

Employee Spotlight: Warren Dean

Road and trail worker, one-time patrol ranger, and poster-boy for on-the-job safety, Warren Dean has seen his share of air-time in the park. A native of Brass Castle NJ (near Oxford Furnace), he collared a weekend job at the park while still in high school, with thoughts of going to college to major in forestry, but was content to get sidetracked when he was offered a permanent full-time job in maintenance a few years later.

It was the early 1970s, before the New Jersey side of the park had emptied of people. Today's quiet roads at Blue Mountain Lakes were lined with "lots of houses;" even the now-deserted Pool Colony had a few homes. Though the villages didn't have many residents, both Flatbrookville and Walpack Center had gas stations, and Walpack even had a liquor store.

River Road in Pennsylvania, in contrast, had all been bought out by the government, and was under colonization by squatters. Lonely roads that once led to houses now ended at Army Corps dumps in the woods; a squatter inhabited a chicken coop at Zion Church Road, and the park's workers made do by scavenging for needed parts in abandoned homes that waited to be demolished.

Warren did some scavenging himself, but with an eye to history. Having an interest in antiques and recycling ("I make stuff out of old parts"), he rescued a *Save the Delaware Coalition* sign and a *Honeymoon Haven* sticker (shown at right.) By the 1980s, Warren was an author also, contributing to *Grist*, a park service newsletter of maintenance tips and techniques.

In the 1980s Warren got an opportunity to go into law enforcement. He attended Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (or *FLETC*—the same facility that trains law enforcement rangers today) and came back to the park to spend five years patrolling around Kittatinny Point and on the river. Though he remembers Chief Ranger Arnott as "a great boss, and a very fair man," in the end Warren didn't care for the paperwork of law enforcement. He returned to maintenance work (also, in those days, a higher paying job) and the seasonal rhythm of "plow in winter, mow in summer."

Warren likes meeting people; he remembers being detailed to go fight forest fires as "a great way to meet people from all over and to see different parts of the country," though, admittedly, "they don't send you out there to see the tourist sights." He isn't camera shy, either. He has starred in safety posters (shown above, right) but his sense of humor is most telling in his poster "concepts" that weren't printed up: Warren as Rudolph the Reindeer with a respirator mask and a red-bulb nose; Warren with gourds as ear protectors, a pumpkin on his head, and the trademark great gray beard sticking out underneath.

Thinking back over his 30 years in the park, Warren realizes that he has served under every superintendent in the park's history, a distinction shared with only a few employees here. What he misses most from those early years of the park is the openness of the landscape—the thriving farms where now there are just fields under cultivation, and the well-kept houses whose homesites have now faded into the forest.

"It's enjoyable to work outdoors, and you get to meet people—visitors and staff—and to do different types of tasks," says Warren, when asked what he would tell a young person aspiring to this career today. "It's a hard job to get now, but it's a good job." ■



(Right) Warren wants **YOU** to wear your hard hat; a 2004 safety poster.



(Left) Warren's contributions to the celebration of the park's 40th anniversary at Bushkill Meeting Center in 2005. (*Honeymoon Haven* became PEEC.)



(Below) Wear your eyegear! (The bee was flown in electronically)

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