



Peter Gerba/Arizona Daily Sun

Forest Service campground enthusiasts Suzi and Fred Dow plot their future travels by motorhome. The couple was in Flagstaff Tuesday gathering material for a guidebook they plan to write on campgrounds.

## Campground vets plan book

By JAN STEVENS  
Features Editor

Fred Dow said one of the things he misses most is his regular hair stylist. His wife, Suzi, misses her dentist.

A little over two years ago, the Dows left their government jobs in Washington, D.C., sold their home in the suburbs, and crammed their lives and belongings into a 23-foot travel trailer. Since May 1996, they've been traveling from one U.S. Forest Service campground to another with a plan of eventually publishing a series of guide books for other campers.

The Dows, who say the attraction of forest service campgrounds has been underpublicized, have visited 72 national forests and 700 national forest campgrounds so far, and they estimate they're about half done with a project they expect to complete in another three to five years. They've taken hundreds of photos and keep detailed data on each campground such as whether the water must be hand pumped, the condition of the roads and which campgrounds include dumps.

Pointing to a map of the United States, Fred says it's easier to show where they haven't been than where they have.

"We've done everything east of the Mississippi River. Now we're working on the West. We haven't done Colorado, Utah, Nevada and New Mexico," he said.

On Monday, the Dows were camped at Black Bart's RV Park, where they were taking advantage of an electricity hookup to add to their web page — [www.gorp.com/dow](http://www.gorp.com/dow) — which they update as they go across country and answer questions for other campers as a public service.

For a week, the Dows used Flagstaff as a base to explore campgrounds in northern Arizona. Although they don't rate campgrounds, they do have their personal favorites, Suzi said.

In this area, she said they liked Forked Pine near Ashurst Lake for its waterfowl and opportunities for sailing; the rustic campground of Double Springs near Mormon Lake; the remote area of Knoll Lake outside Winslow; and, for horse people and mountain bikers, Little Elden Springs.

At home in the tiny dining area of their small traveling home, the Dows eagerly tell of other favorite spots across the nation, such as the James R.

See VETS, Page 7

ARIZONA DAILY SUN, Flagstaff, Arizona, Wednesday, June 10, 1998-7

## VETS

From Page 1

McKelvie forest in Nebraska, which is 2,200 acres of hand-planted forest.

"It's the sweetest little campground you'll ever find with a huge lake and cattle grazing around it. You can tell the forest was planted by the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) because it's all in these nice neat rows. It's like watching a band march past you," Suzi said.

The Dows said although they heard stories of the perils of camping, they haven't faced any dangerous situations yet.

"We've been scared a few times. Once in Virginia in the Thomas Jefferson National Forest it was hunting season, and we were the only ones in the campground. We could hear the shots, and you know there's a difference in the sound when it's over there, and when it's over here. It was close," Suzi said.

"We've been to some camp-

grounds that were a little eerie, too. Forests are very black at night, and especially if you're within driving distance of an urban area, we worry a little," said Fred.

Fred was injured in a fall in a campground at Lake Superior in Michigan, and Suzi has been sick enough to require a visit to the doctor. Their truck has broken down and they've been in some serious dust storms with their trailer swaying perilously behind them. But one of the most traumatic events was Fred's first haircut on the road.

Up until their extended trip, Fred, 62, retired director of office automation for Housing and Urban Development in Washington, D.C., always had his hair styled. As they drove across country, he tried to ignore his growing locks until finally he stopped at a tiny one-chair barber shop on the side of the road in Pennsylvania.

The barber took a buzz razor to Fred's head, never touching the styling shears.

"I was just about skinned. I wore a

red cap for two months," Fred said.

Looking at their small quarters, it seems that getting on each other's nerves might also be a problem after two years on the road.

"Darn right," Fred answers, glancing at Suzi.

"Never," she replies.

But in the interest of a little more room and less togetherness, the Dows opted to buy a little bit larger trailer somewhere along the way. They now tow a 27-footer instead of the 24-footer they started with.

And after the enchantment of Bisbee took hold of them this spring, the Dows will have even more room to spread out this winter. Although the couple intended to make camping their full-time lifestyle for several more years, following a three-day visit that turned to three weeks in Bisbee this spring, they purchased a home in the small southern Arizona town. Now they plan to continue traveling in May through October, but to set up housekeeping in Bisbee the remainder of the year.

"We'll have real plumbing," said Suzi.