



The Chairman's Corner

by

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Dean Knox

7/15/21

On April 18, Columbia County lost one of its most dedicated and longtime employees, Dean Knox, to complications of COVID-19. At the time of his death, Dean was serving in the position of Director of Engineering with the county's Department of Public Works.

A resident of Ghent, he and his wife, Rose, were married for 40 years. Dean was dad to Ashley and grandfather to Bodie.

Dean was born July 5, 1958, in Great Barrington, and would go on to graduate high school in the Taconic Hills Class of 1976. Following high school, he attended SUNY Morrisville Ag and Tech, graduating in 1978 with a degree in National Resources Conservation.

Rose and Dean met while both were attending Morrisville – they would be married on October 18, 1980 on Long Island, where Rose grew up.

Dean began his career with Columbia County on June 6, 1978, as a summer laborer, which then paid \$3.47 an hour. He would go on to hold the positions of Skilled Laborer 1, Skilled Laborer 2, Junior Engineer, Assistant Director of Special Projects, Assistant Civil Engineer, and, finally, from 2003 on as Director of Engineering.

“Pretty much everything he learned, he learned while working for the county,” Rose Knox said recently. “When he was promoted to the job of Director of Engineering, he grew into it. Dean loved his job with the county – no one enjoyed getting up and going to work more than he did. He never complained about going to work.”

Longtime colleague at the DPW, Barbara Otty, recalled that “the first few years we worked together outside, we had to go out no matter what the weather. His mustache always froze solid in the winter. He changed that rule when he became boss!”

“Dean was one of the nicest bosses I’ve ever had. I don’t know how he did all the work he did. I don’t recall him getting mad at anything. He saw the upside in every situation,” Otty said.

Rose said her husband loved flower gardening, aiming more toward perennials, and traveling, in particular to Cape Cod and Maine. The Marginal Way in Ogunquit, Maine, was a favored spot. Dean also was very much into photography and was known as a big fan of the Yankees, ValleyCats, NY Rangers, and NY Giants. Above all, he enjoyed being with family and close friends.

“Dean loved to joke around. We used to tease him when we went to the Fair that he had to stop to talk with everyone,” Rose said. “He was a simple man who was very smart. He loved learning and knew something about everything.”

Dean and Rose had planned to head south for a couple months every year, although they hadn't settled on a location yet. They had hoped to go on a trip to do some scouting around this March.

Dean's family welcomes donations to establish a bench in Dean's honor on the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, of which he was a big supporter. To contribute, visit <https://www.gofundme.com> and search for Dean Knox.

Dean was a pleasure to know and a privilege to work with – he made major contributions to Columbia County and its residents. His death was a great loss to the community.