

HISTORIANS' REPORT 2015

As the outgoing holder of the Historian position I welcome any other member who would wish to accept the next term of office, the significant results of my term as Historian has been to contribute articles as "HISTORIAN'S CORNER" for our magazine. This was a tradition first began with Historian Mike "Smoke" Pfeiffer and his examples was what I based my articles on for content. Another significant result was as I call "LOOKOUT LIBRARY". This has been the keeping in an electronic capacity on computer of all Lookout information that has come my way- either by other publications, including LOOKOUT NETWORK magazine, National Woodlands Owners magazine and many other publications. Information submitted by countless others, stories that were developed and many other sources. The size of this "Electronic library" has fluctuated because of file types and system restrictions and other factors but is roughly about 35 to 50 Gigabytes of information. Efforts were made to burn copies of this onto DVD's and in abbreviated forms to allow for space and assigned differing "volume" numbers.

The biggest challenge has been to make DVD copies in a System format that most other people would be able to open on their own systems. Within the last year, no such copies have been able to be made due to computer failures and other equipment problems. This has led to significant frustration for want of sharing this information with others.

Some partial resurrection of files have been successful using a very old system and printer but the very latest information has, although not what I would consider "Lost" is certainly unable to be used at present.

In more recent news, a study of Pennsylvania Forest Fire Towers, a 396 page document was recently sent to the Pennsylvania Forest Fire Museum Association. Without the ability to make DVD copies, some FFLA archive material which updated has not been able to be sent to the Forest History Society in Durham, North Carolina.

Another successful project had been the editing of “Austin Posts” My years on Pyramid Mountain” and incorporating that into Lookout Network.

Developing what I have called “Major Works” projects has been to identify Lookouts on National Forests, National Parks, BLM lands, and all States. These are in PDF format on disk.

As a fitting tribute to our late Chairman Emeritus and founder Steve Cummings, as an outgoing effort I am putting forth a motion to establish a “PRESERVATION FUND” as outlined and offering the name “KEYSTONE PRESERVATION FUND” in his remembrance.

It has been an ever-present honor to serve as Historian for the FFLA since the Roanoke, Virginia Conference in 2005 as the third person to have that position in the Association. Originally the “Historian” duties were part of the “Secretary” position. The original title of “Archivist” drew some attention that this would not actually be a proper term as an Archivist performs other functions, other than Historian. This was brought to the attention by Historian Iris Baird during her tenure and the title was changed to “Historian”.

For the last 10 years the Historian as a member of the Executive Board (EXCOM) also has been required to vote on measures effecting National organization and projects.

I am conscious of the fact that some members may not wish to expend time on such issues as voting your views etc and this may challenge one’s willingness to assume the position of Historian. I had always viewed such deliberations as secondary to the actual keeping of Lookout Research information and making it available to others when requested. History was always my larger concern.

For the future I firmly believe as a “History-based” Association there is a need to provide some tools needed to do this and to keep updated to as near present standards as possible.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Spear FFLA Historian (term ends January 2015)