

August 10, 2008

PIKE COUNTY, PA - Memories of the infamous floods along the Delaware River in 1955 will be recalled August 16 in a special program featuring author Mary A. Shafer, a Bucks County based writer.

The program, part of the 2008 Lecture Series offered by the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, will be held Saturday, Aug. 16, at 7 p.m. at the Bushkill Visitor Center on Route 209 on the Pike/Monroe county line, just south of the blinking light at Bushkill Falls Road.

Ms. Shafer's book, "Devastation on the Delaware: Stories and Images of the Deadly Flood of 1955," released 50 years after the flood, is the first comprehensive history of the 1955 flood, and includes stories of more than 100 survivors and eyewitnesses of the region's worst natural disaster. Her books will be available for purchase and signing by the author.

August 18-20, 1955 were three terrifying days and nights still remembered with awe in the Delaware River valley. Record-breaking rainfall from hurricanes Connie and Diane abruptly ended a withering drought, but the relief was short-lived. It was soon overshadowed by terror and destruction that tore away bridges and ripped houses from their foundations.

From the river's headwaters in the Catskills and through the Poconos, excessive runoff surged down steep slopes and through valleys on both sides of the river. Tributaries swelled unbelievably, some rising thirty feet in fifteen minutes. Eventually, they all poured into the Delaware, transforming the usually placid waters into a raging, uncontrollable beast.

Mountain resorts were inundated, leaving cars upended in swimming pools. Entire summer camps were washed away. More than 400 children were evacuated by helicopter from island camps in a tense, unprecedented operation. In the end, nearly a hundred people were dead and hundreds more homeless. Dozens were missing, some ripped--still sleeping--from their beds in the middle of the night. Victims' bodies were still being recovered thirty years later--some were never found.

Devastation on the Delaware follows the true stories of survivors and eyewitnesses to bring these events to chilling life. More than 100 historical photos and a dozen maps illustrate this narrative nonfiction account of a tragic event that changed life in the Delaware Valley forever.

With a lifelong fascination with weather, Shafer serves as volunteer Weather Coordinator for her hometown Emergency Management Agency, and is the founder of the Amateur Weather Enthusiasts of America (AWE-USA), an organization of non-meteorologist weather hobbyists.

This free program is the third evening presentation in the 2008 Lecture Series arranged by the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and sponsored by the Friends of the Delaware Water Gap NRA, a non-profit park conservancy. The series continues through October in the evenings and ends with a Fall Family Fun Day Nov. 15.

The next lecture, "Tales and Trails: New Jersey's Past" will be held Saturday, September 20, at 7 p.m. at the church in Millbrook Village NJ, on Old Mine Road at Route 602. Author Henry Skirbst will talk about the Garden State's history based on his research for numerous books.

The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area covers nearly 70,000 acres in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, stretching along 40 miles of the Delaware River from Milford, PA, and Montague, NJ, to south of the Delaware Water Gap. Information about the park and all of its programs can be found at www.nps.gov/dewa.

Information about the Friends is available at www.friendsofdewa.org.