Spotlight: Richard Anderson, Facilities Manager
With Director Lenny Matczynski & Summer Workshop Administrator Amelia Perron
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Amelia: Richard, what is your procedure for building a new cabin?

Lenny: No, you have to ask something more provocative so he’ll give an interesting answer. Something like: Richard, you don’t seem to have a procedure for building cabins. But you must have a procedure; what is it?

Richard: I don’t have a procedure! I call it the chaos theory of building cabins.

[Interview descends briefly into chaos.]

Amelia: So Richard, what is your chaos theory of building cabins?

Richard: Well, first you have to find the neediest cabin. If it’s got exposed foam insulation, like Cabins Franck and Ives had, that has to go because it’s inflammable. Or if they have a lot of mice. So then the cabins have to be demolished and replaced. Oof, Cabin Ives was disgusting – loads of mouse nests in the roof.

A: So once you’ve destroyed the homes of innocent mice, what next?

R: We design a new cabin with no enclosed spaces that mice can build nests in and no gaps for insects to get in. Then John Bolles comes and builds a foundation. However, if we had a tractor, we could do this ourselves. Finally, in spring, we just build a cabin on the foundation, with lots of people to help.

L: Richard, talk about your values as a builder!

R: I like to do a good job: efficient, beautiful, and inexpensive.

L: What’s it like to work with your summer employees? Didn’t we see a picture of the whole camp helping to build a cabin? It was like a barn-raising! That never happens anymore.

R: Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. It is kind of fun to boss college students around. Yes, the participants helped build Cabin Chao. It’s always handy to have 60 pairs of willing hands to help out when there’s lots of work to be done. That usually comes with at least 60 opinions on how to do it!

L: It’s been rumored that you are a volatile and no-holds-barred soccer player. How does this gel with the Playing for Peace mission?

R: I don’t know who’s saying this!
L: I said it was just a rumor!
R: I totally deny that. I’m a gentle and sensitive soccer player.
L: But I’ve heard of people getting injured when they played soccer with you.
R: It’s usually me! Especially when Josh is playing. Actually, he only broke my finger once.
L: You always listen to classical music when you work. I usually know every piece that’s playing on the radio, but one time I didn’t know what it was. I asked you and you knew – it was a Fauré piano trio. How did you know?
R: It was a good guess.
L: But how did you guess? Did you grow up with music?
R: Well, yes. My father listened to a lot of classical music, and he played the piano. He was Viennese, so we listened to lots of Mahler, Strauss, and Bruckner.
A: Richard, what’s the summer here like for you?
R: The nice thing about working at Apple Hill is that it’s never the same. It’s a very seasonal job. There’s the fall to finish up projects, in the winter I kind of just shovel snow and do inside projects, and there’s the spring to plan projects. Then there are two chaotic months because the start of camp is the deadline for finishing new cabins. So when the summer is here, it’s relatively less stressful. I just have to take care of maintenance and mouse problems.
A: What’s your greatest hope for the future of the Apple Hill campus?
L: Besides the tractor, because I know that’s what you’re going to say.
R: I look forward to the day when Apple Hill has programs year round. That will give more people the opportunity to have an experience at Apple Hill and will also provide a more stable financial base. After all, we have a fabulous location and facilities that we have to maintain year-round. But to expand these programs we will have to make an investment in some new facilities, such as improvements to the kitchen and heated sleeping quarters. We are already working on plans for some of these improvements.
And a tractor.
L: I have one final question. I don’t know how it happened, but we all eat lunch together. Describe our lunches in one word. [Amelia’s note: This interview was conducted during lunch, over Val’s French Silk Chocolate Pie.]
R: Amusing.