

TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

Docent Newsletter

The Nature Conservancy

July, 1996

This N' That from Mary McIntyre, Education and Outreach Coordinator

EACH OF YOU is a valued member of our docent team. We need and want your active participation in our Tallgrass Prairie Preserve program. As this program continues to grow, there will be more and more exciting opportunities for docent participation. In fact, becoming a docent will let you in on the ground floor of many exciting opportunities, once we have built our active docent team to a size which can cover gift shop hours as completely as desired. (See scheduling paragraph below). Currently, I am investigating the possibility of creating a team of "trail guide" docents to provide guided walks to visitors on weekends (or as team members are available). This team may be active this fall!!

In the works NOW - an exciting recognition program, which will offer returning docents special awards for years of participation; an hour tracking program, which will allow TNC to calculate the amazing amount (and \$ value) of time donated by volunteers; our annual Fall Recognition Banquet, set for OCT. 12, 1996; and a special event for Docent Council members in honor of their extra efforts!

SCHEDULING - To accomplish these goals, we need you to take more responsibility for scheduling your work time! I've been told that you WON'T do it -- but I refuse to believe that!! With this newsletter, you will find blank August and September calendar sheets. On each calendar, mark your 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices for work days in these months. Return these sheets to the Tulsa office by JULY 10. You may contact a fellow DOCENT and schedule your time together. Work dates will be assigned in the ORDER in which requests are received at the office, first come, first served. Once the deadline has passed, if the calendar is not full, and we have not heard from you, our scheduler, Linda Meistrell, will be calling you to help fill in the blanks. If you are UNABLE to serve that month due to vacation or busy schedule, return a blank calendar with your name filled in and the comment that you are unable to work that month. My philosophy is that as an adult volunteer, you choose to contribute your time, and spending hours playing phone tag is not a good use of anyone's time. We are all responsible adults! I believe this is an exceptional group of docents, and that you will each take this challenge/responsibility upon yourself and keep our work schedule FULL without all the telephone tag!

THANKS - A special thanks to all docents who worked at The Annual Meeting on June 1 and 2, and also during Heritage Day, June 15. Also, a rousing round of thanks to Linda Meistrell for filling up EVERY DAY in June with a volunteer. This was an enormous task. We can now say that we are open every day, thanks to all of you - our terrific dedicated volunteers.

Thanks for making the month of June our first full coverage month since opening!!! Let's do it again in July, August, September, October and November!!

This new scheduling policy will free up some time which we can spend expanding our growing program. As always, your input is welcome. Call me at 918/585-1117, ext. 22.

REMINDER---If you are unable to be at the Prairie on your scheduled day, remember to get a substitute and call me or Linda Meistrell, 918/743-7067.

Research Information

A binder has been placed in the Docent office at the Gift Shop labeled "Recent Research on The Nature Conservancy's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, 1995 to ---". When you're at the Preserve and there is a quiet break between visitors, check this binder out. It includes summaries of research projects being conducted at the Preserve. Thanks to Liz Medley for getting this volume started for us.

The Story of The Bell

Spurred on by questions from visitors, Dave Dolcater has researched the history of the bell which now hangs in the yard near the headquarters building at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. This information will be included in the Research information volume at the Preserve for your complete reading. Here's a brief summary of the information.

Ray Taylor of Pawhuska donated the bell to the Preserve in 1995. He bought the bell at the Barton Estate Auction in Pawhuska about 1993 for \$385. The sale bill had advertised that the bell came from a plantation in Arkansas. The yoke supporting the bell is imprinted with "The C.S. Bell Co., Hillsboro, Ohio." Dolcater tracked down a former business manager of this now defunct company and learned the company's history. Founded in 1858, the C.S. Bell Company was originally the Speedwell Foundry until Charles S. Bell bought it. After Bell brought the foundry, it made not only bells, but farm equipment, stoves, steam generators, etc. Bells produced ranged in size from small farm bells to 54-inch church bells. Our bell at the preserve is a No. 28, which means that the mouth of the bell is 28 inches in diameter. The bell weighs 294 pounds alone, but with the mountings and yoke, weight is 450 pounds. The numbers imprinted inside the bell, "11 19 18" do indeed indicate the date of manufacture, November 19, 1918.

Tallgrass Report

The bison corral is about 80% covered with primer. The cowboys will be finishing that up so that the painting of the first coat can begin this fall! Phase II of the bison corral is now under construction, additions to cope with the continued growth in size of the bison herd.

The bison are moving between the Spring 96 burns and the Fall 95 burns over the 7100 acres of the bison unit, and can be found in one large herd or up to three smaller herds. 144 calves have been identified as of June 17. This brings the total herd size to 540. According to Bob Hamilton, some of the older bison calves are beginning to darken in color and have "zebra" coloring on their faces. Rut "love" season is beginning for the bison!

Three new studies are underway on the Preserve: (1) Kansas state PhD study comparing plant species diversity on prairies of differing sizes; (2) OU PhD study on animal species in temporary wetlands such as bison wallows; and (3) an OSU professor's study on water quality and diversity in aquatic systems. This brings the total research projects now underway to about two dozen.

“HOW I CAME TO LOVE THE PRAIRIE” ---- Veda Robertson was born southwest of Pawhuska and has spent all her life in Osage County. Not only does she love the beauty of the Preserve, but she loves sharing the “rich history, its diversity and cultural heritage” with visitors. Since she lives in Shidler, she is pleased to meet tour busses on days when there is not a regular docent at the Headquarters.

She is happy that The Nature Conservancy has the Preserve and writes that their goals and vision are consistent with hers, that the Tallgrass ecosystem should be preserved for all time.

EDITORIAL:

“Spectacular Day.” “Everyone left so inspired.” These are some of the comments that I have heard from TNC staff and others in reference to The Annual Meeting on June 1 and 2. More than three hundred people attended and the field trips were especially appreciated. Heritage Day at the TGP Preserve was another truly memorable day. Many docents took advantage of these opportunities to participate. These events help us to provide more personal insight in visiting with our guests. Thank you to TNC staff for making them possible. They do a Great Job!!! NBW

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IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO, PLEASE fill out the form below and mail to me. We really want to hear from ALL our docents. Thank you.

Name _____ Address _____

Profession: _____ Retired Y___ N___ Docent beginning _____

“How I came to love the Prairie” _____

Feel free to write as much as you wish to share. Couples Note: **each** of you please write something

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| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | 1 Alan Beckert Kathryn Spears | 2 Phyllis Connally Doris Mayfield | 3 Dave Dolcater Iris McPherson | 4 Marilyn Fugate Linda Weistrell | 5 Marilyn Keefer Sue Wheeler | 6 Al & Liz Medley Eva Van Sant |
| 7 Cheryl Kilpatrick | 8 Harold Murrain | 9 Louise Magruder | 10 Molly Ferguson | 11 Barbara Jean Marashi | 12 Carolyn Mathews | 13 Ken & Shirley Miller |
| 14 Gary & Renee Weyl | 15 Nune Richards | 16 Laban Miles | 17 Dorothy Buck Donna Sue Jones | 18 Craig Hartline Charlie Moomaw | 19 Ted & Jan Holsomback | 20 |
| 21 Barbara Jean Marashi | 22 Van & Loretta Vives | 23 Don & Barbara Sweeney | 24 Dean & Mary Ellen Johnston | 25 Bill Rinehart | 26 Randy & Nyla Woody | 27 |
| 28 Jo Brooks | 29 Stu Marshall | 30 Bob & Mary Reeves | 31 Tom Clark Roberta Hovis | | | |