

A FOUNDER'S MEMOIR

Rita and I moved to Sun City in September of 1999. We were surprised to find out that there wasn't a hiking club, so in the spring of 2000, we decided to get one started. We made up a poster and put it up on the bulletin board outside the SC office – calling for those interested to come to an organizational meeting on June 20. We were disappointed – only 10 people showed up.

We were busy traveling, so we weren't able to schedule the first hike until July 27 – to Colorado Bend, where we had been back in March. Bad idea! 100 degrees and very humid. We had 11 people on that first hike – 4 of whom are still active in the Club (Rita and Dick Brown and Ross and Jo Williams). We were lucky we didn't kill somebody – 2 falls, 2 cases of heat exhaustion and a lot of leg cramps. The first thing I did the next day was to sit down and write up the "Conditioning" and "Hiker Safety" material that you still see on the club's website – which we then required that people read when they signed up to join the club.

In 2000, we led about another 10 hikes and the membership rose to around 100 people. Many of the hikes had more than 25 participants. January 1, 2001, was our first New Year's Day hike, following a long personal tradition that Rita and I had for over 20 years – "For good health and good luck." 12 people came out on a misty 31-degree day! Three people did the 11 miles to Camp Tejas (and got lost several times – another personal tradition).

The club's first multi-day hiking trip was March 26, 2001, to Davis Mountains National Park. 6 couples (10 hikers) with a first night cookout where the chicken never did get done (a windy 40 degrees that night!). However, everybody really loved the concept, so we scheduled two multi-day trips in 2002 – to Big Bend in March and to Garner/Lost Maples in November.

Sometime in 2002, the club got so big that we decided to get a bit more organized, so we chose to become affiliated with the Nature Club – as a SIG, which allowed us to get meeting room space, have a way to handle money that we were collecting for social events, etc. They also gave us some funds each year (we didn't have any dues then). Somewhere about this same time, Don Bennett put together the club's first website.

In the first two and one-half years, Rita and I researched and hiked about 40 hikes within 100 miles of Sun City and ended up with about 30 which we scheduled as club hikes – most of which are still staples on the club schedule every year. As time went on, we got a little tired of leading all the hikes and formed the first group of hike leaders

(15, which constituted the first Board of Directors). In January of 2003, Al Wickline agreed to take over as President, giving us a much-needed rest.

Rita and I are very proud of what the club has become – with all the new leaders that have stepped up to provide new ideas and continuity so that it is no longer dependent on any small group of individuals for its continued existence and growth. We are very happy to still be a part of it.

Dick Brown
2008