

Local

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Quite an honor

Ceremony held at Visitors Center statue for 'CCC boys'

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A group of about 20 people gathered Friday to honor the veterans of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Family members of four CCC boys attended the 11th annual CCC Statue Dedication Ceremony at the Warren County Visitors Center.

The statue at the visitors center in Starbrick is one of seven in Pennsylvania. It was dedicated in 2007.

On Friday, the ceremony honored local veterans — Donald Come, Orren Wood, Charles Varro, Joe Tullio, John Dennis, Nick Stanko, and Leo Beane.

Philip Gouzie, who recently passed away, was also honored.

Ed Atwood, chairman of the statue committee, said Varro was the driving force behind the statue.

He told Atwood, "You could do the CCC boys a big favor if you could get a statue here."

That set Atwood on the path. "He kept after me until I got it going," he said. "Charles kept everything going. He kicked us around."

Although the ANF was promised the first CCC statue, the one that finally arrived was number 42, Atwood said.

CCC historian Michael Schultz spoke about Varro.

"Charlie was a very good baseball player," Schultz said. "During World War II, he played a lot of baseball in the South Pacific."

He made a connection with Red Sox hall-of-fame second baseman Bobby Doerr, Schultz said. He also met, and played an exhibition against Ted Williams in

which he said he was going to strike the Splendid Splinter out. "He didn't," Schultz said.

There were 14 CCC camps on the Allegheny National Forest alone.

Among their many accomplishments, the boys in the CCC:

- built almost 47,000 bridges;
- developed over 800 state parks;
- built 4,622 fish rearing ponds;
- restored 3,980 historic structures;
- installed about 5,000 miles of water supply line;
- improved 3,462 beaches;
- surveyed and mapped millions of acres and thousands of lakes;
- built 1,865 drinking fountains;
- built 27,191 miles of fence;
- spent a total of over 200,000 man-days fighting coal fires — some possibly thousands of years old;
- built over 3,000 look-out towers; and
- learned to read — "more than 400,000 illiterate enrollees were taught to read and write during their time in the CCC."

Tree planting was a major effort for the CCC in Pennsylvania. In all, the organization planted more than 3 billion trees.

Local CCC veterans are honored with trees and plaques at the visitors center.

The tree honoring Varro is a serviceberry selected by DCNR Cornplanter District Forester Cecile Stelter. "It's the first tree that blooms in the spring," she said. "It's native and long-lasting. It's truly a tribute to him."



Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry

Civilian Conservation Corps historian Michael Schultz talks about CCC veteran Charles Varro during the 11th annual CCC Statue Dedication Ceremony Friday at Warren County Visitors Bureau.

CCC Legacy Board member Martha Smith attended the ceremony and spoke about Philip Gouzie — CCC veteran and a Legacy Board member.

At 16, Gouzie heard his father tell his mother that he had lost his job and the family would be losing their home.

"That young boy decided to join the CCC," she said.

He was not old enough, but local recruiters some-

times looked the other way.

Homesick after months away, he decided to walk the 30 miles to his home in Portland, Maine, when he was given weekend leave, Smith said. A buddy turned back after nine miles, leaving Gouzie on his own. He met a truck driver who stopped and explained to the boy that he could lose his job if he let him ride. But, he also explained that he had to take a short break, and if

someone were to climb on top of the logs on the back of the truck, he wouldn't know about it, and that passenger could get a ride into Portland by holding onto the chains.

Gouzie said he thought

during that ride that he was going to die before he got back to see his 'Mumma,' Smith said.

"Phil was CCC through and through," she said.

Gouzie passed away in July at the age of 95.

**Don't Panic.
Remember the Plan.**

Kenny McGee