

History of Friends of the Mustangs

Original Members 1982

Dan and Sam (Colleen) Puckett

Marty Felix

Patty Fennell

Karen Graham

Bios of Original Members

Sam (Colleen) and Dan Puckett - Dan worked at the refinery just past Fruita. Dan and Sam adopted a buckskin mustang mare out of Nevada named Conquista and wanted more. Sam still pays her dues but works and doesn't have time to be an active member. She still has a mustang named Bubba. Dan now lives in Texas and is the only charter member who no longer lives here.

Marty Felix - Came here from upstate NY in 1969 to teach school. She was always a horse lover and was thrilled to learn there were wild horses here. She didn't have a truck or 4 WD and had to rely on friends to take her to the horse range to try and find them. She was going to Coal Canyon in the summer, and the horses were never there that time of year, and it took her until 1973 to find them. One year, she had the son of the Wild Horse Specialist, Bud Sherrets, in her class, and he was a huge help to her. Once she learned where the horses were, she and Bud passed information back and forth all the time to help each other. Marty hooked up with Sam and Dan when she had Sam's son in her class at Pomona Elementary in 1981. They became best friends and went to the range as much as they could, sometimes leaving at 7 a.m. and getting home at 10:00 p.m. or later. Marty wanted to adopt a horse, but only one from the Book Cliffs, and in the first roundup they had in 1977 (took off 40 horses), the horses went to Rock Springs. She had no trailer, no way of getting one of our horses from there, and no place to keep one.

Patty Fennell - She had adopted mustangs from other areas. We all started going to the range together. Patty is a bookkeeper and still lives in town. She is no longer a member of FOM, but she did come to the 30th anniversary party.

Karen Graham - Karen also had a mustang that she adopted from another HMA, and she also wanted Book Cliff horses. Karen remarried, and is no longer a member.

Barb Towns, Eldon Manry, and some others came on board shortly after we became official.

BLM Relationship

After Bud Sherrets left and moved to Idaho, Sam McReynolds became our Wild Horse Specialist. The five of us stayed in touch with him, as he was a great guy and very helpful in passing on info about the horses. We shared information with him too. In 1982, we met with him and asked if there was any way we could have a local adoption after our next roundup, which was scheduled for that year. (We may have approached him in 1981.) He said he'd see what he could do, and he did! He was a great guy, and he always followed through. He found out from the powers that be in gov't if we became club with by-laws, and if we signed a cooperative agreement with the BLM, we could have a local adoption. Patty's roommate, Nancy, who was dying of cancer, wrote the bylaws because she had had some experience with that. She was also the one who came up with the name Friends of the Mustangs.

Bud Sherrets and Sam McReynolds were with the BLM. The first of our five WH Specialists was Don Kellog. He moved on to Washington DC to take a more important position with the BLM. ALL five of our WH Specialists have been wonderful people who care about the horses. I hear that it's not this way in all of the HMAs. We are SO lucky!

So Sam McReynolds had everything in place for a local adoption after the roundup, which was supposed to happen in 1982. One Friday after work, he asked us to meet with him because he had important news. The five of us went, and he told us the funding was cut for the roundup, and we'd have to wait another year. We were disappointed, but it gave us more time to get organized and recruit new members. At that time we were meeting in the basement of some establishment, like a bank or Public Service. I remember giving a slide show for the public, and we drew a crowd. Many who attended joined the club. By 1983, we had way more than FIVE members.

At the 1983 roundup and adoption, FOM members helped the BLM by herding horses into the trap, separating and loading horses, fed them while in holding near DeBeque, helping at Vet Day, and at Adoption Day. I think I'm correct in saying we saved the BLM \$10,000, and they were fine with having to bring the people over here to process our horses (do the freeze branding, etc.), so we could hold our adoption in town. I adopted my first mustang there, and I kept Uintah at Patty's house. I know Sam and Dan adopted, and I think Karen did too. Patty waited until another gather to adopt her next one, Gabby, as she already had enough horses at that time.

After this roundup, Sam McReynolds asked us to help him with range work, such as repairing springs, brushing trails, fixing fences, counting horses, etc. We were more than happy to do these things for him, and when he rewarded us with a cooler full of pop, we were very grateful. We were REALLY grateful that he let us help him "manage" the horses. We felt it was a

privilege. When Sam McReynolds left to take a computer job in Cheyenne, Gerald Thygerson became the WH Specialist for the next 20 years. He worked very well with us too and appreciated all that we did for him.

Number of Horses

How many horses at the time? Good question. At that time, the Appropriate Management Level (AML) of the Book Cliffs (LBCs) was 60 - 120 because we only had 27,000 acres for the horses. We picked up more acreage over the years, and that allowed the BLM to increase the AML to 90 - 150, which it is today. Sam McReynolds told me he thought it was possible that we had close to 200 horses on the range in 1983. If this helps, in 1977, we had our first roundup and took off 40 horses, all of whom went to Rock Springs. In 1983, we took off 45 horses when we had our first local adoption. In 1988, we took off 44 horses and in 1989, we took off another 40. I hope this tells you that we didn't have "60 - 120" on the range back then! We were WAY over our AML.

Naming of Horses

In the old days, the ranchers named some of the stallions - like Devil's Pride. BLM personnel named some - like Sage Socks and Old Bob. Patty, Sam, Dan, Karen, and I named many of them (Buckskin Joe, Jocko, Mitawa) - with the approval of the BLM. Many of the horses didn't have names until 2002 when the official USGS/BLM study began. Mostly we just named the stallions and a few of the mares who were unique in some way. In spite of what you may have heard, it was a collaborative effort, not just "who saw the horse first." When the study began, Melissa Esser (who worked here on the project at first) and I had to name any horse who didn't have a name so we could enter all of the horses in the computer program Wild Horse Identification System (WHIMS). Billie still keeps WHIMS updated even though no one ever asks to see it. So Melissa and I came up with names such as Atomic, Chrome, Mystery Paint, Cloud, Sweetheart, and most all of the older horses. In fact, if you were to ask me who came up with the idea for any given horse name (like Drummer - Debbie Welsh), I could tell you most of them. There was always a reason back then. (Drummer was RINGO'S son.)

When Nancy wrote the by-laws, I don't think there was a board, just officers. Since we only had five members, we were happy to have enough people to be officers!

When I first came here, the horses and cattle ran on the same land. THAT'S why there were tanks already on the range. In 1975, the cattle were moved off of what is now the horse range (that's a story in itself), and the horses who were on Winter Flats, Bronco Flats, and other places near what is now the horse range had to be moved. It was a fiasco. I was there one day, and the use of helicopters for rounding up horses wasn't approved until 1976. It took cowboys

(contracted out) six weeks to move all of the horses who were in what is now cattle country onto the range. That's why one of the tanks on the range is called "Wild Cow." COWS used to use that tank. I would have to look at a map and count, but I think most of the springs and tanks were already there when the horses got the range to themselves. The only one I can think of offhand that WE put in was the seep tank in upper Coal Canyon. I believe this was Georgia's suggestion, and it was a good one. It's a great spring! I know a tank was put in in North Soda and was named Joe's tank or Frank's tank, but the spring was already there. "We" just ran a line and put in a tank.

Fences

The fences were put up in 1974 or 1975 to keep the horses in and the cattle out. Natural boundaries are used to keep horses in, and there are 5 1/2 miles of pole fence where needed. That's why we are constantly repairing the fence; it's been there a LONG time. As far as I know, FOM only helps fix fence. I don't think we've ever suggested putting up any in a new area. By the way, some of these fences are in such remote areas, the fence posts and poles had to be flown in by helicopter. That reminds me... I think maybe the Adobe tank was flown in. I don't know if it was for cattle or horses, but I remember they had to drop it off via helicopter. I bet a lot of the tanks had to be flown in. Judy Cady would probably know more about this than I would. Gerald Thygerson would definitely have the answers.

Fertility Control Study

The Fertility Control Study was initiated by the BLM who hired the USGS to conduct it (because the BLM didn't have the scientists), so it was a joint study. The USGS wanted three study areas, and they got the Pryor Mt. Range easily because they had been studying that range and its horses for a few years, so they had a lot of information. They chose McCullough Peaks too although I'm not sure why. They ASKED a HMA in Utah, and the BLM turned them down! They asked us to participate because I had so much information on our horses. In fact, when the USGS people came here to meet with the BLM about this, I was asked to the meeting. I thought it was a great idea, and then they told me they wouldn't conduct the study here unless I went to work for them. My heart sank because I had just retired three years earlier, and I didn't want to work again. Anything for the horses though, so I signed on. The short answer is, it was a BLM/USGS joint project.

In 2002, Melissa Esser (USGS) and I did all of the darting. Our dart gun training in Billings was in November, so we came back and had to scramble. In November and December of 2002, we darted 13 mares. In 2003 we had some help. Melissa and I and were joined by Jim Dollerschell, Gerald Thygerson, Georgia Manus, and Jason Ransom (USGS). That year we got all 25 study group mares, and they received both their primers and their boosters. It wasn't easy.