



MY STORY

Bob Cafarella, *Preserve Pioneer*

No one was more closely associated with the City's role in the creation of the Preserve than Bob Cafarella, who was the City's Planning Director at the time when the City Council first formed a task force to explore the concept and feasibility of conserving land in the McDowell's. The task force included members representing government, the business community, conservation interests, landowners, and developers. After only nine months, this group presented a set of recommendations to the Council, which then formed a Preservation Commission to further refine and implement these recommendations. During this time frame, Bob was named the City's first Preservation Director.

To many people, Bob was the face of the City in the numerous and often complicated interactions and transactions associated with the creation and growth of the Preserve, including the acquisition of land and the planning and building of trails and trailheads. But Bob was also responsible for conveying the interests of private groups back to the City. He functioned as an intermediary, ensuring that the views of each party were effectively conveyed to all other parties so that each interest group felt that it was being treated fairly in a process that was complex and at times controversial. Bob likens his role to that of an orchestra conductor, trying to keep many people moving forward in a coordinated way and with minimal dissonance.

In addition to his diplomacy role, Bob was also responsible for negotiating and completing the City's acquisition of the many parcels of land that now comprise the Preserve. He has many stories about the negotiations with some of the more difficult and colorful landowners in the area. Not surprisingly, this process was occasionally contentious. Yet Bob is very proud that even the most challenging negotiations ultimately were concluded amicably because even those people who were potentially negatively impacted in the short run, came to appreciate how the Preserve would benefit the entire community in the long run.

Bob was also the principal point of contact within the City for the Conservancy in its early days. He was quick to realize that the Conservancy volunteers had the talent, energy, and enthusiasm to play an active ongoing role in the creation, maintenance, and management of the Preserve. Aware that the City was not prepared to hire a large staff to do things like build and maintain trails in the newly conserved areas, Bob outsourced responsibilities to the Conservancy and says that its volunteers exceeded all reasonable expectations. He was so impressed with the work of this group that, upon retiring from the City in 2009, he promptly became a Steward.

Less than a year of beginning his volunteer work, Bob assumed a leadership role as Chair of the Core Leadership Team. There is no doubt that his years of work within city government prepared him well for the challenges presented in a growing non-profit organization.

In retrospect, Bob's key role in the history of the Preserve was unsurprising given his background. While Bob was always interested in planning, he obtained a master's degree at New York University that focused on both planning and public policy. The process of creating the Preserve required planning work, but it was also a complicated exercise in the development and implementation of public policy. In Bob's view, "the creation of the Preserve marked the beginning of a shift in the attitude of the City and its citizens with respect to development." Up to that point, growth and development was the primary objective. After that point, conservation and open space became equally important and the identity of Scottsdale was permanently changed.

The role of the Preserve in the life of Scottsdale continues to grow and Bob is excited about the Conservancy's expanding mission; but for him the primary goal will always be to protect and maintain this unique conservation resource for the benefit of residents and visitors to Scottsdale.