

A Journey to Winslow
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When I retired in December of 2010, and moved to Arizona, I assumed that the work that I had been doing at the University of Southern Maine was over, or in other words, no more organizing collections, no more making endless boxes, no more handling endless objects, no more meetings, meeting people, conferences, traveling, and no more making exhibits. I was done and looking forward to a life of retirement ease in the wilds of Arizona.

Whew, was I ever so wrong. Craigslist led me to a living situation in Camp Verde, where I planned to farm, ride my bike, hike, drink cerveza, and generally just enjoy myself. But life intervened, my living situation changed, and due to pure serendipity, I ended up living in Winslow, Arizona. Yeah, that Winslow. Go figure. And by a chance meeting with another retiree named Prescott Winslow (you can't make this stuff up), I found myself visiting the Old Trails Museum, where they were needing volunteers.

So, I found myself, once again, organizing collections, making boxes, handling endless objects, having meetings, traveling, and helping with exhibits. And as they say out west, yehaaaa! But don't get me wrong, this time it was very different. Meeting new people (and making friends) was enjoyable, and helping to organize a vast and seemingly endless supply of items an enticing challenge. Working on exhibits was like icing on the cake. I was going to be able to use all those skills I learned during years of working at USM and previously at UNF in Florida. After all, who needed a retired archivist? It was an extremely pleasant realization.

Volunteering at OTM was never like work, or at least I never considered it work. It is something else that I can't quite explain. It was (and is) community involvement. It connected me to Winslow in ways I never expected, and I was also able to meet visitors from around the world, a life-enriching experience. The physical organization of collections materials -- the main focus of my volunteering -- was more than something I just did; it was a rewarding challenge, accepted and met.

And being connected to OTM was a life-changing experience: a form of entertainment, a social activity, mental engagement, frustrating challenges to overcome (the lack of storage space), thinking outside of the box (or boxes), getting to play with a fire engine, holding an Ancestral Puebloan pot, enjoying the company of all the other volunteers at our annual events, being gifted a bicycle, being able to share my artwork, learning about kachinas, telling visitors at the "corner" about OTM, living in a railroad town, spending hours alone in a creaky old building, getting wet doggie kisses, and making friends. I feel privileged. I simply can't list it all.

I can't say enough about how I miss the place, and everyone. Winslow (and Arizona) is the only place other than my home state of Florida I've ever felt homesick for. Life events literally tore me away. I am now back near family in the community where I grew up and embarking on the next "journey" of my life.

I miss you all,

David Andreasen