

Presidential Volunteer Service Award Recipients

By Jess Johnson O/A Clerk, Montana Area Office

This Year the campground hosts at Canyon Ferry Reservoir's White Earth Campground, Bob and Sandy Caudill, were awarded the Presidential Volunteer Award for their efforts as campground hosts. I had the privilege of talking with the Caudill's who said they nearly deleted a call notifying them of the Award.

Asked what has kept them coming back all these years Bob said, "A cabin on the lake, four months of vacation and all the fishing I want." Bob said he enjoys catching Trout for the first few months, and Perch after that. Sandy added that not having to pay taxes is a bonus as well. The Caudill's, who reside in Lincoln, Montana, have logged in more than 4550 hours of volunteer service over the last 14 years, assisting campers and making friends from around the country, even some who traveled as far away as Holland. "We have stayed in touch through e-mail, and exchange Christmas gifts each year."

I found their attitude toward everyone who enjoys camping at White Earth Campground inspiring. The Caudill's told me they "understand everyone is here to have fun", so they try to just meet and greet. Over the years they have been able to discern who they may have problems with, and explaining a few campground rules, for example when "quiet time" is, ensures everyone in the campground can enjoy their time there. Bob and Sandy said in the 14 years they have hosted this campground, they never really had any problems, despite their 17 ½ foot Spectrum fishing boat catching on fire while launching, (Bob thought it may have been a faulty fuel line).



Campground hosts Bob and Sandy Caudill

Before they were hosts, Bob worked as a Buttrey Foods bakery manager for 30 years, while Sandy worked as a custodian, and spent 10 years as a reserve deputy for the Missoula County Sheriff's Department.



Canyon Ferry Reservoir

No strangers to the area, they camped for many years at White Earth before retiring. "The first few years the campground was quite primitive. We had to haul water and travel to dump the sewer." Since then, Reclamation has made many improvements to the campground by leveling the campsite areas, adding a new group use shelter and upgrading the utilities to the campground host site. The boat ramp area was also improved using Reclamation work crews and the Montana Operating Engineers and Associated General Contractors Apprenticeship Training Trust.

The Caudill's have no thoughts of changing their "vacation" plans anytime soon, and told me they will continue hosting as long as their health holds up. While Bob is happy with the recognition and the award, the die hard fisherman lightheartedly wondered about trading the award for a lifetime pass to fish for free the rest of his life.