

The Borough of Delaware Water Gap
AN APPALACIAN TRAIL COMMUNITY

Local History Spot
By Marty Wilson

Much of published history focuses on big events and important people; it ignores the everyday occurrences that form the fabric of our lives. I was recently reminded of that when I had the opportunity to speak with Jack Muehlhan, a realtor who has a long association with the borough of Delaware Water Gap. His stories remind us of a more relaxed society.

Jack was born in 1944 in East Stroudsburg. He remembers regular visits to his uncle's house in the Gap when he was just four or five-years-old. His uncle lived on present-day Rt. 611 in one of the houses on the right after turning toward Stroudsburg from Main St. near the cemetery. To keep five-year-old Jack busy while he took a nap, the uncle often gave him a .22 rifle and told him to go out back and entertain himself shooting at small animals. Jack told me that as a child he once got on a bus to the borough carrying the rifle, with nary a raised eyebrow.

Before 1961, when Rt. 80 opened, Rt. 611 was the main highway between points east and Stroudsburg. Jack remembers traffic jams that ran from the traffic light at Seventh and Ann Streets in Stroudsburg all the way back across Foxtown Hill and into Water Gap. That road was so busy that the hotel chain Howard Johnson's had an option to build a restaurant where the current self-storage facility is.

One of Jack's strongest memories involves the flood of 1955. Jack was eleven years-old that summer. He remembers that by the 19th of August flood waters had backed up from the Delaware River flooding the fields where Dunkin Donuts currently sits and threatening two houses that stood where the current Gulf station is. Jack, his father, and two of his father's friends decided to use a motorboat to get to the houses and move the furniture from the first to the second floor. "I remember it like it was yesterday. We parked on the ramp, put the boat in, and went over to the Bishop's house, where the Gulf gas station now is, and moved the furniture upstairs. And by then the water was coming up to the first floor. The boat was docked at the front porch and, when they were finished, they got the idea that they would go up to the Cherry Valley Inn (where the Sycamore now stands) and have a beer. We went up Broad Street in the boat. And I remember this—in my mind it is a picture as clear as anything—we went around by the stop sign and over the bridge where Cherry Creek was and docked the boat. And they walked up and got their beer. And I had a root beer or a Coke or something. And I remember walking back down and getting into the boat. That picture in my mind stayed with me for years. Now, move the clock ahead . . . into the mid-80s, I was in the real estate business and I sold the Mountain House for the Hausers. After the deal was closed they invited my wife and myself for dinner at their house. They lived next door. And after dinner we were talking about the Gap and Mrs. Hauser got some pictures out [to show us]. And she said, 'here's one I took and I could never figure out who these people were.' And she showed me the picture and I said, 'that's me and my father.'" Jack has the photo now. It shows three men and a boy (Jack) in the motorboat just down Main Street from the Cherry Valley Inn.

Jack has owned several buildings in the Gap over the years. The largest was the Mount Minsi Apartments at the top of Dogwood Drive hill (the former Reenleigh Hotel). By the time Jack bought the building it had been converted into apartments. At one point Jack converted part of the hotel into another apartment. He subsequently got a visit from a council person (whose name shall remain secret in order to protect the innocent) asking him if he had a permit for the new construction. Jack said he did not know he needed one but that he would remedy the oversight immediately. The council person then told Jack that he would get him the permit if Jack would fill an empty seat on the YMCA's Board of Directors.

Another of Jack's stories that suggest things were more relaxed in the borough years ago involves the police chief: "Fred Decker was the chief of police in Delaware Water Gap and, the story goes, Water Gap needed money to balance their budget and so his job was to sit out near the new highway where you come into Delaware Water Gap and sit there and watch people at the stop sign. If they didn't stop, he'd give them a ticket. And I could remember being at Uncle Freddy's bungalow and you could see him. A car would come through the stop sign and he would pull the siren on and pull them over and write up a ticket. He would do that in the summertime and by two or three in the afternoon it was getting pretty hot and it was time for him to have a beer. So he would leave and go to Louise's Hauf Brau House [on Minsi Road] and have his beer. And then around four o'clock he would go back and write a few more tickets."

When the Hauf Brau burned down all the Minsi Apartment residents walked down the hill to watch the fire. Later that year, in November, Jack got a phone call from one of his tenants telling him that the Minsi Apartment building was on fire. Jack rushed to the scene to find the Water Gap Fire Company battling the blaze. All the tenants had taken refuge next door in Thelma Maxwell's house. Thelma did her best to offer comfort to the tenants (including opening a bottle of scotch for them). At one point in the night the fire seemed under control and so Jack drove to Stroudsburg to buy donuts for the firemen. By the time he got back, however, the blaze had flared up again. The building was a total loss.

Jack mentioned to me that Thelma's husband was in the advertising business and that he wrote the jingle for Chequita Bananas. Those of us of a certain age will remember that jingle.

Jack also talked about the lack of a sewage system in the borough until the 1980s when the current system was built. As a real estate agent, a building's sewage system was something he took note of. Many buildings in town, including the Mountain House and the Deer Head Inn, directed their sewage into storm drains that emptied directly into either the Delaware River or Cherry Creek.

One final story from Jack suggests a more relaxed society: Jackie Gleason, the famous comedian and star of the "Honeymooners" TV show, was a well-known and frequent visitor of Shawnee Inn. Jack told me that when the TV star wanted to get away from Shawnee, he often spent time at the Blue Note Inn (on 611 where Mountain Intermodal is now located) drinking and playing pool with the locals. As a boy Jack met Gleason and got his autograph.

Jack's stories remind us that some things have changed in the borough--sometimes for the better and sometimes not.

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THE WATER GAP TIMES

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue Number 47 – Spring 2022

Liberty Water Gap Trail Meeting

Wednesday, April, 20, 2022

Town Hall at 5:30 PM

Special Guest, John Donahue



The Delaware Water Gap Police Department is pleased to offer a new service to our residents: Residents can now request the borough police department check on their property when they are on vacation or away from home for an extended period of time. Request a property-check form by emailing police@DWGPA.gov. When we receive your email we will send you a registration form to participate in the program. Once registered, your information will be distributed to our patrols and they will conduct random checks of your home. Please call the department at 570-476-4676, or email police@DWGPA.gov with any questions.

Borough Office

49 Main Street

PO Box 218

Delaware Water Gap, PA 18327

Phone: 570-476-0331 Fax: 570-476-0380

boro@dwgpa.gov

www.dwgpa.gov

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

After 1:00 p.m., by appointment.

Office Secretary/Treasurer – Allisen Trotter
Municipal Authority Secretary – Lauren Hognlund
Borough Superintendent - Harry Kent Darlington

Delaware Water Gap Police Department

570-476-4674

police@dwgpa.gov

Acting Chief of Police, Michael J. Ceccato

Louis Chirico, Police Officer

State Police – 570-619-6800

Dial 911 for emergencies only

Borough Council

Jamie Levy, President

Zack Booth, Vice President

Derek Anspach

William Buzzard

Lauren Chamberlain

Lisa Paulette

Jack Shoemaker

Larry Freshcorn, Mayor

Council meetings are held on the 1st Monday

of the month at 7:00 p.m.

Council work sessions are held on Tuesday,

the following week, at 7:00 p.m.

Municipal Authority

James Reynolds, Chair

Harry Darlington, Vice Chair

Martin W. Wilson, Secretary

James Holbrook

Steve Simister

Municipal Authority meetings are held the

3rd Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

Planning Commission

Derek Anspach, Chair

Ann Biffen

Valerie Higbee

Gary Schubert

Planning Commission meetings are held on

the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. as

needed.

Zoning Hearing Board

Frank Davis

Carol Penna

Dmitri Snytkine

Harry Kent Darlington, Alternate

Zoning Hearing Board meetings are held as

needed.

Building Code Board of Appeals

James Holbrook

Bob Mancuso

Zoning Officer

Michael Manter

Building Inspector

Dave Manter

Emergency Management Coordinator

Howard Ike

Floodplain Administrator

Walter Conway

Mayor's Corner

Happy Spring fellow residents! We've made it through another winter and without issue thankfully. I'll begin by covering this year's planned events. The Friends of DWG has decided to go forward with all of our events this year, so please check our postings for dates. It looks as if we will be getting a train from Steamtown this year for Founders Day which should bring a lot of foot traffic to town for our local businesses. There is some news from the national level concerning the commuter train from Scranton to NYC. I know we have heard for years that this is coming but there hasn't been much movement until now. In the latest infrastructure bill signed earlier this year by President Biden, 66 billion dollars has been allotted for the project. This should push the project closer to completion soon. A large portion of the funds will be given to Amtrak to update their equipment and stations along the route. I also believe that some new stations will be built as well. I have much more but there is only so much space in the newsletter. In closing I'd like to wish our Police Chief Andy Yakubic good luck on his retirement. Please say a prayer for the people of Ukraine and I hope everyone has a great summer season!

Larry Freshcorn

Founder's Day
Saturday, June 25th
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Arts & Crafts Show
Steamtown Train
History Museum Tours
Fine Art Gallery Exhibit
& more!

Keep your eye out for an upcoming flyer for details

Delaware Water Gap
Presbyterian Church of the Mountain
Free Gazebo Concerts
Sundays, 6:00 to 7:30 PM
June 5th to August 28th

Bring a lawn chair or blanket.
Hot dogs, baked goods & beverages
sold to benefit the concert series.

Rain or shine
(inside in the event of rain)

The Dutot Museum & Fine Art Gallery
Open Saturdays & Sundays, 1:00 to 5:00 PM
May 28th through October 9th

Opening Reception for Artist Penny Ross, Friday, May 27th, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM

Opening Reception for Artists John McNally & Earl Lehman, Friday, June 17th, from 7:00 to 9:00

Break out those bell bottoms and join us for
RETRO "LOVE & PEACE" EXHIBITION

At the Dutot Gallery

Featuring Jack & Jill Swersie along other local artists

Opening Reception Saturday, May 21st, 6:00 to 9:00 PM

Gallery open Saturday, May 21st and Sunday May 22nd, from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM



Council News!!!

Dear Borough Neighbors,

Spring is finally here!!! It looks like we may have turned a corner in our battle with Covid-19. The virus seems to be under control and the risk of infection in our borough is low. It's time to come out of our homes and enjoy our community again. In an effort to return to normalcy, Borough Council has lifted the mask mandate for our municipal building. Face coverings are now optional and no longer required. With continued safety in mind, please be respectful of the office staff, maintain safe distances and refrain from visits to the municipal building if you are feeling sick.

In terms of Council News, your new Borough Council has hit the ground running. We have been very busy working to provide our residents with the best services possible. One of the challenges we are working on is trying to provide effective police services and protection. With the sudden and unexpected resignation of our former Police Chief, council was forced to take quick action to avoid an interruption in police services. Our objective was to appoint a new innovative police chief whose primary goal would be to provide community services using a community policing model. I am now pleased to announce that Borough Council has appointed Michael Ceccato, Acting Chief of Police.

Chief Ceccato, is a firefighter, a medic, has a background in law enforcement and a degree in criminology. Since he took over the position in February, he has enacted policies and services designed to improve our police department. For starters, he issued an order stopping the prior practice of allowing officers to work from home. He also instituted a Home Vacation Police Patrol Check Program. In terms of responsiveness, I have personally informed the Chief that our residents are concerned with people speeding through our borough and illegally parking around the trail. I am confident that he will do his best to address those concerns. To help our new Acting Chief, Borough Council's Personnel Committee and the newly formed Police Advisory Commission have been interviewing potential new officers. If you have any questions and concerns please feel free to reach out to Acting Chief Ceccato at the Police Department 570.994.2445.

In other Council News, council has started a Borough Notary Service. Residents can come to the municipal building, any Friday, without an appointment, between noon and 1pm to get basic notary services FREE OF CHARGE. Also, in furtherance of Borough Councils objective to provide the best services possible to our residents, we have created a Neighborhood Survey. This survey is designed to improve emergency and event related communications. It is also designed to give you, the resident, a voice. Your responses will be used to plan future events, enhance our borough, determine the best way to get you emergency information and guide us in the allocation of your tax dollars.

Neighbors, friends, I am very pleased to report that we live in an amazing community, with incredible people. I am very proud to be to be serving the community I love. I am very fortunate to be doing so with so many great council members. Your Borough Council is dedicated and inspired, and together we will continue to work to make our community even better.

Cheers!!!

Jamie B. Levy
Borough Council President

Town Wide Yard Sale
Saturday, May 14th (rain date May 15th)

Watch for the upcoming flyer for details.