGV to Hot Springs trail and learn about some plants you may be unfamiliar with!



Carol & Bob Huber are helping transform maps and space to facilitate Search and Rescue.



Fran & Bernie Heymans' bird program is informative and a delight to attend!



## Volunteer Corner Suzanne Cable has found her Passion

Big Bend National Park is Suzanne's first real experience in the desert environment, but the position as a backcournty patrol ranger is not new to her. Suzanne is on furlough from her job as wilderness ranger in the Salmon-Challis National Forest, Northfork Ranger District, in Idaho.

A conversation with Suzanne will quickly lead us to realize that her "paid" job sounds a lot like what many enjoy doing when we play. The question comes to mind, "How does a nice New York girl grow up to become a wilderness ranger?" Growing up in Katonah, NY, didn't acquaint her with the outdoor lifestyle. However, her family's one week vacation each year in a cabin in the Adirondacks did instill a love for nature.

Suzanne decided on Brown University for her college degree, because she was a soccer player and they offered a degree in environmental studies. By graduation, she had accepted a job with an environmental consulting firm based in Connecticut. Having two months between graduation and the beginning of her job, she took her first trip out of the northeast with two friends. As they traveled cross-country, they visited National Parks in the US and Canada. On a hike in Cascades NP, Suzanne was paying more attention to the deer she was photographing, than the trail, and fell several hundred feet, tearing the ligaments in her ankle. She started her new job in waste management and recycling on crutches. Because she was very successful in her position, her company sent her to Brussels, Belgium, to develop numerous recycling plants throughout Europe. That year in Europe, traveling first class, staying in the best suites in the finest

hotels, was wonderful, but highly stressful. It also helped her realize this was not a path she needed to continue. Suzanne quit her highly paid, prestigious job, loaded her backpack, and spent a year mountain climbing and backpacking in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the South





Pacific, and Eastern Europe.

Once back in the US, Suzanne knew she had to make a decision about a job. Another road trip seemed the logical way to decide, and Suzanne ended up in White Fish, MT, outside Glacier NP. A friend that managed a trail ride concession provided her first

introduction to horses and mules. Within a few days, she was leading trail rides. After the season was over, Suzanne stopped in the Forest Service district office to inquire about positions. By luck a wilderness ranger had just quit, and Suzanne began her 1st job as a volunteer wilderness ranger.

By the next summer, Suzanne became a seasonal employee. She spent a few years as wilderness ranger in the summer and ski bum in the winter. During this time, she earned her masters degree at the University of Montana in Resource Conservation. Realizing she was becoming one of the oldest seasonals around, she accepted a permanent job with the Forest Service as a manager of wilderness areas in Alaska. This job was a valuable learning experience, but involved only desk work. Suzanne accepted a lower ranked job back in Idaho to get out in the field again. This job is the best of both worlds for her. She gets to be out in the field and has the ability to affect how things are managed. Unlike many people, Suzanne is not interested in climbing the career ladder.

Suzanne is fortunate that she has always been able to see her path. She has strong ideals and has exhibited a great deal of courage in pursuing her passion, even when family or society doesn't agree or understand. Her volunteer time here in Big Bend is allowing her to not only contribute to the park, but also to see some of the different ways parks manage their wilderness areas. This experience has also changed her opinion of Texas. She is happy to meet interesting individuals in a wonderful area she never knew existed!

In early January, 2003, Suzanne located Tim, a lost hiker.



#### Happy Birthday, Jennifer Dyer!

January 15 started early for Jennifer Dyer. She awoke at 6:00 am when her husband, Wayne Strevel, his head

covered with a pointy little party hat, pushed balloons into the bedroom as he followed singing and carrying a birthday cake topped with a flaming candle. Already off to a good start, her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday got even better when she entered the living room and saw the dog wearing a party hat too! Jennifer and Wayne's enthusiastic delight in life make them a joy to work with. Visitors and employees at Big Bend are fortunate to have them back for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year at the RGV Visitor Center.

Jennifer was born in Ontario, however she spent her childhood in eastern Tennessee. She graduated with honors from the University of Tennessee where she obtained a degree in Creative Design. After taking numerous art classes during her 4 years in school, she individualized the program, designing her own course and degree requirements. Because

the materials she had used during college were expensive, Jennifer started using readily available honeysuckle to weave the baskets which made her nationally recognized. Her baskets, better described as sculptural designs, have been displayed and sold throughout the United States.



Jennifer met Wayne in 1978, while working in a health food store. He was an artist/craftsman working as a carpenter. Jennifer thought that might be a fun profession to learn, so Wayne agreed to take her on as an apprentice. After learning the trade, she started a business with her own crew. She didn't see Wayne again until New Years Eve 1990, when they ran into each other on Bourbon Street in New Orleans. Jennifer spent the intervening years doing many different jobs. She worked with wolves in Knoxville, ran a white water rafting tour, and worked as a step-on bus tour guide in the Great Smokey Mountains.

Wayne was on his way back from his first visit to Big Bend

when he saw Jennifer in New Orleans. They married after Wayne obtained his degree in forestry from the University of Tennessee. Loving this area, they started coming to Big Bend every January as visitors. They would stay as long as possible each visit. Eight years ago, they decided to leave Tennessee and move west. They got as far as western Montana before deciding that was about as good as it could get. However after spending 3 cloudy winters in Montana, they sold their house and bought a 5<sup>th</sup> wheel so they could spend the winters in a sunnier, warmer location. A friend described Jennifer's life as a lightening bolt, going from Tennessee to Montana to Texas. The first couple of winters they enjoyed traveling, but found they wanted to "do" something. Volunteering at Big Bend fit their needs.

Wayne recently became a permanent seasonal for the Forest Service, so they bought 5  $\frac{1}{2}$  acres in Montana, where they will use their building experience to build a small house. They still plan to come south during the winters. While in Montana, Jennifer works for the Swan Eco Systems Center in the Flathead National Forest. She was instrumental in developing

this center. She also created and designed the exhibits there. One of her passions is designing forest exhibits that begin a dialog about what happens when a forest is altered. The goal is for this dialog to continue as people go out on the trail. She also works as an interpretive coordinator in the Lo Lo National Forest. The wonderful bat and javelina exhibits at the Rio Grande Village Visitor Center are examples of her work.

Jennifer believes that Big Bend is the best place to spend her birthday. Wayne continued the fun-filled day by taking

her out to dinner at the Chisos Lodge. A little gray fox graced their view while they enjoyed her celebration dinner. This is what life is all about.



With sadness, I am preparing to leave Big Bend at the end of this month to continue my journey. I am humbled and deeply honored that I was given the opportunity to connect in an individual manner with each of you. My life has been enriched by my endeavors to compile this volunteer newsletter.

Big Bend is a very special and magical place to live, if even for a few short months. I have barely scratched the surface in

uncovering the many diverse and surprising views and experiences that are available here. After my first few days, I had already begun to understand why the visitors to this park return year after year. This is a place that speaks to my heart.

I sincerely wish for each of you a safe and enjoyable journey. I hope to see you again somewhere down the road!

## Jessica Sherwood has been caught by the Fire Bug!

On furlough from Grand Teton NP, Jessica Sherwood, is volunteering for the Fire Management Department here in Big Bend for the 2nd year. Because parks are required to keep detailed records of all fires, Jessica is making sure the historical records are correct and



organized. She is also preparing to assist in the Gambusia prescribed burn in the RGV area, scheduled for early February. The goal of this burn is to clean out the mesquite, eventually helping return the area to wetlands

Jessica grew up in Pleasant Lake, Michigan. At the earliest opportunity, she indulged her need to travel and experience new areas by taking a train from Chicago to Sedona, AZ. She began her relationship with wilderness work by volunteering as a wilderness ranger in the Coconino National Forest in Arizona. Still not sure about what work she wanted to do, she moved around the country doing many different jobs. She has worked in Interpretation and as a wilderness ranger in many different national forests. A crew leader, in a wilderness program she was volunteering with, suggested she go to North Kaibab National Forest. While working in the visitor center there, she met and became friends with Angelina.

In the Lincoln National Forest, she started working with the fire crew and trained as a fire fighter. Many times fires are in remote and inaccessible areas. When necessary, a team will be flown in by helicopter and then rappel on ropes, carrying all their gear, to the fire



area below. Once on the ground, they will either clear an area for the helicopter to land, or fight the fire and hike out. Jessica was first introduced to Helicopter rappelling at Gila NF, New Mexico.

Jessica has been employed by Grand Teton National Park since May 2001. She actually works across organizational lines, because she works with a helicopter crew from the U.S. Forest Service. This job is physically challenging and

dangerous, which is part of the reason Jessica loves it. She says that

fighting fires gets under your skin. Once the fire bug has caught you, that's what you want to do. She has found her place in Heli-rappelling, one of the few women engaged in this activity.

Jessica continues to work on additional qualifications as a fire fighter. Because of the years we repressed fires, there are extensive areas with dead and down wood, making forests extremely vulnerable to fire. It will take a long time for our forests to return to their normal cycle of fire and new growth. The hot, windy, and dry weather we are experiencing also contributes to fire probability. Jessica has found something she loves doing that is extremely valuable, and will



allow her to continue traveling and seeing new areas of the country!

In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous.

Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC)

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- Important Notice: Once you submit your paperwork for reimbursements, please wait 2-3 days and then see Terry Boren in Administration M-F, 8-5 to sign for your check
- If you're planning to return next year, please remember to bring your sun hat with you!

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 Be sure to check out the VIP newsletter on our website: www.nps.gov/bibie/vip.htm

## Activities & Events

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Valentine's Dance- Thurs., Feb. 13, 6:30-10:30 pm, PJ Community Room.

Book Club - "Cutting for Sign", Sun., Feb 16, 6:00 pm, Fran & Bernie's 5th Wheel, MH12 at PJ.

Annual Rabies Clinic- Feb. 27, 12:00-1:00 pm, PJ Community Room.

#### Ongoing:

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Sunday Worship Service- 10:00 am at Chisos Basin Amphitheater, 5:30 pm at RGV Amphitheater, 7:30 pm at PJ Community Room.

**Big Bend Community Choir**- Wednesdays, 5:30 pm, Terlingua Elementary Band Room. For information call 477-2377 or 477-2442.

Yoga - Alternate Monday's, Feb. 10th & 24th, San Vicente school gym, 6:30-7:30 pm, \$10/ session

Crafts - Every Monday, PJ Community Room, 7:00 pm

Check the Bulletin Board at PJ for Details and Updates!