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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WCSP SUPERINTENDENTS

Prepared by

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Where Washington Once Led

A History of New Jersey's Washington Crossing State Park

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Date and place of birth: 10-14-58 Trenton

Educational background:

BS – Natural Resource Management – Rutgers 1981

As – Ornamental Horticulture – Mercer County College 1978

Wife: Jean

Children: 3

How did you get onto your career path with the NJ State Park Service?

- got started with State of NJ working in DEP Pesticide Control Program in '93. I wanted to get something more interesting than an office job and after three years started applying for other state positions. The Park Service had posted a Superintendent opening and that was my 28th application out of 36 I would send in over the next three years. I interviewed, got hired and then worked at Wharton Forest from 1999 to 2003.

Time of Service as WCSP superintendent: 2003 to 2010

What were your most important accomplishments as superintendent?

- getting the Visitor Center back to a 7-day a week operation
- moving a full-time visitor service employee (Rob P) into the Visitor Center to handle information, camping, etc
- working with the PA Park to rebuild an enlightening public program for the Crossing Day event held December 25th

What were the biggest challenges you faced as superintendent ?

- an employee base that did not appreciate how important they were.

Did you know any of the previous WCSP superintendents?

Jim Apfell – was someone who was very passionate about Parks in general.
Jim Wiles – actually was the Supt when I was there in the YCC program. I know I drove him crazy by doing things without asking his permission, like inviting the Governor's office to the grand opening of our new exercise trail the YCC kids built!

What is your favorite memory of WCSP?

My favorite memory as a Supt would be the Crossing Days when I could stand up at the podium, welcoming the crowds and informing them of what they were about to witness. Then they would clap and cheer wildly as the boats made it to the Jersey side of the river!

What is your least favorite memory of WCSP?

My least favorite memory as a Supt would be the collapse of the Washington Crossing Association after 44 years of service to the Park.

Did any famous people come to the park while you were there?

My first two years, Gov McGreevy came to speak on Crossing Day, but we had no program set up to do that, so he went to the PA side. I was told they booed him off the stage for being from NJ. That is what sparked me to rebuild an enlightening public program for the Crossing Day event.

Did any important events take place at the park when you were superintendent at WCSP?

There was an episode of AMAZING RACE filmed there. It actually was very boring from our perspective as we waited all day for the 'racers' to get to the Park and then it was over so fast.

What was the most unusual thing that happened to you while you were superintendent at WCSP?

The most unusual thing would have to be the feeling of "coming back home" to a place that I worked at twenty-four years earlier. Sometimes walking the trails that I had built or seeing maps I drew years earlier had a sort of eeriness to it. Of course it was very unusual to walk back into the office in 2003 and tell the secretary Gloria (McIntyre) "I'm back!" She would still treat me though like the pain-in-the-butt 20 yr old that she remembered. On my first day I needed pencils for my desk, and when I went downstairs to ask for them, she said "here's one, when it wears out, I will give you another", just like she told me 24 years earlier!

Did you have any notable employees while at WCSP?

Historian **Kels Swan** is the most distinguished regarding the history aspect. His knowledge and his collection never got the respect it deserved. Ranger **Bill Emery** is the most charismatic. He was the classic of what

'rangers' used to be. He knew everyone and everyone knew him. He spent his whole career at the Crossing and lived in Park too. He would start at 7am on a Saturday and finish at midnight getting the Open Air Theater folks out. He would complain about the long day, but he wanted it no other way. I was honored to have worked with him. (a good book should be written just about the stories he can tell about his career!)

Historian **Nancy Ceperley** is the most captivating. It took years for her to open up to me as I am not a historian and she just wanted to wait me out, hoping I would leave before her. She is a local who has been a part of the park fabric her whole life because of her parents involvement in the original WCA. Her degree is in bible history, and she got a waiver from a politician to get into the State position. We are lucky she got in, because she is the only one who has pushed the idea of the other 'GW', George Whitfield, who brought the colonies together with the Great Awakening long before George Washington did. I would make surprise visits to the Ferry House on cold winter mornings and just sit and talk with Nancy for hours. We both have a passion for plants and after I removed 'Japanese' trees from in front of the house and transplanted her 'period' apple trees in their place, she seemed to accept me more. She gave me a copy of Peter Kalm's Travels in America which I have found to be an amazing read.

What did you do after you left WCSP and what are you doing now?

I was temporarily assigned to Cheesequake in April 2010 for six months, because only one other Supt had put in for the vacant position and Trenton did not want that person there. My supervisor was hesitant to tell me about the transfer, but I accepted it cheerfully and actually said I would take the position as a permanent move. I was ready to move on feeling I had done what I could at the Crossing.