

from Loving the Ranger Life

by Meg Chorlian

1 The variety of sites in our national park system offers a range of experiences . . . as well as possible professions. Park rangers can be found at every site. Their mission? To make visits to the park fun and to show visitors the importance of being good stewards. Park rangers are teachers, nature guides, historians, archaeologists, law enforcers, cooks, pilots, snowplow drivers, and more! Whatever their job, rangers have a passion for protecting natural and historic resources, just like Tom Medema, Linda Jeschke, and Damon Panek—the three people in this interview!

Why did you become a park ranger?

2 TOM MEDEMA: My dad always talked about being a park ranger. We toured many national parks when I was a kid, and I attended ranger programs and thought that job would be very cool. I love working outdoors, and I love teaching people about nature and protecting our resources.

3 LINDA JESCHKE: Growing up, my family visited a lot of state parks. We always camped out and went swimming and fishing. I like helping people get excited about a new thing they learned about the outdoor world.

4 DAMON PANEK: It has always been my dream to have a job where I can spend a lot of time outdoors. I love to paddle, go camping, learn about . . . people, share stories with others, and laugh. Being a park ranger lets me do all of that.

What does your job entail and what aspects do you most enjoy?

5 TOM MEDEMA: I help people plan their trip to the park, take them on guided walks, create exhibits and films for them, and organize education programs for schools. One of my favorite parts of the job is taking people on snowshoe hikes in the mountains. We strap on the snowshoes and walk into the snowy wonderland to talk about the survival of trees, animals, and humans in winter.

6 LINDA JESCHKE: I travel by small planes to remote . . . villages to teach Inupiaq Eskimo children in their schools. Their teachers ask me to come do activities on subjects like math, history, science, and social studies. I show how the parks relate to each of those subjects. I emphasize how lucky the kids are to have 11.8 million acres of parklands all around them and that they could be park rangers someday, too.

7 DAMON PANEK: One thing that I really love about what I do is that every day is different. I might talk to kids about the park's natural and cultural resources in a classroom, walking

on a long sandy beach, or paddling in a kayak. Apostle Islands is considered sacred to native people, so it makes me feel good that I can help protect it and help people understand why this place is important. I'm also a member of the park's All Risk Team, which includes being an emergency medical technician, a wildland firefighter, as well as being trained in search and rescue operations. Each day can bring a new adventure.

From "The Past is Present: Loving the Ranger Life" by Meg Chorlian, Cobblestone Magazine, September 2009. Cricket Media, Inc. Used by permission.

Read the excerpt from “Loving the Ranger Life.”

Think about the different ways that rangers teach people about nature. Write a multi-paragraph opinion essay that supports whether people learn more about nature in the classroom or by spending time outdoors.

Use details from the passage to support your opinion essay.

Remember to —

- clearly state your opinion
- organize your writing
- develop your ideas in detail
- use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar

Use the space provided to write your opinion essay.