

A Brief History of SWFS Amigos
by Lou Romero, May 2010 (*updates in blue by Lou Romero*)
CONTINUING UPDATES by Cyndie Hogg, June 2026

During the 2010 Quemado Roundup opening program, Monday, May 10, questions were asked about how the Amigos got started and when did the Roundups at Quemado start? The questions sparked lively, but differing responses and debate. I was asked by MC, Jimmy Hickman, in my role as Roundup Librarian, to research the records and report my findings the following day.

First, I studied the green bound book of Amigos Newsletters, assembled in 2002, by President, John Pruitt. The Green Book is now used as the symbolic “passing of the baton” from one President to the next. Much of the historic documentation in the book was personally collected by Chuck Williams from interviews with Bill Hurst.

Secondly, I relied heavily on an album entitled, “The Early Days”. Ed Groesbeck served as “informal coordinator” of the Amigos from 1968 until 1979 when Frank Smith became President. During that time Ed attended and documented all the gatherings. Ed also served as Wagon Master from 1970 to 1986. He eventually collected his notes and documented Amigos history with narrative and photos in the ‘Early Days Album’. Given his level of involvement, I believe his historic writings and photos to be quite credible.

I reported my brief research the next evening, 5/11/10. However, that prompted me to dig a little deeper and submit a more complete update for documentation in the Amigos Newsletter. My intent is to update and affirm documentation work done by Chuck Williams and John Pruitt in 2002 and to fill in some blanks if possible. Chuck has reviewed and concurs with my work.

AMIGOS HISTORY

The SWFS Amigos were initially founded June 15-17, 1968, when eleven “amigos” rode into the Pecos Wilderness and camped at Beatty’s Cabin. (taken from 2002 Green Book: ten are included in the photo and ten are mentioned in Ed Groesbeck’s account, however, the 11th, Gonzalo Varela, GDA & cameraman is not shown.)

MAY 2016 UPDATE

“There was a second gathering in 1968 at which the wives were invited since it was to be held at the Panchuela Ranger Station first week of October”....(This quote was discovered by Chuck Hagerdon, May 2016. He also found that Ed Grosbeck labeled the 1969 Roundup as the 3^d Roundup.) – This would make 2016 the 49th Roundup and next year, 2017, will be the 50th Roundup event. No Roundup was held in 1970.

June 11-15, 1969, a similar group of “sixteen amigos” took a week long ride and camped in the San Pedro Parks Wilderness. (taken from 2002 Green Book and Early Days Album)

(Memories of what happened the years 1970, 71 and 72 differ as follows)

1970 – A trip was planned to ride into the Gila Wilderness to White Creek in September, following fire season but “failed to come off”. Apparently, Gus McCutchen, charged with arranging for the horses and packstring, had to deal with a family illness and the trip was cancelled. (taken from Ed Groesbeck documentation in Early Days album)

I also found the following statement in the Green Book, “In 1970 the retirees decided to go to Quemado Lake so that it would allow for the attendance of women folks.” The quote is taken from a report given by Ed Groesbeck at a 1986 Amigos luncheon. However, it is not clear if it was just the decision that was made in 1970, or whether they actually went to Quemado Lake. The record shows Ed being the Wagon Master in 1970.

It becomes more intriguing when you read a statement to the Amigos Editor in Newsletter # 64, April 2000. Wayne Orr was Quemado DR, March 1966 to March 1971. He says, “I think the history is a bit misleading. I worked on the planning for the Lake from the time I arrived. The Quemado Dam was completed Fall of 1970...many thought it would take 3-4 years to fill...but it filled that same winter/spring and even went over the spillway...the first Quemado Roundup was Spring of 1971.”

Bill Chapel followed Wayne Orr as Quemado District Ranger 1971 to November 1972. He recalls, “The Quemado Roundup was never held at the lake while I was there; at least as far as I know! What I recall is that after Bob Lyle’s death, I think it was 1974, Bob Lyle’s wife initiated a memorial for Bob at Quemado Lake, which eventually evolved into what it now is...a great idea!!” (Rip Ames followed Bill as Quemado DR for a short while... then Bob Lyle took over, according to Bill Chapel.)

Art Maynard, Recreation and Lands Staff on the A/S spoke at the dedication of the Quemado Dam. He affirms that the lake filled the winter of 1970/71 and that the dedication occurred the Spring of 1971.

Both Bill and Art say there were no campground facilities at Quemado Lake in 1971. (probably not in 1972 or 73 either)

Amigos Newsletter # 11, June, 1984, under the heading, “THE QUEMADO ROUNDUP reads, “This was the 16th annual Amigo spring get together – the 12th held at Quemado Lake.”

Backing up to 1971, according to Ed Grosbeck’s account, substantiated by a photo, the Roundup occurred at Phelps Cabin on the Apache NF with fishing at Coulter Reservoir. This occurred the last week of May with approximately 13 attendees.

In 1972, Ed Grosbeck’s says he invited the “Amigos” to his ranch in Routt County Colorado, August 6 – 11. 12 attendees participated.

In 1973, Ed’s documentation has 6 photos and narrative of the Amigos gathering at Lake Powell with approximately 27 attendees, April 16-23. Ted Koskella was Deputy Regional Forester 1971- 1973 and he says he “never heard of a Quemado Roundup during that time, but he participated in the 1973 Roundup at Lake Powell.”

(Based on my interpretation of the documentation cited above, I offer the following conclusions for 1970, 71, 72, and 73:

1970 – No Roundup occurred

1971 - Phelps Cabin/Coulter Reservoir was the Roundup site

1972 - Amigos met at Ed Groesbeck’s Ranch in Colorado

1973 - Amigos met at Lake Powell

Since the SWFS Amigos did not become an “official” organization until 1981, perhaps a subgroup may have camped at Quemado in 1971 & 1972 to “test” the site and fishing potential”. However, I did not find any conclusive evidence that such occurred.)

The records seem conclusive that the Amigos met at Quemado , April 29 to May 3, 1974, with 29 attendees. A vote was taken by mail during the fall of 1974 and it was decided to return to Quemado, and have continued the Roundups there ever since. In 1980, George Worley was serving as President of Amigos and he appointed a committee to explore a more formal organization.

Finally, in 1981, the current, official SWFS Amigos organization was formed and Bob Latimore became its President.

The 2020 Quemado Roundup was cancelled due to the coronavirus and COVID-19. The Forest Service also closed the campgrounds at Quemado Lake.

The 2021 Quemado Roundup was again cancelled due to the coronavirus and the COVID-19.

AMIGOS PRESIDENTS:

Ed Groesbeck informally coordinated the retirees from 1968 to 1979.

1. 1979 Frank Smith
2. 1980 George Worley
3. 1981 Bob Latimore
4. 1982 Ernie Taylor
5. 1983 Bill Hurst
6. 1984 Mary Hensch
7. 1985 Roy Bond
8. 1986 Helen Comer
9. 1987 Wendell Doty
10. 1988 Jack Williams
11. 1989 Dale Jones
12. 1990 Ella Egan Kirkpatrick
13. 1991 Chuck Williams
14. 1992 Steve Yurich
15. 1993 Bill Snyder

16. 1994 Bob Partido
17. 1995 Lavelle Thompson
18. 1996 Jim Hickman
19. 1997 Ken Bowman
20. 1998 Phil Smith
21. 1999 Chuck Jourden
22. 2000 Ray Meyer
23. 2001 Art Maynard
24. 2002 John Pruitt
25. 2003 Jane Westenberger
26. 2004 Andy Lindquist
27. 2005 Chuck Sheldon
28. 2006 Lou Romero
29. 2007 Mary Jo Lovick
30. 2008 Fred Fuchs
31. 2009 Dan Winner
32. 2010 Pat Jackson
33. 2011 Fred Fuchs
34. 2012 Dan Winner
35. 2013 Rudy Gutierrez (Greg Griffith, Vice President)
36. 2014 Greg Griffith (Joel Johnstone, Vice President)
37. 2015 Joel Johnstone (Jim Maes, Vice President)
38. 2016 *Jim Maes*
39. *2017 Jim Maes agrees to continue serving as President; no success finding a deputy during 2016 and so far no deputy as of May 2017.*
40. *January 25, 2018 – Chuck Jourden was voted in as President and Kathy Allred as Vice President.*
41. *2019 – Kathy Allred, President (John Barksdale, Vice-President)*
42. *2020 – John Barksdale, President (Carolyn Aragon, Vice-President)*
43. *2021 Coronavirus and COVID-19. This shut down the country for 14 months from March 2020 through June 2021. The decision was made that all Amigos officers would stay the same. John Barksdale, President (Carolyn Aragon, Vice-President)*
44. *2022 Carolyn Aragon, President (Carolyn Aragon stepped up as President March 9, 2022 when John Barksdale could no longer participate.)*
45. *2023 Carolyn Aragon, President (Emily Irwin, Vice-President)*
46. *2024 Emily Irwin, President, no Vice President. Emily Irwin agreed to continue as president for 2025 and 2026. Still no Vice-President.*

AMIGOS ROUNDUP WAGON MASTERS and Assistants/Deputies

1. Ed Groesbeck – 1970 through 1986, 17 years
2. Stan Wyche – 1987 through 1996, 10 years
3. Bill Leonard – 1997 through 1999, 3 years
4. Doug & Linda Smith/Jack & Janice Miller – 2000 & 2001, 2 years
5. Doug & Linda Smith/Fred & Jean Galley -2002, 1 year
6. 2003 Fred & Jean Galley/ Jim & Jan Abbott
7. 2004 Jim and Jan Abbott/Bob and Karen Armstrong
8. 2005 Bob and Karen Armstrong/Roger and Barbara Hobbs
9. 2006 Roger & Barbara Hobbs/Steve & Andrea Sams
10. 2007 Steve & Andrea Sams & Mike King
11. 2008 Bob Armstrong
12. 2009 Bob Armstrong and Chuck Hagerdon
- 13.2010 Chuck Hagerdon
14. 2011 Chuck Hagerdon & Lou Romero
- 15.2012 Chuck Hagerdon & Lou Romero
- 16.2013 Chuck Hagerdon & Jerry Lopeman
- 17.2014 Chuck Hagerdon & Jerry Lopeman
- 18.2015 Chuck Hagerdon & Jerry Lopeman
19. 2016 Chuck Hagerdon & Jerry Lopeman (*Chuck Hagerdon elected Deputy Wagonmaster for 2017 Roundup; recruiting for Wagonmaster is underway*)
20. *2017 Chuck Hagerdon continues to serve as Wagonmaster and Marsha Hagerdon, serves as Deputy*
21. *January 25, 2018 – Chuck Hagerdon’s official role as Wagonmaster expired today. Randy Daniels has offered to assume the role with Chuck as his Coach. They will discuss it further with the Amigos Board for a firm decision soon.*
22. *2019 Randy Daniels, Wagonmaster & Chuck Hagerdon, Deputy*
23. *2020 Randy Daniels, Wagonmaster & Chuck Hagerdon, Deputy The Round up was cancelled due to COVID-19.*
24. *2021 Randy Daniels, Wagonmaster & Chuck Hagerdon, Deputy The Round up was cancelled a second a year due to the coronavirus and COVID-19. An unofficial roundup was held this year.*
25. *2022 Randy Daniels, Wagonmaster & Chuck Hagerdon, Deputy*
26. *2023 Chuck Hagerdon, Wagonmaster & Randy Daniels, Deputy.*
27. *2024 Chuck Hagerdon, Wagonmaster & John Pierson, Deputy.*
28. *2025 Chuck Hagerdon, Wagonmaster & John Pierson, Deputy.*
29. *2026 Rance Irwin, Wagonmaster & John Pierson, Deputy.*

AMIGOS NEWSLETTER EDITORS:

1. Bernice Hese – 1981 through 1990 (correction: Richard Spray served from 1989 through 1990 as Newsletter Editor per his note in Newsletter #109)
2. Ella Egan Kirkpatrick – 1991 through 1997
3. Dorothy Street – 1998 through 2000
4. Dave Gillio – 2001 to 2010
5. Sandra Roberts – 2011 to _____

SECRETARIES AND TREASURERS:

1. Bernice Hese 1981 through 1989
2. Ray Meyer 1990 through 1994
3. Lee Singer 1995 through 1998
4. Minnie Lou Stephens 1999 through 2002 when the duties of Secretary and Treasurer were separated due to increased workload.
5. 2003 through 2005 - Art Briggs, Treasurer
6. 2003 – 2010 - Larry Allen, Secretary
7. 2011 – *2016 - Judy Dinwiddie, Secretary*
8. 2006 – 2010 – Ken Knarr, Treasurer
9. 2010 – 2015- Kathleen Duncan, Treasurer
10. 2016 – *2023 - Pat Jackson, Treasurer*
11. *2017 – 2023 Cyndie Hogg, Secretary*
12. *2024 – 2026 Randy Daniels, Treasurer*
13. *2024 - Virginia Wistrand, Secretary*
14. *2025 – Paul Tidwell, Secretary*
15. *2026 – Secretary was vacant – Cyndie Hogg and Emily Irwin covered.*

AMIGOS WEBSITE:

1. 2000 through 2006 Gus McCutchen
2. 2007 through 2008 Pat Jackson
3. 2009 to _____ Joel Johnstone

LUNCHEON CHAIR

1. 1981 to 2014- Frank Hellwig (Frank was listed in the 2015, Quemado Roundup Memorial)
2. *2014 to _____ Peggy Jourdan, in addition to Telephone Committee Chair*

BYLAWS:

The Amigos by-laws have had a few minor updates or amendments. The last major amendment occurred during 2006-2007 and finally approved by the voting membership in early 2008. The Purpose has remained the same since it was first written.

The Amigos by-laws were revised to adjust the annual dues on September 16, 2020.

The Amigos by-laws were revised December 13, 2025 to better represent how the Amigos were doing business.

- 1. Updated the number of Directors-at-Large*
- 2. Board members no longer need to be in Albuquerque.*
- 3. Changed the Annual All Amigos meeting to video conference.*
- 4. Changed the standing committees.*
- 5. Included all get togethers as official amigos meetings.*
- 6. Dropped the nominating committee.*

FOREST SERVICE WIVES (Las Novias)

In the course of my research, Lou Stephens, gave me a list titled “Forest Service Wives.” It has 71 male names. Their wives are listed in parenthesis. The paper is not dated, but several of the early familiar Amigos names are included. The listing states, “annual dues \$1.00. You will be automatically called for each luncheon unless you request that your name be removed from this list.” Lou Stephens recalls the group of Forest Service Wives called themselves, “Las Novias”. *(2016 Update – Betty Meyers donated 3 albums of Las Novias history and announced that a few of them still meet periodically for lunch in Albuquerque.)*

MISCELLANEOUS AMIGOS HISTORICAL NOTES:

Barbara Miller served as the leader and hub of the “telephone tree network” that serves to announce the Amigos Luncheons. I do not know specifically the dates when she started and ended that responsibility. I do know that more recently, (2015?) Peggy Jourden has assumed that responsibility. Amigos Board roster shows that position as “Meeting Committee Chair”.

1. Pasture Golf – The idea to have a pasture golf competition at the Roundups was presented by Pat Morrison, a District employee. Jim Fisher, Dow Bond and Steve Sams ran with the idea and set up a

course at the 2007 Roundup and it has remained a popular event ever since.

Winners:

2007 – Dow Bond
2008 – Roger Hobbs
2009 – Mike Borens
2010 – Roger Hobbs
2011 – Mike Borens
2012 – Pat Jackson
2013 – Dow Bonds
2014 – Pat Jackson and Kathy Allred
2015 – Mike Borens
2016 – *Kathy Allred*
2017 - Pat Jackson
2018 – Pat Jackson
2019 – Pat Jackson
2020 – Roundup was cancelled
2021 – Roundup was cancelled
2022 – Kathy Allred
2023 – Kathy Allred
2024 – Kathy Allred
2025 – Mike Borens
2026 – Kathy Allred

2. In 2006, I started the tradition of using the Green Book assembled by John Pruitt, as the “official symbol” for passing the gavel from one Amigos President to the next at the January election luncheon. This tradition is still in effect and Greg Griffith received the Green Book, 1/23/14. He then passed it on to Joel Johnstone, January 2015. Next to receive the Green Book is Jim Maes. It seems a worthy Amigos project to collect and assemble a second book of Newsletters starting where John Pruitt concluded to the present.
3. In 2006, I canvassed all the other Regions about establishing a sequence for future National Retiree Reunions. This resulted in 3 commitments: 2009 Missoula; 2012 Vail and 2015 Amigos in Albuquerque. The previous 4 reunions were held: 1991 Glenwood, Colorado; 1995 Park City, Utah; 2000 Missoula, Montana; and 2005

Portland, Oregon. I, Lou Romero, have remained the informal “corporate memory and keeper of the queue” since 2006. As of this update, the Southern Region has stepped into the queue to host the 2018 reunion. The National Museum of FS History has become the “mobilizer and keeper” of future schedules. **(May 2014 Note: Dave Jolly and Dave Stack recently informed me that in fact, the Museum Board has decided to assume the role of keeper and mobilizer/encourager so that Regions can create another queue for future reunions beyond 2015.)** *(April 2017 update: Tom Thompson is the new President of the Museum Board. He circulated a letter to all Region’s retiree groups asking for interest in hosting 2021 National Reunion. So far Alaska and California retirees are each indicating some cautious preliminary interest and getting a dialogue started among their respective region’s retirees.)*

2021 California agreed to host the National Retiree reunion. It was postponed to 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. In 2009, Amigos adopted Oso Corredor, a 2.7 mile trail in the Sandia Mountains. Chuck Williams and Lou Romero are Co-Leaders of the program . We have performed trail maintenance at least 3-5 times a year and kept the trail in excellent shape for hikers, bikers, cross-country skiers, snowshoers and horseback riders. Later, in 2011 we also adopted North Crest Trail #130 from the Crest parking lot to Del Agua Overlook, 2.1 miles. As of January 2014, we continue our adopted responsibilities. – **2021 UPDATE: Chuck Williams retired his role in 2015 and Patrick Petracca, Program Leader at ASC, became my new Co-Leader. In 2018, Rene Archer, ASC, joined us as Co-Leaders. 2021, Patrick retired his role when he was selected District Ranger, Cuba RD, SFNF. Recently, Rene and I decided to retire our responsibility for North Crest Trail #130. As of November 10,2021, she and I continue as Co-Leaders for Oso Corredor trail. 2024 Rene Archer and Lou Romero retired as co-leaders for the Oso Corredor trail. Dave Cummings and Pat Jackson are the co-leaders for the Oso Corredor trail starting October 2024.**
5. *March 2020 all events, the Amigos Luncheons, the Quemado Roundup, Northern Arizona spring get-together, were cancelled due to the coronavirus and COVID-19. This continued into the summer of 2021 into the winter of 2021-2022.*

6. October 11 – 16, 2015 Amigos hosted the 7th National FS Retirees Reunion. Following is a brief summary I prepared following the reunion:

**AMIGOS HOST 2015 FOREST SERVICE RETIREES REUNION -
OVER 500 RETIREES CELEBRATE A COMMON HERITAGE IN THE LAND OF
ENCHANTMENT**

By Lou Romero, Reunion Administrator

525 Forest Service retirees from 34 states and the District of Columbia participated in the “Rally on the Rio” celebration, October 11 – 16, 2015. The assembly included retirees from the 1940’s through the 2000’s. Many arrived early to experience the thrill of the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta.

Those who participated already know what a smashing success we experienced and the brief story that follows. I write this primarily for those who were not able to attend. The story starts in 2006 when the Amigos Board of Directors committed to host the 2015 reunion and remained steadfast to that goal. In 2012 a Core Delegation of Amigos attended the Vail, Colorado Reunion to observe, learn and enjoy a fantastic gathering. Shortly, after the Vail reunion, we formed a Core Team of 17 volunteers (including Board Members) and 9 Committees. The Committees started planning and added 35 members and worked tirelessly to shape the program for October 2015. Finally, June of 2015, we adopted the Incident Command System structures to help us execute the precise details during the celebration. At the reunion we were joined by 45 more volunteers from among the participant ranks to help manage the flow of activity. Approximately 100 volunteers produced the success we all experienced.

The foundation of the Program was our intended purpose, ***“To produce a uniquely Southwestern Reunion that rekindles the sense of pride and fulfillment our careers have contributed to the Forest Service heritage; and a celebration of fond memories with former associates, mentors, spouses, and friends!”*** Our purpose was further enhanced by the theme, ***“Celebrating Forest Service Families”***, which shaped program components that paid tribute to the “contributions and sacrifices” of families to the Forest Service mission and our proud heritage.

During and after the reunion week, we have been flooded with emails, cards and phone calls from participants praising the enrichment of their lives by the reconnections and memories rekindled by the Rally on the Rio. Perhaps, among all the compliments received, the 3 loudest themes are:

- The generous amount of “social time” designed into the total program
- The emphasis on celebrating families; a particular hit was the segment entitled, “Wives Tales”
- The way the program focused on the Southwestern Region of the country...its landscapes, cultures and uniqueness

Reflecting on my personal experience, I feel privileged to have worked with a highly competent Core Team from Arizona and New Mexico over three and half years and later joined by more experts from the Rocky Mountain, Intermountain and Pacific NW regions. It amazes me how the volunteer committees accomplished so much of the work “off-line” while living lives filled with other volunteer work, caring for grandchildren, elderly parents, spouses dealing with illnesses, injuries, surgery’s, funerals, sports activities, graduations, weddings, vacations and all the other “real life stuff” we retired volunteers include in our “laid back, retired lives”.

In closing, I offer the same 2 toasts we celebrated at the Tailgate Party:

- “For our families who supported our careers and the FS mission...RALLY!”
- “For the safety and success of today’s FS employees and their families...RALLY!”

For more information about the 2015 Rally on the Rio, visit www.swfsamigos.org. My personal hopes are that in the next 2-3 years, our Amigos Membership will “Rally” and a sizeable delegation will join the “Reunion At The Cradle”, September 2018, Asheville, North Carolina.

Special Note: The 2015 Reunion fund raising contributed \$11,879 to the NMFSH and \$5305 to the Southern Region Retirees as traditional “seed money” to start planning the next reunion. The remaining \$10,000 raised by the reunion is available to serve future Amigos membership activities and events.