



# BIOGRAPHY OF: Johnny “JR” Ringo

Mascot for:

## Arizona Way Out West & Wacky Awesome Activities, Humorous History and Fun Facts

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### JOHNNY “JR” RINGO

As the Arizona State Mammal Mascot, Johnny Ringo, or JR as he is affectionately known by his friends and family, enjoys visiting with children at schools, special events and bookstores.

JR began his career in 1986, when lawmakers at the Arizona State Capital named the Ringtail the Official State Mammal. Although he is also called a Ringtail cat or miner’s cat, JR’s closest kin is the raccoon. The handsome Ringtail was an excellent companion to Arizona miners because he preferred dark places, and he was great at keeping pesky mice away from miners.

Seeing a Ringtail up close and personal is usually a rare occurrence because of his shy, nocturnal nature; however, JR is a very special Ringtail who has overcome most of his shyness. He enjoys entertaining children, posing for photographs and stealing a hug or two, but he is still too shy to talk.

Things weren’t always so good for JR, however. Many years before becoming the Arizona State Mammal Mascot, he kept company with miners and Tommyknockers in an Arizona mine at an undisclosed location. (To learn more about Tommyknockers, read the *Ghosts of History Past* chapter of *Arizona Way Out West & Wacky*.) As the story goes, the ore played out in the mine, and all the miners left. With all the confusion of collecting their last paychecks, seeking further employment and packing all their equipment to move on to their next job opportunity, the miners left poor JR behind in the deserted mine.

Fortunately, JR was saved by an Arizona animal rescue group. After spending a brief time with a caring foster family, he was adopted by Linda Radke of Five Star Publications, who was a special education teacher before becoming an award-winning publisher. Well-known for her kind heart and love for animals, misfits and the homeless, giving JR his forever home was one of her greatest pleasures.

Once settled in as the newest Five Star family member, JR implored Radke to search for his sister, Jayne, who he hadn’t seen in decades. Radke took on the challenge, located her, and now both JR and Jayne share the responsibilities of educating children about Arizona’s past – and the rest, as they say, is history!

