

WILDLIFER MEMORIAL GARDEN

Official Dedication Ceremony

THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY ADDRESS

- Losing a family member is one of the most difficult challenges in life. Despite our ever-increasing numbers, we wildlife professionals consider ourselves family. To date, we've lost six of our family members in the line of duty here in Arizona.
- Today's ceremony is to honor these six people. We dedicate this living garden in their memory so that they are not forgotten and thank the many individuals who worked tirelessly to ensure that the concept of a "Memorial Garden" became a reality.
- The tragic loss of another Wildlife Manager on January 4, 1994 set in motion a series of events. Just three days later, at the January 7 Executive Board Meeting of The Arizona Chapter of The Wildlife Society, board member Mary Gilbert reported that she had already contracted COPS for information on services provided to families of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. She was granted permission to send flowers to the family of the fallen officer.
- A second action at that same board meeting set in motion this memorial garden. TWS member Al LeCount asked the Executive Board to contribute to a memorial for wildlifers who died in the line of duty. He also wanted to approach the Director of the Arizona Game & Fish Department for use of the Deer Valley North complex as the site for this garden. Thus, the concept of the memorial was born. The Board voted to establish a committee to sponsor the memorial and Al was selected as chair of that Ad hoc committee.
- The original Wildlifer's Memorial Committee consisted of four members:
 - Al LeCount
 - Cheryl Mollohan
 - Rich Beaudry
 - Kerry Baldwin

- These four expanded on the original concept and enlisted the help of other professionals who were interested in being involved, mainly because of the loss of a close friend or to honor those who paid so dearly to help wildlife in Arizona.
- On February 3, 1994 Al discussed the idea of the memorial garden to the general membership of the Arizona Chapter of The Wildlife Society at its annual meeting. Those in attendance were fully supportive
- In December 1994, the Executive Board granted final approval for a native plant garden, a living memorial, awaiting final approval by the Arizona Game & Fish Commission.
- In March of 1995, a special account in the Arizona Chapter's budget was approved. The rapid receipt of sizeable donations provided the necessary money to start the project. Four of these early major contributors were:
 - The Arizona Chapter of The Wildlife Society
 - The Arizona-New Mexico Chapter of The American Fisheries Society
 - Arizona Public Service
 - The Sportsman's Gun Club of Phoenix
- Many individuals and companies also have provided donations to this special account over the years, helping to fund the project.
- The initial garden design was a pro bono donation by local architect Steve Lohide, aided by his employer, the Tempe landscape architecture firm Logan, Simpson & Dye.
- Fund-raising activities to support the special account began right after its inception. TWS members Karen and Jeff Simms assembled an auction for the Joint Annual Meeting of The American Fisheries Society and The Wildlife Society in Sierra Vista, during February 1996. Forty letters they sent to businesses asking for auction items were met with favorable responses, making the auction a great success.

- On January 19, 1996 the Executive Board approved then-President-Elect Ron Engel-Wilson's idea of selling engraved bricks to pave the walkways, much like those at the Phoenix Zoo.
- On November 18, 1996 the Executive Board approved of members Lisa Andersen and Ron Engel-Wilson to finalize Memorial Garden plans.
- After a few frustrating years where legalities prevented the Department from moving forward, the Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC) in July 1998 approved the Department's plans and funds to implement the garden.
- In 1998, the Ad hoc Committee for the Memorial Garden consisted of Chair Lisa Andersen, Beth Humphries (USFS), Dave Belitsky (AZGFD) and former Chapter President Bill Mannan (UA).
- In 1998, the Department purchased the required stamped and approved blueprints.
- On January 6, 1999 the Executive Board approved a motion to add a member of the Arizona Game Rangers Association to the Committee. The Association became the Arizona Game Ranger Lodge 71 of the Fraternal Order of Police, one of the primary sponsors of the Memorial Garden.
- The history of this Memorial Garden is long. Many people have contributed to the project during both good times and trying times to make sure that the garden was built.
- The most significant person is Lisa Andersen. When Al LeCount retired, Lisa became the backbone of this project. She had been a constant since February 1996. Unfortunately, Lisa had family commitments and isn't able to be here today.
- Al LeCount is a good friend of mine and conceived the idea of the memorial. He worked hard until his retirement to make the garden a

reality. His wife Cheryl Mollohan was also key to the garden's success.

- Development Branch employee Jim White spent considerable time working on the details required of a project on state property. Jim did much of the physical labor installing the various components of the garden.
- Special Services Division employees Gerry Wright, Fred Bloom, Richard Rico and retired Assistant Director Jim Burton provided the engineering expertise, construction knowledge, and administrative skills to complete the project.
- Richard Ockenfels, long-time historian and archivist for the Arizona Chapter, researched the Chapter files and other records to ensure accuracy in the Memorial Garden.
- Steve Lohide provided the original design of the garden at his own expense and that of his landscape architecture firm, Logan Simpson & Dye.
- Jeff and Karen Simms donated their time and effort to put together a charity auction to raise funds for the special account from which the garden was built.
- The various Arizona Chapter Presidents and Executive Board members since 1994 who wouldn't let the idea fade despite some big roadblocks. Ron Engel-Wilson and Tom Hildebrandt worked especially hard for many years to move the project forward.
- Arizona Game & Fish Department Director Duane Shroufe backed this project; and without his full support the garden would not have become a reality. Since 1994, he has stood his ground, never wavering in his commitment to those who sacrificed.

Presented by Kerry Baldwin, Education Branch Chief

October 17, 2003

Written by Richard Ockenfels and Marijke Van Fleet

Wildlifer Memorial Garden

TWS Address

October 17, 2003