

Spanning the Gap

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

VIP Treatment

By David Tipson

My first day as a Volunteer in the Park happened to coincide with an all employees meeting here at Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. It strikes me, looking back, that a short address given by Superintendent Roger Rector (now retired) to his staff that day was an especially appropriate introduction to the summer before me.

In a few words he reaffirmed his unyielding conviction that every one of his employees perform at his or her highest capacity out of concern for the park and for the people who visit it. I found inspiring Roger's ardent devotion to an ideal of service to other Americans. It seemed the result of earnest thinking about the role of a national park system in a democracy. What is more, that devotion struck me as partaking in a spirit of volunteerism that has become a tradition in this country.

That meeting provided a framework in which I continue to interpret my experience here with the Office of Preservation and Design. I go to work each day in order to gain experience in historic preservation. Yet I also go prepared to give my time to the park with the same enthusiasm and generosity that I witnessed on my first day. I have assisted in installing a slate roof in Millbrook Village. Ever so slowly I have learned to complete drawings for a contract proposal. Most recently, I have lugged hemia-inducing timbers down to the Greek Revival



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The author in extremely fashionable attire immediately after making appropriate use of historic Walpack Church NJ. The bride worked for the park's Natural Resource Management Division.

house in Peters Valley. Were it not for my inability to keep up with the local fashion (grey and olive green), the regular work days might make me indistinguishable from the paid employees here.

Yet time and again I find myself receiving more assistance than I can offer. Whether through gentle admonishments for excessive zeal with my new hammer, a fourth reminder to please intersect those lines in a drafting lesson, or a demonstration of the beauty of mortise-and-tenon framing, in many ways the park employees with whom I work give of their own time to instruct me in a field that may someday become my career. My high-minded intentions notwithstanding, I continue to find that I am just another one of those people that the National Park Service and its staff volunteer to serve every day.



The author (in shorts and yellow VIP T-shirt, but too busy to turn around and smile for the camera) assists a park maintenance worker with an extension to a barn at Millbrook Village NJ.