



The Forest Fire Warden News

Hello

Hello, this is Mike Kern, and I have been provided with the great honor to serve the Forest Fire Wardens as the new Chief of the Division of Forest Fire Protection. Although I am not new to the division, I am new to my current position, and I would like to take a moment to introduce myself.

I have been working with the Bureau of Forestry for almost 15 years. For the past 7 years I have served within the Wildfire Operations and Planning Section as both the Section Chief and a Program Specialist. Prior to my time in Forest Fire Protection, I was a Forester in the Tuscarora Forest District in south-central Pennsylvania. My wife and I have two daughters and currently reside in Perry County.

One of my main goals over the next several months is to define and articulate a clear vision and intent to both the Bureau of Forestry staff and our volunteer fire wardens. Simply stated, our mission is to manage wildland fire in order to protect life, property, and natural resources. This basic mission has not changed very much over the past 100 years, but the environment that we are operating in has changed drastically. Technological advances, social, and demographic changes are forcing us to analyze all that we do for efficiency and effectiveness. Although we have many challenges before us, I still feel that this is an exciting time to be involved in the wildland fire program in Pennsylvania. I truly believe that our organization is on the verge of doing some very important and exciting things.

All fire wardens are given the opportunity to serve the citizens of Pennsylvania. It is up to us to as individuals to seize that opportunity and use it for the mutual benefit of all.

100th Anniversary

On Saturday, June 20th 2015, approximately 150 people gathered at Hyner Run State Park in Clinton County to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the volunteer Forest Fire Warden program in Pennsylvania. Hyner Run State Park was chosen because of the proximity to the Forest Fire Warden's monument at Hyner View that was dedicated on the 50th anniversary of the wardens in 1965.

Although the weather appeared threatening in the morning, the rain held off until the program had concluded in the afternoon. Events started with a program of guest speakers including the State Forester, the Assistant State Forester, several retired Chief Forest Fire Wardens, and District Forest Fire Wardens. A meal was shared by all and door prizes were awarded by the Division of Forest Fire Protection. After lunch, Smokey Bear (and a real black bear!) made a guest appearance to greet the children and to thank the wardens for their 100 years of service.

On behalf of the Division of Forest Fire Protection, I would like to thank all of those who assisted with planning and conducting this program. By all accounts, the program was well received and enjoyed by all of those who attended. Additionally, I would like to thank all of the Forest Fire Wardens, past and present, for their work and dedication. We are proud of the long history of service that the fire wardens have given to the Commonwealth, and look forward to a bright future for many more years!

Warden from the "50s" advises looking to the future

Paul Felton became a warden when he was in District in 1950. Paul said there weren't many fires in the District which he attributed to the care of the people. Southern Chester and Lancaster Counties were occasionally problem areas which Paul described as "Appalachia". There were fires in that region, with fuels conducive to intense fire behavior. Fighting them was made difficult and dangerous by the potholes left from past mining. These experiences led Paul to the advice he has for current wardens:

"Be aware of young people who may have an interest in fighting wildfires, and watch for those who would make a good fire warden."

Division of Forest Fire Protection Personnel

Mike Kern,
Chief Forest Fire Warden

Vacant,
Operations and Planning
Section Chief

Charles C. Choplick,
Logistics and Finance
Section Chief

Brian Pfister,
Fire Operations Specialist

Jason Williams,
Aircraft Operations and
Safety Specialist

Chad Northcraft,
Air Operations Forester

Vacant,
Federal Excess/
VFA Coordinator

Levi Gelnett,
Wildfire Prevention
Specialist

Todd C. Breiningner,
Fire Operations—Eastern

Joseph R. Miller,
Fire Operations—Western

Terry Smith,
Special Investigator

Richard Temple,
Fire Cache Manager

Sally A. Fortney,
Clerk Typist 2

Diane Lehr-Gebhard,
Administrative Assistant

PA 100th Warden Anniversary Interview – Ralph Heilig

Ralph Heilig has been a fire warden for 56 years. He was sworn in as a fire warden in June of 1959. He became a warden for his positions with the Department of Forest and Waters. He was hired as a forester in Emporium in 1958, then in Strasburg in 1961, became an Assistant District Forester in McConnellsburg in 1965, District Forester in Huntingdon in 1980 and retired in 1999.

The first fire that he was on was in the fall of 1951, when he was a student at Mont Alto. The college was called to send out a crew to help with a fire on the Michaux State Forest. Maurice Goddard was the head of the school at this time and was the crew leader. When the Mont Alto students were on the fire and working, male and female students from another school showed up and started harassing the Mont Alto students. The females were in dresses and the males were in short pants and saddle shoes. Maurice Goddard approached the other students and told the females to get back in the cars and the males to follow him to his truck. He handed them rakes and put them to work in their short pants.

Ralph conducted many warden trainings and Smokey programs. His most memorable Smokey program was when he took Smokey to a one room school house west of Driftwood. He said there was one teacher teaching students from kindergarten thru eighth grade. That was the only one room school house he had visited.

During our interview we talked about fires he had been on and also ran down some standard interview questions. When he was asked what was the most important thing to remember when doing fire suppression his response was safety. His favorite part of being on a fire was fighting the fire and the adrenaline rush that you feel. The food that he remembers eating on wildfires were sandwiches, but you could not order sandwiches already made. You had to have bread, lunch meat and condiments delivered and would have to assemble the sandwiches yourself.

Ralph has many memories and stories he is willing to share about his time working for the State of PA in the Bureau of Forestry and as a fire warden. He has made many friends and has had all kinds of experiences in his time. If you like to hear of the past and like stories, he is a great man to sit with and just listen.

PA 100th Warden Anniversary Interview – Dick Hartman

Dick Hartman has been a fire warden for 54 years. He became a warden in 1961 when he accepted the position of fire inspector at the Michaux State Forest, District #1. He came to the bureau with no fire training, but said he had great fire wardens and they learned from each other.

He remembered his first spring fire season as being slow. He was waiting for the phone to ring and thinking to himself, this job is going to be a snap. That was his last slow season. For the next 12 years they had a lot of fires.

The majority of the fires that they were called to were in the southern portion of the Michaux forest district. One of his memorable fires was in South Mountain off of Cold Springs

Road, down near the old hotel. There had been a timber sale with a portable sawmill. The sawmill had left a big sawdust pile and it had been set on fire. Fire trucks and sirens were blowing and then everything went silent. The fire trucks had run out of gas. They believe that the gas was siphoned out of the gas tanks. They eventually got gas, made it to the fire and put it out. When they returned to the fire station, a ladder and the radio had been stolen.

Being the fire inspector and a fire warden, he did many Smokey programs. He packaged the Smokey materials, scheduled the visits and got them to the schools. Each year he would do a Smokey program for every kindergarten, first and second grade class in Adams, Franklin, Cumberland and York counties. He said it was two people, a guide for the bear and Smokey Bear, and the bear did all the talking.

Mr. Hartman has many fond memories and stories of his time at the Michaux State Forest and as a fire warden. He said his favorite part of his career was being able to do something constructive for the people of Pennsylvania. One thing that he said before our interview was over still sticks in my mind. He simply said “you never walk away from a fire burning.”

Insalaco Fire Warden

When Lenny Insalaco became a Warden in 1969 most of the training was hands-on. You went out on a fire and experienced guys showed you what to do. You could get a crew of 12 – 15 guys. Back then people had more time. People appreciated spending time outside in the woods, they weren't sitting front of the TV or video games. Lenny's love for the woods had him working summers for Department of Forests and Waters, and led to his earning a Forestry Degree. In 1972, he started working for DER, eventually heading the Regional Emergency Response Team, dealing with a wide variety of hazardous material incidents and natural disasters.

When Lenny started firefighting they had minimal equipment. “We had a fire rake, and an Indian tank. The truck had a little water and booster reel that was OK to work the edge of a field fire. Aircraft use was minimal.” We dug handlines and got water to refill the Indian Tanks where we could find it. This was the tail end of the drought of the 1960s. After digging a handline it was good to have a little water to keep the fire from burning under your line.

Lenny noted the changes in technology and the availability of equipment giving firefighters the ability to adjust tactics and get more water to the fires. While he sees this as mostly positive, he also voice concern that we don't want to lose the experience and techniques that are effective when equipment and large amounts of water aren't available. Earlier firefighters had to be resourceful, always thinking and looking ahead, while working hard.

In respect to the changes in the Bureau's wildfire program, Lenny pointed out the merits of the PA-130 class, of which he is an instructor in D-11. In addition to training strategies and tactics, PA-130 fosters recognition and communication between the Bureau and Fires Companies. A Fire Chief is more likely to take direction from a Warden whom the Chief recognizes, as opposed to someone they never met before. Having the PA-130 facilitates communication as “it allows us to speak a common language”. After taking PA-130, fire company personnel are familiar with the terminology and tactics, and will understand why certain tactics are deployed on a fire such as burning in a line etc. The personnel who have

attended the PA-130 take the message back to other fire company members as well.

In D-11 we try to tailor the class to local conditions and refer to local fires as examples in the class.

“Every Fire is a little different, you have to be able to adapt as you go, and keep going till you’re done.” Lenny’s advice is “Do it Safe”. “The adrenaline starts pumping, and, Yeah, we’re gonna do it, but let’s do it safe, and make sure everyone gets home safe when we’re done”.

**JAMES R. TENNY
FIRE WARDEN
WEST FAIRVIEW, PA**

Feb 28, 1968, James (Jim) Tenny, became a Fire Warden in the Tuscarora State Forest. He had begun working for the Department of Forests and Waters as a Towerman in the Weiser Forest District. He also served as smoke chaser for that District.

Jim had been a member of the West Fairview Forest Fire and Conservation Company, formed by former Weiser District Forest Technician Howard Wiseman. The crew had a 1939 Chevy pickup, equipped with rakes and Indian tanks. They participated in firefighting throughout the Weiser District, as well as various prevention activities including burning Railroad Safety Strip from Harrisburg to Millersburg and Millerstown to Thompsontown. They also participated in various conservation projects for the Weiser District.

In the 1970’s, Jim took the leadership of the crew, and was headquartered in West Fairview, under the guidance of the Tuscarora State Forest. Men would gather, and assist with moving equipment to Dauphin, or the Protection warehouse in Elizabethville. Jim would also provide training while the crews were on standby for fire. While at home, work, and school, the crew would be dispatched by some of the local mothers.

In the late 70’s, four of the crewmembers went out of state on a fire detail. Jim would also assist at the Mob Center at Harrisburg International Airport.

Jim continued to acquire equipment for the crew, and in his spare time he would make any necessary repairs to the equipment by himself. At this time, the crew had a crew transport, brush truck, multiple chain saws and handtools.

Cornplanter Forest District #14 Warden Interviews

William (Bill) Huber: Oil City/Cornplanter Township, Venango County--- Appointed as a Warden in 1960

Bill’s father, Herbert Huber, was a Fire Warden for over 13 years, when he suddenly passed away and Bill was asked to replace him as the warden. Bill remembers his father responding to wildfires and also that his father helped build the Plummer Fire Tower which still stands today. They were issued metal Indian tanks and rakes, with rakes being the most common tool used. Bill remembers travelling to Warren to participate in training in which they burned fields to teach about ‘fighting fire with fire’, in fact, his favorite part of the warden program was the camaraderie and the trainings that allowed them to keep up-to-date on current practices. The Salvation Army would occasionally bring out their truck and provide sandwiches and drinks on some of the bigger fires.

Bill remembers spending a lot of nights in the woods fighting fires but the Oleopolis Fire was one that they had to make a hasty retreat from and he remembers riding in the back of a pick-up truck holding onto another firefighter by the belt as the fire advanced up the slope behind them. The thing Bill always remembered was “protect yourself and your men” and he said that “safety first” is still the piece of advice he would give as a PA Fire Warden. He said cooperation among the VFD’s has gotten better over the years, as has communication with cell phones, etc. The Huber family has always supported the PA Fire Warden program and will continue the family tradition when Bill’s son is appointed as a warden.

Robert (Bob) Jones: Clarendon Boro, Warren County --- Appointed as a Warden in 1987

Bob was appointed as a warden when he was recommended by a former fire chief and warden. His initial training was with the volunteer fire department responding to fires in and around the Allegheny National Forest. They never seemed to lack for tools and were issued a supply of rakes, shovels and metal Indian tanks. He thinks some aspects of suppression has gotten easier or at least faster with the introduction of leaf blowers to help establish a scratch line and GPS units to delineate the size of fires. Bob remembers one fire near Morrison Run in which they drove in using a 1935 Dodge truck and after they got done fighting the fire, it took them an hour just to turn the truck around. Things have changed over the years, Bob remembers that when he joined the fire company you almost had to be on a waiting list and now all departments seem to struggle at attracting volunteers. Some of the things Bob remembers are to always watch your back and post a lookout and get on the fires as soon as you can and to keep them small. This advice and the family fire warden tradition have been passed onto his son Andy, who is currently a Special Assistant Warden.

Robert (Doc) Orr: Girard Boro, Erie County --- Appointed as a Warden in 1995

Doc is probably most recognized as a familiar face in the Wildland Fire Crew Program, since he along with a few others were the founders of that program but in 1995 when there needed a replacement for an inactive warden, Doc answered the call. A lot of his training came through the Specialized (now called the Wildland) Crew program but he also remembers many of the trainings that occurred locally. The first fire he was ever on was actually in Eastern Pennsylvania near Hazelton. He remembers being staged at an airport and being fed hamburgers that were as big as a dinner plates. Doc remembers all the fire departments working well together utilizing the standard firefighting tools, rakes, Indian tanks, etc. Doc thinks it’s important to get the young, new people interested in being part of the fire departments and fighting wildfires. For anyone starting out in wildland fire fighting, Doc would advise getting the bunker gear off and making sure you secure your perimeter and mop-up well!

Richard (Dick) Bower: Youngsville Boro, Warren County --- Appointed as a Warden in 1978

Dick remembers when he was in high school accompanying the fire warden on wildfire incidents. Then in 1978, the fire chief approached him and asked if he would like to become the next warden. He remembers getting taught the basic firefighting skills at the county fire school but also really enjoyed going to Lewistown and Carlisle for Warden Weekends. The most common tools were Indian backpack tanks and rakes and when they were fortunate they could reach

the fire with 1 ½” hose. Based in shallow oil and gas territory, Dick said you always needed to watch for those lines that supplied the oil and gas wells, it was always ‘safety first’ and oil and gas infrastructure could add hazards to firefighting. They were usually supplied a lot to drink to keep everyone hydrated but usually had to wait until they got back to the station to get something to eat. His most memorable fire was the District’s largest fire, Jamison Run, and he still remembers trees torching out in front of them as they provided structure protection to local cabins. Dick stressed keeping up with the wildland fire training, he said it keeps you thinking and helps prepare you before you actually become engaged in an incident.

Harry Drury: Conneaut Twp/Albion, Erie County ---
Appointed as a Warden in 1967

Long before Harry was one of the Bureau’s Fire Inspectors or before he and others started the Wildland (formerly Specialized) Fire Crew program, Harry had been approached about being a Fire Warden. Often working with Fire Inspector, Andy Marfink, Harry remembers responding to many, many wildfires over the years. He said it was always very important to keep your people together and always know where your forces were at all times. The most important part of the warden program was the camaraderie and he would encourage all wardens to stay involved with all their departments and neighboring departments and keep up with the training. Harry’s most memorable fire was the Jamison Run Fire which burned over 600 acres but only destroyed 2 structures and had no accidents or injuries. Over the years, Harry thinks more wardens have become involved in training and would encourage trainings among Forest Districts, Departments and Wardens.

John Hegedus: Oakland Township, Venango County ---
Appointed as a Warden in 1978

Burt Burchfield and Harry Drury, both well-known names in the wildland firefighting community in northwest PA, got John involved in the PA Warden Program. He remembers travelling with Harry to his first weekend wildland fire training at Fort Indiantown Gap. Issued the standard firefighting tools, the rake was probably the most commonly used tool on wildfires. His most memorable fire occurred on Easter at Cornel Drake Park near Titusville. The fuel was mostly grasses but they experienced some really erratic wind shifts and at one point they had to duck as the fire flashed over them. On that fire, as with all the other wildland fires that John fought, he learned and practiced the lessons of always monitoring the current conditions and always looking out for his guys. Some of John’s favorite times were escorting his buddy, who was Smokey Bear, to local schools, hospitals, etc. In fact, one of their visits took them to John’s grandson’s school and he is sure that visit cured his grandson of any curiosity about playing with matches!

Charles (Chuck) Hollabaugh: Grand Valley/Eldred Township, Warren County --- Appointed as a Warden in 1968

Chuck had started the Grand Valley Fire Department in 1967 and the following year, district Fire Inspector, Andy Marfink approached Chuck about becoming a fire warden. Andy provided Chuck his first training which was one-on-one, going out into the woods and riding through the territory. Chuck remembers being issued metal Indian tanks and rakes and there being a lot of ‘hands-on’ labor. Today things have improved with water tanks mounted on ATV’s and ‘softer’ bladder bags. He recalls being taught how to properly carry

your tools; always watch out for changing conditions; always establish and know your escape routes and above all keep your men safe. Chuck really enjoyed passing this information onto others teaching the proper methods of wildland firefighting. He said it’s important to keep young people interested and provide hands-on training so that they are prepared when responding to incidents. His family always approved of his fire warden appointment; they viewed it as part of being in a rural volunteer fire department.

INTERVIEW WITH FIRE WARDEN GLENN BELL

My name is Glenn Bell. I have served as a Fire Warden for over 40 years. I began as a Fire Warden in Forest District 10, as part of my job requirements with the Bureau of Forestry. In 1988, I transferred to the Tuscarora State Forest, where I still am an active volunteer Fire Warden, although I retired as a State Employee.

I have seen the Warden Organization go through many changes, many which are positive. Some however, need improvement. When I started, I had access to Bureau of Forestry tools, and most of the training was “On the Job”. I did have other experienced people within District 10 who helped me “hone” my fire suppression skills. The major training which did help, however, was the fire simulator training which the Division of Forest Fire Protection had developed for new personnel. It was a labor intensive training device, which did limit the number of times it was offered. It was a valuable help in suppression tactics.

During my forestry school training, I always thought the backpack tank (whether referred to as the Indian or Parco—two different manufacturers and styles) would be the ideal tool, I soon learned that was a heavy tool. Once working in District 10, I soon discovered the fire broom and drip torch was also an effective tool in the suppression effort (and lighter in weight). That discovery was the result of one of my job responsibilities--initial attack on wildfires.

My major job responsibility was initial attack on wildfires, as well as Wildfire investigation. Along with that, I was also responsible to gather all data pertaining to the wildfire. The forms, to date, have not changed significantly. The wildfire investigative procedures, however, have. Better training as to determining fire origins and causes are in place now, and determination of responsible parties is easier to determine.

One of my job responsibilities also, as incident commander on initial attack, was to order food for the crews. Advancing from the old warden’s manual of loaves of bread, bottles of mustard, lbs. of meat, we began to order ready-made sub sandwiches, which made life easier. However, for some reason, no matter how many were ordered (and extra) the subs never seemed to get the entire way around the line.

When I started my career, Wildfire Prevention Programs in the Schools were a crucial part of our Wildfire Prevention efforts. Fire Wardens Deward “Pat” Wykoff Prevention program for District 10. That program, which began in the late ‘60’s, was instrumental in decreasing the number of children caused wildfires by over 75%. It didn’t take long for other Forest Districts to follow suit. The Smokey Bear stories that came from that program were many. My favorite one was when Smokey came down off stage to shake hands with the school children, one of the kindergarten kids in the front row either

was so excited or scared to see Smokey, and he actually wet his pants. I saw the child as he left the auditorium. Further investigation revealed a corresponding wet spot on the carpeting where he sat. That location was the spot Smokey was headed for when he came off stage.

Suppression stories are many, and some do not hold up to today's safety standards. Back then, you did what you had to do, and take the calculated risks of your actions into account when you did them.

My wife has been very supportive of my work, especially when it was my job. Now, being retired, she realizes forestry is "in my blood".

Over the years, there have been many changes. The out-of-state wildfire experience has been a definite good training tool for our people. The Incident Command System is a definite plus in managing wildfires. However, my position on Wildfire Prevention is that you do suppression efforts when the Prevention efforts fail. Unfortunately, we tend to concentrate efforts on suppression, while tending to forget the need for prevention efforts. Prevention efforts can serve as good Public Relations to the Bureau of Forestry, DCNR, and the District. Public contact can go a long way in helping to resolve Wildfire Problems and Bureau of Forestry programs in general. Implementation of the WHIP program (Wardens Helping In Prevention), is a great tool for this. The Fire Warden can be a key factor to contacting the public in their local area. The implementation of the FM Radio from 1969-79 provided a needed upgrade to communications. The 800 Radio system, from planning in the late '90's until now, shows too much hurry to implementation, with not much preplanning prior to implementation. There are still issues with that system.

One thing I would caution those in charge to be aware of: Just because something is new, it is not an automatic reason to adapt to it. Many ideas are implemented, and not thought through. There should be a specific reason to make the change, and the benefits and detriments be weighed before doing.

My parting advice would be: Do what is right, and stick to it. Change when change is necessary, and learn from past errors.

INTERVIEW WITH HARRY ANDERSON, FIRE WARDEN IN SPROUL STATE FOREST, 1925-1980

You must remember, in the early '30s, the CCC program was in its infancy. Road networks of today were virtually non-existent then. Radios were unheard of, and transportation was spotty, at best. The procedures he followed were somewhat uniform throughout the District. The only real forestry communication was telephone from the fire tower to the District Office, and a few key Fire Wardens.

The fire in particular Harry related was one that occurred during the spring. Tamarack Fire Tower (located north of Renovo, and still in operation today) observed a fire to the southwest, about 15 miles out. This put the fire location on Keating Mountain, located west of the town of Renovo. The towerman called and informed Harry of the fire. There was no highway between Renovo and Emporium (actually, the road only went to the town of Westport, located 6 miles west of Renovo. There was a main railroad line however. That line ran from Williamsport, Pa, through Renovo, Emporium, and then

split to either Erie or Buffalo. The branch line from Keating (about 5 miles west of Westport) did not exist.

So, Harry contacted a crew of 5-6 men, and scheduled to meet at Westport. When the crew gathered, Harry purchased food supplies for a couple of days from the small grocery store in Westport. They had their tools (the Rich Rake aka Council Rake aka Fire rake had not been invented yet!) with them. They hailed down the local westbound Passenger train (usually those local trains ran every 2-3 hours) to catch a ride to the village of Keating. From there, they hiked up the mountain (no township road then!) to the fire. Before Harry left, he got a "good" fix on the fire location from the towerman, and its direction, behavior, etc. In those days, the towerman had to have a good sense of fire to pass that info to the warden. No radio to keep them updated.

Once on the fire scene, the men proceeded to build fire line and extinguish the fire. The only tools was the fire rake, which consisted of a short piece of wood attached to a handle, and the teeth were wooden pegs which today are either the mower teeth or rake teeth. If you broke a tooth, you simply would cut another stick—preferably hard, and whittle it to replace the broken one. They also had backfire torches (a piece of 2" galvanized pipe with a cap on one end, and a reduced 1/2" pipe with a wick and a shutoff valve on the other. The instrument was about 3 feet long, had a strap for over the shoulder. It was filled with kerosene). Also included were a "duck-billed" brush hook, and either a single or double bit axe. With those tools, they constructed line until the fire was under control.

When I asked Harry how additional crews were sent, he related the need of a good towerman. That person would note when he first saw the fire, and its direction. From observation, and timing, the towerman could make a good estimate as to when the crew arrived on scene. If the smoke plume continued to grow, the towerman would call more crews to assist. On the other hand, if the smoke slowed down, or disappeared, the towerman did not send any more help. Of course, that towerman had a good knowledge of the terrain. It wasn't an accident that many towerman were good hunters, and frequently during hunting season covered the same ground they watched during fire season.

I'm not sure of the exact date, but Harry passed away in the '80s. He had become a great friend and teacher to me early in my career. His savvy was helpful to me in my position as a forest technician, as I basically did the same job as the Fire Inspector, later to be replaced by Fire Foresters.

Fires up along the Delaware

Ben Powell was running with fire Company when Bill Keller recruited him and Ben became a Warden in the 1960s. Then as now, it was important to educate fire companies on the difference in tactics in wildfires as opposed to structure fires. In one instance a mower caught fire on a farm and started a fire. Ben finally convinced the local firefighters the farm's structures were out of danger, and that efforts should be directed to stopping the fire before it reached nearby Gamelands where there was a heavier fuel-load. Just after pointing out that structures were safe a porcelain commode that was in the farm's outhouse exploded.

Ben is still active and is trustee of a crew of guys that go out of state. The Dobron's of Point Pleasant in Ben's area manufacture and certainly use Keller brooms on wildfires. Ben sees Wildland Urban Interface as a growing problem in the

area. Ben's area is the Northern part of Bucks County along the Delaware River, and he has reported fires for his counterpart in NJ, who has himself, reported PA wildfires to Ben.

Ben pointed out that in order to recruit and retain Wardens and Volunteers, tax breaks, or, some other type of incentive programs, should be instituted. There was a major drought in the 1960s and future droughts and fire problems are likely to continue. Ben hopes that the PA Fire Wardens Program will also continue strong for the next 100 years or more.

Cashman Fire Warden

Steve Cashman was on his first wildfire with the Hamburg Volunteer fire crew when he was only 15 yr. old, and carried the GE Porta-Mobil radio. Thus began a long career of professional emergency service, both paid and volunteer. The School Superintendent was supportive of the firefighters. For those 16 yr. and older the school District paid for crewmembers physicals and they got permission to leave school to fight fires. They'd ride to the fire sitting on the toolbox of an old Ford Stake-body that was prone to vaporlock. On the way home one would get under tarp or whatever to stay warm especially after being wet from carrying an Indian tank on a November fire.

Steve returned to the Crew after his time in the Military, and many other members continued with the crew after graduation. Steve was appointed Fire Warden in 1972, and in 1973 took 6 of his crew members out to the Freezeout Fire in the Hells Canyon Area of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest on the Oregon-Idaho border. See attached photo of the crew. This was followed by at least 15 trips out of State.

He took part in many exciting PA fires as well, and remembers seeing Mike Mazur being knocked down by an airdrop from a twin engine tanker. Apparently they all got off the line quickly at the air-tanker's approach but Mike wasn't quick enough. Steve worked for Weiser Forest District and appreciates the mentoring and assistance provided by Don Oaks and Joe Miller.

The Hamburg crew was started by in 1949, by Preston and Ann Derck. Steve chartered the crew in 1980s, which facilitated getting funding and equipment. Steve is still active but lets Dean Dalious handle running the crew. Early on it was no problem to get a crew of 20 for a fire. Now people are busy and scared for their jobs so it's especially difficult to get people out during the day. There is not enough Bureau of Forestry staff, so we should continue to train fire companies in wildland firefighting, and mentor new wardens and crewmembers.

Change doesn't come easy, Steve noted, but remarked that many of the changes have been good, especially adoption of the ICS system and the establishment of the State's IMT teams. It is important to train them on the idea of fuel removal in firefighting. Some basics don't change such as the importance of wearing good boots and breaking them in before fires. Refer to photo of firefighter who broke in boots on out of state trip. A technological change welcomed by Steve is the leafblower, or as he put it, "I like the fire broom with the pull-cord".

Baptist Bible College Forest Fire Crew

It was a Sunday evening, I think in 1969, when a group of Baptist Bible College was students returning from an evening church service, they spotted a fire up on a nearby mountainside. Even though they were dressed in suits and ties they decided to see if they could locate the fire and offer to help. Initially, they were turned back and told they couldn't get through. Not deterred in their willingness to help, they decided to go a different way and eventually made their way to the fire. They located the crew fighting the fire; and offered their services and joined the attack. They continued until the fire was extinguished and then returned to campus.

The Fire Inspector; in charge of the fire scene that night, was John Wargo, Lima 10. Realizing that a potential resource was available, Mr. Wargo made a visit to the College, to see if they would be interested in developing and training a Forest Fire Crew. While at the College, he was directed to speak to Dr. Leonard Vanderveld, who, along with his wife, had started a Campus Police Force, Campus Fire Crew, Campus Health Service and Ambulance Crew. Mr. Wargo and Dr. Van discussed the possibilities and both were definitely interested in pursuing the possibility further. The College was grateful for this opportunity to become involved in service and to give back to the community. After working through the details, a crew was started. Dr. Vanderveld and staff member Carl Smith were appointed Forest Fire Wardens and arrangements made to provide some training and provide a vehicle and equipment. At first, a stake body truck owned by the College was used, which was later replaced by a stake body truck owned by the State. Bench seats were aligned on both sides of the back for crew members and equipment kept in the center. A canvas cover was placed over the back for wind protection. Hand held radios and chargers were supplied. As wardens, Dr. Van and Carl Smith were designated as drivers. The Campus had a fruit and vegetable underground cool storage room and this became the on campus Forest Fire headquarters and equipment storage area. Lima 44 was ready for service!

Thus, the Baptist Bible College Forest Fire Crew was formed. The tower bell at the college was used to notify crew of a fire and to report to the "underground". The number of crew varied usually from 8 to 20, and with a one time high of 52. It eventually became the largest crew in the state. After a couple of years Carl Smith left the college and Don Drake, one of the original trained crew members, was appointed a warden. Wardens continued to be authorized to drive state vehicles and therefore to transport the college crew. When this changed Don was brought on as a patrolman, so he could continue to drive.

The opportunity to be a part of the Forestry Crew appealed to a variety of students. At that time wardens were paid \$1.25, trained crew \$1.00 and voluntary crew \$.75 an hour, so no one volunteered for the money. I remember one fire, at night when we got to the fire; flames had gotten into the tall trees, and was 50-75 feet in the air. At this time the basic approach to fighting the fire was using Indian tanks and cutting a fire line. Dr. Van took the main crew and went into the woods to cut the line. He had George (a BBC student) on point and gave him a brush axe to cut the way. Now, George, NCAA, national wrestling champion at Michigan University was making great progress cutting the way because what he couldn't cut he was ripping out with his bare hands. Meanwhile, back on the pole line, I and one other crew member had Indian tanks and were tasked with not letting the fire cross the line. We looked at the

flames that were 75 feet in the air and then at the Indian tanks, neither one being convinced that it would work. I think we were really trying to figure out how fast we could run with the tanks and how quickly we could make it to the other side of the pole line. Fortunately, someone decided to backfire. We learned that night when someone says that when two fires come together it sounds like a freight train, it really does!

Campbell's ledge was our nemesis, it seemed like all our fires were located there. First, there was the trip through the "Narrows" which at that time was a "bombed out" gravel and dirt, single lane road. The guys in the back of the stake truck really "liked" that road. Then there was the rough terrain and the cliffs. The fires could burn very hot there. One fire was so hot that it caused the brush on the other side out the road spontaneously combusted into flames with radiated heat. When we were called there we knew we would be there for a significant amount of time. That wasn't all bad because we knew it could mean that they would feed you! What type of food you got varied. I remember once Dr. Van sharing some tropical chocolate with me. (I think it was left over from WWII and lasted because it wouldn't melt!) But more often than not, it was hot roast beef, mash potatoes, and green beans from Alexander's. I know that was the reason that some crew came out to fight the fires, the food was so much better than cafeteria food!

One of the crew members that I remember the best was Doug Clark. Doug was unusual because he had cerebral palsy and before coming to college wasn't allowed to do much of anything. He wanted so much to be part of the crew. He couldn't go up into the woods but he could stay with the truck and keep track of things. One time I told him not to let anyone take anything off the truck if they weren't part of our crew. I think it was one of the patrolmen that came to get a tank or rake and Doug came flying out of the cab to stop them. I came along just about this time and told Doug it was ok. I still don't know what he was going to do to stop them but I have no doubt he would have tried. His being a part of the crew was one of the biggest things in his life and something he was extremely proud of. Another member was a black student who would joke with me about having to smile at night so I would know where he was. Others of our crew used to work the Scrub Oak tower.

The crew, being from a Bible College, led to a couple eventful stories! One came to be a pretty famous story. We were fighting a particular stubborn fire; it had been burning for a while. People were becoming tired and frustrated. Someone said we sure could use some rain. One of our crew heard the comment and called for a prayer meeting to pray for rain. It wasn't too long before it began to rain. After that everyone wanted our crew on their fires. The other incident involved someone who was setting fires. We were fighting to extinguish the fire on the uphill side of the road. As we were doing so, one of our crew noticed that someone was down in the area below us and starting spot fires. We decided that the "biblical" thing to do was to stone them. So everyone picked up stones and when a fire started throw stone at that area. I'm not sure how well it worked, but it seemed appropriate at the time. Later it was determined the firebug was someone from one of the volunteer companies sent to help extinguish the blaze.

I'm sure there are many more stories that could be told, but that's for another time. In the later 1980's, volunteers became harder to get. More students had to work more hours to pay for

school. Therefore, the crew size diminished. In the summer of 1987 both Dr. Vanderveld and I left the College. Dr. Van retired and I started working full time at Community Medical Center. It was at that point that the most active part of Baptist Bible College Forest Fire Crew ceased.

We will always be thankful for the BBC and Pa. Department of Forestry relationship and the privilege of working with and for the Department. You had an impact on a lot of students during that time and your dedication to keeping our forests and communities safe remains one of the best memories of our time!

Susan Drake

Catching a Ride to a Life of Excitement and Community Service

James "Jim" Howley of Thornhurst Township Lackawanna County got involved in wildland firefighting in the 1950s when he'd occasionally catch a ride with Forest Fire Inspector Clarence Renfer, to the Howley Cottage in Thornhurst. When there was a fire, Renfer would come by and pickup Jim and take him to the fire. Although Jim was only 16, he was in top shape and really liked fighting the fires.

This started a lifelong involvement with firefighting, and other emergency response activities. Jim was one of the founders of the Thornhurst Fire Company in 1967 and became a fire warden in 1977. The Thornhurst fire of April 1976 did not deter him, although he claims that fire made him 10 years older in one day. They laid down wet lines with trucks as thick smoke was lying down. Jim saw the fire coming and it crowned and jumped their wet lines and burned over their heads. They pulled back and made their way to Bear Lake road and protected the Nicholson Home just in time. Trees were exploding and throwing chunks of burning wood. Fixed wing airtankers were making airdrops along with a helicopter that was dipping out of Bear Lake. Every time the helicopter came down to the lake a flock of geese would fly up into the smoke. Jim thought, "Dumb geese flying into the smoke", and then he imagined the geese looking down at them and thinking, "Dumb people staying down in the smoke". Between the multiple aircraft and the geese there were some close calls. The fire burned 540 acres in 6 hours.

Jim was involved in many exciting adventures including a river rescue that earned him recognition by U.S. President Gerald Ford for Courageous Action in Rescue. Jim teaches a large variety of classes and he setup an orienteering course on the Lackawanna State Forest. Jim and his wife Jane had to coordinate training schedules as she founded the Thornhurst Ambulance Squad and was also very busy.

There have been a lot of changes in the Bureau's Fires Program since 16 year old Jim was out on wildfires. Jim noted, that, these days it's difficult finding quality volunteers, a problem exacerbated by the dearth of jobs in the area. Jim said that DCNR Fire Supervisor Jack Zborovian has provided guidance and assistance with the timely transition over the years of supporting the fire warden with resources from the VFD's. Citizens of NE Pennsylvania benefit greatly from all of Jim's hard work. Probably, Clarence Renfer is looking down, glad that he gave Jim rides all those years ago.

NO.....IT'S JUST LUKEY!

I first came to Forest District 18; I think it was the spring of 1994, as a Forest Fire Patrolman. It didn't take long to realize that there was way more fires than a few seasonal employees could handle.

One of the first fire calls I responded to was a report of a smoke in the Lehigh River Gorge area. When we drove up the road alongside the railroad tracks, we could see at least five separate fires. I was dropped off at the first fire and the guy I was working with was going to take the second fire. When I asked him about the other three fires he said, "Lukey's Crews is on the way".

As the fires were suppressed and we met back along the tracks, I asked about the crew and who is Lukey, what's his real name, because I wanted to meet him. So the guy I was working with me told me his name, Francis Lukasevich. I said I'm going up to this guy I should may be say "Mr. Lukasevich", or "Hello Fran" or "Great work Frank." My partner said with inflection, "NO, IT'S JUST LUKEY".

Well, since I was the new guy I should do what I'm told. Who am I to question the person who has worked and lived here, he should know best. After all he only goes by one name, FISH.

I sat down with Forest Fire Warden Lukasevich at his home and asked him to talk about his career, so far and his life. This is a very small part of his story.

Lukey lives in Jim Thorpe with his wife of forty years, Barbara. They have raised three children, Sarah, Meghan and Peter. He is a happy grandfather as well to three grandchildren, and at any given time you can find them running around his and Barbara's home.

His real job is being a Foreman for PennDOT and has worked for them for 23 years. When I asked him about retiring, he said "I'm thinking about it".

Lukey recalls, watching the old bi-plane make water drops over a large fire on Bear Mountain, when he was small. "Watching that I guess got me interested in Forest Fire".

Lukey joined the forest fire crew in Jim Thorpe in 1967 at the age of seventeen. The crew was headed by Warden "Doc" Dougherty. The crew was called Dougherty's Black Sheep, and was very proud of it. In some ways I think that tradition lives on in Carbon County.

Righter Rebold was the Fire Inspector for the Carbon and Lehigh County Division at this time. Lukey recalls that all the state employees worked out of Righter's grocery store in the Hill Section of Jim Thorpe during fire seasonal. "There was this time when a state employee was installing new copper water lines at Righters house and they started the basement on fire with the torch". "Oh, by the way, when the crew needed food and drinks on the fire line, well you can imagine where that came from". Ahh the good old days I thought.

"Back then, as teen you hung out at the fire station and since at sixteen you could fight fire as part of a forest fire crew, I started hanging out at Righter's store". Soon Lukey was welcome into the flock and began his life with wildfire.

He recalls the days in the spring when the high school principle would come around to the classrooms and gather all the students who were members of the Fire Crew, they were to be picked up for a fire detail. No red bag needed back then.

I asked him to talk about gear and clothing "back in the day". Back then he said, "Blue jeans and may be a long sleeve

shirt." "Our first helmets were old military liners types, but we did get hardhats years later". "We never carried any kind of pack, or even water at that time". He remembers that the crew bought their own denim shirts, and sewed patches on them so they would look more like a crew. It was important to look and act like an organized crew to the Warden Dougherty back then and it still is to this day with the Jim Thorpe Crew.

"I remember in 1968 there was a large fire, not uncommon for that time in Carbon, on the Broad Mountain it was about 1000 acres at the time". "We were all at the top, the fire was pushing up slope from Lake Hauto, you could hear it coming, and all we could do at the time was take cover". "The fire moved over us, we dove under trucks, jumped inside trucks anything to get covered". "I guess in this day and age we would call that a Burn Over".

In 1970 Lukey joined the Diligent Hose Company and became an active Volunteer Firefighter and he still is today. The fire station was just a block away from Righter's Store, so now he had two places to hang out.

In 1973 Lukey along with nine others from the Black Sheep Fire Crew were asked to take part in one of the first two, twenty person hand crews assigned to a fire out of state.

Think about that for a minute, ten guys, one quarter of the two crews came from Carbon County. I asked Lukey why he thought the Fire Protection Division did that. He found out later that the Division thought because the fires in Carbon acted most like the fires out west, that these guys would be ready for it.

NOTE: At that time much of the county was still recovering from the lack of any type of forest management. If it was a tree, it was cut to help supply the needs of the mining industry. Most of the area was second and third generation re-growth, with a large composite of Shrub Oak, High Brush Blueberry, other brush species and grass fuel models.

Well they were right; the crew received a special letter of thanks from the US Forest Service and our Governor at the time Milton Shapp, for their work.

While they were there they were given a yellow fire resistant shirt, they were able to purchase one shirt for \$7.00 to take home. They were also given an orange bag with a belt attached to wear around their waist. Inside was this new metallic tent called a fire shelter.

As time passes on, the dynamics of the crew changed, District Foresters changed, policies changed and Lukey was asked to become the Jim Thorpe Crew's new Warden.

"Yes, with one condition" Lukey said. "That Vince Yaich was to become a Warden as well". So it went, spring of 1989 the new Forest Fire Wardens Lukasevich and Yaich would take over the Jim Thorpe Crew.

Lukey still has his notebook from those first weeks of April he and Vince took over the crew; here is account of that time.

4/17, 85 acre fire, Carbon County.

4/20, 5 acre fire, Carbon County.

4/22, 100 acres Towamensing Trails Development, 15 acres Mt. Pocahontas Development, at the same time the crew was working these fires the rest of the Carbon County Crews were on a 1000 plus acre fire along the Blue Mountain on the Carbon County side.

4/23, 180 acre fire, Carbon County.

4/26 and 27 series of fires along Flagstaff Mountain, Carbon County.

Along with those fires in late April, came a series of fires on Kotter's Mountain. It was during one of those fires, Lukey recalls it was about 40 acres and growing rapidly, that he and Vince decided the only way to stop this fire from running up the mountain was to attempt a true "Backfire".

"It was right out of the text book" Lukey said. "The backfire was sucked into the main head fire, and within minutes the fire was stopped".

Speaking of the good old days, I asked him if he thought the way we fight wildfires has changed and how has the crews changed?

"Well here in Carbon County the fires don't seem to get as big as they use to do". "More roads, less forestlands, and the forest that is left are mature stands", "But that doesn't mean a big one cannot happen again".

"It's definitely more difficult to get people to join a crew, there is so much more for young people to do then back when I was a kid". "If you don't get them when they're young, you won't get them at all".

I asked him about his thoughts on training over the years and if it has impacted the way we fight fire.

"I think the training has improved a great deal, when I started it was all on the job training. You were assigned to an experienced crew member and you learned the ropes that way". "But on the other hand, you cannot just take a weekend class, get a certificate and think you know how to fight a fire either". "It's a combination of the two that works out the best".

"But really it still comes down to a rake, a backpack tank, a drip torch and you can handle most any fire in Pennsylvania".

Lukey has always been a part of training other wildland firefighters. He has assisted the Bureau of Forestry with Crew Camp for many years. He has taught at the Warden's Weekend for years, and at countless local level classes not only wildfire, but on the structural fire side as well.

"One of the greatest effects training has had around here, I think, is that the training that the volunteer fire departments get now in wildfire". "No longer do they stop at the end of the fire hose, they go after it", said Lukey.

He is also a part of District 18 Support Crew staff and is affecting that group in a positive manner as well.

In closing I would like to thank Warden Lukasevich personality for all his help that he and his crew has given me over the past thirty teen years that I have served as Forest Fire Specialist Supervisor for the Penn Forest Division.

So many years later I still have a hard time speaking when Lukey shows up on one of "my" fires and he asks "What do you need from us", I still feel I should be asking him that same question. "Sir, what do you need from me"?

Local Forest Fire Warden remembers fighting wildfires in PA and in the West

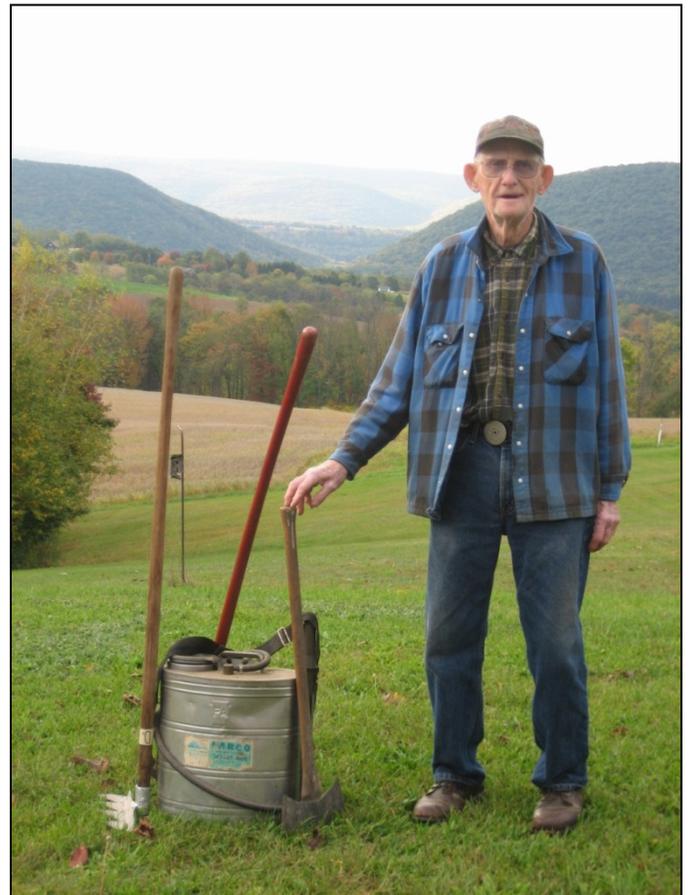
All of us who enjoy the local woodlands can thank Forest Fire Warden Paul Dalious and the men he led in fighting fires in PA. His activities did not stop at the state line, he took crews to Oregon, California, and Minnesota.

Mr. Dalious became a Forest Fire Warden in 1963. His wife Marguerite related how crew trainings were held at their home in Main Township. The house was the gathering place, and there was a high level of excitement with every wildfire response. The entire Dalious family (wife Marguerite and five children) were involved, from filling canteens, to loading tools, to calling the crew.

Mr. Dalious told of his son George's disappointment when he could not get to Bloomsburg in time for the bus that took the crew to the airport for their trip to fight fire in Oregon. Dalious' sons did not make it on other trips out of state, but they did participate at in-state trainings. Dalious' daughter Darla also trained for wildland firefighting and passed the step test, but Paul forbade her from going on any fires including the out-of-state-detail, "No girls!" (it was different time).

Mr. Dalious fought on several out-of-state fires including Marblecone fire in 1977, the largest fire in CA up to that time. They were out fighting on night details, and when they returned had to find shade under sparse pines to sleep under during the day. Mr. Dalious has a photo album of his crew's activities. From viewing the album one can see that they worked and lived under difficult conditions. However, everyone in the crew looked happy and proud to be there. That says a lot about Dalious' leadership. We can thank Paul Dalious and wardens like him for protecting our forests, and laying a strong foundation for current and future crews.

To join a Fire Warden's Crew, contact your nearest DCNR, Bureau of Forestry Office.



Forest Fire Warden Paul Dalious shows some of the tools he used in fighting fires, including fires on the mountains in the background.



Warden Dalious' well-travelled wildland fire helmets



Edge of control line Marblecone fire



Looking for shade – Marblecone Fire



Paul and his crew, he is 3rd from R in back row



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