



Time for Nature



Like father, like daughter

National park wardens Murray and Melanie Hindle love their jobs

Park warden Melanie Hindle is carrying on a family tradition. She grew up enjoying the outdoors and riding the trails with her father Murray, who has been a warden in Jasper National Park of Canada for some 35 years. Father and daughter agree that a warden's life is hard to beat.



Melanie Hindle is a warden in Manitoba's Riding Mountain National Park
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More than just a job

What's the best part of the job? "Variety," says Melanie promptly. "You don't ever know from one day to the next what you will be doing."

Melanie, who works in Manitoba's Riding Mountain National Park, says she may be called to a motor vehicle accident on Monday and be fighting a forest fire on Tuesday. A stint at the computer may be followed by a wildlife emergency. And it can be "pretty neat to be hands on with a tranquilized bear!"

"It's a lifestyle, not just a job," says her father, Murray.

What makes a good warden?

Both Hindles emphasize that wardens must be adaptable and comfortable in a variety of roles. They need to be able to perform individually or as part of a team, says Murray. "A warden must be able to step up to the plate." They also need a good supply of common sense, which, adds Murray, "is not that common."



Planning ahead: A young Melanie tries on Dad's uniform. © Murray Hindle.

Memorable moments

"One of the nice things in a warden's life," says Murray, is the memories, "lots and lots of memories." Over the years he has climbed Canada's highest mountain (Mount Logan) and helped in several mountain climbing and avalanche rescues.



A scuba-diving instructor, he has dived in parks on the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts. He also trains other wardens in law enforcement techniques, and he helped convict one of the country's most notorious poachers.

As Melanie grew up, family outings in Jasper were big events for the Hindles. Melanie's childhood memories include overnight horseback trips, some up to ten days long, as she accompanied her dad on his rounds. Other wardens would stop by her dad's warden station, which at different times served as a drop-off point for a stranded moose calf and some orphaned ducklings.

So much to learn

Back in 1972 when Murray started his career, he was given three horses and sent into the back country. In those days, each warden had a district to patrol within the park. A standard shift was 24 days on, and 4 days off. Self-sufficiency was the key; this was "an opportunity to learn by yourself."



The Hindles agree that a warden's life is hard to beat.
© Melanie Hindle, 2001.

Though it's still important to be a jack of all trades, today's wardens tend to be more specialized. Some are experts in wildlife biology while others specialize in botany or range management. Murray believes the specialization is a good thing; wardens are increasingly professional. Nowadays there is "too much to learn to be a generalist," he says.

Melanie has learned a lot from her dad but these days, he is learning from her, too. "She has a strong focus and a passion for Parks Canada that rubs off on me," says Murray.

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