

# Dennis A. Long

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Isle Royale National Park  
Michigan



Dennis Long was no stranger to the power of Lake Superior. He had lived the last several years of his life along her shores and was now attending college at Northern Michigan University in Marquette. As he rounded out his second year of studies, he geared up for his third summer as a member of the Isle Royale National Park trail crew. But this summer would be different for Dennis, at the end of this summer, he wouldn't be returning home.

August 6th, 1969 was a day not unlike others at Isle Royale. A strong storm had recently pushed warm water from Lake Superior's surface into Isle Royale's harbors – perfect conditions for swimming. Denny, as he was known to his friends, traveled to Rock Harbor that evening, gathered some companions and went on an evening stroll to Scoville Point. Among his friends that night was Carolyn, a young woman working for the Rock Harbor Lodge.

While walking, the group came upon a small cove which was turbulent with waves. They decided to body surf the waves, riding their warm crests back into shore. Soon, Carolyn became overwhelmed. It was clear she could not catch her breath as she struggled to stay above the surging water.

Seeing that his friend was in trouble, Dennis swam out. As he approached, he wrapped his arm around her neck in a classic rescue position. He tried to pull her back to shore, but Carolyn's head went underwater and she began to panic. At that moment, Dennis knew that he needed to get his friend swimming on her own. So in a desperate attempt, he grabbed her legs, pushing them to show that she could indeed swim. Carolyn was able to gather her wits and swim shoreward for what seemed like an eternity. Upon arrival, she looked back for her friend, but he was nowhere to be seen. A cold and powerful Lake Superior current had pulled Dennis out into deep water, claiming his life.

The search for Dennis began immediately, but it wasn't until days later that park officials found his body. Lake Superior once again claimed the life of a man far too young, someone whose heroic act kept the lake from taking two lives that fateful August day.

Posthumously, Dennis Long was recognized for his sacrifice by being awarded the Carnegie Medal for heroism and the Department of Interior Citation for Valor. In 2009, construction began on a recreation hall which was built for staff of the Rock Harbor Lodge. An opportunity arose to not only honor Dennis and his courageous act, but to once again connect the National Park Service and the Rock Harbor Lodge through recreation and a place to gather. The hall was built with funds provided by National Park Concessions, Inc. and constructed by National Park Service employees.

On August 12th, 2011, we dedicate the employee recreation hall to the memory of Dennis A. Long, a National Park employee who made the ultimate sacrifice to save the life of another.



# A Place to Come Together

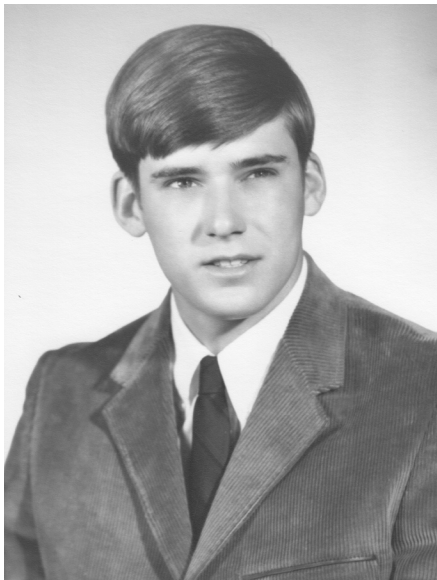
## The Dennis Long Memorial Recreation Hall

Part of what makes Isle Royale so special can also make it a very hard place to work: the remoteness of the outpost. Most employees come to the park seeking solitude, but some soon find it to be a bit too remote. Fortunately many island residents find solace in the fellowship of National Park Service (NPS) and concession employees alike.

Using funds contributed by National Park Concessions, Inc. and built by the hands of NPS employees, the new Dennis A. Long Memorial Recreation Hall embodies the friendship that existed between Dennis Long and his friend Carolyn over 40 years ago.

It is the hope of all that this new facility will continue to help bring together all of the residents of Isle Royale. No day on this island is complete without the tireless devotion of both NPS and Forever Resorts employees working together to ensure safe, seamless operations.

## A National Park Employee Remembered



Born January 29, 1949 to Virginia and Stanley Long, brother to David Long, Dennis was known as a quiet and courteous young man with a pleasant disposition. During the summer of 1969, Dennis began his third season at Isle Royale National Park as a member of the trail crew. He died saving the life of his friend, Carolyn, on August 6, 1969.

Dennis Long made the ultimate sacrifice of his own life to save that of another. His valiant act of heroism will never be forgotten, and Dennis Long's name shall grace the recreation hall as a memorial to his sacrifice, heroism, courage and unfaltering service.

