

The Bridge

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The Newsletter of the Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park (FoRB)

P.O. Box 7642, Columbia MO 65205-7642 <http://www.friendsofrockbridgemsp.org/>

Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park is a membership supported 501(c)(3) organized to promote understanding, appreciation, enjoyment and preservation of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park and the surrounding area.

Send your submissions to Jim Gast, editor at FriendsofRockBridge@gmail.com.

FoRB Officers: Kevin Roberson, President; Mark Lee, Secretary; Melissa Hutchens Treasurer; Jan Weaver, Sue Tillema, Scott Schulte, Jim Gast, Mark Hahn, Steve Ferguson, Meredith Donaldson, Board Members.

President's Message

Dear FoRB Members,

It is with a heavy heart that we bring you news of the passing of Dorothy Stoerker. Dottie passed Saturday, November 27th. Dottie's family was the driving force behind the founding of our Park and Rock Bridge Memorial State Park was founded in memory of her daughter.

We had a good group of volunteers to help with the November 6th Rock Bridge Renew. Many invasive plants met their Waterloo, and the highway has never looked so trash-free. Thanks to all!!

This holiday season is a great time to think about our blessings. I know that I am blessed to be able to help the Park and the Friends group. Both of these actions help the community and especially the youth. If you are blessed with health or wealth, how about giving back to the community and the Park? CoMoGives.com is happening now and it is our major fundraising plan. Also, Roxie or Sarah can always use more volunteers.

Please welcome Meredith Donaldson to the FoRB board. Meredith brings experience with UPOP and Nature Detectives.

Take care of you and yours and I will hope to see you in the Park.

Yours in conservation,
Kevin Roberson

Remembering Dottie Stoerker Jan Weaver

The creation of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park in 1967 was spear-headed by Lew Stoerker, in memory of the death of his daughter Carol Louise Stoerker. When Lew died in 1992, his wife, Dottie joined the newly formed Friends of Rock Bridge Memorial State Park. Her goal, in memory of Lew and Carol, was to help children and their families discover and enjoy the park.



David and Dottie Stoerker. Photo by Roxie Campbell.

Through her efforts, FoRB was able set up an Urban Populations Outreach Program (UPOP) for under-served kids in partnership with the Missouri State Parks Association. FoRB also started a Nature Detectives program for preschoolers. At the same time, she worked hard to engage FoRB's members in the history and natural history of the park by coordinating monthly programs with local experts. Her other

major project was the restoration of Hickam cabin. Around 2010, the state parks system was considering what to do with the cabin, then in need of major repairs. Dottie mobilized support for restoring the cabin, raised awareness and funds, and worked with experts on restoration.

By 2018 the park was able to use the cabin for programs on the early European settlers of the area. Her persistence paid off in the number and quality of programs that both FoRB and the park are able to provide for the children and families visiting Rock Bridge Memorial State Park.

Boy's Find of a Petrified Tooth is Remembered By Roxie Campbell, Park Naturalist

Here's an example of how the park touches the lives of families and fulfills the mission that the Stoerker family and those who helped to create the park strived to accomplish which, in part, was to provide a safe place for children to play. Christopher, a boy of about 9 years of age visited

the park with his mother, Sally, and his Cub Scout troop in about 1994. They really enjoyed the park and doing this together. I led them on the Devil's Icebox Trail, in exploring Connor's Cave and the Rock Bridge and in catching critters with minnow nets in the stream by the parking lot (which we have done with many groups of children over the years). While wading in the stream, Christopher found something we were all very excited about. Our suspicions were later confirmed by the state archaeologist – a petrified tooth! The archaeologist thought it was of a browser, probably a deer. This item was accessioned as a park artifact.

Fast forward about 27 years: I was contacted by Christopher's father who wondered if we still had the petrified tooth and could he see it because Christopher had passed away. His father, Donnie, visited the park in November and got to see, hold and photograph the petrified tooth that Christopher had found. He reminisced about how Christopher was good at finding such things and loved being outdoors. For all of these years, they had remembered his big find of the petrified tooth, so long after the fun day at the park, the memory of it continues to bless this family.