

A Short History of The Santa Catalina Volunteer Patrol

The Early Years

1997 - 2007

While December 11th, 1996 in Tucson, AZ may have seemed an ordinary day, it definitely was not. On that important Wednesday a group of dedicated elders, and some youngsters, both civilian and Forest Service personnel alike, met to discuss *“Not surrendering Sabino Canyon to environmental degradation due to budget cuts and limited personnel on site to serve and protect it.”* Those words are from the original meeting notes.

Though the ten founding members had not yet chosen a name, or thought through just how such a group could be achieved, the Santa Catalina Volunteer Patrol was definitely born that day. Those few resolved to deal as soon as possible with rapidly growing visitor numbers-----while Forest Service staff shrank.

They were: District Ranger Tom Quinn; FS personnel Marylee Petersen and Heidi Schewel, as well as current member Ricki Mensching. Also there were former Patrol folks Fred Blatt, Harry Wilhelmsen, Welden Borden, Dick Dobrin, Julian Ettelson and Dennis Tornback; all founding members.

Fortunately the minutes of those first meetings, and many anecdotes of the trials and tribulations of beginning a new group, as well as the initial Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) have been preserved. Formation meetings followed in January, February and March of 1997. Those founders had to decide whether patrol members would stand at “stationary posts” and carry radios to communicate, or patrol at large?

Turns out they did carry radios, but early on embraced our current system of signing in, and patrolling at large in the canyon. Those first radios were paid for in part by a grant from Friends of Sabino Canyon (Founded 1992). Signing in, the Internet not then available, was done at the VC. Uniforms? Try T-shirts, with Kokopelli at the center of a design saying Santa Catalina Volunteer Patrol. Made by Harry & Dorothy Wilhelmsen's Sons at their silk screen shop here in Tucson, and an initial donation of \$2,500.00 from Friends of Sabino Canyon to help launch that laudable effort. But who would do the first Mentoring and Orientation?

Those founding ten had sixty possible names; self-generated from friends and people they had met in The Canyon. Twenty-one of those sixty agreed to join the Patrol, be interviewed, and "get their T-shirts." No badges, no patches, and who knew where they should go and what they should do?

Since the MOU was finalized in March of 1997 perhaps that is the month to celebrate our 20th Anniversary? Our first president was Marylee Petersen, whose own career with the Forest Service, and earlier in banking in Tucson, as well as with the Patrol were filled with many challenges. Our first Secretary was Fred Blatt (Who did a great job) and our first Treasurer (Another challenging position) was Ricki Mensching . Still with us today from those early times are Ricki, and Tosh Lawrence and Dru Dixon from '97 and '98.

Early bicycle and doggie "arrests" are now a part of the Patrol's history, as well as other changes in direction and duties as The Patrol day by day learned how to define its work. How did early patrols succeed? What happened with Paint Ball folks? And ropes over deep pools? And what about the pay booth on the Catalina Highway, and Tucson citizens unaccustomed to paying to use the canyon? Our second chapter, to follow in the April Chronicle, will provide some details and insights into how those problems and many others were solved. Stay tuned.

Our first uniform.



The SCVP moved in those first years, not just from one century into the next, but also from hand written sign-ins at the visitor center, to the internet system we use today; from a canyon where uniforms were almost never seen, to one where twenty and more uniformed men and women are now seen every day of every year in all parts of the Catalinas. All of whom, then as now, choose each day when and where they would patrol, rather than a set schedule, an aspect of volunteer work fairly unique in America today.

The first Orientation was held February 26th 1997 at a small meeting room in the Forest Service warehouse on Sabino Canyon Road. The hardest part, according to those in charge, was not teaching folks in those early years about what to do as patrol volunteers, but measuring body parts for uniforms! Certain manufacturers had a hard time with sizes and measurements. Uniforms rarely fit well. Though Harry Wilhelmsen, a founding member, says in an effort to get patrol people out in the canyon quickly, he was provided a FS uniform early on by FS staff. Annual meetings were held in the spring, at the Ricki Mensching home.

Classes in those early years were limited to twenty but gradually grew to twenty-five and finally to the fifty we now enroll. The Patrol and Naturalists ability to ride on the shuttle for free while on duty, and in full uniform, was something the founders had to negotiate. And at one point ended, because some brought family members along for a free ride. The privilege was eventually regained. Founding members also point out, while many were Naturalists (That group having been formed in The Canyon in 1978) others were not. But all founding members and Forest Service personnel, who gladly encouraged them, had noticed the same phenomena repeatedly: where ever they were in The Canyon people would ask them questions, seek guidance and information. And there were too few in The Canyon, day-to-day, able to provide such assistance.

The bike patrol, which was recently incorporated into the SCVP, was founded in 1992 with Fred Blatt at the helm, and was much appreciated by District Ranger Tom Quinn, who served in Sabino for seven years between 1991 and 1997. As far as early duties for the brand new foot Patrol, Dick Dobrin, Harry Wilhelmsen, Marylee Peterson, Ricki Mensching, district Ranger Tom Quinn, and other members still recall the initial meetings with cyclists who had to be escorted out (Dobrin had them walk their cycles out) as well as the “Trash Patrols”.

Members then, as some still do today, would go out often with rubber gloves and their own trash bags to clean up the canyon. Wilhelmsen recruited his grand children for that task, one of whom today pitches major league baseball for the Arizona Diamondbacks. Dobrin remembers too, he was authorized to enforce parking violations with “Warning Tickets” advising vehicle owners without passes they were getting a “Second chance to pay.” Happily too, most of those founders and early members recall no serious problems then with dogs. Dogs were not allowed, and rarely came, unlike today.

Each founding member and FS personnel at the time also recall illegal swinging ropes over deep pools of water, between stops one and two in Sabino Canyon, and paint ball gun fights, as well as illegal fires and some rare, but occasional nude swimming. All of which were early problems for patrol folks. Wilhelmsen managed to cajole one group of twenty or more reckless, teen-age divers at stop eight into halting their reckless behavior by asking the leader for his mother’s telephone number, which the young man provided. So, as Harry said, he could report the young man’s death. When Harry returned a half hour later they were exiting the canyon. Reflecting the still heard mantra, which was in force then as well as now: *“Inform but do not enforce.”*

Another worthwhile phenomena and memory of the early Patrol was the final sighting of the last Big Horn Sheep. Marylee Peterson remembers a patrol person telling her in 1997 he saw a ram on the hillside above Pontatoc Canyon, and then a hiker appeared with a leashed poodle. On seeing the canine the ram fled, and was never seen again, nor any others after the late nineties. Now we current folks are privileged to be a part of the whole Big Horn Sheep reintroduction program, whose first sheep were released back into the Catalinas in November 2013. Then recently, for the first time in twenty years, a ewe was seen in December 2016 in Sabino Canyon at Stop Two, and just last month (April 2017) a ewe and a lamb were seen at crossing six in Bear Canyon near Seven Falls.

Ranger Tom Quinn, in years past, worked many changes in the canyon. In addition to supporting the Bike and Volunteer Foot Patrols he was instrumental in eliminating the use of alcohol in the SCRA as well as the establishment of Friends of Sabino Canyon in 1993.

The first HOURS REPORT for the period 10-1-97 to 9-31-98 for the newly formed SCVP showed 1,342 hours by 17 patrol members as follows: Bertleson 354, Dobrin 225, Cirrito 146, Koenig 113, Elkind 92, Stutzheim 90 and 322 hours by six others whose names have sadly been lost. Also lost are the totals for 98-99 and 99 to 2000. The patrol's most recent total from October 2016 with 227 members (171 actually contributing hours) was 18,702. Strikingly, the average number of hours contributed per member per year.

We have come from a time of writing-in our entries by hand at the Visitor Center, to doing it now on the internet from home; from a time of seventeen members to two hundred forty-four; from a time when help and assistance in the canyon was badly needed, to today (April 4th 2017) when eighteen men and women are on patrol on fifteen different Canyon trails! And quite possibly an equal number, if not more, of Naturalists leading groups at various Ramadas, and yet more trails.

Until 2014 meetings and Orientation for new classes were held at the FS warehouse, with sizes near twenty. *From 2000 to 2004 the total membership of The Patrol rarely surpassed fifty*, with twenty to thirty percent doing most of the patrol work. Mentoring, as it is done now did not begin until 2005, and classes at the Visitor Center, beginning with the Class of 2014, then grew to fifty.

Marybeth Morehart says of those early years: “Annual meetings and the fall party during the first five years (Until 2002) were almost always at Ricki Mensching’s home, and one year there was a big bundle of used clothing from the Forest Service. What a bounty that was,” remembers Morehart.

The minutes of the December 2003 board meeting reflect, 5,874 hours were logged that year (508 in one month during The Aspen Fire). The five top patrol persons in hours logged were David Bertelsen 1035, Dick Dobrin 824, Tom Van Vessem 290, Martin Rosen 254, and Bill Holmes 188.

Annual dues were then \$10.00 and total membership as 2004 began was seventy-seven. Almost all patrol work was concentrated then in Sabino Canyon, but a 2003 bulletin suggested it would be appropriate for members to begin to spread out to Ventana, Pima, and Finger Rock trail heads, as well as Mount Lemmon. While being reminded our MOU did not cover all of Coronado National Forest, rather only the Catalinas. Not the Rincons, Santa Ritas or Chiracahuas. The same remains true today.

By December 2004, less than one hundred members had logged over 4000 hours. Marylee Petersen remained president and Ricki Mensching Secretary, each working many an un-logged hour. Heidi Schewel of the Forest Service wrote concise instructions that year in The Patrol Newsletter on how the uniform was to be worn. Forest Service shirt with FS and volunteer patches, nameplate and badges in the same places we have them today, green pants; brown belt.

Heidi went on to write in 2004 what remains important today: “Some volunteers are wearing components which are not part of the official uniform.... and while we want to eventually move everyone into official uniforms for consistency and to portray professionalism, in the short term we have some flexibility.”

We were asked also not to go into the narrow Visitor Center hallway where the sign-in sheets were located, unless we were in uniform. The sign-in sheets hung on the wall through the door behind the gift shop. Herb Boskin of ‘06 enjoyed that way of signing in *“Because it allowed me to say hello to other Patrol members, as well as the FS people you then saw twice a day”*.

By March of 2005, following the induction of thirteen new members, membership reached eighty. That same month Fred Blatt reported success with speeding bikers racing down Sabino Canyon: “...we were successful in having full time FS personnel issue tickets to cyclists refusing to slow down.”

In late 2005 the 100 hour pin was introduced, and the first few given out soon after; sixteen that year. Ann Nierenberg at the same time suggested The Patrol put into place an Internet system whereby Patrol folks who wanted a hiking friend could list themselves and connect with others. By 2007 Jane Klip reports the new class was fifteen members. But total size remained less than one hundred.

Warren Icke reports The Chronicle was formed in 2007 to provide patrol members answers to questions about current conditions in the Canyon. “Current Answers to Current Questions” was then, and remains today, the main purpose and theme of The Chronicle.

Catalina fires were soon a big part of what The Patrol did, beginning but not ending with The Bullock Fire of May 21st to June 2nd 2002, which burned 35,000 acres on the north, and northeast sides of the

Catalinas from Redington Road all the way to Oracle Ridge. The Bullock Fire turned out to be just a preview of what twelve months later would destroy most of Summerhaven, as well as huge areas of high elevation forest on the south side of The Catalinas. The famous and destructive Aspen Fire began June 17th 2003 and burned well into July.

It destroyed 340 homes and businesses in and around Summerhaven; burned 85,000 acres of forest, twice that of the Bullock Fire, and cost 17 million dollars to suppress. Patrol members put in thousands of hours on both those extremely destructive fires, as well as many other smaller fires, at high and low elevation trailheads.

Then, as if two of the worst fires in the history of the Catalinas were not enough, in July of 2006 a combination of intense rain fall and the scorched, non-absorbent earth on to which it fell, caused a truly disastrous flood to rage down Sabino Canyon ripping out roads, tumbling great boulders to its bottom, and closing it to use for almost two years.

As Jim Maluta, who was there reports: "Some of the boulders in the road at Stop Nine were five feet tall. And the rest room was totally obliterated by the rockslide. It disappeared. I think there may also have been a picnic table and a well with drinking water there. They too were gone."

Marylee Peterson writes: "...after the flood of 2006 the SCVP, and also SCVN, spent a lot of time and volunteer hours 'guarding' the canyon. Because everyone wanted to see first-hand what it looked like. Heidi Schewel and I, as FS personnel, took the media into the canyon several times, and I can tell you it was a challenge. We often had to form a 'human chain' to get across the creek (which was a swollen river), as well as clamber over boulders, etc. It is difficult to picture the extreme damage that occurred that year in Sabino and Rattlesnake canyons, but the photos give one a fair idea.

Again The Patrol adapted and guided visitors to safer parts of the canyon and away from the areas being rebuilt. In remarks about how The Patrol has been able in concert with the Forest Service to achieve its Congressional mandate to the people of the United States, former District Ranger Stan Helin recently wrote:

“The SCVP has been powerful in assisting us to get the message through to the public when we had very limited FS personnel and simply could not be in every location all the time. Imagine all the trailheads on both the top and the bottom of the mountain. If it hadn’t been for SCVP willingness we never would have been successful.” And later: “I want to pass along a time when the SCVP made an immense impression on the chief of the FS and visiting Undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture, Harris Sherman. *They were blown away by your success, community based support, training program, organizational structure, and bylaws.*” (Italics added, JH)

Helin continued: “Undersecretary Harris took that message back to Washington DC, as a model of how to create such a strong community based program in support of our National Forests. He asked for copies of your bylaws and training programs. As I now travel for the FS around America, I have seen a few places with bigger groups, but so far no one I have come across has such long-lasting fortitude, continuity, approach, and involvement as does the SCVP.”

Helin wrote recently commenting on The Patrol’s many successes now in DC himself: *“From all my travels around the country I have seen no other volunteer organization like it. What you are doing in Sabino Canyon is unique.”*

Tosh Lawrence and Ricki Mensching at Marshal Gulch during fire season



Stop nine forever changed by floods and landslides of July 2006.



The Middle Years

2008 - 2014

The Patrol's first twenty years are best defined by endless challenge. From its first tentative steps into Sabino Canyon in 1997 to assist hikers, to assisting with major fires, floods, landslides, helicopter rescues, hiking deaths, missing persons, Music In the Canyon and national holidays, to inventing and implementing the Ram Rangers, the SCVP has in all those years never relaxed. Nor failed to respond. By 2008 its original ten members had grown to one hundred. And founding member Dick Dobrin, who in 2017 passed away, logged alone in 2008 over 800 hours; in 2011 over one thousand!

At the November 2008 board meeting, Ricki Mensching passed the Secretarial torch to Carol Tornow. One Ricki had carried the prior ten years with unfailing energy. And one that Carol would carry forward, and then Deb Langeloh after her with equal vigor. In 2009 the privilege of SCVP members to ride the shuttle for free, while in uniform, and only under certain conditions, was again ironed out. And became part of the contract negotiated by the USFS. As 2009 ended new members, and those still with The Patrol since its inception, began to work hard to revitalize the SCVP. Marylee Peterson was going on eleven years as President, and Ricki Mensching beside her, each earning themselves, with no small effort, recognition for outstanding work.

Other board members in 2009 were Ned Harris, Maribeth Morehart, Don Morehart, Janice Nusbaum, Warren Icke, and Carol Tornow. A web site for The Patrol was first suggested in a 2009 board meeting. By 2011 first web master Bob Wenrick had "birthed" our first web site, and brought it close to what it is today, proving again not just the ingenuity of patrol members, but also their staying power. *Internet sign-ins, however, were not possible until 2013.*

Former board member Don Spiece remembers: “The outdoor sign-in sheets had always been at the VC. Then, at the end of the month, they had to be tabulated. Sometimes whole sheets would disappear. With the website sign-ins beginning in 2013 that ended!” We can thank Jim Barnett, Angie Perryman and many others who served then on The Patrol for this major milestone in our history.

But what other functions, which today we take for granted, might the web site provide? All of it, step by step, had to be figured out, studied, implemented, and experimented with -- to create today’s site. None of it came easily.

In 2009 Jan Nusbaum followed Marylee Peterson as The Patrol’s second president, and a public Honor Board was instituted, to recognize outstanding volunteers. By mid 2010, Jan Nusbaum and Deb Langeloh were urging The Patrol to work beyond Sabino Canyon. Remembering that period Carol Tornow says: “Jan and Deb took the lead by talking with campground operators on the Mountain and scoping out the various trailheads and unsupervised campgrounds. The first Mt Lemmon orientation meeting was held in August 2010. I helped with the agenda and hosted the meeting after Jan and Deb prepared the orientation and training materials. Fifteen to twenty members attended to prepare for Mt Lemmon patrols and a sign-in box for Mt Lemmon patrols was created outside the Palisades Visitor Center.” So just as the eight and nine thousand foot elevation forests, and Catalina streams, lakes and waterfalls began to renew themselves from fires and flooding, so too did The Patrol expand and increase itself.

As 2010 came to a close, for the first time the coming reintroduction of Big Horn Sheep, still three years in the future. So the SCVP, by 2012 would have to create from thin air, with no prior model at all, what became an essential part of the reintroduction’s final success: the extremely active Ram Rangers. The SCVP closed 2010 with 124 members, and increasing efforts on Mount Lemmon.

The class limit in 2011 remained 25 recruits, due to room size limitations. Orientation remained at the warehouse, a quarter mile north of the Visitor Center. “Associate” status was listed for future discussion for those who continue to pay dues, but no longer patrol. At October’s 2011 board meeting \$600.00 was dedicated to the complicated work of improving the Internet web site. January 2012 board members were: Jan Nusbaum, Jim Barnett, Debbie Barnett, Walt Tornow, Warren Icke, Dean Perron, Jeff Hahn and Agnes Stahlschmidt.

With a continuing limit that year of 25, some applicants were informed to reapply and others were not accepted. In 2012 a Patrol volunteer became lost and had to be rescued. That incident was the source of today’s insistence by the board, mentors, and printed material that all Patrol members be instructed carefully on how to behave in uniform in order to set an example, not be one.

During 2012 Forest Service representative, Linda Stamer, began her short but popular term. Within two years she would move on to California, and her equally popular replacement, Sarah Corning, would arrive in 2014. As visitation increased, problems with pet dogs versus legally defined “Service Dogs” became a serious issue, which remains to this day a continuing challenge.

Each board member serves a two-year term, six beginning on odd years; five on even years. New officers are elected every 12 months for the coming calendar year. They are President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary, though this year the latter was changed to Administrative Officer. As 2012 ended, Walt Tornow became The Patrol’s third board President, following Marylee Peterson and Jan Nusbaum. Through 2014, he would serve two very energetic terms. And end up with his full sized photo in front of the VC. The famous and popular pictures of “Prepared or NOT prepared to hike” The Catalinas.

At 2013's first meeting, Tornow said that minutes should record not only the actions of the Board, but also offer greater detail concerning the members' rich discussion, which would help future boards understand the history and justifications for their actions. Dues were raised in 2013 from the original \$10.00 a year to their current level of \$15.00.

Among Walt's many goals (Most of them now in place) "...were initiating strategic planning, developing systems for key organizational processes (recruitment, orientation, member communication, dues tracking), developing computer based record-keeping and database management, and bringing on-line a user-oriented web site..." During Walt's presidency, the Big Horn Sheep program began.

Walt appointed Granny Grant and Phil Bentley in 2012 to initiate and oversee The Ram Rangers. As Grant puts it: "The first year was difficult because the public didn't know what was going on. So the SCVP did a TON of educating. By year two, I had to alter each team slightly by encouraging all the Ram patrollers-----and I encouraged ALL members of the SCVP as well-----to start patrolling all the trails outside of Sabino every day of the week---in the sheep reintroduction controlled areas." Thus the Ram Rangers pushed The Volunteer Patrol even further out into the western Catalinas. And by late 2013 (a short four years ago) uniforms which were formerly seen only rarely outside Sabino Canyon, were being seen the length and width of The Catalinas, on all but the North side.

Member Linda Horowitz, summing up growth of the SCVP, wrote: "The biggest change was the expansion and clear delineation of the role of a patroller. When I first started I saw my role as just going on the trails and helping answer questions from people who were already hiking. The addition of new jobs including standing in front of the VC to help people choose their hikes and giving out maps, and patrolling on Mt. Lemmon, and The Ram Patrol have made us much more a presence, and help for the public."

In his 2013 President's Message, Walt Tornow wrote: "... the SCVP is strong, healthy and active. When called on to volunteer, our members respond when and where needed ... such as Mt. Lemmon, Mountain Lion Kinder Patrol, Bighorn Sheep Patrol, and many other special events." A Mountain Lion Patrol sub-group was formed with Dan Lupo as its Chair. Its job would be to protect gatherings of children at the Naturalist presentations in Sabino and Bear Canyons when needed.

He reported growth to 140 members, 33 of whom were new that year, and a backlog of 25 applicants already for 2014. He mentioned the hard work of long time members Angie Perryman, Don Spiece, Tim Ralph, Debbie and Jim Barnett, Jeff Hahn, Pam Bridgmon, Phil Bentley and Deb Langeloh. By 2014 the web site had been modified and improved many times. Manual sign-ins at the VC were completely over, and there was time to think about invasive species in the canyon, business cards for patrol members to carry, and a full report on lamb survival among Big Horn Sheep.

The first year of the sheep reintroduction program thirteen of the thirty Big Horns released into the wild died, but three lambs were born. And another 30 sheep would be released near Pusch Ridge in November 2014. Music in the Canyon was again held in March, and along with Friends of Sabino Canyon and the Bike Patrol, the SCVP was there in big numbers to assist and maintain order for that major fund raising event. The Festival of Books followed at the UA Campus where The Patrol was again present. And in 2012 Jane Battaglia was keeping the minutes as Board Secretary.

The 2014 Music in the Canyon Raffle, together with vendors, donations and ticket proceeds produced \$44,000.00, leaving almost half that for FOSC to maintain trails, post signs and improve facilities in Sabino. There were 2,500 in attendance, twice the number of 2013. As 2014 began to wind down with no fires, floods or more than the usual number of stranded hikers, the board met in November to begin planning for a greater number of applicants.

A class of 50 was ready, and Granny Grant, whom no one would ever contest as the best-uniformed patrol person day in and day out, questioned “uniform standards.” A memo, detailing uniform standards, was drafted and sent by e-mail to the SCVP membership.

In November 2014 at the annual business meeting and Pot Luck there were 68 in attendance. Walt Tornow, after two busy years, passed the gavel to newly elected President Marty Horowitz. Walt’s tenure would not be an easy act to follow, but in the fifth and sixth parts of this history, we will find out how its been going for The Patrol and its new leadership. Along with a new president were board members Bob Turcotte, Jane Battaglia, Don Speice, Phil Bentley, Granny Grant, Maggie White, Bill Rood, Tim Ralph, Jim McDougal, and Angie Perryman.

SCVP Board, 2014



Left to right: Tim Ralphs, Phil Bentley, Walt Tornow, Jane Battaglia, Granny Grant, Don Speice, Jeff Hahn, Marty Horowitz

The Recent Years

2015 - 2016

As 2015 began The Patrol had graduated upward from Sabino Canyon to Mount Lemmon, eastward to Pusch Ridge and westward to Agua Caliente trails. Duties had increased; training had accelerated, and The Patrol had excelled.

New challenges included disturbed archaeological sites, rock art, the upcoming fire season, invasive species, Big Horn Sheep talking points and protective patrols, new member limits and how to run Orientation? As well as Easter weekend with its maximum visitation and parking dilemmas, vandalism and spray painting on the route to Seven Falls, and financial reports too. It all had to be done: Trail and Visitor Center responsibilities, and bookkeeping too.

One quote from *tripadvisor* in early 2015 about Sabino Canyon read: “Must see!” Sabino Canyon is the one place I take all my out of town visitors to see. A recent visitor from England told me she enjoyed the tram ride more than she enjoyed seeing the Grand Canyon.” This exemplifies why our Tucson Canyons, like their famous cousin to the North, keep The Patrol both busy and growing.

In February, with new President Horowitz at the helm, high water procedures were reviewed, as well as advanced training, trail first-aid as in what to do, and what not to do, back country communication, and the yet distant annual meeting. As always there was much to do, and too few to do it.

Early in 2015 current district ranger Ken Born arrived, and a “Welcome Ken” gathering soon took place. Bill Rood replaced Granny Grant as Big Horn Sheep coordinator, and Marshall Gulch parking and payment issues on Mount Lemmon continued.

As spring ended a faithful group of summer patrol personnel persisted again through June, July, August and September, often in three-digit heat. While several others drove the 26 miles up The Catalina Highway to work Mount Lemmon, where entirely different volunteer opportunities awaited them.

Because out of state tourists dominate at Sabino in the winter months, it is hometown folks in the majority in the high elevation Catalinas during each hot summer. Few realize it, but snow remains on Lemmon for much of the winter, though only in the highest areas. And while The Patrol does not coordinate its efforts with those of the ski resort located at the highest elevations, plenty of Patrol work goes into the trails adjoining the ski area, and also at the twenty and more trailheads along the Catalina Highway, reaching from Soldier Trail at 3,000 feet all the way to Mt. Lemmon itself at 9,000.

By summer 2015 new CE classes organized by Maggie White were teaching patrol members the differences between volunteering in Sabino Canyon and on Mt. Lemmon. The major difference being Sabino hikes went generally uphill when beginning, and down hill when ending, while the opposite held true on Mount Lemmon.

The Monsoons, which typically release half or more of Tucson’s annual rainfall, occur in July and August. During that period in Sabino, high water issues occur. Such as when to close trails and how to do it? By fall the Board set dues to remain at \$15.00 a year, and in 2015 all applications became electronic. In October Bob Turcotte took over as web-master for the long serving Angie Perryman.

The Arizona Department of Game and Fish in November 2015 released a third group of thirty sheep on the east side of Pusch Ridge. By December sixty collared sheep were known to be alive. Lamb births and general survival were good, and lion predation was limited. A fourth and final release was scheduled for late 2016.

Sarah Corning, the liaison between The Patrol and Forest Service explained again the different types of parking tickets given by FS personnel. Patrol persons, she said, “Will always remain in an advisory capacity and never issue tickets.

By summer’s end the board minutes again addressed uniforms:

“Mentors must teach new candidates how to properly wear our uniforms. Something is lacking here since there have been so many uniform violations lately. Question was raised: Do mentors need to be trained prior to mentoring? Is a checklist needed for mentors regarding the proper way to wear our uniforms? Mentors must hike with their candidates in full uniform PRIOR to releasing mentees. This is the time to make corrections and mentors should not release mentees until the uniform is correct.”

As fall came and Monsoon high waters began to recede, the tram fees for Sabino Canyon were raised slightly by the private contractor, from \$8.00 to \$10.00 for adults and a similar increase for children.

Forest Service rules were published prohibiting Geo-Caching “...an outdoor recreational activity, in which participants use a GPS receiver or mobile device and other navigational techniques to hide and seek containers, called “geocaches” or “caches”, at specific locations marked by coordinates all over the world...” even though in the past it had briefly occurred in the Canyon.

Bill Rood reiterated how important the thirty Ram Rangers, all of whom were SCVP members, had become to the State of Arizona's sheep reintroduction program. Their presence, not just in Romero Canyon and Pusch Peak, where most of the sheep had gathered, but also in Finger Rock, Pontatoc and Ventana Canyons had become essential. This was because the rules regarding pets, dogs and other activities in the West Catalinas were more restrictive, than Sabino Canyon and Mount Lemmon. Not even bona fide seeing eye dogs were allowed.

As the year-end approached, Vice President Bob Turcotte announced 43 applications already in hand for the class of 2016, six of them from the West Side. In its final meeting of that year, Bill Walsh and Dan Lupo joined the board, and Linda Stelljes took the Secretarial baton from Jane Battaglia.

Over flow parking at the nearby public school was utilized on weekends, and Patrol personnel who repeatedly serve on the busiest holidays of the year continued to put on a brave face, meet the long lines of traffic, and return occasional angry looks with an honest smile.

Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, New Year's and other special days tested the skills and patience of all Patrol personnel willing to serve. Not often, but occasionally, once a vehicle was at last parked, out would pop not only passengers, but also numerous pets! In December 2015 instructions to Patrol Volunteers were repeated regarding pets, skateboards and other issues:

"Closure Orders - NO motorized vehicles, including Segways, are authorized in the canyon; skateboards also unauthorized.

☒ Appropriate Service animals are allowed, NOT emotion support/comfort pets."

Patrol Candidates for the January 2016 class neared fifty and twenty-one members volunteered to Mentor, and a voluntary “*Refresher Course*” for long time members was proposed. Bill Walsh began the important work of establishing our exact IRS status regarding what kind of non-profit we were. The mountain lion group would continue to protect gatherings of children at the Naturalist presentations in Sabino and Bear Canyons when needed.

True to form January 2016 began with a discussion of proliferating Drones. Would they be allowed or not? No one knew. Also discussed was what kinds of handicapped conveyances would be allowed up Sabin? Some would be allowed while others would not. Was it a permanent device for assistance, or temporary became the key.

The Linda Vista trail in early 2016, because of its proximity to the sheep in the Pusch Peak area, became a serious problem for the FS and the board. Historic use of an illegal social trail, almost straight to the top of Pusch Peak, was addressed without conclusion.

Bill Rood reported in February the first annual “Winter Picnic” at Catalina State Park went well as a social event for the patrol, attended by sixty members. And Treasurer Walsh reported a balance of just over \$6000.00, an amount equal to annual expenses.

For the first time in recent years, in March 2016, the FS called upon the Patrol to seek multiple volunteers to be trained to work in the Visitor Center “behind the counter” to assist visiting tourists and locals alike, a program which eighteen months later is now in full swing.

By April the always-complicated relationship between The Southern Arizona Rescue Association (Whose offices and meeting rooms are located not far from the VC) the Pima County Sheriff's Office and the SCVP was discussed. In particular regarding persons lost and/or missing in The Patrol's area of responsibility. Who is supposed to look for them? President Horowitz made it clear; our position is to remain "neutral." We are generally not to assist.

In certain rare instances some Patrol personnel do assist. They may direct other hikers around injured persons, as has happened on the trail to Seven Falls multiple times, or remain on site until SARA volunteers or Sheriff's deputies arrive. In some cases mounted patrols on mules and horses assist both SARA and Sheriffs. As the April minutes state: *"Regarding the lost hiker in Sabino Canyon, neither the FS nor SCVP has any official capacity in search and rescue and are not assisting; that is being handled by the Pima County Sheriff's Department and SARA. SCVP is only doing our normal patrolling. Marty brought up the issue of communication with those doing search and rescue operations, and that we have volunteers who are able and willing to assist **if official coordination with the FS and searchers is opened up to us."***

Also in April three Mountain sheep were killed by Mountain Lions and hunters hired by Game and Fish were not successful in finding and killing the responsible lions. Again dogs on Romero Trail were a problem for sheep, and more patrol personnel were requested. Vinny Yackanin, representing the Sabino Canyon Bike Patrol and its nine members, requested that group become a part of the SCVP.

By May of 2016 there were eight volunteers ready to be trained to work one or two days a week, all day at the Palisades Visitor Center to keep it open on Jeannie's day off. And the board, in an effort to know with some clarity whether or not volunteers on

patrol were covered against law suits by federal or personal insurance continued to press the FS for an answer.

Bill Rood reported professional hunters had killed seven mountain lions since the sheep reintroduction program began. The total number of mountain lions in the Catalinas is estimated to be near one hundred in 2016, and sheep now a similar number.

Following a drowning at Tanque Verde Falls off Redington Road, and inquiries by the family of the deceased, the board voted not to expand patrols into that area. The idea of a 500-hour pin, in addition to the already available 100-hour pin was presented as New Business, but nothing further occurred.

No summer meetings were held and in August it was decided, “we will continue to behave as if drones are banned while final details are being worked out by the FS.” In August Bill Rood stepped down as head of the Ram Rangers and Gary Youngling was appointed to replace him. David Carper stepped up to assist in web site duties. And for the first time in many years Palisades VC located high on Mount Lemmon would be open seven days a week.

September proved again the Patrol’s attraction. Not only had the class of 2017 filled at 51, but 12 had already applied for 2018. And by October 150,000 new maps to hand out to visitors had been approved. FS allocated one wall of the conference room for the patrol to put up awards, recognition and other important memorabilia.

In November the FS began to staff the Fee Booth from sunrise to sunset, and a car counter was installed. The overflow parking issue was further resolved with the words: “Overflow parking lot at SARA – possibly starting beginning of January. Signs, parking bumpers, gate all have to be put in before SCVP will be called to patrol and help in that area. Mostly people with Annual Passes will be encouraged to use the overflow parking

lot. Reminder that on weekends ONLY can we suggest that overflow parking can be at the school across Sab. Cyn. Rd. “

In mid November a first ever event occurred, as far as any present members could recall. The Pima County Sheriff’s department, in an effort that had so far failed to find a missing hiker, called on the Forest Service and the SCVP in particular for assistance. Ten patrol persons volunteered to go, and one actually participated in the search, which was that day centered on the Mount Lemmon Highway at the Green Mountain trailhead.

Those volunteers were Jack Hemingway, Joyce Lucas, Linda Sheehy, Paul Krieghauser, Tom Trimmer, Bob Turcotte, David Dean, Deborah Chappa, Gary Youngling and Jim Hunter. By day’s end the missing person had still not been found, but another step in the Patrol’s ever expanding duties had been taken. The next morning the hiker wandered back out of the Catalina Mountains after three nights in the wilds, and was picked up on the highway by a passing motorist.

As 2016’s December meeting began President Horowitz reminded the board the fee paid by visitors is not a parking fee, but rather a use fee for all the facilities including parking, restroom, visitor center and so on. And the four spaces in employee parking on east side of lot are for PILA folks only.

As the year neared its end verifiable reports of mountain lions seen near Stop Two Bear Canyon, or “The dam” began to come in. Followed by other actual sightings at Stops Four and Six in Sabino Canyon well into the summer of 2017, but none since, though numerous lions remain in the area.

In December the Forest Service announced Drones would be allowed in the SCRA, and nearby Wilderness areas. Drones could not be launched or landed in the Wilderness but could fly within it. The announcement read:

“... drones are allowed in Sabino Canyon. They must be registered with the FAA and the registration number must be ON the drone as well as the operator having the registration # on their person. The operator has to be at least 13 yrs. Old. The drone must be within the operator’s line of sight and not above 400’and must weigh less than 55 lbs.”

The year 2016 ended, as will this brief history, with twenty plus Mentors again on Sabino trails, guiding fifty-one new members with information gained from past experiences; providing insight on how to deal with an ever changing public, and new challenges which each day are certain to arrive.

Twenty years after being founded, going from an original ten members to today’s two hundred forty, The Patrol’s short history presents a picture of a group which has never failed to fulfill its mandate, nor be unable to meet well each new, and often unexpected challenge.

Many thanks to Jim Maluta, without whom much of this would not have been written, as well as David Carper and Marty Horowitz, who each, along with Jim provided many months of tireless editing, advice and major assistance in the production of this effort.

Jim Hunter