

“No Goldbricking Here”

**Oral Histories of the CCC in the
Columbia National Forest, 1933-1942**



Heritage Program
Gifford Pinchot National Forest
and
History Department
Portland State University



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Columbia National Forest, 1933-1942**

edited by

Donna Sinclair and Richard McClure

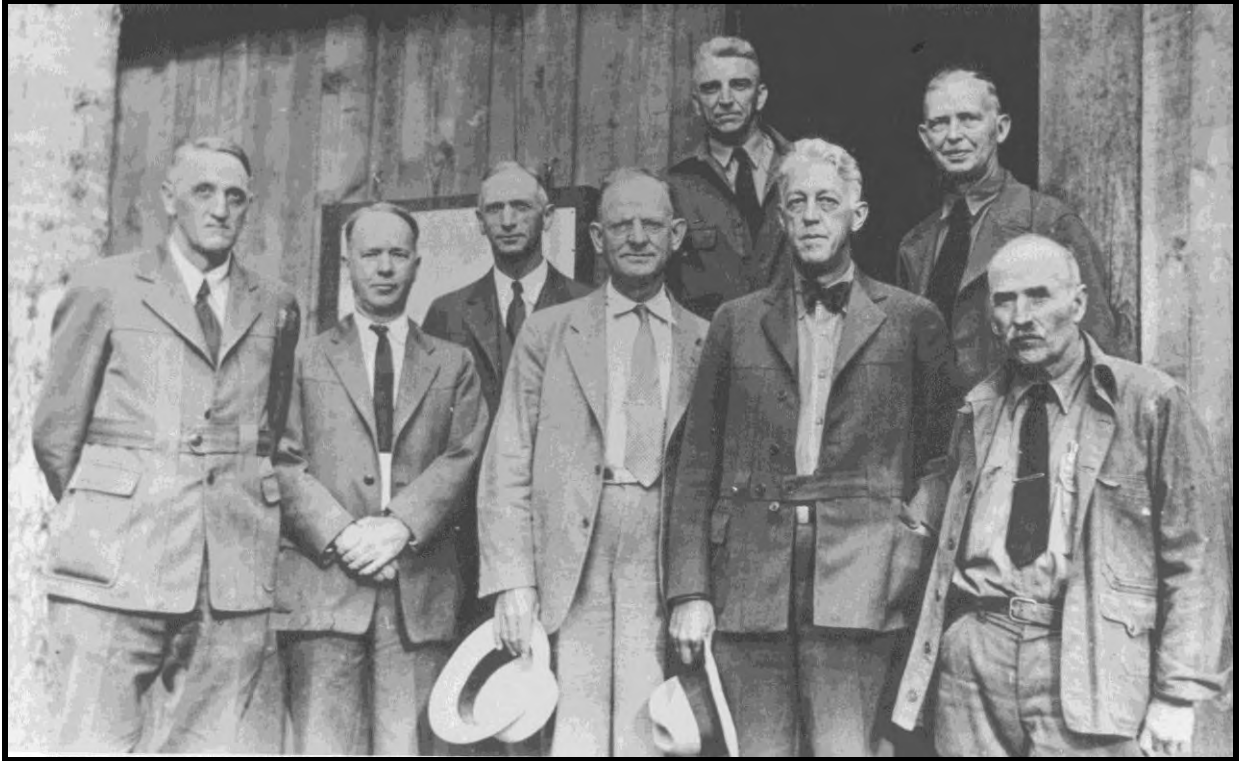
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Table of Contents

				Pages
Introduction				1-7
Narrator	<i>Company</i>	<i>CCC Camp</i>	<i>Service Period</i>	
Phil Amoruso	944	Hemlock	1935-1938	8-25
Carroll Aust	2907	Vancouver Barracks	1937-1938	27-43
Wesley Betts	945	Twin Buttes	1937-1938	44-61
Philip Brumbaugh	602	Twin Buttes	1933-1934	62-69
Kenneth Good	604	Peterson Prairie	1933-1934	70-79
Paul Grooms	5481	Sunset	1936-1939	80-93
Lynn Hazen	944	Hemlock	1937-1938	94-109
Fred Hemenway	2919	Lower Cispus	1939-1941	110-127
Jack Leonard	944	Hemlock	1937-1939	128-149
Ben Marshall	945	Lower Cispus	1935-1936	150-161
Charlie McMahan	933	Lower Cispus	1938-1940	162-175
Pete Paladeni	944	Hemlock	1934-1937	176-203
Jack Pollari	944	Hemlock	1938-1941	204-217
Frank Pratt	933	Lower Cispus	1933-1934	218-233
Kenneth Ray	1456	Hemlock	1941-1942	234-251
Charles Sethe	2919	Lower Cispus	1934-1936	252-265
Cliff Smedley	2919	Lower Cispus	1934-1936	266-279
Pat Sutherland	944	Hemlock	1939-1940	280-307
Index				308 -312



Upper photo: CCC Director Robert Fechner visits CCC Camp Lower Cispus, 1933. The group includes, from left to right: C.J. Buck (District Forester); T.T. Munger; Chester Morse; Robert Fechner; John Bruckart (Supervisor, Columbia National Forest), Ferdinand Silcox (Chief, USDA Forest Service); Jim Frankland; John Kirkpatrick (Ranger, Randle Ranger District). From the archives of Gifford Pinchot National Forest, photographer unknown.

Lower photo: Company 944, Camp Hemlock (F-40), June 1939 (Photo Art Commercial Studios, Portland, Oregon, Photo No. 573178, original from the archives of Gifford Pinchot National Forest).



Introduction

The oral histories collected in this volume are those of young men grown older who once worked for a short-lived, but powerful organization, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC began seventy years ago as the Emergency Conservation Work Program (ECW), among the first of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's many national relief measures.¹ The CCC, initiated while the Dustbowl raged in the Midwest and during the height of the Great Depression, had a two-fold goal -- to "build men and forests." The organization would simultaneously address the nation's conservation needs, put the country's youth to work, assist poverty-stricken families, and stimulate local economies. In addition, it would instill morality, and provide a sense of purpose and national identity to enrollees. On March 21, 1933, President Roosevelt sent a message to Congress:

I propose to create a Civilian Conservation Corps to be used in simple work, not interfering with normal employment, and confining itself to forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control, and similar projects.

More important, however, than the material gains, will be the moral and spiritual value of such work. The overwhelming majority of unemployed Americans, who are now walking the streets and receiving private or public relief would infinitely prefer to work. We can take a vast army of these unemployed out into healthful surroundings. We can eliminate to some extent at least the threat that enforced idleness brings to spiritual and moral stability. It is not a panacea for all the unemployment, but it is an essential step in this emergency...²

Roosevelt received congressional approval on March 31 for 250,000 CCC members, and by April 7, 1933, the first enrollee signed up. Robert Fechner, a prominent labor leader, was appointed as Director of the program. The young men who would serve in the CCC came from poor families, and were between the ages of 18 and 25. They worked five days a week, lived most of the time in 200-man camps, and received \$5.00 per month for spending money. The government sent the remaining \$25.00 of their monthly pay home to their families by allotment. The CCC lasted for nine years, from 1933 until the beginning of World War II in 1942. Although brief, this was a formative era, both for the nation and for a generation that is rapidly disappearing. Since the inception of the CCC, the world has changed immensely. Many of the men who were interviewed about their experiences in the CCC during the 1930s are the same people who battled in Europe and the Pacific during the early 1940s, and returned to a nation transformed by economic prosperity. They are the same individuals who witnessed other major 20th century events, Korea, Vietnam, and the cultural, sexual, and technological revolutions of the past forty years. Their recollections of the CCC experience reflect a very different time and place, an era when poverty and hard work were the norm, and for many, a time of significant personal development.

The men interviewed for this volume worked for the CCC in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, then known as the Columbia National Forest. CCC administration engaged various public agencies. The Department of Labor coordinated enrollees, and the Departments of Agriculture and Interior provided work projects and personnel to manage the workers. The US

¹ In addition to the CCC, Roosevelt also created the AAA (Agricultural Adjustment Administration), the PWA (Public Works Administration), and the NRA (National Recovery Administration) during his first 100 days in office. Other relief and recovery measures, such as the WPA (Works Progress Administration) later became part of Roosevelt's New Deal.

² Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as quoted in Cohen (1980:6).

Army, the only agency with the mobilizing power to organize such large numbers, ran the camps.³ In addition, the managing agencies -- the USDA Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the newly-created Soil Conservation Service -- employed skilled craftsmen, called Local Experienced Men (LEM) to work with the CCC --~~boys~~." Throughout the month of April 1933, Congress authorized enrollment of various groups for Emergency Conservation Work, including Native Americans on reservations, WWI veterans in their own camps, and even some women's camps. African Americans, too, joined the CCC, nearly 200,000 during the nine-year life of the organization. In 1933 and 1934, the CCC brought African Americans to the North and Northwest as part of two integrated companies from Fort Sheridan, Illinois; however, after 1934 the Army located segregated camps elsewhere. On April 22, 1933, Congress authorized enrollment of 24,000 LEM, and induction began at Vancouver Barracks, one of two regional induction centers.⁴

As soon as Congress created the CCC, Brigadier General Stanley Ford, commander at Vancouver Barracks, went to work organizing the district headquarters. The Ninth Corps area organized three sub-districts, each with its own reserve commander and housed more than thirty companies and twelve million acres of forest land. The Vancouver District CCC embraced a 44,100 square mile area in the states of Oregon and Washington.⁵ During the initial organization, the chairman of Oregon's State Relief Committee announced that the state's CCC quota would be 2,000 men. Washington State would recruit 2,500. To make room for the incoming recruits, military troops in Vancouver evacuated their barracks and the army set up tents to take care of the overflow. By the end of April, hundreds of young men had arrived at Vancouver Barracks where they were immediately fed, bathed and examined. After passing the physical examination, the army issued clothing from re-conditioned World War I Quartermaster supplies. Recognizing that many of the young men were indigent, the army also authorized credit at the PX to purchase tobacco and toiletry items.⁶ Processing continued on a daily basis with hundreds of enrollees arriving. On May 5, 1933, 800 applicants enrolled. On May 16, 1933, Local Experienced Men became eligible for enrollment in Vancouver. By June 3, 1933, over 4,000 men had joined the CCC in Vancouver, including 535 LEM. These first CCC enrollees spent the summer rapidly constructing their camps in the forests of the Northwest. During the following years, the number of camps waxed and waned as district boundaries changed, with as many as fifty-five camps in the Ninth Corps area at one point in 1935.⁷

The first CCC camp established in the state of Washington was Camp Hemlock, about ten miles north of the Columbia River on the Columbia National Forest in Skamania County. Erected in May 1933, Camp Hemlock was the base of operations for a 200-man CCC company until 1942. When the CCC disbanded as World War II began, the camp became property of the Selective Service Commission and housed a small contingent of Conscientious Objectors. After the war, the Forest Service acquired title to the camp buildings, and began a disposal process that would last for several years. By the 1950s, when the site was developed for a new ranger station and expansion of the Wind River Tree Nursery, scarcely a trace of Camp Hemlock remained -- at least on the surface. By 2000, documentary research had uncovered the complete records of CCC Camp Hemlock at the National Archives and Records Administration

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Official Annual* (1938:28); Cohen (1980:8); Unfortunately, the African American CCC experience in the Northwest has not been well documented. At least 450 African American CCC enrollees came to the Northwest from Chicago in 1933, some serving in companies assigned to the Columbia National Forest. Extended efforts to locate former African American enrollees, both in the Northwest and in Chicago, have not been successful.

⁵ *Official Annual* (1938:15-16, 25).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 26; *Vancouver Columbian* (1933a, 1933b)

⁷ *Official Annual* (1938:27, 30).

College Park, Maryland facility (Archives II), and an archaeological dig had uncovered many artifacts at the original site of the camp.⁸

What the research and archaeology had not uncovered was what it meant both individually and as part of a broader community, to be a part of the CCC. That is where oral history entered the picture. Oral history relies on taped interviews to create a different kind of historical documentation. Oral history is more than a recounting of past events, or finding out about the history from experts. The oral history method relies on a collaborative process between an interviewer and a narrator, through research and good interview techniques, to help individuals recall specific experience and perception. In addition to gaining information about places and processes, through oral history, we are able to develop a more complex and deeper understanding of what historical events mean to real people. The Voices from the Forest Oral History Project -- part of the USDA Forest Service's Heritage Program and the culminating ~~ap~~ "apstone" course in the core curriculum of Portland State University students -- stemmed from a desire to understand more about the institutional history of the CCC and the Forest Service, and its meaning for those involved.

For the past three years, PSU students collected oral histories focused on the experiences and daily lives of those who worked in the Columbia National Forest before, during, and after World War II. Senior level university students have conducted and transcribed more than thirty interviews to add to existing interviews previously collected by Forest Service employees and volunteers.⁹ The PSU Voices from the Forest Oral History Project was accomplished under the guidance of Portland State University Instructor and oral historian, Donna Sinclair, in partnership with the Gifford Pinchot National Forest's Heritage Manager, Rick McClure. As the project began in the winter of 2000, the issue of mortality among former Forest Service employees quickly became imperative, and we determined to focus on pre-World War II Forest Service employees and Civilian Conservation Corps members. In 2001 we interviewed those who worked on the Columbia National Forest during the 1920s and 1930s. The following year in spring of 2002, we focused on those associated with the CCC.¹⁰ This volume of oral histories is the result. While the oral history project provided specific information, such as site location and confirmation regarding archaeological findings, most valuable were the less tangible pieces of historical understanding that came out of the project. Through its focus on work and daily life, student interviewers recorded a great deal of information about how CCC enrollees viewed their experience, the work they accomplished, skills they learned, the impact of the military in administration, and relationships with other enrollees, supervisory staff, and the local community.

Former CCC enrollees and supervisors helped us to understand relationships between places, organizations and individuals. We learned where, when, and how the CCC operated in the Columbia National Forest. In addition to the main 200-man camps at Camp Hemlock and Lower Cispus, smaller side camps were seasonally located and removed in different areas of the forest, depending on work in progress. Narrators in the project talked about snag clearing and road building near Camp Sunset on the East Fork of the Lewis River, an area devastated by the massive Yacolt Burn of 1902. They discussed work performed at Rock Creek near the Columbia River, at Lookout Mountain, Twin Buttes, Willard, Smoky Creek, and other locations throughout the National Forest. Those from the north end of the Forest discussed their work experiences and daily lives at Camp Lower Cispus in the former Randle Ranger District, and at

⁸ McClure (2003).

⁹ The Gifford Pinchot National Forest Heritage Program now holds 87 tape-recorded interviews, a large portion collected by Judy Caughlan in 1981 and 1982.

¹⁰ During the winter of 2000 three narrators who worked on the Columbia National Forest during the 1920s were interviewed: Fred Good, Ken Good, and Russell Niblock. They were all Forest Service employees, and except for Ken Good, who served briefly in the CCC, their interviews are not included in this volume. The remaining interviews conducted during the winter of 2002, were with individuals who worked on the Columbia during the 1930s.

the Sheep Creek and Spirit Lake side camps. Other small camps previously located on or adjacent to the Columbia National Forest included Bear Prairie, Mineral, Peterson, Speilei, and Washougal.

Work varied in the CCC as enrollees spent their days either out in the forest on work crews, or engaged in camp upkeep, such as kitchen duty or woodcutting. Some enrollees worked on both large and small construction projects, ranging from building a concrete dam at Trout Creek or learning carpentry from LEM as they constructed the Hodgson-Lindberg Training Center. The CCC boys in the Northwest, directed by LEM, became known for their high quality, distinctive buildings marked by intricate rockwork, and fine carpentry. Timberline Lodge, constructed by the CCC and WPA on Mount Hood is a fine example of the craftsmanship and skill of the CCC. A typical day for a CCC boy would be to awake to the sound of reveille. After morning cleanup, he would eat breakfast, attend a flag raising and head to his work assignment. Although the larger projects such as dam building and Timberline are not represented in this volume of interviews, former CCC enrollees discussed a wide variety of work experience centered around fire prevention, replanting forests, and creating future recreational sites. Fire protection efforts included road building to make fire prone areas more accessible, staffing and building fire lookouts, felling snags, and stringing telephone lines throughout the forest for communication purposes. This was the main body of work accomplished by the CCC in the forests of the Pacific Northwest. According to the army, —~~It~~ was not a case of a few miles of roads or telephone line or a handful of fire lookouts. The tree troopers...built telephone line enough to stretch from Vancouver Barracks to Chicago; enough forest roads to have extended from Vancouver to San Francisco and return.” By 1938, they had built forty-five lookout towers and ninety-three lookout houses.¹¹ Other CCC jobs represented in this volume included truck driving, working in a sign shop, rock crushing, and blasting.

While the documentary record provides detailed work records for at least one Washington State camp, Hemlock,¹² these interviews provide a sense of what it was like -- pleasurable, difficult, and at times dangerous -- with vivid descriptions of how things were done. In addition, a flavor of the times emanates from the language of the narrators as they refer to and explain terms like —~~smoker~~,” the —~~andy~~ wagon,” and —~~pme~~ picking.” Narrators aptly described the impact of the military on their CCC experience. As one interviewee, Paul Grooms, put it: —The army fed you, clothed you, housed you, gave you medical attention, dental attention. Whatever your needs were, the army provided.”¹³ Food was an important part of the CCC experience. The government saw to it that CCC boys ate three hearty meals daily, and through these interviews, Hemlock’s cook, Dutch Halle, became a revered and iconoclastic figure. We also learned about another legendary figure, General George C. Marshall, later Secretary of State and author of the Marshall plan, who served as the commander of the CCC at Vancouver Barracks between 1936 and 1938.

Narrators in this project also described what life was like outside of work. CCC boys took their work seriously, but thoughts of romance and entertainment were rarely far from the minds of most Tree Troopers. Many young men met their future spouses in local communities near their camps, and so settled in the Northwest. Others came regularly to Vancouver Barracks where they could visit nearby Portland or cut loose in a Vancouver pool hall or movie theater. The army held weekly boxing matches at Vancouver’s Victory Theatre, with large crowds of civilians, enrollees, and soldiers in attendance. Basketball and boxing were similarly organized.¹⁴ Relationships with people in nearby communities became clear as some former CCC boys recalled attending weekly dances at places like North Bonneville, Stevenson, and

¹¹ *Official Annual* (1938:22-23).

¹² The National Archives College Park in Maryland has retained the records for only one camp per state.

¹³ Paul Grooms interview with Ari Binder, (May 1, 2002), tape 1, side 1.

¹⁴ *Official Annual* (1938:45).

Carson. Many of the local boys remembered hitchhiking home for the weekend, and the sense of pride they took in contributing to family well-being by sending money home.

Former enrollees recalled the CCC as a time when they were given a chance to succeed, through learning occupational skills, receiving educational opportunities, and figuring out how to get along with others. Through this project we were able to understand aspects of the CCC experience that aren't evident in the documentary record. We found that the tenor of the CCC changed over time, shifting from its national relief focus in the early 30s to a work opportunity for young men from a natural resource based economy. We learned that during the early years of the CCC, enrollees could only sign up for one sixth-month stint, while later they could re-enroll for up to two consecutive years. We found that some could hardly wait until they were eighteen years old to join the CCC, and so lied to join the organization. Others were older, having struggled to find employment or serving elsewhere before coming to the Northwest. Many recalled an increasing connection between the military and the CCC. Some claimed it provided good supervisory experience for military officers, and almost all recognized the impact that CCC discipline had on their own military preparedness and in their later lives. —“You could see military all over the CCCs,” claimed Don Fechtner, a former Forest Service employee who worked with the CCCs.¹⁵ The military influence in the CCC assumed new significance as many thousands of CCC enrollees moved seamlessly into military service. Many of the enrollees had positive recollections regarding the connection between the military and the CCC. The military lifestyle of the camps is credited for giving them a better sense of discipline, the ability to handle orders, and the interpersonal skills necessary to work productively in a group setting. Armed service was not the only place these traits would come in handy. One narrator, Pete Paladeni, noted that enrollees relied on CCC lessons later in life: —“No matter who we worked for we learned we were going to have to take orders. Some people don't always like to take orders, and we learned that we had to get along with people and how to work, and we learned quite a bit that we didn't learn on the farm.”¹⁶ Many credited these lessons to the combination of discipline provided by the military lifestyle, and the mentoring provided by LEM. CCC enrollees credited these older men with teaching them not only about work, but also about life.

As the Voices from the Forest Oral History Project has progressed, there have been many unexpected outcomes. Students formed relationships with one another and with their narrators, some of them long-lasting. They learned about history, not only of the CCC, but also the Great Depression, World War II and the role of the individual in particular historical circumstances. Many were introduced to public lands policy, the Forest Service, and the Gifford Pinchot National Forest for the first time. Others came away with a more complex understanding of national forest management and about the significance of the individual in history. These students, whose courses of study ranged across the academic spectrum, learned to value the past. Many likened their own experiences to those of the CCC boys and the LEM. They credited them not only with teaching them about history, but also about a different way of being in the world.

To the students in this project who took this project so seriously, the narrators who shared their stories so freely, and to AmeriCorps volunteer Imogene Marshall who worked diligently to assist with transcribing, editing and indexing this volume of oral histories, you have our gratitude.

Donna Sinclair and Rick McClure
June 2003

¹⁵ Don Fechtner interview with Arend Hall, (May 8, 2002), tape 2, side 1.

¹⁶ Pete Paladeni interview with Cindy Toman, (May 2, 2002), tape 2, side 1.

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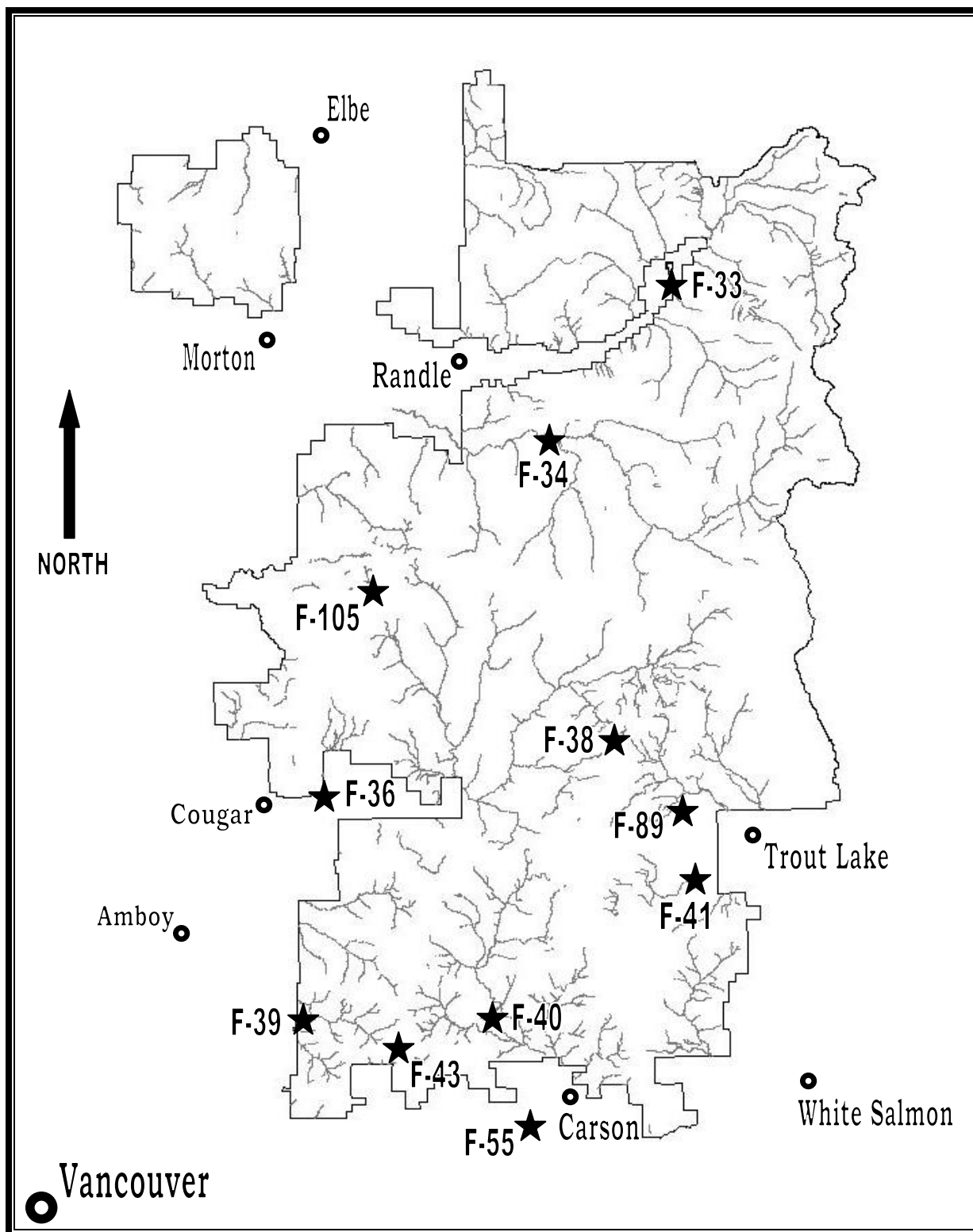
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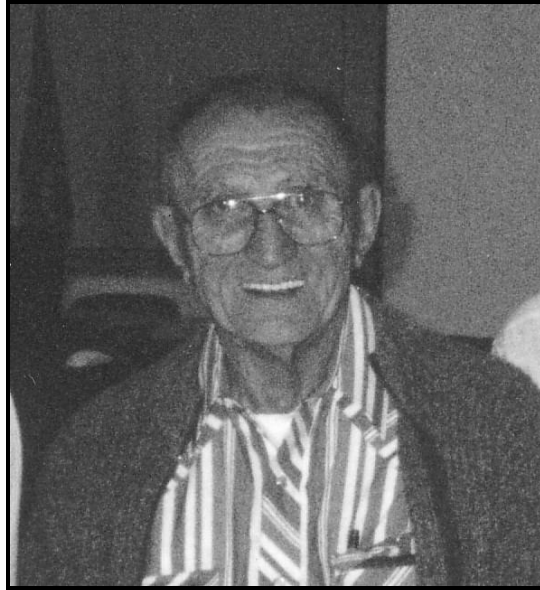
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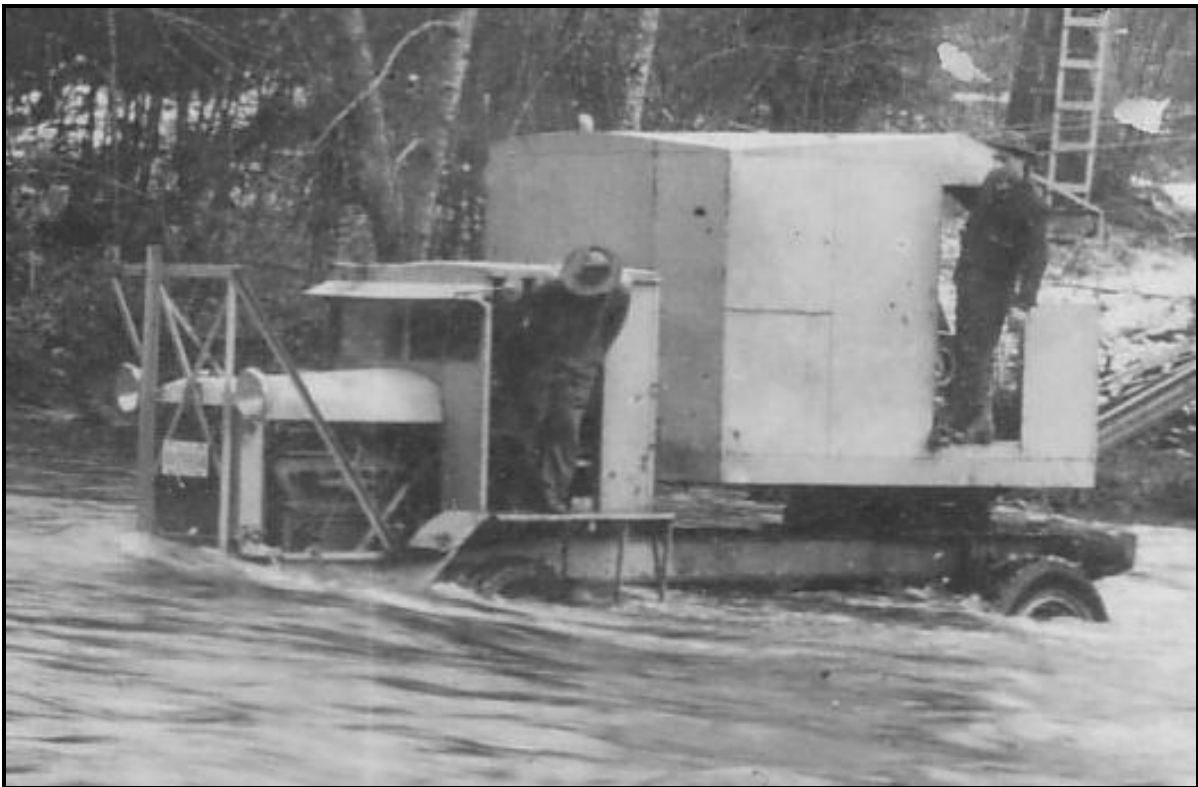
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CCC Camp locations within and adjacent to Gifford Pinchot National Forest. F-33 = Packwood; F-34 = Lower Cispus; F-36 = Lewis River; F-38 = Twin Buttes; F-39 = Sunset; F-40 = Hemlock; F-41 = Peterson; F-43 = Lookout Mtn.; F-55 = Rock Creek; F-89 = Smoky Creek; F-105 = Spirit Lake. GIS base map shows principal rivers and streams within National Forest boundaries.



Phil Amoruso, above, in May 2003, and below, driving Coleman truck-mounted crane across the Cispus River for bridge construction, November 1938. The lower photograph is from the personal collection of Mr. Amuroso.



Phil Amoruso

Co. 944 (1935-1938)

Narrator: Phil Amoruso

Interviewer: Rick McClure, Heritage Program, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Also present: Doris Amoruso

Date: February 9, 2002

Place: Amoruso residence, Soap Lake, Washington

Introduction:

Philip E. Amoruso was born March 15, 1920 on the family farm between Heisson and Crawford, east of Vancouver, in Clark County, Washington. His parents were Philip Amoruso and Eva Bell Amoruso. Mr. Amoruso enrolled in the CCC in 1935, serving as a member of Company 944 through 1938. After a summer of work on the Forest Service road crew, he was hired to operate and maintain dredges at Bonneville Dam. In 1942, after a period of machine shop employment in Portland, he went to work at the Kaiser shipyard in Vancouver, and was part of the large workforce building Liberty cargo ships. Upon leaving Kaiser in 1943, Mr. Amoruso was drafted into the army, and served with the 218th Ordnance Maintenance Squadron in the South Pacific during World War II. He remained in the Air Force Reserve for many years, performing wartime service in Korea, a tour of duty in Germany, and field service in the Vietnam conflict in 1966. At the time of his retirement in 1968, Mr. Amoruso was Senior Master Sergeant with the 62nd Field Maintenance Squadron, U.S. Air Force, stationed in Moses Lake, Washington. Following Air Force retirement, he worked for the Bureau of Reclamation at Grand Coulee Dam and a John Deere tractor dealership in Coulee City, Washington.

Why don't you tell us how you first learned about the Civilian Conservation Corps and then how you ended up signing up?

Well, I quit high school in my junior year because I wasn't interested in anything they had in that high school. It was all farming and that type of thing, and I was strictly mechanical. My dad didn't even have a tractor on the farm; it was all horses.

So I read about the CC's in the paper, so I made my way into Vancouver, Washington, and went down and on the old Army post there is where they had the office you went to to talk to people. You had to make out like you was practically destitute to get them to even listen to you, and you had to be 16 years old. I lacked about three months of being 16 years old yet, but I told them I was 16.

So then I got the papers and everything, and I signed up. I don't know what all I answered on the questions on there, and then I had to take it back and get my mother to sign it. I knew better than to get my dad because he wouldn't sign it for me. So my mom signed it. That was in January of 1935, and so they took me right in in January and we was loaded onto a little Chevrolet van; I can't remember what we called it, but that was our supply wagon for the camp at Camp Hemlock. So they loaded us into the back of that, and there was, I don't know, five or six of us in there. It was a one-way trip, all the way up there to the camp, and man, it was cold back there going up there that time of year. But we got up there, and then they assigned us to a barracks and kind of checked us out on what they expected of us and everything like that.

And your company number was --?

Company 944, Hemlock. We had our own post doctor there, Dr. Phillips. And that winter, we hadn't any more than got in there and we was snowed in, and we was plowing roads with Cats and stuff, and boy, them Cats was breaking down because the snow would pile up in the final drives and break the dead shaft in the back of them old [Model] 50 gas Cats, and so we was practically isolated there for three months, which was good for me because that kind of broke me away from home. You could get homesick as you wanted to, but you couldn't get away from there.

My first job was building an equipment shed, and Walt Hockinson was the foreman on that, and I ended up splitting shakes. So I split shakes there, and then they come out one day and they wanted volunteers for some student truck drivers, they said. So I volunteered, and we ended up out there, and they had a dump truck that they backed up to the cesspool; the cesspool was plugged up, and you had to teeter on a little four-by-six, after the lid was taken off, there was four-by-six's across the top of the pool, and you had to shovel that stuff up into the back of that dump truck. So boy, I learned something then: you don't ever volunteer for anything, and I never did volunteer again [laughing].

From then on, why, we worked on that equipment shed all winter, and then in the spring when it started breaking weather, we went up to Government [Mineral] Springs campground, and we was working in there cutting brush and cleaning out around the campsite there. Theed Worthington was our foreman. Red Tooley -- Cecil Tooley, I think his name is, him and I was working together, and boy, we was really working and cleaning brush and packing it, and old Theed come around a couple times and he says, "Boy, you guys are really working," he says, "I don't ever have to check up on you," and he says, "You don't want to be cutting brush all your life; what do you want to do?"

I said, well, I wanted to learn all I could about mechanics, and I said I liked to drive Cat and stuff like that. He said, "Well, I'll see what I can do." And -- oh, I don't know how much time elapsed between that and -- but they told me one morning, why, there was an old 60 gas Cat¹⁷ there, that that was my Cat. It had a double drum on it, and I had to take it up to Tyee Springs where they was going to put the hatchery in, and they were going to set it up over there and put a drag line across the river and scoop the river out and deepen it right there and pull gravel back over to the side the hatchery was on, so that they would kind of build a bunker there so that when the river come down it wouldn't overflow into the hatchery.

So I worked out there, and old Wade McNee was the foreman there, and he showed me and told me how to release the compression on the cylinders. You had to crank them with a bar and a flywheel. You pulled it over, and he said, "Watch out because if it kicks, and you're out in the woods, it will throw it clear out in the brush and you'll have a hard time finding it." So I cranked on that thing all morning, and I tried everything. It would spit and sputter and try to start. He'd come along and offer some little suggestion, but he really didn't help you do nothing and he just made you learn it all by yourself, what to do.

So about noon I got the thing running, and I walked it clear on out to Tyee Springs. It's about, I don't know, probably three or four miles out there, maybe farther, I don't know exactly. But I got it out there and got it set up, and then they run that drag line, and I was just going to pull that bucket across and pull the gravel out and dump it, and go back and forth with it. To get my gas, the road was on the other side where the trucks come in, so they'd put a barrel of gas on the drag line, and I had to pull it across the river so I could pump it into my gas tank on that old 60 Cat. So I worked at that till we got it all done.

So they set the cables up, they tied the cables to some trees on each side?

¹⁷ Model 60 Caterpillar tractor, manufactured 1931-1936 (Bickford 1997).

You had pulleys on one side of the river, and then onto the Cat on the other side, and then you'd just run the bucket back and forth with it.

Did you have to move the settings ...?

Well, after you dug out a site, then you'd have to move it over a way, and then just keep going like that. But we moved all that gravel out of there with that, and then -- I don't know, I guess after that, I'm not too sure about it, but it seemed like I got to work in the shop after that, overhauling stuff. I worked in there, and I don't know how much time I spent there, but it was quite a while.

Then I think it was that summer that I was called out and we had a fire up there above Tyee Springs there up on the hill there, and we had to pack them PM pumps up there, and they weigh 75 pounds, and when you pack it on your back to go up the hill, you know you got a load. But what we did, they'd put one pump down in the river, and then another one up maybe six or seven hundred feet above it, and put in a big canvas bag. You'd pump water into that, and then you'd have another pump there and relay it on up to the fire.

So we got all that in, and I had to just stand by and keep that one pump working. We got up there, and then we got the fire under control, and they had a bunch of guys come out of Portland -- you'd go down to Portland on Front Street there or wherever and pick up a bunch of those old derelicts down there and bring them out there, and they'd get some money for fighting fire. One night I was up there, we was digging a fire trail like the dickens, and them guys were just setting around there doing nothing. "Boy," I said, "this is a heck of a way for them guys to earn their money." So the next day or, I don't know, a day or two later, why --

Well, I'm getting ahead of myself here now, but while we was up there it started to rain, and that's what helped us get the fire under control, and we had radios there, and they had a kid assigned to the radio, and he was trying to call the lookout station and tell them we was ready to get those guys out of there, and the radio wouldn't work for him, and he was fooling around with it, and I said, "Well, I think you probably have to dry it out, probably got some of that rain water in it or something like that."

He kept arguing back and forth, and finally the forestry foreman -- I don't remember which one we had up there, maybe Rip Graham or one of those -- and he said, "Well, if you can get it running, go ahead and do it." So he just told me to go ahead and take it. So I took the radio, and I don't know what I dried it out with, dried it out with something, fooled around with it a little bit, and I can still remember, "This is PF-242 calling PF-26." I kept repeating that, and finally I got an answer and got through on the radio.

You got ahold of which lookout?

I don't know which lookout it was now. Whatever PF-242 is, that would be the lookout, because we was PF-26.

So then the foreman said, "Could you take this guy down to the bus down there, take these guys back down to go back to Portland?"

I says, "Sure." So boy, I took them, and I bet you they walked ten miles farther to get there; if they wasn't going to work any other way, I was going to get some work out of them that way. And boy, they was a bunch of tired guys when they got back down to that bus. [laughs]

So then I was back in the shop, then, after the fire, and then mornings, you know, they had roll call at seven o'clock, and you belonged to the army at night. You had your area with a double bunk and a wall locker for two guys there in one little area, and you had to have that bed made up by seven o'clock, your floor mopped and cleaned, your footlocker open for inspection and your wall locker open for inspection, and they come through the barracks and inspected every morning. You had to stand out there at attention at the foot of your bed, and then they

come through and inspected your area. Then you'd go out at seven o'clock, you fell out for roll call and then were turned over to the forestry [Forest Service] for the day.

So you never knew what your assignment was going to be until that morning when you....

Well, no. They'd take you out someplace to dig trails or something like that. So finally they needed somebody down for the powerhouse, and they said, "If you want to go down and check the grates on the dam, and if there's any trash on them, clean them out and then go down and check the generator and the powerhouse, and oil everything up and take care of them, why, then just go ahead and do that you won't have to stand roll call." So I took that job on. I was on that for quite a while; I don't remember how long but....

So you'd be down at the powerhouse before seven a.m.?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. But I didn't have to stand roll call.

Did somebody else mop your floor, then?

No, that all had to be done. Then I'd report back up to the shop then and I worked on my regular job up there then during the day in the shop.

Of course, you know, being young like that you figure everything out. One night me and another buddy of mine, we went down and we were going to get some whiskey, so we went down to Carson and got two fifths of *Cream of Kentucky* and come back to camp and proceeded, and we drank both of them, the two of us, that night. That wasn't enough. He had another pint in his locker, and so we finished that off, and talk about sick! I was sick that night, and I laid in my bunk and was just blowing bubbles.

Next morning -- but of course between times I ran out as fast as I could out to the latrine that was out in back, back and forth, but the next morning I was up, and I had my area clean and my bunk made up and everything else by inspection time. But boy, I tell you, that learned me a lesson, and I never did drink that much again in my life.

Well, now, consumption of alcohol in the camps was considered illegal, right? Were you worried about being punished?

Well, I don't know. They didn't seem to worry too much about it. As long as you took care of your area because I can remember Barracks Two was next door to us. About every weekend them guys -- you'd see some big fights going on over there, and you know dang well they was drinking, so apparently they wasn't too strict on that, long as you took care of your job and everything.

The next day when we went out, I was out working on the -- I probably got a little ahead of myself with my working at that shop and that because I was still working out on trails on the road and cleaning out brush and stuff. I was out there, and boy, I'd start working, and man, I'd start heaving again. Old Wade McNee would come by every once in a while and he'd say, "Well, there's a pretty good party in town tonight, I think we ought to go out and have a little drink." He just razzed me all day about drinking. He had no sympathy for me whatsoever [laughing]. He was just razzing me. But boy, I'll tell you, he helped guys grow up, I think.

So then after I got in the shop working on trucks and stuff like that, I remember one time it was just about quitting time, and Ray Converse was driving I think one of the 60 Cats, and he was bringing it in. Well, when you bring it in before you park it in the shed you had to clean it up. And he went and got gasoline, not what he was supposed to use to clean it down with, and that exhaust pipe -- pretty soon we looked out there and that whole dang Cat was just one big

bonfire. And that thing had about a, oh, thirty [or] forty gallon tank on the side of it, and he'd just filled it with gas. It was just lucky that thing didn't blow up, but with a full tank it was probably more safe than if it was empty because there wouldn't be that many fumes. But that's one thing I remember happening while I was there.

Another time we had a kid working in the shop, and he was working on a Dodge truck, working on the rear end of it, and we were just thinking, boy, he'd always drove a car and he'd never drove a truck much, and when he tries to find reverse in that thing, he'll try to put it up, you know, where a car goes. Well, pretty soon he went in there to back it out, and here he went backing out just as perfect as could be, and we were all kind of scratching our heads trying to figure out how he knew how to do that. Pretty soon we heard him holler outside, and he had four speeds in reverse and one going ahead. He'd put the rear end in backwards [laughing]. That was old Winston Springer that comes to the CC's. I razz him about that yet.

He comes to the reunions?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, he's the one that brings the chicken all the time. Let's see, from then on, why, I was assigned to go out on a side camp, and we got up there and....

Which side camp was this?

Up by Indian Racetrack. We was up there cleaning trails, and we got up there, and there was about, I don't know, fifteen or twenty guys in the bunch. And they got up there, and I can't remember the guy's name that was the assistant leader on there, and he said, "Well, we're going to have to have somebody for a cook."

So nobody volunteered, so I said, "I'll try it, if you guys want to risk it." So that week I was up there, I cooked. I got along all right, but I guess I used too many groceries because old Dutch Halle, he hollered about the amount of groceries we ate that week.

Dutch was the....

He was the mess sergeant. But that week, then, they said they wanted somebody -- oh, what the heck was his name? I can't remember who was running the shovel, but he got out of the CC's and so they had to have a shovel operator. So Wade wanted to know if I wanted to try it, and I said, "Heck yeah."

No, I'm getting ahead of myself again because I was up at Tyee Springs before that, and Jess Adams would take me up there in the morning, and I had a 50 gas Cat, and I was just pushing gravel up and making part of that retaining wall to protect the fish hatchery there. I was up there by myself, and I pushed gravel with that 50 all along there, and I don't know, I must have worked up there for a month up there working on that.

I used to check my gas in the Cat every night before they picked me up. I was out there all alone, and he'd take me out there in the morning and just dump me off, and that's all I seen of him till he picked me up at four o'clock that night. I'd check my gas, and then I'd tell him, "Well, I need fifty gallons of gas today," and so he'd bring me a barrel of gas.

So he brought me a barrel of gas out, and I checked my gas, and it was the same place it was, so I poured that whole fifty gallon barrel of gas in it, and I went to start the Cat and it run a little bit and quit. I looked at it, and here the dang inspection bottle under there was full of water. Drained the water out and put it back up, and all I got was water out of it. So somebody had drained all the gas and filled the tank up to the same level with water. So I had to go into the fish hatchery there and have them call back in and get me some more gas, and all that had to be dumped out.

I did that whole deal, and then after that I got put on the shovel, and Wade told me, he said, "Now, you've got to watch the brakes on this. When you let that bucket down," he said, "you've got to keep your foot on the brake to keep a little tension on the cable because if you let your foot off, the drum will spin from being pulled, and your cable will get in the gear someplace."

I said, "Okay." And so I loaded out a couple loads of gravel, and I had to wait in between times, and I was piling it up there, and pretty soon I forgot to hold them brakes, and it started getting into gear, and boy, I pulled that clutch and shut everything off, and I was digging that cable out of that gear when Wade come back, and boy, he says, "Well, did you learn anything?" That was the last time that happened.

But I run that shovel all over. We used to go out on Panther Creek and we'd load gravel, just dig the gravel around the creek, and they'd haul that out and made road with it. I think Jack Rikken had started working then on the shovel, and so we'd trade off and back the truck up, one of us, and the other one would run the shovel. So that day I was just backing the truck and he was running the shovel that day, and so Wade come down, and I says, "We're having a hard time with the truck here. I have to go make more room for him to turn around."

And he says, "Well, just go out there in that area there and just dig it out and clear the brush out, and that should do it."

So I went out there and took the Cat out there, and I just got out there, and it sunk right down, clear down. So Wade come down and I said, "I think we'll have to get that 60 Cat down here and pull that thing out of here."

So Wade said, "Oh, I don't think we need that," he said, and he walked over to the back of his pickup and he handed me a shovel. "Here, I think you can get that out of there," and I dug it out.

How long did that take you?

Oh, I don't remember. I had to dig underneath it, you know, where it was high-centered so the tracks would get some grip again. Got that done and I got it out all right. He was right, I could do it with a shovel.

Let's see, from there, I went where? I guess after that we went up to Mt. Hood. We dug that road going up to Timberline Lodge. There's pictures there in the book of that, back there, the lodge.

This was the good story you told me last August about actually seeing Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt?

Yeah. I was loading trucks up there, and they come by that morning, him and Eleanor. They was in one of them big cars that they rode in, like a convertible with no top on it. I was running the shovel, and old Jack was just up there to see the President when he went by.

Then one day while I was there working and that -- the day before, you pick up a load of dirt and sling it out like that, and then the truck would back up to it. Well, he backed up too far, and he hit the bucket with the back of his cab. So I didn't think nothing of it because it was just an honest mistake, but the next day I seen a guy standing there watching and watching, watching all the time I was loading, and so I found out that what it was is the WPA was kind of unhappy because the CC's was running the shovel. They thought that they ought to run the shovel. So they turned it into Safety that I'd hit the cab when I swung out, and he watched me to see how I did it. He never said no more about it.

So how did that work out that if you were in the CCC over at Camp Hemlock, and the WPA had the project going at Timberline, how did they get a CCC person to help out with a WPA project?

Well, I guess the foresters had some interest in getting that road built, and see, before that lodge was there that's where they hauled the dirt there and filled in in front of the lodge there where the parking area is now. And we widened that road coming up there. They had to pay the Forest Service for the use of the shovel. So we dug that.

I remember one night Jack and I were down there in a little tavern down there at Zigzag, and we was in there and they had a slot machine in there, a nickel machine that paid off money. So we put a nickel in it, and boy, just like we hit the jackpot, it just started feeding nickels out. And Jack says, "Put another nickel in, quick." We didn't want them to know; we took four or five dollars out of that machine that way. It just kept paying us. As soon as you'd put a nickel in, it would start paying.

So when you were working on the Timberline project, were you staying in a CCC camp?

No, I was staying right in -- there's a picture there of it. They're just like tent houses. The guy in the place where I slept was the guy that did all the concrete work in the lodge. He worked that color into that floor. Man, every night he was putting oil and everything on his hands. That concrete, you know, working that color in, boy, it would just about take the hide right off of your hands.

So this photograph we're looking at shows a tent camp with standard Army pyramid tents. You can see another building behind it. So this was at Zigzag or Government Camp?

Well, it was just below -- we had to ride a truck up to where we run the shovel, so I don't know -- it was right in there someplace.

This must be Government Camp in that scene. The first town you come to when you head down off the mountain. There's quite a few vehicles. Are these all Forest Service vehicles or official vehicles of some kind?

I don't know. Probably WPA vehicles, probably. That was their camp¹⁸, and that's where we ate, in their mess hall and everything.

Another incident happened there. One morning we was going up to work, and we crawled in the back of this truck, and here was a guy with a whole bunch of photography equipment, and he had a nice looking gal with him, and here he climbed in the cab and says, "You get in the back," and made her get in the back with us. I thought, boy, that's some guy; he crawls in the cab and makes her get in the back end of the truck.

And what was he doing?

He was up there making photographs of different things with her in the picture around there. I never did see any of the pictures of what they did.

So then from then on we went to Philomath, Oregon about in January. I had to take that shovel down that Columbia River Highway, and man, it was snowy and icy, and I thought, "I don't know about this." Made it down all right, and then I had to go through Salem before we got out to Philomath, and that dang bucket and stuff on that shovel, with the streetcar tracks and all the wires up there, and I don't think you cleared them more than a foot or two, and boy, I was sweating that out. I didn't want to get tangled up in some of that stuff.

¹⁸ According to Margaret Dryden, Acting Forest Archaeologist, Mt. Hood National Forest, the WPA camp was located at Summit Meadows.

What kind of a project were you doing in Philomath?

Digging a road up a hill there. That was the southern camp. We went out there, and I was digging away, and on my second or third day there the whistle blew for noon, and I just kept right on a-working, and the forestry [Forest Service] foreman said, "Did you hear that whistle for noon?"

And I said, "Maybe so, but they ain't got nothing to eat down there but grits," and I said, "I can't stand them." So he didn't say nothing. I kept right on working. That night he come by when I quit and he handed me the keys to his pickup and said, "Go to town and get yourself something to eat. I don't want you to starve to death." [laughing] They used that to get home for weekends. So they told me to just pick up the truck and drive it on out to -- which is about twenty miles out of Vancouver to where I lived, and just come in Monday morning and on down here and deliver the truck to them that way. So that's what I did.

So you got to go home for the weekend?

Got to go home for the weekend. When I was coming back through Battle Ground, why, there were some kids hitchhiking a ride alongside of the road, and there was a truck in front of me, looked like a milk truck or something, you know, that delivers bottled milk. And those kids was hitchhiking, and so he just started stopping, and I thought, "Well, he's going to pick them kids up." No turn signals, no nothing. So I swung out to pass him, and about that time he swung into a driveway right there, and boy, I wheeled that truck up, and we ended up side by side in that driveway, but I didn't touch him. Boy, I was sweating that out with a new truck. But he hadn't signaled or anything; of course, you shouldn't assume what they're going to do, either.

So then I took the truck on back down to there and finished that job up. I've looked -- my wife and I went to the coast here one weekend and come back there, and I can't even find out where the CC camp was now. Nobody knows much about it anymore.

Then after that I took the shovel and went on up to Packwood and up to the camp there, Lower Cispus.

Oh, near Randle?

Yeah, took the shovel up there and Stan Cathcart, who was the forestry [Forest Service] foreman on that job, he had me -- we had to put a thirty-foot boom on the shovel, which is only a five-ton shovel, and then we had a clamshell that went on that. When I was going to dig the piers for the new bridge they had there -- the bridge that was there, as you'd go across it with a truck with a full load of guys in it, the sides of the bridge would come in and clamp the sides of the truck, and you had to unload and drive on and then let the guys get back in after you was across the bridge.

That was a cable suspension bridge, wasn't it?

Yeah, mm-hmm. So they had me digging roads out there while they was putting in -- I done some of the preliminary digging there, and then they made a big cofferdam out of timbers and logs. So I dug that one side, and then I had to ford the river with the truck and go over on the other side and dig the pier on the other side. While I was doing that, apparently so much water got in the clutch on the truck that it wouldn't release at all. So when we got done with the job there digging the pier, why, I had to take the truck back down to Packwood, so I had to put it in gear, start the engine, and drive it down the hill to Packwood from there with the only way to shift gears I just had to do it mechanically with no release of the clutch or nothing. That's where I left the shovel when I got out [of] the CC's. I left it right there.

Somebody picked it up after you?

I don't know what happened to it after that.

So that was one of your jobs, working on the bridge?

That was the last job, yeah.

And when they built the cofferdam, then did you have to build the forms yourself, or did someone else build the forms?

Well, Stan Cathcart had a bunch of the CC guys in there, and they built the cofferdam in there, and then I dug out inside the cofferdam with the shovel. They did the same thing on both sides of the river, and then on that one side there when I was digging, that's where I said I got hooked onto something down there after I was digging a while, and I thought, "Well, boy, it's a big rock down there because I just can't wiggle it loose." I thought I had a hold of it one day, and I looked around and here my truck was coming up off the ground. With that long boom, it wouldn't take too much -- the weight was overcome by the truck. So then we finally decided that was bedrock that was down there, so we just dug around it and then poured concrete.

That was the first time I ever seen that done, though. They took a tube, made one out of galvanized iron, and they'd pour the concrete right down -- they couldn't pump the water out, the river was coming in there the whole time, but he said that would make the strongest concrete you ever had because it was cured right underwater, and he said it wouldn't wash anything out. I always had a question about that, but that's the way they did it. They just poured it, and they just kept working around that cofferdam until they poured it up.

How did they mix the concrete?

God, I don't remember now how they did mix it. I know back at Hemlock we had some mixers, great big mixers that we used there.

And what did you use them for at Hemlock?

Well, like on building projects, when they'd pour forms and stuff. They built that dam there, you know, across the river. They built that, too, the CC guys did. That was before I was there, yeah. That was one thing, I really appreciated Dutch Halle after I went to some of these other camps and ate because nobody fed you like Dutch did.

So you got to eat at Cispus camp when you were working up there?

Yeah, mm-hmm.

And when was that exactly that you were working on the bridge?

That was in the first part of '38 and the last part of '37.¹⁹

So it was during the winter?

¹⁹ Official Forest Service inspection reports place these events between September 1938 and January 1939 (MacKay 1938-1939)

Yeah. Yeah. I had a heck of a cold that winter, and I just kept right on a-working. I wasn't about to let somebody else run the shovel. This one kid come up in mess hall one day and he brought me something he had all peeled, and I thought it was an orange, and it was a grapefruit. I'd never ate a grapefruit like that before.

So when you were working out of the Cispus camp, the bridge project was really the only thing they had you do up there?

Well, when I wasn't working on the pier, they had me digging on the road approaches there on both sides of the road there. On the side toward camp, we didn't have to because that was pretty much open over there.

The other side, where it drops down off the plateau there was a little different, huh?

Yeah.

So you helped cut that road in?

Yeah, mm-hmm. One thing I forgot about in between time there that I was running up the creek, I think it was on Panther Creek Road, and I think that's when I first got acquainted with -- now, what's that foreman's name? I can't think of it now. The one I mentioned that worked on the bridge project with me.

Cathcart?

Yeah. He come up by, and I was working on the clutch because the clutch was slipping on the 60 gas Cat I was running, and he come over, and he had a crippled leg, and he crawled up on the tractor, and he was helping me and showing me how to pull the flywheel over and adjust on it, and that dang Cat, he was setting on the track, and he pulled that lever and the dang thing started, and man, it was just right over a bank like that, and I just went up and jumped on both brakes and killed it. Boy I could see him underneath that dang Cat going over that hill.

That was a close one!

Yeah.

Tell me a little bit more about life in Camp Hemlock. Talk about the dining hall and the meal situation and what you'd do for lunch if you were working out.

Well, everybody went in for a meal, you sat down at a table, and you had KP's. Everybody pulled regular KP duty, and of course you had student cooks in there that did all the cooking, helped Dutch out. They put everything on the table, they put your bowls on there, and you set down and you could eat. Of course, the guys that was there for a long time, they got onto this, and boy, they'd take their fill out of them bowls and there was just enough left for one helping and you took it, you had to go fill the bowl then. If you didn't, they'd all be hollering. But the meals they put out, I tell you, was fantastic. Good prepared meals, and like I say, when I would go to some of these other camps, I really appreciated the kind of meals we got there at Hemlock, and every so often he had enough out of the mess fund that he'd throw a party and we'd have a beer party and watermelon and everything like that, and he bought that....

You had beer in camp?

Oh, yeah. Yeah. He was a fantastic mess sergeant. But then when you was out on the job, you took the lunches right out with you, and you had beans and coffee and everything like that. I remember one thing that they'd always say that -- like when you made coffee -- I can't remember that foreman's name, but anyway, he always said, "I don't care if there's only two of you out there and they send a gallon can and it's a pound of coffee, put a pound of coffee in," and man, it would take the hair off your head the strong coffee he made.

One time we didn't have anything to make the coffee in, no cans or nothing. I think that was Wade McNee that time, and he said, "Give me that paper sack," he said, "I'll boil coffee in that paper sack." And this one kid as much as called him a liar, and boy, old Wade took that sack, set it full of water right in the middle of the fire, and it burned the sack down right level with the water, but that water set there and boiled in that sack. And boy, that kid didn't have nothing more to say.

Now, tell me about Jess Adams²⁰. What kind of work did he do, and tell me a little bit about your interactions with him.

Well, I tell you, he was just like a dad to all us guys. I mean, he'd listen to your troubles, and if you had a gripe, why, you could go right to him, and he'd air it out, and he'd give you an answer one way or another. If he knew what you was interested in, he did his best to get you on what you wanted to do.

At night, you know, we had the education building, and they taught foremanship and supervision, and you could take mechanics classes or anything like that, and if you really showed an interest in that stuff, then they showed an interest in you and helped you out.

Did you take any classes?

Oh, yeah. I took all the mechanic classes I could take.

What kind of classes did you take?

Well, just on automotive, on rebuilding engines and stuff like that. Like when you went in the shops, like when I worked in there, we took them old trucks, '35 Chevrolets and that, and you stripped them down, took the cabs off of them, stripped them right down to the bare frame, there was nothing there. Then you went over it and checked the rivets in the frame; if they was loose, you took them out and put new rivets in. Then painted it, and it come out of there just like a brand new truck.

In the same way, like when I was running Cat, when your Cat went in the shop, you went in there, and you worked on it, and you knew exactly what you was putting that Cat through when you operated it and what string you put in here and there and what to look for in the thing and what to expect out of it.

Now, when they were doing the work on these trucks that you just talked about, were these Forest Service trucks that were going out to be used by the Forest Service?

Right.

Were they just from your camp, or from a larger area?

²⁰ Jess Adams was the Forest Service Superintendent at Camp Hemlock.

No, just our own. We had, I don't know, fifteen or twenty of them ton-and-a-half trucks.

That's another thing, I always tried to get home on the weekends if I could. Well, you could go one weekend, but then the next weekend you couldn't go. So I volunteered to drive truck to Vancouver, then. So I'd drive truck one weekend, and the next weekend I'd just ride in the back. Boy, I remember some of them [roads] was kind of -- like I say, if you were ever acquainted with that Columbia River Highway...

Going over Cape Horn?

Cape Horn, I went up Cape Horn one winter there, and you were just barely crawling because if you went too much gas on it, why, it would spin out. Come down off of there and got into Washougal, and a dang dog run across the road, and I hit the brakes on that thing, and it was just like you hadn't done anything, you just kept right on going. Dog got out of the way somehow.

Whenever you did those kind of drives, did you have to stop by Vancouver Barracks to pick up supplies for the camp?

No, they did that all -- they called that the -- "andy wagon," that took care of all the supplies for the camp. That's another thing, that driver was going -- I don't know what the occasion was, but somehow coming down out of camp where you cross the -- what is the first bridge going out of the camp there? I can't remember....

Just about a mile from camp?

Yeah. Is that Wind River? That's the first part of Wind River there. And I don't know, something happened and he had to slam on the brakes, and old Doc Phillips was riding with him, and his head went right through the windshield of that truck. Didn't hurt him any. He was just lucky it didn't cut his throat or something.

That was another thing, it was really an eerie experience driving that shovel out of there and going down, and you're going across that old cable suspension bridge across the Wind River, that high one, you was going uphill all across that bridge, and that bridge was just rolling in front of you all the way across that. Yeah, you could see the bridge just roll in front of you. See, the shovel weighed five tons, and that four-wheel drive Coleman truck, that was a pretty heavy truck, too.... that's all mounted right on that Coleman truck. The shovel worked right off the back of it.

So that's the one that's in the photograph that you have?

Right. Mm-hmm, yeah.

It says USDA Forest Service on the side of it.

Yeah. I often wonder if they ever did -- because they was going to take it in the shop there and work that clutch over. I don't know what ever happened to it after that because the truck actually belonged to Hemlock, or it was assigned to them.

When you were living in camp, did you ever have to put on a uniform, or was it mainly just work clothes that you were in all the time?

Well, we had -- just like if you went to towns, the clothes you had was a uniform, yeah. But you had regular work clothes when you were working all the time.

Did you ever have to put the uniform on in the evenings?

No, huh-uh.

Special occasions, nothing like that?

No, huh-uh. If we went to a dance or something in town, we used to go down to Carson, they had dances and stuff.

So you did that for entertainment, you went to dances in Carson?

Yeah.

What kind of music?

Country-western.

Do you remember any of the songs that were popular back at that time?

No. I can't think of anything else. Lots of things that I've left out, like we had to go out and cut cord wood lots of times, wood for the camp, and of course no power saws then, it was the old misery whip.

How close to camp did you cut the wood?

Well, up along Panther Creek we cut some, and then some up like when you're going like to Silver Star [Mountain], across there, we went back up in there on some side roads and cut. I tried to find some of the areas when we was there last summer, but I couldn't find any of them.

That was another job I did with the shovel, I forgot to say, was at Tyee Springs where the ponds are there, the fish ponds there, I dug those, and then I went out and made a new channel for the river. I'd just dig and cast it off the side and keep digging. I was out there all by myself on that because I know one day I was digging and I was learning this song, and I was probably singing at the top of my voice with the engine and everything running the shovel, and I was a-digging away, and pretty soon I looked up, and here was Jess Adams and a whole bunch of the dignitaries from the Portland office out there, and they was all just laughing their heads off.

Do you remember the song?

Yeah. I don't even know the name of that song anymore. It was something about I recall a cottage on a hill where every day I had to pay another bill, about meeting with your wife and stuff like that.

Was it a country-western song?

Yeah, uh-huh.

Do you remember who recorded that song?

No, I don't.

So, did you visit some of the other CCC camps that were in the area?

No. No, I never did.

Rock Creek Camp, do you know anything about Rock Creek Camp?

No. In fact, I was looking there, and there's a lot of camps there that I didn't realize was even there.

[Doris Amoruso] What's the one Bill Hanson that just died told you?

He was someplace in Yakima. He was in a camp there.

[Doris Amoruso] We tried to get him to come down to the CC deal [reunion]. Are they trying to get another CC deal started for kids?

Yeah, they have what's called AmeriCorps, which is very much like the CCC. It's co-ed. It's really almost modeled on the CCC.

Do they have the army in there, the military? Well, that's where they'd fall down, then, isn't it?

It makes a difference, doesn't it?

You're darn right because that's where you get the discipline. Like at Lower Cispus, I forget that captain's name, but he was an old infantry officer, and them guys stepped out of line, he had them out there at night doing close-order drill.

How were the officers at Hemlock? You didn't talk too much about the army people at Hemlock.

Well, I never got involved much with the officers at all, except when they was trying to find their cars that was hid out in the woods. That last officer was a pilot, and so he was flying over there and locating all our hiding places.

Do you remember his name?

I think it was Spinning²¹.

And he was a pilot?

Yeah. He would fly it on his reserve training on the weekend, and he'd fly up there and see if he could locate the cars.

Did you have a car in the brush?

Oh, yeah. Model A Ford.

²¹ Theodore C. Spinning, 1st Lieutenant, Cavalry Reserve, was the Company Commander of CCC Company 944.

Where did you keep it?

Well, various places. They'd find it in one place, and we'd take it and hide it someplace else. [laughing]. Forestry wasn't worried about you. They didn't care about that end of it at all. I think that they looked the other way. I think they all knew that they had cars out there. As long as you didn't get out of line, why, I don't think they was going to bother you much.

Was there any kind of restriction on staying in camp? You know, once you were done with your work, were you free to hop in your car and take off?

Far as I know I was because I don't remember being restricted. As long as you were there for your work in the morning and had that part of it taken care of. I know the guys used to a lot of them go to town. A lot of guys was older guys. [asking Doris] What's that one out of Yacolt that had that red-headed daughter that went to school when you did? He was an older guy, quite a bit older than all the rest of us.

Now, there was a recreation hall in the camp, right?

Yeah, mm-hmm.

Did they have a radio in there where you could listen to radio programs?

Yeah, radio.

Did you ever do that?

I probably did, but I don't recall it.

[Doris Amoruso] See, that CC made him practically like a military man, and when you got out -- why don't you tell him what you did?

Well, it did, and yet when that guy was doing all that close-order drill up there at Lower Cispus, that kind of turned me against the military.

You didn't see any of that kind of thing at Hemlock?

No. Some of them over in that barracks, too, could have stood some of it, some the rows they had over there.

Were they mostly local guys?

Yeah, I think all of them. A lot of guys I went to school with, and from Battleground and Longview and Woodland, and then from up around the actual area right around camp there, too. Stevenson. In fact, I think the one you interviewed before, Jack Leonard, he's right from...

Yep, Carson.

There was two brothers, Jack and Jim Leonard.

Were they in the same time you were?

Yeah. Yeah, they're in the picture there.

Did you ever see any of the boxing matches Jack was in?

Oh, yeah. I remember one time, too, we used to have baseball games out there, and I remember old Bernie Jarvis, he was a truck driver, and he was up there at bat when somebody threw a bat, I think it was, and hit him, boy, and it popped his eyeball right out. Golly, I can still remember that.

[Doris Amoruso] Could they put it back?

Yeah, they put it back, but I don't know whether it was -- I guess it didn't hurt it any, I don't know.

So then when were you discharged from the CCC? Did you go right into the military?

No. After I got out -- of course the first summer I got out Jess called me back up there, and that's when I pulled grader for Mike Paladeni up Lower Siouxon road there, clear up to that lookout; we graded that whole road.

The Siouxon Lookout?

Yeah, mm-hmm. Now I guess that road goes clear through there and on down below to Woodland, don't it? Roads all over there. That was a dead-end at that time. It was all dirt road up through there.

Did you ever go to Siouxon CCC Camp? It was up past the fish hatchery.

No, when I was out working on the ponds out there, that was an NRA camp.

It was an ERA camp, I think.

They had an Italian cook out there, and he took and made that pudding out of, what do you call them things? Tapioca. He made a tapioca pudding with them big tapiocas, and man, that stuff, I could have ate a gallon of it the way he made it. But we didn't get to do that very long. They finally put a stop to that, and we had to pack a lunch out there. Yeah, well.... Joe Szydlo, I think was his name [the cook] at the Siouxon camp, at that NRA camp or ERA, I don't know which one you call it. They was more or less like a WPA, I guess, in there because they was all older people in there. They stayed right there, and they had barracks there just like we did in the CC's. They were working on that hatchery, putting in the forms and the sea net and stuff for the fish ponds.

So the same time you were working the shovel digging out the fish ponds, there were ERA crews working there at the same time?

Yeah, mm-hmm.

And did they have Forest Service foremen, too?

I couldn't tell you. There was some connection there with the Forest Service because I think the Forest Service was interested in putting that fish hatchery in.

Did you know any of the ERA guys?

No. I didn't know any of them.

You mentioned working for Mike Paladeni.

Yeah. After I got out of the CC's, sometime in the spring of 1938, and so that summer Jess Adams called me and wanted to know if I wanted to come up and pull grader for Mike Paladeni, so we graded that Siouxon Road then all the way back through there that year.

Did they hire you as a Forest Service employee?

Yeah. Then he got me a job the next summer at Sunset, when they started building that new road up over Silver Star [Mountain], on the lower end of it down by Sunset, building that.

So did you stay in the Sunset CCC camp, then?

Yeah, mm-hmm. Then Ross Humphries owned a machine shop there in Bonneville, and he called the camp up there and talked to Jess Adams about my ability at doing this and that and the other, and so then he went up to camp and talked to several of the foremen up there, and so I got the job there as an apprentice and worked in there for three years.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Ellen Beckett, June 2002

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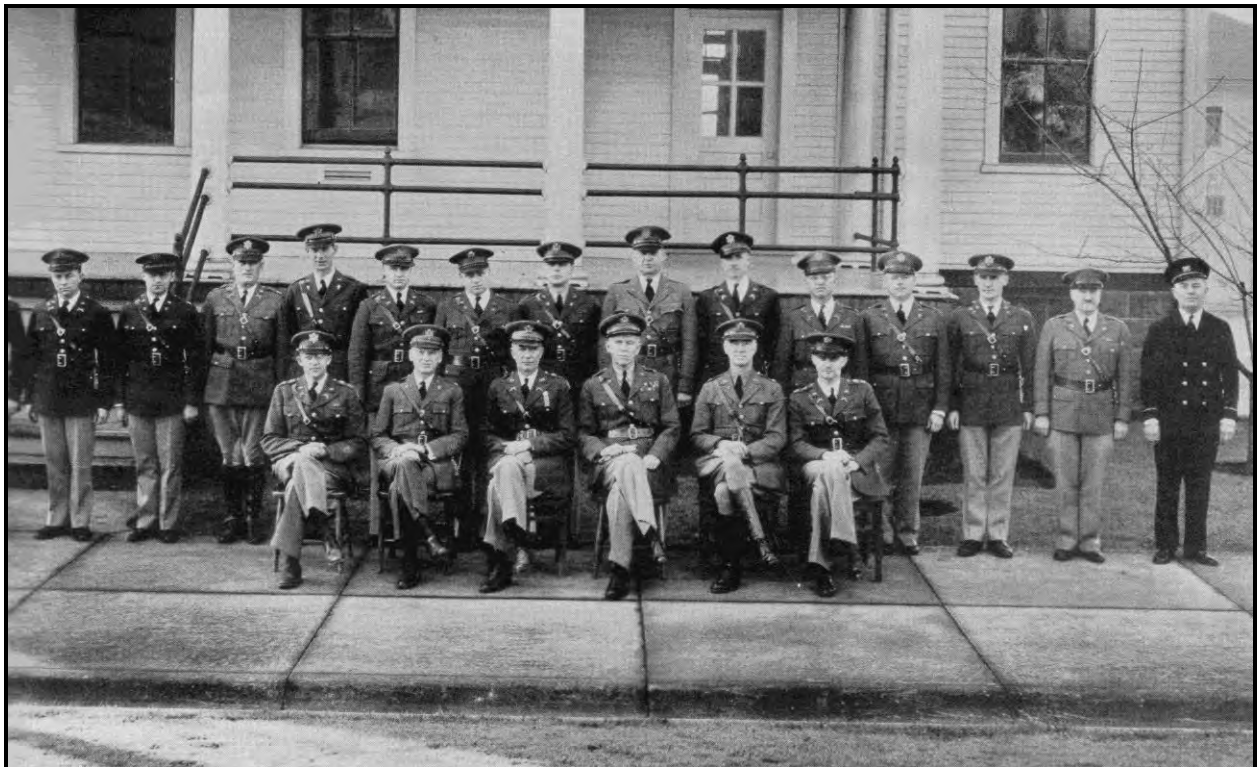
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Upper photograph shows army trucks from Vancouver Barracks like those driven by Mr. Aust. Lower photograph of Brigadier General George C. Marshall, District CCC Commander, and staff, above, at Vancouver Barracks in 1937. The photographs are from *Official Annual, Civilian Conservation Corps, Vancouver Barracks, 1937*).



Carroll Aust

Co. 2907 (1937-1938)

Narrator: Carroll Aust

Interviewer: Donna Sinclair, History Department, Portland State University

Also present: Helen Aust

Date: January 22, 2001

Place: Aust residence, Vancouver, Washington

Introduction:

Carroll Aust was born to a farming family near Vermillion, South Dakota on March 10, 1916. During the Great Depression, the family experienced severe financial setbacks due to crop failures. As the oldest of seven children, Carroll Aust felt responsible for helping his family. He joined the Civilian Conservation Corps, and served for two years in the Black Hills National Forest of South Dakota. In 1937, the family migrated to the Pacific Northwest, and settled in Portland, Oregon. Again, the family experienced financial difficulties, and the young man turned to the CCC. He re-enlisted and due to his previous experience, was sent to Vancouver Barracks to serve as a truck driver. His CCC experiences later helped him to obtain a job with the Bonneville Power Administration.

How did your family come to the Portland/Vancouver area?

That was during what we call the Great Depression. But we also had crop failures, a half a dozen years of complete crop failures caused by grasshoppers. We dried up, held out, then one year even flittered out. My dad was getting really worried about [whether] he could furnish the livelihood for a family of seven children and he and his wife. That's a family of nine. And he had a chance to come out to Portland to look over the situation. And when he landed in Portland and started working at different carpenter jobs -- he was a master carpenter -- he said he was never going back to South Dakota. So, being the oldest child, it was up to me to see that everything we did have got sold for whatever we could get out of it because hardly anybody had any money anyway. But the neighbors tried to help us out by buying all the farm machinery and the horses and stuff.

We came out, and the closer I got to Portland I thought, "This is heaven on earth out here." I don't think that they felt the Depression like they did in the Middle West or farther east because I understand that they had crops growing. Which we didn't. Just to give an example -- back in South Dakota during that hard times quite a few meals were just plain corn on the cob. That's all we had. We had a couple of cows that gave us milk. So we had to get out here....

About how old were you then? Do you remember?

I was twenty-one, a very naive twenty-one. [Laughs]

And so you came to Portland, and what part of Portland did you live in?

Oh it was Southeast Ankeny about twenty-something. My dad had rented a duplex, one building with two families. And my mother started cooking for some kind of a care home and my brothers and I -- I had one brother four years younger and one brother six years younger, we went out and worked for just anything we could get. Sometimes it was just food to bring home.

What kind of jobs did you do then?

Well, mostly lawn work, putting in new lawns. I had to dig up yards and completely rebuild them, pack them and so on. But I couldn't see doing that for the rest of my life. After a few months anyways, I went back into the Civilian Conservation Corps. I enlisted and was sent to Cascadia, Oregon. And I was there about a week or so when I got orders to report to Vancouver. I went in to see the captain, to see what that was about, and the fellow said, "Carroll, what have you been up to?" [I] Said I had to go see the captain. But he said, "I understand that you have been driving Forest Service truck in the Black Hills of South Dakota for two years. Is that right?"

I said "Yes, sir."

And he said, "How would you like to be transferred in to headquarters?"

Were you inducted at Vancouver Barracks, the first time - - before you went to Cascadia?

I don't remember where the office was. It was what we called for short the CC's. I enlisted in some office here in Vancouver, but I was told to report to Camp Cascadia.

So the office wasn't at Vancouver Barracks?

It could have been. Things moved kind of fast for me and I'm kind of a slow mover. So anyways, that's how come I got transferred to Vancouver Barracks headquarters. I was experienced [and] I was given a semi-truck. That's a truck with a trailer to haul supplies to all the camps in the Northwest. And if my bigger truck wasn't needed I was given other trucks to drive. I also chauffeured army officers different places to inspect the camps. Periodically the army inspected the camps.

Do you know who did that? Who inspected the camps?

The army officer. See whenever we were in the camp we were under the command of usually a captain. There was a lieutenant, doctor, and a sergeant of the army, so there were three army officers in each camp. I thought "Boy, that was really the life, alright." I had no idea of dating and all that. I was just interested in what was going on in the world.

So when you joined, did the money go to your family? How much was your pay at the time?

My pay was thirty dollars a month here. Five dollars a month was what I could use for my necessities and the rest of the money went home.

And was that enough, that five dollars a month. Was it enough for you?

Well, it wasn't anything that we could splurge. But people were pretty good. Here in Vancouver we got invited to different homes -- for songs. For some reason or other, every time I met somebody like that they asked if I was in the army. And I'd say no, I was in the CCC and [then] I was welcome. I don't know whether they held it against the army or what, but that was the first question I was asked all the time....

What company were you in?

.... I was stationed in what they called detached service. Where I was discharged from was Company 2907, CCC. I had been transferred from one company to another depending on where I was needed, one camp to another.

And how long was your tour of duty in the CCC that time?

Well, it was two years in South Dakota and one year out here.

.... I wanted to know if you remember the name of your direct supervisor? Who was the captain you worked with at the Barracks? While you were in the CCC?

It seems like it was a Captain Hall. Under him was Sam Coleman, First Lieutenant Infantry Reserve. He was First Lieutenant Sam Coleman. He was the last one I knew of there.

Was there any contact with the Forest Service office in Portland?

Just out in the camp. See, when I drove then out of Vancouver I was under the control of the U.S. Army. And General Marshall²² was actually in charge of all the camps, all the officers [were] under him. So, I had no contact with the Forest Service, only when I went to the camp. Some of the things that I hauled out there was for the Forest Service.

What kind of supplies did you take there?

Packs, shovels, waterbags -- portable generators, water pumps, all that stuff.

Did you take food supplies out there?

Yeah, we had to supply all the food to the different camps except what they could buy locally. Each camp tried to buy food during the summer that was raised locally. But mostly it was cases and cases of food. When there was a forest fire, which happened once in a while, we had to drive almost day and night to supply all the equipment they needed.

.... *So you would take supplies like axes and shovels and....*

.... Some of the stuff was burnt up in the fire. We had to gather all that up and take it back to camp and overhaul it or whatever was needed.... One fellow didn't make it fast enough. There was one young man killed, the only one I know of, when a tree fell on him. And we couldn't find him, not until after the fire. By the signs we could really tell he had really struggled to get free.

You actually found him?

Yes, he was one of the fellows that was a little mentally short. As long as a fellow could work good and follow orders they didn't have to take, say, a mental test to try to see how smart you were. And he was one of those fellows that evidently just got lost. He lost his head and he was where he was not supposed to be.

I was going to ask you -- I read something about people being rejected, not very many who applied to be in the CCC. I wanted to ask you what kind of reasons might someone be prevented from joining?

²² George C. Marshall, the five-star general who became Secretary of State in 1947 and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953, commanded Vancouver Barracks and headed the Vancouver CCC District from 1936-1938.

Well, there were some that tried to get in that were not capable, physically, of handling the job. That's the only thing that I know of that held up an enlistment.

What kind of testing did you have to go through to join?

Psychological kind of -- What would you do in case this happened or that happens? They'd also ask what kind of work they had done [and] put them in a category. That's quite a few years ago. [laughs]

Do you remember if they asked about your family's finances or anything like that when you joined?

Well, when we were going to enlist they might have asked you something like that. But it was a necessity that we do something like that so we could get some money to send home.

When is the first time you heard about the 3 C's? Or what is the first you recall hearing about it?

Well, I was working outside, out in the barn or something. My dad said, "There's something about the Civilian Conservation Corps and you can earn some money there and we could get some more money if you'd be willing to do it."

"Yes, I would." So that is all I remember about that. I went to the nearest town, which was Vermillion, and had a physical exam. Kind of a cursory exam. They wanted to know if this skinny kid could work and so on. If anybody had some handicap serious enough to keep them from working, of course they couldn't take them in.

Did you go to a conditioning camp when you were in South Dakota?

I went to the CCC camp north of Chamberlain, South Dakota on the Crow Indian Reservation.

Did you work at the motor pool in Vancouver? Were you part of the big motor pool that was there?

Yes, that [is] what it was called. We had two semi-trucks and we had, I think it was five or six smaller trucks, regular army trucks. Instead of the army's insignia on the truck it was CCC....

How many people did you work with there [at the motor pool]? Approximately....

Oh, I'd say a couple of dozen. Other drivers and office personnel and store personnel. They had a warehouse there that had other companies haul food in, and supplies and so on. And we would load up from that one company. We never picked up anything from any [other] warehouse; it was always that one warehouse [at Vancouver Barracks].

Do you have any idea around what area that was?

Well, you know where Pearson Field²³ is there? That airfield is part of it. There were very few planes flying in, private planes. Whenever one did come in to land it was coming in right over the Barracks. So we must have been pretty well in line with the runway.

That is where the warehouse was? And the motor pool?

²³ Pearson Airfield, located in Vancouver, Washington, is the oldest operating airport in the United States.

Yes. There was a garage facing -- that street now that goes along what ended up being Highway 14. It was the road [that] went right through the Barracks from downtown. It wasn't Main Street, it was the one that goes east and west. . . .

With Fort Vancouver²⁴, and then the street. There's the Fort, and here's Pearson.

Well, you know where the Fort is now -- it was right along the north edge of that.

Okay. That's Fifth Street. So, you said a company would bring products to the warehouse, and then you would take them from the warehouse out to the forest?

Yeah.

Out to the camps.

Now, the officer in charge of there would pay the trucks for what they hauled in. It was a lot of local produce and things like that that was hauled in, and then we took it out to the different camps.

So, different companies brought things to the warehouse then?

Well, yeah.

Local grocers?

Yeah, commercial companies.... There was a lot of farmers took stuff in there too, things that they had grown. I remember, about the only meat hauled in there was bacon. The fresh meat they tried to get near each camp, I guess. They didn't want me to haul that in an open truck for long distance without refrigeration.

So you would haul things, food supplies that were dry goods and produce?

Yeah, about everything.... It was usually stuff that wouldn't start perishing right away. It was more long-lasting food, vegetables and so-on.

What about laundry service? Did that go back and forth, or did that happen at each camp?

Each camp had their own laundry service. Usually had a Maytag washer or. . .

And did the boys in the CCC do their own laundry?

Yeah.

What about you when you were at Vancouver Barracks, did you have quartermaster laundry, or did you do your own?

No, we did our own.

²⁴ The renovated Fort Vancouver, former Hudson's Bay Company fur trading post from 1824-1860, is located south of Fifth Street and operated by the National Park Service.

You did your own. And what part of the Barracks did you live in? Was it a barracks that was full of the CCC enrollees?

[It] had double bunk[s], one bunk on top of the other. Just like regular army barracks. With the army we were issued army blankets, and everything we had there was army. We had an ambulance there too that, if anybody was hurt, found from camp, we had to go out and bring them into the army hospital.

Did you ever drive that?

Yep. I remember one time, down along the Oregon coast. It was quite a ways to go, but I had to go down to get somebody that had their face hurt some way or other, I guess. When I got ~~on~~, I had a medical orderly with me, regular army. And every half-hour, I think it was, he had to put some medical drops in this fellow's eyes. And the ambulance had no siren. On the way back somebody tried to play games with me coming up the winding road. The longer it took, the more often I had to stop. So this orderly said, "Get back to Vancouver as fast as you can."

And this one fella, every time I tried to pass him, he would speed up, and then he'd slow down. This orderly said, "We must get going." Because the other driver was kind of poking along, until there was a passing place, then he'd speed up. And I think it was deliberate. That's the way it seemed.

So finally I said, "Will you are going to verify what I did. I'm gonna pass this fellow." We had kind of a long curve -- and he started speeding up. And I finally picked a spot where it was wide, level ground, and actually I run him off the road. I looked in the rearview mirror as I went by and, he was still upright and everything off the road. He had gone in the ditch. And when I got back I had to get before one of the higher officers and explain what happened. And the medical orderly verified that I had to do something like that to get going. This orderly had a high, shrill voice, and he even rolled down the window and made a sound like a siren, really screamed. Didn't do any good [chuckles].

....It seemed like every forest fire somebody got hurt, some way or the other. I don't really recall very many injuries because they were pretty particular about safety of the men. Oh, we were at some camps where [there were] mostly fellows from New Jersey and back [east], that had no experience at all out here. We had to teach them how to operate the axe or machete or whatever we were using, and teach them to do it in a safe way. And some of them were very inexperienced, so we had to have a Red Cross card, first aid card.

Did you get the first aid training in the CCC?

Yeah, the first one [in South Dakota].

Were there any other job duties that you had besides driving the truck, and the ambulance, and delivering supplies?

Not at that time. Back in South Dakota I was, guess I had experience. My dad had got me started driving when I was in my middle teens. He hauled livestock. And when the market was good, and he was driving pretty near day and night, he'd take me with him to Sioux City, Iowa. And I'd drive.

How long would it take you to get out to, say, Camp Hemlock? What was the truck's speed like, and what were the roads like?

All by yourself -- just you?

Well, in the warehouse.

So the hauling of the CCC boys took place in the smaller, regular army trucks?

Yeah, regular army trucks. I don't know whether that's what we'd drive. We had two of those. This is a good friend of mine with me [looking at photos]. And that was a truck I drove too.

Looks almost like a covered wagon from the back there.

.... Wood hoops around there, and then the canvas covered it.

And what year would that be? Would that be a 1934?

Yeah, that would be a '34, '35, something like that, I think. . . . And here's the truck I usually drove [at Mystic Camp in South Dakota], ton-and-a-half truck with a fella helping.

And the ones you drove in Vancouver were like that, though.

Yes, they were like that. They had about five trucks like that, but it was army trucks. They had them like this. I think there was four or five of them.

Four or five of the ones that look like covered wagons?

Army trucks, just like this. And then two semi-trucks. And I had a picture of that too, the big one.

So, if you went to a camp on Saturday night, that was your choice? It wasn't something you were ordered to do?

[We went] to the nearest town. Depends on where the camp was located. They usually had one or two truckloads that went into the town.

Into the town that was near the camp?

Nearest. Yeah, they wouldn't be very far away.

Did they ever come into Vancouver for the weekend?

Yep, some of them. They did out there at Hemlock, they did.

And would they stay at the barracks where you were when they did that?

Well, they'd go in just Saturday night, and then I'd have to take them back to camp.

Oh, on Saturday night?

Sometimes it was kind of late, but they let them have that.

Did you also go to the side camps? You know how they had Camp Beacon Rock and Camp Hemlock, and then they had other camps that were further out, did you go to those?

I was stationed at one in South Dakota, that's all. They were kind of a branch of the main camp. And there'd usually be two trucks and a couple dozen fellows working there. And they'd have a cook. I think that's all they had to take care of the kitchen stuff. And we were under the control of the Forest Service then because they weren't a main camp. The main camp would do the inspection. That's when I chauffeured some army officers around to all the camps, to be sure it was in really healthful conditions.

Did you ever have an accident while you were out driving for the CCC?

No. [looking at photos] This is a typical office in the CCC camp.

Made of wood, and the U.S. Forest Service insignia there.

Yeah, and the army office on the other half of it.

When they brought trainloads of CCC boys in from other places, do you know what happened next? They would usually come into Portland, wouldn't they?

Yeah.

And then who would pick them up and bring them to the Barracks?

Well, the trucks down here at the Fort [Vancouver Barracks] would bring them up, and then take them out to different camps, wherever they were short-handed or something. I knew of very few fellows that —went over the hill.” They just couldn't take it.

What would make them “go over the hill?”

Hard work, mostly. See, some of the fellows working were inner city. They'd never worked. At one time, I was hauling the fellows out, and we went by a sheep pasture. And all of the sudden the guy right behind me started yelling, and I slammed on the brakes to see what the problem was. And he pointed out the window. There was a bunch of sheep out in the pasture.

He said, “Look at the sheep! Look at the sheep!” [laughs]

He'd never seen sheep before?

Not a live one. So that was an example of what it was like.

Can you tell me anything about medical or dental services that were available at the Barracks?

Well, we had a doctor, who was usually a lieutenant. And when they'd see anything serious, they'd take them up here to the army hospital, and Fort Vancouver [Barracks]. Minor injuries, they'd have -- part of one building in camps to take care of them. Because we had a medical orderly they call it, in camp.

So the doctor was in Vancouver, but the medical orderly was at the camp?

Oh, we had doctors at each camp too. And I think that they were army too.

What kinds of social activities?

About all we could afford [was] to go to the movies.

Did you go to the Kiggins Theater much?

Down to Kiggins, yeah. And I'd go over to a roller rink in Portland, roller-skating. The only activities we had was to go to the movie, or go down roller skating, and some fellows [would] go to the dance. It's hard to believe maybe, that I was very shy in those days. I wouldn't talk to a girl.

So you wouldn't go to the dances?

No, I didn't know how.

Do you know where they were held? The dances?

There was some ballroom downtown, It seemed like it was just on the west side -- there was some ballroom there that they'd go to in Portland, I should say.

Oh, in Portland?

Yeah. You see you could walk across the Interstate Bridge²⁶ then. They had a streetcar at the south end of the bridge. So we'd get on the streetcar [and] go downtown Portland.

Was it the Crystal Ballroom?

That sounds kind of familiar, all right. It probably was. But I really wasn't interested in that, I just wanted to go roller-skating. One of the fellows with me, sometime[s] we'd go down roller-skating.

And where was the roller skating rink? Was it Oaks Park?

Well, it was on the west side of downtown Portland. I think just south of the business area.

You told me earlier that the people took pretty kindly to the CCC boys in Vancouver.

Yeah.... I was always treated pretty nice. Usually [a] couple fellows [would be] invited to visit a home, have a dinner, have a meal, here in Vancouver.

Where did you get invited? How would you get to know people?

Well, I think it was just someone would come there to the camp, at the office and say, "How about some fellows come to our dinner?" I don't remember just exactly how we'd get invited, but it was usually just two boys that were invited. I don't know whether there were names mentioned.

²⁶ The Interstate Bridge between Vancouver and Portland was constructed in 1917. Prior to the construction of Interstate 5 in 1964, first streetcars and then Denver Avenue in North Portland provided the main thoroughfare from Vancouver to downtown Portland.

So what kind of food did you have on post in Vancouver? What was the food like?

Oh, meat and potatoes and peas and stuff like that. It was well-balanced, it wasn't exactly like I sing in that song²⁷ [laughs].

I was going to ask you if you know what "canned willie" is?

I have heard that expression too and it usually [meant] corned beef in a can. I think that's what they're talking about.

Can you tell me if your experience in the CCC made a difference in your future?

Well, I suppose it did. The experience that I got driving truck in the CC's, even operating a tractor sometimes or a dozer or building a road. They usually would only allow the ones that had previous experience on a dozer, but because I had operated farm tractors and I had done that.

The main thing was to get a job. Get something to eat. I had been hungry. I mean I have been really hungry, so I understand what a person feels like. When you're really hungry ain't nothing else matters -- get a job or something. A lot of times I worked [a] job all day to get meals. That's back in South Dakota. There were two farmers that had two small children, pretty large farm, and I would work once in a while to get a good meal. Be that much less to take away from the family.

Was there anything that was difficult for you about the CCC?

I don't think so. Because I had been in the Depression for awhile, and usually I got any job I could get, and I'm always a positive personality. Sometimes you have to have a positive personality to survive. But even now, if someone tells me that's impossible, that's when I get interested.

So you saw that it was difficult for some of the young men who didn't have experience like you did?

Yeah, when they grew up in what they called the inner city. Some of them hadn't even seen a lawn, any grass growing. And so I was kind of in sympathy with them. And there were a lot of them that couldn't read or write. And I made a regular tour of all the camps -- and when they got letters, they'd save them _til I got there. Then I'd be sitting in the recreation hall reading the letters to them that their parents had had somebody else write for them. Then they'd dictate letters to me. I'd write, address them and everything, and send back to the folks. So sometimes mail would be two, three weeks old, but they had that waiting for me to come there.

And then you would write a letter for them.

Yeah.

To send back? And [did] you [do] that at all the different camps, or only certain camps?

²⁷ Mr. Aust is referring to a song that he wrote while driving a truck in the CCC [see page 43 for lyrics].

Well, it was mostly on the Southern boys and back east. Fellows that had grown up in the Middle West or even out in the West here, they're, I don't know, better educated or what, but it seemed like the fellows in the Southern states and the East, New Jersey and New York area, they had help. And I don't remember how many camps there were that.... because some of the camps had fellows [all] from one part of the country. They never mixed from the southern states and New York or New Jersey ones.... I think that they probably realized that it just wouldn't work.

Did you drive to all twenty-seven camps? I think there were twenty-seven camps between 1936 and 1938.

Well I never counted them. I don't know -- it was all the camps under the jurisdiction of General Marshall when he was there.... And I've tried to locate some of the camps since then, but the buildings are all torn down and the trees are growing up and everything.... They've changed the location of the roads and everything [referring to Mystic Camp in South Dakota, although the same is true on the Gifford Pinchot [National Forest]]. I think that the best thing ever happened, though, was the Civilian Conservation Corps that President Franklin Roosevelt [started].

Why do you think it's the best thing that ever happened?

For a lot of these fellows, they never worked before, and they didn't know how to do anything. They had to be taught just about every little thing, and it seemed like when they did get discharged and go home they were more confident, I think. They figured if they could handle that they could handle anything. We had certain sanitation rules they had to follow, showers and everything, and we had dress inspection sometimes. Stand in line like it was the army. They had physical inspections every once in awhile.

Did you have to do physical training?

Well, we got that on the job [laughs].

You got that on the job. Being part of the motor pool and stationed at Vancouver Barracks you didn't have to run PT like the soldiers did?

I didn't have a soldier's job, it was driving mostly...

Did you get up with reveille every morning?

Yeah, yeah -- same fellow that was timekeeper in the office, he knew how to blow a trumpet. So he'd get out there, 'course he had to get up earlier all the time. He had to get out, towards the Barracks and blast that trumpet.

What did your clothes look like?

Well working clothes, denim shirt, denim pants. When we went anyplace socially, I think I had to use khaki pants. [The] army accepted no insignia on it.

Did you have a CCC cap?

Yeah, regular army cap. Yeah, dressed up, anybody seen us would think we were in the army.

And that's why they would ask you if you were in the army or the CCC?

Yeah, here's something [that] happened. I don't know what it was that people in Vancouver [had] against army fellows. Maybe they just figured if they're in there that's all they are capable of -- or something, I don't know. They realized they had known enough about the Civilian Conservation Corps, that they treated us real decent.

Now, you mentioned to me, and you mentioned on the Marshall Memories tape [that you acted as chauffeur for Mrs. George C. Marshall]. I asked you if you did that sort of thing very often?

She had another chauffeur. She wanted to go downtown Portland, oh for two or three, four hours. And that wasn't my job to start with. She had another fellow do that. And one day, I had been there for oh, a number of weeks, and the truck dispatcher -- he was in charge of the trucks -- told me to get my uniform on, go up and pick up Mrs. Marshall.²⁸ And I thought, Oh-oh, okay, I'll do it... And when I went up there -- all I knew of them is the General -- because he was promoted afterwards -- he would be sitting in there reading the paper or something sometimes, and he said, --The ~~we~~ will be right down."

And pretty soon she'd come down the stairway, and the first time anyways I went out and opened the back door of the car, and she said, --~~N~~, I'll ride in the front." And I thought, --~~We~~ okay, she's different."

Like I said, I was kind of shy in those days, and went downtown Portland and we hadn't gone very far and she asked me two or three different questions, and I said, --Yesma'am, no, ma'am."

She reached over and tweaked my ear and she said, --won't bite." [laughs] And the next time she called and asked for me.

Well, this other driver was there. He drove one of the small trucks, usually. And he said, --~~We~~ a minute, that was my job."

--Oh the truck dispatcher said she asked for me, asked for Carroll."

So he came to me and said, --How come you're driving for her?"

--I ~~dn't~~ know, just taking orders." She had asked for me. I can't understand it 'cause he had a completely different personality. He was kind of a loudmouth type. And a lot of joking and so on, which I wasn't really. So after that, I lost track of [the] number of times anyway, and they told me that sometimes when I was out driving, that she asked for me and if I wasn't there she just wouldn't go. So I thought that that was pretty nice.

So you would just do it when you were available?

Yeah, when I was driving -- we had two big semi's there -- I was driving one of them and sometimes I wasn't available. I would be driving something else, or I'd be working in the shop. They put me in charge of the trucks pretty soon, so I could pick out the drivers and whatever.

Were you a mechanic too?

Yeah, I was a mechanic. My father and his two brothers had a garage back in South Dakota and that's where I'd learn[ed] mechanics pretty well. And I was an apprentice mechanic for International Harvester in Sioux Falls for a while, so I understood pretty well. My dad was really a mechanic and his two brothers that were first class mechanics taught me a lot.

²⁸ George C. Marshall met Catherine Boyce Tucker Brown, a widow with three children, in 1930 and the two married within weeks.

What prompted you to compose your song? The song that you wrote about the CCC? When did you write that?

[Helen Aust] He was a singing truck driver.

He was a singing truck driver. You didn't tell me that.

I knew so many songs that I'd sing kind of to drown out the truck motor. My dad played harmonica, and my mother played the organ. She sang too, for different groups. What they call Ladies Aid School or something like that. So I had a sense of rhythm. I made up all the songs as I went along. Helen said, —~~That~~'s not the right word."

Well, I was using the tune [laughs]. But I like good music. And now, I have a mandolin in there, I plunk away different tunes. But, somebody [said] one day that this is something to write home about, and I thought well, I'm gonna write a song. And the last verse was after I got here. From the time I left South Dakota, I had a feeling there should be one more verse, finally put it together.

And what was that last verse? Do you remember it?

[singing] Sometime my nephew, sure, let's get together again.
Tell what we've been doing and where we have been.
Some friends we will miss them, don't know where they are.
Let's all keep in touch boys, though we wander afar.

That was after you wandered afar, wasn't it?

And it was. Some of the fellows I really got close to. You know, really friends... like in the army you have some friends, they really stick together. Well, we had some older fellows than I, in the CCCs. I think twenty-four years was the limit to age they could be in, and I know there was a couple there that they were my mentor[s]. I figured if I can grow up and be a nice guy like that.... And there was the fellows that tried to have a sense of humor, but they were hard workers.

Did you stay in contact with any of them?

No. See, we come out here from South Dakota and, there was two or three fellows stationed down here, that I see sometimes. But....

You still see Paul, and Lorraine.

Yeah. One of the fellows there, Paul Dix, he was [in] the office. I see him once in a while.

In the army or the CCC?

In the CCC.

Was the CCC office separate? Was there an office building that was separate from the army buildings?

No, it seemed that in pretty near every case, there was one building and then they were separated by a wall there; and the Forest Service had one half and the army had the other half.

Like the picture you showed me.

Yeah. See the Forest Service didn't have a very big office there that I knew of in Vancouver. We used army trucks to haul the fellows out to camp for a while, but then the Forest Service got their own trucks. So weekends [were] the only time the army truck was used to haul supplies and stuff to the headquarters down there. Or pick up men at the depot that were going to the CCCs. But if you were going out in the woods, they used Forest Service trucks. They had a symbol on the door -- big shield -- U.S. Forest Service.

What were the road conditions like?

Well, the roads they had were pretty primitive. Had, a lot of time with low gear. They [the construction people] punched a road through, and I had part of that job too sometimes. Even out here when I got working for Bonneville Power, they had to make some kind of a road to get into every structure.

Is there anything else that you would like to add about being in the CCC? Anything you'd like to say?

The skills that I developed in the CCCs actually, was what got me the job with Bonneville Power. And the opportunities I had with Bonneville, too. I became a journeyman electrician. A journeyman. Journeyman means that you're able to do any kind of electrical work. I went through that three-year [apprenticeship] course in two years. And I ended up in the last three years as the top-level foreman. And, when I think back about when I was driving truck back in South Dakota, I'd never in my wildest dreams believe that I could accomplish that. I happened to be lucky each time [there were promotions] because of having a positive attitude, maybe that's kind of what helped get the job done.

Is there anything negative that you have to say about the CCC?

No, I really can't. Some people could probably think about some of the negatives, but like I say, I'm a positive person and I tend to look at the positive side and ignore the rest of it.

So for you it was a positive experience. Well, I think that's about it. Unless there's anything else that you want to say.

No, I appreciate you coming over.

Oh, well thank you! I enjoyed talking to you.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Angela Redinger, March 2001

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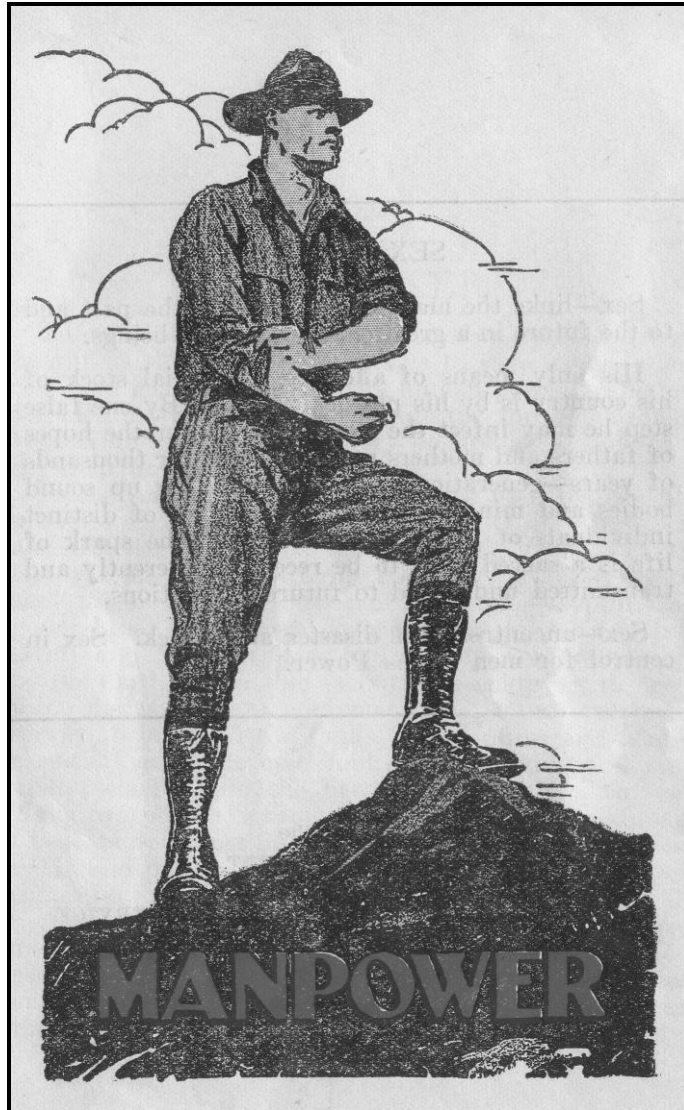
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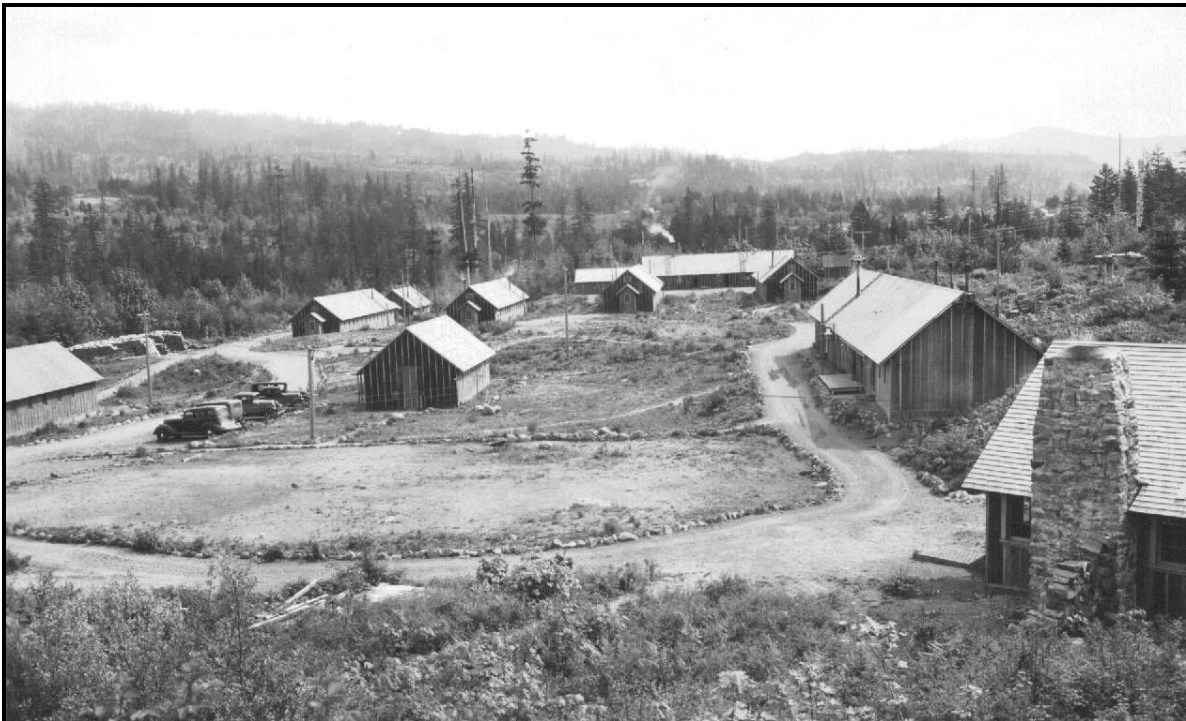
Carroll Aust's CCC Truck Driving Song

Come all you young fellows,
and I'll sing you a song,
Of life in the CCs,
where I've been so long.
Way out in the jack pines,
where life is so drear',
Where only a few months,
Seem just like a year.
They call you all out boys,
And put you in line,
If you don't feel like working,
It's a three dollar fine.
You get five a month,
To meet all your needs,
The girlfriends all leave you,
'cause you can't buy them feeds.
Sometime in the future,
Let's get together again,
Tell what we been doing,
And where we have been.
Some friends we will miss them,
Don't know where they are,
Let's all keep in touch boys,
Though we wander afar.





Wesley Betts, above, at Twin Buttes CCC Camp (F-38), and view, below), of Rock Creek CCC Camp (F-55), near Stevenson, Washington in 1935. The photographs are from the personal collection of Mr. Betts.



Wesley Betts

Co. 945 (1933-1938)

Narrator: Wesley Betts

Interviewer: Stacie Clough, Capstone student, Portland State University

Date: April 30, 2002

Place: Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters, Vancouver, Washington

Introduction:

Wesley A. Betts was born on March 4, 1914 in Pleasant Valley, north of Vancouver, Washington. His father was a carpenter through the Depression and he and his siblings picked berries to supplement the family's income. After graduating high school, Wes joined the CCC in order to help his family. He enrolled in Company 945, which went to the Rock Creek, Goldendale, Twin Buttes, and Sunset Falls camps. He started out as a regular worker doing jobs such as planting trees, crushing rock and building roads. It wasn't until somebody found out that Wes could type that he became the Clerk for Company 945. After leaving the CCC and working in Alaska, Wes returned to Vancouver and became a civilian employee of the CCC for a number of years. He continued to live in Vancouver where he married and raised a family.

How did your family end up in Vancouver?

Well, my ancestors were pioneers. My grandfather on my dad's side had seventy-five acres in what we call Pleasant Valley. He bought another seventy-five acres for a hundred and ninety dollars and the deed was signed by Ulysses S. Grant. It was Washington Territory at that time and apparently the commanding general of that district had to sign it. My son here has a copy of it if anyone doubts it [laughs]. Anyway, their kids were raised out there. My dad had three other brothers, they were all farmers. My dad was a carpenter. Times were very rough during the CCC days and President Roosevelt wanted to get the kids off the streets so they had the WPA and things like the CCC's. We got thirty dollars a month, and I think twenty-five of that was sent home as I recall. Then there was another category, the second level was thirty-six [dollars] a month. That's what I was eventually as a company clerk, I was getting thirty-six [dollars] a month.

And when was that that you were getting thirty-six [dollars] a month?

It would have been about in probably 1936, something like that. I did a lot of things like falling snags and setting chokers in mud up to my knees behind a Cat. Somebody discovered that I was a typist so they wondered if I wanted to be a company clerk. That's when I moved in there. Then my rate went up to thirty-six [dollars] a month.

When your rate went up to thirty-six did you still get five dollars and your family got twenty-five?

No, as I recall I think we got five [dollars] or something like that. I am not sure of that. I don't recall now.

So when a boy in the CCC got a raise, that money didn't necessarily go to the boy?

No, the money went to his folks. In some cases they saved the money and gave the money back if the family was able to, and so forth.

What did your family do?

My dad was a carpenter and his work was always intermittent, so I think they gave me a little bit when I got out. I don't recall now what it was.

You've talked a little bit about the Great Depression, but can you tell me about the Great Depression and how it affected your family in a little bit more detail?

Well, when we got out of high school -- I graduated in '33 -- and most of us never had jobs when we got out. Employment was poor in those days, so you almost had to do anything you could do and we did things like picking prunes and strawberry and berries and potatoes and anything we could do, and that's what we used to buy our clothes with. Each kid had to do that to have school clothes.

So when you were picking the berries where did you do that?

At different farms -- Fruit Valley and, just wherever they had berry farms, around Vancouver.

And would that be before or after school?

It would usually be in the summer time when school was out. We usually earned our money in the school vacation. Our parents a lot of times weren't able to buy everything we needed so it was everybody doing their own thing.

I am going to move on a little bit more to the CCC. When did you join the CCC?

It would have been about June 1933. Because I graduated in 33 and it was right after that.

Do you recall the first time you heard of the CCC?

No, I don't remember how I knew about it. Unless I could have heard about it from someone else. There were articles, of course, in the paper and this sort of thing. Vancouver Barracks newspaper was published once a month and one time I was editor of it. I worked for a major there and we'd go over to the printing office and set up type sometimes for some of the articles. I had two years of printing in high school and never used it before.

When was this when you were doing this?

It would be when I went to work in about '37, oh let's see, 36 maybe, possibly 36.

Okay great. How did you feel about having to leave your family to go into the CCC?

It really didn't bother me because we usually had weekend passes where we could come home. It didn't really bother me that much.

Were any of your friends or family in the CCC?

My brother was. He was in Company 944, which was at [Camp] Hemlock near Carson. He's deceased now.

Where were you inducted?

I was inducted in Vancouver Barracks. Then I was sent out to the camps. We had, maybe thirty-five camps around the Northwest and they just assigned us to a company. I was in 945 all the time I was what they called an enrollee. And then later the civilians at Vancouver Barracks were what they called temporary indefinite, which meant the government could hire you as long as they needed you.

Can you explain what the induction process was like?

Each employee had a personnel file and in that it had, of course, their name and all their family data. They would also have who to call in an emergency and also they had a medical exam. In fact I was a company clerk for about three years, so we kept the records and made the payroll for these kids to see they got paid and all that.

What were the medical examinations you had to go through?

They had a regular medical army doctor that examined us. Of course they checked your blood pressure and your heartbeat and stuff like that.

And do you remember, did everyone have to go through that?

Everyone. Everyone had to go through that.

And was there one doctor assigned to each company or was there one doctor for the whole CCC?

No, each company had a separate medical doctor. Each company had an education advisor and a doctor and usually either two or three army officers.

What was the very first camp that you went to?

Sunset Falls. That's in Yacolt. I might mention that my daughter drove me out there a couple months ago. I hadn't been there since I left. At that time in '33 the roads were crushed rock and bumpy. The rubber tires were all cut from this crushed rock. She took me out and now it's all paved and there's beautiful homes and cabins along the river. I got out to the end of the road and they had a camp there where there was a five-dollar day use permit. We had to pay five just to park there. You couldn't go down to look at the steelhead in the falls because it would disturb them. I couldn't even recognize the place because when we were there, it was all snags. Everything was burnt. Now it's all green and in this park I noticed there was trees there that were two-and-a-half feet in diameter. I wondered if those were the ones that I helped plant. We planted twenty five thousand of them when I was out there all over the hills. Now it's all green out there. It's not like it used to be, it's very nice.

What was the transportation?

Well they had just army trucks. Typical army trucks is what we rode back and forth in, dust and all.

Dust and all, explain that, was it dusty?

Well, the road in the summer dries out and you get all that dust and you're just all full of dirt when you get wherever you are going.

What was your first day like in the CCC?

Well, I don't remember. Of course we were kind of used to working in those days and I can't remember the first job I had. I think it was felling snags. I felled snags for about three months out there with a cross-cut saw. I had a partner with us, of course, and it involved things like cutting a notch in the tree for your springboard and sometimes hanging out over a cliff or the side of a steep hill while you were doing this. About the hardest work I think I ever done.

So you felled snags at Sunset Falls?

Yeah, for about three months.

Can you explain to me what you do when you fell a snag?

Well, I don't remember the years, but there was fire that went through the Gifford National Forest²⁹. These were what you call old growth trees mostly. They had stretches and these snags were where all the limbs were burnt off and they were dead, of course, from the fire. Every so often there would be a pocket where there would be a spot from the pitch where it would burn into this. Otherwise some of the trees were solid green – no knots for maybe ten or fifteen feet – very beautiful timber at one time. What you do is cut a notch in one side of the tree, depending on which way you want it to fall, then you saw from the other side. And the notch will usually make it fall in that direction. Then you jump off the back when somebody says timber because sometimes you'll get a split or something and it might be dangerous. And that's about all there is to it.

And you said that it was the hardest work --

.... that I've ever done. Running the cross-cut saw. There's another partner on the other end and these saws are six or seven feet long, I guess, and you had to saw through those. And sometimes you'd find snags that had a pocket of pitch in the middle and you'd use kerosene on the saw to overcome that.

Explain that. You'd put kerosene on the saw?

On the saw, because that sort of neutralized the pitch.

And that made it easier?

Made it easier, yeah.

Do you remember what your first impressions were from Sunset Falls?

Oh my gosh. It was hard work. Everybody worked and the foremen were all Forest Service people, old timers usually, that had worked in the woods for years. And so they knew what to do and we didn't do everything on our own. We had supervisors, forest men, that were old timers and they knew exactly what to watch for. If you had a job that they used to call a —~~view~~ "snow maker" -- those that they split and one part flops in that air and comes down on you, they knew how to avoid that. So, they were very beneficial as far as our work was concerned.

²⁹ Mr. Betts is referring to the Yacolt Fire of 1902, the largest recorded wildfire in Washington state history.

I am going to get to some of the other work that you did at Sunset Falls, but you remember how the camp was laid out?

Usually it was kind of like [army style] you might say. If you've been to Vancouver Barracks, they had a parade ground there. But these buildings were closer to the middle. When they'd had reveille in the morning, everybody got out there and they took roll call to make sure everybody was there. They had a courtyard between the buildings and that's about all I could tell you about it. The buildings weren't too far apart, they were grouped together more or less.

And did you have tents or barracks?

We had barracks usually. Then, at Twin Buttes, which is up near Mt Adams -- you had to go up there in summer because of the snow -- they would have tent camps where they'd have tents really for the roof. And the side, as I recall, was some kind of wood, but the top was a tent. And of course, they had some buildings that were more permanent that they used for the shops, and things like that were regular buildings. I understand those have all been torn down. I haven't been up there, but a fella that I know in Lyle has been through there and said they're all torn down.

Explain what the process was like for meal time at Sunset Falls.

Well they usually had a bugler that blew the mess call and everybody went and did their things. That's about all there was to it. Or they sometimes had a thing like a triangular gong that they'd bang on it with an iron. Usually young fellas are always hungry so they were aware of things like that.

And, what did you do when the bell was rung?

Well you'd just go in the mess hall and usually you had a place where you were assigned you know, a regular table. I remember they had one fella at one place there where he ate like a hog. He came to eat one time and they had a little pig trough set in front: —Hey, I can't eat out of this.”

What kind of food did you guys have?

Well, I'd say it was just standard army chow. In the morning they'd have scrambled eggs and maybe bacon and they had box cereal, this dry chaff, and sometimes oatmeal. Just the same as they'd feed you in the army. Most of the cooks were ex-army cooks that were there.

As far as waste, where did you guys put your waste products at Sunset Falls?

Well, they had garbage cans in the back of the cook shack and I think that trucks hauled them out into dumps where they dumped them. I don't know if they buried them or not. But I remember a bear used to come and tip these cans over and help himself. They finally shot the bear and the cook cooked the bear and we ate it. It wasn't too bad, a little bit like beef I thought.

I am going to talk a little bit more about the work that you did at Sunset Falls that we talked about before the interview. Let's talk about setting chokes. Could you describe what this job is like?

Yeah, when they were building roads they had to fall trees a lot of times to make room for the road. So they'd fall these trees and then they'd have Caterpillars [tractors]. The choke setter was the guy that took a steel cable and hooked it in under the end of the tree, and the Cat drug this tree out some place. The mud in places, at times, was up to your knees almost, and it was always kind of a mess getting cleaned up. I did that for a while, two or three weeks while I was at Sunset.

This is believed to be one of the most dangerous jobs. Did you feel in danger when you were doing it?

Well, they are kind of dangerous if you don't know what you are doing and if you are not careful.

Did you ever witness any accidents?

No, I never saw anyone get hurt with that. It's not quite like logging timber or anything like that where they have these high lines. Usually they'd just drag these out along the road, you know, to get them out wherever they took them.

How did you get trained for this job?

Well you really don't have to know anything much because the supervisors will tell you how to start and all that. It doesn't really take much training or anything like that. In some cases we did work like clearing trails and every year trees would sometimes blow over the trail. They have to keep them open for fire protection and also the road, the same thing. So it was a maintenance job more or less.

We talked a little bit earlier about all the trees that you guys planted. Where did you plant the trees at Sunset Falls?

We planted them all around the hills around the camp. Like I said, at that time these snags that had fallen were just flat with the ground and you had to jump in and out amongst the trees. We had what we called a hoedag. It was actually like a pick that had a flat blade and you'd just strike it in the ground and then pull up the handle and then you put in these little seedlings that were about eight or ten or twelve inches long, and then you'd step on it. I think we planted them about eight feet apart. We supposedly planted 25,000 of them and this friend of mine in Lyle thinks they have been harvested. I'm not sure if they have or not. I saw trees up there, but I don't know if they're the ones that we planted. I think they'd probably harvest them in fifty years or something like that.

Can you describe to me a normal day, from the time you woke up to the time you went to bed at Sunset Falls?

As I remember, every morning they had reveille, which meant the bugle blew and you had to get out and they took roll call to make sure everybody was there. I don't think we had exercise. And then we would go get washed up for breakfast. I think breakfast was about six o'clock and then after that you had just so long to get yourself dressed in whatever you were going to wear. Then you'd usually go out and get in the truck and they'd ride off someplace to some project that they were working on. The projects were done by the Forest Service and the army part of it had more to do with the discipline and looking out after everyone's interests. Making sure people didn't go AWOL.

What did the army do for discipline?

If someone got into mischief they would usually give them KP duty where they'd work in the kitchen peeling spuds and doing all the dirty work. Cleaning the latrines, things like that for a period of time. If it was real bad, of course, they'd probably end up in jail and the captain would have to go and get him out....

Can you explain any of those instances?

I remember one time we were at Rock Creek [Camp]. They used to have dances there on Saturday night at the grange hall and a couple of guys got in some kind of a fuss. One guy said, —A945 out.” There was some guy there that had a gun he pulled this pistol out and said, —Ve got a 945. Who wants it?” Nobody said a word. They all settled down and it was just like normal.

Who was that that pulled out [the gun]?

I don't know, I don't know now if it could have been the sheriff or who it was, but somebody did. He said, —Ve got a 45. Who wants it?”

And that wasn't somebody in the CCC. It was somebody outside of the CCC?

No, the guy with the gun wasn't in the CCC. The ones that caused the fuss were the CCC guys. Of course they can restrict them, not give them a pass if they act up. They could keep you from going out. It was kind of like the army because the officers in there didn't take any nonsense. If people goofed off, they really cracked down on them.

When you talked about AWOL, what happened if you did that?

They would discharge you eventually. You'd get a dishonorable discharge, which didn't mean too much I guess. They've had some that did leave but not many. It was your bread and butter really.

Back to the normal day at Sunset Falls. We talked about leaving for work. What happened at night when you came home from work.

Well, when you came home there were certain days when you had to scrub the floors with a mop and water and clean the boards and the floor. Then you had a certain amount of time to get ready for dinner and usually it involved washing up because you'd nearly always be dirty or sweaty or whatever and you might want to take a shower or something like that. Then dinner at night and after that you were all free until the morning.

I'm going to move on to Twin Buttes. How did you travel from Sunset Falls to Twin Buttes?

Well, Twin Buttes was near Mt Adams. If you were at Sunset Falls you probably would have to go back and go some other way because at the end of this road at Sunset Falls you run into Skamania County. Your best way to get to Twin Buttes is to go to White Salmon and go north. It's about fifty miles, first is Peterson Prairie, which is about twenty-five miles. That used to be a headquarters for the packhorses that would carry supplies up to the men on the lookouts. You know, in the summer and things like that. It's very pretty up in that area. Then at Twin Buttes it used to be that you could look north and see all the way to Mt. Rainier on a good day. Beautiful

country but the road wanders around. At that time there was almost just a single road. There were a few campgrounds in there but the mosquitoes were just horrendous in there, terrible....

What did you have to do to Sunset Falls in order to leave it, the prep work?

Well, they just transferred up to Rock Creek and I don't know if they actually ran out of work there. There was probably more work they could do like planting more trees and stuff. But I guess they had other stuff they wanted to do at Rock Creek. At Rock Creek I worked on rock crusher for some time, maybe three months. What they did was they blasted rock and then after it was blasted they took a sledge and you had to make small ones out of the big ones so they would go in the rock crusher. It was very dangerous work. At that time we didn't even have safety goggles. I don't know if no one thought about them or what, but we'd just squint and hope that it wouldn't put our eyes out....

You said that you didn't use goggles but was there any precautions that the CCC made to make sure that you guys were safe doing that job?

When they'd blast they would take you off where you'd be safe, but otherwise, as far as the breaking the rock, we never had glasses. Nobody said anything about it. I guess we didn't know any better at that time.

When you say that you blasted rock, can you explain that?

They had what they call powder monkeys where they take a jackhammer and they drill in the rock. Then they put a dynamite charge in there. And then that's hooked up to caps. It's set off electronically from a distance. It's kind of dangerous work for anybody that has to do that. I never did that jackhammer work actually. Just the sledgehammer work is all I did.

So the dynamite would blow the rock up?

Yeah, but it'd be in big chunks. Usually they were fairly big. The opening for the rock crusher is only like, I don't recall, but maybe it's a couple feet square, something like that. So we couldn't put a huge rock in there. They had to be small. And every once in a while the rock crushing machinery would break down, you know. Sometimes rocks are so hard that they are harder than the steel in the machine, and they would break down once in a while. So the small rocks were better. Not real small but ones that it would handle....

Can you explain the machine a little bit more to me? You said it's a square, you put the rock in. How does it crush it into smaller rocks?

Well, I never actually saw the inside of it, but the rock crusher has this heavy machine, and I believe it was a gasoline motor that ran this, maybe diesel. And there's a thing that makes a kind of a 'whoosh, whoosh, whoosh', like that. And this thing, any rocks that were dropped in there were crushed, and they had a smaller one for the roads. Seems like the opening was only a couple of feet square maybe, maybe two-by-three, something like that. So the rocks had to be small enough that it wouldn't wreck the machinery.

Okay, I want to move back to Twin Buttes a little bit. What was your initial reaction at Twin Buttes? Talk a little bit about the mosquitoes.

Well, it was cold up there at night. It was real cold at night. Twin Buttes, it had a certain amount of mosquitoes there, but in the area as you went towards Mount Rainier, where it was a little lower, the mosquitoes were fierce. I went fishing there one time and the back of my hands were black with mosquitoes, and it swelled up about an inch thick on the back of my hand. I itched and itched for two or three days. So they were bad in that area for some reason or another.

Were you in the CCC when you went fishing?

At times I think we did. I think like on Sundays we did....

And when you had those mosquito bites, could you go see the company doctor?

Well, you could, but I don't think we paid any attention to it much. But the fish were pretty good. I'll show you one of these pictures for your own information. Here's one of em here. See that's a nice fish. That's probably a river salmon, that one. If you go in farther, you'll see one there.

So we're looking at a picture that has a foreman.

That was my boss right there. He was what we called the First Sergeant. I think he got forty-five dollars a month.

What was his name?

Fasel. Willis Fasel. F-A-S-E-L. Yeah, now here's what I was talking about the saws and the axes. That's what we had. Springboard is a notch you cut in the tree, and then there's a two-by-six, maybe about by seven feet long. And it has a steel thing on the end of it. It hooks into that notch in your stump, and you stand on it when you're sawing. You have to do that sometimes if the tree's on a hill....

Back to Twin Buttes. Can you explain to me if the meal time was any different than at Sunset Falls?

No, I think they were all the same. Really all the same.

Okay. Did the cooks move with you?

Yes. Yes, the whole company moved when we moved.

Okay. So they were part of company?

Mm-hmm.

And where did you guys put your waste products at this camp?

I think it would be the same thing where they'd haul it out into a dump. Well, they probably didn't bury it because there wasn't anybody around at that time actually. But now they are more conscious of those things.

So do you ever remember there being a dump site on the camp?

No, not on the camp.

Let's talk about your work. You said earlier that you were building roads at Twin Buttes. Is that correct?

Well I was a company clerk there. When we were at Twin Buttes, I was a company clerk. My job was to take care of the personnel records of our employees. You had to make a payroll every month for the employees and listing all their names and that sort of thing. That's what I did. Typing payroll. Things like that.

Was it at Twin Buttes at this time that you got that raise to thirty-five dollars for being company clerk?

I think actually it was at Sunset Falls because they needed a company clerk and they noticed I was a typist. So they offered me the job.

How did they find out you were a typist?

Of course, in our application, when you first were hired, it told what you were and what you did and what your education was. I don't recall now, but it probably had some information like commercial arithmetic and things like that which we took. I imagine that's how they saw it because we didn't have computers in those days, of course.

How did you feel about being a company clerk while they were working in the woods?

I liked it because that was my rest hour.

We talked a little bit about the jobs that you did like company clerk and payroll. Was there any time you had to do any other type of work?

Well, there were reports. Always various reports that were due on a certain date. I don't recall now what they were, but they would have been like the number of enrollees and how many of them were gone. How many were discharged and how many were hired and things like that. There was always a lot of paper work to keep track of.

Since we are talking about company clerk. Were you a company clerk at Rock Creek?

Yes, I eventually was. I remember I was working on the rock crusher for about three months. Maybe it was after that I got to be company clerk. I said Sunset Falls but I think it probably was there. It's so long ago that I can't really remember.

So, the jobs we have talked about so far are rock crusher, a company clerk, felling snags, planting trees and setting chokes - - was there any other jobs that you did?

I said clearing trails, didn't I there once? And building the roads, and setting the chokers and all that. We did a certain amount of that.

What was the process of building a road?

Well, sometimes they had to have roads for firefighting purposes and they'd build these roads. It involved falling trees to get them out of the way, or snags, whatever was there. Then there had to be a drainage. You had ditches usually on the side to keep everything from washing out.

That's about all I recall. Usually they were graveled by hauling gravel from some pit some place.

What was your specific job when you were building the roads?

Mostly it was that choker setter for three months and there was always a certain amount of shovel work here and there. They did have machinery, they had Caterpillars and road graders at that sort of thing.

Each day was there a possibility that you were going to be doing something different or did they let you know that you would have this job for two weeks?

You just did whatever they told you to do. Usually you knew what your job was. You knew you were supposed to get on a truck to go out with crew so-and-so, and you never knew what they were going to ask you to do. We didn't have much problem that way.

I am going to move on to Rock Creek, which was the third camp that you were at.

That would be the second camp. We were at Goldendale also. The work in Goldendale was mostly revetment work and rather than the Forest Service we were under the Soil Conservation Service. Their engineers built quite a few rip-rap revetments. Now that is, certain times of the year they'll have heavy rains and it will wash gullies through somebody's farm so they build a rip rap or gladice or something to keep the soil from washing off. That was at Goldendale.

What was your first impression of Goldendale? The camp.

Well it was windy all the time that we were there. It's hot in the summer and cold in the winter.

How long did you stay at Goldendale?

It seems like we were there just in the summer time. We were there two different summers. Then we would move back to some other place. In this case it would have been Rock Creek.

When you went to Rock Creek, do you remember traveling into Rock Creek camp?

Yes, it's not far from the road. You just turn off the road at Stevenson. I've driven through there years afterwards and I couldn't even recognize the place anymore. The buildings are all torn down.

Can you explain to me the layout of Rock Creek [Camp]?

I have some pictures of it but it's just a typical camp. The buildings were scattered. This is the Goldendale one [referring to a picture]. I got some of Rock Creek here in this book. Maybe in these pictures here.... [see photograph, page 42] Here's one of me. Now there's one of the buildings right there and there's some more of them. They look kind of like they are on the side of the hill and I don't remember that much about it. It's been so long ago. They're scattered out and there is just gravel and mud between them. Especially in the winter time there is a certain amount of mud in all those....

Well let me ask you some more questions since we have the pictures on CD and we will be able to get to those. They will really help us out in understand the layout. I want to get some more of

your impressions of what the camp was like. Did you notice any difference in the camps at Rock Creek as far as the buildings. Did the buildings seem to be consistent or were they different?

They're consistent; they used double oil drums for a stove. They were welded together. There's a picture of one in here. All the camps had the same ones and apparently they were made in the metal shop or wherever. They were made by the enrollees, I am sure.

Where were those stoves at?

They were in the mess hall. Here's a picture of one right here, I'll show you.... Here's one of the mess halls. You can see the barrel there is usually two of those drums. One is the firebox and the other is a heat exchange. That's what they all look like.

This is.... a picture of the mess hall and in the right bottom corner there is a picture of the stoves that Wes has been talking about.

The wood goes in here and this is just feed in here that dissipates.

He's saying that there are two big barrels and the heat goes in the bottom.

Welded together. The fuel goes in the bottom and the smoke goes up in here and this exchanges the heat and gives you more heat because there is two of them there.

Okay so the fuel goes in the bottom barrel goes up the tube that they're welded through and that's where the heat is.

Up here in tent camp they used to have what you call a Sibley stove. It looks like a triangle kind of like this and it sets on some cement part of the floor. They are usually in a tent. I think we had those at Twin Buttes if I am not mistaken. But the building as far as I know, all had them like this [barrel stoves].

Did you guys have any of these stoves in your barracks?

They had stoves in there but I just don't recall what they were like now. They probably were kind of like that.

Earlier you showed me some of the pictures that were some of the specialized shops at Rock Creek that made the signs and the carpentry. Were you ever a part of working in any of those shops?

No, I would have been a company clerk, I think, at that time mostly. Or else I'd been out doing my labor work, whatever it was. No, I never worked in the carpenter shop or any of those....

What was your impression of the carpentry work that the CCC [did]?

Well, I thought it was pretty good. They built picnic tables, and they built many of these forest camps that are still being used today. In those days carpentry work was kind of unreliable, in that they didn't seem to build houses much in the winter in those days. Everything was done in the summer time. My dad was nearly always busy in the summer but not in the winter.

Sometimes he'd get a week or two repairing some barn or something like that. But it was very different than today. Now they build houses all year around, you know.

I'm going to talk a little bit now about all the camps in general. Overall, what was your favorite job you did in the CCC and why?

I think the company clerk was my favorite because I don't care too much about manual labor. My bones are kind of small and a lot of the work, if it involves heavy lifting or something like that, well I don't really like it too much. In Alaska, I worked on Alaska Railroad driving spikes and lining track and raising track where it settled after a thaw. It was hard work for me, being a small person. So I think that being a company clerk suited me just fine, being in a place like that.

How many CCC boys were company clerks?

Every company had one of them. And every one had a First Sergeant. And every one had, like I told you, an officer of staff. Many of these officers that were in there in the early days became famous people in their time. There's one here of Lyman Nemnitzer in this picture here. He became a commanding general in Europe³⁰. It shows him here. Right there.

So we are looking at a picture, it doesn't have a title, but it's a row....

These were inspectors that came. This was our captain and an assistant. This was one of the inspectors from the [Ninth] Corps. This guy was an inspector too, Lieutenant Bush. They'd come out there and they'd go fishing and they were shown around and all that. A lot of them became pretty important people. I saw this Lieutenant Hobson about twenty-five or thirty years later when I was working at Vancouver Barracks. He was a commanding person at the army field station somewhere in Chicago. Lieutenant Read ended up in Texas some place. I think he was a much higher rank at the time. I don't remember now what it was. It was good training for the officers that were in the military. Being able to handle all the characters that we had.

You just said that there was one company clerk in the CCC and you were that --

Well, no each camp had a company clerk and a first sergeant that did the paper work.

Were you treated any differently because you were the company clerk?

No, I don't think so. We ate in the same mess and had the same privileges as everybody else. So I don't think I was treated any differently.

Since we are on the topic of famous people, did George C. Marshall ever visit any of your camps?

George Marshall was commanding general at Vancouver Barracks in... I am not exactly sure of the date but I was personnel officer at Vancouver Barracks in 1951 and 1952 and he was the commander there at one time³¹. We also had a Commander Rodman who was a prisoner of a

³⁰ Commanding General, U.S. Forces Europe (1962-1969); Supreme Allied Commander Europe (1963-1969)

³¹ Brigadier General George C. Marshall was District Commander at Vancouver Barracks from 1936 to 1938 (Mack 2001:116,118)

war for something like two years and was there for a while. Marshall was there when I was there. I can't remember him inspecting these camps so I think he probably came in later.

While you were at the camps did you ever encounter any Native Americans?

There could have been ones there but I wouldn't recognize it. There was a lot of them at Carson. There was a lot of Indians there. I have been going there for as much as sixty years or more. The Indians ran that place at the time. There were Indians all over there that were connected with the Hot Springs. Eventually now it's been sold. I understand that it's closed at the moment for repairs. Last time I was up there I remember seeing a couple Indians come walking along towards me and they were older men. One of them said the white man stole this property and now they expect us to pay to take a bath here.

How long ago was that?

A couple of years ago.

But while you were working in the CCC?

Well, we'd see them in town but I never actually had much contact with them....

What did you like to do with your time when you weren't working?

We used to do a certain amount of walking around, like hikes and things like that. That's about all there was to do up there. Sometimes go swimming if there was a place where you could swim. We liked that. But I didn't do much fishing at that time although it would have been good if I could have.

Do you remember where you went on hikes?

I don't remember any place specifically. Sometimes we would go up different trails to different places and maybe lakes. Mosquito Lakes is one of the places we went to.

What sports teams did your company have?

It seems like they had volleyball and basketball. I am not really a sports person much. I used to play golf, I started caddying when I was twelve years old in golf. I worked as a caddy for about eight years. That's about the only sport that I cared much about....

Going back to the CCC, did you ever go into town for any dances or social events?

Yeah, we used to go to their dances once in a while. I didn't dance at the time but we used to go and gawk cause there was nothing else to do. We were somewhat bashful in those days but we used to like to look anyway.

How did you guys get to the dances?

Always in a truck. We'd be pretty dirty when we got there. The dust you know. The trucks, the way they were with the canvas hood, tends to suck the dust in the back. It didn't matter how clean you were when you started out because you probably wouldn't be that way when you got there.

How many guys would you fit in a truck?

Oh, I can't recall exactly, but I'd say there could be like maybe eighteen or so. Maybe twenty. And I remember that once they required a bunch of women to go. They sent a truck and picked a bunch of women and took them to the dance. They used to do things like that.

So the CCC would arrange for groups of women --

Yeah, yeah, sometimes.

And did any of your family or friends ever visit you at the CCC?

No. No, but we used to get passes for weekends sometimes where we'd go for a Saturday or Sunday and come back Sunday night....

What were your feelings when you left the CCC?

Well, I had been in there quite a while. This friend of mine in high school and I had talked about going to Alaska. We were going up there, and he was going to go with me. And so I found a job with Libby and McNeil Cannery in Alaska. And that was in the spring of '37. They had a strike about that time and it drug on for almost two months or so. It didn't look like it was going to be settled, so I just said —~~It's~~ "let's go up anyway." So we quit and went. He and I went up. We both got jobs on the railroad after about a month. But we got in Anchorage too soon and the street were full of ice and the rivers were all froze up and everything so we finally went to work on the railroad.... But I came back home because I really didn't like doing that heavy work, and my mother was always telling me all the time, —~~We~~ "you can get a job doing typing, son. You shouldn't be doing that heavy work, blah, blah, blah." So I finally decided she was right. So it was good because I hit it just right. Then I got a job right after I came back. I've been working in Civil Service ever since, until I retired.

When did you retire?

I retired in '69. So I've been retired, well, about as long as I worked actually.

Explain to me how you got the job when you came back from Alaska.

I was in Vancouver one day and I ran into a friend of mine that I knew in the CCC. He said, —~~Why~~ "don't you go over to headquarters? They're hiring civilians there. Go over and see Captain Read." Captain Read is in one of the pictures. He was in one of our camps so he knew me. They hired me and I worked at headquarters. I was a special orders clerk. I cut stencils all day long. All these enrollees that were transferred for one reason or another that came in or that moved, I had to cut special orders. You couldn't get one number wrong or you had to do it over, correct it. If it got out and it was wrong, you had to mend it. Stuff like that. So I did that for quite a while. Several months.

What year was that?

It would have been in '37.

How much did you get paid in that job?

I got \$105 a month, \$1260 a year. That was a good job in those days. I was buying furniture and had a wife. Now they'd laugh you out of town if you were offered that.

So the CCC was still going on. When you came back from Alaska you were hired as a civilian. Explain to me what the differences were.

Well, at headquarters at Vancouver Barracks, they had civilians there that ran things. Like you saw in the pictures in here. Things like the quartermasters had civilians. I was in the personnel office. They had supply people who were civilians and all that. They still had the same officers, but the civilians were the ones that worked for them. Our jobs were temporary/indefinite which meant they could let you go when they didn't need you. But it did hold out about three or four years before they closed it up.

Is there anything else you want to add about the CCC?

Also, when I was at Vancouver Barracks I worked for a claims officer. He handled claims for people that sued the government. He also was a supervisor of our paper. We had a paper that came out about every month at CCC headquarters, and I had a couple years of printing in high school where we set type. But I hadn't done any of it since then. So anyway, he had me as assistant. I was kind of like a yard bird. I would carry copy over to the printing office. Sometimes we would set the type for certain things like the headlines and stuff like that. Then they would put it into a mold where they made the thing that went on the press. I did that for quite a while. Those were the two main jobs I had at headquarters. Eventually, I went onto other jobs in the Civil Service after that.

Is there anything else?

That's about all I can think of. I was going to say this paper I had one of them. My son bought the house that I had on 136th [Vancouver] and I had a chest in there from my CMTC³² days and I had one of those papers in there and I thought I had another green book like this [Official Annual].... My name is here some place. Yeah, right here [page 37, Official Annual]. This is the finance office, see these are all civilians. Then you have ones like the quartermaster. Station hospital is one, district sales office, property warehouse personnel, substance warehouse, property office.

Was this a regular thing for people to have worked in the CCC as juniors and then be hired back later?

Well, some of them did. I think it was just a matter of chance that I found a vacancy when I came back. My friend up there that I told you I went up [to Alaska] with came back in the fall and didn't work all winter. He couldn't find a job all winter. He's dead now, he lived up in Belfair. Up in Washington -- Hood's Canal -- and he's gone. But this shows all the headquarters people and it tells what the people did and where they went. There's [Company] 945, but you see that's Goldendale, the Soil Conservation Service. I was gone from there when this was taken. It gives all the history, how they were formed and all that....

[End of Interview]

³² Citizens Military Training Camp, established at Vancouver Barracks in 1926 (Sinclair 2002:28).

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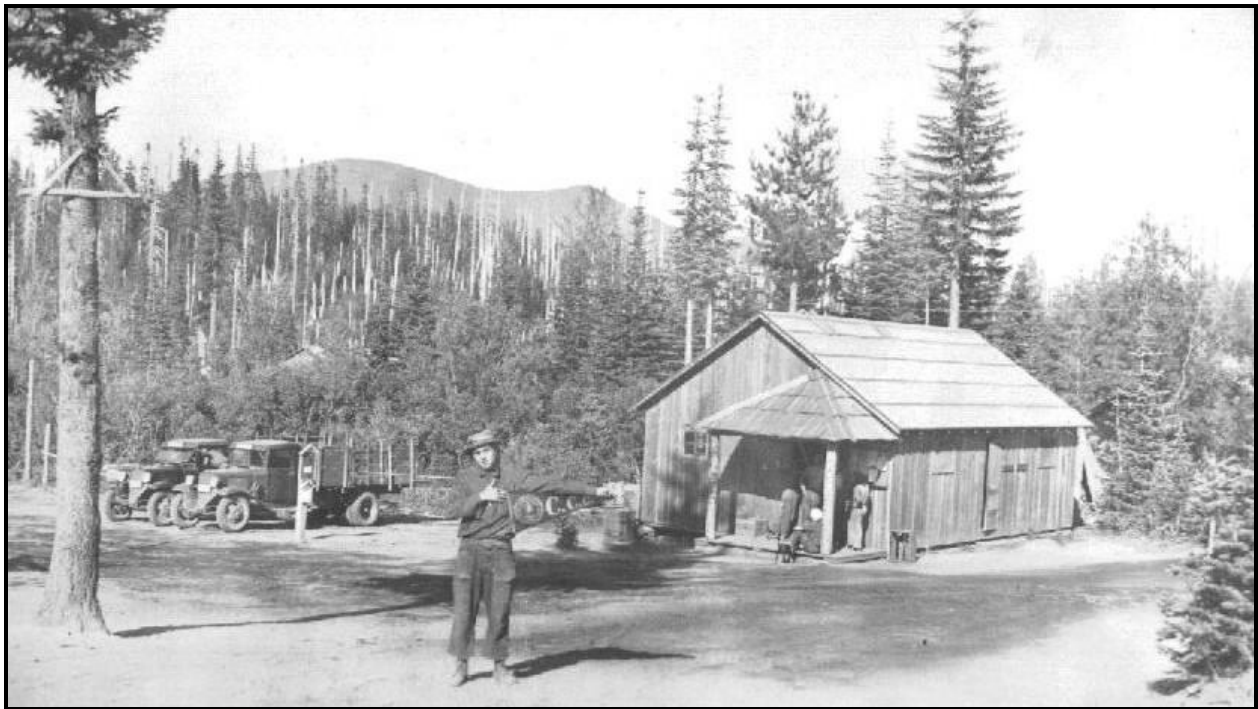
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The upper photograph shows CCC enrollees picking huckleberries at Little Goose Lake, August 1933 (USDA Forest Service photo by K.D. Swan from Gifford Pinchot National Forest archives). The lower photograph shows the office building at Twin Buttes CCC Camp, above, 1934. The photograph is from the collection of Mr. Wesley Betts.



Philip Brumbaugh

Co. 602 (1933-1934)

Narrator: Philip Brumbaugh

Interviewer: Cheryl Mack, Heritage Program, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Secondary interviewers: Ken Huskey, Teresa Lee, USDA Forest Service

Date: September 1, 1988

Place: Moss Creek Campground, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, near Willard, Washington

Introduction:

Philip Vernon Brumbaugh was born July 7, 1908 at Goldendale, Klickitat County, Washington. His parents were Daniel P. Brumbaugh and Ora (Smith) Brumbaugh. In 1933, Brumbaugh served in CCC Company 602 at Camp Willard and Camp Twin Buttes and was later transferred to Company 1312 at Camp Rock Creek, where he remained until discharge in April 1934. Mr. Brumbaugh again served in the CCC from 1936 to 1937, as an enrollee in Company 5708 at Camp Oakridge, Oregon, in the Willamette National Forest. Philip Brumbaugh spent most of his adult life as a lumber millworker and resident of White Salmon, Washington. Mr. Brumbaugh died on June 14, 1997 at the age of 88.

Okay, so do you want to tell us a little bit about exactly when you came here, how you ended up being in the CCC, how old you were then?

Well, I came here in June the 13th, 1933. I was twenty-five years old then and I'm eighty now.

You didn't have to put that part in [laughs].

[laughs] Well, I wanted to see how good I'm hanging together [laughs]. I think this is probably where the camp was, as far as I can tell, but it has changed, of course, an awful lot. The trees are much bigger than what I thought they would be. But otherwise, I distinctly remember Moss Creek being over here where it is. And as far as I can tell, it's right where the camp was.

,,Cause you remember it being right off the Oklahoma road, on the west side of the road, and it would have been about a mile down to the mill from what you can remember?

Yes, right close to that, something like that.

Can you describe what you remember about the camp, like how many people were here, what the camp looked like, anything you can remember about it?

Well, it was just a tent camp, squad tents, eight men to a tent. I don't think the whole company³³ was here at that particular time. We were here through June and July. We were supposed to be out at Twin Buttes³⁴ the first of July, but there was so much snow up there that year we couldn't get out there until the first of August. So otherwise, there was a large supply tent, and then a large mess hall tent, and other than that, why they were just scattered where they could find good places to locate them without cutting down any more of the trees than what had to be cut down.

³³ Company 602, Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.).

³⁴ Twin Buttes C.C.C. Camp (F-38).

About how many tents, like about many men were here?

I'm not too sure on that, but I think there was probably half of a full company. A full company was over two hundred.... I think there were probably a hundred or a few more, probably.

And what sort of work did you do when you were here?

We worked on the road out here and cut the growth that hadn't been cut around up at the Oklahoma Ranger Station and they worked on the telephone lines and work like that, all the time, and cleaned up the park over here on Moss Creek³⁵.

Now when you say, "cleaned up the park at Moss Creek," do you mean on the other side of the road? Where do you mean?

Yes, on the other [west] side of the road.

So that was a campground or park then?

There was the starting of a park there, yeah, at least. I don't remember just how it was, but I always remember the boys getting bit by scorpions all the time, working in there.

That doesn't sound too pleasant. So this was just a temporary camp for you then?

It was a temporary camp. Yes. That's all it was.

And you do remember there was a guard station at Willard at that time? One building or two buildings maybe there?

Yes, there was.

Maybe if you could tell us just a little bit about what you remember life was like when you were camped here.

It was nice. Seems like everybody enjoyed it. All of the boys that had come in here to the camp were from Chicago. Came right out here from Fort Sheridan, Illinois. They had never been around trees like that grow in the forest out here, or anything like that. But it sure didn't take them long to learn.

And so you were saying before, they didn't even know what tools were, they didn't know what an axe was?

No, they had never used axes, or saws, or anything like that.

And then you also went on to Twin Buttes?

We went on to Twin Buttes around the first of August of that year. And they built road out there and felled snags in the old burned over area. We were out there til October when we pulled the camp out of there.

³⁵ See *Six Twenty Six* article by B. H. Brown, "Go. 602 Moves" (1933) for a more complete listing of work accomplished by the men in this camp.

Okay, then you also said in '34 you were stationed in Trout Lake. Was there actually a CCC camp there?

Yes, they had a side camp from Stevenson. The main camp³⁶ was at Stevenson, that I was in at that time. I was up at Trout Lake through that winter of, part of '33 and up in the spring of '34.

And you recall that that's when they built the houses, the residence houses there at the ranger station?

Yeah, they built houses there at the ranger station in Trout Lake. They had a carpenter crew out of a twenty-five man camp.

And were there CCC structures, like camp structures, at Trout Lake, or were they tent camping there, too?

They used the old forestry [Forest Service] buildings that were there. And there was a building there that they used for a mess hall. [The] Forest Service used to have road camps there once in awhile with a pretty good size crew all the time.

Do you remember anything about fires on the Forest while you were here? Were you ever pulled off for any of that?

I never was on any fires that year. The big fires were on the coast, but they sent all of the men they could spare on the fires, but I had to stay in camp for the fire watch.

Now you remember the road, the Oklahoma road at that time, was it just like a single lane dirt road at that time?

That's about all it was, yes.... It was plenty good travel for automobiles.

How did your day go? Like what time did you start? Breakfast, and, what time was your day through? Did you work Monday through Friday? Explain how your workday went.

We worked five days a week. And, ah, breakfast at seven o'clock and was ready to go to work at eight o'clock. Then we left the job to come in about four o'clock. It was five days a week, Saturday and Sunday at ease.

What did you do on those days, usually?

Oh, they'd do anything, play ball and have stuff, stuff like that.

That's right. When we were talking, they had pretty competitive baseball teams from the different companies.

Oh, they had some good baseball teams. Yes, they did.

And where would you play?

³⁶ CCC Rock Creek Camp (F-55).

They used to play at Lyle, White Salmon. Any place that would play against them, there were town teams. They had some real good ball games because they had good players.

And did any of your folks in your camps get into picking huckleberries, too, on the side? I can remember reading about that.

Well, when we were out, after we got out to Twin Buttes, there was a heavy huckleberry crop that year, and all those boys outta Chicago would be out there Saturday and Sunday picking huckleberries.

Getting fifty cents a gallon for em, right?

How much? Ten cents a gallon they picked em for!³⁷ They was only worth about twenty-five cents a gallon, at that time. That is, that's all they could sell them for out there. I picked a few, but I never was much of a huckleberry picker.

Did you eat good in those camps?

Yes. They fed good. About comparatively like the army.

So you had a cook, an actual cook that went with your camp?

Oh yes, they had cooks that they'd sent to cooks and bakers school. They'd send emlike down to Fort Vancouver [Vancouver Barracks], Fort Lewis, then they'd come back and take over the head cooking jobs. It was all run about the same as the army, cause it all come under the army anyway.

And then you took turns with KP duty and cleanup and stuff like that?

Yes.

Can you think of the specific projects that you worked on? Like you mentioned working on the Little Baldy road. Can you think of the specific projects that you worked on, while you were here, like the Little Baldy - whatever?

No, only just like a general cleanup job. There was so much work that hadn't been done over the previous years that needed to be done and of course they tried to get all of it done that they could get done while they were here. And they done lots of work.

So, when you were camped right here, if it was right here, you can remember that you could walk right to Moss Creek, and get your water from that every day, that's what you remember?

Yes, we used to fill our canteens out of Moss Creek cause that was the coldest, clearest water in the country.

Still pretty nice! [pause] Can you think of any more?

³⁷ George Bright (1933) reports that C.C.C. boys from Twin Buttes Camp were paid —8 ~~cents~~ a pound for the berries, which amounts to about 48 cents per gallon." Other sources report that the price fluctuated during the Depression depending on the market.

Did you guys hunt at all while you were here, for the meat, or did they bring everything in? For the meat, did they bring everything in, or did you actually go out and hunt?

Oh, they brought everything in from the supply in Vancouver [Barracks], from the army, the old army post in Vancouver.

And you can remember, you said your brother was stationed up at Little Huckleberry Lookout, he and his wife, while you were stationed here.

Yes, he was with the Forest Service.

And you used to hike up the trail to visit him?

I used to hike out there and spend the weekend with him, and then come back down to the tent camp on Sunday evening....

Well, is there anything else that stands out in your mind?It's interesting to me that if there was a camp here that no one remembers it being here. I mean, that always amazed me when I was looking for this camp.

Oh yes, I've mentioned it to people that I've known for years. Talk about a camp over here, they'd say they didn't know there was a camp here. It was just a temporary camp. It was just put here to have a place for that company until they could get out on the job where they were supposed to be for the summer....

Do you have any recollection of how far you would have had the garbage pit away from campsite. Any idea at all?

It wouldn't have been very far, I wouldn't think.

You used a lot of canned goods, though, a lot of your food was in cans, that you had, yeah, so I'm sure that it's out here.

Oh yes, yes, tons of it

So I'm sure that it's out here, it's just a matter of under what piece of salal it's buried. Well, thank you very much for all your information. I want to ask you one more question about Twin Buttes. Now you remember, was there a two hundred man camp up there?

Yes, approximately two hundred. There would be about a hundred-and-fifty, like that came with the outfit and then there would always be about fifty men from out here, among that many men.

The locals that they brought in, yeah.

Yes, local, LEMs: Local Experienced Men.

And they mostly did the road work. I was asking before, they were building that road that went across the Lewis River to Randle, yeah.

Yes, that was a road-building outfit, and cleaning up the forest, fell all them snags, I felled snags all summer.

And was the store there at Twin Buttes when you were there? Was there a store?

Yes, through the summertime. [Charley] Price, from Carson, that ran the store at Carson, would always go up there and buy huckleberries on the corner...

And he also sold gasoline and everything else up there, yeah.

Oh yes, it was a general grocery store, yeah.

He had all kinds of groceries. Then they moved it to Cultus Creek later on, he must have thought it was a better spot or something, yeah. And you do remember there were some buildings there at Twin Buttes, not just tents?

Well, just that old guard station, and of course, the mess hall was a building, but it was still a tent camp, the same old squad tents.

Now, the buildings that they had, like that big mess hall, what was it made of, do you remember?

Well, it was just rough lumber, it was rough lumber.

And they'd have a shake roof?

Probably -- no, roofing. Composition roofing, 'cause it stood through the winters there for several years. I don't know how many years. I wasn't back up there for a long time after that. We used to have dances in there. Go down to the huckleberry fields with the trucks and pick up all the huckleberry pickers take 'em to the dances on Saturday night.

Well it sounds like it must have been a pretty good time.

Oh it was, it was great.

Well, thank you very much for your information.

Thank you.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed from VHS videotape by Richard McClure, Feb. 20, 2001

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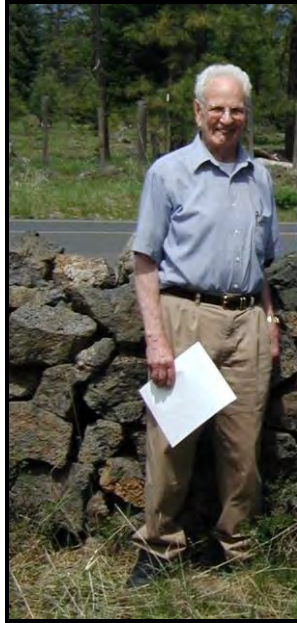
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Little Huckleberry Mountain fire lookout, a weekend destination for Philip Brumbaugh while he served with CCC Company 602.



Ken Good, above, in August 2002, at rock wall built by Ken and other members of Co. 604, Mt. Adams Ranger Station, Trout Lake, Washington. Lower photograph of Company 604, taken June 30, 1933 was copied from a postcard courtesy of Mr. Charles Kupec, Oak Lawn, Illinois, another company member.



Kenneth Good

Co. 604 (1933-1934)

Narrator: Kenneth E. Good

Interviewer: Elena Chernichenko), Capstone student, Portland State University

Date: February 3, 2001

Place: Mr. Good's residence, Yamhill, Oregon

Introduction:

Kenneth E. Good was born on June 7th, 1913 in Juneau, Alaska. His father was a minister and decided to move to the Pacific Northwest for work and to provide better education for his four sons. Soon the family was living at Trout Lake, Washington. The Good brothers (John, Fred, Ken and Harold) were all going to school and working for the CCC or the Forest Service in their spare time.

Mr. Good worked in the Columbia National Forest for ten years. He began his career in 1928 under Harvey Welty, cleaning fire equipment at the Guler Ranger Station. Unable to find other work, he joined the CCC in 1933. Mr. Good worked at Camp Guler, a CCC side camp at the ranger station, and also worked as a truck driver at Camp Peterson (F-41). He was employed as a fire lookout during summers while attending college. Continuing his Forest Service employment, Ken Good, worked as a campground supervisor at Cultus Creek in 1938. The Goods were married in 1939 and both worked at the check-in station in Peterson Prairie.

What were your first impressions of the Columbia National Forest when you saw it?

Well, the Forest Service at that time was quite primitive and there were very few trails. The only way you could get out was through trails. [There were] very few roads. The roads that were out there were very primitive, and so to protect the forest they had lookouts. I can't remember how many lookouts; there must have been at least ten or twelve lookouts in the Mt. Adams district. Now, this was the Columbia National Forest at that time, prior to the Gifford Pinchot name. So the Columbia National Forest had different districts: the Mt. Adams District was where we were, and there was a Hemlock District, and the Randle District, and I don't remember some of the others. But anyway, in the Mt. Adams District our headquarters were at the Guler Ranger Station.

Forest Service work was very seasonal. It generally began in May, or maybe later April, and lasted all through the summer up until weather conditions forced the workers out of the mountains. That was generally in maybe later October, November, or as far as early December—whatever the conditions were.

From June ~~to~~ September were fire suppression days where they manned the lookouts. Each one was out on a lookout and stayed there from the time they went up until they came down in early September. Most of the lookout employees were young men who were attending college or were in school. [Those were] ideal working conditions for those attending schools. They could work during the summer months and make enough money to go to school....

We had a central station at Guler Ranger Station where a telephone operator was on duty all the time. The lookouts had to report in twice a day and make sure that they were all right and everything, they were getting along all right. So, their communication was with the Ranger Station where they kept track of where the employees were...

How did you hear about the CCC?

Well, I was in the CC's before I went up on Little Baldy [Lookout] back in the 1930's. We had always worked for the Forest Service and we went up to ask about work. They said, —The only work we have, and the only chance of work that summer would be to sign up in the CCC's." And so I thought that was the only alternative so I signed up and that was in June of 1933.

And what were your duties? What were you doing in the CCC?

Of course, I worked in the Ranger Station. It was close to home, so I had advantage over all the rest of us. I could go home to Mom and Dad whenever I wanted to (if I wanted to take my weekends and be with them). So, in the CC's you were issued all your clothes and bedding (blankets and bedding), and so you were given all these things. We were supposed to stay in camp.

You told me that you were a truck driver. What was that like?

Well, I worked out of Guler Ranger Station most of the time (all the time I was in the CC's). I didn't have to move from station to station unlike a lot of them. So, it worked out pretty good to me. They issued me a truck. To begin with, our equipment was very primitive. When the CC's came in, they set up camp down on Trout Creek by the Wyers Stage Company³⁸. We had just primitive tents and we slept right on the ground. Of course, we had cots on the ground. Now, cook camp was just tops over tables you dried out and you opened. It was very, very primitive; and for transportation we just had old farmers trucks and kinda crude equipment. Then one day a bunch of us went to Vancouver and we brought back thirteen new blue Chevrolet trucks. So, from then on things got better.

I drove the truck most of the time I was in the CC's. I'd haul materials out to different camps, or wherever they wanted. If they needed supplies, or lumber, or anything to haul whatever it needed to be [I would do it]. They had different side camps out, and I had to haul equipment out and supplies out. Then they used horses and pack mules. A lot of times I would haul a pack string out. The packer would have to go out and take supplies out to those different lookouts or different camps. And so I'd haul a pack -- four pack mules and saddle horse -- and the packer would take all the equipment out to the end of the road and dump them all. Then he'd go about his business. Then maybe I'd meet him in the next day or so at some other place and pick him up and bring him back in into camp.

If your truck broke at any time, would you be the one who fixed it?

Generally, if I could fix it [I would]. I was lucky, I was able to maintain my own truck and it wasn't that much of a problem. The only problem that I had... you were asking about fire suppression, forest fires. Shortly while we were there in the CC's they had the big Tillamook Burn down here in Oregon. Our company sent around 100 men or 200 men down there to fight this fire. I was supposed to go and take a load of men down, but the day before my truck broke down, and so I couldn't go. That's how close I came to coming to the Tillamook Burn. Now, most of the men in our company were from Chicago. They came off the streets of Chicago, ordinary men that needed work. They came out here and they never had any experience in the woods or anything like that. They didn't know how to handle woodworking equipment like crosscut saws or axes, and they were always chopping their toes or having problems. But anyway, that was the type of people that we were with and some of them were really nice fellas, and some of them were kinda crude. But we never had any problems; they never gave us any problems.

³⁸ On present-day Guler Road, Trout Lake, Washington.

Do you remember the Ice Cave?

Yes the Ice Caves are about seven miles west of Guler up toward Peterson Prairie. Now Peterson Prairie is about nine miles up from Guler, so it's about just two miles from Peterson Prairie. The Ice Caves were just looping down in there; there was a lot of lava in that country. There is a lot that came down off Mt. Adams. So there are a lot of caves in that area. The Ice Caves did have some ice in them, and then the ice would hang from the ceilings. There wasn't too much ice in them, but then it snowed in the wintertime and [snow] would fall down in there and it [would] never melt all summer. So there wasn't too much in the Ice Cave, there was just kind of a place for people to look; and you could go through the caves in at one end and come out another.

Did you ever go there?

Oh yes, I've been there lots of times. Now, at Guler our camp sort of moved up to Peterson Prairie. They built more of a permanent camp there for that season. So, we had better quarters up there, and we had tent platforms so we didn't have to sleep right on the ground. Conditions were a lot better, and they had a cook shack up there, and food got better from then on. Then in the fall we had a, what they call, a spike camp or a side camp there at Guler. I stayed there so I didn't have to move to the main camp and the main camp moved down to Stevenson, Washington where it was lower. Because if they stayed out there in the mountains there was too much snow and they couldn't do anything. So, the main camp moved down to Stevenson.

The company I was in when we first joined the CC's, I can't remember the company number, but it was about number 300 something. We would be transferred to another company, and the last part of the time I was in there was in company 602 and 604. So you see, number 300 was just in the beginning of the CC's.

Okay, and do you remember any social activities? Or what kind of social activities did you have at the camp to pass your time?

Well, I really didn't enter any cause I wasn't in the main camp. I didn't enter any social activities, but they did. On Friday nights they would take whoever wanted to sign up and go. They would take them to White Salmon or some place, and let them go to the movies or something like that, but I never did.

Well, while driving a truck did you take anyone...

Different places? Yes I did. I'd take truckloads of men to activities they wanted to go to, maybe for this or that. Yeah, sometimes to White Salmon, or maybe down toward Stevenson. But most of my truck driving was around Guler. There were different projects that the CC's did around the Guler Station. Now you see that rock fence around the front of the station? I hauled a lot of that rock. I had a crew that helped me, and we hauled rock and built that fence. Well they had different projects [going on]. Now, one of the projects [was building] different lookouts. They built one lookout up on Sleeping Beauty and improved the trail. So they had crews doing that. They built another new lookout up on Flattop, and they moved the lookout from the east side over on to the west side, and then built a new lookout on the tower on the east side. So whoever manned the lookout up on Flattop had to spend some time on either side. You spend maybe an hour or two hours on one side, and then go over on the other side. That was where they worked at. But these different projects they had to have for the men to work, so these are some of the things that they did, see. And they built roads, put in telephone lines...

How far was the camp from the neighboring town?

It was twenty-five miles from White Salmon. And let me think -- it was around fifty miles from Stevenson. [That's] where their main camp was in the wintertime. Now after they were at Stevenson they started coming back to Peterson Prairie for summer, they moved the camp up to Smoky Creek. That was a nice camp. They had barracks buildings, and cook shacks, and it was all enclosed. So, that operated clear up until the closing of the CC's, and I think, I'm not just sure the dates they closed it, [but it was] around 1941 or something like that. But I'm not sure if there are still buildings up around the Smoky Creek camp or not.

How did the CCC experience affect your future in the Forest Service?

Well, my real boss was our district ranger. To begin with [my] first experience in the Forest Service, Harv Welty was District Ranger. Well he left in about 1929 or 1930³⁹. Then K. C. Langfield was our district ranger after that and he was a taskmaster, and he was very good. He had good work ethics. He expected you to be on the job a certain time and he was very particular in cleanliness. One time I hauled a lot of supplies. They were building a bridge down around on the Lower Lewis River. There wasn't any bridge across, and they wanted to extend the road down Lewis River. So, they had a crew down there building bridges. Part of this road down there from Twin Buttes down to the Lewis River had a section in there about a mile long that was very slippery --the conditions were muddy. When we went down, it was very slippery. And I had a load of haylawn and five or six men and there was three of us in the cab. And there were two or three up on top of the load. Coming down this hill we hit this slick spot, and I put the brakes on and the truck just slid, it couldn't stop. The front wheels went over the bank. Luckily it didn't roll on over; the front wheels went over the bank and you could spin those front wheels. It scared the daylights out of us. But we were able to jack the thing up and there was a truck behind us and he helped us and we got out of there. But that's about the only thrilling experience driving a truck.

Now you told me that you were a campground supervisor.

Well, that was in the summer of 1937. I worked all summer at the Cultus Creek campground. Now, remember this was during Depression days, and working conditions for people all over was hard. So the huckleberries were ideal in those days. And families would come out to the huckleberry fields and spend a summer out there and pick huckleberries. Now, a family of four or five would pick huckleberries. And huckleberries at that time sold for, in the campground, for thirty-five cents a gallon. Well, a family of four or five could get out and then they make ten or twelve dollars a day, which was very good wages. So, they stayed out there all summer as long as the huckleberry season was on. And so I had, I can't remember maybe seventy-five or one hundred camps at my camp at Cultus Creek.

So, each day I would get up in the morning, and I had a horse that I patrolled the huckleberry fields with. I get up in the morning and I make rounds around the campground to make sure that everything was all right. I had to clean the toilets and make sure that the camps were secure. Then in the evening, after that, I go back and I get my horse and ride out in the huckleberry fields and be out there all day visiting with the huckleberry pickers or just seeing what was going on. And I get back to camp and I'd have a bag of oats for my horse with me and I had my lunch. And we'd get back to camp about four in the afternoon and after supper I'd

³⁹ Harvey A. Welty was District Ranger, Mt. Adams Ranger District, from 1924 to 1933, when he was transferred to Spirit Lake Ranger District.

make the rounds at the camp and check their fire permits. And each camper had to have an up-to-date fire permit. And so I checked all the campers, and got to know them.

And several times during the week we had a central spot in the campground where we had a big bonfire. Built a big campfire, and everybody would come around [the fire]. And different [people] would tell stories and they played the guitars and different instruments and [there was] singing. So, it was quite a gathering for the people and it was quite interesting to do that. Well I stayed there until the huckleberry season was over, which was around the first of September. And we closed up and then after huckleberry season went out and did trail work.

Did you encounter any Native Americans while on duty?

Indians? They designated one area on the south side of the road for Indians only. And the Indian camp was about two or three miles farther up toward Twin Buttes. Jude Wang had charge of the Indian camp -- he supervised the Indians just like I did. But, the Indians could pick any place, but white people couldn't pick over on the Indian side. So the Indians had their area where they had it for themselves only if they wanted. But, the Indians came up there and a lot of them came from different reservations, and lot of them came with their horses and packhorses. They'd bring their buggies and they'd be strung out and there was big bunches of them. In bunches they would come and they camped up there they stayed up there all summer, and they picked huckleberries for their own use. And instead of selling, all right maybe they did sell some, but it was mostly for their own use and they dried the huckleberries. Put the huckleberries on flats and dried them and they took them home when they were all through. So that was their winter supply of food for them.

Now you said that the people at the camp, when they were picking huckleberries, they camped out. Do you remember the supplies they used? And how they camped out back then?

They just lived in tents, and there wasn't anything special. They just cooked out over the fires. Some of them had outside stoves that they cooked on. But [life] was just generally kinda primitive-like, and camp-like.

Is it the same as camping is now?

Oh yeah, very much just like we do now when we go camping.

Okay. Do you remember any other stories about your life as a campground supervisor? Anything interesting?

Nothing, nothing in particular, nothing outstanding. After the season, the Indians left. Jude Wang was in charge of the Indian camp, so I was still at Cultus Creek. So, one day he says, —The Indians are gone.” He said, —They have an Indian sweat house. How would you like to take a sweat bath?”

And there was a cold springs up there. And the water in that springs bubbled out of the ground at about thirty-eight degrees temperature. And the Indians had a little sweathouse. It wasn't very high, maybe four feet high, but it was all covered over and sealed tight. They'd build a fire and heated these rocks, and then they roll them inside this house and then cover up the door. And then they would strip down, and get inside that [sweathouse] and pour water on the rocks and it would steam them. And so, we had a fire and heated the rocks and [Jude] said, —Now get your head right down to the ground.” And he said, —If you can't take it, well, holler.” And we poured water on the rocks, and we stayed there as long as we could stand it, and then

we'd come out and jumped in that ice-cold water. The water felt lukewarm. It felt so good. But that was one experience that I remembered.

Now you said that you were riding around on horses. Is that because you didn't have a truck, or was it easier to get around?

Well, just to get out in the forest, or be amongst the people. It was just ideal, so I [would] stay on my horse all day long, and go to one place to another and talk to different people and see what they were doing. More visitation and contact with them and let them know I was around. But, I enjoyed that and the old horse I had. When I go out and maybe, oh, several times I went out in Indian Heaven country, they called it Indian Heaven country. That's backcountry; it's beautiful back there. Beautiful settings and lakes and so on the other side of Sawtooth [Mountain] and back in that country. But not very many people got back in there, but once in a while I'd go back in there.

Now, do you remember the transition from horses and mules to trucks?

Oh, well, the reason for [the horses is that] you'd take [them] out in these lookouts. Some of these lookouts were way out and [had] no roads into them. And the only way there was by trail. And these fellas on lookout, like John on Sleeping Beauty (that's my brother), the only way to get supplies in there was for the pack horses to take supplies into them. Or, if they moved a camp all the packhorses they'd have to take them, and so, they used the pack mules.

Now, a couple of years they had what they called snag falling crews. Now as part of my truck driving days I hauled supplies for snag falling crews. Each crew had a crew of about five men to a crew. There were four fallers, and each group of fallers had a saw filer. So, there were five in a crew. And they were way out in the mountains away from the roads, so they had to be packed-in. So the pack mules would take their camps in and they would stay out all week, and then some of them would stay out all the time. But some of them could come back into town over the weekend, but most of them stayed out. And the saw filer was very important at the snag crew [when] they were falling these snags. Now, these snags I'm talking about were from a former fire that had been going through the country maybe forty or fifty years prior to this time, and the snags were still standing. Dry snags. And when we would have lightning storms, lots of time lightning would strike these snags. Well the snags were dead, and they would burn and they would be a hindrance to fighting fire. They would spread the fire. So they wanted to get rid of the snags, and these snag falling crews would go out [and get rid of them]. They got paid for the [amount of] stumpage. The more wood snags they fell the more money they made, so the Forest Service paid them according to the stumpage. So, I had to haul supplies out to the end of the road, or take the pack string to the end of the road, then he'd take them to these snag crews, or he'd take supplies out to the different lookouts that didn't have a road into them.

When you were at the lookouts, did you spot any forest fires?

Not anything in particular that I remember of. But I know we had to report any fires we saw. We could spot them and locate them, but I don't remember any outstanding fires. But, the biggest fire that I remember was when this big Tillamook Burn fire burned. That was in 1933, and then the next fire. My wife and I were stationed at Peterson Prairie at the check station. In 1939 there was another big fire at Tillamook Burn. There was three Tillamook fires, 1933, 1939, and 1945 and I don't know how many thousands of acres it burned⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ The largest of the Tillamook Burn wildfires consumed 240,000 acres of timber in 1933.

So, how much did you get paid?

Now our wages for CCC's was thirty dollars a month. And I sent home twenty-five dollars for my brother to keep him [going to] school. He [was going] to the University of Oregon at that time. And I had five dollars a month for myself, a lot of which I loaned to people that smoked. And I didn't smoke myself, so, five dollars was all I had. But it didn't bother me any. Of course they fed good, they had good cooks, and meals were good. The working conditions in the CC's were -- you go to work at eight o'clock in the morning, and quit at [four]. It's the first job in my life where we had a coffee break at nine-thirty -- ten o'clock in the morning. Then we had one in the afternoon, and then we quit at four o'clock. So our days weren't too long. We really didn't accomplish a whole lot. They didn't push us very hard, so it wasn't too hard to work. In the Forest Service we were expected to put in full eight hours a day. So, then we were on our own.

Now you worked for the CCC and the Forest Service. Could you tell me what you liked better?

Oh, I definitely liked the Forest Service because I did the same thing [working for the Forest Service]. [The] only [difference] was our pay schedule. When I quit the CC's I did the same thing, only my pay came from the Forest Service instead of the CC's. And it was increased from \$30 a month to \$100 a month just like that. So, the same person was my boss in the CCC's and the Forest Service, and he was a fine fella. And he thought a lot of me. Mr. Langfield and Orin were good people to work for.

I might mention something interesting, about on the lookout. During this fire, K. P. Cecil was the supervisor for the Columbia National Forest. He was head supervisor, and he'd been over on that fire and he was played out [tired]. Now this was right after Thanksgiving, my folks had been up there. They came up Thanksgiving and they brought chicken and pie and goodies. So I had some left there, and he came up to the lookout and he was played out, and he laid out on the bed and went to sleep and he slept all afternoon. When he got up I had supper all ready for him, and I had served him fried chicken, and apple pie, and he thought that was great. So I made some good points with him. But he was a nice fella.

And what lookout was this at?

That was on Little Baldy lookout.

What is your most significant memory in the ten years you've worked in the Columbia National Forest? What did you like the most?

What I liked the most? I really enjoyed, I think, I enjoyed being up on Little Baldy. It was different. Nobody has ever experienced staying up that late in the fall on a lookout for fire suppression. [There] was no rain, we'd maybe always predict rain, but it never would come and it was just a dry fall. And so we stayed there from September till the 7th of December.

Would you like to add anything else? Anything else you remember that you'd like to get on tape?

I have very fond memories of the Forest Service. The Forest Service was a good job for a single man, but for a married person it wasn't...I wouldn't recommend it because you're away from home from April and along the fall. And you take your sleeping bag and you're gone. And you don't have any home life at all during the time you're on, you're working for the Forest Service and that's it. But it was good work, I enjoyed being with it, but for a married man I wouldn't recommend it. But I do have very fond memories. Did we elaborate on the little bear?

Well, do you remember how the bear came about to camp?

Yeah. One day one of these fellas [Bill Marshall] from camp -- we were camped at Peterson Prairie -- was out picking some huckleberries, and he saw this old bear. And I guess she came after him, and he climbed this tree. And the bear just stayed right there and kept him up there. And he had a pocket full of matches, and he'd light them and drop them down on the ground. And he started a little fire and finally the bear left. And she had a cub there with her. So, the bear left and he got down and he went back to camp, and one of the fellas took a gun out there and shot the old bear. But we had the cub. The cub was just a little thing, and so they had to feed it with a bottle. So, we got the bear right there [points at picture with bear], and he was just about like a pup dog. Everybody liked it, but the bear was on camp there all summer, and then when our camp moved out in the fall, they took the bear with them and they moved down to Los Angeles. And there was a camp down there, and the last I heard they gave the bear over to the zoo there in Los Angeles.

Did you have a name for it?

No, there wasn't any name for it.

That picture that you have over there [picture with bear] do you know who that is?

Yeah. I don't know this fella's name, but there is Hanson [guy with cap] he was from Glenwood. I knew him; I used to play basketball with him. So we had basketball there in the school, and he was in CC's same time I was. But I can't remember this guy's name [guy with bear without a cap], but he's feeding [the cub] with a bottle. You could see he weren't very big.

Yeah. You said that all your brothers worked in the Forest Service. How was that like having all four of you working?

Well, generally John and Fred, John was the oldest, and he always manned around the lookouts. John spent a lot of time on lookouts. And during the summer Fred was on different lookouts at the same time. Or he did trail work. Fred worked sometimes I think all summer on trail work.

So, you and your brothers worked in the Forest Service. Did you work together?

No, no, we never did work together. John and Fred both were going to school; right out of school they would start with the Forest Service. Well, to begin with the early part of the first week or so in the Forest Service they went through a fire school over at Hemlock. So John and Fred always went to fire school. It was a several day school on fire suppression, and how to fight fires and all that. And then when they got back from that they got stationed, sent out to the stations on the different lookouts. So, and they would spend all summer out there. I went out and visited John on the lookout, and he hadn't had a hair cut all summer, so I took a pair of scissors and clipped his hair, and he looked pretty ragged after I got done with him.

Now, how did the entire family become involved in Forest Service? Did you need the money?

Well, yes. My father was a minister, and everybody didn't have a whole lot. The whole community just lived [simply]. [People] had gardens, and a cow and a pig and something like that. Living was very simple, that was during Depression days, and times were kinda hard, so

money was very scarce. And for John and Fred to go to school they had to earn money to pay tuition. And they were able to make enough money in the Forest Service to get them through the year. So that's the way they worked it. And after I got through in the Forest Service, I just worked around home and I did mechanical work. I had a shop where I could work in, and I worked on different people's cars, and different things like that. So, I've been a mechanic all my life.

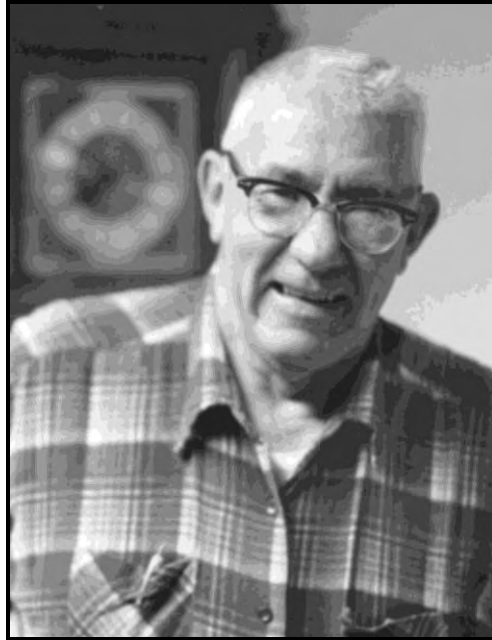
Anything else you would like to add?

Right off hand I can't think of anything. I have many fond memories working for the Forest Service, and the thing that impressed me most [was that] one of my supervisors K.C. Langfield was a wonderful person. He taught me a lot of work ethics and cleanliness. He was a stickler for picking up and didn't want any debris left around the cabins or campgrounds....So, he was very particular about our appearance. When we were meeting in public, we had to dress good and he expected us to be clean. Well, I thought that was some good things I learned from the Forest Service, and the people I worked with were good people.

Thank you very much your time.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Elena Chernichenko, February 2001.



Paul Grooms, above, during 1981 oral history interview (photograph by Judy Caughlan). Mr. Grooms served in CCC Co. 5481 at Camp Sunset, shown below. The lower photograph is by George Bright, Columbia National Forest, August 1933, from Gifford Pinchot National Forest archives (#280402).



Paul Grooms

Co. 5481 (1936-1939)

Narrator: Paul Grooms

Interviewer: Ari Binder, Capstone student, Portland State University

Also Present: Donna Sinclair, History Department, Portland State University

Date: May 1, 2002

Place: Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters, Vancouver, Washington

Introduction:

Paul Grooms was born on November 28, 1918 in Cosby, Tennessee. While growing up, he, his mother and sister worked as dirt farmers on the edge of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. There, Paul spent time in the southern forests, harvesting ginseng root from the forest to help support his family.

He enrolled in the CCC at Fort Oakford, Georgia at age seventeen. Once his company was formed they were sent to Somerset, Pennsylvania to work in Kooser Lake State Park. Paul spent a year of intense work as an assistant carpenter. From there, he was shipped by train to the Columbia National Forest to work at Camp Sunset Falls, where he spent the rest of his CCC days working as a supply steward for the army.

Between 1944 and 1946, Mr. Grooms served in the Marine Corps in the South Pacific. After his CCC and war experience he returned to the Northwest and became the road construction superintendent for the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. His job involved using large equipment to build roads through the National Forests. He retired from the Forest Service in 1976 and subsequently served as the mayor of Yacolt, Washington, where he and his wife live currently.

What brought your family to the Northwest?

I did. What brought my family to the Pacific Northwest? I brought my family. I came as an enrollee in the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1937.

Did the Great Depression affect your family?

Yes, definitely. So did the [Great] Smoky Mountain[s] National Park, My parents and grandparents had a small farm on the edges of what is now [Great] Smoky Mountain[s] National Park. And when they bought up the land for the park they bought up the land that my parents and grandparents had. And so we were poor, dirt farmers. Nobody had a job, Depression days, they lived off the land, if you lived in the country. I don't know how the people in the city lived, but we lived off the land.

From hunting?

Hunting, fishing, what ever they could produce from the land and from hunting and fishing.

So when did you first hear of the CCC?

Oh, I was a youngster I guess, probably when I was fifteen or sixteen years old, when they came into being in 1933. I wasn't old enough to enroll at the time, I wasn't old enough to enroll when I did enroll. But anyway I got accepted in October of 1936, and had a staging area in Fort Oakford, Georgia, and I was there until they got enough people together to form the company

and they loaded us aboard a train and zipped us to Somerset, Pennsylvania, in the state park. We spent a year in Somerset County, in Kooser Lake State Park. There we built a swimming pool and swimming beach, and summer cabins for people from the city who could afford to go to the county for vacation. There were a number of cabins that the state rented to vacationers from the city. And it was quite an elaborate setup. Like I said, a dam was made, we imported sand for the beach; they built bathhouses for changing, showers. The water was cold. I don't know why they ever made a swimming pool out of it, the water was too cold to swim. We were there a year.

So, why did you join?

It was a means of earning a dollar. It paid a dollar a day, and the keep, and the keep was good. You had housing, had shelter and clothing and medical care and food. And at that time there was one less mouth to feed at home. And a few dollars of income that could go to the family.

When were you first inducted, was it in Pennsylvania?

No, in Tennessee, in Cosby, Tennessee.

How much of that money did you send home?

Twenty-five dollars went home. An enrollee was paid thirty dollars a month, and you had five dollars of your own to spend, however you wanted to. There was possibility of advancement. Assistant leaders, they got thirty-six dollars a month and there were leaders who got forty-five dollars a month. Still twenty-five dollars a month went home automatically, and whatever else you got was your own. You could go to town on Saturday night.

Do you know what your family did with the money?

They used it to survive on, my mother and the sister had to survive. My father was long gone. And my mother worked in the knitting mills, the hosiery mills, and she got two days a week work in the hosiery mills. I don't remember. Very little pay at that time.

What kind of food did you get?

Army food, it was good food and plenty of food, and it was a good diet, a balanced diet. I don't know if you are familiar with how the CC camps operated, but the army operated the camps. Whatever organization you were assigned to managed the work projects. The army fed you, clothed you, housed you. Gave you medical attention, dental attention, whatever your needs were the army provided. And all the projects you did provided you with work, and the work was geared towards learning a trade. Education was not emphasized too much, but learning a trade, something you could earn a living at when the time came that you had to.

So when you started working for the CCC, did you feel prepared, physically?

Oh yes, I was physically prepared. I was in good condition. I grew up on the farm and lived in the country and hunted and fished and went to school part-time.

Before the CCC, did you spend much time in the forest?

I lived in the country. I lived on the edge of the [Great] Smoky Mountain[s] National Park. Yeah, I spent a lot of time in the Park. Usually poaching things in the Park that you could turn into a dollar. We gathered ginseng roots, chestnuts, at the time, before the blight killed all the chestnut trees, there were lots of wild chestnuts in the forest. You'd gather the chestnuts and sell them, sell the ginseng root, and hunt and fish for the food for the table.

In our pre-interview you said that you attended school in the CCC. What kind of school did you attend?

Elementary. That's one of the things the army provided, they had regular, I guess they were reserve army officers that were in overall control of the camps. Then they had civilian teachers, instructors, educational advisors they called them. In school, I dropped out midway in the seventh grade, and then in the CCC when I went to Pennsylvania, I completed the elementary school. I completed the eighth grade. I got a certificate from the Somerset County Public Instruction, public school services.

So how were you signed up for this school?

It was voluntary, if you wanted to further your education you could, but it wasn't mandatory that you do anything. You did it voluntarily....

So, what kind of jobs did you do in the CCC?

I worked as a carpenter's helper, when we were in Pennsylvania, building these cabins that I just mentioned before.

Was this in Sunset Falls?

No, this was in Pennsylvania and this went on for a whole year. Then for some reason they packed up the whole company and men, equipment, everything, and sent them to Vancouver. That was in November of 1937, then we were sent out to Sunset Falls, then it became a different life. It was a state camp in Pennsylvania, a federal forest camp here in Washington. Then I changed, I went to work for the army so to speak, I became a, they called them a supply steward. I was in charge of everything that the enrollees needed, shirts, shoes, underclothes, beds, blankets. Saw their bed-sheets, their beds got changed once a week, that they got shipped off to the laundry once a week. That was my job here.

So how soon after you came to Sunset Falls did you start to work for the army?

Right away. I did not work in the forest projects at all here.

Did you live in Vancouver Barracks at all?

No.

How many people came from Pennsylvania out to the west?

Oh, 200 plus -- 250. They tried to maintain the company camp level at about 250.

So they formed the whole company and then put you on the train?

Yeah, formed a company in Fort Oakford, Georgia. We went to Pennsylvania, then from Pennsylvania the whole company came to Washington. By that time changes had been made, the enrollment period was six months, and at the end of six months you had an option you could get out or you could reenlist, for up to three enlistments, for up to eighteen months. By the time we came to Washington, you know, two six months periods had passed, so you didn't have the same people you started out with.

You went through three times?

I went through more than that, I went from October of 36, 11 April of 39.

How did you manage that, did they let you?

Yeah, I had, I don't know what you called it. I had a special position.

With the army, in the CCC?

Yeah.

Was it Civil Service?

No, it was a regular CCC enrollee position. Like I said, I had managed to upgrade to what they called a leader, supply steward, supply sergeant, they called them stewards. So, I don't recall the circumstance, but they let me stay for an additional period of time. Maybe they didn't have anybody to replace me. I don't know.

So what kind of activities did you do at Sunset Falls?

Well, I was always a fisherman. I could go fishing and you could go to town on the weekends. We had five days a week project work and half a day a week, I am talking about regular enrollees now. They had five days of project work, half a day of clean up; that was Saturday morning. At noon Saturday until Monday morning you could do whatever you wanted.

Go to dances?

Yeah, go to dances, go to town, movies. Those that were old enough or could pass for being old enough could go down to the bar to drink beer, to the tavern. But most were not old enough to qualify as tavern customers.

But if you passed though?

I can't remember a time when I was turned away from a tavern.

Did they check I.D.'s?

No.

If you were too young they would just say, "Get out of here!"

Yeah, yeah. If you behaved yourself nobody said anything. If you were unruly they threw you out, and that was it. It is an amazing thing. All these troops, young fellows, from everywhere.

There was very little difficulty, very little problems. The only problems I ever remember having in our camps, or involving anybody in our camp involved people from New York City. You know they were just a different breed of people, just different than the ordinary run of the mill people. And usually they wouldn't last long, they would get kicked out, mustered out, or couldn't cope with the control and left on their own. So they usually didn't stay long.

Were there conflicts between the boys from the south and those from the east? Like from New York?

Sometimes, not many, it was usually the Saturday night things, the weekend things that got out of hand, trouble in the community. And it was very little, they were welcomed in the community, at least we were, I know....

Did your camp have any mascots or pets?

Yeah, usually dogs. Cats didn't fit in too well. I had a dog, a Pekinese. And there were always half a dozen dogs around.

Did the dogs go to work with you?

Well mine did, because I never left camp. I was in camp. But the dogs stayed in camp, that's where they got their food.... They were everybody's pet. No particular person owned them.

How did you get them?

They followed you home Saturday night. Now and then they would have a pet deer, they would become a nuisance. But then there were a few....

Did you have any contact with Native Americans, in the camps?

No, other than myself!

Are you Native American?

Partly, yeah.

What kind?

Part Cherokee....

Who was Cherokee in your family?

My grandfather on my mother's side and my mother.

Is that something that she [mother] talked about?

Oh yeah, she was very proud of it, and she looked like one too.

Were there a lot of Indians around?

Yeah, we lived right in the middle of the Cherokee Nation. That's where they rounded up all the Cherokee and marched them off to Oklahoma, the —Trail of Tears" thing came from that area. Our side of the family were the renegades that stayed hid out in the swamps and didn't go to Oklahoma. And they survived and eventually the federal government set up a small reservation in North Carolina for those that didn't go. And it is still there, the Cherokee Nation is still there in North Carolina. And they have a town called Cherokee and they have an Indian school there, and all the bucks sit around in their regalia and pose for pictures for the tourists....

Back to when you were a supply steward. When you ran out of supplies, how did you get your supplies?

Vancouver Barracks was the headquarters. And so if you needed fresh supplies you ordered them from the central depot, which was Vancouver Barracks. Food was purchased open market around the area, Vancouver, stores, except for large quantities of canned goods. Of course the army had contracts for that stuff. But any fresh produce was local.

And the blankets?

They were all World War I army stuff. And you just ordered them from the quartermaster in Vancouver, the [Vancouver] Barracks.

What sort of condition were they in by 1937, since they were World War I army supplies?

They were quite new; they had lots of new stuff left over. They had been stored. They weren't bad when you got rid of the mothball smell. But, they were all right. And the clothing was all uniforms, too.

What were they like?

Wool, the pants, and wool shirts. Later they were khaki shirts and later the supervisory people or the rated people had khaki uniforms, summer uniforms, and then they had the winter wool uniforms.

What kind of wildlife did you see in the forest?

In Pennsylvania we had mostly deer and upland birds. In Washington you had deer, elk, bear and coyotes. In forty plus years that I spent in the Columbia National Forest, I saw two cougars in the wild. I saw lots of bear, deer, and elk and coyote and bobcats. But cougars are scarce - the two I saw, I saw one in the daylight and one in the middle of the night.

So back to the extra-curricular activities, like sports, basketball, baseball. Did you play any of this?

No, I am not that kind of a sportsman, mine was hunting and fishing. I didn't, still don't. I don't even watch sports on television. But they had a basketball team and a baseball team. They played various teams from schools and from communities. In fact we were encouraged to participate in things that the community could be involved in too.

We are talking about sports. Did you know Jack and Jim Leonard? They were twins; they were involved in smokers.

No, I don't recall them.... I know a few people, I guess now it is getting to be a very few that were in camp. One lives near me. His name is Paladeni, Pete Paladeni. He was in Camp Hemlock.

He will be interviewed tomorrow.

Very nice fellow. He is responsible for me spending a lifetime working for the Columbia National Forest.

How's that?

When I came back from the war in 1946, and I came back in April of 1946, I didn't have a job. The Forest Service was hiring a fire crew for the summer and Pete was the foreman of the fire crew to be located at Sunset Falls. And he hired me, and for most part I stayed. I retired in 1976.

So, what kind of medical attention did you receive at the camps?

Whatever we needed. They had a doctor in camp. They had the army hospital in Vancouver. If it was serious enough that you needed to be hospitalized, they sent you to Vancouver, to the army hospital. But there was a doctor in camp all the time. He was an army officer, and army doctor. Dentists, they farmed out. They sent you out to who ever they had a contract with, cause the army contracts everything you know. And so, who they had a contract with they shipped you out.

What were your living conditions like at Sunset Falls?

We had barracks, fifty men to the barracks. We had army cots; in rows like the old time army barracks. You didn't have individual quarters. There were fifty men to the barracks. At Sunset we had five barracks.

Were they set up when you got there?

Yeah, there had been somebody there previously. A local, I don't know, but they were local people. From around Washington and Oregon anyway. And, had a large mess hall, dining hall where you ate. Cooks prepared food, had a large latrine, toilet facilities, off to one side of the barracks, and that was kind of a community thing, everybody used the same facility. And they had a recreation hall, a pool table, ping-pong tables, card tables, you could sit around and play cards. And they had a P.X. where you could buy soda pop, candy bars, cigarettes, whatever your desires were.

What was a typical day like working in the CCC, from when you got up ,til the time you went to bed?

Well, you get up, you open up for business. On weekdays, my job was, before and after hours, I would open the supply area. You had a big warehouse like at five in the morning and stay open until eight. Then all of the people who worked on projects left camp, went out to the various projects, tree planting, road building, maintained lookout towers, telephone lines, and whatever they did. They went to these projects and then they came in at 4:30 [PM] and I would open for business again at 4:30 and stay open until 10:00 [PM]. 10:00 [PM] was lights out and everybody was supposed to be in the barracks and in bed by that time. So I had a split day.

During the day, things had to be done. Trips had to be made to Portland and Vancouver for supplies. Laundry went out to Portland. Emmanuel Hospital had a facility nearby there. They had a laundry and they was run by the Catholic organization and the workers in the laundry were youngsters, girls mostly, and for some reason they were brought in to do these chores. So they had the contract to deal with the camp, to do all the sheets, pillow cases, blankets and mattresses covers and all that stuff. You took that there once a week and then had to go back and pick them up. So you had them back on Friday evening and Saturdays were bed-changing day, so you had to have them back by then. Personal laundry they could send out the same way. So that's what my day was like. I can't tell you about [others]....

You had to drive to Portland and Vancouver while everyone was on [duty], and stick around the supply area in case anyone needed anything during the day?

Guys would come in with wore out shoes or wore out socks and they had snagged their work pants during the day and needed a new pair. Shirt got torn whatever, it was always somebody needed a replacement for something.

Were you involved in the food purchases?

No. They had a mess steward who did that. Who prepared the menus and ordered the food and then they had cooks that prepared [food], bakers that baked.

Did you know the cooks at that time? Did you know Dutch [Halle]? [shakes head] Oh, there was a cook at Sunset? Who was the cook there?

A guy named Albert Bends, Merle Martin, and there was another one they called Sparky Red. I forgot what his name was. Albert Bends still lives there. He was a cook for a long period of time at Sunset. In fact he went on to do some kind of duty after the war started. These things, CCC faded out when the war started, all the young people were being gobbled up by the military for World War II. And he didn't go to war and he stayed there until they phased out the whole operation.

So he stayed at Sunset. Did you know anything about conscientious objectors?

Only that they went to Cascade Locks, Oregon. They had a conscientious objectors camp there. And it was famous for its movie actor Lew Ayers⁴¹. So, but no we didn't have any.

Do you remember any friends from Sunset Falls?

Oh yeah, but there isn't many left. I say that there are only about three of us left, that I know about. There is one that was a cook that lives in Georgia, and he comes around occasionally, two three years ago he was here visiting. And Albert Bends, and Jim Styers -- he lives out in the east, north of here in the country. And there is Martin, he died a year ago, one named Ed Hill was a cook, lives in Washington. And that's about all that's left.

So you knew Ed Hill?

Oh yeah.

⁴¹ Lew Ayers (1908-1996), perhaps best-known for his starring role in the 1930 anti-war film *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Have you read his book⁴²?

Yeah. I had a circular from his organization [NACCC] up there, I was going to bring it in, but I couldn't find it when I was ready to come. One of his newsletters. He has a thing going, a chapter of some kind. I get his newsletters. Oh, I knew Ed. He was in the same company I was in....

So, were you drafted into the war?

No, I enlisted just ahead of the draft.

In '44?

Yeah, in 44.

In what service?

I was in the Marine Corps in the South Pacific.

And when you came back you joined the Forest Service in '46. You started working for the Forest Service as a firefighter?

Yes, the first six years I was in the employ of the Forest Service - - it was the Columbia National Forest then. I was in fire control. And we had a hotshot firefighting crew. There were a number of them around. We had one at Sunset. I became the leader of that crew, Paladeni became sick and he was only there a short time. And then they had one at Mt. Hood, one at Oak Ridge, Oregon, and one from the Umpqua National Forest and there were several so-called hotshot crews. Initial attack crews they called them, scattered around.

What was your duty in the initial attack crews?

We were just what it says: initial attack. You had a forest fire and you were generally the first ones there. And the object was to surround the fire and put it out. We usually didn't stay for the putting out, we got the fire under control and we got ready for the next fire, or we went from one fire to the next fire. We fought fire all over Washington, Oregon and northern California.

What sort of tools did you have?

Hand tools, pick axes, Pulaski, shovels, hazel hoes, water pumps and just water and whatever.

Hazel hoes?

Yeah, hazel hoes. It is kind of a grub hoe that you dig dirt with.

How it is shaped?

⁴² In his book, *In the Shadow of the Mountain* (Washington State University Press, 1990) Hill describes his experiences as a CCC enrollee in Co. 5481 at Camp Sunset.

Well, it has a handle like an adze, if you are familiar with a carpenter's adze, that you use to hoe with. It had a handle like that, only it's got a broad digging hoe on the end.

Straight off or on an angle?

At an angle.

Ninety degrees?

Yeah, you dig dirt just like a madcat, only it had only one blade on one side. The Pulaski, I don't know if you are familiar with the Pulaski, had an axe blade on one side and a digging blade on the other side. And we had fifteen men crews.

Did you surround the fire, and what would you do to prevent it from spreading?

We dig the fireline down to the mineral soil, clean away all the flammable material that was adjacent to the line, so it wouldn't spread or get over. Then you usually left the mop up or clean up to someone else while we either went to regroup or get our tools and equipment in shape for the next one. And many times we just went from one fire to another. Just like smoke jumpers did, we were the group crew of the smoke jumpers.

Did anybody get hurt?

No, in six years I never had a lost time accident from fire. I had some minor scrapes. And bruises, no lost time accidents....

How did road builders change from when you were in the CCC, for example, to the time you left the Forest Service?

Oh yeah. During the CC days, when you built a road you had a hand level, an Abney, you are familiar with what an Abney is. Really, it is a hand level that gives you a present of grade. And it had an Abney and two poles, wooden poles, one was nine-foot-long and the other was eleven-foot-long. You established a grade that you rode with an Abney, and you built two standards of roads. Ones nine-foot wide and the other is eleven-foot wide. And that's what you used the pole for, like a measuring tape. You had nine-foot and an eleven-foot, and they told you how wide the road had to be, depending on what standard road you were building. In those days the eleven-foot wide road was a pretty high standard road. From here you went to complete engineered road, surveyed, designed, built with modern equipment, bulldozers. And in the beginning there was lots of handwork, hand labor. Done by mules, we were talking about mules a while ago. You used mules and Fresno scrapers. There was very little if any power equipment at that time. And we went from about 500 miles of truck roads in the Forest when I came on, to when I left it was over 6,000 miles. It grew that much over the thirty plus year's period....

Did you ever see conflict between Indian people who were picking huckleberries [in the Forest] and the white people who were up there picking?

No, because they were segregated. The Indians picked on this side of the road and the white people on that side of the road. Indians could go over to where the white people were picking, but the white people could not go on the Indian side and pick. But generally the Indians didn't go over there. There were enough huckleberries for everybody. So they didn't have to, they had

their own camp spots. This went on in the Mt. Adams country. In [the] CC days we had something we didn't cover. We had a winter camp at Sunset Falls, and a summer camp at Mt. Adams, up top. They would pack up in the spring and move to Trout Lake and then when the snow started again you pack up and move back to Sunset. And so it was a tent camp in the summer time and I got a picture of it.

What did you do up there in the summer time?

I did the same thing that I always did.

You did the same thing you always did. What was the other company up to?

They planted trees and felled the dead snags and....

At Trout Lake?

At Smoky Creek. That's beyond [west of] Trout Lake about six or eight miles.... And they planted trees, built trails, maintained lookout towers, maintained telephone lines, built telephone lines. Built roads, built campgrounds, and there were all kinds of activities going on in the Forest.

Was there flag-raising every morning?

Yep, every morning, they stand.

Did they do the reveille like they do in the army in the morning?

Yes, everybody fell out and stood to.

Anything else you would like to add?

No, I don't know. It seems like we have covered a lot of ground in this short period of time. Took me forty years to cover that, and we have covered it in an hour.

Is there anything you can tell me about the relationship between Vancouver Barracks and the Forest?

None, except during the CC days. During the CC days Vancouver Barracks was the headquarters of the Ninth Corps area of the CC.

How involved were the army officers, the part of the army that was in the CC camps?

As you look at this, you see the structure. You had a commanding officer, you had a junior officer from the army, a commanding officer, a junior officer, a doctor who were army people. I believe they were army reserve at that time. Then we had a civilian educational person. I tell my grandkids that my claim to fame was that I knew personally two very famous people, General George C. Marshall and Jimmy Angel. You may not know about Jimmy Angel.

I don't know about Jimmy Angel⁴³, but I sure would like to know about General Marshall?

Well, George C. Marshall was commanding officer at Vancouver Barracks -- ~~3~~^B, part of '37, '38. He was a great fisherman. And I was a fisherman. My commanding officer decided he needed to make some points, I guess, with General Marshall. I knew where all the good fishing holes were in Washougal River, in the North Fork Lewis River, so I got assigned a two month period of time to accompany the general, to show him where the fishing holes were. And it was very interesting and very valuable to me. Because he was just an outstanding man.

Did he talk to you?

Oh yes, he talked. Not much. He was not a man who rattled along. If he said something, it has some meaning to it. And then he got transferred. He got sent to something bigger and better, I guess....

So now who was your commanding officer who arranged the meeting with George Marshall?

His name was Chaplain.

And you said that Marshall, that he didn't say much unless it had some meaning, could you think of anything he told you?

No, we were fishing. He didn't talk when he was fishing. He didn't talk too much business, he didn't talk his army business with me.

Was it just the two of you?

Yeah.

Did you ever meet his wife?

Yeah.

Did you go into town?

Had lunch one time with him at Marshall House. I am one of the few people that could claim that legitimately....

So what did being in the CCC mean for you?

Well I it meant a whole different life than I would have had without it. I grew up in what was known as the moonshine capital of the world. And I would have probably went the route everybody else went. I would have wound up making moonshine whiskey, selling it, getting busted, spending time in jail, and who knows what it would have led to for me. But there wasn't anything else. Cotton picking days were over by then. There, wasn't much cotton to pick. Hand picking. So that was about the only thing you could make a living at in those days.

You said your family came up here. Was that your mother and your sister?

⁴³ Jimmy Angel (1899-1956), famous bush pilot who in 1933 discovered the world's highest waterfall, Angel Falls, in the jungles of Venezuela.

I was here and they came here, and we made this our home. I married a local girl. In Yacolt. We have been married for sixty-two years now....

....But yeah, it changed my whole life. If it hadn't been for that I never would have amounted to much. I think it prepared me for what I did, and I was reasonably proud that I was able to, with a limited education, and limited background, to become a construction and maintenance superintendent for an organization the size of the [Gifford] Pinchot National Forest. A million and a quarter acres of land like I said, 6,000 miles of roads, and probably that many miles of trails. And of course they phased out the telephone lines, they had miles and miles of telephone lines. And then radio came into being they phased all that out. Then with aerial observation, they phased out lookouts. So, things changed.

Were you ever on the lookout?

Short period of time. You know, fill-ins. After the war they were usually manned by college students. You know, earning extra money in the summer time. When school started, they all had to go back to school. There was a period of time that warranted lookouts, they had to fill in whoever was available, which happened frequently. And maybe we were assigned to look out for a week or two weeks, or a few days.

So did you meet your wife while you were in the CCC?

Yeah. She and her friend were walking down the road at Yacolt, towards Moulton Falls. Moulton Falls was the community-swimming hole at that time. And it was a kind of a gathering point for youngsters. I seen her and a friend of hers walking down the road going to the swimming hole. And I came by with somebody who had a car. We had visitors yesterday who went to school with my wife and they graduated together from Battle Ground. His parents had a car, and he was quite popular because they would let him use the car. And there wasn't many cars around then in '36, '37, one car, much less two or three. So, we stopped and I asked them if I could carry them to where they were going. They thought that was funny. They laughed at me. I was going to carry them. And that was our first meeting.

You got her telephone number from her?

No, there was no telephone.

No telephone?

No telephone.

There was a lot of letter-writing going on.... Well, I have to get going. Thank you Mr. Grooms.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Ari Binder, May 2002



Lynn Hazen, above, in April 2002 (photograph by Donna Sinclair) and at Camp Hemlock in 1938, below. The lower photograph is from the personal collection of Mr. Hazen.



Lynn Hazen

Co. 944 (1937-1938)

Narrator: Lynn Hazen

Interviewer: Donna Sinclair, History Department, Portland State University

Date: May 1, 2002

Place: Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters, Vancouver, Washington

Introduction:

Lynn Hazen's ancestors moved to Washington State in 1876, homesteading in the area of View,⁴⁴ Washington. Mr. Hazen was born July 28, 1919 at La Center, Clark County, Washington. At the time of the interview, Lynn Hazen's 106 year-old mother, Carrie Elsie Hazen, still lived on the remaining portion of the family farm. Hazen's father, Homer Hazen was a dairy farmer, and he and his four siblings were raised to view hard work as the norm. The family was self-supporting, a large garden and work in the logging industry often supplementing proceeds from the dairy farm. Lynn Hazen attended school in Fargher Lake, Washington for eight years, then attended Battle Ground High School for two years before joining the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1937 at age seventeen. Hazen joined the CCC to help his family pay for a farm loan during the Great Depression, and worked both as a truck driver, transporting goods in the CCC "Gandy Wagon," and in the Company 944 sign shop at Camp Hemlock. During the summer of 1938, Hazen volunteered for CCC service at Camp Denali in then-McKinley National Park where he worked in construction. During World War II, Hazen served in the "Brown Shoe" Air Force as a mechanic, before returning to the Pacific Northwest to work for the Bonneville Power Administration.

How did your family come to the Pacific Northwest? Do you know that story?

Yes. Our grandfather came from Indiana. Let's see, Etna Green, Indiana. That's about forty miles west of Fort Wayne, in 1876. And he homesteaded at View [Washington], right where the Hazen Chapel is. He had 160 acres there, and he donated the land for the church, helped build a church and a cemetery....

So you grew up on a dairy farm. What was that like? What kinds of chores did you have to do?

Oh, you name it, I did it. Milk the cows, shovel out the barn, harvest the hay. This was all done with horsepower. We had no tractors at that time. During harvest time, when I was about ten years old and too small to put the harness on the horses, so Dad made me a stool and let me get on that stool and put the harness on the horses....

Did your father work outside of the farm?

Yes, at times he worked in the logging camps.

Did you ever do that?

Yes.

Before you were in the CC's or after?

⁴⁴ East of LaCenter, Washington.

Both. Before and after. I was greasing skids in a logging operation which was only about three-quarters of a mile from our home. And I got fifty cents an hour.

What's greasing skids like?

Well, in those days they logged with horses and the skid road was small logs put across a trail or a load, and they chopped a notch in them, and they'd pull the logs down this route. And they had old castoff grease and a swab, and I would grease their skids so that logs would slide....

Can you tell me how the Depression affected your family?

Yeah, things were pretty tight. We, of course, had all of our food on the farm. And I remember when I was a kid, during the summer, we'd furnish the timber and I'd cut cordwood and sell it for a dollar and a half a cord.

Where would you sell it? Would you go into town or...?

Oh, the people would come in with their truck and load it up, two or three cords on the truck and haul it away to places like Vancouver, wherever.

You mentioned on the telephone that your family had a hard time during the Depression.

Oh yeah, they had a lot of sickness. I had a brother that had a lot of sickness and was in the hospital, and this really hurt. So that was one reason I went into the CCCs, to help the folks pay off the farm loan on the place, which they had to take out to make ends meet -- the hospital and doctor bills, and so on.... [My brother], first he had measles, then he got pneumonia, went to the hospital and was operated on. And while he was in the hospital he got whooping cough. Somewhere along the line he also got appendicitis, which wasn't too good....

And did all of the boys work on the farm to keep things going?

Oh yeah, at one time, yes.

And then you joined the three Cs.... First of all, where did you sign up?

LaCenter, Washington.

They had a recruiting office there?

We met a fellow that came out from Vancouver. I don't know what office he was out of, but he signed us up for CCCs.

Do you recall the first time you heard about the CCCs?

Yeah, when I was seventeen years old.

And what did you hear?

Well, I heard that you can make thirty dollars a month, which wasn't too bad at that time....

They let you in at seventeen?

At seventeen. I was seventeen-and-a-half. It was January 1937.

And did any of your brothers go in?

Oh yes, my younger brother went in after I was in there....

And where was he?

Camp Hemlock. Same place.

And how long were you there?

Two years.

So after you signed up, you had to go through the induction. Did you do that at Vancouver?

Vancouver Barracks.

And how long did you stay at Vancouver Barracks?

Oh, a matter of two or three days.

Is there anything you can tell me about that, what the process was like?

There really wasn't much to it, a quick physical to prove that you were still alive, and that's about all.

The army actually did that.

Yes.

And then how did you get out to the camp?

We rode the army truck. We had an army truck, we called it the —andy wagon" that came to Vancouver, picked up all our supplies and recruits like myself, and they hauled us up to Hemlock. Which, you know, was out of Carson, Wind River area.... That's what everyone called it [the —andy wagon"]. It brought in all our supplies. We had a small PX and oh, candy bars, cigarettes, clothing, bedding, whatever.

You had a small PX at Camp Hemlock?

Just a little canteen, very small.

Do you know where you were inducted at Vancouver Barracks, where the Forest Service building was?

Well the Forest Service building was right on Fifth Street, on the north side. And I was inducted at the army barracks, right on the south side of Fifth Street?

Did you stay in the army barracks while you were there?

Yes....

Were there any enrollees staying in tents at that time?

Not there.

Did they give you supplies?

Clothing, yes.... Oh yeah, they gave you a razor and a toothbrush and a bar of soap. Like Jack Leonard said, from there on you were on your own. You got five dollars a month in camp and that's what you bought your personal supplies with.

Was that enough?

Had to be. [laughs]

Was it enough to have some fun too? Five dollars a month.

Oh yeah. Yeah, we'd get to go to a movie once in a while.

At Camp Hemlock?

No, we'd go to, oh Carson, Stevenson, and Bingen....

And did you feel pretty good about being able to send the money home?

Oh yes, yes.

Did it help them to pay the loan?

Sure did.

You told me that you worked at the sign shop.

Yes. That was basically the first place I worked, and here's a sample of one of the signs we made.

It says Fairbanks, Alaska.

Yes, I made that after my CCC trip to Alaska....

And what kind of wood is this?

Cedar.... That's all sandblasted. What we did, we'd cut the letters out of rubber and paste them on here and then sandblast them. See the sand would not heat the rubber away, but it would sandblast around the letter.

So it makes little grooves in the wood that also carves the letters out.

Right. That's the grain of the wood that you see there. Then you had to pull the rubber off and stain them to preserve them, and then paint the letters black or white. Whatever.

Oh, that's great. What did you make signs for? For places around the forest?

Oh yeah, the whole total forest. Men this way, women that way, or campground signs and everything. Here's another one I made. This is kind of a scrounged out. That was sandblasted.

A picture frame.

Right.

So you put the rubber around the edge here and then use the sandblaster. What was the sandblaster like?

Oh, we had an air compressor and sand and we had a hopper, and you'd just put the sand in the hopper, and make high pressure air that blew out of a nozzle.

Did you wear masks while you were doing it?

No, we did this through a window with rubber gloves to keep from eating the skin off your hands.

I can imagine if it can blast the wood like this that it would be dangerous. Did anybody ever get hurt?

Nope.

No. Where was the sign shop?

Right near Forest Service headquarters at Hemlock. Very close. This is the truck I [drove]. I started out driving a 1933 issued truck. That's a 1935, and I drove this truck all over the southern part of the Columbia National Forest. Now it's the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Is this a picture of you?

Yes. The last three numbers on the license plate was 875.

So, the first truck you had was a 1933.

'33. Oh, that was real modern. That was a 1935.

How fast did it go?

Oh, they had them governed at thirty-five miles an hour. But we'd cheat. I was making long runs from the Forest Service warehouse here in Vancouver to, oh Hemlock, Guler, Trout Lake. Wherever. And I'd goof around, I could get a few more miles out of it. I hauled everything too -- lumber and dynamite caps, steel, you name it.

Dynamite for the?

Blasting. Road construction and that. Naturally when I hung that big red sign on the front of my truck that said —Explosives,” you had the road....

And what were the roads like at that time?

Oh, the highway up the river was blacktop at that time. But then from Carson to Camp Hemlock, ten miles. That was gravel. Then all the roads from Hemlock into the forest were bare dirt. Just little, one-track roads.

So from Hemlock up to say, Sunset Falls...

Yeah, over to Sunset it was twenty-seven miles on this dirt road from Hemlock to Camp Sunset, another CCC camp.

And when you would take supplies out there, would you stay the night out there? To Camp Sunset, some of the outlying areas.

No, I didn't haul much supplies into Camp Sunset. They had their own supply run on this side of the mountain.

So where did you haul the majority of supplies to?

Hemlock. Trout Lake. Oh I hauled everything⁴⁵. I even hauled an old packer. He had a saddle horse. The name of the saddle horse was Blaze, and he had five mules. And I would load these six animals in the truck with the equipment for the people in the lookouts. And I'd haul him out as far as we could go on the road, and we'd load up the mules there, and he would pack the supplies into the lookout.

And where were the horses and the mules kept?

He kept those in the Wind River valley. And I don't remember exactly where his farm or place was, but it was nearby Hemlock.

So you would drive and pick him up with the horse and the mules and--

Right.... Yeah, there was six of them.

Do you remember what his name was?

Leo Moore.... I'm quite sure. I could check it by looking through here.... Yeah, I'm sure it was Leo Moore. He knew the hills, all the trails. In fact, he would operate clear up here at Cougar, about three miles east of Cougar was the end of the road at that time. From there on it was just trails. In fact, I hauled a load of hay from Hemlock clear down here to Vancouver and then up to Cougar and unloaded the hay for his mules and his horse at the end of the road.

You transported them out there, and then did you take supplies to them intermittently? So that he could take them up to the lookout?

⁴⁵ Mr. Hazen later mentioned a trip made to the lumber mill in Klickitat to pick up 1" x 6" tongue-and-groove pine boards for the interior of one of the Forest Service buildings at Hemlock.

No, he had that all pre-arranged, and had everything loaded and he'd take them out to the people in the lookout....

You helped him pack things up there sometimes?

Yeah, somewhat. Oh we worked on lookouts. I'd haul the crews out to build the lookouts and repair them or whatnot.

And when you did that, did you actually do some of the work also?

Oh, yes.... Yes. Repairing.

Which ones did you go to?

Oh, Mowich Butte, Lookout Mountain, Point 3670, which was north of Hemlock on a high peak on the south side of the north fork of the Lewis River. You could stand there at that lookout and see Mt. Rainier and Mt. Adams, Mount St. Helens, the whole country. At that time there were no roads -- just a green carpet.

I bet it was beautiful. What kind of supplies did you take up there?

Oh, just food for them, whatever. They were connected to their ranger station by telephone, and they'd call in what they needed.

So, what skills did you learn while you were in the CCC?

Oh, truck driving. Running machinery. I ran a Cat a little bit. Of course, painting, carpenter work. Just about everything....

So where did you learn carpentry work?

Oh, just here and there, especially up in Alaska. We built two, I call them three-story houses. Real nice. Insulated. Real good....

[looking at photographs] There's photographs of Camp Hemlock. That's myself. We're standing on the bridge that the CCC has built before I got there, over Trout Creek.

That's Bunker Hill in the background.

This is a picture of the dam they built before I got there and the bridge that I'm standing on in that photograph.

Now, do you know, behind the dam there's a little lake.... Was that used for recreation quite a bit?

Yeah, we could go swimming there. Trout fishing. Whatever....

[looking at pictures] Well, here's a picture with your license plate number.

Right.

14-875, with NF there.

I remember that number. That's a picture of Jess Adams and his wife. He was our project superintendent.

So you knew Jess Adams.

Oh yes.

And what was he like?

Fine fellow.

Did you work with him closely or as part of the crew?

Pretty much, yes. He would send me on a lot of errands, special things. Oh, like picking up a load of lumber here, trips to and from the warehouse. Christmas time, I'd haul Christmas trees into town.

Did the CC boys cut Christmas trees?

Yeah, some.

Did they sell them in town?

No, they were for the Forest Service personnel here in Vancouver and Portland.

So the CC boys would go out and cut the trees and then deliver them to Forest Service personnel.

Yeah, I'd load em up and haul em in. That was only a couple of times, though....

You asked about my trip to Alaska. My wife found this book in which I kept a log, a daily log of the total trip, to Alaska from Camp Hemlock to Fort Lewis, and then by boat to Seward, Alaska. They asked for volunteers to go up there and work in the national park, and here's a list. There was seven of us that went.

It looks like May 14th 1938....

[Reading] Left Camp Hemlock, 9:30 a.m., for Vancouver.... It [the journal] went from May 14th till...

August 23rd 1938, or is that 25th?

Here it is here. October 7th 1938. Here's an entry. Pervis, who was a guy when the "candy wagon" came down from Hemlock to Vancouver, and I rode in back with him in the "candy wagon". Then I went back to my same old job driving truck, worked in the sign shop again.

Well, why did they want volunteers in Alaska?

I don't know why they wanted volunteers, but they had this project up there for the [Mount McKinley] National Park, and I guess put out the word.

So they came to Camp Hemlock and said, "Does anybody want to go?"

Well, they sent word there. There's the fellows that I went with, right there and myself. There's seven of them. There was a total of eight, counting myself. Stan McGowan, Ben McAllister, and Del Bearson, Leonard James, Leonard Platt, Pat Moore, and Jim Warren.

Thank you. Now did you become good friends with them?

Lifetime friends with Stan McGowan. Let's see, Ben McCallister stayed in Alaska. Leonard James, he ended up being an officer in the army. I lost track of the rest of them.

How did you get to Alaska?

By boat. We went from Hemlock to Vancouver. By train from there to Tacoma, Fort Lewis. From there to Seattle, and from there by boat to Seward, Alaska. Aboard the *North Star*. Small Indian Service boat. And boy, that was a rough ride when you got out in the open water. It's all in that log there.

Okay, wonderful. I'm looking forward to reading it. That'll be fun.... And where did you stay in Alaska?

We made our own camp. Here is the camp right here.

Oh, it's a tent camp.

Yeah, they hauled us in there by train and we just got out, and our tents and lumber was on the train.

Was it a 200-man camp like the others or a smaller one?

I don't remember how many. You could estimate the number of tents there and multiply that by five.

About five people per tent.

Five people per tent.

So the wood and the tents were on the train and you hauled it out there and set it up.

Right.

And there are some buildings there in the background too. Did you build those?

Yeah, those small buildings. Oh, those are also tents. They just have wooden walls around, maybe three feet high. But we did have a mess hall and infirmary. And those were what they call — "nail and bolt" camps. They came built in sections and you bolted them together. And then same with the roof. Camp Denali. We named it. Denali is the Indian name for Mt. McKinley.

It's now called Denali National Park.

Right. They stole our name, Denali, I guess. [laughs] Myself and Stan McGowen there, we were lifetime friends there....

Well, you sure look young here. Didn't you tell me you had your eighteenth birthday that summer in Alaska?

Nineteenth.... Let's see, Pat Moore, Del Bearson, and myself. That's taken right there at McKinley. Oh, do I have two of these. Yeah.

You've both got your suspenders on.

Oh yes.

You didn't wear your CC clothes when you were out there working?

Oh, sure. That's our CCC fatigues mostly....

Oh, okay. They look like jeans.

Blue denim.

What about the brown khaki? That's not something that you wore?

Oh yes, that was more or less our dress uniform.

So these were your work clothes.

Right.

They gave you the boots and gloves and that sort of thing.

Whatever we needed. At Camp Hemlock, they even issued caulk boots for working in the woods.

[looking at photographs] We'd love to scan this picture of Jess Adams and his wife. Do you know his wife's name?

I forget it. I don't remember.

Was she around much? Did she come up there too?

She'd just come up there occasionally. Their home was in Vancouver, east Vancouver. She accidentally got asphyxiated. They had a break in a natural gas line near their home, and the gas got into the house and asphyxiated her.

That's when you were in the CCC?

No, later.

But you heard about it?

Oh yes. Word gets around. Of course, we have a reunion every year too, at Lewisville Park. Oh, back to Lewisville Park. Have you ever seen the big portal sign at the entrance of Lewisville Park?

I'm sure I have.

It's probably twelve, fourteen feet long. That was finished, completed after I left Hemlock. You might take a photo of that if you want.

That came from Hemlock?

Yeah, that was completed in '39 after I left there. I remember, oh it was big. The sign was so big they had to move the wood out into a room about this size, and sandblast it in the open. The guy that did the sandblasting -- he had a hood and protective clothing on.

So, a room about...

Oh, this was probably thirty-by-sixteen....

Approximately how many people worked in the sign shop?

Oh, there were probably eight or ten. Not many at all.

Is there anything that you can tell me about Vancouver Barracks? About, say, recreation there? Or did you go there for any team sports or anything like that?

No. No [pause]. Oh, in Jack Leonard's deal here, he told about. Now Jack stayed in the CCCs and Jim, his twin brother, got out. So we had this boxing tournament at Cascade Locks. And Jack mentions that in here. So, if what Jack says is true. I hope his memory's right, and I think it is. Well, Jack was still in the CCCs, and he and Joe Martin. Joe's nickname was Gandy. We always called him Gandy. Well, according to Jack's write up here, they were supposed to fight each other in the ring. And Jack explains that he didn't want to because he knew they'd get hurt. So anyhow, we loaded up the boxing team and the spectators and hauled them across the bridge to Cascade Locks. The school gymnasium. And we went in and Rip Graham [was] organizing the bout, or smoker, if you want to call it that.

—Hey, where's Jack? Where's Gandy?"

—They're not here," but Jim, his twin brother was out of the CCCs at that time, and he and his father were there.

—So, where's Jack?"

He said, "I don't know." He said, "Must be in Stevenson."

So, I put Jim in my truck and I said, "Let's go get he and Gandy." So we drove to Stevenson. Sure enough, like Jack says there, we found them in the theater and they'd been drinking a gallon jug of wine.

And Jim said, "Hey, you're supposed to be over there fighting." He said, "Dad's there and he wants to watch you box."

And Jack said, "No, he says, 'I'm not fighting. I'm not fighting Joe. He ain't fighting me.'"

So Joe was drinking the wine with him, right?

Oh yeah, yeah. They tied one on. So, we went in the restroom and talked about it and decided that Jack and Jim should change clothes. Jim put on Jack's CCC uniform, which was OD colored. And I put Jim back in the truck, drove back to Cascade Locks and walked in. And here was Rip Graham busy getting everything going for the boxing match. I said, —~~Ri~~, I've got Jack here."

And he says, —Good So, Jim put on his boxing trunks. Now, reading between the lines. If Jack and Joe were supposed to fight each other, Joe and Jack were drinking the wine in Stevenson. So, Jim won the bout by default, because Joe, his opponent, didn't show up.

And did you leave Jack and Gandy over in Stevenson?

Oh yeah in the theater.

They stayed there in the theater [laughs].

They stayed there and drank their jug of wine. [both laugh] So anyhow, no one, like Jack says in here, no one [knew]. Let's see, Jack and Gandy, myself and Jim, and probably Jim's father, were the only ones that ever knew the difference for years and years. And Jack indicates in here that he told Rip Graham about it two or three years before he died. So that was our secret for many years.

That you pulled one over on the organizers.

Yeah, they'd never know. No one ever knew.

What other kinds of fun did you have while you were in the CCC?

Oh, I don't know. I remember one time we had a dance in Carson. That's about all. We could go fishing or hunting, or.

Did you go to dances much?

No, no, not too much. Oh, let's see. This is Camp Hemlock. Oh you asked, on the telephone when we were talking about the Russian flight, the first flight that came from Russia over the North Pole. Okay, they were supposed to land at Swan Island, the old airport on Swan Island in Portland. Well, that was fogged in, so they landed at Vancouver, at the Vancouver Barracks. And that was June 1937.⁴⁶

And you said you saw that. What did you see?

I saw the plane after it [landed]. Well, in 1937 I was driving this Forest Service truck up and down the highway. The highway, at that time, the Evergreen Highway was Fifth Street. Airfield on the south side, the barracks on the north side. So the plane was parked right there. I remember driving by it a few times. It stayed there X number of days....

I was going to ask you also about the motor pool at Vancouver. Is there anything you can tell me about that, about where it was located?

⁴⁶ Three Russian aviators landed at Pearson Airfield in Vancouver on June 20, 1937, having made the first non-stop flight over the North Pole. While in Vancouver, the Russian aviators met with then-Colonel George C. Marshall, commander of the CCC and other troops at Vancouver.

No, the only connection we had with that was our —andy wagon,” the one truck, and that was maintained there in the army motor pool. But we had nothing to do with it. We just drove it....

Did you gas it up or anything there?

No, we did that actually at Hemlock.

There was a gas station at Camp Hemlock?

We had our own gas supply at Camp Hemlock. We had a fleet of trucks. We had graders, Caterpillars, trucks, pickups, whatever.

So, was there a garage up there that held those?

Oh, yeah. We had our own garage, our own maintenance set-up.

I wanted to ask you a couple more questions about Camp Hemlock... What kind of medical facilities were at Camp Hemlock that you recall?

We had a small dispensary when I was there, and they had a contract surgeon and he had one assistant....

And how about the dentist? I know that they had dental care.

We didn't. Occasionally, very seldom a dentist would come around and he had an assistant and they would clean your teeth, but I never went to them, never did....

What about education? Did you take any classes or anything?

No, not there. They didn't have too much for that. They had hobbies like leather work or typewriter classes, that's about it.

What kinds of things did you do in the evenings?

Oh, play cards. Go for a walk. Not much to do. Remote.

Did you ever come into contact with any Indians while you were up there in the forest?

No, we had an Indian in our outfit there. Frank Eyle, from Battle Ground.

At Camp Hemlock?

Yes. I went to school with him [and his brother] at Battle Ground.... They were pretty good. They were tough....

Was he the only Indian in the outfit?

Yes. As I remember, while I was there. Oh, they were good people.

Same age as you?

About, yes. Had to be. Same grade, same class at school....

Is there anything else you can tell me about the Government Mineral Springs Campground before we move on? You said that you got the stones locally. Did the boys go out and pick them up and gather them together, and then --

Oh yeah, we'd pick 'em up, haul 'em in with a truck and mix up our mortar and build the fireplaces.

Did you ever go out there and camp afterwards?

Yes. Later on I went deer hunting and camped here and there.

And did you drink the water from Iron Mike?

Oh yeah. Tasted kind of icky. Well, is there anything else I can tell you about.

Well, I was going to ask -- is there anything else that you want to tell me about the CCC that you've been thinking about?

Not really. I think we've pretty well covered it. I hope it gives you a good idea what we did.

Oh, it does! It really helps. Oh, I did want to ask you about holidays while you were in the CCC.

Oh, some of the holidays we would stay there, stay in camp. And well, we'd have real good food. Turkey. All the trimmings. Cakes, pies, you name it. Dutch Halle was our [cook]. He had formerly been in the Army. I guess he was a cook, and he couldn't pass a physical to reenlist, so he was our cook in the CCC. He did a real good job. He came from Germany, by the way.

He was from Germany. Did you ever have kitchen duty?

Yes.

And what did you do then? So you worked with Dutch in the kitchen then.

Yeah, for a short time, till I got the flu and got laid up. Then I went to work in the sign shop, after we had the flu. Oh boy, a whole bunch of us had that.

Oh really? did they have an infirmary there?

No, they had one of the barracks. They turned one of the barracks into an infirmary, and everyone [who] had the flu was confined to that barracks.

That was when you first got up there, in the winter of '37.

Yes.

Because you told me that when you went up there that it was covered with snow.

Oh yeah, that winter we had a good five feet of snow on the level. In fact, we had trouble keeping the road open, the gravel road from Carson to Camp Hemlock you know, for emergencies or supplies or what. The county and our graders couldn't keep up, keep the road clear, so we took our 50 Caterpillar and put lights on it. And let's see, a guy by the name of Sheryl was the chief operator of that Cat, and we'd run that all night to keep the road open....

About how many people were laid up during [that time], it wasn't an epidemic there?

Oh gee, there must have been at least thirty of us in that building at one time.

That's a pretty good portion of you.

Yeah, right.

Did anybody die or anything?

Nope.... Oh, talking about Jack and Jim Leonard. Identical twins. They were both in the CCCs at that time, and payday happened to fall on a weekend, I believe on a Saturday. Well, they had gone home to Bonneville, North Bonneville. So they figured no need of both of us going out there to get paid. So one of them, I forget which one, Jack or Jim, came out and they walked through the pay line, says, —th Jack Leonard” and they gave him his five dollars.

He went out and walked around a little while, came back in. He says, —I'm Jim Leonard,” and they gave him another five dollars and he took the money and went home.

Oh, that's a great story! It sounds like they were in cahoots quite a bit.

Yeah. Oh, I'll tell you another one. Jack had this girl in North Bonneville on a Sunday. They were driving around, you know, just sightseeing or whatever. And she was calling Jack Jim. So he went to take her home late in the afternoon. He swung by the house and he went in the house, and here sat Jim. Jack took his sweater off and handed it to Jim, said, —Here, put this sweater on. Take that girl home. She thinks she's been out with you all afternoon.” She never knew the difference.

That's funny.

They were identical. Oh, you had to know them to tell them apart.

It sounds like they were fun.

Yeah....

Is there anything that you want to add?

I hope I didn't forget anything.

Well, I hope not, too! [both laughing] A lot to talk about, isn't it? ...

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Donna Sinclair April 2003



Fred Hemenway at Camp Lower Cispus, above, in 1940. Lower photograph by Mr. Hemenway shows members of Company 2919 in front of the recreation hall at Camp Lower Cispus in 1940.



Fred Hemenway

Co. 2919 (1939-1941)

Narrator: Fred Hemenway

Interviewer: Lisa Parker, Capstone student, Portland State University

Date: February 11, 2001

Place: Hemenway residence, Castle Rock, Washington

Introduction:

Frederic Joseph Hemenway was born in Clear Water, Nebraska in 1921. His parents, who married in 1900, raised seven children. In 1931, the Hemenway family moved to Wyoming to attempt cattle ranching. After many difficulties, they left the state in 1937 for Washington, where one of Mr. Hemenway's sisters resided. After high school graduation in 1939, he enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps because of job scarcity. His older brother Charles had joined the CCC in Wyoming. Mr. Hemenway spent one-and-a-half years in the CCC during 1940 and 1941. During his first six-month hitch, he was based at CCC Camp Lower Cispus, but spent the remainder of his service at the Randle Ranger Station. During his time in the CCC, he worked at many tasks, including trail maintenance and construction. Mr. Hemenway died on October 1, 2002.

How did you hear about the CCC?

My older brother, Charles, was in the CCC's in Wyoming. At that time they were getting thirty dollars a month. But twenty-five dollars came home to the folks and Charlie got five dollars to live on in camp. You got meals and room and board, but he spent about a year down in the southern part of Wyoming in CCC's, and they built a dam and got a lot of conservation work done there. I was very familiar with the CCC's and when I graduated from high school I couldn't get a good job. I graduated in May or June and I signed up for the C's in December of that same year. I didn't go until January.

I read your article⁴⁷ and you say in there that the best job you could find paid five dollars. I was wondering what kind of job you were looking for?

You know, they call me easy sometimes, because I get talked into things I don't want to do. A fellow that I knew was planting trees for Weyerhaeuser and he lived with his elderly mother, but he stayed in camp during the week and he needed someone to stay with his mother. So, during the week, I stayed up at Toutle and I took his mother to buy groceries and I did work around the farm. I milked the cow and I put in windows or whatever was broken and helped keep up the farm. Five dollars a week, room and board [laughs], which wasn't very good pay, but then, five bucks was five bucks at that time.

And about how old were you then?

Eighteen.

I now want you to describe your first day in the camp itself.

⁴⁷ 1999 article: Civilian Conservation Corps Memories. *Cowlitz Historical Quarterly* (41(2):17-24).

Naturally, I was terrified. When I went into camp, they had, I think, three barracks or maybe four, for the forestry [Forest Service] people and they had one barracks they called the army overhead barracks. Well, the other barracks were full, so they put me in the army overhead barracks and this included the supply sergeant and people that worked directly under the army. I was terrified. We had a bunk with a footlocker at the bottom of it and we were able to lock that because thievery was really something. I mean, [chuckle] these guys would steal each other's socks and whatever they could get hold of and, well, I was scared you know. It was probably two weeks before someone moved out [of the barracks] and then [they] moved me into the forestry barracks. I was first assigned to the supply room where we gave out uniforms to the new recruits and I was able to pick out my own uniform because being real small, it wasn't easy to find. Can you imagine caulked boots in a size five? I found a pair and that's what I wore and my trousers were twenty-eight waist, oh brother, good old days [laughs]. I was assigned first to the wood cutting crew and there was lots of downed logs there in the forest and we had to [use] -- they called them misery whips -- long bucking saws, two men to a saw and we'd saw these things into stove wood length, about two-foot long and split them with wedges and axes. We had a real good woodpile, but it took a *lot* of wood to keep all those stoves going in camp because that's all the heat we had. They had a generator, a Peterson, for power, but at night, nine o'clock, ten o'clock, whenever they shut the generator off, and that was the end of the power until the next morning.⁴⁸

You had to cut wood everyday then?

The wood cutting crew lasted for probably six weeks before we had enough to supply the camp for several months.

How did you actually get to camp? How did they take you there?

We got on army trucks in Kelso, where we signed up and had our physical. You've seen pictures of them, with a bench on both sides and a canvas cover over the top and the rear end was open. They drove us up the highway into Randle. Now, the captain was behind us, so we had to stick strictly to the specified thirty-five mile an hour limit. I thought we never would get there, but I'm told that the truck drivers, when the captain wasn't following, [laughs] they could get a lot more speed out of their trucks. It was probably pretty close to sundown when we got to camp because, well this was in January and the days were real short. They fed us and gave us a bunk and then the next day we started on our temporary work. The guys had to get their hair cut and they gave us a shaving kit. I still have the box, but I don't know what happened to the stuff that was in it [laughs]. At that time, I didn't need a razor....

I want to know, what [was] your first impression of the area, the Camp Cispus area? What did you think of it when you first saw it?

It was all right. I remember officer's quarters and [a] mess house and then there was a huge water tank, and water came from a creek up on the hill, and the rows of barracks. We had a good library. It was well stocked with books and Pappy Green was the librarian and education officer, and very friendly. I didn't like it when I was in the army overhead barracks, but after I moved into the other barracks, I felt comfortable. I felt at home. Everyday, we'd get up and, now this memory is kind of fuzzy. It seems to me like they had a flag raising ceremony in the morning. But we'd put on our work clothes. We'd left our caulked boots off until after we got

⁴⁸ Mr Hemenway believes that Camp Lower Cispus actually had PUD power and was not run by a generator.

ready to go to work. We'd leave our shoes at the door and put on our caulked boots and get in the trucks and go to whatever job we had.

The first job, like I say, was the wood cutting crew and the next job was trail maintenance. The guys that were in the C's before us had built trails all through the mountains, but these trails, due to wind conditions and one thing and another [had deteriorated]. There were lots of snags or had been a forest fire, but the trails would get logs across them. We went along these trails and made them accessible for the mules that they used for hauling fire equipment and that sort of thing. But this was, to me, the world's best duty because [of] climbing mountains everyday, and the scenery was beautiful. Most of this country had been fairly newly logged and the view was terrific in all directions. Mount St. Helens is not too far away and some of the other mountain peaks. Sunrise had a forest lookout on top. Several of the mountains had lookouts on top and many of the trails we were on didn't go up to a lookout. Some of them did, but the lookout trails had already been pretty well maintained. But the others, we'd get up on a mountain ridge and eat lunch and then start back down. One trail that we were on, there was a ford across Yellow Jacket Creek and it was kind of a dangerous looking thing. Lee Bosworth said, "We'd better widen this trail," [because] there's a better ford up above. But there was a promontory of rocks [that] stood out there and he said, "I'll send a truck driver back for some equipment. I want you and Kelley to stay here and drill holes in this rock so we can blast it off." So, Kelley and I took a hand drill and a sledgehammer and drilled several holes in this rock so the powder monkey could put in dynamite and blow it away. When we were done, it made a real good trail across this thing and later on, there was a forest fire up at the end of that trail, and it was a good thing [we made the trail] because the mules would have had problems, or the people too, fording the creek. Some of these trails too, when we came to a creek that we couldn't get across when we were maintaining the trail, we'd take the equipment we had and fall a tree across the creek [laughs] and walk across the tree, which they wouldn't do now. I mean, you don't fall a tree for that reason. But back then we could do that.

Did you have to go through the initiation process? I know that a lot of boys had to go through the initiation process when they got to camp.

Well, there was always a few ornery guys that wanted to initiate everyone. Actually, they didn't pick on me. I come into the kangaroo court [and they said], "—O, I don't think he's guilty of anything," and they let me go. But the guys behind me, I mean they held them under that cold water. Oh, that water is cold too, coming right out of a mountain creek, in January. Yeah, there was initiations. One little guy had a deal he wanted somebody to blow into. Well, you'd blow into this tube and of course, it blows soot all over your face and little things like that. But, most of the initiations, except for the cold water was not that bad. But, like I say, he didn't pick on me because [laughs] he figured I wasn't big enough to fight back, I guess.

In your article, you refer to Captain Jeppesen [Company Commander], and then you talk about his German accent. So, I want to know, were there a lot of different ethnic groups in the CCC?

Not really. Most of the kids were from Seattle, Tacoma, and quite a few from [the] local neighborhood. But unfortunately, the CCC's did not allow Blacks⁴⁹. I understand that there was a couple of Black camps, but that wasn't enough. I mean, they were probably poorer than the rest of us, but, well it's a different ballgame of course, but that's the way it was back then. I don't think there were any Blacks. There may have been in some of the camps, but I don't really think so.

⁴⁹ African-American enrollees served in several CCC companies on the Columbia National Forest in 1933 and 1934, before racial segregation was imposed and "—labeled" camps were established in other parts of the country.

So what about the Forest Service guys, you had access to them?

They were the foremen. They assigned the projects for different deals that we were going to do. Like Bosworth's crew was assigned the trail maintenance or the wood cutting crew. Another crew worked in the wood shop where they built picnic tables and they built portable outhouses, and there was another crew that fell snags. There was forest fires [that had] run through there and these trees that had been burned were standing up there and they are a hazard as far as lightning is concerned. Lightning hits those trees and they catch fire and they'll start forest fires. Well, to fall these trees is to get rid of a lot of the hazards of forest fires and there was a pretty good size crew doing that. There was some on road maintenance and I really don't know what all [laughs], but they had lots of work. Some of the work was make-do of course, because keeping 200 men busy isn't that easy, but then mostly we did work. I don't recall a tree planting crew, but in lots of the camps there were. They planted millions of trees, which is a good deal, I mean, really.

And which crew were you on?

Well, like I say, just the wood cutting crew. Oh, we also had several days of firefighting training. They actually set a fire and we built trails around this fire. We contained this fire, just for practice and it wasn't long until this practice came in handy because the guys knew what they were doing when they got out on the fire line. It was good training, I remember that. But right off hand, I don't remember what else I did other than in the evenings of course, we had classes and I took a class in surveying of all things.

Do you remember what you learned in surveying? What kinds of things did they teach you?

Well, back then, we used a chain and we used a compass and a transit of course, and that sort of thing, but our instructor could have been better. For instance, [we] ran what they call a closed tangent. Anyhow, you start out by this direction, then you set a line by the compass and then measure it off a tape and then you set a certain angle, and the idea is to do this two or three times and come back where you started. Well we were able to do that on one occasion, I recall. But it wasn't too long after that that I was sent down to the ranger station.

Then, how often [were] these classes?

Probably once a week for each class, like psychology was once a week. Incidentally, Captain Jeppesen taught psychology one night when Mr. Green was gone. It wasn't psychology, it was physiology [laughs]. It's as close as he could come....

What role did Captain Jeppesen play in the boys' lives?

Not too much. I mean most of the duties he turned over to the foresters [Forest Service foremen] and I wish I could remember the name of some of the foresters there because most of them were really nice guys⁵⁰. They would assign the duties and they would check up on the foremen, like Bosworth. I don't recall that Captain Jeppesen had too much say over us other than he did conduct inspections every morning. You had to have your bunk made up. He

⁵⁰ In his "CCO Memories" article, Fred Hemenway (1999) mentions that Bosworth, Stockand, Anshus, and Krah were the four "semi-skilled" leaders, or foremen, in residence at Camp Lower Cispus.

would run a quick inspection every morning to make sure that everyone had their bunk made up.

I heard you say most of the Forest Service guys were pretty good to you. Did you have some problems with some of them?

No. I should have said all of them that I recall because they were easy to get along with.

And all the army service guys were too?

Well pretty much, except the supply sergeant. I didn't like him [laughs]. But I thought he could have done a better job of supplying better groceries for us because in all the literature I've read about camps, the guys talk about how good the meals were. And I hate to say this, but Cispus didn't have great meals. I mean, we ate more spaghetti [laughs] than we ate anything else.

Was there a refrigerator there?

Oh yeah, they had refrigeration equipment and that sort of thing. They had nicknames for everyone [laughs]. If Phil were still alive, he won't appreciate this, because I'm sure he knew that his nickname was "Filthy Phil," the cook [laughs]. And, it wasn't unusual to see him stirring a pot of beans with a big cigar in his mouth. This is one of those things that we put up with.

So, you say that everybody had nicknames. What was yours?

—"Dynamite" [laughs].

And how did you get that?

Oh, that was Howard Kelley. He nicknamed everybody. I wouldn't say that everyone had nicknames, but yeah, all through the camp, I was known as "Dynamite" [laughs]. Why, well that was Kelley's way of doing things and Kelley talked constantly. Just one of those guys that talks all the time. Mostly, I'm pretty quiet.

You told me a story in our pre-interview about how you were cutting a log and got through it really quick. Do you want to go ahead and tell that one?

Yeah, we were making a campsite and to set the toilet away from the tent sites, there was a great huge log about five feet through in the way. They wanted us to cut just an opening through this log. Well, I was on one end of the saw and another guy on the other and we started sawing through this log and stubborn me, I wouldn't quit. I mean, I just kept pulling on that saw and we got clear to the bottom and I said, "New!" And I looked over that log and here was three guys on the other side. They'd been changing off, trading. Boy, did I get the horse-laugh [laughs].

What was the relationship between the CCC boys like? Was it a camaraderie?

Yeah, for the most part, they got along pretty well. I remember one fight. It was at night and there was nobody to stop it and well, it just happened that I knew this one fellow. But, I don't like fighting. Everybody else was watching these two guys fight and I was in the barracks doing something else. But for the most part they got along pretty well. One thing that happens when a bunch of men get together, [is that] there was so much profanity and it shouldn't have been

that way. Even in the mess hall, the names they had for the different food was, you know, spaghetti's spaghetti. It's not some other horrible thing that they called it. But this, I didn't much approve of. There was one table, a young man considered himself, oh, I guess you'd say he intended to be a preacher. He had one table where things were quiet. When they served the meals, the person that took the next to the last helping from a plate had to go refill it. They said you'd cinched it, so you had to go refill the plate. Well, you'd scrape off some on a plate and go dash over to the counter to get a refill. And I remember beans and spaghetti and surely we had some good meals, but it doesn't stick in my mind. I did better when I [laughs] got down to the ranger station. I could do my own cooking.

Was there a lot of competition between the boys?

Not too much, not that I remember. I do know that some of the guys got in trouble because they just wouldn't work. They wouldn't do anything. They called them the —~~Old~~ Brick Squad." They just didn't know how to work, or didn't want to work or whatever. So, they put em on one squad. They called it prune picking, throwing little rocks off the roadside. [The roads] mostly were just, oh, sandy stuff. But then these round rocks on the road, they'd go around and throw these rocks out in the brush. They called them prune pickers [laughs]....

How often was leave available?

Probably every two weeks, I don't recall for sure. I know I got home quite frequently when out in camp. The only way we had to get home was if one of the guys happened to have a car, we could ride with him. Otherwise, we had to hitchhike, and it wasn't unusual for us to hitchhike both ways down to the highway. And then I'd take the bus. It cost about a quarter to ride from Mary's Corner down to Castle Rock. So, that's the way we'd do it, but I don't recall that there was ever a truck run down to take the guys to Kelso or whatever. There may have been, but I don't remember.

How would you describe the relationship between the CCC enrollees themselves and the army and the Forest Service and the whole group of officials?

Mostly we just did our jobs, you know. There wasn't any conflict that I recall. I think people were a little bit afraid of Captain Jeppesen because he was the authority, you know, and he had the power to court-martial you. Court-martial is not the right word, but then, you know, to give you a bad time or whatever. But, mostly, it was pretty good.

You were in camp for six months, so during that six months, can you describe what a typical day would [be like]?

We would get up in the morning. I believe that they rung the bell and everybody would get up and get dressed and there was probably a flag raising ceremony, but that may have been after breakfast. Anyhow, we'd go to breakfast, then we'd come back and we knew approximately what kind of work we were going to be doing that day. We'd get on our work clothes and go to work and put in an eight-hour day, whether it was building a camp or maintaining trails or whatever. At night, we'd come in and get washed up and then we had to put on our uniforms, or the army, olive drab thing and our necktie with it poked in the second button down. I believe that they'd lowered the flag before chow, and there was a ceremony at night when they lowered the flag. We'd eat and then we were on our own in the evening. We could go to the library or take a class or whatever we wanted to do. Some of the guys played cards I suppose, although I don't recall specifically any card games. But there wasn't any supervision that I know of to

prevent that. I think they probably turned the lights out at nine or maybe ten. I know the lights went out all at once because one night just before the lights went out I saw this man looking at my neighbor's locker and just the instance the lights went out, he grabbed that guy's socks. We were issued a bunch of new socks [and], well, [they'd] steal anything. But that was unusual....

You talked about [how] you knew what job you were going to have when you got up in the morning. How did they assign those jobs?

Well, when we had one job like the trail crew, this would go on for several weeks. So, we knew that we were going to be on that job for several weeks. Then later, whatever we were going to do would go on for quite awhile. We went down to the ranger station [and] we did a lot of work around there. We rebuilt the water line down to the ranger's house from the pond up on the hill. There was a creek up there and they'd put a little dam across it and they put a pipe in there and that was the water supply for the whole ranger station. Nobody bothered to check the water for whatever. Nobody ever got sick that I know of from the water. The same thing [was true] for the CCC camps. There was a little dam up on Yellow Jacket Creek and the water was just beautiful, crystal clear. It would run down the pipes and into this tower and that was the camp water supply. Sometimes we worked on [the water line], sometimes we had to redo the sewer line for the ranger station, for the ranger's house and that sort of thing. That's a kind of a fuzzy memory, I don't remember exactly, but I do remember digging like crazy [laughs]. We also planted some trees around the ranger station and I'm pretty sure that one of those trees that I planted is still growing up there and it's about three foot on the butt now. I don't remember specifically planting that tree, but I do know that we did plant trees around the ranger station. And of course, the ranger station now has been, not abandoned, but they have a new ranger station farther up the line a couple of miles and they still use the existing ranger station for one reason or another⁵¹, but I don't know what. There's a warehouse and a machine shop and a barn for the mules.

You talked about your trail maintenance and your wood chopping. Do you remember any other jobs you did while you were at the actual camp?

Well like I say, we did work down at the ranger station. We [also] built campgrounds along the Cispus River. Back in those days, people always camped in a tent, I mean, there was no RV's, they hadn't been invented yet, I guess. But we put in tent spaces and we dug holes for the pit toilets. The men in the shop would build usually one-holers or two-holers that they set over [the pits]. We probably built campgrounds for maybe a couple of months. I think the river's come up since then and they've all washed away but there's still one on the north fork of the Cispus. I was up there awhile back and even the picnic tables were still there, the ones that were built while I was in camp. Well, I lose track of time, but that must have been thirty years ago since I was last up there.

What kind of tools did you use to build campsites?

Oh, we used bucking saws, an axe, and another tool they called a Pulaski. It had an axe on one side and a hoe on the other. It was mostly a firefighting tool, but they came in handy for cutting brush out of the way. We left [these campsites] as natural as we could. People wanted everything natural. But you had to move a few rocks and one thing and another to build a tent space and we also put in rocks. We took the truck and went up to a rockslide and hauled these huge rocks down and made fire rings out of these rocks. Whether or not they're still there, I

⁵¹ Currently used as the operations compound for the Cowlitz Valley Ranger District, Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

have no idea, but the rocks were big enough so they wouldn't have washed down the river. We worked ourselves to death hauling those two, 300-pound rocks. We had to have three or four of us at a time to get hold of one and move it in. But all the time we had fun, you know, we enjoyed that sort of thing.

Now I want to go back to the firefighting training. What exactly did that consist of? What did you do in firefighting training?

Mostly, you built trails. You take all the brush and all the cover off the ground, dig down to bare dirt, and [make] a trail maybe a couple of feet wide. This way, if a fire's burning slowly up to this trail, it won't jump across. You can stop the fire in these, they call it a fire trail. The same system, I'm sure is used today where they can't get water to it. They also had what they called backpack pump cans. You put five gallons of water in a can and you carry it on [your] back with straps and there's a little pump on this thing [and] you pump this water out. A little bit of water will go a long ways when you're fighting fire, especially if it's moving slowly. You'd wet the brush a little bit and have the fire trail and you take a couple hundred guys and maybe fifty of them have backpack cans, it's amazing how you can stop a fire. Now when you get into these crown fires and really hot fires it's pretty difficult, but a lot of fires aren't that furious, so it's easy to contain them with enough manpower. And the CC's had the manpower. There was one fire that broke out when we was there and they were on the scene, oh gosh, a day and a half before the Forest Service brought in their crews. They had the fire more or less contained by the time the other crews showed up.

Did you help on fighting that fire?

No, I was down at the ranger station at that time and I was on the radio. Why I got on the radio, I don't know. But then that is the job I had during a fire.

How big an area did they use to set the training fire? Was it a large area?

Oh, probably a full acre I would imagine. It was big and among other things, they'd include a sawdust pile and we had to trench through this sawdust on the edge of it to prevent the fire from getting into this sawdust pile. [When] sawdust catches on fire, it goes like forever. So it was good training.

I want to jump to the ranger station for just a second. You actually say in your article that you helped prepare firefighting equipment. What did that entail?

We had to get the backpack pump cans ready to go and make sure they all were working. It's a little pump you pump by hand and the water squirts out. We [also] had the other backpacks. I can't remember all what was in them. Each one had a flashlight and I can't remember what all, but it was a pretty good size pack for each fire fighter. I believe there was a sleeping bag too in this. I know we spent days getting these packs ready because it takes a long while to change all the batteries in probably a hundred backpacks. There was a special building that we used. It kept all this firefighting equipment. These [backpacks] were all ready to go when a fire broke out. All I had to do was throw them on the truck.

So, the cans were all filled with water and everything?

No, they usually filled those in the creek later. But there was plenty of water available.

How was camp life structured? Was it run like an army style camp, or was it a lot looser?

Probably very similar. They had some guys that stayed in camp [and] they took care of maintenance. And in the forestry center [Forest Service foremen's quarters], where the forestry men stayed, there were a couple of guys that took care of that, and this is an aside: One day, a fire broke out in this forestry building. Ray Staudinger was cleaning in there and he smelled this smoke and he looked up in the attic and here was this fire around the chimney. Well, he yelled at somebody to ring the fire bell and he shimmied up there and put the fire out. Captain Jeppesen, when he heard the fire bell go off, I mean, he was walking on air. He was so excited and here the fire was already out [laughs]. He was yelling orders through this way and that and he didn't know what he was doing really. He was sure the thing was going to go up in smoke. Incidentally, that forestry building is still there or it was a few years back when I was up there. Jeppesen was excitable to say the least [laughs].

What areas of the Forest did you work on? Was it just the Cispus area or did they take you to other areas?

There was a side camp up at Cat Creek. The only time I got up there was later on when I was just leaving the CCC's and I'd applied for a position as a lookout, for a job in one of the lookouts, like Sunrise or Watch Mountain Lookout and that sort of thing. I was up at Cat Creek -- there was quite a few guys up there. I believe they were planting trees up there. They had a pretty good crew up there. That was [about] twenty-five miles up the line, real close to Mount Adams.

But you were out of the CCC by then?

I was just getting out. We took a training course on [lookout duties]. I didn't get my job as a fire lookout, but that's probably for the best too. That's a lonesome job [because] you sit up there all alone month after month and look for fires, look for smoke. But there was quite a bit of training. But other than that, I was never up to Cat Creek.

So, you just basically stayed right around the area then of Lower Cispus?

Yeah. We'd go, like I say, on the maintenance trails. On the weekends when we were in Cispus, we used to climb Burley Mountain and go up there and play in the snow. There was snow on the mountain, but there wasn't any down in the valley. In the morning you'd get up and it had been logged fairly recently [and] you'd see the deer running back and forth on these trails.

Were you involved with the completion of any major projects while you were in the CCC? Did they do anything major?

Not really.... No, other than like the campgrounds we built, no. The C's did build a log shelter up at La Wis Wis, which isn't all that far away. It's above Packwood probably ten miles and that building is still there and it's in good shape. They've kept it up, maintained it. It's worth driving up there just to see this building. It was all built by the CCC boys out of logs, and [has] fireplace in it and a shelter.

In your trail maintenance, I wanted to know what kind of tools you used. Did you use the same ones you used for a campground?

Well, yeah, pretty much. We carried a Pulaski, an axe on one side and a little hoe type thing on the other. And we always carried a bucking saw to buck any big logs that fell against the trails, and some of the guys had axes. That was the main tools that we used.

Did you have to take shovels?

I believe we did have a shovel. Some of the guys carried shovels.

Now I want to know about the camp setting itself. Did every enrollee have a job towards the betterment of the camp, towards the cleanliness?

[Not] other than keeping our own space. We had to make our bunks up every morning and keep things neat. I think probably someone swept the barracks every day, but I'm not even sure of that. Too many things have escaped my memory.

So you didn't have to do any kitchen duty or latrine duty or anything like that?

They had a latrine maintenance man and I think the army overhead took care of the kitchen. I can't be sure.

In your article, you also discuss your pay, saying that you actually got eight dollars and twenty-two was sent home to your parents. Did you ever discuss your pay with any of the other boys?

No, we just knew it was coming. On payday, I can't say the man's name, but he'd go around and collect two or three dollars or four or five dollars from each guy and he'd go to the liquor store [laughs] and he'd bring home a load of liquor. I had the pleasure of meeting that guy here two or three years ago in Arizona. He has passed away since then. I would like so much to be able to talk to him, but too many people have passed away that I knew then.

Did he share the liquor with you?

Oh no. Well, each guy would order what they wanted, like a pint of gin or a pint of scotch whiskey or whatever they wanted. He'd bring their liquor back and of course, he'd get his cut. If the whiskey cost three dollars for a pint, why he'd get fifty cents or whatever. Everybody had a racket, some way or another to pick up a few bucks. One guy, who fancied himself a barber, set up shop cutting hair, but he wasn't a barber [laughs].

Were these boys who gave him the money to get liquor?

Oh yeah, after payday they'd look this guy up and say, —Are you going to the liquor store?" Well he had his car hid out in the brush and so he'd go to the liquor store and he'd get his little lick off of that. Of course, it was a wild night there, but then by the next morning the liquor was gone [laughs]. And at that time, I wasn't drinking. I just didn't drink, so I lucked out. I saved my money.

I've read that some of the camps had canteens or little stores. Was there anything like that?

Yeah, inside of that recreation [hall] that I showed you [page 110], there was a canteen. They had dry ice and they put these Mars Bars on dry ice and freeze them and they were real good frozen. They sold tobacco, cigarettes, cigars, I believe ice cream, too. Cigarettes were fifteen

cents a pack. But, they had a pretty good supply. Then inside the next room, they had pool tables and we played pool just for fun and that was good....

Was the canteen run by the officials?

No, one of the boys took care of it. I suppose they paid him to take care of it, maybe he made a few extra dollars. But I remember going in there to get candy bars and cigarettes. That's when I first started experimenting with tobacco. I gave it up for quite awhile. Later on, when I was down at the ranger station, I didn't have anything to do and I had four pennies and five cash tokens and I went to the store and bought a package of Bull Durham. At that time, cash tokens were five for a penny. You probably don't even remember the Washington State cash tokens. Later on, they got expensive and went three for a penny....

What kind of things did you actually do with your eight dollars a month? We talked about the canteen, but what other kinds of things could you do with it?

Well, golly I don't know, it seemed to disappear. We had to pay for our haircuts. They did have a fairly decent barber that for, I think, thirty cents, he'd give you a pretty good haircut. Of course, I'd go home on weekends. That took a little money to get on the bus after I got to Highway 99 to get to Castle Rock. In Castle Rock, I'd go to a show once in awhile or something like that. It was just general, little things. My folks took the twenty-two dollars and on that twenty-two dollars they could pay the rent, they could pay the light bill, they could pay for part of the groceries. Twenty-two dollars. Rent was six dollars a month, so they didn't have much of a house, but then for six dollars what did you expect [laughs]. But, it got them through. Dad eventually went on WPA, which was another government project.

What kind of activities were available at the camp for the boys?

In the main hall they did have a dance one time and I don't recall much about the dance. I was always real shy and I don't think I even went to the dance. They also had a boxing ring in there that they'd set up. The guys could box for fun or even a couple of times there was a grudge match from guys that weren't getting along, so that didn't work. Activities usually, well, we hiked up Burley Mountain when there was snow on and I don't recall too much else that we did.

Did they have sports?

Some of the guys wanted to start a rifle range [but] the Captain said, "No way. Your mothers won't approve of it, they'll think you're training for the army." So, they wouldn't allow that.

What was your favorite thing to do on off duty hours?

I probably enjoyed going to the library and reading as much as anything. We didn't take books down to the barracks, but the library wasn't that far away and they had a pretty good stock of books. Usually I was involved in some kind of a psychology class or surveying. We did have horseshoes [so] we'd play horseshoes.

You talked about the dance and that was a special event. Do you remember anything else? I've also read that they actually had community sing-along nights.

We didn't have sing-alongs, but I do remember they'd bring up a movie projector once in a while. I saw Loretta Young in a movie, —~~T~~a Crusades." This was in 1940 so the movie was

probably several years old at that time, but I've remembered that movie ever since then. That was a really outstanding movie and I always liked Loretta Young anyhow. Probably once a week we had movies. Now, you're jogging memories here that I'd forgotten about. I do remember one guy that wasn't all that brilliant. They showed a war picture about the desert down in Africa and this guy who wasn't too bright said, "My uncle was in that war" [laughs]. As far as he was concerned, there was only one war. Some of the guys, well, I wouldn't say they were retarded but there was this thing called dyslexia that they hadn't diagnosed at that time. I'm sure that it bothered a couple of guys.

Did you have physicals quite often while you were in the camp?

No. We had the one in Kelso before we went and that was it. They also had a first aid area. One of the guys was a corpsman, [and he] could patch up minor wounds and dispense aspirin and that sort of thing. He was just a recruit, but he had a little special training for that sort of thing.

You talk about going home for home visits, but did they ever have town visits where they took the boys into town and did anything?

They may have, there was quite a few guys from Tacoma. I think they did run a truck to Tacoma about once a month and I can't even be sure of that. Tacoma isn't all that far across as you cut up through Morton and on into Tacoma. There was quite a bunch of guys from Tacoma and a few from Seattle.

Now I want to move to the Randle Ranger Station. You were the only boy that got to go? Or were there others?

Yeah. Ross Kindle was at the ranger station. He had been there probably a year and the fellow that was with him down there, they wanted two men down there, his time was up in the CCC's or whatever. Anyhow, he decided to do something else, so they had a vacancy. Why they picked me I don't know except that I did have a reputation of being a hard worker. So, they sent me down there. Ross Kindle was a leader. He was one of the high price guys. He got thirty-six dollars a month. He was married, he had a wife in Doty⁵².

I asked you about other boys at the Randle Ranger Station.

Yeah. Well there was Ross Kindle. Now he was, I imagine, sixty years old or somewhere around that and I was only nineteen, twenty, this is 1940. Anyhow, it's amazing how well we got along because he was real easy to get along with. He did have a radio and I wasn't used to a radio [laughs]. But the Tacoma radio station came in real loud and clear so we had radio music both at noon when we went in for lunch and at night. Ross Kindle was interesting because he could tell all kinds of stories about the old days when he worked in a logging camp or at a sawmill. He mentioned [that] during, I think it was the Yacolt Burn, he got up one morning and [thought], "Oh! it must be time to get up but it's still dark." There was so much soot and smoke in the sky, [that] it was ten o'clock in the morning and it was totally dark. It could have been the Tillamook Burn or the Yacolt Burn, I'm not sure which⁵³. Both [of these] fires took out thousands of acres of prime timber. Ross was full of stories like that and he was interesting to live with. We didn't have a problem, which could be unusual. I could have found fault with people, but he

⁵² Doty is a small community in western Lewis County, Washington.

⁵³ The Yacolt Burn occurred in September 1902; the first and largest Tillamook Burn occurred in 1933.

didn't find fault with me. We worked all the time. We did all kinds of work around the ranger station. Among other things, we painted every building in the place and that's a lot of buildings [laughs].

How many buildings were there?

Oh, let me see, there was the main building, the row house, the shop, the mule barn, [and] there was another building [but] I don't know what they called it. We didn't paint the little house where we lived. That was a little two-story house. We didn't paint it, but everything else we did.

What color did they have you paint it?

It said on the can it was gray but it was more of tan to me. Some of that paint's still visible, too [laughs].

So was it just you and Ross Kindle or were there other men there?

No, just two of us. Now the ranger station did hire two other men. Jim Green was a muleskinner. He took care of the pack saddles, the mules, everything. He had everything ready to go if a fire broke out. Jim was a colorful character because he had only one eye and he didn't bother to cover up the hole where the other one had been and some of his teeth were missing. I mean, he looked terrible [laughs], but he was a good guy. Another fellow that worked there was Frank Kehoe. As you go up past Randle now you'll find Kehoe Road. That was named for his dad who lived in an Irishman's shanty, so help me it was a true Irishman's shanty. The windows, to see out, why he rubbed his hand up and down to see through the dirt. Frank worked at the ranger station and I don't know what all he took care of, but he was over there everyday and he was a real likeable guy. I don't know what happened to Frank since then either. I do know that one time I contacted him since then, he wanted to fly. The guy that owned the grocery store in Randle used part of the ranger station for a landing strip and he had a little light airplane. That's when I had my first airplane ride too. I used to go over to [the] Kehoe's every once in a while. They served me a meal or whatever and they took me to church. We'd go to a Catholic church in Morton and I'd ride with them to go to church. When we were in camp they were supposed to give us a truck to go to church in Morton but I never did see any sign of a truck. The Captain said, "Oh, we'll get you a truck," but then they never went that far [chuckles].

How often did you get to see the ranger?

Oh, almost every day. He was around and he'd come down to the office, [and] sometimes I was up to his house. I told you we'd put in a water line to the ranger's house and I suppose it supplied the whole ranger station. He was around quite a bit, down in the warehouse, whatever. All kinds of things to check on and look after. [In] the main warehouse, there was all kinds of equipment; truck tires and I don't recall what all. It was a big warehouse. [It had] a big loading dock out in front.

And who was the ranger?

Mel Lewis.

Since you got to experience both the camp and the ranger station, which one do you think was the most efficiently run and the cleanest?

It's hard to say, they're pretty well tied together. Foresters from Gifford Pinchot -- actually it was the Columbia National Forest at that time -- would come and they'd stay with us. We had an upstairs in our little house. I don't know what their official business [was], but they would get together with the ranger. I suppose they would discuss trails and fire plans or whatever. Some of those guys were older and they were full of stories about the woods. One of them said he was camping out one night and he was sleeping beside a log and he opened his eyes for some reason and he was staring right in a cougar's face [laughs]. He jumped and the cougar jumped; all kinds of stories like that that they were able to tell. I remember this one man in particular. He said, "You got anything to eat around here?" when he got up in the morning. We had some flour and stuff and he says, "Want to make some hotcakes." I don't know what he put in this dough, it wasn't batter, it was dough and he made balls a little bigger than a golf ball and he took an onion sack and he wiped off the top of the wood stove. He took these little balls of dough and put [them] on the top of the stove and they flattened out and they were hotcakes, the best hotcakes I ever did taste. I don't know what he put in them. The foresters, the rangers, were really interesting people for the most part and one of them was even from Sundance, Wyoming and we knew a lot of the same people that I knew in Wyoming. So, interesting things....

Can you describe to me how your life changed once you were at the ranger station?

I was terrified, of course. I didn't know what was going on. I had something new. They said, "Pick up your stuff and we'll take you down there." It didn't take me long to settle in and for some reason, I got elected to be cook right away. I can't remember what we had mostly to eat, [but] I know that the supply truck would come by from the camp, pick up our order, and they'd go to actually to Fort Lewis, and fill our orders. They'd just leave whatever they took a notion to. One time they left a thirty-pound box of pork sausage and we had no refrigerator [but] I was born and raised on the farm. So, I simply took the pork sausage and made little patties and fried them up. Then, [I] took the lard and put it in a glass mayonnaise jar, put in a layer of sausage, and then a layer of lard and a layer of sausage and it kept it perfectly. We had sausage for weeks. You put lard over the top of it, it's sealed in, screw on the lid and it doesn't need refrigeration. That's just one of the interesting things that happened. We could usually find something to eat around there. A lot of it was pasta and they left us tea and coffee and what have you. In order to get hot water, we had to build a fire in the little cook stove. The coils in there would heat the water in the big tank that sat beside the stove. If we wanted to take a shower, we had to build a fire in the cook stove. That's the sort of thing I was used to. We didn't have any of the modern conveniences. We did have electricity there.

When you were actually in the Randle Ranger Station did your routine change at all from when you were in the camp?

We'd get up in the morning and eat breakfast and then we'd go to work, like painting or taking care of the forestry tools or whatever. Along about eleven-thirty, I'd go into our little house and make up some lunch and then we'd listen to the radio until one o'clock. Then from one o'clock until four o'clock or four-thirty we'd go work, do whatever we had to do. Then, in the evening, quite often, I would walk down to Randle which is only about a mile away and spend some time down there listening to the jukebox that somebody else had supplied the nickels [for] [laughs]. By the way, Frank Lewis and I used to, he had two bicycles, so we'd ride our bicycles two or three miles up the line, maybe four or five miles, up to the Cowlitz River and then turn around and right back.

I did quite a bit of bike riding when I was there, and later on we got hold of these army field sets and we tried to learn the Morse code. I was doing pretty well. I don't remember how Frank did. We had a wire from my bedroom to his bedroom. I think we had to go through a culvert with that wire to get across the road. That's when I had my first experience with radio. He would come in [on] an evening and go upstairs to the radio set. I-20 was the call letter and he would talk to the various lookouts. There was a half a dozen lookouts around, Watch Mountain, Sunrise Peak, and I can't remember the others. Then I got interested in the radio and started doing that and when a fire broke out, lo and behold, here I am manning the I-20, the radio station, and staying in contact with the guys on the fire line with their SPF sets. There was an SPF1 and an SPF5, I think, and who should be on those SPF sets except Staudinger and Kelley [laughs]. [It was] like old home week. That's how I got my beginnings as a radio operator in the navy....

You say that you weren't really able to keep in touch with the boys, but you were still considered a CCC member, right, while you were at the camp?

Oh yeah. They brought my pay down every month. Yeah, I was still a member of the CCC while I was at the ranger station....

What kind of things did you do for fun while you were at the ranger station? You talked about bike riding. Did you get to hike and stuff like that still?

Yeah. Frank and myself and one of his friends used to hike up to Watch Lake. It's about a 7-mile hike up through the woods. Of course, you can drive there now. There was trout in that lake that were Montana Blacks and you could see the stinkers down there, but do you think they'd bite? Eventually we talked a few of them into biting, but they were thick in there and that lake is deep. There was one log in the lake, standing on end, just about two feet sticking out of it. You could push on the top of that log and it would go down and it would bounce back up. We were on a raft; people had built rafts that stayed on this lake before us and we had to be careful. We poked this log down and if it was gone very long, it could come right up through the raft and at you, but we were aware of that, so we didn't do that. The lake is really deep. It sits right at the foot of [an] almost straight up and down cliff on one side of Watch Mountain. It was all virgin timber at that time. I think it's probably all been logged since then.

You talk about Frank Lewis. Was he stationed there with or near you?

No, he was just the ranger's son. He was part of the Lewis family. The ranger's house is just across the road [Silverbrook Road], real close and Frank would come down to the station quite a bit. He liked to go around the warehouse. I don't know why, but we got to be pretty good friends there.

What kind of jobs did you do at the ranger station? You talked about getting the firefighting equipment ready and painting the houses and cooking, but what else?

That was pretty much it. We had to be there during fire season in the summer time, when it was hot and dry. The ranger asked one of us to stay there and the other one could go home for the weekends. Well Ross had a wife in Doty and so I thought, well he can go home and see his wife, I'll survive if I stay here, so I usually stayed in camp. I couldn't go as far as Randle, but I could go bike riding. One of us had to be there to get the equipment out in case a fire did break out. That was about it.

While you were at the station, did you ever get to make home visits?

Oh, yeah. If it rained or there wasn't any fire danger, I could go home on the weekends. We could both go every weekend if we wanted to. I didn't always go home, but I usually did. I was scared to death of girls at that time [laughs] and at twenty years old, I should have been dating, but I just wasn't.

Was it hard being the only young man at the ranger station? You say they were all really nice to you, but did they ever joke with you and things like that?

No, not really. No I just had my job to do. One job that had slipped my mind, they had little sticks that you weigh every day to tell the moisture contents and that was one of my jobs, to weigh these little sticks. You put them out in the sun and some days they were heavy, soaked with water and [that meant] no fire danger. Sometimes they were dry as kindling and [therefore] the fire danger was way up. They used this as a gauge for moisture content in the sticks in the woods and it's really quite accurate. It'd tell the moisture content in the wood, but by weighing these every day and recording the weight, it gives them a pretty good idea of the moisture content in, the fuel in the woods.

I've just got a few final questions. You were in the CCC towards the end of its life. It ended fairly soon after you had finished your service.

Let's see, I left in '41, [and] it ended in '42, about a year after.

I wanted to ask you, how many hitches did you complete?

We signed up for six months at a time and I put in three six-month hitches. In other words, I was there a year-and-a-half.

Now, to go back to the first question. Did you ever feel like the town's enthusiasm or the boy's enthusiasm was starting to fade a little bit as you got towards the end?

Oh, I think so. When we went in, it was impossible to find a job and jobs were starting to open up a little bit about the time that I quit. Several of the boys were able to find jobs. You could quit [the CCC's] anytime if you had a job, [but] you had to prove you had a job. Jobs were opening up and the camp was dwindling down, fewer men than they had before. So, I'm told. I wasn't up in the camp.

In your opinion, what do you think was the very best thing about your experience in the CCC?

I learned a lot. When I went in the navy, I was way ahead of the other guys. I had been in a camp, under structured environment and I knew what to expect. So many of the guys were really upset when they first went in the navy and they couldn't take the discipline. I'd learned a lot in the C's.

When your final hitch was actually over, how did you feel?

Oh, I was relieved. I was ready to do something else. I thought there was probably better things to do somewhere else. I was work oriented and I didn't know I could make a living any way except with my hands. So, of all things, I went to work on the rails of a section gang, tamping ties on a railroad. I'm sure I could have done better than that, but that's another story

and one I intend to write sometime because that was interesting, staying in logging camps and riding the train to camp and that sort of thing.

You started with Weyerhaeuser, but did you ever try to get a job through the Forest Service?

They sent me to the Forest Service and I planted trees for several months and they just simply transferred me over from the section gang. Why, I don't know. This was when Weyerhaeuser was phasing out the railroads and we dug up a lot of old ties and burned them. This was right in the changeover from railroad logging to truck logging. I think we were probably working for the Forest Service when we actually dug up these railroad ties and burned them. [We] had huge fires going and boy those old ties were heavy too. I stayed in the forestry camp up near Wolf Point and we planted trees for several months. That was interesting too.

You talk about how the CCC helped you in the navy when you got there. How else do you think it affected your future?

Well, it's kind of hard to say, but it's like any other experience in early life, it's something you always remember. A lot of the things that I learned, memories, are still with me. I don't know how it really affected my life, other than it made my navy experience easier.

Finally, is there anything that you want people to know about the CCC?

Yeah. I think that the CCC's did more good for less money for the government than anybody the government had hired [laughs] because we worked and we did lots of work. All through the nation, national parks, by planting trees, by building fire breaks, falling snags, and building roads, all that sort of thing for a dollar a day and room and board. You can't get that much work done out of anybody anymore [laughs]. I'm sure a lot of these 50,000-dollar a year people do a lot less work than we did. So, yeah, that's what I mostly would like to leave.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Lisa Parker, March 5, 2001

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Jack Leonard (top row, left), brother James (top row, right) and fellow members of CCC Company 944, Camp Hemlock, near Carson, Washington, April 1938. Lower photograph shows members of Company 944 at roll call (USDA Forest Service photo).



Jack Leonard

Co. 944 (1937-1939)

Narrator: Jack Leonard

Interviewers: Donna Sinclair, History Department, Portland State University, and Rick McClure, USDA Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Date: October 14, 2000

Place: Wind River Work Center, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Introduction:

John Stanton —~~ack~~” Leonard was born July 12, 1920, in Portland, Oregon to Lorene (Fredrickson) and John Raymond Leonard. When his father found employment as a lineman during construction of Bonneville Dam in 1936, the family moved to Stevenson, Washington. At the age of 17, Mr. Leonard joined the CCC, serving from 1937 to 1939. In 1941, he married Edith Lyle Dorgan, and from 1944 to 1946 served two years in the U.S. Navy aboard the *U.S.S. Presidio*. After discharge, he was employed by the Bonneville Power Administration and later as a lineman for Skamania County Public Utility District. He retired in 1975, and lived in Carson, Washington until his death on July 22, 2001.

So do you recall the first time that you heard about the CCC?

It was after we moved to Stevenson. In fact, I tried to get into CCs in 1936, but you had to be seventeen. The girl asked me how old I was, I said, —Sixteen.”

She said, —Come ~~ack~~ when you’re seventeen,” so I did [laughs]. Down there not being in school we had a lot of free time and it sounded like a good deal. When I really first heard about them, or had any experience with them, was while we were living there in Stevenson.

The day after Thanksgiving, on the place where we lived there was a big snag. Dad said, —~~ack~~, you and Jim go out and fall it and make wood out of it.” ‘Course we didn’t know nothin’ about falling. It was cold, frosty and we’d built a little fire while we were doing this and went down to the house for lunch and Mom looked out the window and the whole hillside was on fire. We hadn’t put the campfire out. Well, they called the CC boys cause at that time there wasn’t any firefighters for the state in this area. So, they came down and that’s where I first got acquainted, didn’t know anything about them, looked like an interesting thing. That’s where I got interested. I think I went up the next day or two and tried to get in.

They were from Camp Hemlock?

They were from Camp Hemlock, mm-hmm. Walt Hockinson was the foreman, oh I think a couple of Campbell boys and I forget the other, there was seven or eight of em. But they come down and wiped it out, but we had a real fire, I’ll tell you that. My mother, I thought she was gonna die, she got out there right in the middle of it to put it out.

How did they put it out?

They brought down a pumper, backpacks, shovels, axes; same method they use now for firefighting now practically. Not as good equipment, but it was adequate for that one. Burned probably about two acres. There were a couple of houses that could have been involved. They

did a great job. For being a kid and not knowing much I was pretty well impressed by what they done.

What part of Stevenson were you living in when that happened?

Just about where the new clinic is. The original house that we lived in is gone, but the house just east of the new clinic is almost on the site where the one that we lived in was when we moved here.

And that's where the fire was?

That was the fire down where the clinic is, and the house next to it, and then back up on the hill, that was all burnt. There was no houses there at that time. The closest house was just across the road. I forget the people's name here now. Anyhow, a good thing they came, they did a good job.

And you hadn't heard of them before that at all?

No.

What was it about what you saw that impressed you enough to want to join?

Basically I got acquainted with a couple of the kids, you know, described what it was, and it sounded like a pretty good deal. I went in first. My brother Jim came in later.

What did they tell you? Do you remember?

Not really. Just that it was pretty good life, they liked being there because some of them their home life wasn't that great. Plus a couple of them they didn't want to go to school, which I sympathized with at that time [laughs]. I decided it was wonderful, you know. It ain't worth much, but it's wonderful [laughs].

Can you tell me about going up there to join? You made the decision to join the CCC and did you come up to Camp Hemlock to sign up?

No, you could sign up right in Stevenson, they had a little office there, I forget what the name of it was. Anyhow, they had a little office, had to do with welfare, and WPA, and that sort of stuff; ocourse I was so young but that's where I was told you went to get information. Then they signed me up and I think it was a couple of days they said to be there. There was about five of us, a truck came out of Vancouver Barracks, picked us up, and brought us out to Hemlock.

What was the process like? Did you have to go through a physical, or...

No, you just went in and signed up, told em you need a job, weren't going to school and that was about it.

Did you have to demonstrate any financial need on the part of your family?

I don't recall that they did. Course Dad hadn't been working very long so it could have been a little bit of, I don't know what would be the right word, not disenfranchised, but just kids that needed something to do. Kids at seventeen need something to do clear up u they're eighty.

So the truck from Vancouver Barracks came and picked you up?

Yeah, I think there was [quietly counting] about five of us and they were all local kids. No, there's one more, I think there were six of us and there's two of us left. Good friend and he's in a little trouble physically now, but there's two of us left out of those six that joined that day.

Did you remain friends after?

Oh yeah. In fact, still good friends with the one who's left, Bill Shelton. Yeah, we were life-long friends, course weall remained pretty much in the same area.

Were there a lot of other local guys who joined?

There were quite a few. Some after I got out that I didn't know, although I became acquainted with some of them later on. You asked me about Pete Paladeni. He's one of the first leaders that I met after I got in there, which was about the second day. I hadn't been assigned to the work unit yet so I was sent over to the Forestry headquarters [Forest Service ranger station] just doing yard work and that stuff, and they had a lightning strike over on Gumboot Mountain, which is over across the hills. Pete was the main man, I think the two Campbell boys, and myself. Anyhow, they came by and said, —~~u~~mp in the back of the pickup. We're going on a fire." That's the first time I met Pete and we got over to where the fire was, which is Gumboot Mountain, which is way up from where the road is. So not knowing any better, I jumped off of the pickup, picked up a backpack, pumpcan full of water. I think it was six miles from there up to the top and nobody relieved me and I learned right then never to pick another one up next time I went on a fire truck -- either an axe or a shovel -- they didn't weigh much. But that was quite an experience. Another thing on that deal, about midnight we couldn't find the fire, we got up there and no signs of fire, fog was right eye level. About midnight, Ross Sheppard came in, who was the [District] Ranger at that time. He stretched out on the floor of the lookout, that's where we stayed that night, nothing but boards, and about one o'clock, two o'clock he started snoring and I'd never heard anybody snore like that in my life. That impressed me, added to the whole thing, hyped up and spent the night with -- I think there was four of us -- but we never did find the fire. Fog had dropped down enough dampness to put it out; it was just a light strike. That was my first experience with fire and my first acquaintance with Pete, which was some sixty years ago, so we've been friends for quite a long time. And you know about Orie [Hisel], he was lead clerk over in the CC office itself with the commander of the post and he's been a friend for....

The commander of the post was at the CC office?

No, the commander of the CCs. It was two units -- had an army officer for the camp commander and Jess Adams was the superintendent of the work for the Forest Service -- one was army and one was Forest Service.

So the army commander was in Stevenson, and the Forest Service commander....

No, he was right here in camp. The camp commander lived right here in what was the officers' quarters, right close to the barracks themselves that the CC kids were in. Then, of course, each bunkhouse had a leader in charge of the bunkhouse.

How many kids were in the bunkhouses?

About fifty. It seemed to me most of the time there were about two hundred out here -- two hundred kids -- so that would be four. It was close to fifty to a bunkhouse.

So what did the inside of a bunkhouse look like?

An army barracks [laughs]. You just walk in, there's a row of bunks here and a row of bunks here. Big wood-burning stove on each end. That's basically it, there was no tables. Of course, they had a rec hall, but the barracks themselves, that's what they were, a place to sleep and keep your clothes.

Where did you keep your clothes?

Had a footlocker at the end of the bed.

And who chopped the wood for these wood stoves?

CCs. I was on that detail for a while [soft laugh]. Learned how to run a drag saw, if you know what they are. They look something like a Indian travois with a motor and a reciprocating saw on it; laid one end up on the log, drove in some dogs to hold it in place, set your blade, got it going good, then let it gently down into the wood and then it just sawed right through, and the blocks whatever size you wanted the blocks that fit the stove and then you just split that up with a maul and a wedge. Each cut can move the saw down the length of the wood you're cutting.

What kind of wood did you use?

Most of it was fir. All we cut was down stuff. Well, we'd fall snags and make wood out of that but nothing green, it was all dead or down.

How far did you go from camp on those wood details?

The furthest I went from here would be over through the other side of Warren Gap, on Panther Creek Road there. Then around camp, around Bunker Hill, there was a lot of snags there. In fact, I forget whether it was the winter of '37 or '38, I forget how many sets of fallers there were now, but we felled all of the snags that year on Bunker Hill, top to bottom. Used springboards, which I don't think anybody uses anymore, and we used misery whips -- crosscut saws.

The springboards that are on the side of the trees...

Yeah, you move yourself up to get above the burls, or whatever, or if you're on a side hill then somebody had to get out on the far side a lot of times though. It was pretty interesting for a kid. I had a partner, we felled together for, I suppose, nearly a year and we got pretty good at it for kids.

How long did a detail like that last?

The wood cutting deal? Oh, probably on the woodcutting deal itself was probably a couple of months and we made enough wood for the camp for the following winter.

So that would be your job for a couple of months?

It was at that time, yeah. Falling, cutting, and buckin' up, loadin' out, haulin' and all that stuff. I think that was just on the one winter.

How were jobs assigned?

I'm really not sure. Each leader had some skill and then each one of the Forestry [Forest Service] personnel that was in charge of each crew had different skills. So, Rip Graham was one of the Forestry [Forest Service] foreman, he'd been in logging all of his life so he was pretty much ahead of the fallers and the wood crews and that. Walt Hockinson was a foreman; he had pretty much to do with trails, telephone, and that sort of stuff. Wade McNee was pretty much into engineering, road building, and that sort of stuff. So, I don't know whether they picked some of the guys that they watched work or how they worked it, but anyhow I wound up eventually working for all of them I guess doing most of the things [soft laugh]. I'm gonna tell you about that a little later. Like I said, I was in falling, I was in road work, ran a jack hammer, helped Wade on survey laying out p-lines for roads prior to construction, a little bridge building, a little bit of everything in the two years. If you were a fair worker eventually you wound up working for everybody because they knew that you would do the job.

What road work were you involved in?

Widening the Lookout Mountain road, and building the road that runs from.... [it] was the end of the Panther Creek Road at that time. And I helped Wade run the p-line on the one that goes up around over to Bear Creek now.

What does that mean, "to run the p-line?"

That's your first line where your road is gonna be, you run what's called a p-line or a -- there's another name for it and I can't think of it right now -- but it's a baseline for your road. Then your engineers will come along from that and do the measurement, get the elevations, and grades, and then you come in with the road building equipment -- Cats and that -- and start building through the stakes that are laid and if you follow em right you'll end up with a road.

So how do you run a p-line? What do you do specifically?

Well, you use a transit, or in our case on a preliminary you just run an eye level and a rod. So you'll stand there and look through this here, it's level and he'll read that wherever you're standing, or write that down, and you go to the next place to get to elevations and of course at that time you're not worried about right or left, you're just running your first lines. Then that all goes back to the engineer's office and from that -- the slope and this p-line -- they'll lay it out on paper, go out and stake it and that's what whoever's doing the construction goes by and he tells the Cat operator, or whatever method they happen to be using, what has to be done and you wind up with a road eventually.

So you'd run the Cat too?

[Laughs]. No, I didn't on construction. We were widening the road up on Lookout Mountain and we were bringing the Cats in and I'd run a Cat just a little before, and -- what's the kid's name, he was a Cat operator -- he was on the big one and the foreman, I think Rip, ~~ack~~, you and Sonny -- Sonny you bring the big Cat, Jack you bring the little 20 when you come in." We was out about almost to Mowich Butte. ~~Any~~ logs in the road, kick em off as you're coming in." Well, Sonny went ahead with the big Cat and he had a big drum on the back of his and I just had this

little old putter, I think it was a 20. Anyhow, we come around this corner, and I turned my head to look at this log, and when I turned around Sonny had stopped. I hit the brakes, the front of the Cat I was driving went under the drum on the big Cat and when it came up it knocked the radiator off. Well, that ruined my Cat experience; I was no longer a Cat driver [laughs]. Felt so silly, that thing's sittin' there, radiator and the front end of that Cat laying out on the road. Oh God, here I go [laughs]. We had some pretty good times, interesting [laughs].

You said that you worked on bridge building, too. What bridges did you work on?

I helped build the bridge across -- I can't think of the name of that creek -- but it was on this new road we built. We built it out of logs at that time, a log construction bridge.

What part of the building were you involved in?

At that time you leveled your logs with an adze -- I forget -- but anyhow, I had part of that to do. I remember when the boss came out one day and said, "You ever done that before?" And I said, "No."

—~~We~~ that's a mighty fine job." And of course being just a kid, you know, and here's this big ol' guy duded out in Forest Service [uniform], it felt pretty good. I think I've always been a good worker. My dad impressed Jim and I both -- my brother -- said if you was doin' a job do it right, and do it well, and do it until they told you to stop, so we did [soft laugh].

What kind of training did you get in the CCC?

Well, I learned how to fall timber, I learned how to run a jackhammer, I learned how to handle dynamite...

What was it like as a seventeen-year-old kid to get to handle dynamite?

Too young to know any better, but it didn't bother me. The kid that was in charge of dynamite had been a powder monkey prior to coming into the CC. I was about eighteen then, I guess, and I think Skinner was probably twenty-four, twenty-five. I got to help him on a couple jobs -- blowing stumps and blowing rock and that. This bridge that she's asking about that I helped build, just before you got to it there was quite a [few] outcrops that had to be shot. I helped Skinner run jackhammer, punch holes, and helped him load and we kept loadin' loadin', loadin'. He says, "Well, I think that's enough." Finally went in and helped him wire it up, we got back, touched it off and blew the whole side hill up, road and all. "Oh God!" [Laughs].

A road that had already been built, huh?

Well, you could get around it, but he'd hit a crevasse unbeknownst, so he stuffed in about a box more [dynamite] than it needed and it went down into this crack under the road. Well, when it blew it just blew the whole thing out. Here's this great big hole, here's a bridge over there...

So then what did you do?

We didn't do nothing. We just went back to camp and they come back up. "Course they had to build it back up to the road, but we did get the rock car in. You still see Skinner, —Oh my God!" [Laughs].

He was in charge, right?

Yeah, Skinner was the powder monkey, I was the helper so I was safe [laughs].

Were there any other kinds of work details that you were on?

Well, of course, fire....

What's the most memorable firefighting experience you...

I think the most memorable fire was the Willard burn in 1938⁵⁴. I was on that one I think for about thirty days, on fighting and mop up. They had a camp we stayed in a tent camp. I think I was on that one for about thirty days, mop up and stuff. That's the first crown fire I'd ever seen. That was quite impressive.

What does a crown fire look like?

Hot and big [laughs]. We were across the canyon from where it went up, we were in no danger, but it was pretty impressive.

Could you feel the heat from across the canyon?

No, we were building a fireline and mopping up on an area while it was still burning across on the other side of the little White Salmon River and we were on the highway side where the fire crown was over towards, under Big Huck⁵⁵, in that area, so it was quite a ways away. It was impressive. That was where, like I say, I picked the shovel or a hoe every fire I went on after that first one. No more experiences for back pumps for me. I was a slow learner, but I remember what I saw sometimes [laughs], or did.

So most of your fire experience involved building line?

Yeah. [After] a fire strike down on McClellan Mountain, we went in from Red Mountain down through Racetrack and back off in there, and that's another one where there wasn't much fire when we got there and we had nothing. About midnight or so Leo Moore run a pack string when he got in about one o'clock with bed rolls and food and stuff, but we had to build a fire to keep warm. Anyhow, coming off of -- I forget which trail now -- we had our tools and stuff and we sit down to rest for a little bit and this kid -- we had these tin hats like the old tin pants used to be -- he just took it off and laid it down beside him, we sat and shot the breeze for a little while -- I think there was about ten of us -- and we got up to go and Red Nichols, he picked up his hat and put it on but he had laid it on top of a hornet's hole, and as far as we know all of the tools are still there where we sat down, I've never been back. We just all bailed downhill, he threw his hat. I can still see them things coming up out of the ground like that and coming out of his hat, he's throwin' his hat and we all bailed out. I think the tools are probably still there, never did go back.

So how did you get in? You said that he carried things in with a pack train -- they used mules or...

⁵⁴ The Willard Fire burned 13,220 acres between August 8th and August 17th 1939 (Langfield 1939a and 1939b).

⁵⁵ Big Huckleberry Mountain

We walked. Yeah, he had mules. Yeah, he packed for the Forest Service for years, he lived in Stevenson and I was in his -- two of his sons came into the CC shortly after that.

Would you be able to say what percentage of people were local?

At the time I was in there?

Which was '37 to '39, right?

Mm-hmm. I wouldn't think over ten percent. It might have been twenty of us at one time or another, all local. I guess if I really put my mind to it I might be able to count them all, or the ones that I knew. I would think during that time that I'm aware of, prior to that I don't know. I would guess at the time I was in there, there was, from Skamania this way [east], probably close to twenty of us, which was at that time ten percent of the boys. I don't think that would hold true for the full time cause they started I think in '33 if I remember right and they closed out in what? '40, '41?

„42.... So where were most of the other guys from?

Most of them at that time were from the Vancouver area. Then of course we had a few from Chicago, I remember several from Chicago. A couple from New Jersey, but basically they were all from Washington.

How long was the term of service normally?

Six months. Every six months you could rotate out. Two years at the time I left was the maximum you could stay and I stayed the full two years and probably would have stayed longer. I was out about four, five months before I got a job; went into line [lineman for powerlines] work and stayed with that for the rest of my working life outside of a couple years off for Uncle Sam.

In what way do you think the CCC contributed to your later life experience?

Well, it gave me some skills I probably wouldn't have had. It gave me a perception of what work was all about and I think it taught me how to get along with people, although some I didn't get along with.

What would happen when you didn't get along with somebody here?

Oh, we'd contest each other.

In what way? [soft laugh].

[Soft laugh]. How do boys contest each other? [Laughs]. Fisticuffs.

Was that allowed?

Not if you got caught at it, but they had smokers. Which, I've fought in a few.

They were called smokers?

Boxing matches between camps were called smokers⁵⁶.

So there was competition between the different CCC camps.

Mm-hmm. In the winter when there wasn't much to do they'd have a smoker here. We went over to Wyeth and up to Goldendale. Then once in a while they'd have a dance right here in camp. The smokers, I always looked forward to those.

So if you were, for instance, having a smoker with the Goldendale camp would they load up half the camp here and drive „em over to Goldendale? How did that work?

They'd take the ones that wanted to go. Mm-hmm, yeah. Ten, fifteen of us would be boxing and then the rest would go just to watch. They usually had a pretty good turn-out, it was fun. You got a few lumps and give a few.

And if you won the match you'd probably get one of these that was full, huh? [handing Mr. Leonard a beer bottle].

No, they didn't allow that in camp, but I've had many of those [laughs]. That's the first one I've seen for a long time.

This is a brown glass bottle that was found in the dump⁵⁷ at Camp Hemlock. Can you describe what this might be?

Looks like to me like it's a Rainier quart beer bottle. I'm sure that it is.

Green River was the brand on some bottlecaps we found. You ever hear of Green River⁵⁸?

Probably, but mostly it was Rainier. The bottles were the same.

You say that it wasn't allowed.

Not in camp.

When you went to someone else's camp, was it?

Nope, not in their camps either. No, it wasn't allowed, you weren't allowed to have it. I'm not saying they didn't have it, but you weren't supposed to have it.

Were you able to leave camp?

On weekends.

Every weekend?

⁵⁶ This form of recreation was popularized in the 1941 film *Pride of the Bowery*, featuring the East Side Kids. Actor Leo Gorcey plays a CCC enrollee who desperately tries to earn extra money boxing in camp smokers.

⁵⁷ Archaeological investigations by the Forest Service at the site of Camp Hemlock in June 2000 included excavation sampling of a refuse dump believed to date from the last years of the camp.

⁵⁸ Green River soda was manufactured by the Blitz-Weinhard Co.

Not every weekend. Sometimes you might have a work detail or kitchen duty or something like that. But basically you could leave most weekends. Even if you stayed in camp, on Saturday nights they would send a truck, or a couple of trucks into Carson on dance night -- Saturday night. Then you had to be back in camp when the truck got there. During the week you weren't allowed to leave camp.

So the dances were held at Camp Hemlock?

Well, they'd have one or two here, just special occasions, but basically all the dances were in Carson on Saturday night. They had a pretty nice band. In fact, that's where I met my wife.

Is that right? Where in Carson?

The [American] Legion hall. That's where they held them.

The same one that's there now?

Same one that's there now. Yeah, the Legion hall there was built not too long after World War I. Veterans and legionnaires formed the Legion club and built that and it's been there for as long as I can remember. It was there when I came there in '37 -- first time I ever seen the town. I didn't know it existed until 1937, came through on the CC truck.

So you met your wife there?

Yeah, she went to Stevenson High School and my sister introduced us. We went together a little over two years before we got married. We were married a little over fifty-five years when I lost her.

And you said there was a pretty good band there. Do you remember the band, the type of music, and...

Well, the one was a well-known band. They played all the good music. I didn't think I'd ever forget it, but they played all the good music. I can't remember the name of the band, I think it's the one I'm thinking about, but they had a girl singer, real attractive and this buddy of mine, he was pretty good-lookin', kind of a woman's man, I guess he thought he was anyhow. He went right up on the stage and asked the girl to dance, she said, "No, I can't," and he insisted and I forget which one of the orchestra went and told him he'd have to get off the stage, that that wasn't allowed. Joe whacked him, broke his jaw, knocked him cold in the winds, put an end to the dance that night. Nobody bothered with him much. He had boxed a little before he came in and he was a tough kid....

Did girls drive from all around to go to those dances?

Not too many of them drove, most were local girls, or they'd come from Stevenson, of course. They'd have to drive from there or somebody'd bring 'em. Quite a few of 'em just local girls. Although when they had a good band, then they would come from quite a ways -- White Salmon and across the river. The typical fun; different than what they have now, I suppose, but we enjoyed it, it's all we did. We always looked forward to Saturday night.

You said there was a recreation hall near the bunkhouse, too.

Well, it was part of the building of the main office. There was a couple pool tables, piano, and books, stuff like that. Tables where guys could play cards. I wasn't in the army, but I would guess a typical post recreation hall like you probably seen in the movies, guys sittin' around chewin' the fat or whatever....

Did you train pretty regularly for boxing?

Not all that much. We'd go over here in what was then the carpenter's building over at camp and we'd spar around over there.

So the boxing ring was in the carpenter's building?

We didn't really have a ring over there, just went and sparred around. We never got in a ring ^{ti} we got to someplace else. I never understood why, they never did have a match that I recall here in camp. We went to Wyeth, we went to Goldendale, and seemed to me there was another place. But we always went there and I think it's because we didn't have a ring here probably. So, we would just mark off a square and whack around at each other a little bit.

So how'd you do in the matches?

[Laughs] My first one was a toughie, but my last ones were good, I won ^{en}. The first one I think I was eighteen and I was boxing at a hundred and seventy pounds, and the match I drew I think was twenty-six years old. He had been the Golden Glove Champ of Alabama, he was left-handed and he was cross-eyed. You talk about a combination, he about whacked me silly. But I give him as good as he give and we went to a draw and that's the first time I'd ever been in a ring, but after that I done a little better....

How many officers were there?

There was only one. There was one army officer -- although we did have a navy commander for a while. We had Spike Jones; Captain Jones was in charge when I first went in⁵⁹. The next one was Lieutenant [Theo. C.] Spinning. Then they had, I think he was a full lieutenant, a naval lieutenant and I can't remember his name.... Elmer? Then Jess Adams was the Forest Service supervisor. This was the Forest Service, Jess Adams. And I don't recall that there was more than one officer at the time, I think there was just the one. Then they had the leaders, Bob Green -- several of them.

Those were the Local Experienced Men?

They were CCs that were stepped up to a leader position.

And they were in the bunkhouses with you, or were they housed separately?

[Long pause]. I can't quite remember. No, they were in the bunkhouse with us. Each one had a leader and an assistant leader. I think Dusty had quarters -- he was the head leader of the bunch.

These leaders in the bunkhouses, did they sleep in the same long rows of beds with you, or...

⁵⁹ Camp Inspection Report of Dec. 16, 1937 lists the Company Commander as Elmer H. Stambaugh, Capt., Inf. -- Res. (NARA records)

Yeah, Mm-hmm.

So can you tell us what a typical day was like? Was there reveille? What woke you up in the morning, and proceed from there.

There would be a reveille and then a few minutes later one of the leaders would come and open the door and it was time to hit the floor. We got up and washed and I think we roused out at seven, had breakfast at 7:30 [AM], did parade, got your assignments and was on your way by 8:30. Then it was always back into camp no later than 4:30 [PM].

Did you take your lunches out with you?

If you were assigned away from camp, yeah. Sack lunches

What were the sack lunches?

Same as they have now. Cheese sandwich, baloney sandwich, an orange, and an apple [laugh]....

What'd you have for breakfast?

They fed pretty good breakfast. Eggs, bacon, ham, it varied. Oatmeal. They fed pretty good breakfast. Suppers, they were pretty good, typical steak, potatoes, gravy, they always put on a real feed for Thanksgiving and Christmas for the kids that had to stay, had no place to go.

Did you go home for Thanksgiving and Christmas?

I got to go home on all of them, I don't remember staying in camp on any of the holidays, but they always had good meals when the whole camp was there, and like I say there was always a few kids that stayed to take care of the camp and they were always well fed. Basically, everybody was treated great, they really did a good job, and they had some kids that were hard to help. Most of them if they got too rambunctious they'd just move em out. But it was good. I think it kept kids out of jail. It taught a lot of kids work ethics, something that they'd never known before.

What was it about it that taught them those kinds of values?

I think basically example from the leaders and the foremen personnel. I thought that was a great bunch of foremen, they were really great guys. Wade McNee was a great factor, Rip Graham, George Norman, George Halverson was the leader, but they were all examples of work ethics, good morals. Jack Denne, his dad -- he'd come in on Sundays for those that wanted church; they held services up in the library.... for those who wanted, they held a service. Not too many went to it but they had it if you wanted. It was just a neat place for a kid to be at that time, at least I thought so.

A lot of these CCC camps, these larger camps, would have associated spike camps in the summer....

I never got out on a spike camp. They had one going at that time out on Lookout Mountain right there at the head of Rock Creek. They had one up at Red Mountain right where the road

divided -- one goes on around through the lava beds, one goes on up Red Mountain, up there on your left -- they had probably about a ten-man camp there.

Was that close to the Racetrack Guard Station?

Pretty close, mm-hmm. In fact, I think they're pretty much adjacent there. In fact, I'd forgot about the guard station being there.

Now, when you were in camp were you restricted in any way to the camp? When you came back from work or back into camp was it just off limits or were you able to wander wherever you wanted?

You could go there [gesturing to tree nursery area on photograph]. You could walk back, but you had to get back to your barracks at a given time. But you couldn't leave the area, say, you couldn't go past this point right here [a point on Hemlock Road], but you could go here, or you could take a walk up the hill, or walk up Bunker Hill, or something like that, but you couldn't go to town. You stayed in the area and they had bed checks at night.

So you came back at 4:30 in the afternoon?

I think it was around 4:30.... Then you was on your own til suppertime, and after suppertime you could read or do whatever you wanted. Go over to rec hall.

Did you have to gather at 4:30? Was there another parade sort of thing?

No. No, you just jumped out of trucks, went to the barracks, got ready for supper. From then on until they blew taps you was pretty much on your own in camp. Like I say, you could stay in your bunk, or go visit other bunkhouses, or go to the rec house, walk around the compound, go fishin', or anything like that, but it had to be within the area.

Could you have visitors during the week?

No.

So your wife, who wasn't your wife at the time, couldn't come up here and visit you?

No. The only time they could come in is when they would have the dance or visitation on the weekend or something like that.

So they would have visiting hours on the weekends that family or friends could...

Well, you could come but you had to sit out. You couldn't go anyplace with them unless you got a pass or permission from the camp commander, or whoever was in charge at camp on that particular day. But it was, I think, pretty much like army life except that you did have freedom all the time on the weekends, most weekends anyhow. They weren't as tough. If you'd been in the army they would have told you to squat and you would have asked them how long. But in there if they told you to squat you could ask them if it was all right if you didn't squat. They didn't really have a thumb on you, but they did have it lightly; just enough to keep you under control was all they had. I'm sure it trained -- a lot of them went into the Army after they got out. In fact, a couple of my friends went in and they were on Corrigedor when it went down, and fortunately for me my mother wouldn't sign my papers [laughs]...

So you didn't go into the military.

No. At that time to get in the service, I was still underage, you had to have a parent consent and at that time....

In '41 or '39 when you got out?

I got out in '39, so I was still only nineteen years old and I think you had to be twenty or twenty-one. Your parent still had control of you at that time. But she refused absolutely to sign the papers, so I didn't go with em. She done the same thing when I was a little younger, while I was in the CCs I thought I wanted to go into the navy; she wouldn't sign them then either.

Was there military recruitment going on at the CC camp?

I don't recall any. There may have been, but I don't recall any.

How often did you really see the commanding officer and what sort of interaction did you... ?

Oh, probably every day he'd be out for roll call, most days he would. As far as one on one, not very often, very seldom.

Would they make announcements and speeches, and...

Yeah, they'd do something like that. Well, not Spike, he was kind of a hardheaded guy; he never made speeches he just told you what he wanted and he'd expect you to do it.

So there wasn't much in the way of real morale boosting kind of talks?

Not that I recall, most of the guys basically got along, outside of what they picked up from the forestry [Forest Service] foremen and some of their philosophy and it rubbed off on some of us, and some of it didn't. They were great role models, all of them. There wasn't one of them that I didn't like. Remained friends with three of em, and they're all gone now, they've all passed, but up until they died -- became good friends, lifelong friends, like Pete, been friends with him and Orie for over sixty years, I guess. Orie and Pete were both there this last reunion.

The reunion was held at Lewisville Park, in Clark County?

This year. Yeah, we've had it every year for -- I don't know how many years. I didn't make all of them, but I made the last seven or eight. I didn't make the first one, but I made about four or five in a row and then different things came up, but I've made about the last ten. Like say, there's I think thirteen of us showed up this last summer.

Were all of them from Camp Hemlock or were they from all around the area?

They were all from Hemlock, but they weren't all from 1937, '38, '39. There was a couple older than I, in fact, Walt Hockinson's brother was there and I think he had something to do with the CC in about 1934, '35, something like that. It seemed to me there was one person from another camp, and that's the first CC-type thing he'd ever been to and he was quite impressed and surprised there were still that many showing up cause I guess most of us now are 80 or getting real close.

Jack brought along a tremendous artifact here. It's the Official Annual, 1937, of the Ninth Corps Area Civilian Conservation Corps and it has pages devoted to each of the individual camps within that Corps Area. Here's the pages for Camp Hemlock, including some photographs of the camp and some of the buildings in the camp, some of the personnel....

[Looking at the *Annual*] This is the rec hall here.

Did you play pool much?

No. Just a little bit [soft laugh]. That kid was from Yakima [referring to a photo in the *Annual*]. That's the only fight I got into camp about, was over that kid right there.

Why was that?

We hadn't been there very long, this kid was from Yakima, I can't think of his name now, but he was just a little fella. One of the leaders came in -- he was sitting up on his bunk, he had an upper bunk. Anyhow, I'm not gonna mention the guy's name but he was a leader, and he came in and I forget just what happened. Anyhow he told this kid to get down off his bunk and the kid [said], --Got ~~nt~~in' to do, I don't have to get off here."

He said --~~Yah~~, you do."

Said, --No, I don't." Well, he went over and got a hold, pulled him down and slapped his face, and he said, --When I tell you to do something I want you to do it."

He was about this much taller than this kid and I took a little umbrage with it and I said, --You can't do that to him." He said, --~~What~~are you gonna do about it?"

I said, --You do it again I'll punch you." He said, --You wouldn't punch me," and I smacked him.

And you did it, huh?

Split his lip.... Anyhow, to finish the story, he had a scar right there for the rest of his life.

Above his lip, for the rest of is life?

Yeah, split it open. I thought I was out of CC, but he didn't turn it in. They asked him how he got it and he said he bumped a door, --cause ~~had~~ he told them how he got it he would have been out.

Did he bother the little guy anymore?

Never. He never bothered any boy while I was around [soft laugh].

Was there a store in the camp where you could buy...

There was a little canteen. You could buy cigarettes and a little candy, writing paper, there wasn't really much in it, just some basics. Cigarettes, chewing tobacco, candy, gum, pop.

Was that in the rec hall building?

That was in the rec hall building, yeah.

What time was lights out?

Ten o'clock, about the same as army routine -- you're expected to be in bed and usually the leader would walk though and if you weren't in your bed they'd check the bath area. Lights out were at ten o'clock and all talking stopped at about ten-thirty.

And you got to sleep in on the weekend?

If you weren't assigned to the mess hall for weekend duty or pearl diving or something like that.

Pearl diving?

Yeah, washing dishes.

And you got your chance to do that from time to time?

Yeah, I used to have clean nails, they ain't that clean anymore [laughs]. Oh yeah, I think everybody had a little shot at pearl diving.

Did you ever pull garbage detail?

Never did, I don't know why, but I didn't get in enough trouble to get assigned to that one I guess. Come close a couple of times, but no I never did get in on the garbage detail.

What about cleaning the bathrooms and bunkhouses... ?

Never got in on that either. That was saved for exceptional people [laughs].

So what would you say is your best experience in the CCC?

Two years of learning. It was all good experiences; I never really had a bad one.

So if I asked you what your worst experience is you couldn't come up with anything?

I think the worst experience -- I was telling you on the snag falling crew we fell all the snags off of Bunker Hill and a set next to us -- Ole Olson and I forget who his partner was. But Ole was on a spring-board on the down side, and it was real cold and the tree was froze and he was chopping and his axe didn't come in quite square and glanced off and he chopped through his foot. He didn't lose anything but it really done a job on him; packed him off the hill and of course they sent him to Vancouver to the Vancouver Barracks and the army hospital was down there. Outside of that I can't recall I had any bad experiences.

Were you up there alone with him, or were there a lot of people?

No, no. Like I say, my partner and I fallin' near Ole and his partner were over just a little ways. You always fell far enough so that if you had a backfall the tree that you were falling wouldn't hit anybody else so you could be 200 feet away, and that's probably where Ole was, but then we had to go get him and wrap the foot, and carry him off the hill from the top. He couldn't have done it on the bottom where it was easy. No, he had to wait til he got to the top of the hill to chop it.

Is that the only time you saw someone who was really hurt?

Well, I wasn't playin', but I was watching the [baseball] game and -- can't remember the kid's name now... Saturday weekend game out there, and this kid got hit in the eye with a baseball and lost his eye; that was a bad one, but outside of that there weren't really many bad times, bad events.

Are there any other relationships with Vancouver Barracks that the camp had that you can recall? Not necessarily that you were involved in, but, so the barracks sent the truck out to bring the boys out. What other kinds of things?

Yeah, the ones that were in Vancouver the trucks would haul em in on a weekend on Friday nights and bring them back on Sunday evening. Course all the medical, anything major was sent in. They had a camp first aid, and it seemed to me for a little while they had a doctor [at Camp Hemlock]....

From the Barracks?

From Vancouver, yeah. But most of the time it was, I suppose now you'd call em a medical technician, first aid man. Back then that's about all they knew was bandages and ipecac if you had to throw up or something. Castor oil if you had a stomachache.

So there wasn't a nurse stationed there?

No, never any women assigned to the camp that I know of. Might have been before or after, but none that I'm aware of.

What about mail? Would you get mail daily?

Yeah, Mm-hmm. They had mail call usually at night.

Do you know if that came through the local post office or did it come through the military?

I'm not sure, I think a little of both. I think it was delivered from both. Yeah, they had daily mail call. Must have been part of it local because I got a letter from my wife, my girlfriend at that time.

Even though she was just ten miles down the road, huh?

Well, yeah, girls at eighteen, nineteen write down things. Well, no telephone, you know, you gotta do something. Now they just e-mail em or get on a cell phone.

So what do you think is the most important experience that you took from the CCC into your work life?

I think really a good work ethic and pride in working. I became a lineman.... a power lineman for the power companies. I worked for Bonneville [Power Administration] two or three times. Worked for contractor building towers and I worked for Skamania County PUD down here for twenty-eight years and retired out of there. I've spent basically all my life, since the time I was sixteen, in Skamania County or attached to the county. Like I said, a couple of years in the military and on line construction for about seven years. [We] decided to settle in Carson when

my oldest daughter became old enough to start school. We'd been from here to there several times and wanted a stable place for school so we decided to come back to Carson and I got the job at Stevenson as a lineman and been here ever since. It's been a good life. Basically I learned how to work, and enjoy work, and appreciate work, and appreciate others that had the same ethics. It was good training; I enjoyed every minute of it, except the nights that I couldn't go out to go to Carson. Had a lot of good people, made a lot of good friends.

At what point did your brother join?

Jim joined the next sixth month rotation. I think I went in the 2nd of October in '37 and I think Jim came in April of '38, and he spent one hitch....

Were you in the same bunkhouse or did you have a chance to spend time together when you were both in?

Oh yeah, we worked together for that six months and I think his bunk was in the same bunkhouse, just one bed down or two beds down. I was telling you about my friend that went up in the stage and whacked that guy, broke his jaw at the dancehall. He boxed, like I told you, he was a boxer before. We had this smoker over at Wyeth and he had won his match, I won my match and we both were boxing in the same weight class. The next time we went over -- the next day I guess, to finish out -- I guess it was the next smoker we were scheduled to fight each other. Well, we had made up our mind we weren't boxing each other cause I was afraid of him, he was afraid of me. So instead of goin' over to the smoker we got a gallon jug of loganberry wine.

Where'd you go with it? You couldn't have it here, right?

We went to a theatre in Stevenson [laughs]. We're sittin' there and my brother Jim came in and says, —Heyyou're supposed to be over there boxing.”

And I says, —Yeah, but I'm supposed to be fighting Joey. He don't wanna fight me, I don't wanna fight him. We're not going.”

He said, —Dad's outside and he came up to watch you fight. I said, —Tough. I ain't going.”

We went back in the bathroom, he says —ake your clothes off.” I had on the CC outfit. So he put on my rig and I put on his, I went back and watched the show and he went over and boxed [laughs]. Nobody ever knew it.

[He] come back [and I said], —~~We~~ how'd you do?” [He said,] —~~Will~~, I won.” We absolutely refused to [fight] -- because I think it would have been a draw, we would have both been hurt, but we got away with it. Had we been side by side they would have noticed it, you know, but he had been out of the CCs then for about six months and we were identical twins.

So you boxed with people who weren't in the CCs.

No, they were all CC kids, but he just went over and showed up and I think Rip Graham was in charge of it and he didn't recognize the difference between Jim and I, Jim was a little shorter and just slightly heavier. Anyhow, he got in the ring, I don't know who he fought, but anyhow he whipped him. I never did tell anyone about that. I guess I told Rip a couple years before he died, —You remember that fight?”

—Yea! He says, —You did what?” He says, —You, you, you, you!” But he got a big kick out of it afterward, he would have been mad as hell if he had known it at the time. Yeah, we had some pretty good times. I enjoyed the full two years I was there. Didn't have nothing to worry about, you know, just get up and do your job. It was a great bunch of guys.

Early on, you talked about the relationship between the CCC camp and the Carson community, and that's an interesting question in and of itself.

They were, as far as I can remember, well-accepted and the boys here were respectful -- outside of once in a while when they got more of those bottles there than they could handle they might get a little mouthy. Basically, they were quite respectful and enjoyed the town and looked forward to going in, especially on Saturday nights, you know.

And were people receptive to them? How did they react? They were friendly?

They were friendly. I never met anybody in town that really had a bad word. There might be one or two, which is bound to be, but basically they were accepted into the homes, and lot of times on holidays some of the kids that didn't have no place to go some of them would come out and invite em for dinner. The town really liked em cause they were a great bunch of guys, unless, like I say, maybe one or two exceptions, but you find that no matter where you go. The town really enjoyed them I think....

...about mosquitoes. Well, it was about the same thing as the fire story. I was on the trail crew; we were changing signs up in the Indian Heaven country, and went down into the Indian Racetrack down off of Red Mountain then. There was this old sign nailed up to this tree, and I had the new sign and the tools. I walked in, rapped the old sign to knock it off, and the mosquitoes just come swarming. All there was was a curtain, and that's another place we left a set of tools. I've never been back to that point either, but they're there, I didn't bring em out. That was a lot of mosquitoes, just a black wall of em, couldn't see nothin'.

I guess you didn't carry Off in those days, you know that spray stuff that people put on their bodies. Were there any methods of dealing with things like mosquitoes?

Not at that time.

Nobody used bug repellant back then?

Never heard of it, I don't think. They didn't have any in camp, and they didn't issue any.

Did they issue things like soap, and shampoo, or did you have to buy it yourself?

You buy it yourself. They gave you clothes and if I remember right they gave you a little basic kit when you came in. A razor, comb, toothbrush, toothpaste, and maybe one little bar of soap, but after that you was on your own.

How much money did you make a month?

Thirty dollars a month was your base pay, twenty-two of that was sent to your family and you got eight dollars. If you made assistant leader you went to thirty-six [dollars] and you got fourteen [dollars], the rest went to your family. If you made leader, that was forty-five dollars a month, but the twenty-two still went to your family, so the basic fee when you started was eight dollars a month and you worked every day for it, five days a week.

So there's an incentive to do well. And did you make more each time you enlisted again?

No, it was base pay, unless you were enlisted at a rate and you were an assistant leader, then you would still remain an assistant leader. But if you weren't you just signed over at the same basic thirty dollars a month.

How far did eight dollars stretch?

Thirty days [laughs]. No, you was always on the books to somebody for a few bucks. Or if you had a couple extra, maybe you won five dollars playin' poker or something, while you're loaning your buddy. Basically that's what you got by on was your eight dollars, but that was enough, you get in the dance for fifty cents, you buy a gallon of wine for a dollar and a half -- two of you go together, that's six bits apiece, just enough to get a good glow, loosen you up and get you ready for the dance.

Once a week, right?

Well, whenever you was allowed to go in. We had pretty good times. A couple of the kids had cars that they stashed out in the brush here down the road and once in a while they'd sneak off and go to town for a little bit.

Any of them ever get caught?

I never did, but some of them did.

Did you have a car stashed?

I didn't have a car [laughs].

Just never got caught sneaking off?

Right. I've walked from Carson to Hemlock a time or two.

A long walk.

I know it. Middle of the night everything you hear is a bear. I think you'd have a hard time now getting a kid to walk that far to see a girl, I think most of them won't walk around the block, but you didn't have a car so you had to go by shank's mare.

Since you lived in the local area, and you've been back to this place over the years since the camp closed, do you know what happened to all the buildings that were in the camp?

I really didn't. I think they were tore down before I got back out of the service. I'm just not sure what year they did tear it down. I was surprised when I came out and they had these big drying sheds. I have no idea when they were built, I really don't know when they tore the camp down. Fact, it's hard now to visualize where the camp was compared to what's over there now....

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Melissa Williams, October 2000

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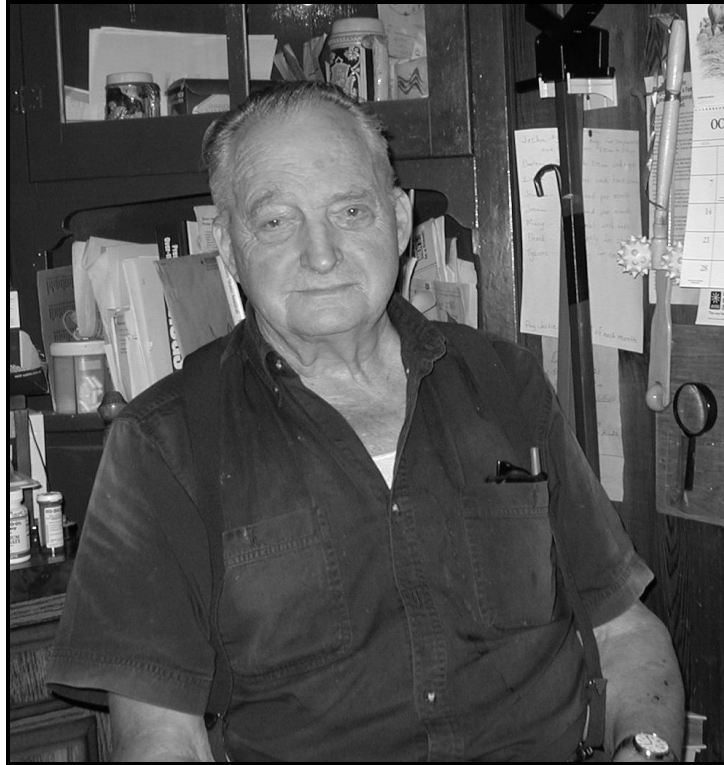
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1939b Map of Willard Fire, with acreage tables. F – Control, Willard Fire. With attached memorandum dated October 3, 1939.



Ben Marshall above, during interview in 2001 (photograph by Cheryl Mack), and below, fourth from the right, in front row, with fellow members of Company 945, in 1935. The lower photograph is from the personal collection of Mr. Marshall.



Ben Marshall

Co. 945 (1935-1936)

Narrator: Ben Marshall

Interviewer: Cheryl Mack, USDA Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Date: October 24, 2001

Place: Marshall residence, Trout Lake, Washington

Introduction:

Ben Marshall was born August 2, 1918 to Benjamin Alexander Marshall and Pearl Marshall in Underwood, Washington. He was the sixth of eight Marshall children. He attended schools in Trout Lake, Pleasant View, and White Salmon. His older brothers, William and Harold Marshall were enrollees in CCC Company 604. At the age of eighteen, Ben worked on the construction of Bonneville Dam. He later worked for Alcoa Aluminum before joining the navy in 1943, where he served aboard the PT Tender, *Portunas*. After World War II, Ben operated a dairy farm for many years with his wife Betty and five daughters. After selling the dairy business in the mid 1950's, he worked as a logger for Hollenbeck Lumber and later for SDS Lumber until his retirement at the age of 62. He continues to reside in Trout Lake, Washington with his wife, Erma Frey-Marshall.

When did you first hear about the Civilian Conservation Corps?

Well, I had two older brothers. I wasn't old enough when it started in 1933, but the Ranger up here was given the job of picking out boys to go in. His name was Harv Welty. And so my first brother, older than me, he got in, he was probably about eighteen then. Then later they brought out 200 CC boys from Chicago. Just getting started on that program.

Now what camp was that, that those 200 boys went to?

The first camp was right across from the tavern⁶⁰ because they didn't have any place for them. Then they built a camp at Peterson Prairie.

And where at Peterson did they build that camp? Was it like before the campground or after the campground?

The Lost Creek Ditch goes right down through there.

Through the middle of it, okay.

And it was on the left side of [the road] going up I guess that would be the.... south side. And it was a prairie. It's all grewed up now.

So it's not the meadows that are there now? It wasn't in the meadows.

No, but it was just like it.

But it looked like that, okay. Because I thought it was in the meadows.

⁶⁰ Trout Lake Tavern, later the Trout Lake Country Inn, on Guler Road, Trout Lake.

They built a tent camp with a wooden cookhouse and that sort of stuff there. And they had 200 Chicago boys and around twenty-five locals. And my brother was one of the locals.

Now did they have a set number of locals that they would hire or did it vary?

No, they just wanted to help the Chicago boys understand the woods. And most of the locals were familiar. Bill, my oldest brother, he was about twenty-two at that time, he got in as one of the locals with the Chicago boys.

Now is it true the things I heard, that they never picked up an axe before and that they... ?

That's quite true, some of them had never been out of Chicago or off the street but they did pretty well for never being out in the woods or anything. They had em on trail crews and, oh, various other things, and some were building.

Now, so what year did you join the CCC?

1935. I wasn't old enough, I was not quite seventeen when I joined in 1935. I was in a year, about a year.

So did you have to lie about your age and say you were eighteen?

Yeah.

I think that happened a lot in the CCC. Now why did you want to join? Was that the only work around?

Well there wasn't much work and the wages were terrible in the sawmills. You know, thirty cents an hour or something like that. But yeah, it was camaraderie I guess. Two hundred guys, they're all young men.

So it sounded like something fun to do?

Yeah, kind of, in a way, and you got thirty dollars a month, twenty-five went home and you got five. And board, and room, and clothes.

So they provided your clothes. Was it army clothes they gave you?

Yeah. It was, more or less....

So how did you actually sign up? Did you go up to the Forest Service, did you go up to Twin Buttes?

Well, my folks were living down in Clark County then. My sister lived right over here, and I come up and stayed with her and was working in Woodruff's sawmill, and found out that they [the CCC] were going to, it was not the regular enlistment at the time, but they were going to take some more. So I went down to White Salmon and give my sister as a dependent and got in that way, and she sent the money to Mother.

Now was it through the employment office then that you would sign up for it?

I don't know if they had an employment office but it was something like that.... Yeah, it was kind of like the employment office. I guess it would be the version of the employment office at that time.

So you signed up and you were stationed then out at Twin Buttes?

Well, first I was at the Guler Ranger Station up here. That was called Guler then.

Oh, okay. And that was a camp?

They had a spike camp. They had fifty people there and the rest of them were out. And they were just building the camp at Twin Buttes and Smoky Creek. From Guler we rode out in trucks and worked on building them camps. I worked on Smoky Creek.

You worked on building buildings at Smoky Creek?

Well, all kinds of things, tent frames, drainage and all kinds of things. And then later I got moved out to Twin Buttes, and it was a wooden mess hall and a bunch of tents on wooden floors.

Platforms?

Yeah.

And how many people were at Twin Buttes that year, in '35?

The whole company was divided between Smoky Creek and Twin Buttes. Probably over a hundred at Twin Buttes and then some at Smoky Creek and some still stayed at Guler.

Which company was it that year? Was it 945?

945.

It was 945, so that was officially out of Goldendale?

Rock Creek.

Rock Creek, that's where it was from. Yeah, 'cause they usually had the main camps and then they would send them out to these other ones.... Okay. So when you were there, there was about a hundred.

At Twin Buttes.

A hundred men at Twin Buttes. So do you remember how many actual buildings there were there?

No, the only wooden buildings were the office and the mess hall.

The office and the mess hall. Now but there was also, well there was the Forest Service log cabin as well that was sort of there, right.... It was kind of outside of the camp?

Yeah somewhere outside, but it was not an office or anything, it was just a place for some of the packers and stuff to stay.

But I've always been confused, about the buildings at Twin Buttes, as to whether the Forest Service and the CCC shared any buildings there. Did they have any kind of buildings that the Forest Service people used that was part of the CCC camp?

No, they ate with the officers and that, they were different, but they stayed in our camp and had their own tents and stuff. At Mosquito Lakes, not far away, they already had some Forest Service buildings over there.

Can you describe those buildings, like what they looked like, how they were built?

Well let's see, I guess they weren't quite built yet. They built them after I was there, cause we drained the entrance to Mosquito Lake. I think they had built a big barn up there and a house for whoever was the ranger there or something. That's about all I can remember of it. One of the reasons it was at Mosquito Lakes was cause that was the end of the road. We was working on the Randle road then, but while I was in there they completed the connection between Twin Buttes and Randle.

Oh, you were part of that crew that connected the road?

I wasn't working on the road, but my friends were, and one of my good friends, you probably remember him, Tommy Burkell. He drove the first truck all the way through.... Yeah, I never got to work on that road, but they had spike camps out. They didn't transport them back and forth, but they had camps out towards the Lewis River that stayed there and worked about as far as the road went. And, it did go down by Twin Falls, the first road.

And who got to build the bridge?

I wasn't on that crew. I don't know, it was just a log bridge. That's all it was, and anyway they had a crew working from Randle this way, and one the other way. So it was quite an accomplishment at that time.

Yeah, I've actually heard some other stories about that. And the kind of equipment they had. I think they had one of the first dozers with a blade on it or something when they were building that road.

Yeah, they had a bulldozer with a blade, but there was no hydraulics. It was a cable lift to it, and they done pretty good, and they did have small dump trucks. Oh, I think two or three yards is all they would hold, nothing like they have today. And a lot of it was hand work too.

Can you tell me about the jobs you did while you were in the CCC?

Yeah, first I was helping build Smoky Creek Camp and Twin Buttes Camp, getting them built. And when I got up to Twin Buttes I was on the crew that, they called it mosquito control, where they were draining a whole bunch of swamps with dynamite. Stick a half a stick that far apart and blow a big ditch.

Now that sounds pretty dangerous, did anybody have any [accidents]?

It wasn't that bad. Anyway we had bars, we'd poke a hole about every foot apart and put, most of the time, a half a stick, sometimes a stick of dynamite in there, and you just lit one and then the concussion blew the rest. And they set the others off.

Wow, those ditches are still out there today.

Yeah, one I see every time I go out there. This little Steamboat Creek was running in below Mosquito Lake and they wanted to get fresh water in the lake. So we changed it and it comes in above the lake, and I worked on that.

So you must have worked for Bob Lambert?

Yes I did.... Yeah, he was one of our bosses, very good guy. Oh, then I went in the kitchen. I worked in the kitchen for....

At Twin Buttes?

Yeah, at Twin Buttes and a little while at Smoky Creek.

Well that must have been something, cooking for that many people.

Yeah, it was two shifts of cooks and I was KP.

Peeling a lot of potatoes.

Yeah, and washing a lot of dishes. Yeah, then I went to Smoky Creek, and the people at Twin Buttes had already moved to Goldendale. We were being transferred to the Soil Conservation Service. And we stayed at Smoky Creek trying to finish gravelling the road as far as Cultus Creek. So we stayed until the snow was that deep on the tents, and ice and everything. They finally moved us over to Goldendale.

So really, the camps never spent the winter up here except maybe at Guler. Did any of them stay at Guler?

Yeah, they stayed at Guler. They had fifty men there that was part of 945, but the headquarters was at Rock Creek, and then later Twin Buttes. Yeah, that was all part of the same company.

Now the camp was at Guler. Were the buildings already there that they stayed in, or did they build CCC barracks for them?

I think they built them, and they're not there now. They built them especially for them. I don't know how long they lasted but they were there.

Because we have some photos of them and they look like CCC-type barracks but I didn't know if they...

I think they were at the most fifty people here, and a lot of times not that many.

Now, because you were a local person, did you actually stay at the camps or did you come back down?

No, I stayed at the camps....

So then you weren't any different than the other enrollees. I mean, it wasn't like you went home and....

Oh no, no, I stayed. Most, all of the people where I was in were all locals. A lot of them were from Trout Lake, White Salmon, Lyle, different places like that....

So did they give you much training in the jobs that you did? How did they train you to do the things, especially the boys from Chicago?

I don't know about them. Yeah, the Chicago boys they did. Most of the people out here had worked in the woods or the mills or something. They knew something about working.... Some of them was farmers. They just did whatever the foreman [told them to do]. Sometimes the straw boss, that was about all the bosses, showed them how to do things.

So they didn't actually spend a lot of time training you to do anything in particular? They just assumed that you knew it. Now I heard that they had something that they called Local Experienced Men that they hired.

That was when my brother [Bill Marshall] was in, to help the Chicago boys. They put about twenty or twenty-five in there, local, because the Chicago boys didn't know beans about axe or tree or nothing else.

Okay. What would you say was your most memorable experience that you had when you were in the CCC.... the story you tell people the most about your time in the CCC?

I can't think of anything that spectacular. I know we used to take a flatbed truck, big bed truck and go clear to Bonneville to the dance or BZ Corner or somewhere like that. That was our way of having fun. Anyway nothing much happened that I know of that was spectacular. Some of them went on forest fires, I never went. I can't think of anything else.

So this going to the dances, was that the main recreational activity?

About all there was.

People picked huckleberries, I guess, and sold them.

We used to at the South Camp at Twin Buttes. A lot of people were poor and they had to pick huckleberries to make a living. We'd go over there and have a big fire and court the girls.

I hear there was a lot of that went on up there. In fact later didn't they have dances at Twin Buttes?

No they didn't have dances there, they had some movies.... In the mess hall. Had movies, and things like that.

They would just take you to the dances, wherever they happened to be, even as far away as Bonneville?

Yeah, sometimes.

That's a pretty long ways to go.

You wouldn't get home at daylight.

Boy, now did any of the camps up here have sports teams? Like I know Camp Hemlock had a baseball team.

They played some softball, I don't think we had a baseball team. We played softball some, and then they even started playing football a little bit at Twin Buttes, and later it got more involved when we went to Goldendale. That's about all.

And do you feel like there was any way, did the CCC affect your life in any way, like did it make you think differently? I mean it's probably different for you, not having come out here from Chicago. But do you feel like the CCC had an effect on you in terms of the rest of your life?

Well, not really. I think all of the young men my age and older learned how to get along with other people and that was the main thing, because if you didn't you got in a lot of fights. That's the only thing I can think of, the camaraderie.

So was it difficult living with that many people, were there a lot of...?

No it wasn't. They surprisingly got along pretty good. Of course naturally when you get a hundred young men together there would be a few scraps, but not too much.

Was there a standard way of settling arguments? I heard at Hemlock they actually had boxing matches.

Yeah, sometimes they settled it with the gloves on, sometimes they [would] just get in a bareknuckled fight. But sometimes, if it was a grudge fight or something, they would put the gloves on.

Now did the CCC camp have much of a relationship with the community of Trout Lake?

Well, I guess a lot of us were from here, and that was the connection we had mostly. And so a lot of us, we knew each other from school or jobs or things. I don't know if it had any effect, but it was a tremendous help to the poor parents. They had some money coming in, twenty-five dollars a month. Sometimes before that there was nothing.

And I think particularly for the people who came here from far away, we've heard that over and over again, that it really was a difference between total poverty, because people who lived in cities didn't have any other way.

It was one of the greatest things that ever happened. The Depression, unless you lived it, you [can't know]. It was terrible, there was no work. Millions out of work.

Can you tell me something about the kind of food that they gave you there, did they feed you well?

A lot of people bitched about it, but it was healthy food, really. I worked in the kitchen and made lunches for the guys going out to work for the day. Then breakfast and supper were good

healthy meals. It wasn't like gourmet, but they were good meals, and they got all you wanted to eat. So I think it, in the long run they were treated well.

So you started to tell me before about the story about your brother [Bill Marshall] and the infamous bear at Peterson Prairie. Now that's a story that people ask about all the time because of the photographs they took of the bear.

Well, my brother, because we had lived here, [we] used to pick huckleberries, and he was in there along with the other twenty-five locals, and Sunday he went up a quarter of a mile or so up on the hill out of [Camp] Peterson, picking berries. And this old she-bear comes just a snarling at him and he didn't know what's going on, he never had that happen before. He shimmied up a lodgepole pine, it wasn't very big, stayed there a while but every time he tried to come down, why she'd come right after him. So he took his handkerchief and gathered some dry needles and lit him a fire and dropped it and she did back off. And so he got down, and then he went back to camp and told them he started a fire.

He started a forest fire?

Well it was just a smoky little thing, but anyways so the Forest Service boss there sent fifteen of them up with shovels and another local boy, his folks lived right across from the tavern, he had his rifle with him in camp, why, he took it along. And when they got back up there the old bear come after them all, and George shot her. Then they seen a cub up the tree, a fir tree next to it. That's why it wouldn't come down. They went up and got it.

And so it became the camp mascot?

It sure did. They kept all the good scraps from the mess hall. It got real fat.

And how long did they keep the bear?

They had a six months hitch up here and they went back in October and they took the bear with them.

Took it back to Chicago with them. That's pretty amazing. It must not have been very big yet.

Oh it was pretty good sized when they took it. It was just growing like a weed.

Now, when you mention the picture of the bear, in one of the photographs of the bear there's a Black man standing with the bear. And people have asked that question before, of whether the CCC was integrated or not, whether there were Black men in the CCC?

There were quite a lot.... Quite a few of the bunch from Chicago were Black.

And so how did that work out here? At that time, I'm sure that people must have had some different feelings about that just because of the time that it was. How did that work for them?

I wasn't in that camp, but anyway they got along pretty good. They had a few troubles between Black and White, but not serious. Not real bad. When I was in, we only had one Black boy in the whole camp and he was from Kelso.

Oh, so he was local, he didn't come from Chicago. Yeah, 'cause I had read something later that said that the CCC was completely segregated, that they had Black camps. And I thought, that's funny, we have all these photographs that show Black men.

No they were integrated.

Well, that's interesting. I think this was one of the few places then where that was. So, I brought some photographs here, and I'll show you if you want to look at them, and if they make you think of anything. These are two photographs that were taken by Ray Filloon.

Oh, I knew Ray, too.

Did you know Ray Filloon?

Oh, very well. He was kind of an independent photographer, and he would contract or take pictures of different things. But when I got to know him well, I was planting. That was after I got out of the CC's. I was planting trees on the Yacolt Burn about ten miles out of Yacolt, on Copper Creek, and he was the timekeeper....

These were [Wesley Betts'] pictures that were taken at Twin Buttes. You might be in some of these then. You guys were in together? Well, then you might be one of the rookies. That's what he has these labeled as, "The rookies"

I don't know, No I don't think so. He worked in the office. I remember that very well. He was kind of a loan shark.

You could do that in the CCC, huh?

We got five dollars a month, and if you had to have money, or a big date or something, you could borrow two dollars from Wes and pay back three.

So you had two lieutenants stationed at Twin Buttes?

Yeah, reserve officers.... First lieutenant and a second lieutenant. And they handled all the discipline and all that stuff.

And they actually had reveille in the morning and things like that?

Yeah, we had reveille, yeah.

Okay. And where were the rest of the enrollees at Twin Buttes from? They were Washington boys?

Yeah, Washington, most of them was from. Well, some was [from] far away as Seattle or Tacoma, and one or two from Spokane.

[Looking at photos] Now does this look familiar to you as being the tents at Twin Buttes?

Yes, very well. That's where I slept. In one of them tents. We had them tents in a row, and then wooden floors in them. And they were pretty comfortable really. Had four bunks in each tent.

Four bunks. And then there must have been some kind of stove in „em.

Later at Smoky Creek, they had these little Sibley stoves, cone-shaped stoves. We didn't need them at Twin Buttes, it was warm enough.

It was warm, huh? What about the mosquitoes at Twin Buttes?

Oh yeah, there was mosquitoes there all right. But I don't know if we had any mosquito netting or anything....

And then you probably remember the store that was up there, where the campground is now.

I knew the people that run the store. Jim Peterson.... From Stevenson.... In fact I have a little story about that too, I was only seventeen, or barely. I wasn't quite seventeen, and anyway, I knew these people at the store I remembered when I was real little. Anyway so they was going to have a show at the mess hall and I asked his girl to go to the show, and I was so embarrassed and so was she. And Tommy Burkell and another guy, they were quite a bit older than me and they sit behind me and [said], —Oh, ~~pl~~ your arm around her.” They just embarrassed us to death.

So did the CCC boys go and shop at the store? I mean, did they trade their huckleberries there or go buy things there, or were they allowed to go there?

I sold huckleberries there, because after I got in the kitchen I only worked every other day and every other weekend. So I'd go pick berries, and you got thirty-five cents a gallon, and you make enough money to go out on the weekend. A couple of dollars, that's all it took....

Now you mentioned that you planted trees for the Forest Service, after you got out of the CCC, what did you do?

I done so many different things. But I had a good job finally, so much different, at Bonneville Dam on construction. Six dollars a day there, that's big money.... And then I worked in a logging camp.... Weyerhaeuser, for a while. But in between jobs I took this job planting trees. Then we went back, some of us went back to logging camp after that, after the tree planting was over.

Now when you were planting trees for the Forest Service, you said you did it up Copper Creek?

Silver Star.... our camp was at Copper City⁶¹.

Who was the Forest Service boss for you then, do you remember who it was?

Yeah it was Shepeard.... Yeah.... Burt. There were several Shepeards. Anyway, Mike Paladeni was our boss.... Yeah, he stayed with the Forest Service quite a while. He was a foreman.

Do you remember any of the other people you worked with planting trees?

⁶¹ Tree planting camp on Copper Creek, south of Sunset Falls Campground, in the East Fork Lewis River watershed.

Yeah, let's see, Michael DeClew, and there's three Paladenis [Mike, Pete, and Quinn]. And I can't think of some of the others right now, several Finn boys from Hockinson, but I can't think of their name right now.

Now how many trees would they make you carry?

I don't remember. We took a pretty good packsack full out and then I don't know whether we ditched en or what we did, but we only had like less than a hundred at a time on your backpack.

And you planted with a hoedag?

Yeah. Got in a whole row of people and you take three steps and plant one, three steps and plant one.

And you know they all look so evenly spaced down there now. You can tell.

The line was about twenty-some people. We tried to keep it straight, had one on the lead end and one on the tail end. They'd mark it so the next time you come by you would....

Down there now.... the trees are so even that you realize, somebody did this.

It was completely burned, I guess that was. I don't know which one of the bosses told us about it, but 1902 they had the big fire, that was miles and miles and miles. But then the trees had only got up, 1929 they weren't very big and it burnt again, that's why they had to plant it, because there was no natural reseeding.

The Dole fire burned in 1929, and that was one where those mines you were talking about, the crew fighting the fire had to hide in one of those mines when the fire burned over them. So how long did you continue to plant trees for the Forest Service?

Well it was just a short job, you know, like a month or six weeks or something like that.

So just for that one year?

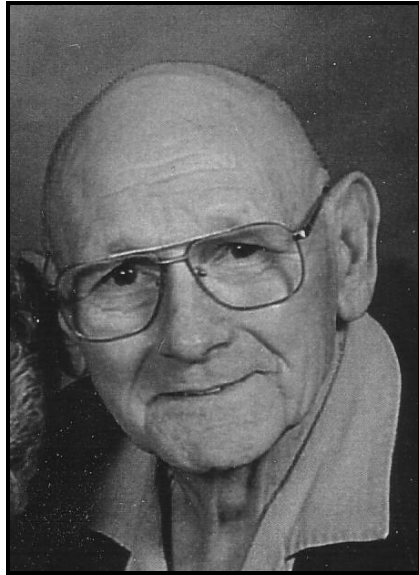
Yeah, That was not a continuous job. Every spring they'd get a bunch and plant lots of trees.

And so what did you do after that?

Oh, construction and logging camps, and later aluminum plant. And I done so many things you wouldn't believe. And farmed on my own some. I tried a lot of things. Went in the navy two years....

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Cheryl Mack, November 2001.



Charlie "Pat" McMahan, in 2001 photograph, above, courtesy of Mr. McMahan. Sheep Lake CCC side camp pictured below, from 1935 photograph, Gifford Pinchot National Forest archives.



Charlie McMahan

Co. 933 (1938-1940)

Narrator: Charlie —Pat McMahan

Interviewer: Rick McClure, USDA Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Also present: Mrs. McMahan, Kirian McClure

Date: February 8, 2002

Place: McMahan residence, Mossyrock, Washington

Introduction:

Charlie —Pat McMahan was born on September 18, 1920 in Swofford Valley, near the community of Mossyrock, in eastern Lewis County, Washington. His father, Frank McMahan, settled in the Mossyrock area in 1886, later marrying Elizabeth Ann Hunt, Pat's mother. Mr. McMahan is related to the McMahan family in Randle, another eastern Lewis County community. His father's brother, James F. McMahan, settled there about 1890. Mr. McMahan was interviewed about his experiences as an enrollee in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). From 1938 to 1940 he served in Company 933 at Lower Cispus CCC Camp, near Randle, and was also stationed seasonally at the Sheep Lake and Spirit Lake Side Camps. Mr. McMahan enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1940 and served for 55 months aboard the destroyer *U.S.S. Mustin*, participating in the Aleutian campaign during World War II. Following military service, he returned to Lewis County and operated heavy equipment in logging and construction work for many years until his retirement.

Could you tell us where and how you came to be in the CCC?

Well.... my mother died when I was nine years old, and my father died when I was sixteen, and I had nobody to look after me, and I just went to work for a tie mill outfit for three dollars a day, off-bearing from an eight-foot tie mill. We were cutting seven-by-nines and eight-by-ten hemlock.

My sister, she had the misfortune that she had divorced, and she had three children, small ones, and I kind of made my home with her. And when I got away from that tie mill, I tried to get into the CC's, and they told me that I would have to have a dependent. I asked if she could be my dependent, and they said, "Well, sure." So I signed up.

And where was it that you signed up?

In Chehalis.

Do you know what kind of an office it was?

Unemployment, I think. I believe. I'm not sure. It's been a long time ago. I think it was in April. Well, no, it would be different than that because I spent eighteen months and I got out in April of 1939.

Oh, when you got out. How old were you when you joined up?

Seventeen or eighteen. It was in 1940 when I got out of the CC's because it was in April, and then that summer I worked at a little gyppo outfit and then that fall I went into the navy, in 1940, and I was twenty years old, and the judge told me that my sister could be my guardian, and he fixed that up for me, old Judge Studebaker.

So when you joined up, what was the next thing that happened? Was there a delay before you had to show up at camp? Did somebody pick you up? Did you have to report someplace? How did that work?

They had the truck out there to pick us up and take us into camp, and it was -- I don't remember the exact days, but it wasn't long after I signed up until they took us right into camp. They had a G.I. truck there and took us right into camp and give us a new set of clothes and a new pair of shoes, and that was it.

Were there other local guys that you knew that joined up at the same time?

A few. You know, not close, but at Toledo there was a couple of guys there, and Don Coleman was in there. He lived here at Mayfield at that time, his folks did, or his dad did, and he drove the army hack. That's about all that I can think of right offhand there, but then around Chehalis there was several that came in.

And when they took you out to camp, which was at Cispus, then, what sort of training or orientation did they give you to start out with?

Actually, not much. The camp was run by the army, and the army fed us and clothed us, and we had a large barracks there that we stayed in. I think there was about four or five big barracks there, and then they had a big rec. hall, log cabin like.

Big A-frame type roof on it?

Yeah. But it was big. The CC boys had built it before I got there, before I went in, and they had a real nice dance floor in there, and about every once a month we'd have dances there.

Is that how you met your wife?

Nope. That's how I met my first wife [laughing]. When the CC first started out, they brought a bunch of young fellows from back east to get them off the streets.

To Cispus?

Yeah. The Lower Cispus and the Upper Cispus. And they didn't know which side of the saw to put next to the wood. They were getting chopped up with axes and everything else, but I guess they survived.

We sure hated to have an accident, though. Man, I'll tell you, you'd rather take a whipping than have an accident of any kind because our old captain, he was a Swede, Captain Jeppesen, and if we ever had an accident around there, he would say, "By God, men, there's no use in this. We won't have it." And we'd have to get up in front of the whole mess, he'd bring the whole crew into the recreation hall there.

So if only one guy on the crew got hurt, the whole crew....

If you got yourself scratched, a big scratch on you, he'd call the whole bunch in there if he found out about it, and you'd have to get up in front of the whole bunch and tell the whole crowd how you done that, why you done it.

Did that ever happen to you?

Yeah. I dropped my bucking saw and the tooth hit my knee there and punched a hole in it. But that other [scar] down here, I got that when I was going to school.

So Captain Jeppsen had you up in front of the whole company there?

Oh, yes, and I had to take my britch leg up and show the crowd what happened, and tell them exactly what happened. He was a good old captain, though. He'd look out after you. If you needed something, he would sure try to get it for you.

Did he have a lieutenant under him, too?

No. It was just him there in camp, and then he had his sergeant there that was more or less a stenographer or whatever you call it.

So what were the barracks like inside? Could you describe what the inside of the place where you slept looked like?

The barracks had two doors in them, one at each end. You could go on out either way. There were wood boxes; we had wood heat in there, and the wood boxes was just a box on the outside of the wall, close to the stove, and we'd fill the wood boxes from the outside. Our pet deer used to come up and get in there. Her name was Jeep.

It would get in the barracks?

Oh, yeah. You'd come back to camp during the weekend, or Sunday night, you were just as apt to find her laying right in the middle of your bed as anything.

Camp mascot.

Mm-hmm. She got down on the river bar, they had a dump down there where they would dump their junk, and she ate a bunch of battery acid and it killed her. And we were all quarantined until the captain found out what had killed that deer. When he found out what had happened, it was okay then. But our barracks were just two rows of bunks, one on each side, and just an aisle down the middle.

And what did you keep your belongings in, your clothes and things?

We had an open cupboard up at the head of our bed, and then we had a footlocker. Some of them had a footlocker, if they could afford it.

You had to bring that yourself? You had to provide your own footlocker?

Yeah. Mm-hmm. Up on the wall, at the head of the bed, that was just an open box hanging up there, like an egg carton or something, and if you wanted to put something over it, you could, but you know, it had to be pretty neat or it would have to come down.

Did you have inspections?

Oh, you bet. Yeah.

Did you have both work clothes and an official uniform?

Mm-hmm.

And when would you wear that official uniform?

In the evening. We'd come in, and we'd have to put our evening clothes on, which was an army olive drab.

For dinner you would be dressed like that?

Mm-hmm.

Tie?

Yep. Then you fell in for retreat, and you'd all line up there and have inspection, and the best-dressed guy, he'd get to take the flag down.

That was the privilege.

Yep, that was a privilege.

How about the work? I'm real interested to know what sort of work you did, what sort of work assignments you got. You talked to me on the telephone a little bit about that; you mentioned driving Cat, clearing roads. You were in for eighteen months, so you must have had lots of different work experiences.

I did. I worked on trails, we learned trails and were building fire trails.

Do you know which trails that you worked on?

Badger Trail is one that I remember very distinctly.... Up to the lookout, and then the rest of the crew went down by Badger Lake and on through and connected that trail up.

Then I worked on the Greenhorn Trail, and then I went to work in the shop, in the mechanic's shop. My first job was cleaning a Cat up with a steam hose. I'd give it a good bath and get all the grease off of it, and they'd give it a paint job.

That's the one that I got to break in on. Walt Lindauer was our shop foreman, and he was a good old boy to us, the ones that worked in the shop, he was good to us. I got to break in on a Cat, and I used that after I got out of the navy. I run Cat in the navy when I was on shore duty for, oh, probably three or four months, and then when I got out I worked in a tie mill, and I went to run a Cat, and then I run a Cat for several years.

If I hadn't gotten that experience in the CC, I probably would have never run Cat on the outside.

[Mrs. McMahan] I can remember when they would bring the boys in, a truckload of them, from the camps maybe to a dance, and then they would take them back at a certain time.

From the Cispus camp?

[Mrs. McMahan] Yeah.

All the way to Morton?

Oh, yeah. That's the only place that had a dance hall, and we'd come down to Morton to movies on Saturday night. Requisition a truck and ...

So you did that, you actually saw movies in Morton?

Yeah.

How about music? What sort of music did you listen to then? If you went to one of these dances, what kind of music were they playing?

Oh, gosh. I can't remember. Just dance music. Other work got done on the road. We used to -- when we'd find a big boulder in the road between -- well, down the Greenhorn Road and all the way through to Chambers Lake, going up the country, if we found a big boulder in the road they didn't want to dig out, it was too big to dig out, we had to clean it off and drill with hand drills, one guy would turn the drill, and the other guy would hit the drill, and you'd better make sure that you hit the drill because it was going to be your turn next to hold the drill.

A lot of trust....

You bet. I don't remember how much we could drill in a day, but they'd run a competition on us and see which one drilled the most inches and holes, and they'd get a carton of cigarettes between them, and that was a big bonus.

So you worked on the road up to Chambers Lake?

Mm-hmm.... We graded the road from Lower Cispus down there, all the way through to Chambers Lake with an old pull-behind grader, and 55 Cletrac⁶² all the way through. It had taken us four days, two days up and two days back.

Just grading?

Mm-hmm. I have been trying to think who the kid that was on the grader was, and I'm pretty sure his name was Clayborn. I never knew his first name, but Clayborn I'm pretty sure was the one that was on it.

Who were the foremen on those road jobs?

Roy Brown and Ed Fleetwood. He was with the Forest Service in forestry down there. Ed Fleetwood, Roy Brown and ...

You had mentioned Harold Wasson.

Harold Wasson, yeah. Mm-hmm, he was the other one. And then there was another old fellow that I don't remember what his name was. He was the carpentry foreman. When I was logging for the piling for the bridge there....

⁶² Model 55 Cletrac Crawler Tractor, manufactured by the Cleveland Tractor Co. from 1932 to 1936.

The Cispus Valley Bridge?

Mm-hmm. We logged just on the flat on the left-hand side of the road, only about, oh, two or three miles up the road there from the bridge, and we bobtailed it just....

Skidded them out that way?

Yeah, mm-hmm.

And then did you have to peel them and let them cure?

No.

Did you just put them in green?

We put them in green because we were using them right then to build the bridge, and then after we got the bridge built, they pulled them out.

What else do you remember about the construction of that bridge? Must have taken a while to build that.

Yeah, it did. I remember the old foreman, he had a special name for everybody. He had a name for everybody.

You haven't mentioned what that name is yet.

I don't think you want it on there [laughing]. No, I don't think you would want it on that tape. That pet deer, she'd get into the storeroom for the mess hall, and they had a counter there, just about thirty-six inches high, and then the shelves above it, and they kept the raisins on the shelf up above it, and she'd get up and put her feet on the counter, and she'd take her nose and knock a box of raisins off, and then she'd stomp on them on the floor and they opened up.

Do you remember seeing that [yarding] operation when you were there, or was that later?

No, it had to be there whenever I was there because I was there all through the building of the bridge. It's been a long, long time ago.

Do you remember doing other kinds of work besides pulling those pilings in?

After we got the pilings in, there was no more work for the Cat, and I started breaking in on the pile driver there, along with the fellow that was running it, and his name was -- I thought of it a minute ago....

So there was a machine pile driver on site to set those pilings?

Yeah, that was this one right here [points to photograph]. That was your pile driver.

Oh, that's the pile driver in the photograph. Oh, okay. So I would guess, then, the way the pile driver is set in the photograph that there is no decking on that bridge when that photograph was taken, right?

Apparently there must not have been. I just don't know.

Well, that's a good bit of information because I had no idea what that was in the picture. That's the pile driver, then. Okay.

It just went right on across the bridge and drove the piling as we went across....

Do you remember what kind of Cat you were using on that bridge project?

A [Model] 22 Caterpillar. No drum or no blade.

Basic.

Yeah. There was another kid, he was going to break in on a Cat, and you remember that hill just before you break across the flat going out there? He'd only been running Cat about three or four days, and he was going to take the Cat and walk it down and walk it into camp. Well, he got to that hill, and it wasn't going fast enough for him, so he just kicked her out of gear, and he forgot how to steer it, and he got to the bottom of the hill there, and he got scared, and he left it, and it went over a bank [laughing]. That ended his career running Cat right there.

So you talked about working on road construction, road grading, the work on the Cispus Valley bridge, and then after that what other kinds of work did you do?

Well, we worked the road all the way through up around Midway, and up in Sheep Lake hill.

Did you help build the road to Sheep Lake?

No, we didn't build it, but we went through and ditched it by hand and cleaned out a culvert or two here and there.

So it had been built by that time.

Yeah.

Did you ever see the CCC side camp that was at Sheep Lake⁶³?

I was in it.

Oh, you were in it?

Yeah.

Well, tell me about that camp.

Well, it was just a work camp, and we had a cook there, had a cookhouse. We had the foundation for I think about a ten-by-ten, maybe a twelve-by-twelve tent, and we pitched our canvas tent over the framework. Let's see, I think there was four or five beds in there....

In each tent?

⁶³ Now known as Ollalie Lake.

In each one. I think there was probably about five or six tents, and that's all there was there.

Did you have stoves in those tents?

Yeah, a little wood stove.

And so there was a wooden building there that was the mess hall, cookhouse?

Mm-hmm. Yeah.

About how big was that building, do you remember?

Gee, I don't know. It must have been probably thirty-five, forty feet long. We had the mess hall in there for the bunch of us, and the cookshack there and storeroom....

Was it right about where the campground is now at Olallie Lake?

Yeah. Just as you leave the main road and drive down into camp, it was on the left-hand side of the road, just as you get off the road there.... the cookshack was just on out from the toilets there.... There's trees there where all of our camp was. Yeah.

So there were really two different spots, the modern campground and the CCC camp are almost in two different spots?

There was no modern campground there then. That's all been added since then.

We were talking about Sheep Lake CCC camp. You were describing that....

See, 1940 was, I think, about the last time it was in there. Maybe '44, '45, when the CC went out. They probably just cleaned it all up before they left.

Moved the building out?

Well, it was just a board shack building.

Wasn't much to it?

Mm-hmm. Same as with the barracks. They were just the very cheapest lumber you could get.

So at the Sheep Lake camp -- now you had an army officer at the main camp at Cispus. Was there any army staffing at Sheep Lake?

No. Just Forest Service. Roy Brown was Forest Service.

So he lived there and stayed there with you guys?

He stayed in his shack up there.

So he got to sleep in a wooden building, and you got to sleep in canvas tents?

I don't remember about that, but he stayed there in camp. One time we caught a badger. He like to eat the shoes off me.

They can be vicious, huh?

Oh, yeah. We put him in the toolbox that night, and went out the next morning and he was gone. Chewed his way out of the toolbox.

So when you were staying at Sheep Lake camp, were you mainly doing road work?

Mm-hmm. And trail work.

So you worked on some trails up in that area, too?

Yeah. That one going down over the hill, I forget -- Squaw Creek Trail, I think it is. We done that, you know, straightened it up and fixed it all up. I don't remember the other trails, but we did that and road work, drilling rock, shooting them. If they was too big to dig out, we'd drill it and shoot it, and then take the chunks out and fill the hole up.

Grade it up. So it must have been real different being in the CCC in the winter versus the summer because a place like Sheep Lake, I'm sure there was a certain time of the year when you had to move out of camp and move back down to Cispus, then?

Yeah. Gee, I don't remember much about the winter.

You must have stayed warm enough, then, huh?

Yeah. We had plenty of good warm clothes. I was only there for the one winter, but we had plenty to eat and plenty to wear, and we could go over to the wood shop and work in the wood shop, whatever we wanted to do over there, and it didn't cost us anything for the material or anything.

To build little projects and things?

Mm-hmm. We used to make little boxes about so high and raffle them off, ten cents a shot. Probably sell twenty-five or thirty chances on it and make a little money that way.

Did they have a commissary in camp where you could buy things with the eight dollars that you did keep to yourself?

Yeah. You know, you had candy and -- we didn't have any pop that I can remember, but writing tablets and -- oh, all the little goodies that you need to be busy on. That was open in the evening, and I think on the weekends it was open on the afternoons and evening.

And I guess the CCC had quite an educational program where you could take classes in different things, too. Did you ever participate in any of that?

Well, it was just reading classes, something that you could read. Working, they would teach us to build a fire trail and stuff like that. The CC's, you know, they hadn't started thinking about education. All the CC's was for was to get those kids off of the street, and they didn't care how much you accomplished, but you just keep busy at it and stay out of meanness.

So you mentioned that then I guess it was in 1940 you were dispatched to a side camp at Spirit Lake.... Can you talk about that experience, what the camp was like and then what sort of work you did there?

It was the same. We had tent barracks over platforms like we did at Sheep Lake. We cleared an area that I don't remember how big, three or four acres, for the new ranger station. We had a 35 Cletrac there with a blade on it, and we couldn't use that.

How come?

We could have done too much, too quick. See, there you come back to they didn't care how much you accomplished, just so you stayed busy at it. We pulled the stumps by hand, dug around them and sawed them off, sawed the roots off down in there and pulled it out with a hand stump puller. That's the way we cleared that land. I don't remember, we was there probably three months, two or three months, and there was a little 35 Cletrac -- wormed our way up through the timber and then built a road down from the timberline down to the old ranger station and connected into the road down there.

So how was life at Spirit Lake for three months?

Oh, good. I never had any problem making friends anywhere I went. I've been all over this world, and I've never had any problem making friends. Just treat everybody like you want to be treated and you'll get along.

Was it a pretty busy place when you were there in terms of recreation, lots of people there during the summer to recreate?

Well, yeah. Our camp was back out away from the camp around there, and Harry Truman Lodge down there. We could go down there once in a while if we wanted to, but mostly we didn't want to.

Did you get to do any boating while you were there? Canoeing or boating or....

No. They wouldn't let us ever on the lake. We built trails around it. We had a boat that -- I forget who run it, but they would take us across the lake in it over to that falls over there....

Harmony Falls?

Harmony Falls, yeah. And then we'd go out from there.

So you worked on trails over in that area?

Mm-hmm. And we cleared that place for the ranger station, and done a little work around the campground, but very little. Over there you'd be walking along, and you'd step on -- there was a lot of big heavy turf on the ground at that time, and you'd take a step and you'd sink down in it, and you'd take a stick and stick it down in there, and just run it around and around, like putting a cap on a jar.

Big timber down in there around the lake, too?

Mm-hmm, yeah, but those holes down there, we called them tree wells, and there was one right there by the ranger station, and it had a rail fence around it, and we put that rail fence around it.... To keep people from falling into it. As well as I remember, it was about six or seven feet deep, and it was about twenty-four or thirty inches in diameter. There were several of them around there we found when we were clearing that piece of ground in there.

Now, when you arrived at Spirit Lake, did you have to set up your own camp?

Mm-hmm.

You set up your own tents, the platforms, everything?

Well, the platforms were already there from before. Every year, I guess, they would send a crew over there and do a little work.

But there were no barracks buildings like at Cispus camp?

No, huh-uh. No, Cispus was our main headquarters....

So you did eighteen months. You must have had to have re-enrolled, then, after each...

Mm-hmm, every six months.

Every six months. And that was no problem, to re-enroll?

No, but you could only stay eighteen months....

And then what did you do once you were discharged from the CCC?

I went to work for a little gyppo outfit down in Kelso, and I worked there that summer from April until somewhere around September, something like that. Then I decided to go in the Navy, and I went in and signed up for the Navy, and I was in training for six weeks, and then I went over to Pearl Harbor, caught my ship over there, the *U.S.S. Mustin*, 413. It was a destroyer, 1550-ton class destroyer. I spent 55 months aboard that one can....

I just wanted to ask you again for any other interesting stories you might recall about particular work assignments or people that you worked with, or any particularly fond recollections of places that were really special to you out there?

Well, no. I just liked everybody and got along with everybody. They were all my good friends. It's been so long ago that I've just about forgotten most of their names. I can still remember the foremen's names, but that's about all. Gee, that was about forty-one years ago since I was in there.... The only thing I've got as a reminder of the CC's, I've got a CC cap....

Does it have a little patch on it with the CCC?

Yeah. A friend of mine gave it to me.

This cap looks like the 50th anniversary of the CCC. Somebody got that for you, eh? Yeah, "50th Anniversary - 1933 to 1983."

And that's all I've got left of it.

That and the memories, huh?

Yeah. And I know that the CC's was good for me because it kept me out of meanness, gave me a place to stay and warm clothes, and that I wouldn't have had otherwise. I learned to run Cat in there, which after I got out of the navy, I run Cat for several years, mostly logging Cat, but I did do some construction, and I owe it all to the CC's, and I think it was a real good thing.

Well, thanks very much for sharing some time with me here, sharing your experiences.

Well, I'm happy to do it.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Ellen Beckett, 2002



Cispus Valley Bridge under construction by the CCC in 1939, Tower Rock in background. The pile driver described by Mr. McMahan is visible in the center of the photo. The photograph is from the Gifford Pinchot National Forest archives.



Pete Paladeni, above, initially enrolled in the CCC at the Lookout Mountain Camp, shown below (lower photo by George Bright, Columbia National Forest, Aug. 1933, from Gifford Pinchot National Forest archives.)



Pete Paladeni

Co. 944 (1934-1937)

Narrator: Pete Paladeni

Also present: Margaret Paladeni

Interviewer: Cynthia Toman, Capstone student, Portland State University

Date: May 2, 2002

Place: Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters, Vancouver, Washington

Introduction:

Pete Paladeni was born on September 22, 1915, in Yacolt, Washington. Mr. Paladeni's family came from Italy, and after living in Oregon, eventually settled on a dairy farm near Yacolt, in Clark County, Washington. Mr. Paladeni joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in September of 1934 at the Lookout Mountain camp. He immediately began falling snags. Mr. Paladeni joined the CCC a second time in 1936 after a logging camp injury. In 1937, he was hired by the Forest Service as a junior foreman and worked for the agency until 1941. During his time in the CCC and Forest Service he performed a variety of jobs, including snag falling, tree planting, time spent on lookouts, trail construction and maintenance, telephone line construction and maintenance, fire fighting and fire prevention, and a variety of miscellaneous jobs while assisting District Ranger Ross Sheppard. Mr. Paladeni performed in leadership roles during his time on the forest. Today Mr. Paladeni and his wife, Margaret Heidigger Paladeni, live on the family farm, which is by road six miles west from Sunset Falls on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

What experiences did you and your family have with the forest before you joined the CCC?

I worked for them in 1933 and 1934 in planting trees in the Yacolt Burn.

How many stints did you do? How many times did you sign up for the CCC?

Two different times. Once in 1934 and then in the fall again of 1936. I went to work in a logging camp, and I got hurt, and the doctor advised me to take a little less strenuous type of work than a logging camp. So I went back in the CCs again.

How did you first hear about the CCC?

Well, I think the first we heard would be -- there was a camp at Sunset, and the road to Sunset went right past the front of our house. You could see the trucks of the CC's going back and forth, and that's the way we kind of heard about what was going on....

How did you go about joining the CCC? What was the first step?

Well, somehow I got word that there was a camp at Lookout Mountain, a CCC camp, which was a summer type camp, and that if I were to go up there, I could sign up and go to work, and that's what I done somehow. I don't recall how I got to Lookout Mountain, which was quite a ways from home, but I went up and signed up and went right to work.

So you joined at Lookout Mountain?

That's right.... In September of 1934.

What camp were you at?

It was called Camp Hemlock. The main camp was at Hemlock, which is Wind River Ranger Station today.

And you lived in the barracks there?

At Lookout Mountain we lived in tents. At Hemlock we lived in the barracks....

How long were you at Lookout Mountain?

Till the snow came. The snow was higher elevation. The snow ran us out, and we went down to lower country.

To Hemlock.

That's right.

What did you do at Lookout Mountain?

Fell snags.

And how did you go about doing that?

Well, [laughs] like I said, I'd done some previous to that. And I went out the first morning with a young fellow that said he had done some snag falling or some tree falling, and we worked and worked and worked, but we didn't get very much done. I told the foreman the next morning that that young man and I just weren't getting it done. He said, —Let you and I fall a snag.” So we did. He said, —I have another man for you the next morning.” He had a man on the crew whose partner had gone driving truck, and the man was without a partner, so I got paired up with him, and we hit it off real good. So it made our work pretty easy....

And who was your foreman during that time?

A man by the name of Nig Brockman.

So when the snow came you went to Camp Hemlock.... So what did you do at Camp Hemlock?

We felled snags down [in the] lower country where [it] didn't have so much snow, and we could work most of the winter in there.

Do you remember what your first day was like at Lookout Mountain?

I remember getting started there and where we were at. I still go back there picking huckleberries sometimes, but that's about the extent of it.

What would a typical day be like? What time would you get up when you were at Lookout Mountain?

Well, I would think around 6:30 [AM] probably, and we'd have breakfast and go to work at eight

o'clock. We'd line up and get on the trucks, and they would haul us out to where the work was.

Did you pack a lunch?

Oh, definitely. Oh, yes [laughs].

How many men were at Lookout Mountain?

I would guess in the neighborhood of 100 men. There were three snag falling crews and a trail crew and a telephone line crew and a little road crew....

So how many men would be in a tent?

I believe about five or six. We had a little stove in the middle, what they called a Sibley stove, and it heated the tent real well. We had wooden floors, and the sides were wooden up about three feet, so that gave us more head room in the tent.

Did you sleep on cots?

Well, no. They were kind of a -- I think that's right. Cots with a -- the mattress was a light canvass sack that we put straw in, and that worked fine till you'd used it quite a while, and it would break the straw up smaller til it lumped up. And you went down and dumped it and put some fresh straw in.

Where were you getting the straw at?

I don't know where it came from [laughs], but it was down over the hill. There was a place where we could get rid of it and get fresh straw.

Okay. So you'd come in at what time after a day of falling snags?

4:30 [PM] we would be back in camp, as I recall, take showers and so on, get ready for the evening meal.

So you'd come in for dinner after you cleaned up, but where would you eat?

We had a cookhouse made out of lumber, kind of a permanent-type building that was the mess hall and cookhouse and so on.

Was the mess hall already there when you got there?

It was, yes. I believe the CC's started in 1933, and I don't how long before they'd used that, but I know they did from the spring of '34 til went in, in the fall....

What did you do while you were at Camp Hemlock? Falling snags again?

Through the winter. And then as time went on, I got into different types of work. I worked around the ranger station. The ranger was a man by the name of Ross Sheppard, and his parents were neighbors to us where we lived there. And he kind of knew us slightly, and he kind of asked for me to go work over there around the ranger station which had different jobs to do. Some of it would be to get the packs ready for the pack string for the following day, and ten

in the morning they had a little lookout house up on Bunker Hill. -- I would go up there and look out for fires during the day and come back in the evening in time to eat supper. And if it was rainy weather, there was fire tools to check and little odd jobs around the station to do.

And you mentioned getting packs ready. What was that?

For the pack string, the pack mules. There weren't very many roads those days, and they delivered grocery and mail and whatever the lookout house people needed by pack string. The packer would go out with these mules and make the rounds to the different lookout houses.

And the food that you packed up and the supplies you packed up on this pack string, where would that come from?

From Carson. I believe the lookouts had an open account at Carson, and they could order whatever they wanted, and then at the end of the month they would pay for whatever groceries they got....

But is that how you got your supplies up at Lookout Mountain was pack string?

No, by the time I got there, there was a road to the foot of Lookout Mountain. Lookout Mountain was close to this Lookout CC Camp, so there was a road up there. But I would go down to the bottom of the hill and pick up my groceries. They would be delivered by a pickup or truck or whatever.

And you'd pick them up with a vehicle?

No, I'd walk down. It was just a trail to get down there and walk back up.

And everybody walked down and got their own supplies? Is that how it worked?

Not always but sometimes where the pack strings were able, they went right up to the lookout house. A few of them had roads to drive right up there, but there were some that were quite distant from some roads. There weren't very many roads in the district at that time. The roads began to come in right after the war when there was a big demand for lumber, and tracts of timber would sell, and people would build roads in to get them out. But in the 30s there were not very many roads in the Forest Service areas.

What company were you in?

Company 944.

And that was 944 up at Lookout Mountain, too?

Yes, it was. Same one.

Where were all the people from?

A good many of them were from Clark and Skamania Counties. Some were from Spokane. Some came from Seattle and places in between like Kelso and Longview. Some of them came from quite a ways away, but the big majority came from Clark and Skamania Counties.

Did you know a lot of the people?

No, I didn't know any of the CC men when I went up there. I knew one of the foremen and a fireman that was there, but I didn't know anybody else.

That was pretty courageous to go up there at that time.

Well, in a way, but, you know, it did us a lot of good when we had to go in the service. We were already used to camp life. I was in an outfit that they wanted older people. They didn't have time to train them, so they wanted experienced people, and this involved people that were thirty, thirty-five years old. And some of those people had never, never been away from their family and their children. They did some hard time many, many times. None of us had it easy, but us that lived in the camps for months and months at a time, you might say -- well, I'd go home once in awhile on weekends, but we kind of knew what it was like to be away from home.

You mentioned going home on weekends. How often would you go home while you were in the CCC?

Well, that depended a good deal. When we were at Lookout the recreation truck went right past the front of the house so I could get off and on. That made it pretty easy. I could go home every weekend. But then when we moved to Hemlock, the rec trucks went to Vancouver, and sometimes it was kind of a problem to get from Vancouver out to home.

A lot of the men started in Vancouver. You didn't have to go to Vancouver Barracks or Fort Lewis?

No, no, no, no.

Was there any initiation when you first joined?

No, not when I went in anyway. No. There may have been when some of the younger people came in, in groups, you might say, but as a single individual, it didn't bother.

So a typical day at Camp Hemlock, what time would you get up?

I would say around 6:30 [AM]....

Were you at any other camps while you were in the CCC?

Well, we were at side camps. They had a CC camp at Rock Creek out of Stevenson, and somehow that moved on to somewhere else. Well, wintertime came, and this camp had large buildings that were carpenter shops, and I and three other fellows went down there -- four other fellows with a foreman, and worked in this carpenter shop making furniture for the lookout houses, beds and different things. And we built a lot of signs. We didn't paint them. We just made the boards for them. Some of the signs were two or three boards put together with little strips in the back and would later be painted and printed whatever they wanted on them, and we worked at that quite a bit till, I would say, about May one winter.

So when was this that you were at Rock Creek?

I would say '35. And then we had a side camp at Siouxon, which was near Government Mineral

Springs, and we spent one winter up there.

And what did you do then?

What we did then, there's a fish hatchery there now on the highway, and we cleared out a pretty large area of stumps and snags and brush, whatever, for this fish hatchery and quite a bit of the creek. And we would set up a gin pull and pull the logs and so on out of the creek, and we'd get logs that weren't so wet to start a good fire and then put these logs on top. We'd use this machine that had block and tackle to put the logs on the pile and burn them up and clear the land for the fish hatchery. That was a prime project up there.

So how many men were involved in that?

I would say there were probably forty or fifty in the camp, but they did various types of work. Some worked on the campground there at Government [Mineral] Springs and different things....

Back at Rock Creek when you were doing your carpentry work, had you had any training in that?

No. We had a foreman that kind of had some. He looked out for us and told us pretty much what to do. There were different machines that none of us had had any experience with, and from what little he could help and feeling our way, we kind of was able to pick up work that had to be done and go from there.

What was your foreman's name?

Walt Hockinson. He and his wife lived there in a little cabin, and we lived in a separate cabin. We had a cook that did the cooking for us, and then three of us that worked in the carpentry shop.

So talking about cooking, how was the food?

Very, very good. We had an excellent man for a cook. He wasn't a teenager like most of us. He was probably twenty-five or thirty [years old], but he was a very good cook.

Do you remember his name?

No, I surely don't. But even the food at the main camp was excellent after we got a man that had retired from the army and was a mess sergeant in the army, a fellow by the name of Dutch Halle, and he came as a head cook at the camp. He would bake bread and biscuits and pies, and we had excellent food, probably the best of any camp or as good as any camp going. He knew how to handle a kitchen.

So what would a breakfast consist of?

Sometimes it would be pancakes with eggs, maybe a hot or cold cereal, coffee, milk. That's pretty much it.

So you weren't ever hungry.

No, we sure weren't. I think we all put on weight [laughs].

Yeah. So did you ever spend any holidays at camp?

Oh, yes, sometimes. Especially in the wintertime when it was pretty cold traveling in the trucks to go to town, we'd prefer to stay in camp.

Thanksgiving?

That's right. And we had real good meals. We had turkey and pie and like you would not believe. Very good.

So after you ate what did you do as a group for fun?

Well, the usual thing. Usually there was a lot of talk going on, bull sessions in the barracks about what it amounted to mostly. We had pool tables we could go in the wintertime in the rec hall and boxing and wrestling.

Did you do any sports when you were there?

Not outside of camp. I played ball within the camp but not out...

Softball?

Yeah, and we did some basketball.

I read somewhere that you had a pretty good team at Camp Hemlock.

Some of the teams were good, but I didn't participate. I wasn't good enough to be on the teams [laughs].

[Laughs]. Okay. Did you ever spend Christmas at the camp?

I believe, yes, there was times when I did, I'm sure.

What was that like?

It was very similar to Thanksgiving except there was more goodies of different kinds. He would just -- this man that I said was the head of the kitchen would get nuts and candies and different things that made it a little extra special.

So you weren't really homesick?

Oh, not too much. After a while you got used to camp life. At first you got homesick, but after a while it became part of your life.

Okay. When you were at Camp Lookout [Mountain] were members of the army there?

A lieutenant.... Same as would have been at Hemlock. There were more -- I don't know if there was anyone left at Hemlock when the camp was up there. I said there was probably 100 people there. There may have been more. And I don't know if they had a side camp yet at Hemlock or not, but we had a lieutenant for a company commander, and then the Forest Service had a

superintendent to take care of the work and the work crews.

Did you talk to him [the lieutenant] one-on-one?

Oh, he would come around every morning with the top kick for inspection to see that your bed was made up and your floor area was swept up clean, but there wasn't much occasion to have a one on one unless you got in trouble [laughs].

Oh, that never happened, though, did it?

Well, we won't go into that [laughs].

[Laughs]. He came along with a top kick? Is that what you said?

Yeah.

And what is that?

Kind of a sergeant, kind of gives orders from the company commander if they're needed for some things, but when inspection came, they both came around.

So how was that being under the army's thumb, so to speak?

It wasn't bad at all. It was, like I said, really good for us when we went in the service, and it was good for us while we were in there. We learned discipline. We learned to take orders. We learned to stand inspection every morning for our bunks and area to see it was cleaned up, and it fit in pretty well with the military....

So how was the mail delivered when you were at Camp Lookout [Mountain]?

Oh, the mail came to Carson, and a supply truck went to Vancouver every day, and I believe on the way back in the evening they'd pick up the mail. When we were at Lookout, we got mail, and I suppose again the supply truck had to make trips to get supplies pretty much each day and got it from there.

Did you ever get hurt where you had to go see the doctor while you were in the CCC?

No. I got stung by yellow jackets a couple of times, but I don't ever recall being hurt. I had kind of a flu-type bug one time and was in the infirmary. We had a little infirmary with four cots in it and was in there for a period of time, but that was about the only thing. No, I never got hurt.

While you were at Camp Hemlock was there any construction going on?

Quite a little bit. The CC's were involved in building a training school⁶⁴ that is still there and still used today, and houses for some of the people that work for the Forest Service. And they built different lookout houses here and there. I can recall some of the fellows going out doing that kind of work, and then they built a pretty large dam there, a concrete dam, at Wind River.

Were you involved in any of that?

⁶⁴ The Hodgson-Lindberg Training Center, at the Wind River Work Center.

Not at all. No carpentry and that dam work I didn't get in on. I didn't miss it either because that was cold work there in the wintertime especially....

Okay. Did you have anything else you wanted to say about the CCC?

Well, there were different, little comical things that took place that might be interesting, and one of them was that we had to stay in one weekend because of fire season. The fire season was pretty severe, and a ranger thought he should keep the whole camp in. Well, they weren't used to this. They were used to going to Vancouver on Friday nights. Well, they had their dinner, and one of the guys in the barracks said, "You know, what we ought to do is have a rain dance." So what did they do but go out to the ball diamond, and they got a bunch of empty gas drums, and they got in a circle, and it got bigger and bigger. And one fellow would have his hand on the shoulder of the next one, and they were going around the circle going "woo-woo-woo-woo, woo-woo-woo-woo" like that and beating on these drums.

Pretty soon here come Ross Sheppard and the assistant ranger over there with a real serious look on their face, and I was working for Ross then. I went up to him, and he says, "What's going on?"

I told him. He kind of got a relief, and he said, "We thought they were rioting" [laughs]. But we got a little attention.

[Laughs]. You said you worked for Ross Sheppard doing little things for him.... What type of things did you do?

Quite a bit was with fire tools. If they had a fire, there was a lot of hand tools used those days because bulldozers weren't in yet. I think the Forest Service worked on a pretty strict budget. When the monies ran out for whatever they were doing, that was the end of it, and they were only allowed so much for equipment. But when those tools would come back from a fire, we'd have to check everything in these. Some were big boxes with tools to see the tools were sharp and handles were tight and painted and in good shape, and then they'd put a light coating of oil on them and put them back in the fire box.

What kind of tools were these?

Shovels and what they called a hoedag and Pulaskis and axes and saws, whatever was needed, water bags and so on; that everything had to be checked and replaced, whatever was needed.

You were talking [earlier] about building a manger.

That's right. So the animals wouldn't waste so much hay, pull it out and spill it on the ground. That run into quite a little job. But through the summer, most of the time I'd be up on the lookout house at ten in the morning till evening. I'd pack a lunch and my water with me. It was only maybe a mile up there.

And what lookout was this?

Bunker Hill. You had a little station. You didn't live in it. You just stayed down below and went up in the daytime.

So was that lonely? Were you up there by yourself?

Oh, like any other type of work where you work by yourself, it is at first, but after a while it gets to be routine. You're busy watching for fires in the daytime, especially if they're extremely dry, warm days, east wind and such as that. But there was a way of time passing, kind of got used to it.

How long did it take you to walk up there?

Oh, I don't recall, but it didn't take very long. Our legs were pretty young then [laughs]. From the lookout you could only see kind of toward the Columbia River, and this ridge ran kind of flat on top, maybe a quarter of a mile, and twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon I'd walk to the other end of the ridge to see if there was any fire up in the valley. But for the most part, it was just look out.

Did you ever spot any fires?

Yes, a couple of different times. One time we had a lightning storm come in, and Ross said, "I wonder if you'd go up on the station and see if you can see anything." He said, "Some of those strikes hit pretty close." I got up there, and there was an old growth tree right close to the station within about ten, fifteen feet, and the lightning had hit that. And I was standing there kind of looking at that lightning strike and down came a cinder from the tree that had fire in the top. It dropped down. The first thought was: did some bird pick up a cigarette someplace in the highway and drop it? But right away I got on to what was going. So I called down. They sent a crew up to fall it and take care of it.

Another incident I'd like to relate when I was -- like a bunch of young fellows, they had to have something to do. And I was probably the last one out of the barracks in the morning to go eat breakfast. I'd clean my area and sweep up and go eat breakfast. Well, I came this one morning from breakfast, and everybody was busy as they could be. I was barrack's leader at the time. And I thought man, they're sure quiet this morning, but I thought no more of it. And when the lieutenant and the top kick came in for inspection, they'd come into the barracks and blow the whistle. Everybody got to the foot of their bed. Well, I would go up and meet them and go through the barracks to see. If something wasn't right, he'd let me know, and he'd take care of it. We got to my bed, and my locker door was closed, and I thought, I sure thought I opened that. That was a must, your locker door, and I think somebody slipped a bug in this lieutenant's ear. We got down to my locker, and he said, "How come that locker door is closed?" And I looked at it, and I didn't have an answer. And I opened it, and the guys had swept all the cigarette butts, the candy wrappers, the wood chips into the foot of my locker and then shut the door. And the lieutenant spotted it right away. He got a big smile on his face. He said, "You see that that's taken care of, will you?" [Laughs].

Another time I come in from breakfast and again everybody was busy as bees and quiet as they could be, and I checked everything. I couldn't find a thing wrong. Had inspection and everything went through fine. Well, sometime later I found out my friend from another barracks, this Orie Hisel that we're still friends today, came in. Like I said, I was always the last guy out of the mess hall. And what they'd done, they thought they'd play a trick on me. They took my bed out and put it on the lawn. Well, while they were out there putting that bed on the lawn, the company commander came out of the kitchen and saw what they were doing. He was kind of a rough old fellow. He says, "What in the H are you guys doing?" And the company commander looked at the nametag on the foot of the bed. He says, "You take this bed and put it right back where you got it." Well, this had all happened and I didn't know anything about it. It kind of backfired on them [laughs].

[Laughs]. It sounds like they liked you a lot.

Well, we got along good.

Yeah. You said you were barrack's leader. What did that involve?

To see that the fellows had everything cleaned up and the beds made and everything was pretty much in order. I got forty-five dollars a month. First I got thirty-six dollars. Then I got up to forty-five dollars where I was a leader, and he kind of had to look after things for inspection in the barracks and so on.

Was that kind of hard at times, or was it hard to get them to --

No, no, no. No, no, no. They were a good bunch of guys. You know, people needed something like that at that time. Today different ones will say we should have something like that today, but it wouldn't go over. Because there was no work to be had and that was a good thing for us even though we only made a dollar a day and room and clothes and food, but it was a big, big thing for us. We had eight dollars a month to spend on ourselves, and everybody wanted to make a go of it. Today the people you would have that would qualify for something like that are people that can't find work anyplace else, and for most of the time, if they want work and get out and look, they can find it. Yes. No, we had very, very few troublemakers.

Do you remember a time when somebody did cause trouble?

I remember one time when the sheriff came in there one morning bright and early before we got up and got three guys. There were three new fellows that come in. They'd been down to Stevenson and stole something from some source. I don't know. But he came and picked them up, and they never came back. No, for the most part, they got along real good. Very few fights. No.

Okay. You worked for the CCC in '34, '35, and then you came back in '36.

I went to work in the logging camp in the spring of '36⁶⁵, and I hurt my back bad, and then in the fall of '36 I went back in the CCC's.

Where did you go then?

I signed up at Hemlock. There had been quite a lightning storm, and I heard they wanted fire fighters. I went up to sign up at the ranger station, and Ross Shepeard was still ranger. He said, "I want you to work right around the ranger station and take care of the fire tools as they come in and go out and whatever they need." Well, as soon as that was over, I went back over to the camp and signed up again.

And you fought fires at that time?

Yes, we did.

⁶⁵ Mr. Paladeni was employed as a rigger for the Crosscut Western Lumber Company in Oregon (Hemlock Breeze 1939:1)

This is while you were in the CCC?

Of course, you bet. That's one thing we did -- whatever was needed to fight fires. As a matter of fact, the first year we was in there New Year's Eve of 1935, which would have been the end of '34, they had a large hotel at Government [Mineral] Springs, several stories and many, many rooms in it. Somehow that caught fire, and we went up there, and even though it was wintertime, them dry cedar tree tops would catch on fire, and we'd cut them down and control the fire and kept it from spreading very far, but I remember that was our first fire was on New Year's Eve.

That's pretty dangerous work.

Well, they trained us quite a bit for that. We had lots and lots of fire training, and I will say that number one on the list was always, always safety. You didn't do a thing if you didn't think you could do it right or without getting hurt. If there was a chance of getting hurt, you just never done it. Let your foreman know, and he'd figure things and so on. And we had excellent foreman in the way they watched over us. You'd have thought that we were all part of their family.

No, no. It was a wonderful thing for the young people. They got lots of real good training. We didn't realize at the time how much that was going to mean to our future lives in different things we'd confront and how we would handle them. As a matter of fact, I was able to use the training I got there in falling snags and fighting fires at the Honor Camp that's only nine miles from our house where I went up there and worked with those people falling snags and training them to fight fire and whatever had to be done. It was nice because it was close to home and it was permanent work.

So when you were in the CCC you said you were trained a lot to fight fires.... What did that training involve?

Going out and building trail, fire trail by hand and keeping your distances from the other workers, and so on, and how to make cuts in logs on the ground so you could roll them out without the log getting pinched and just a variety of things. Cutting brush that had to be done for the construction of the fire trail. A fire trail is generally built through the top duff; the leaves and the molds and the needles down to mineral soil, and that was one thing that we were taught was how to tell when you're down to good mineral soil. And if you get in a forest where there hasn't been a forest fire for many, many, many years that layer may be down there fifteen, eighteen inches before you get to soil, and if you don't get to soil, the fire could creep across your lines. There was quite a few factors involved. Yes.

So how wide were the trails that you were building?

Generally eighteen inches unless specified more, but generally an eighteen to twenty inch trail would control most of the fires. Like I said, we didn't have bulldozers those days and helicopters like they have now, and we didn't have the portable camps like they have now where they have showers and outhouses and everything delivered right on the fire line. The first thing we did if we'd go on a big fire was dig a pit maybe about eight feet or ten feet long and about three feet wide and three feet deep and find two forked trees fairly good size and plant them on each side of the pit and then put a pole across into the forks of these trees. That was your latrine. And the last thing we done was to fill that back in when we left the fire camp. And showers, if there happened to be a stream or a creek or a pond, we could shower, but sometimes the creek was quite a ways away, and after so long they'd take us on the trucks to

where there was water so we could clean up after a day or two probably because firefighting is pretty dirty work most of the time.

So you trained building fire trails. What else did you train doing to fight fires?

To stay pretty much out of the danger spots and what created a danger spot and so on and to keep your crew intact. Don't separate yourselves from any of the rest of the crew, to always stay together. And it seemed to involve quite a few different little things, how to use your tools safely, how to use your axe safely without cutting somebody else and so on, how to carry your bucking saws. We didn't have chain saws those days. They were hand saws and take care of them and whatever needed to be done.

What's a bucking saw?

Well, it's what they call a misery whip [laughs]. Most of them were about seven or eight feet long, and it's built similar to a falling saw, but the bucking saw is stiff enough that you can push it, one man can push it. Where the falling saw you never push it, you only pull it. There's a man on each so it can be thinner and lighter to handle. And on how to buck your logs so they wouldn't bind and had wedges and whatever. Yes. And whenever we rolled out a chunk, to make sure it didn't go down where anybody was working down the hill, different things.

That had to take a lot of strength to use that bucking saw.

Well, we were young [laughs]. Yes. And once you got used to it, it wasn't as hard as it looks. You had, especially the falling saw, two fellows working together. It's not that hard a job. It was work but not that hard once you get used to pulling the saw so it doesn't pull too hard.

When you went back in, in '36 did you do anything else besides fight fires?

We still had some falling to do. I started out as an Assistant Leader there. My job would be to scale the snags the fellows cut. They would mark them, put the date on them, put their set number on them and an arrow going to the next tree they were going to fall. I would come along and measure them and write it down in a pad and so they'd know what each set got each day.

Was there any value left in those snags?

Today they probably could have used a lot of them, but those days they couldn't. Some of the snags were killed in '29 which was only five years before⁶⁶. They were still sound and would have had some commercial value, but here they were way up there in the boonies. There was no decent roads to get them out and so on, and they weren't needed yet like lumber is today.

Most of them were for fire protection. If you have a snag on a ridge top or close to a road and it catches fire and burns in the top where the wood is subject to be rotten, the wind can pick up the embers and blow it across the road and start your fire again. Same from a ridge top, if there's quite a bit of breeze on the ridge tops and picks up these embers and puts them down over the hill somewheres, you've lost your trail. Where if your snags are down, your fire is on the ground, and you stand a lot better chance to hold your lines.

So you fell these snags and left them on the ground?

⁶⁶ The Dole Fire of 1929.

That's exactly right. That's right. The only ones that were used, if there were some not too far from camp, they would cut them for wood because we heated the barracks and the tents and whatever with wood, and there was a crew that did that, just cut wood.

So you didn't have to cut wood?

Oh, no, no [laughs]. But we kind of liked the falling, and that was nice because just two people working together and you got along good, your day went real good. And it was nice, clean work, no mud to be in. We were out there in the snow, but you got used to that, and the rain and so on.

Make sure I got the terminology right. You said you were an Assistant Leader?

Yes. That's when I scaled the snags. Assistant Leader got thirty-six dollars a month, and twenty-three dollars a month went home, and you got to keep eight dollars. When you got to Assistant Leader, you got six dollars more you could keep. When you got to be a leader, you got fifteen dollars, so you got forty-five dollars a month. That part was yours.

What did you spend your money on?

Well, [laughs] you might know. I went in with another guy, and we got a car [laughs]. Do I need to say any more? We hid it out in the woods, but this other fellow worked in the army office, so he was in with the company commander, and we didn't have any problem. No.

[Laughs]. So where did you go?

Oh, it would depend. We'd go to shows in Stevenson and maybe Goldendale, depended what shows. Then on weekends sometimes we'd go to town. We didn't go all the time. If you got a car, you still got to watch your dollars.

Okay. So you became a Forest Service employee at some time.... When did that occur?

I am not really sure. I'd have to say about '38, along in there, '37 or 38.

Was there a gap between being in the CCC and becoming a Forest Service employee?

No, no. I moved from the CC barracks into the Forest Service bunkhouse. The bunkhouse cost me five dollars a month, and I would get my meals at the camp for whatever it cost them to feed me. Usually it was about ten dollars, eleven dollars a month. So I had it pretty good there. Instead of getting forty-five dollars a month, I got a hundred dollars a month, but I had to furnish my own clothes but that was a step in another direction, you might say. But it was easy because I knew the guys. I'd worked with them and still did for some time til they said I had to go to another camp for a six-months deal to see how I got along with people I didn't know, and I ended up in Sunset. There was a southern camp there. Those guys were just as nice as could be. In the winter, the camp was at Sunset. In the summertime it went up to Smoky Creek in the Trout Lake District⁶⁷, and I went up there and did trail work and telephone line work up there through the summer. I got to see lots and lots of beautiful country.

So how did you get chosen or decide to become -- wasn't it a Junior Foreman?

⁶⁷ Mt. Adams Ranger District, with headquarters at Trout Lake.

Yes. I could have ten men where the others had twenty to twenty-five men, but ten was all I was supposed to have, and it stayed pretty much that way. Sometimes I only had five on a trail crew.

So how did that come about, becoming --

It just happened they came out with these openings as what they called a Project Assistant, and one fellow from each camp could be picked to do this. And they had picked one fellow ahead of me, sent him to Sunset, but he was left in camp on a Thanksgiving Day weekend. The Forest Service always had to have a man in camp, and this young man was left there. Well, I guess he got pretty lonesome and went to the tavern and kind of overdone it, and he lost out....

And what did that training involve?

Same pretty much as I did right in the CCC's. I got into snag falling and trail construction and maintenance and telephone line construction and maintenance and sometimes odd jobs depended whatever they had, but I liked the trail maintenance. You got to see lots and lots of beautiful country. We did lots of hiking in a day, and usually there was only a crew of about five of us, and it was really a very, very pleasant type of work.

So did you have any leadership training, or did they just --

I got that from being in the CCC's, yes. The difference was the Forest Service had to work forty-four hours a week at that time. We worked half a day every Saturday, and I would always pair up with this Wade McNee. We'd been friends from before because we'd worked together quite a bit, and he helped me quite a bit in different ways. And it wasn't very hard where I knew everyone. I knew the foreman. I knew most of the guys. It really wasn't an effort at all on that part.

So you became a Junior Foreman⁶⁸, and then did you immediately go to Sunset Falls for this six-month period?

Yes. But at the end of six months I didn't get back to Hemlock. We happened to be at Smoky Creek, and I talked to the superintendent. I wanted to go back to Hemlock. He said, "You know," he said, "that Alex just don't want to let go." This was the other superintendent. I think they kind of had a little hard feelings between one another, and I was kind of the go between.

But then that camp broke up, and Alex, who was camp superintendent there, Alex McKay, could pick six foremen to go to Alaska to build an airfield up there for the Corps of Engineers. He asked me if I would like to go, and I said I sure would, but I didn't have enough seniority. He could take six men, and I was number seven on the list. He said, "If after I get up there and there's an opening," he said, "would you like to come up?"

I said, "I sure would."

Well, by that time the shipyards had opened up, and everybody was talking about the big money in the shipyards, three dollars and something an hour. I thought well, I've got the service to go into. I'm going to go get some of that big money. Well, that was a pretty sad move after being used to working in the woods. People were so jammed and crowded. It was no place for a man that was used to working in the woods. I didn't stay very long.

⁶⁸ The Hemlock Breeze (1939:1) reported that Mr. Paladeni was promoted from Project Assistant to Junior Foreman on October 1, 1939, adding --"arouses a great deal of pride to see one of us rise up from the ranks...."

So when was that?

It would have been in 1940.

So you worked with the Forest Service until you went to the shipyards?

That's right. But I didn't stay very long. The same time McKay wrote and said there was an opening up there if I wanted to go up there running crew. Well, I'd been to the recruiting office for the navy, and I thought I'd rather go navy than army. And the guy said, "You know, we're looking for fellows like you in the Seabees."

I said, "What in the world is that?" I'd never heard of them. They were a construction battalion. Well, I said, "What do they do?" Very similar to what the work would have been in Alaska except up there I would have been pushing a crew where this other I would have just been an enlisted man. And I thought about it, and I told the fellow, "I'll let you know next week sometime."

I went right to one of the fellows in Alaska, Walt Peterson, and he told me about the conditions up there, and they were not good at all. So I decided to go for the Navy. I think it was one of the best moves I ever made because I had it a lot better in the Navy than they did it up there.

When did you join the navy, and how long were you in?

I joined in '42 in March and was there just about three years, and two-and-a-half years lacking seventeen days I was overseas building air bases and whatever they needed on the Islands. We had excellent officers and a wonderful commander. We worked twelve hours a day. The equipment never stopped, only long enough to refuel and regrease or whatever, and nobody bothered us. We did our work.

That's similar to what you experienced in the CCC?

That's right. That's right. Yes.

You did say that one guy that was chosen from your camp didn't make it through the training.

No. And when I went in the service we were in Pearl Harbor for a while. I ran into him there in Pearl Harbor. In fact, I ran into about a half a dozen guys that were in the CC's that were in different branches. Most of them were navy. The navy had a pretty big base there and quite a few fellows went through there. Especially before an invasion of some of the Islands, there would be thousands and thousands and thousands of people there, soldiers and sailors and Marines, whatever, and once in awhile you'd bump into somebody you knew.

That was --

It was always nice. You bet. You bet.

Somebody from home.

That's exactly right.

Yeah. Working on the phone lines, I think that's really interesting. Could you tell me a little more about that?

It was pretty simple to build a phone line in those days because it was just a one-line phone system. And you pretty much built them along the roadways and even over the road so the line would always be clear of limbs and brush and stuff growing up. If it went alongside of a road, you brushed out pretty good, so it wouldn't interfere. But they had a cedar pole, maybe was fourteen feet long, sixteen. You'd bury it about three, three-and-a-half feet in the ground, and you had a way of hanging the insulator on the pole. A staple held it up there. In the wintertime the line would collect ice. Sometimes the ice got that big [indicating], and that put quite a bit of weight on the line that it would pull down and release itself from where it was fastened on instead of breaking. But most of it was just putting these holes and poles in and see that your line cleared good. It was fast type of work.

Do you have any idea how many miles you did?

No, I don't know [laughs], but it went fast. I did it at Sunset. I did it at Trout Lake.

And you were doing it up to lookouts?

No. The maintenance would be up to the lookouts. Yes, some of it was new lookouts that didn't have lines in to them. Some of them was reconstruction of lines. Some would be where they changed a roadway to make it better that we'd put a road line along that so you could maintain the line from the road instead of going out through the brush someplace.

So how often would you have to go out, and the line would quit working, and you'd have to go find the problem?

Oh, generally you just kept going till you found it. Usually it was a break most of the time. A tree had fallen across, and who knows, maybe didn't release like it should have, but there was quite a bit of slack, and it wasn't very often there was a break in the line. The biggest problem seemed to come in the wintertime when this ice formed on them. Then it would pull the line to the ground, then it would snow over the line, and if by chance the snow froze, then you had to go in the spring and pull that line out up through all that snow with the ice on it. That was hard on your fingers. We got in on that a few times in the spring getting them lines up. That was their main means of communication. They didn't have radios those days. They depended on that phone for everything.

When I spoke to you on the phone you mentioned that you were at several lookouts?

Different ones. Most of them were for short periods. I was on Silver Star one spring before fire season came on. They had kind of a little dry spell, and a lightning storm swept through that area, and Ross thought it would be good if I went up and looked around to see if I could see any lightning strikes. There was no road up there then like there is now. It was quite a little hike to get up there, and I was to be up there only one night and look around the next day and then come back. Well, I got up there, and the fog set in, and I couldn't see out next morning, and I couldn't see out the next morning [laughs], but I think I stayed three days and then came out, but I was short of grub because I'd only taken enough for one day. But it was kind of interesting.

And the same with Lookout Mountain. Those days when an inch of rain came in the fall they felt the woods were fairly safe, so they laid their lookouts off. Well, the east winds would

come in the latter part of September and maybe no rain for quite some time, and there would be a fire danger again. So I got sent up on a lookout for about three weeks while this dry spell was on till the rain again.

The same with Mowich Butte. The fellow that was on there had a dental problem. He was from Spokane and wanted to go home to get his teeth taken care of. So I was up there for a week. That was my first one.

Now, what was the name of that again?

Mowich Butte. It had the old-fashioned lookout where the living quarters were down below, and then it had a little cupola that went up where the fire finder was on the top of the roof, and you could look around and see more. In those days they used to run sheep in there to graze. They would come from Yakima and Trout Lake. We would have what we call sheep driveways. They were eight feet wide for these sheep to travel from one area to the other end, and they came down as far as Lookout Mountain and spent whatever time....

....And [this shepherd] butchered a sheep, a smaller one, I'm sure, and he brought a hindquarter. He didn't know I was new. He was taking it to the man that he'd [been] acquainted with. So he gave me this hindquarter of sheep. Well, you can imagine how much cooking I'd done up to that point. Them days we had little wood stoves in the lookout houses, and we gathered what wood we could. Well, here I was new -- this was my first experience, this lookout house. They encouraged you to put your fires out at ten o'clock in the morning and not light them evening till -- I can't recall, but when it was fairly [dark]. Well, my goodness, by the time ten o'clock in the morning rolled out that stove had already got good and warm, but I had this hindquarter in the oven. And I put it in there for three days, and I don't think I dented it one bit. It was just about as raw at the end of the three days. You can imagine, and I finally took it and threw it down over the hill [laughs]. I wasn't much of a cook, but it was good experience.

And you were there, did you say three weeks?

No, on this one about a week. Lookout Mountain about three weeks.

Do you remember when that was?

That one on Mowich was when I [was] first in the CCC's because this fireman at the camp was a Forest Service man. He kind of was in charge of the fires, and he knew me. He was from Yacolt and knew me, and he asked me if I wanted to go up there, and I thought well, that would be nice to learn, so that was how I got started on that. He gave me quite a little instruction on firefinder and how to locate fires and so on.

Can you explain that to me?

Well, do you know what a firefinder is? It's a map about this big around [indicating], and it sets right on like a large compass about this big around [indicating], and this circular -- they call it the firefinder -- has a sliding thing, a ring with a sight through it that you can put this sight right on a fire and look on your map, and it tells you right where you're looking. It gives the slope this way and the direction this way, so you can pretty well pinpoint it. And two, then you give an azimuth reading of so many degrees to the ranger station. The center of the map is your station. You report that into the ranger station. He'd call another lookout to see if they can see that smoke, and between the two points they can get right on that thing. Yeah.

The Forest Service dismantled all their lookout houses except there's one yet on Red Mountain, I believe, and it's too bad they didn't think to preserve one of them so people could

see. Some of them weren't that many years old, and they were in good shape. So people could see just what they were. Firefinders were all like new because we'd put a light coating of Vaseline on them when we left in the fall. I'd have given anything now if I could find one of them just to have it to show people what they were, but how do we know. It's kind of hard to explain just what they were.

So you'd look out at the landscape to see if you could see any smoke. How many hours a day were you expected to do that?

Well, like I said, the warmer hours, but you kind of normally glanced out there when you first got up in the morning, and you watched it. During the day you watched more when the hot time of the day because you didn't have anything else to do. And they had quite a few lookouts in the Wind River District at that time. Yes.

How did you stop yourself from going crazy up there just looking?

I don't know that I did [laughs]. I had quite a little experience with a fellow that was on Dog Mountain Lookout. Dog Mountain is off the Columbia River above Stevenson fifteen miles or so, and you can pretty well overlook the Columbia River Gorge up and down. And one evening Ross Sheppard came over, and I was just getting ready to go to bed. John Shrednick -- that was the lookout up there. From the lookout to the ground there was one step, and the step was open underneath, and he stepped out to do his thing for the evening before he went to bed, and there was a rattlesnake underneath this step, and it bit him on the ankle. Well, John got the little rattlesnake kit. It's a glass vial with a suction thing on it, and you have a real sharp, little blade to cut an "x" where the snake bit and then suck this matter out with this little syringe. Well, in his excitement he broke the glass, which is kind of easy to do, but he thought he pretty well got it, but he wasn't sure. Well, Ross said, "Would you go over and get my horse and go up and take him to the doctor?"

So I went over and loaded the horse and down we went. Ross said, "Now, take it kind of easy on the horse. He hasn't been ridden all summer, but," he said, "he'll be all right." Well, I got on the horse at the trail head, and it was uphill right off the bat, and I don't think I went 200 yards and that horse was heaving like you would not believe. And I thought well, he gets his second wind, we'll be all right. So I let him rest good and took off again. I didn't go as far the second time as I did the first and it was the same thing. So I thought I'm going to walk and lead him. Again, the same thing happened. We'd only go a little ways, and that horse just -- because it was a pretty good uphill. Well, the outcome was it was after one o'clock in the morning before I got up to the lookout.

John had coffee made, and he said, "I made some coffee."

I said, "Look, let's not fool around. Let's get to the doctor." The doctor in Stevenson said to ring the bell until he came. He would be asleep but to ring it, and he'd wake up. He got on the horse, and he had the snake. He'd killed it and put it in a gunnysack.

He said, "Will you pack that snake down to the station? The girls want to see it."

I said, "No way." I said, "That's a good place for it."

He says, "Give it to me." So he got up on the horse, and I gave him the snake [laughs].

We didn't get too far from the station, and John said, "You know, I'm sure thirsty." He said, "I'm going to go over to the spring and get a drink," which was on the way out. Well, he went over to the spring to get a drink and put the snake down. We got down the trail a ways. He said, "You know," he said, "I forgot that snake." He said, "Will you go back?" [laughs].

And I said, "No way." I said, "That's a good place for that snake. Leave it there." No, John had to go back and get it. Well, I kept on moseying down the trail.

By the time we got to Stevenson it was just getting daylight. John said, "You know, I

don't feel very good." He was so sick he couldn't walk into the doctor's office. The end result was he was in the hospital for about a month before he got over that snake bite. Yes. But that was quite a little experience. Yes. And I don't know if there's still snakes on Dog Mountain today or not, but there was then....

Was there a lot of wildlife around?

Oh, maybe a little more than today, but it wasn't too noticeable that I could tell.

You didn't see bear or cougar?

Very, very, very seldom. No, no. We'd see a lot of sign of the bear in the huckleberry fields when the huckleberries were on. We'd stop and eat huckleberries a couple times a day when we were working in the snags.

What other lookouts were you at?

Observation [Peak] for just a couple of days, and [Point] 3670, about two weeks on that one, but I had a helper up there. I played football, and I turned my ankle, and I couldn't walk. So they sent a guy to go on fires in case I saw some fires. So I had it pretty nice. I had lots of company....

What was one of your favorite jobs while you were there?

Well, I really liked snag falling because two guys out there by themselves and time went so good, and it was good, healthful work. And I liked trail construction, yes. I didn't mind whatever. Of course, all of us liked some things better than others, but even today I have to be the kind of fellow that stays busy. We're fortunate that we bought a tree farm when you could still buy tree farms and land. Today you can't. So we have some, and I just love to be down in the woods.

When we'd fall snags and the wind got to blowing to where we shouldn't be out there, they'd pull us out of the snags. That was one point they were really fussy on because they started rocking them, and it would take the tops out of them and this and that and the other. So the road didn't have fine gravel on it like we have today. It had normal rock. Some of it was pretty good sized. Well, when this wind would get to blowing, we'd go out and throw the bigger rocks off the road down to about two inches. We had one guy that liked to needle the truck driver, and he'd hold up a rock. He'd say, "Now, is this one two inches or not?" [Laughs] He'd keep doing that all. So what did the truck driver do but thought on the weekend it kind of was getting to him. So he took a shingle, he drilled a two-inch hole in it, and then tied a leather shoelace on it, and then hung it on this guy's neck [laughs]. He says, "Anything that don't go through that hole," he says, "you throw over the bank" [laughs].

And we had one fellow get killed by falling snags. That was before I went there. Some of the snags have quite a belly in them like this [indicating a circle], and the belly was leaned up the hill, and they fell the snag with the belly because that's the way it leaned. Well, he was on his board, but there was so much curve in the snag that when it fell, the butt was up in the air, and it slid back downhill and knocked him off his board and killed him. Where if he had fell it just a little bit one, it wouldn't have happened, but that's part of what they have to go through to get there.

Then while we were at Rock Creek [CCC Camp] at the sign shop we had an Indian there with us. The road went over Rock Creek, and he went down by the streamside one evening when we were coming back from being to Stevenson. He saw some mink tracks. He says, "You know," he said, "I've got some traps at home. I believe I could catch that guy." Sure

enough he did, and he shipped the pelt, but he didn't have a license.

So here come the sheriff from Stevenson one evening and said -- he shipped this pelt to Sears & Roebuck, and he says, "You're going to have to come to Stevenson." The Indian didn't mind it much. He got some cards and some magazines and away he went down to Stevenson to spend the weekend [laughs]. He said it wasn't bad.

He worked for the Forest Service?

He was a CC employee. Yeah, yeah.

Were there any other Indians that were in the CCC?

There were different Indians, and very, very few colored people.

Did you have any association with --

Oh, definitely, yeah. Well, I think where the problem comes with them is quite a few get in a group and they kind of separate themselves, but we had them in the service. We got along fine.

What camp were they at?

At Hemlock. There was one or two, very few that were in there, but they happen to -- I don't know where they came from.

You don't know that they were from Washington?

No, I don't know where they were from. We had one fellow or two from California. Guys would do quite a bit of drifting then. It's hard telling where they would come from. Yeah.

Then when I was on Lookout Mountain one night -- the camp was close by, maybe about a mile from the lookout -- I looked over on Summit Ridge, which was probably seven or eight miles away, and I could see a light over there, and the area was locked off at that time. You couldn't travel through because of fire danger. Today there's lots of green trees that have grown up, and the fire danger isn't as crucial as it was then. So I reported that at the station, and the ranger said, "Well, nobody should be in there." He said, "Does it look like a fire?"

I said, "Well, it looked like the sky lights up there." So they got a crew from the camp and sent them over there probably ten o'clock, eleven o'clock at night, and they looked and looked, and they couldn't find a fire. What I had actually seen was lights way down on the Columbia River who knows how many miles away that I hadn't been able to see before because of the haze and stuff. So I kind of sent them on a false run, but I never did tell them where the lights were [laughs]. No, no....

When you worked for the Forest Service who was your -- well, was it a ranger? Is that what you would call him?

Superintendent of the camp. Jess Adams was, and Alex McKay was, the [CCC] Camp Superintendents. Alex was Superintendent at Sunset. Jess Adams was Superintendent at Hemlock.

And how would you get your orders, what you were supposed to do for the day?

The Superintendent would tell you. Of course, come springtime you would go on trail

maintenance, and you had a book with maps on it that told how far you were supposed to go on each trail. So until you were all through trail maintenance, you didn't have to be assigned each day. And some of the jobs just went on for quite a while, but once in awhile the Superintendent would come out and see how things were going.

So what was involved in the trail maintenance?

Oh, usually lots and lots of hand digging, building little bridges across streams. They had different styles of bridges they wanted on certain places, but you had all the instructions in the handbook. It told you just how to do this and that and the other. The trail was pretty well laid out by some forest engineer and flagged so you knew where to go to build the trail. It was good work because it went pretty fast. One day with a ten-man crew you'd build quite a bit of trail.

These bridges, were they pre-cut lumber and you assembled on site?

No, no. You went out in the woods and got the trees that you needed, and the same with the decking, you would find a tree and split it in half and turn the round side down and leave the flat side up, and that left a rough deck, but it was fairly flat. It was kind of interesting work.

How did you split the log?

Usually with a sledge and a wedge. The wedge was about that long [indicating] and pointed and came out pretty thick. We only cut about four feet long, so they could split pretty good.

So about a ten-inch wedge?

No, the wedge would be about six, seven, eight inches. But where you get away from the butt of the tree, the bottom of the tree, the tree splits a lot easier. The bottom is intertwined grain just like that [indicating], and you try to split it, it splits hard, but you get away from that a little ways, the grain is pretty straight, and it doesn't split that hard.

How long would it take you to split a four-foot log?

Oh, it wouldn't take very long because most of the logs were only about that big around [indicating]. It wouldn't take very long. No.

So I wanted to ask you if you had any association with the huckleberry fields and the Indians?

Not so much with the Indians. When we were at Smoky Creek, the Indians in that area -- there was a time when the Indians had a lot of trouble picking huckleberries with the whites somehow. So the ranger got together with some other people and went up there and designated one side of the road strictly for the Indians, and the other side anybody could go there. And they would be up there picking when we were doing our work on the trails, and we'd run into them, but there was never any problem. No, no, no.

What do you think your biggest challenge was being a junior foreman? Was there anything that was more difficult?

Oh, I assume there was times when it was, some of the decisions you had to make, but I don't recall that I could pick any particular one.

Well, how much control did you have on what decisions you made?

You had pretty much. When you were out [on] trail construction, you had the manual that told how, but it was to get it done, get it done safely and whatever, yeah. The main thing was to get the job done safely no matter what it was, and we had real good results with that because we took time to talk to the fellows on how to do this and how to do that and how to do the other....

I kind of wanted to know what the landscape looked like when you were a boy, the Yacolt Burn?

Well, I'll tell you what it looked like because we were -- the Yacolt Burn was in 1902 which was 230,000 some acres, but in '29 very much of the same area burned over again but not as far. It was 180,000 some acres, but we lived to where the fire went through in '29. And from 1902 to '29 a good many fir trees had come in voluntarily. When a fire goes through as severe as the 1902 fire did, it makes a wonderful seed bed, and the wind will carry them seeds for miles and miles, and quite a bit of the land was recovered and fir trees were growing maybe up to that point when the '29 fire came along. Well, when that came along and burned the trees down and the brush, it was nothing but a black landscape. You would take one look at that land, and it was just like being someplace in another world entirely. Wherever you looked it was black, just black as could be, and it stayed that way till the next year it began to green up a little bit. Much of the vegetation that was killed, like the hazel brush and the vine maple and the pea vines, the roots survived to where the next spring they shot up a ways again, but for the first year or two it looked pretty sad, I'll tell you.

So how close did that '29 fire come to your home?

Right up next to the barn and right next to the house. We had people there with burlap sacks they dipped in water buckets. When it got close to the buildings you'd hit it with these wet sacks and put it out. And once it burned that, then there was nothing else there to burn, but while it made its initial run, it was pretty fierce. The wind blew real, real hard, and it had been real dry for a long time. The smoke got in the eyes and the heat, til the next few days you really felt it.

So the '29 fire, did that create any snags or was the timber too young?

It created some snags from the trees that didn't burn in 1902. Whenever you have a fire, no matter how big it is, there's always little islands of trees that didn't burn. It's just kind of nature's way of repopulating itself. So the ones that were killed in '29 were still full-topped. They were dead, and when the bark would slip off, they would turn a light gray from the weather and this and that and the other, but there were a few of them here and there, but the little ones, they fell over and there wasn't much of them standing.

So how close is your tree farm to the national forest?

We're within six miles by road.... Six miles from Sunset Falls.

So you could see the difference in the forest when the CCC cut the snags and replanted?

By that time it had started to come back on its own, and they did lots and lots of tree planting to fir trees. The Forest Service had started planting areas that had burned in 1902 as early as '22, I think, and maybe before that even. Those days they packed the trees out with a pack string of mules, a couple of pack strings, haul trees every day to the crews that were quite a ways away where there was no roads planting.

Did you ever plant trees with the CCC?

Oh, yes. We planted quite a few in the CCC's, too. Yes, we did....

What were you planting, Doug fir?

Right. Eight feet apart those days, and when a little tree like that is eight feet apart, it's pretty far, but when that little tree gets that big, it isn't eight feet anymore. So now they're going through and thinning out a lot of the eight-foot spacings and making it more, and I think for the most part they plant them twelve to fourteen, fifteen feet apart.

So what was the survival rate?

I think it was real, real good. I don't exactly recall, but you go back there now and some of those trees are like that [indicating] that we planted, and it looks like by far the biggest percentage of them grew. Had real good results with trees that we planted. Yes.

So what year was it that you planted trees?

Well, I did for the Forest Service '33 and '34, the springs, and then in the CC's, we planted some in '34 in the fall around Lookout Mountain, and then the next fall we planted again in the Lookout Mountain area.

Was that hard work?

Oh, it was different work. We didn't like it as well as falling snags [laughs], but it was different.

How many trees would you plant in a day?

The trees were small them days. Today you buy a tree to plant and it's about that large [indicating] with a big root wad. Them days the trees roots and all were only about that long [indicating]. And you had a hoedag. That has a blade about that wide and that long with a handle on it, and you take two steps and then sink that thing in. There wasn't much brush or vegetation because the fire had gone through not too many years before, and then lift up to loosen the ground on the bottom and pull back on the top and stick that in there and step on it, and you go up on another eight feet. This guy went up eight feet, and you move eight feet alongside him, and each one is eight feet apart pretty much. But it was a job. Yes.

Did you have any involvement with the ERA?

No, I didn't directly, but there was one or two of the guys that worked there that worked for the ERA. One of them worked with lookout construction, new houses. They built quite a few new houses for the lookouts because the old ones weren't very adequate to start with, and they weren't built with the same materials and so on that they had later, so a lot of the old ones were replaced, and there was quite a little new construction, and one of them worked on that. And I'm not sure what the others done so much, but no.

Well, did you have anything else you wanted to add?

Not that I can think of so much as the fact that the good examples the foremen set for us that

we were able to do likewise as we got older and went along our way in life and so on, how much the CC life really meant to us in our future lives, that no matter who we worked for we learned we were going to have to take orders. Some people don't always like to take orders, and we learned that we had to get along with people and how to work, and we learned quite a bit that we didn't learn on the farm.

Did you realize at the time when you were a junior foreman you were influencing these boys the same way ?

Well, I don't think quite so much, but some you did because they became so much more interested in what they were doing than others, and you got closer to them because they took more interest in their work and so on. But today there's not very many of us left. Same as World War II guys, there's not very many left that were in World War II. But it was a good thing for the times that were on then. It kept lots and lots of kids off the streets and [from] getting in trouble....

So the CCC being so close to Yacolt, how did that change life in Yacolt?

I don't believe too much. The camp was probably ten miles from Yacolt. They would go there on -- well, Yacolt didn't have much entertainment for them. Amboy had dances where they could go to, but Yacolt didn't have much entertainment. They would go down there and play ball, baseball and basketball, play with the local teams and so on....

So you were going to talk a little more about the '29 fire?

Yes. To make a winter feed for our livestock we planted turnips because they would stand the weather pretty good. I don't know if you're familiar with how a turnip grows, but it gets to be about that big around, and half of it is underground and half above the ground, the part that you feed the cattle. It's, like I say, about that big [Indicating]. We had them in this field when the fire came through. It burned all our pasture land for the cattle, and Dad said, "Well, I'll go down and see how the turnips survived." He went down to where we had the turnips planted, and there was many dead rabbits in that field that had come to feed on the turnips, and the part of the turnip that was above the ground -- now, mind you, this was a field that had been cultivated. The part that stuck above the ground cooked just as if you'd put it in a pot on a stove and boiled it just from the heat of some of that fire. That will give you an idea how intense it was and how hot it was because we'd had dry weather for quite a while without any rain, and the winds that were with it were pretty strong.

I don't know if you're familiar with rotten wood of a fir tree, but a wad of it like that --

Is it about ten inches across?

Or eight or ten or more. Can be just like a puffball because it's full of holes from the bugs and this and that, and it's real light. Well, that catches on fire, and there's a lot of circular motion with this east wind. You watch in a snow field sometimes when it's snowing hard and it's real cold, you'll see a lot of circular motion that picks the snow back up, and it does the same thing with these sparks. It will pick it up from the trees that's burning and carry it up in the air till the wind carries it on, and I seen it throw fire ahead of the main fire as far as three miles. How could you control or do anything -- you just couldn't. You just had to wait till the wind died down, and then you could do something with it.

We had an open barn in the front, and there were many cracks in it, the old barns. You didn't have much money to build much of a barn, and the sparks would go through these cracks

into the loose hay. And there was a fellow in the hay mound that when a big spark landed on some of the hay, it would take a pitchfork and go out to the edge of the barn and dump it outside, and a guy there would take it out away from the barn and let it burn. And if it hadn't been for some of those people that were there doing that, we would have lost the barn, and the house was just maybe 100 feet from the barn. It would have went, too, but fortunately we were able to save the barn and the house and everything.

So these people that came to help you, were they your neighbors?

They were loggers from Yacolt. A fire warden came up. Them days it was the Department of Forestry. It wasn't the Department of Natural Resources like it is today. Dad asked him if he couldn't send some men up. He says, "You know, we don't have money for that." He said, "You go down to Yacolt and send some men up, and I'll pay them." Here came about six loggers. Them guys worked like you would not believe all night, and the next morning when the wind died down about little after daylight, they laid down out there by the barn, and they sacked out. They were so tired. They were sound asleep. You couldn't even wake them up. But if it hadn't been for those people, we would have lost house, barn and all, and they wouldn't take no money for what they'd done. No. That was the bitterest fire I've seen in the many years of fighting fire for DNR and the Forest Service. I never saw anything like that again. Yeah....

So how did the Depression affect your family?

Well, we were more fortunate than some in that we had milk, we had our own beef and pork, and we had chickens, and we could plant a garden. And we had slim pickings, I'll guarantee you, but we were able to have something to eat all the time. Yes. We were more fortunate than some because we could grow quite a bit of what we would have to have for food. Yes. But it was a good experience. It wasn't the best, but even today as plentiful as money is in some ways, we still watch our dollars, believe me. It's there. You just can't get away from it.

So is there anything else you'd like to add?

I think we covered everything pretty good except I'm real fortunate. I still have good health, and I still enjoy being in the woods, but I'm thankful I don't have to go on fires anymore. That's a young man's job....

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Cynthia Toman, May 12, 2002

References

Hemlock Breeze

1939 Enrollee Receives Promotion. *Hemlock Breeze*, 6(10):1. Camp Hemlock, Washington, October 25.



CCC enrollees from Camp Hemlock felling snags for firebreak near Wind River Nursery (Aug. 1933 photo by George Bright, Columbia National Forest, from Gifford Pinchot National Forest archives).



Jack Pollari, above, in August 2003. Lower photograph shows Company 944, CCC Camp Hemlock baseball team, 1940. Ballplayer names, from left to right, include: *Front row:* Kiezer, Barreman, Armstrong, Lieutenant Howard, Casteel, Traup, Yancey. *Back row:* Kiezer, Pollari, Fell, Sunterland, Dugan, Rauch. The photograph, taken at Vancouver Barracks, is from the personal collection of Mr. Jack Pollari.



Jack Pollari

Co. 944 (1938-1941)

Narrator: Jack Pollari

Interviewer: Jennifer Kobbeman, Capstone student, Portland State University

Date: May 7, 2002

Place: Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters, Vancouver, Washington.

Introduction:

Jack Pollari -- Armas Jacob Pollari -- was born in 1921 at Hockinson, Clark County, Washington. His parents came to the United States from Finland around 1900. Mr. Pollari grew up on the family farm, and enrolled in the CCC in 1938 at the age of seventeen. He spent thirty-one months in the CCC as a member of Company 944, based at Camp Hemlock, in the Columbia National Forest. He did various jobs while in the 3 C's including building roads, trails, falling snags, building bridges, and firefighting. After leaving the CCC in 1941, Mr. Pollari was drafted for military service in the U.S. Army. As a member of the 104th Division, he served in Germany during World War II. Following his discharge from the army, Mr. Pollari worked as a timber faller for a small logging company in the Lewis River area. Later, he worked in construction, including many years as a hod carrier for a Vancouver-area building contractor. He retired in 1983, and currently lives in Vancouver with his wife.

How did the Depression affect your family?

Rough. That's why I wound up in the three C's.

So how did you first hear of the CCC?

Well, my mother was a widow and she went with me to Vancouver and I could have joined the army but that was for three years and the three C's was for 6 months. So I took the latter.

How old were you then?

Seventeen.

How many years were you in and what year did you join?

1938 and I was in there thirty-one months.

What do you remember about the day you signed up?

New adventure.

Were you alone?

Well, I had a buddy that went in but he didn't make it. He didn't pass his physical so he didn't get to go....

You had to pass a physical, were there other requirements?

Only that you was able to work.

Did your family and friends support your decision to join?

Oh yes.

What were you most worried about at the time of joining?

Just that it was new.

And what were you most excited about?

I was rarin' to go.

What was the process of joining the CCC aside from the qualifications?

Well, you had to go down to the Vancouver Barracks, to the headquarters and take a physical and you could pass that physical, that was about it. As long as you could see daylight and hear thunder you were in.

How long did [induction] take?

Oh, we were there about three days or maybe a week. You know, test us out.

Where did you go after that?

Camp Hemlock.

What kind of supplies were you given?

Issue kit; they call it an issue kit. It had a razor, soap, comb, toothbrush and the likes.

Did you get to take anything else with you from Vancouver to Camp Hemlock?

Yeah, you wore your own clothes. Then when you got there they issued clothes for you.

What company were you in?

944.

Where did most of your fellow company members come from?

Clark County and Skamania County and I would say College County too. I had some fellows come from as far as Seattle.

When you went through your induction how many men were there with you?

I guess about two dozen.

What was your first day like at Camp Hemlock?

Well, you just got acquainted. Where are you gonna go, what barracks.

What was a typical day like at Camp Hemlock, from morning ,til night.

Well, you got up in the mornings got dressed, cleaned up and you would go for breakfast.

What time did your morning start?

Oh, 6:00 [AM] I think.

And then you went on from there, after breakfast --

To work call. They would send you out on different crews.

How many hours was a typical work [day]?

Oh it's supposed to have been eight hours. Come and go, you know.

So when you were finished with your work, where did you go from there in the evening?

Well, we rode back to camp and cleaned up and got ready for supper. You know, if I remember right we used to have a retreat, a flag lowering.

Was that done every night?

Yeah, like they did in the army.

How much leisure time were you given in an average workday?

Well, if you wasn't on a fire you had the rest of the day off. But you had to stay in camp.

What time was lights out or bedtime?

Oh, around 10:00 [PM] I would say.

What camps aside from Camp Hemlock were you in while in the CCC, were there any other ones?

No, I stayed there the whole time. There were work areas that we went into for the summer like Siouxon Peak, you know, and them places.

So, how was that different from a regular day at Camp Hemlock?

Well, I don't know, it's like camping out. Of course, you know, you worked; you always had work to do....

What physically, what work did you do during these summers?

Cut brush and fall trees, mostly snags. Plant trees sometimes.

Where did you spend your holidays?

Well, you went home if you could get a pass.

How did you get a pass?

Applied for it and signed up for it.

Were there special qualifications for these?

No, what we got every six months was a furlough.

Can you explain that?

Well, you signed up to begin with for six months and then you served that time and then you could sign up for another six months if you wanted to. But if you did then you got a furlough. I think it was a week; seven days, something like that....

Did the camp get many visitors?

A few, yeah. On weekends we would play ball you know. We had a ball park and a lot of fellows had their parents come up and visit and, of course, girlfriends.

Were you allowed to leave on the weekends?

Yes, but you also had to get a pass. I mean everybody couldn't leave. Somebody had to stay for fire protection, especially in the summer time.

So did you rotate shifts then for weekends on and off? How did that work?

No, it is just like how it worked out for the, see the camp was run by the army. All 3-C camps were run by the army. They ran it just like an army. But then your work part of it was with the Forest Service.

Who was your foreman, do you remember?

Superintendent was Jess Adams.... he was the one that lined up the work for us, all of us guys.

What about in the summers when you would travel to Siouxon Peak and such, did he still go with you?

No, he stayed in Camp Hemlock, you know, mainly. He had an office there. When we went to like Siouxon Peak we a foreman with us. You know, they belong to the Forest Service.

Did he travel around with you wherever you went or was there a different one each summer?

Well, yeah, it varied. Whoever was available I suppose. I didn't know their system you know, how they worked it.

So he didn't come from Camp Hemlock?

Yeah he stayed in Camp Hemlock, the foreman, the one that I'm thinking about. And there were others, they went home at night. They were married you know and had families.

So what influence did your foreman or Jess Adams, for example, have on your life?

Oh, yeah, very good men. Really, we looked up to them. Because we were in our young teens, you know. There were other foremen there, too, you know.

So what jobs did you perform while you were in the CCC?

Mostly snag falling. We had other work to do like building roads, trails, and maintain telephone lines.

So when you were snag falling, how many men would go out at a time on a typical day?

Well, like a truckload. I suppose there was, I guess around ten sets. Two guys to a set.

And you just spent the day out there? How did you have your lunch?

Well, the truck drivers brought the lunches. You know because we went with the truck and the driver took care of that part.

What tools did you take with you?

Oh yeah, saw mainly. Axes, double-bitted axes, springboard, wedges, sledges, and oil can.

What was the oil can for?

In case you hit pitch in the tree well you got to make it work, in other words grease it. That isn't what we called it but that's what happened. You know, we grease it.

Now you mentioned going out and making roads, what sorts of tools would you use for that sort of thing.

Well, axes, and shovels and of course we had the jackhammers.

Were there certain men that used certain tools or did you kind of get a feel for all?

Yeah, we all got a chance at it. Especially the jackhammer. It was new to us.

And the phone lines, what sorts of tools?

Well, your special splicing tools that you used to splice the line to the insulator.

Were you trained on that before you went out?

No, you kind of learned on the job.

So you mentioned a lot about fires, about going out on fires. So, the Willard Fire, did you work on that?

Yes, yeah.

Can you tell me how many men worked on that fire?

Well, the guys that run it could tell you that. I wouldn't know it, but there was at least a hundred of us, you know⁶⁹.... [It was in] 1939. I could add something to that, I don't know if I told you before or not.... Well, there was when Hitler invaded Poland and we was talking amongst ourselves, you know, about the war. It looked like we're going to be in it too cause nobody knew what Hitler was up to for sure. So we did -- we wound up -- I wound up in the army, in Germany.

So you mentioned about a hundred men. Did they all come from Camp Hemlock or a variety of camps?

A variety of camps⁷⁰ -- it depended on the size of the fire. Sometimes it was just the one camp.

What about the Willard Fire?

That was a serious fire you know. I can remember it had what you call a crown fire. The fire goes from tree to tree above you and you don't even know it at first til all that stuff starts falling down, and then you have to get out, be sure you get out. We got out....

How long did it take to fight that fire?

We were there like a month I would guess.

So what varied from a typical day at camp versus a typical day fighting fires in terms of food and such?

Well the most different thing was sleeping outdoors on the ground. Whereas when you were in camp you slept in the bunk. And then you get up in the morning and put on those damp clothes. That wasn't very pleasant.

What about food?

Yeah, they brought the sandwiches again. We usually had sandwiches.

What was the typical length of a workday while you were fighting fires?

Twenty-four hours. We was there, you know, constantly.

What tools were used to fight these fires?

Well, one was a mattock.

Can you describe that?

⁶⁹ Salinger (1939) reports 402 CCC enrollees from six different camps on the fireline Aug. 10, 1939. Twenty-seven of the firefighters were from Camp Hemlock.

⁷⁰ The CCC firefighters included enrollees from Camp Zig Zag, Camp Cascade Locks, Camp Lower Cispus, Camp Skamania, Camp Goldendale, and Camp Hemlock (Salinger 1939).

Well, it had a hoe on one and the axe on the other side like a double-bitted axe and one was a hoe. Hoedag I guess it's called.

Was there any special training given to the men before they fought fires?

Oh yeah, we always trained in the summer time building forest trails. How to go about it.

While you were fighting fires did you specialize in certain areas or did everyone go out and do the same sorts of things? Were there certain tasks?

Yeah, the guy in the front he always sort of lined you up how to, where the trail is gonna go and then they marked trees and everybody fell, you know, like a squad of men would fall in and mostly cut brush and then of course the last ones would carry a saw to cut the heavy stuff off the trails, you know.

Did you ever have any medical attention while in the CCC?

Dental work, I had lots of dental work.

Can you talk a little bit about that?

Well, when we was growing up we didn't go to a dentist. Our folks told us we would lose our teeth anyway so why put money into them. And that was a big mistake. I still got half of my teeth because I wound up in the dentist, you know they had the dentist in camp and they worked on me.

How often did you see the dentist while you were in?

In camp, well I suppose every six months.

Did the dentist travel around from camp to camp?

As far as I know he did, yeah. Of course then they had doctors in camp, they had a regular doctor in camp....

Was there any construction going on while you where at Camp Hemlock?

Yeah, they was building a building there across Trout Creek there and we was working on that. There was carpenters and laborers. That was, you know, a short job.

What sort of job did you do when you participated in that?

Clean up mostly.

Did you take any classes while you were in the CCC?

Yeah, I took a class in rug-making, believe it or not.

Can you talk a little bit about that?

Well you have to know how to make the rug. I don't know. It's been so long ago I don't know if I can tell you. You had a kind of a rack on the table and you run these, I want to call it string but it's not string, it was made out of wool-yarn.

How often did you get to go to that class?

Until you finished your project. I suppose it was like a couple nights a week til it was done. Which might have taken a month.... I can remember going to a cable-splicing job one time. Learned how to splice cable. That was interesting.

What was that used for?

Oh, to pull logs mainly. They had Caterpillar tractors you know, you pulled the heavy stuff with the cable.

How many men went to these classes?

Oh, there was 200 men in the camp and maybe ten percent of them went. That would be my guess.

Was it something that they wanted to do and just couldn't get in or...

No, it depended on their wishes. What they wanted to do. Like I took a little course in electrical work. How to run wires and it was knob and tube those days and how to set those up between the walls and stuff....

Were there any classes that you were required to take?

Yeah, if you was a squad leader you needed to take first aid.

How many men were in a squad?

Oh, about a dozen.

Did the squads remain the same during the six-month period or did they change around?

Yeah, they changed because someone got sick or whatever and some of them went over the hill [laugh].

Our class got a chance to go out and visit Camp Hemlock and [Government] Mineral Springs; while we were out there we saw a stone structure. It had a concrete round basin and it had a pipe coming out the top. It was just back from where the barracks were. We think it might be like a fountain or something but we're not really sure. Do you have any idea what it was?

Where was that?

It was just behind where the barracks would have been [at Camp Hemlock].

Well, it must have been the water fountain.

There were fountains out there?

Only one that I knew of.

Do you remember what it looked like at all? Can you describe it?

Well, the best I can remember it ran all of the time and you could have a drink. The summer time especially.

How high did it stand?

Off the ground? Maybe six feet.

Did you ever have any contact with the Indians while you were on the Forest?

If there were, I don't know if they were Indians. I can remember this one fellow he had one arm. He would roll up a cigarette. I don't know if you're familiar with roll-your-own type cigarettes.... You have a Bull Durham sack and you have papers in a little card, folder and you take one sheet of that paper and this fellow would put it in the crease of his pants and then pour that tobacco into that paper and use that one arm. He did all that with one arm. I thought that was amazing.

Did a lot of the men smoke?

Oh yeah. I'd say 99 percent did, maybe 90.

Where did they get their cigarettes?

From the canteen. They had a canteen there in the day room or rec hall. You could buy tobacco there, hair oil. Like I told my one buddy, I used to buy hair oil and see what happened [lifted his hat from his head to show his baldness] [laughs].

So what about African-Americans. Did you ever...?

They were separate camps. There were some but they were separate. Then also the Southerners were separate. I couldn't believe that either.

What do you mean by separate? Just a different camp?

Yes, they were in a different camp. They were segregated.

Did you ever work together?

On the fire we did.

With the African-Americans and the Southerners?

Yeah, Mm-hmm. Not much, but if they were there we would be involved with them.

So you talked a little about leisure time, what about baseball tournaments?

Oh yeah, we went to the Vancouver Barracks for our district championships. I can always remember going down there, then whoever won the tournament got to play on the All Stars [team]. The best I could do was honorable mention. I was a little disappointed in that, I thought I should be an All Star. [laughs]

If you were an All Star where did they go from there?

Well, they played the game with whoever won the championship, who won the championship the All Stars would play against them like a tournament.

Who made up the teams that played against each other? Was it each camp against each camp?

Yeah, right. Also during the season you had to win the area championship, then you'd go to the Vancouver Barracks and have the playoffs.

Did everyone in the camps participate?

No.

Was it volunteer?

Yes, not too many guys liked to play ball. I was surprised.

How often did you play?

Every chance I got. You know I could have went to Alaska but I turned it down because I couldn't play baseball up there. I always regretted that because I could have went to Mount McKinley. They call it something else now; they got a different name for it⁷¹. But anyway I always regretted not going.

Why did you regret it?

Because, man, it ain't every day you get to go to Alaska. I've been there once since then, Alaska, in my life. That's how come I regret it that much more [laughs]. Not going when I could have, free, you know.

Did you go to the dances [in Stevenson]?

Oh, we would go there just to be doing something, you know.

How often were the dances?

I would suppose we went half a dozen times during twelve months time.

Who came to these dances?

The local people you know. It was mainly locals, the people around the town.

⁷¹ Mt. Denali. The CCC camp that was established was Camp Denali.

Were the dances more than one camp or just Camp Hemlock?

Yeah, that's the only one I went to.

Did women from Stevenson come to these dances?

Oh yeah, and Carson you know. Around the area.

Is there any single memory that stands out in your memory regarding the CCC?

Well, you know there was three guys that were in camp stole a state patrol car from Stevenson. They drove it to Vancouver. Of course, you know, they got thrown into the clink. [laughs]

Was there a lot of mischief that occurred?

Nothing serious, just mischief.

How were you punished?

Well, one way was they kept you in camp. You couldn't go on a pass. But you had to behave yourself.

Is there anything more that you would like to add?

Oh yeah, when I joined it was a home away from home as far as I was concerned. And a lot of guys didn't like it. Some of them went over the hill and never come back but I enjoyed it. It was a home away from home. [laughs] I ate like a rich man. I didn't get that at home. Although I didn't starve at home we never had pork chops and steak and all of that goody stuff. The one thing I remember well was the dinners we had like Christmas and Thanksgiving and all the holidays. They were great.

Was your family allowed to come visit?

Oh, yeah.

And they ate with you?

Yeah.

What was your best memory of the CCC?

The money. Got to have some money in your pocket.

Did you get paid well?

At those days, yes. A dollar a day. Of course we only kept five dollars a month out of the thirty dollars a month.

Where did the other twenty-five go?

It went to your parents. It was like welfare's what it was.

What did you spend your five dollars a month on?

Hair oil. [laughs] Well, you know, soap and personal items. Then you went home and bought gas for the car.

How often did you go home?

I d say every other week. Usually. But then in the summer time maybe you stayed there a couple of months, at the camp because of the fire season.

How many people were back at home in your family?

Just my brother and I and my mother.

Was your brother in the CCC?

No, he went to school. I helped him go through high school and college then, you know. My folks didn't have no money.

What was your worst memory.... what you disliked the most?

I suppose falling trees because of the pitch. That was hard work. [The pitch] would stick. It would cause your saw to gum up and it was hard to pull.

How did you take care of that problem?

With that kerosene in a bottle. You had a bottle that had a hook on it and you hang it in the tree and whenever you needed to use it you just squirted the bottle of oil, kerosene mostly. That helped.

Anything else you would like to add then?

Yeah, I don't know. It was a good thing for us guys. I don't know what we would have done if we hadn't have been there. We might have gotten into all kinds of trouble, you know. It was a good thing. Of course then the Army came along and that was altogether different, or the war. I wound up in Germany. We got rid of Hitler [laughs]. Now who we got -- Saddam Hussein?

[End of the Interview]

Transcribed by: Jennifer Kobbeman, May 2002

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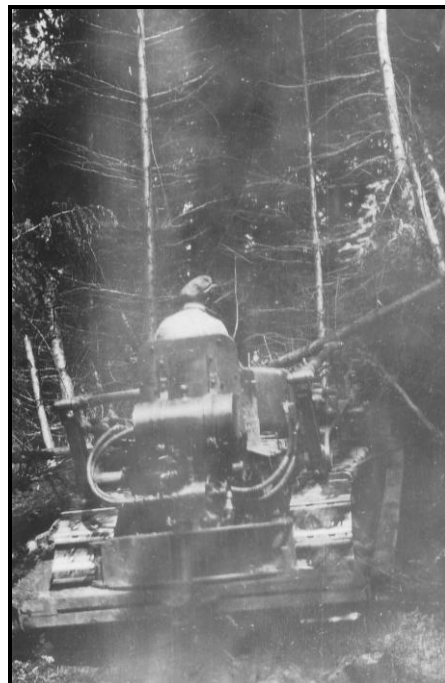
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A CCC firefighting squad, Pulaski tools in hand, are mobilized from camp. Undated photograph from Gifford Pinchot National Forest archives.



Frank Pratt, above, at his home in Randle, Washington 1935 or 1936, and below, operating a Caterpillar tractor during CCC construction of the Lone Tree Mountain Road, 1933 (below). The photographs are from the personal collection of Mr. Pratt.



Frank Pratt

Co. 933 (1933-1934)

Narrator: Frank Pratt

Interviewer: Rick McClure, USDA Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Secondary Interviewer: Steve Freitas, USDA Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Date: October 17, 2001

Place: Pratt residence, Randle, Washington

Introduction:

Frank Pratt was born in Twin Falls, Idaho on January 18, 1910. His family operated a bakery in Boise, Idaho, before buying into a restaurant business in Tacoma, Washington, in the 1920s. In 1927, his father bought property in Randle, Lewis County, Washington, and the family resettled to the home where Mr. Pratt continues to live today. From 1928 through 1932, he was employed seasonally by the Forest Service, and enrolled in the CCC in 1933. He served in Company 933 in 1933 before returning to seasonal employment with the Forest Service. In 1934, he married Maxine McNee, the sister of Wade McNee, CCC foreman and neighbor. Mr. Pratt worked for the Forest Service until 1941, when he began driving a Caterpillar tractor for various gyppo logging companies in eastern Lewis County. He retired in 1972.

I started in '28, started working for the Forest Service. The first job, let's see, well, I went into the CC's that year, 1933.... Summer time, more or less, up to that time til I went into the CC's.

You were working over at the Ranger Station here?

Well, at the old one.... Over, on the old highway⁷². I was working for [John] Kirkpatrick. Worked on trails first. He had, Bill Green was his name. He was the foreman. We were up Silver Creek and he put me in this trail marker. I don't know why, but anyway, he did. And I had -- not a Pulaski, but a -- I can't remember what they are. They got a big blade on em... like a mattock. Yeah. Blazing a little, just digging out a little bit for the rest of the crew to follow, and then they digged it out. And that was my job, was to kind of go along and mark the trail. That was up Silver Creek. That was about the first job.

You were working for a guy named Green?

I was working for Bill Green, Bill Green, yeah.

Did you know Kenova Peters at all?

Yeah, I knew Kenova real well. He was on one of the road jobs we had later up the Cispus, yeah. And also he was on Burley [Mountain] one time -- right after it was built.

Do you remember any other trail work you did during that time period?

Oh gosh, I went on a lot of different trails. I don't remember all of them. Ed McNee and I worked together a lot. He's my brother-in-law. And we worked a lot together. You should 'a had him here because he can remember a few things that I forget.... That was Wade's brother, yeah, he was the young one.

⁷² Present-day Silverbrook Road, the main highway until U.S. Highway 12 was opened.

So then in 1933, you started?

Joined the CCC's.

And how did you find out about that? How did you land a job in the CCC?

Well, I guess it was just because there wasn't enough work around. Mainly, you know, we didn't have much to do in the wintertime except sit around the fireplace and keep the fire going. But, I decided to join, and I think Eddie was still in school and he joined during the summer. Well, let's see, what else do I remember...?

Where did you sign up?

I believe it was over at the Cispus Camp.

Well, you just went right over to the camp?

I think it was. I can't remember for sure, but I believe it was over there. And we had the camp over on the Siler Creek, that's just out of the Forest boundary, right along the Forest boundary there.

And that was a tent camp?

That was a tent camp. Seven of us in a tent. And they put me in charge of one tent -- a hundred and forty-five dollars a month⁷³ [Laughs].

Big money.

Big money then, yeah. The rest of em I think got a hundred and thirty [\$130] or something like that there, twenty, ten. Oh, I don't remember. That's way back. But anyway, we started in the first job we took, Wade McNee was foreman, Harold Wasson was supervisor. We started in on the Lone Tree Road⁷⁴. We left the old Robert's ranch, started from there, and started up through the woods. There was Clyde Goble, who was the head bulldozer driver. He was more or less kind of teaching Ed [McNee] and I. And when Eddie, he joined up, and we all started on that road going up to Lone Tree [Mountain]. We worked all summer on that, late into the fall. And, at that time we didn't have to take any stumps, well whatever we could push off, they went over the bank. Everything else went over the bank. That was the kind of road building we did. We went to the top of that in the gap up there on Lone Tree. That fall, about October.

In 1933?

Yeah. It was on Lone Tree. And just about that time the old [Model] 30 Cat broke down. We had an old 30 with two drums on the back. No, that ain't the one. That was a different one. Brad Clevenger here drove that. Ah, but anyway, they brought it in and it broke down that fall, right up in the gap and they sent us an old International up there to finish up what little we had to do, and if you know anything about International, they were hard-starting damned things. Once in awhile, you had to tow em to get em to go. I towed many a truck, an International truck, to

⁷³ Mr. Pratt likely means \$45 per month, the pay rate for supervisors.

⁷⁴ Forest Road 55.

get it started. But anyway, we finished that job, and later on, of course they went up with a grader and graded it all out. And I think that possibly was Wade McNee and Scotty Mullins. They were on the old pull grader.

You pulled it behind a Cat?

Pulled it behind the old Cat, yeah. They came up with a Cat with two drums on the back.

And that's what the drums were for, was to cable back to the grader?

No, no, you hooked it directly to a hook.

But that was -- the drums were for cable?

Yeah, pulling out stumps and getting yourself out of the hole, which we done a lot of.

Now, did you have to spread rock on that road too?

No, that was dirt for many years, nothing but dirt.... I helped the crusher up there. But anyway, we got that job done. And then we went to, I think, the East Canyon. No, it wasn't either. Olallie Lake. Olallie.... We went to Olallie. Which was called Sheep Lake then. And I was working...

You stayed up there?

Yeah. The CC's had already gone through and shoved a road up there. But, it was in terrible shape, so they sent me up there to go that old [Model] 70. The old 70 had a bar that you put down in the fly wheel and then you brought it over and you give it a whiz and sometimes it would throw that thing a mile and sometimes it would go. But anyway, I got that thing going and I done a lot of work on that. And I just had got way down about four miles below the lake, pretty close to the bottom, and they decided they wanted somebody up at La Wis Wis, so they told me they were going to send one of the [Model] 50's up there. And I said at the time, —How are you going to get it up there? They don't have any trucks, no nothing to load it on.”

Well, I don't remember who the foreman was up there at that time, but it could have been Wade, who says, —You're going to walk it from here.”

From La Wis Wis?

To La Wis Wis. Well, the next day, I started in. I walked it to the Cline Road. I made it to there. Left it that night. They came and got me and gassed it up and the next morning I started in again -- from Cline Road and went up the Cline Road. I got to clear up uh -- well, this side of Johnson Creek, yeah, and run out of gas, so that ended the day for that. Well, they come and got me, and took me back home -- or down to the camp. The next morning I went, come back up, and got on it. They gassed it up and checked the oil and everything and it was ready to go. But one thing they forgot. And that's one thing I forgot. When I started out, every four hours I got off and greased the rollers. You had to do that or if you didn't the first thing you know, they were smoking, as the grease didn't last very long in em. Not like there are nowadays. But anyway, I had to do that all the way, about every four hours, get off and grease that thing, the rollers underneath. And I guess it was two-and-a-half days that I finally made it up to La Wis Wis. Then they wanted the road cut. There was already a trail like going down into La Wis Wis. They could get a truck over it, but it wasn't very good, so they put me to building that road down

into La Wis Wis. And that stood like that for I don't know how many years before they finally went back in and redone it altogether. Probably twenty years, I don't know.

Then did you build the roads in the campground, too?

No, I didn't do much of that, but I did pull out a lot of the rafters, you know that went in the building, there.... We went down on the old road that went towards Packwood, and they cut rafters down in there.

For the kitchen building?

For the kitchen. Well I did help on that a little bit. Yeah. Oh gosh, I don't know. There's other jobs.

Let's go back to Sheep Lake for a minute. Now, you lived in the camp there, at Sheep Lake, right?

Oh, yeah. They had one there at Olallie, at Sheep Lake.

Do you remember how many men were in that camp? It was just a side camp.

Well, yeah, it was just a side camp. Well, I don't believe it was over, if there were twenty. Probably sixteen -- something like that. It wasn't very many. I think we had two tents and the cook tent.

Were there any wooden buildings there at all?

Nothing.

Just tents?

The only wooden thing there was, they would have had a little ramp that went out on the lake about twenty to thirty feet. Yeah, I got a picture of that -- here, with me setting on it, sitting out on the end.

Now since that was a side camp and in the high country, then did you spend the winter months down at the main at [Camp] Cispus?

Oh, I did for -- ti about Christmas time, and they had enough work from then on -- they hired me back into the Forest Service.

Oh. So, your time with the CCC was up, so you went back into Forest Service --

Yeah, I went back into the Forest Service.

But, you did live in the camp that's out where Cispus Center is now?

Yeah, we did live there, part. I wasn't there too long, because they more or less pushed me around to different places -- wherever the Cat was working, they sent me in. We ran those old [Model] 50's, that's what they were. They had the hydraulic on one side, raised the blade straight up -- no drums. Oh that was another thing. Once in awhile we'd get stuck with one of

them down in a stump hole and you'd be stuck for good -- far as -- we'd always carry the line, about a three-quarters inch line, and we'd take and drape that over the track and get a hold of it underneath there, fasten it together, hook it on a stump back here and then turn your tracks, and that's the way we got back out of the holes.

Oh, pull yourself out.

Pull yourself out.

Or the stump out.

And oh, Ed Merriman who was a mechanic over there, I believe it was Ed Merriman. He made some clamps, and put a chain on it, and we had that to carry with us for a while. Each one, you put right on a track and take your line back to a stump and haul yourself out. That worked good.

And he thought that up himself in the shop?

Yeah, he done that himself.

So, you worked directly for a foreman, a CCC foreman then? And that was...

Harold Wasson and Wade McNee, yeah, mainly.

So would they have meetings to kind of brief you on each project to tell you what the plans were?

No, they done that amongst themselves, and the next morning they come and got you and loaded you in the truck and took you out.

So the Cat would be waiting out there for you?

The Cat would be waiting for you.

That was your specialty.

Right. That was my specialty. Yeah, I done that all through the CC's.

And at Sheep Lake, can you talk a little bit about the tent camp there. Can you describe the living conditions, in the camp, while you were there?

Oh, I don't know. I believe it was about the same. It was about a seven-man tent.

Wooden platform? Platform floor, or were they --

No. We had no wooden platforms up there. No, they were on dirt.... We had platforms on the one down at the main camp and the one over here at Siler Creek, yeah.

Did you sleep on cots, then?

Yeah. We had regular army cots.

Did each tent have a stove?

Yeah, the old, what did they call them?

Were they barrel stoves?

No, they weren't barrel. They come up to a point. Oh, they got a name for them and now, damned if I can't think of it. I can't remember what they called them now⁷⁵.

They come to a point, and then a stack on top?

A four-inch stack on up, too.

So, did somebody supply your wood, or did you have to go out and get it yourself?

Oh, there was always some of the crew done that -- yeah, kitchen help. They done that kind of work. No, we had nothing to do with that.

You didn't have to do any kitchen duty yourself?

Nope, never had to, not once. No.

And so then you, you say you went back to work for the Forest Service, then did you go back to the CCC again or did you stay with the --

No, I worked a whole lot on grading from East Canyon where they'd done regraded the old road back down to, oh I can't remember the trail that takes off from there....

So at that time the road -- you could drive from here to Trout Lake?

No, I don't think so. Gosh, I don't remember.... Yeah, I worked back in there from about a mile past Council [Lake]. We built a road on over to Boulder Creek.... It just dead-ended it there, mm-hmm. And let's see.... they were grading the road, the Cispus Road -- from East Canyon down. What we were doing there was pulling a scarifier, pulling out big boulders and all the CC's behind were following along behind rolling these rocks off of the road. And then the grader, later on, came in and leveled that out. We scarified that down to, well uh, where the first campground after you leave the narrows there.

Blue Lake Creek?

Yeah, Blue Lake Creek. We scarified all the way down to there. Yeah.

So when you ended up working for the Forest Service rather than the CCC, were you still allowed to stay in the CCC camp, or did you have to find some other place to stay?

No, I stayed over there quite a little bit. Yeah, I had a room over there -- with the big shots.

Oh, with the foremen?

⁷⁵ Sibley stoves were issued by the army for use with the standard pyramid-style tents.

Yeah, it was one big building there. Yeah, I had a room there.

You had your meals in the dining hall with --

We had our meals, yeah, with everybody else. Yeah, no different that anybody else. We just, just get more money. Well, I guess that was still a hundred forty dollars a month.

Did you have much interaction with the army staff there?

Well, they more or less kept everything going in the camp. They didn't have anything to do with out on the roads, or whatever you were doing. Yeah.

So in that sense, you would probably have had more contact with Forest Service personnel than with army personnel?

Oh yeah, yeah. Yeah, they had nothing to do with me after that. Yeah, I was strictly Forest Service....

So, how long did you work for the Forest Service?

I worked from 1928 to 1941. Then I started in with the logging business -- working for a contractor up at Johnson Creek.... On a timber sale.... I believe that's all private land in there that we logged first.

So, why did you decide to leave the Forest Service in '41?

Well, I'd make more money, lots more. That was the main reason. Let me see, I think I was on -- they built the Burley Mountain Lookout, '26 or '27, something like that⁷⁶, and I was the third one on that.

Oh, you actually worked on lookouts, too?

Oh, that was when Lewis took over as ranger. Kirkpatrick couldn't hack it anymore, yeah; I don't remember just exactly what happened. He died from something, I don't know what it was. So, they put in Lewis.

Mel Lewis?

Mel Lewis, yeah. Yeah, I worked for him all the time he was there. Under him, rather.

What do you remember about him?

Oh, he was a good one -- he was real good. He always, you know, seen that you done your job. Oh, I can tell you one on Kirkpatrick, when I was working trail, up Silver Creek. We were all working clear back in where the big trees were, back in there. What I mean, they're big. And we run out of trail, so Bill would go on ahead. He would [go] blazin' out. Kirkpatrick come up there, and here we was all standing around. Nothing more to do. Well, Kirkpatrick wanted you

⁷⁶ Burley Mountain Lookout was built in 1934, and is one of four fire lookouts remaining on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

to do your day's work. There was no eight hours, and that was it. But anyway, we was all standing there, and he says, —Have~~th~~ you got anything to do?"

And we said, —No, Bill's gone ahead to blaze out some more trail."

—We," Kirkpatrick says, —I'~~g~~ive you something to do." He turned around and he went straight up the damned hill and started blazing trails up there. "Now," he says, —you can go work on that until Bill comes back." And we did [laughs].

So, when you were camped out at Olallie Lake again, what kind of things did you do for fun in the evenings? Did you have much time off when you were up there to --

Oh, B. S.

Yeah?

That's mainly what it was. Just about what I would do. Yeah, that's about all there was to do. Once in awhile somebody would bring a deck of cards and they'd have a pinochle game. That didn't happen very often up there. Everybody, I'm telling you, worked then. And when you come in at night, you'd hit the bunk, and that was it, yuh.

What sort of meals did they give you there?

[Laughs] Army meals. Something you put on toast.

SOS.⁷⁷?

Yeah. We had that a lot of mornings. And, yeah, they shipped me down to -- another place they sent me was down to Amboy. I believe the camp was at Amboy. I'm not positive about that.

Sunset?

At Sunset. Somewhere right in that area was the camp. And all of those boys all came from back east where they ate nothing but grits. And that's what we had to eat was grits, pretty near every meal.... Well, they put me on that road that goes over to Carson, from there. I worked on that about, oh, a month or two, I guess.

As a Forest Service employee?

Yeah, yeah.

The one that goes over Lookout Mountain?

Yeah, towards Lookout Mountain. Yup, you're right. Comes out there not too far from where the ranger station is.

And you had CCC guys working with you on that then?

They were still working, yeah. But these guys were all [from] Kentucky? No --

⁷⁷ SOS, for —~~s~~tion a shingle" in military parlance, essentially ground beef in gravy over toast.

Camp Sunset was all guys from Georgia.

Georgia. That's it. Yeah. Well, that's what they ate -- most of the time, was grits. I got awful tired of eating grits, I'll tell you. But they always had something else along with it, you know. It wasn't all grits, but every meal. Yeah, I think I worked two months there.

And then now you mentioned somewhere in there that you had actually done some time on the lookout, on Burley [Mountain].

Yeah, I spent four years on lookout. Through the summer months, yeah.

It was all on Burley?

On Burley, yeah, four years in a row.... From '36 to '41.

Well, that was real different from the work you'd been doing before.

Oh yeah, but as soon as it ended, they put me out on the road jobs. We'd work until the snow blew us out. Yeah.

Well so, tell us a little bit about living up at Burley.

Well, that was a good life. You had a lots of sheep friends. [Laughs] You packed your water from way down the lower if you had to pack it. It was about a mile down the hill -- off the end of Burley there. But, my wife always came up every weekend. Now this is getting back, we're getting further along here -- purty near out of the CC's. There was still a few camps here and there. I don't remember there -- well, maybe the first year I worked on lookout, there might have been some in the camp down at the Cispus. But, I don't remember for sure. But, it was a good job. I liked it. Had several fires to report. Each year when I was up there I think they had a fire on Lone Tree [Mountain] pretty near every summer, I mean.

Was that lightning fires?

No. No, they weren't lightning fires. We had some people up here that set fires to get... make... get a job for the summer. I'm not giving any names. [Laughs] I know who they were. They're not around anymore, none of 'em. Well, I had lots of lightning strikes. Had one that came down and hit down on the road just below the lookout. Frank -- well, he was the mechanic for fixin' telephones and all -- Frank Hill. He was the mastermind for the telephone. Well, anyway, one day my wife was there and she was standing on the footstool with the four-inch long [glass insulators] on it. He was back behind, and I had the bed right over there where I'd look down towards the road down below where they'd come in and then we'd come up to the lookout. Well the lightning hit -- I saw it hit -- and at the same time she said that it came right out of the telephone and went right over the top of my head. Now, whether it did or not, I don't know, but that's what she told me. Well, we didn't have any telephone, so it must have been. Yeah, it knocked it completely out. And they sent for Frank Hill to come up. My wife, when she went down, she told them about it and then they come up. We didn't have any radios -- anything like they have nowadays.

So, what was expected of you as a fire lookout, in terms of duties in that job?

Well, mainly, you stay there and watch for fires. We had one that lit way over on, well, what we called Niggerhead. They don't call it Niggerhead⁷⁸ any more. [And] Holdaway Buttes. And we got a hit at about, oh I guess about nine, ten o'clock at night and they sent some kid up from this, lived over across the river over there to go on that fire. We could see the fire from the lookout. Well, they sent the two of us over there. There was no trail. We went up through there and just wound our way across there. And at one time we had these headlights on our heads, two big eyes, about so big around showed up in front of us. We don't know what it was. We never knew to this day what it was, whether it was a bear or cougar, or elk or deer, what it was, but it was two big eyes. Anyway, we hollered, whooped and hollered, and went on. We got to the fire. Next morning they sent a crew up. It didn't amount to much of anything. I went right back to the lookout -- back on my job.

What did you take with you when you'd go on a --

Pulaski.... Yeah, Pulaski and a shovel. Yeah, I think he took the shovel and I took the Pulaski. That was all we had. That's all I had up there, matter of fact.

No backpack pump, or --

No, we didn't have nothing like that. They had no idea what we was going to get in to. But, it didn't amount to much, just a little smoke and a little... I don't think they worked over a day or two on it and had it out. Yeah, that was in that Holdaway Buttes area. Now, I guess they got a trail across there, I don't know.

So, did you have to go to fire training before they would put you --

Oh yeah, I went to fire training. Trying to think where we had that. It was up here.

Not down at Wind River?

No, we didn't have to go to Wind River. Huh-uh. It was over to Cispus, I believe. Yeah, I think that's where it was. Yeah, we had to go through that. Learned to read the fire finder -- read the....

Compass?

Yeah, compass. Oh yeah, we went through, running out and getting a [practice fire]....

So, did it get kinda lonely up there on Burley, all by yourself?

Well, it was, in a way. But my wife come up every week. She drove the car right up there. We used to have a garage there, which is not there anymore. They burnt them up, I guess. But, she drove that all the time. And then I'd take the car and go down and get my water. Then I'd have enough water to last me all week.

Was there a creek there or a spring?

Well, it was a spring. Yeah, it was a sheep camp down below.

⁷⁸ The name was changed to Kirk Rock in the 1960s.

So did the sheepherders ever stop by and talk to you?

Oh yeah, they came in once in awhile -- bring me some mutton.... Yeah, they'd butcher every now and then, bring in two or three pieces of good mutton and fry up and have. Yeah. The sheep made that country. Before they went in there, it was nothing but burnt logs everywhere. And them sheep whittled all them logs down to where they were just, you know, barely above the ground. I don't know any other instances other than just ordinary days.

Well, tell us what an ordinary day was like.

Well, you always had something to read, and I had a little battery radio there, and I could play that.

What could you pick up from there [Burley Mountain Lookout]?

Gosh, I don't remember. Tacoma or Seattle or someplace. I don't remember. I know we could pick up something. Maybe it could have been Portland.

So, you probably had favorite shows you listened too?

Oh yeah, we always had different shows going on. There was all kinds of en.

What was your favorite?

Oh Lordy, I don't know. I can't remember en. It was entertaining anyway. And, oh, another thing. The flies would come out in the afternoon there. I've seen so many flies on the rope and the flag, so heavy it hung straight up and down.... deer flies -- yeah, the bitin' kind. And another thing, we had several of those times of static electric goin' over -- cloud. Well, I had a lot of nerve. I done what my antennae down there, and I stick my finger out there and see what I can get. I feel a little bit of a [charge] And you look out there, and I've seen the telephone line as big around as that [indicating size] with static electricity all around it.

Just in the air?

If the axe laid out there, it was covered with static.

Had a glow to it, huh?

Yeah. Yeah, everything, even the flagpole. It would glow.

Is that what they called Saint Elmo's fire?

Yeah. I think that's the name for it. Yeah.

That would be some kind of cloud?

It would be a cloud that, yeah, just a cloud that passes over. And you could hear it and you could smell it.

Smell the ozone?

Yeah, it has a little snapping noise to it, and it still has a very peculiar smell to it.

Would those happen once a summer, or just once in awhile, or...?

Just once in a great while. Maybe once a year. Maybe.

I've read about that. Never experienced it. Now, did you communicate with other fire lookouts, while you were up there? Did you call them up and...?

Oh yeah. With a mirror.

On a radio?

No, we'd talk over the telephone. We were all hooked up. Yeah, I'd talk with Kiona [Peak], and Pompey [Peak], and another one up there that's still manned, not High Rock, yeah. Well, no, I couldn't get High Rock, but I could get him with a mirror. We'd flash back and forth. Just for entertainment [laughing]. And the one at Packwood, the only way I could see it was to climb up on the roof, and then I could see it, on Burley's roof there.

Which one in Packwood was that?

Lost Lake, I think....

Did you know any of those people that were on those other lookouts?

Well, Pete Harrington was the second one on Burley. Kenova Peters was the third one, and I think I was the fourth one -- on Burley. And there was one before that, uh, before those, uh, trying to think of his name. He lives down in Rainey Valley. Kenova Peters. He was, yeah, I think he was the first one on it. Lyola McMann was on Kiona. Ed McGee was up.... at the Upper Cispus.

Would that be Hamilton [Buttes]?

No, well I was on Hamilton once. Went up there in fire season -- they sent me up just special. End of season, too, that was....

Do you remember what year?

Well, that was, probably '30 uh, probably '35 or '36 -- somewhere about there, I think. Trying to think of some of the others. Oh, Bill Boyer, who was on Sunrise [Peak].... That's about all of them, ones I can remember, right off the bat.

So then in '41, you figured you could make better money working in a logging outfit then.

Yeah. I was still driving Cat for them, too.

So, after some years of working on fire lookout, then you went back to Cat operation?

Mm-hmm. Well, I just was up there during the summer months, and then when [Mel] Lewis was there, he'd have some other job. I was rated number four on that, on the ratings. I had a four rating.

That's your performance?

Mm hmm.

So, Wasson was the one that would rate you on that?

No, that was through the Forest Service....

Did you do any work on the compound here at the ranger station -- any of the construction work associated with the compound there?

Well, the only thing, Frank Kehoe and I dug the first well over there, at the end of the big building.... Right on this end of the big building.

The big warehouse building?

Yeah.

What did the [ranger station] compound over there look like, back in the „30's?

It was just that one big building, and, the ranger station on the right. I can't remember now whether there was other buildings there or not. I know we didn't have that big garage or nothing. Oh, the horse barn. Yeah, it was there.

Did you ever work on any building construction projects? You mentioned the kitchen building at La Wis Wis -- did you work on any other construction besides that, of buildings?

No, most of my work was with the Cat, building roads, yeah. Purty near always. Yeah....

When you did your lookout duty, did you have the weekends off and get to come home?

Stayed up there.... seven days a week.

No relief.

No relief. Nobody come up. Nope. You put in your eight hours, and your days. That was it.

I have a question -- when you were at the CCC camp, up at Sheep Lake, was there Native Americans picking huckleberries there in the fall?

Oh yeah, yeah, they come up there. Yeah, a lot of the Indians, even then, would come -- come in on horseback.

Did they camp near where you guys were?

No, we never did see their camp. I think they camped up there, where some of those prairies are, towards the summit, I would imagine, that's where they camped. And some of em still do that, too, I've seen some up there, yeah. That's when the huckleberries were huckleberries, I'll tell you.

Compared to what we have left in the way of berry fields today, huh, timber all grown up.

Well, I know Burley's that way. Burley [Mountain] was all open when I was up there. There was just little Christmas trees all over -- probably four or five, six years old, most of em, on the average --from the big fire, went through there⁷⁹....

I worked one fall up Johnson Creek Trail. Took a crew that was doing a, what do they call it, ACE? -- that was later on. Oh, the state or something, they put out help for everybody....

ERA?

ERA, yeah.

So, you were employed by the ERA.?

No, I just had a crew from that -- on the Johnson Creek Trail.

Do you remember what year that was, what fall?

I'd have to think about that for a while. That would have to be late 30's. Oh, there's one thing. Ah, the road up to Summit Creek. Yeah, I built most of that road -- from when you go in, up about a half a mile or a mile, there's lots of rock right along the edge, well, it's from the end of that, that our crew started working that road, and then I pulled the first stringers across.... Yeah, I pulled the first stringers in there. And Wade McNee was foreman there. And we built up to the creek. And Wade come to me one day, and he says, "Frank, I want that Cat on the other side of the road." We already drug the stringers up there.

And I went out there and I look over the side -- and, --I ~~an~~'t get over there. How am I going to get that Cat over there?

Wade says, "You got a blade on her. Go to it." [laughs] Ah, I started whittling away and I finally got down in the bottom.... Yeah, I got down to the bottom, and then I worked myself back up the other side.... I pushed out enough road there to uh, pull these stringers over, yeah, and then we continued on up after we got the bridge across, yeah.

So, did you continue the road on out....

Yeah, clear up to the Soda Springs.... Worked all the way. Then, later on I put in one winter up there, keeping the road open when they had the coal mines there.

You stayed at the coal mines?

I stayed at the coal mines, yeah. Lived in a tent -- through all that snow. I kept that road open that went down into it, with a Billy D-4 that they brought in from Seattle, and I had it as high as the tippie, and the tippie was darn near as high as this house, anyway, thirty feet. I just kept pushing that snow down in there until it built up, and I just keep climbing up on it -- each time -- and there was one heck of a pile of snow there.

Well, are there any last stories you'd like to share with us about the Forest Service or the CCC, any of your most pleasant, enjoyable experiences you'd like to --

⁷⁹ The Cispus Burn of 1918.

Well, when I was on the lookout, they decided to rebuilt the lookout over on.... Badger [Peak].... in the Holdaway Buttes area. Anyway, they give us two horses, Jim Green and I. They sent two, brought two horses up and they were great big worker horses that had these great big feet on em. That was during the war. And we packed that new lookout in on those two horses, and Jim would have to -- he had a powder box, and he'd have to lay the powder box down to get the stuff up on the horse, tie it on.... We hauled all that new stuff in there for -- I don't remember if there was an old one there or not, I don't think there was. I think Jim and I hauled the first one in there. That was quite a chore, I'll tell you.

Why is that?

Well, getting the stuff up on them great big horses, both of us was short. He, he's about the same size I was.

How many trips did it take to pack all that in?

Oh, a couple, two or three. I don't know.

Where did you pack in from?

The garage up there, at the end of the road, there.... the one at Badger. There was a garage there, at the end of the road.

So, that was one of your memorable experiences, was taking that lookout in?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, it was quite a job.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Kathleen Black, 2002



Officer's quarters, above, and superintendent Jess Adams' office, below, Camp Hemlock in 1941, below. The photographs, from the collection of enrollee Andy Prounchick, were provided courtesy of Mr. Edwin Hill and Ms. Jacqui Beidl. .



Kenneth Ray

Co. 1456 (1941-1942)

Narrator: Kenneth Ray

Interviewer: Jason Packham, Capstone student, Portland State University

Date of Interview: February 8, 2001

Place: Mr. Ray's residence, Vancouver, Washington

Introduction:

Kenneth Ray was born in Falls City, near Dallas, Oregon, on December 26, 1920. He lived and worked on the family farm at Siletz, Oregon until his enrollment in the CCC at age seventeen. He received initial training as a company clerk at Camp Reedsport in Oregon, in July 1938. In April 1941, after thirty-three months with the CCC at Camp Reedsport, Mr. Ray received a Civil Service appointment as a clerk at Vancouver Barracks. After U.S. entry into World War II, he was promoted to the position of subaltern at CCC Camp Hemlock, within the Columbia National Forest, to replace military officers reassigned to military service. With the disbanding of the CCC in 1942, Mr. Ray was responsible for closing Camp Hemlock. When his position was terminated, he found employment in the Kaiser shipyards in Vancouver, and was drafted for military service in 1943.

How did you first hear about the CCC?

Well, we lived at Siletz, Oregon at the time I was seventeen years old. We lived on a farm and I knew I didn't want to be a farmer. There was nothing else but logging at that time. It was the Depression days in the '30s and unbeknown to my folks, I sneaked over to Toledo, Oregon and signed up for the CCCs and my dad, one of my parents had to give their consent because I was not yet eighteen. And let's see, oh, going back a step. The only other alternative was logging and my dad wouldn't sign the release so I could work as a logger. He said I wasn't going to grow up to be a damn logger like he was. [Laughing] In the '30s there was no other alternative. There wasn't hardly any work. That's what got me in the CCCs. I was accepted and was enrolled, I think, on the 8th of July, I think it was 1938, sometime in the first part of July.

They wanted an Assistant Company Clerk and since I had two years of typing in high school, I was almost the only candidate, not that I wanted the job. It was because I had a little typing and the job entailed quite a bit of typing so I was elected as a committee of one. Allen Jensen who was the Company Clerk at that time was being groomed for Personnel Adjutant at Vancouver Barracks. That's where the CCC headquarters [was] in Vancouver Barracks. So I was assistant to him for I think the latter part of July or the first part of August the year I enrolled, until the first of the year until he was transferred to the Vancouver Barracks in the Civilian Corps. And so I became the clerk. And the CCCs had -- I know the army had -- five exemptions. When I say exemptions that means you could stay for more than two years -- that was the maximum allowed for enrollees at that time to stay in the CCC's. The army, the War Department, managed the camps, had five exemptions. They could be reenlisted a number of times, and I think the Forest Service had the same exemptions. Several members, one fella in particular was Pop Saunders who was the filer, filed all the saws and kept the axes sharp, he was exempt. Several of the, I forgot what they called them, sort of assistants to the foreman anyway, they were also exempt. I think that they had five, and I think the War Department had five. We were the cadre of the camp; I was there for almost three years, then transferred to Vancouver Barracks as a clerk. I was a clerk for a few months and was promoted to Junior Officer at Camp Hemlock, which was what you came to talk about.

Before we go there, I wanted to ask you what kind of work you were doing as an Assistant Clerk at Camp Reedsport?

Well, I was training to be the company clerk.

Okay. What did that entail?

Keeping all the records and reports. The company clerk is the one that did all the paper work.... You know, the Federal Government likes reams of paper, the more paper the better they like it, and that was expected during the summer, fire season.

Why was there more paper during the fire season?

Because you had more reports to make.... For one thing, the War Department and army part of it -- the War Department managed the camps. We had to supply the food for the fire, we supplied the food, we supplied the personnel to take care of the supply end of it. That meant reams and reams of paper. Smith River fire was the first one I remember. Smith River, I even got to go out on that one. We got so short of manpower that they just stripped everyone and assigned them to fighting fire, just like, —~~A~~hands on deck.”

Anybody that was available they took out to fight the fire.

If you could breathe, walk, just like when they were looking for soldiers and sailors. If you could breathe and you could walk, you were in. [laughing]

This is kind of off the subject of that, but how was the food in camp?

Excellent, excellent. Especially up at Hemlock. Bill Shooty, I think his name was spelled Surly, but they called him Shooty, and he was an old Army mess Sergeant. There again, he was another exempt enrollee of the cadre. He was probably as good a cook as the Benson Hotel had. I can remember he always had a stock pot, you know what a stock pot is -- that's a big old kettle sitting on the back of the big old stove, wood stove, at least I think it was a wood stove, it might have been gas but I think it was wood, but he had a stock pot there. And he made the best damn soup that you could ever eat anywhere. Yeah, he had that stock pot, that's where all the bones went, that it takes to make the flavor. But he was probably, he had a reputation of having the best mess of any camp. We didn't bother him. Usually the mess officer, which I was never, mess officer put in the orders for food and so forth. You didn't mess with Bill Shooty, he did that. He knew more about that than I did in five years. We let him alone, he ran the kitchen, never bothered him.

That was at Camp Hemlock?

Yes. Best mess on the West Coast as far as I'm concerned. Of all the camps in Oregon, he had the best anyway [laughing].

Back to, Camp Reedsport, and we are just going to touch on that one more time and then we'll move on. What kind of social activities were available there?

Well, we had a good baseball team, we had lots of athletics, we had an education department. I finished my high school, my last year of high school at Reedsport. I graduated then, they transferred my credits from Siletz High School. And I got my last year's education at Camp

Reedsport. Now there was some fudging, for instance I didn't have to take typing classes, I had the typing in the office everyday, they figured that was enough typing. I did take history. The reason I took history is cause I liked history. I took a math class, I took an English class -- I can't remember everything. It was fifty years ago, I kinda forget.

Did you play baseball there?

Yes.

What position?

Oh, usually right field. I wasn't the best athlete. I never was the best athlete, that's why I learned to type. My dad had to work out as a farmer, that's why I didn't want to be a farmer.

So, you were then sent to Vancouver Barracks.

Yes. I got a Civil Service appointment April 1st, 1941.

Did it change your rank at all?

Well I was no longer a CCC enrollee. I was a Civil Service employee with a wage of one hundred and five dollars a month. If you think that was poor wages, ask any anybody how much they made in 1941. That was good wages. Then when I got promoted to be an officer over there, Subaltern, a hundred and fifty dollars a month, that was top wages. Not very many people made a hundred and fifty dollars a month in those days. Now they want to make that much a day.

So, at Vancouver Barracks, what was your rank?

At Vancouver Barracks I was Civil Service.... I started as CF1 Clerk, which is the bottom of the ladder and then they had two ranks, one CF2 Clerk. And I went from CF1 to CF4. I wasn't a clerk up there at Civil Service long enough to get a promotion.

So as a Civil Service Clerk, were the duties any different at Vancouver Barracks than they were at Camp Reedsport?

Yeah, yeah. You worked, working with CCC enrollees, you keep the records and so forth. Just about all I was doing really was taking care of the records of the camps and I would send the form into the headquarters and keep track -- you see they kept track of how many enrollees were in Oregon and Washington, well Vancouver Barracks District. What state [they were from]. Every state. Like [Camp] Hemlock up there, all of them was from the south or Tennessee, some Alabama, Mississippi. It was too long ago. Anyway, we kept track of how many kids from Oregon, how many from Washington, how many from other states, how many summer camps were back in the northeast. It was strictly record keeping. I was a record clerk. A flunky, keeping paperwork for the government.

Who was your commanding officer there at Vancouver Barracks?

Well, my direct boss was Allen Jensen, the Personnel Adjutant who was formerly the clerk at Reedsport who I replaced down there. At that time, almost all of the reserve officers who had been officers at CCC camps had already been called to active duty for the war. And these more

knowledgeable Civil Service employees like Al Jensen, and Leonard Gaske who was the Adjutant, they served as the officers of the CCC even though they were civilians. Because the army was all in the war. Lucky Strike green was going to war. That's what they called them. That's what we used to kid about, Lucky Strike green, you know the uniforms were sorta green. Lucky Strike cigarettes used to come in a green pack instead of white like they are now. I guess they are white now. I quit cigarettes long ago. But that was a joke. The army officers had all gone to service. Lucky Strikes were advertised, they weren't usually green color on the packages. Lucky Strike green was going to war. Well, that's what we kidded about, all the officers all going to war. But it allowed us to be promoted and make more money.

I see. Back to social activities, what type of activities did you participate in at Vancouver Barracks?

No, there was no social activities there. We worked Wednesday morning and Saturday morning and we had Wednesday afternoon and Saturday afternoon off. We were there six days a week. So your social activities --

Did you ever do anything for fun?

Well, we were civilians, we lived off the base. I lived in a boarding house in Vancouver. There used to be a big magnolia tree in the backyard. When the magnolias were in bloom, we would take these big blooms downtown and give them to all the girls. Well, I was young and single....

Is that where you met your wife?

Yeah!

Well, tell me about that.

Well, in October of '41 we had a Halloween dance. A Sadie Hawkins Day dance. And she and I went as Lil Abner and Sadie Hawkins. And that was not our first date, but our first serious date. And after that I proposed to her and she was foolish enough to accept. And I was married for almost fifty-three years lacking two months when she died.

How long were you at Vancouver Barracks working as a company clerk? I mean not a company clerk, I mean as a civilian.

I think it was about December so I think from about April 1st to December in '41 I worked in Vancouver and then transferred.

Describe a typical day at Vancouver Barracks? What would one of your typical days been like?

Boring.... It was, it was the most boring job I ever had in my life. I swore if I ever got out of there I would never take another Civil Service job. It was just a mound of paperwork. Mounds and mounds of paperwork. I wasn't necessarily very bright, but I couldn't see any sense in all that paperwork, paper shuffling, but the federal government does this. I mean it's still going on but only it's worse. Now, I guess they get lots of e-mail and other garbage. I never disliked anything so much in my life.

Did you have any memorable experiences there?

Oh yeah! Yeah! I enjoyed the people. I mean we had some real nice people there. In fact, the gentleman who was the head Chaplain, Ed Rounds, who is ninety or ninety-one years old. He still lives down at Rose Manor and I think someone ought to interview him. I believe his memory is better than mine.

So how did you come to go to Camp Hemlock?

Well, they transferred me there or asked me if I would be interested in going up there as a Junior Officer. And when they told me what the wages would be I said sure I would. No, I was tickled to death because it got me out of that paper shuffling. That's what I call it.

Who approached you with this?

A.P. Jensen.

So you accepted and then what happened?

Well, I didn't have anything but a new automobile and the clothes on my back that amounted to anything. I loaded up the car and left and went up there. It was just about that simple. I had to find a lady at the boarding house and my fiancé. Of course, she knew about it already anyway because she was the stenographer at the [Barracks]. The District man at that time was an old army officer, the name of Hall. Anyway, you see, she was also a secretary for the District Commander, as well as for the Adjutant, my fiancé was. And when we got married and I took the cigars in and I gave one to old Colonel Hall and he wouldn't even accept it he was so damn mad at me for stealing his secretary. He was a grumpy old codger. Old army and then put up with a bunch of old snot-nosed kids, you know, like we were. That didn't set very good.

Was he in World War I as well?

Probably. I don't know. But General Marshall was -- you undoubtedly heard of him -- he was one of the top generals, but he used to command men at the Barracks at the army end of it. He would have been District Commander but that would have been prior to that, that would have been before World War II, in the mid-30s probably.

So when you went up to Camp Hemlock, you took your fiancé?

No, she stayed there and worked for about three months and then she got pregnant. So we rented a house, we had a real nice five-bedroom house.

Where was this at?

Up there at Camp Hemlock. On a farm up there. It was a daylight basement house and they lived in the basement. They rented a farm. They lived in the basement and we rented the upper main floor. Rent was fifteen dollars....

At Camp Hemlock, what were your duties?

I was the junior officer and our company commander was an ex-school teacher, one of the Educational Advisors from one of our CCC camps and I don't know which one. But he wasn't very knowledgeable about operating a camp and what it took to run one, but he was an older man which took to handling the enrollees because I was not much older than a lot, in fact there

was probably some enrollees there that was older than I and it's pretty hard to give orders to someone your age so he was appointed company commander and he sent me to go up there to do the work because I knew all the work. But I was the mess officer, the supply officer, and I oversaw the running of the office and trained the new company clerk. He got the pay and I got the work, which was alright. I wasn't qualified to be a company commander. I wasn't serious enough at that time, you know, just married or about to be married when I went up there and there again I guess I thought there was a lot more paper shuffling than ever needed to be. So I kinda sloughed on that end as much as I possibly could but I couldn't get away with it when I was up there. When I was clerk at the Barracks I used to grumble and growl all the time about all that paper shuffling and making reports that didn't mean a damn thing. They would go back to Washington, D.C. and get stuck in the archives. They would take up good valuable space and we would build more buildings to just store all the paper.

Who was the company commander? What was his name?

I don't remember. I don't remember his name. No. I should, but I just don't. It's something like Fletcher, I don't remember, but he and I were never buddies.

How come?

I resented the fact that I had to do all the work and he got the better share of the pay. You see, the company commander was a CAF-7, I think, yeah, and they got a hundred and fifty dollars a month and I was the junior officer getting a a hundred and fifty dollars. I got a hundred and fifty dollars and they got twenty-seven hundred dollars a year, I think, so that would be what, two hundred something per month.

What was your ranking?

Subaltern. Okay, subaltern is English. They couldn't call you a junior officer because you weren't an officer. When they had the Army Reserve officers running the camp you had your company commander who usually was a first lieutenant or a captain and then you had your junior officer who was usually a second lieutenant or first lieutenant as the case may be. But when those Army Reserve officers were called to active duty and they replaced them with civilians, they couldn't call them officers so the designated term was company commander and subaltern. Subaltern was an English term meaning the same thing as a shave tail or as we call them, second lieutenants or junior officer, but subaltern is an English term so they picked that up to use. I don't know, I guess that was as good as any. But that was what we were designated as the company commander and the subaltern. And my title was subaltern. Each camp had a company commander and subaltern. And in some cases, okay, Howard Nelson, for instance, who was our first sergeant out of Reedsport and a real nice guy -- he would know how to run the mess because he was a first cook when I first went to Reedsport and then later made first sergeant. So he would know how to handle the mess alright, he would know how to handle the supply. He wouldn't know a thing about paperwork, so whoever was his junior officer was probably somebody he was assigned. Howard Nelson who was assigned Camp Warren.

So there weren't any military men at the camp at all when you went up there?

No, heck no. They were called to active duty. So, we were all civil service employees running the camps until they closed.

Did you run the camp any differently than the military officers might have?

Probably not as well, but we tried, yeah! But in most cases we ran it probably as well as [the Army] because the forestry [Forest Service], they were the ones who took the work crews out, they were the ones that worked the men in the field. All we did was supply the...

Manpower?

Yeah, we supplied the knowledge and took care of the supply and the mess, clothing, medical, and educational adviser and whatever else they needed, but the forestry [Forest Service] was the one that did [the work]. In some cases it wasn't the forestry [Forest Service], it was some other branch of the government or the state. Some of those camps were run by the state. I think Hemlock was National Forest and Camp Reedsport was National Forest, I think. But some of them were state camps, I mean did work for the state.

What were the living conditions like at Camp Hemlock?

Excellent.

But you didn't live in the camp. You lived on the farm.

Well, no. I didn't live on the farm, I had to stay at the camp because Fletcher, Fletcher that was the guy's name.

That was the company commander?

Yeah, Fletcher. Okay. I thought I might recall his name. But he didn't want to be responsible for anything if he could avoid it. He was a school teacher.

At the same time?

No, that is what he had been all his life. He was an Educational Advisor which was our school teacher. We called them EAs. Educational Advisor. And each camp had one. And he was the Educational Advisor but he didn't know a thing about running a camp. I mean all he was was a school teacher and he taught classes and so forth. But they took some of these Educational Advisors because they had some years behind them. They knew how to handle people a little better, they were supposed to, you know. And actually these enrollees weren't much older than high school kids. Late teens and early twenties. So he had enough age on him and maturity. That's the word I was searching for. And they made him the company commander and they sent me up there because I knew how to do the work. That's what it amounted to. And he didn't want to take on any of the work load if he could avoid it.... He was there strictly as a grandpa. Well, he didn't know any of us but they knew that when they sent him up there. I mean they were so short of bodies to run these camps that they took -- now he was an Educational Advisor so he was a little bit familiar with camp procedures and so forth and he had taught classes in camp. He was capable of handling things to a certain extent. But I wasn't capable, I wasn't mature enough.

Is that why they didn't put you in the position in the first place?

Oh yeah, sure.

How old were you at the time?

Twenty-one. Here you got enrollees in there that are that old or older. I wouldn't have taken that responsibility anyway. I mean I wasn't ready for that and that would have been a few extra dollars but I couldn't have controlled those kids as well as somebody who was more mature. Do you think you could go down and handle a bunch of those college kids, about two hundred of them?

Well, I don't know.

Well, well it's tough you know. You have got to have at least, in my opinion, at least enough maturity to command respect. And when you're the same age or younger, you can't command that. At least that is what I think. I was satisfied doing the work. And I didn't mind doing the work. You know what the heck. In fact I was tickled to death. I got out of that paper shuffling in Vancouver Barracks and at least I didn't have to type the papers and so forth. We had the company clerk to do that. But I had to be responsible for the office and supply sergeant. And the mess sergeant, Bill, ran the kitchen, ordered all the food supplies and so forth and that was the biggest one single job in the camp. And he was more qualified than I ever would have been because I didn't know anything about that end of it. Fletcher didn't either. Fletcher would have been like a duck out of water. I could have at least made up an order if I didn't do anything but copy some of them that had been made before. But no, I was very fortunate to have old Bill there. Like I said he was the best mess sergeant in Fort Vancouver Barracks district.

If you had all this responsibility, what did your company commander do?

Overseer. He would set at the desk, I don't know. You see, he and I finally came to some pretty harsh words. I guess right after the war started in December of 1941, shortly, as fast as the army could get the paperwork out anyway, orders came out that we were to give drill instruction by the left flank, march, about face, and all that garbage that you did in the Army. You haven't been in the army yet, but you may get unlucky yet. But anyway, that was the company commander's job, and almost without exception the company commanders in all the camps did that, but not at Camp Hemlock. Fletcher wouldn't do it. That was right after the war started and we got orders. In other words, they were preparing all these enrollees for the army.... for the draft. Yeah. And Fletcher wouldn't do it so I had to. And I didn't know beans about drill. In fact, I had three left feet. But I had to do it and I resented it because that was his job. I mean the rest of it he could shuffle off to me maybe but that was his job, that is part of what he was getting paid for and he wouldn't do it. He designated me a committee of one to do that and take care of it -- drilling them every day.

How did you accomplish this?

Very poorly. Well, I didn't know beans from buckshot about it and I just did the best I could. I got probably got a little information from somewhere, maybe old Bill the mess sergeant being an old army retiree, he was. He was probably a World War I vet. I might have got a little information from him, I don't know where I got it. I might have got it from some of the personnel or other. Anyway, we stumbled around and did the best we could.

I'm sure you did. How close was Camp Hemlock to town?

I don't know. Ten miles or so I think. I don't remember. We sent into Stevenson for shows and so forth. We would run an army truck in for recreation. No one had cars. Well I had one, but I mean all the enrollees if they wanted to go to a show I would take them in the truck.

How did they know what was playing?

Oh, we would probably get a local paper or something. Probably a local paper would tell them what shows were playing. It didn't make much difference, it was cheap to get in and you didn't care what the movie was probably.

What other social activities did the men have?

Well, I think horseshoes, baseball, and maybe touch football. Really I don't remember. We weren't there very long and before they were starting to talk about breaking up the camp, I think once those orders came down from Washington D.C. that we had to start doing drills. I think that interfered a lot with our spare recreational time because every day we had drills, every evening after we got off work. Well, when they worked all day and then come in to drill for an hour or two, or whatever it was. Probably at least an hour and then have supper. They probably weren't in the best frame of mind to go out and play baseball. Although they might have, I don't know. I don't even remember whether or not we had a basketball hoop. I don't remember if it is still standing up there. Of course if it is still there, then we had one. I know we had pool tables and stuff because I had to dispose of them when we broke up the camp and I had a hard time finding someone to give them to. Some institution, I think some boy's club in Stevenson, got one of them. I think we had about three of them and I don't know where the other two went. It was too long ago to remember.

Did your rank have any affect on your participation in the social activities.

Oh, I didn't participate in kids social activities.

Well, you were the same age.

I know but I didn't have any time for that. I was too busy. If I was in camp I was working. Yeah, because, like I say, I was busy with work. And too, I was just engaged to be married and my wife or my fiancé at that time was living in Portland. No, I beg your pardon, she was still living in Vancouver Barracks. And after we got married in March of 1942, we had an apartment in Portland and I would come down Wednesday nights. That was my night off. That was my one night that Fletcher would stay in camp.

He didn't stay in camp the other nights?

He was married and I think he had a house down on the river somewhere.

Down near Stevenson?

Down in that direction, yeah, only not that far down I think. But it was on Wind River. He and our medical officer, I mean doctor not medical officer, Dr. Phillips. A very nice older guy. He was from Clarkston, Washington. Long since dead.

So, when you left Vancouver Barracks, just to clarify this, when you left Vancouver Barracks, your fiancé stayed in Vancouver.

Yeah, she was still working. She didn't quit until about three months after we were married.

After you were married?

Yeah. She was going to work because we knew the camp was going to close.

When did you get that news?

Well hell, when they started to pull all these officers to active duty, it was a foregone conclusion. I mean they wanted all these enrollees for gun fodder.

So that would have been early 1942?

Yeah, early 1942. We knew it was only a matter of time. The CCCs were about ready to close because they wanted the enrollees for soldiers or sailors and they had taken all the officers that could pass the physical. In fact, I don't think there was any exception. I don't think there wasn't any of them that couldn't pass the physical because they had to pass a physical to be called to duty as CCC officers.

Do you remember when you went to Camp Hemlock? Do you remember the date?

No, not exactly. But I think it was probably about the first of '42 I think. It was after, let's see, yeah, it was after the war started because my buddy from the boarding house and I were setting in the restaurant about 11:00 o'clock in the morning that the news of the war was out. I was working at Vancouver Barracks when the war broke out.... But I would say it was probably the very first part of '42, I know in fact it was very early '42. They had probably already decided that I was going up there. They had probably already discussed that....

How did the local community interact with the CCC boys at Camp Hemlock?

We didn't have any problems that I can recall. Those southern boys are pretty well behaved. They weren't a rowdy bunch as those guys from Jersey for instance at Camp Woahink at the Oregon coast near Reedsport. They were mostly from New Jersey and they were constantly in trouble with the locals. But the southern boys are by and large real gentleman acting. It wasn't hard for them to say "Sir." In fact, some of them would say "Sir" if they were talking to another enrollee. I mean it was bred into them. They were a nice bunch. I liked them real well. And they liked me. Of course, my dad was a southerner. So that probably helped.... My dad came across the plains in a covered wagon at the turn of the century in 1900 at 13 years old to Oregon.

Well, did you have any good friends while you were up there?

Yeah, the first sergeant. I can't remember his name. I don't remember his name at all. And the company clerk was nice. You know you get real busy doing your work and you don't have time enough, and I wasn't there long enough either to develop a real solid friendship. But the first sergeant was about my age and a nice guy. And Jess Adams, the forestry [Forest Service] foreman, I would say the first sergeant and Jess Adams were the two guys I spent the most time with and enjoyed the most.

What did you do with them?

Oh, gab and swap lies. You know, you were busy and didn't have enough time for a whole heck of a lot. And like I say, I was a young fella in love and that was the most important thing to me

at that time. But it was an enjoyable time up there. I was so tickled to get out of Vancouver Barracks shuffling papers that anything else would have been better.

You mentioned Jess Adams. What was his --

He was a forestry [Forest Service] foreman at that time. He was the only one at that time I can remember. I don't remember any of the rest of them. I guess Adams is the only one. Jess Adams would have been the one to give you a run on Camp Hemlock because he was there for many, many years and he handled the forestry end of it. He was very knowledgeable and a nice guy. You waited too long to get all this information.

From the information I was able to gather, it said that Jess Adams was the camp superintendent.

Okay.

Is that the same thing?

Yeah that's the guy. Forestry superintendent. Yeah.

Good. What was his responsibilities? Do you remember?

Well, the forestry superintendent was responsible for the camp. The army end of it was responsible for the enrollees. We housed them, fed them, clothed them, educated them, wet-nursed them. Did whatever it took. But the forestry superintendent ran the camp, I mean not as detailed as the army did but all the work detail. He was in charge of the work details and that was their end of it. I wouldn't know anymore about work detail than a hog would about Sunday because that was not my cup of tea. I never worked -- in fact when I started at [the] CCC camp, I almost started in the office and the army end of it was the only thing I knew. I didn't know anything about outside of being on that one fire, the Smith River fire, which was something of a desperation deal because it was a big fire and they were short of manpower and I was assistant company clerk at the time when that happened. I think it was in August of '38 about a month after I went in. So, I was expendable in the office so I went out to fight fire. I didn't like fighting fire because smoke always makes me sick.

Well, back to Camp Hemlock. Who participated in the closure of that camp?

I did. I was to close it.

By yourself?

Uh- huh.

Nobody helped you?

Well, yeah, the enrollees did. But I was the last man. I was the one that shut the door, turned out the light and shut the door. Fletcher, the company commander, was in charge of the troop

train that took the enrollees back south⁸⁰. I don't recall what the destination was but they sent all of them back on a troop train. And Fletcher went with them. He didn't have anything to lose to take them back there but to keep them in line and so forth. I closed the camp, the army end of it. The Forest Service didn't ever close up. I mean they had no more enrollees to do the work but the nursery was still there as far as I know. It didn't ever close up. Of course it's closed now, but I think it was open. The nursery stayed in existence for years didn't it⁸¹?

So what happened to the buildings?

Most of the buildings are still there. I don't know if all of it is still there or not. Like I say, it's been so dang long ago that I can't remember exactly the location of all that was there and all we had. But when Nina and I were there, quite a lot of the buildings were still there. So, the forestry [Forest Service] would know more about what happened to the buildings. From the time I left there in July of '42, until she and I went back there about five or six years ago, five years ago I think it was, I had never been back. So there is a long period of time there from '42 to '95 or whatever it was I had never been back there so things didn't always look the same after that many years.

You mentioned earlier about the pool tables. What other supplies did you have?

Oh, we had baseball equipment, basketball equipment, boxing equipment and so forth. Some of it, quite a bit of it I think went to the high schools around there, Stevenson or I don't remember. Tables, I think there was a youth club we gave one to. You couldn't sell them and in most cases the felt was in bad shape because kids playing pool they would stick a pool cue into the felt and make holes in it. You know they weren't in good shape. They would have to be re-covered to be of value and we couldn't do that. But we disposed an awful lot of athletic equipment that allowed some of the schools access to when they never had money enough at that time to buy any. This was right after the Depression, there wasn't any money. There wasn't any jobs until the Corps came along. We had twenty-five percent or more unemployed in the 30s.

What about all the shovels that were used?

That was theirs. We didn't own a shovel that I know of. If we needed a shovel for something, we would go and borrow it from the forestry service.

That the same with the mess equipment?

No, no. The mess equipment, that belonged to the army and I don't know what happened to it. I can't remember. They probably gave it to some organization. I don't know. Or maybe they took it back to Vancouver Barracks and the army or navy got it. I don't know. I can't remember.

What was the reaction by the local community to the closure?

I don't know of any. We were so far from town that we didn't have very close contact with the local people and I suppose they took it in stride because they knew what the score was, the war

⁸⁰ The *Skamania County Pioneer* on July 24, 1942 reported, —Eighty-seven men comprising the CCC company which has been stationed at Hemlock, entrained for their homes yesterday morning. The move was occasioned by the decision in Washington, D.C. to discontinue all Civilian Conservation Corps activities....”

⁸¹ The Wind River Nursery, in continuous operation since 1909, was officially closed in 1997.

was going to take precedent over anything and everything and whatever got in the way was trampled asunder.... the war effort came first.

How long did it take to close down the camp?

Now when you say closed down the camp, you mean from the time we started or from the time the enrollees left? Because there was still work to be done after they left to dispose of a lot of that stuff and closing, locking the doors and so forth. And I don't recall, there again if I had my other papers I could have a better record because I had the army orders for almost every move. You don't make a move without an order when you're working with the army. But anyway, I haven't got them right now unfortunately. If I find them I'll see to it you get them.

How long were you there after the enrollees had left?

Oh, I would say probably a week or two. I'm not sure, I don't recall exactly because it was so long ago, but probably a week or two because after they left, there was still equipment to be disposed of and I think that most of the army phones and stuff went back to Vancouver Barracks because these were army issued. The underwear, the socks, the shoes, were all army-type issue and all that stuff went back to Vancouver Barracks and the army took it back I suppose. And maybe the same thing happened to the mess equipment. I don't recall but all I remember about it particularly was the recreation equipment and that didn't belong to the army -- that belonged to the camp. We had a PX where you could always buy cigarettes and candy and little knickknacks and stuff and that profit went to buy such things as potatoes and ping pong tables and all that stuff. That's the stuff I remember having problems [with]. The stuff that belonged to the government, they probably came and picked the whole dang stuff up. I wouldn't have had authority to [be] giving it away or disposing of it. The only thing I had problems with disposing of was what I said, recreational equipment and so forth. We tried to give it to some worthy kids' organization or something they wouldn't be able to afford or hadn't been able to afford for years because of the financial condition of the country; and it was one of the things I remember the most is about the disposal. Because I don't think any of that stuff that belonged to the War Department, like I say, the kitchen and the clothes, furniture and so forth that belonged to the government, I don't think it went anywhere except right back to the government and I don't know what the heck they did with it. I mean some of it probably wasn't really useable but we didn't dispose of it that I know of or that I remember of anyway.

Did any of the men express to you their feeling about leaving the camp or possibly going to war?

No, nobody said anything that I can recall. They probably did but I don't recall. But the majority of them didn't like leaving the Northwest and going back to the South. Believe it or not, but our weather up here is a hell of a lot better than it is in most southern states. It can get awful cold down there in the wintertime and in the summertime it can be miserable, muggy and lots of insects and chiggers. If there are any insects that can bite, it will live in the South. But most of them really loved it here in the Northwest, I mean our trees, our climate, and scenery. I took them all on a trip prior to disbandment of the camp. I took some of the money from the recreational fund, the profits from the PX, and rented a bus and took, say did we have more than one bus? Maybe two, I don't recall. Well anyway took them on a trip up the Columbia River to Maryhill Museum. They had never seen that before and we took a car, I had a new car, and my wife and I and the first sergeant went with us and I don't remember who was in the bus, in charge of trying to control them a little bit. Although most of the boys weren't hard to control.

I mean they weren't unruly and obnoxious. They weren't all lily white by any means but by and large they were very good group of kids.

So why did you take them on this trip?

I wanted them to see more of the country before they went back to the South. I wanted them to see more of the Northwest. And they hadn't been up the Columbia River and up to Maryhill Museum. We had a good time. And I think, if memory serves me right, and I think it does, I think that Bill the mess sergeant made us a lunch, a big bunch of sandwiches or fried chicken or whatever. I don't recall just what it was, but I think that we had this lunch and I think we ate lunch up at Maryhill Museum. But they sure enjoyed the trip. That's the only recreational thing I can remember about the camp except our baseball game. But when we were down at Reedsport, we played some of the local teams, there was lots of high school teams or town teams and a lot of towns around there fairly close. But up at Hemlock we weren't as full blessed. We were out in the boonies and most of them were just pick up games. I don't recall whether we played any of the two teams or not. We probably did but I don't recall. But they all enjoyed the trip.

So was this an emotional time for the camp members.

Oh yeah! When they were ready to leave, oh yeah! You bet. It was kinda an emotional time for me too. Because I kinda developed a rapport with those southern boys. I know that our company commander didn't do that. He, I don't know, was a funny duck. You probably had teachers that were funny ducks. Well, he was one of them.

Did the government pay for the transport of these men back to the South?

Oh sure. Took them on a troop train.

What's a troop train?

Well, that's a bunch of railroad cars, passenger railroad cars, don't you know what troop trains were in the service or in the war? Didn't you ever see pictures of a guy or soldier hanging out windows in trains and such? Yeah, it was a special train made up to haul soldiers to go to a certain destination and they probably spent quite a bit of time on sidings because there were a lot of war trains and they would probably not have the priority and they would be routed in at the convenience of the railroads. So it was probably not a very enjoyable trip back there. I don't know. I was lucky I didn't have to go on the troop train. I probably would have gone if I had the opportunity, but like I say, Fletcher wasn't capable of closing up the camp because he wasn't smart enough so it didn't take much brains. All he had to do was handle [them] and see to it they got fed and stuff on the train. Now, I don't want you to think that Fletcher was a dummy. He was a damn sight smarter than I was and he knew how to get out of work. So he was a pretty cagey old codger really. But he really didn't have [the experience]. It would be just like you if they promoted you to a professorship down there to teach classes you didn't know anything about. I mean he was a duck out of water.

Where did you turn your papers in to? After closing the camp.

Vancouver Barracks.

To anyone specific?

Oh no, you just mailed them in and they distributed them. They had a mail section there that took care of distribution, to see the papers get to the right place.

Were you discharged after the camp was closed?

Yeah, Yeah. Terminated is the word they used. Same thing, discharged or terminated. Okay we were terminated sometime in July, I think it was, and they added your accumulative leave onto that so that your discharge day would be the day your leave expired.

But you weren't actually working for them at that time?

No, we were on leave. Terminal leave. Like a lot of firms now. I mean if you worked for a firm and then you got some leave time coming, maybe you were terminated as of the first of March or the end of March and you got thirty days leave coming, they add that [time]. Now if memory serves me right and I think it does, the War Department at that time had a little different system than private companies in that if you had ten days leave coming for instance, it was ten working days. So your ten working days and it entailed two different weekends, you had fourteen days. In other words, you got about two weeks pay and that would be your termination date then....

How did you feel about the possibility being drafted in the war effort?

Well, I was ready to go but in the meantime, let's see. In December 19th of '42 our first child was born and I probably could have got deferment because I was working in the shipyard and being married, having a child, and working in the shipyard I could have probably gotten a deferment but I didn't want to take a deferment. Not that I am brave or anything of the kind because I wasn't, but I felt that I wasn't any better than the next guy serving my country so, fortunately for me, the draft board in Vancouver Barracks, where I was registered in the draft, lost my papers or mislaid them. They didn't lose them, they misplaced them somehow. And they didn't call me to active duty until June of '43 I think it was when I went into the service. So I was fortunate. Of course I didn't run right down to tell them they lost my papers or mislaid them. I let sleeping dogs lie. Because I was just the right age, twenty-two years old.

You say you did go into the service, they did draft you in?

Oh yeah, in '43.

How long were you in for?

Thirty-three months.

Did you have anything else you wanted to share, any particular story you want to share?

Oh yeah, I got a story about Jess Adams.

Okay, tell us about Jess Adams.

Jess and I kinda hit it off real good. He was probably damn near old enough to be my father but we hit it off real good. At mess hall, and of course, he liked the food that we got served, and he would take Bill Shooty, the Mess Sergeant, he also acted as first cook, he saw to it he gave the orders and his cooks did the work of course but he oversaw all the cooking and he made the

best gravy in all the world. Usually we would have pork chops and gravy. I mean, if he had the gravy we would have pork chops with it. And Jess Adams would take a slice of bread and put gravy on it and that was a Jess Adams pork chop. But that, like I say, it's been so long and I don't remember a single solitary forestry [Forest Service] employee except Jess Adams. And Doc Phillips was a very fine old gent but he was probably at least retirement age or maybe past it when he was up there. I don't know, it's just too long ago. The thing is too since I left up there I haven't had any contact with anybody else that was up there. Some of the boys at Reedsport - there are a few of them that's still alive, at least one or two besides myself, and I would see them occasionally after I left down there. So, but Hemlock was a short term deal, actually less than a year, and enrollees were from out of state and they left and I never saw them again. I only remember the name of one of them and he was a kid that was uneducated. I don't think he had any schooling at all and he was from Tennessee. Nice kid, I mean, like I say, uneducated. Most of the boys were poorly educated. But the first sergeant and company clerk, there were a few others, had a high school education and that was exceptional then.

Well, thank you for participating. I appreciate all the information you have given us.

[End of Interview]

Transcribed by Jason Packham, February, 2001.

References

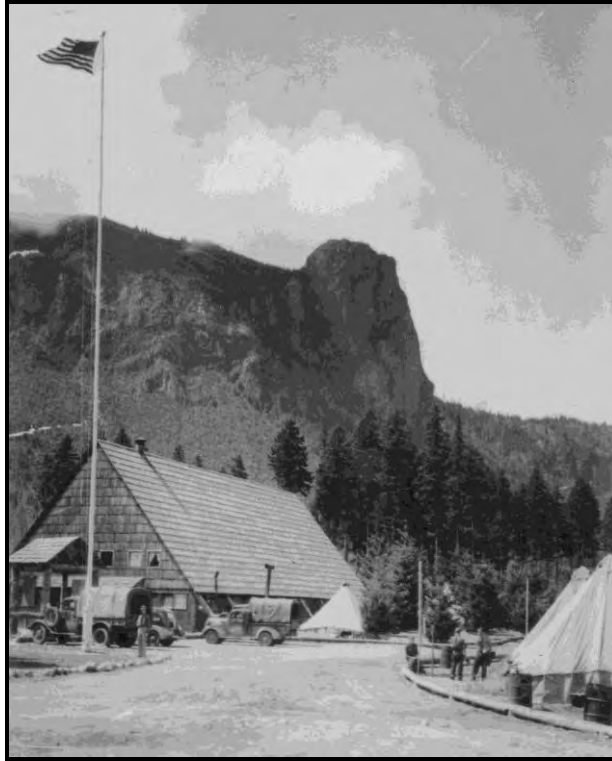
Skamania County Pioneer

1942 Hemlock CCC's Leave For Home as Camp Closes. *Skamania County Pioneer*, 49(31):1.



Jess Adams, Forest Service superintendent of CCC Camp Hemlock, with his wife, above, in 1938 (photo by Lynn Hazen). Lower photograph shows Adams inspecting tree seedlings at Wind River Nursery, 1941 (Andy Prounchick photo, courtesy of Edwin Hill and Jacqui Beidl).





Upper photograph shows the entrance to Lower Cispus CCC camp, with Tower Rock in background, 1937, (courtesy of Mr. Donald Woods). Lower photograph shows Charles Sethe, first in the second row, and other members of Company 2919 at CCC Camp Lower Cispus, 1940 (from *Pictorial Review*).



Charles Sethe

Co. 2919 (1940-1941)

Narrator: Charles (Chuck) Sethe

Interviewer: Judy Caughlan, volunteer, USDA Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Date: October 8, 1981

Place: Sethe residence, near Packwood, Lewis County, Washington

Introduction:

Charles Sethe was born and initially raised in Mossyrock, Lewis County, Washington. His parents were August Sethe, and Ethel (Henderson) Sethe. His father was a younger brother of William (Bill) Sethe, who was District Ranger for the Forest Service at Packwood for many years. August Sethe moved his family to Randle, where he had been raised, in the late 1920s. Charles Sethe joined the CCC in 1940, serving one year in Company 2919. During World War II, Mr. Sethe served in the U.S. Navy in the Aleutian Islands.

Now what was your work experience with the Forest Service?

I was only with the CCC camp at Lower Cispus for one year. Like I say, I was born and raised at Mossyrock and Uncle Bill [Sethe] was here at Packwood. In those days transportation wasn't all that great and we didn't get to see each other as much as we should. I used to come and stay with him occasionally for a week.

Would he take you out in the forest and take you fishing or -- ?

Not fishing, just out on some of his trips when he went out to look at timber, this type of thing. In those days we didn't have many roads. Of course the road wasn't over White Pass yet. Packwood was the end of the highway here and we didn't have a hundredth of the Forest Service roads that we have now to ride on. We did have vehicles, but he preferred the horses.

And he had his own horse there at the ranger station?

Horses and mules both they kept. I don't think they kept them right at the ranger station. I believe people around in the valley had places where they kept them. At one time, in the 20s, my folks and us lived just around the corner down here, four miles this side of Randle on the old Sethe place where Uncle Bill was raised. My dad would keep the animals through the winter for the Forest Service when they weren't using them.

He'd keep the mules and horses?

Mm-hmm.... Oh, like I say, my dad and Uncle Bill were very close so when they got together they usually talked about the old times some and I never got too much of that. I can recall my mother asking Uncle Bill about the people logging up here and what he felt about depleting our forests. He said that as long as they continue to log at the rate they're going now, we will never run out of timber.

Okay, when was that?

That had to be forty years ago.

Forty years ago, yeah. And how much it's accelerated, huh?

Oh, yes, yes. At that time there was just a mere skiff taken out compared to what they're doing now.

One thing that interests me about these people is the kind of spirit they had towards the Forest Service. You said a lot -- many of the members of your family worked for the Forest Service. What was their attitude and how did they feel working for the Forest Service?

Well, I think the Forest Service enjoyed better relations with the public at that time than they do now. I'm retired from Federal Civil Service myself. I operated a dump truck whenever they need me building these little Forest Service roads, logging roads, whatever, and I'm surprised at the attitude of the people out there towards the Forest Service. I feel kind of bad about it because I'm still a federal worker as far as I'm concerned, you know....

Let's see, the only time that you actually worked for the Forest Service was for the CCC for that one year and you were at the Lower Cispus?

Right, and that was not under Uncle Bill. That was under the Ranger who was down at Randle at the time.

Do you remember who was the Ranger?

I'm trying to think. His name was Mel⁸² somebody. I'll think of it pretty quick probably.

What was your impression of the Ranger then -- this was nineteen what?

I went in in April of 40 and got out in April of 41.

Right before World War II.

Mm-hmm, yeah.

What was the Lower Cispus Camp like at that time?

Well, the pictures here would tell you more about it. Let me get around here a little bit further. These were pictures that I took up at the camp and this is just the area surrounding. Now the camp was right under Tower Rock and my mother taught school there in 1918. She said she had sixteen kids in the first eight grades.

A one room schoolhouse.

All in a one-room school, uh-huh. This is the swinging footbridge across the Cispus [River] over here. The one we built at La Wis Wis was a little bit different. It had cables running over the top and adjustable turnbuckles running down there. Oh, I could tell you another little story about that too, and Uncle Bill. We were staying in the CC camp here at Packwood. There was three squads of us and Bob Lambert was the foreman, right here.

Okay, there's Bob.

⁸² Melvin M. Lewis was District Ranger, Randle Ranger District, from 1935 to 1945.

I was the Assistant Leader and then there was three squads that each had a squad leader under me. We built this bridge and when we got it built then there was a lot of adjusting to do with these turnbuckles to get it so it would run level and we never could.

Was this on the Cispus?

No, this was the one at LaWisWis.

LaWisWis. You couldn't get the tension right?

Right. We had cables that came down from the top and then cables that came from the bottom this way and then the turnbuckles between were supposed to be adjusted so that your floor would go up over an arch but it would be level across this way all the way and it always sloped downstream. So, after several attempts to try and adjust that, one night I went over to visit my Uncle Bill and asked him -- or told him rather, that we were having problems with it. He said well, he'd send some of his people up to see if they could give us a hand, find out what the problem was. Well, it didn't take them very long -- they said that they needed somebody else on it. So he called the Army Engineers out of Seattle and they came down. I don't know how many -- two big carloads or something -- and were here about two weeks and then they left. I never talked to them but the word was handed down to me that they said they had bigger fish to fry than that.

They couldn't worry about the swinging bridge. Now, Bob Lambert was involved -- what was Jim Langdon's part in the --?

Jim Langdon was the forestry supervisor at the camp. Let's see now. The CC of course had two factions, the army and the Forest Service.

Right.

Over here is people we never got to meet personally that were over us. This is Captain Jeppesen who was over at the camp. He was the army representative over there in charge and at night and weekends and everything we were under him. But, in the daytime we were under whatever Jim Langdon wanted us to do. Our educational advisor in the office they were in with their --

[Mrs. Sethe] Elmer C. Green, educational advisor.

[Looking at photos] Mm-hmm, right here, no, I guess it's the next page. Yeah, there's Jim Langdon and Bob Lambert and the rest of them are named. I can't remember -- this was our head mechanic, Lindauer.

Lambert, Lindauer, Langdon, DesChamps.

DesChamp. And McNeil was the other one.... Let's see, where was it? Right here in this first row somewhere was Jim Langdon, I thought. I guess not. He's on there somewhere. He signed it for me. This is him in his office.

So, he had an office at the camp also?

Right. He actually had two offices. No, I guess he just had one and the other one was the drafting room.

Here's a facsimile of a drafting board. Two [saw]horses with a big board on top and a desk.

[Mrs. Sethe] He had a real uptown office, huh?

Well, you know, these little things are sometimes important.

The trucks were backed into this shed and the one that my crew had. We were the number one fire-fighting squad and we had to sleep with our clothing and our boots laid out a certain way beside our bed.

Just like a fireman.

Yeah, and when they called us at night we weren't allowed to lace our boots. We had to get into our clothes and pull our boots on and run and get into this truck. They kept the tailgates open and they had steps built up to it. All our fire tools and everything were in there so when that fire gong rang we just pulled the boots on and then laced them up after we got inside.

Then you were off.

Yeah, we did a lot of firefighting, and that was the hard way.

Were they lightning strikes or --?

Yes, I'd say ninety percent of them, ninety-nine percent probably.

What kind of equipment did you carry in your truck?

We had just, axes, shovels, Pulaskis, and saws. We didn't have chainsaws in those days, had the old misery whips, sledges and wedges and a peavey to roll logs out of the road. That was about it, just the basic tools.

And you had to get up there and establish a line.

The way they did it was, someone, either the foreman or myself would strike off on a line around this fire. You'd just take an axe. That's all you had and you just make a blaze. Keep walking as fast you can walk and just blaze and the guy behind you would cut limbs and the guy behind him would cut limbs. It'd depend on how many people you had as to how many you'd have cutting limbs and what kind of terrain you were in also. If there was no underbrush then you didn't have many limbs to cut. And right behind them would come people grabbing these limbs and throwing them into the fire but still walking as fast they could go. Behind them came people with saws, [who] would start cutting logs. Any log that laid across the trail, they'd cut it on both ends and roll that chunk out of there. That's why they had to have sledge and wedge to keep the saw from pinching and everything and then they would run to catch up because there may not be another log for a quarter of a mile. There might be one in the next ten feet, you don't know. That's the way they operated. We always threw everything into the fire instead of out of it and then came the shovels. They had to dig, we had to have a trail, well, depending on the area you was in how many inches wide and six inches deep of raw earth. They'd turn it over.

Okay, your firebreak. Your break-line.

Mm-hmm. And the fallers would go along. If any trees meshed together up here, they'd fall these on this side into the fire and leave the others standing.

Sounds like you must have done a great deal of it because you remember it so well, huh? I could almost see myself out there with you going step-by-step, fighting fires. Did you ever have a chance while you were at the camp to visit any of the lookouts?

Oh yeah, now the Burley Mountain Lookout was just right above us and we went up there quite often. On the road that came down from Burley Mountain down to meet the Iron Creek Road was nine miles from the top to the bottom and had twenty-nine hairpin curves. The trucks we had when I first come in were 34 Chevys and they didn't have hydraulic brakes. They had mechanical brakes.... And when you put three squads of men in the back and two men up front with all our tools and everything and come down that hill, the brakes wouldn't hold it. So they just had to use a low gear and when we were going up, as we got to a point where we were going to start working, people would start bailing out while it was climbing in this low gear to get the weight out of there so that he could finally find a place to stop and turn around and be ready to come down in the evening. Then when he did come down in the evening, he could stop cause he was empty and they'd put a block under the wheel to hold it til everyone got in then the last man'd have to grab the block out and run and get in while it was moving cause it wouldn't set still. That low gear'd hold em back.

Did you get a chance to work on phone lines and --?

Yes, they had us do just about everything. Sometimes we would go out and maybe we would start to install a phone line and we'd only get maybe one or two days on it and they'd call and tell us you've gotta go repair this bridge or you gotta go do something else. So, we worked on so many different things....

[There was a] radio code class, did you take that?

I was the instructor in the semaphore and the radio code and first-aid. They don't have a picture of the first-aid class here. The thing about the CC camps was they told us that if they couldn't provide us with what we wanted to learn at that camp they would transfer us to one that taught whatever it was that we wanted. So, you did have a chance to learn. I might say this while I'm thinking about it, about the CC's -- this was one of FDR's favorite programs, and they took the kids into this camp, they got a lot of em off the street where they were either going to get into trouble or take a job that some married man needed to support a family. They gathered them all up and they put them in this camp and they taught them discipline and to get along with one another and schedule, routine, to be on time with everything. They taught them a trade or hobby or something. I thought it was the best invention ever was. One of the best years of my life, really.

People have given me a very good feeling about the CCC's and what, you know, what it contributed to them and of course the retirees are very active in the area and meet.... [looking at photos] Yeah, that's a picture of Bob Lambert. Now he was working up here with Langdon with the CC camp?

Yeah, we had several foreman of which he was one and Landauer was one. He was the foreman of the mechanics. This is one of our projects. We built this water tower.

Okay. Where was the water tower located?

Right in camp. Had you been over there to the camp?

Yeah, just a couple years ago. But that's the new --

Yeah, there's only one building left, the big recreational hall.

But so many of the buildings are new⁸³.

Mm-hmm. See these snags? The fire went through here in 1918, so these snags had bark on em and when lightning would hit one and catch it on fire, the air coming in at the bottom where there was holes would be just like a chimney flue and the sparks would just fly in all directions. So they had us going through, taking a half-mile wide swath, right up a mountain and fall all the snags, then go over a mile and do it again. We did that in several places where the bad snags were.

Every half-mile?

Yeah, we'd take a half-mile swath but then skip a mile.

And then another half-mile.

Mm-hmm.

And this helped reduce the danger of lightning?

If a fire would hit, it was contained within a one-mile square that way cause see, we'd go the other way too.

Okay, so you criss-crossed?

Yeah, we criss-crossed em Mm, hmm.

That's tremendous. One gentleman was telling me that he felt, you know, that the snag work and getting rid of those areas was one of the most important contributions that the CC made.

Mm- hmm, I thought it was. My crew was, like I say, the number one fire-fighting crew, so when we weren't out fighting fire, we were -- during the fire season we had to stay right in camp so they could call us any minute but during the off-fire season, then they put us on these other projects like falling snags and building this bridge and building that water tower. These were brand new trucks, the ones I was telling you about that had mechanical brakes. They replaced em right after I got there, within the year, so they came out with these new Fords to replace those old Chevys.

You got new Fords in nineteen what?

⁸³ At Cispus Learning Center, formerly the site of CCC Camp Lower Cispus, one original camp building remains: the Army Officer's Quarters. Most other buildings were built by the Job Corps in the 1960s.

Forty. _40Fords and they even had the CC license plate on it.

You had your own license plates?

Sure we did.

It's USCC54170, right, and they're a brand-spanking new shiny truck but they still had the stakes in the back with the wood and the tarp over it.

Mm-hmm. They had a bench down each side that the crew sat on. Then in the middle they had a box, about, oh maybe that wide with a lid that lifted up that you put all your tools in and then part of the crew sat on that. You could either straddle it this way, one in front of the other or one each way as you go.... You didn't have too much knee room that way.

Was the crew in charge of cutting wood for heat at the camp?

Yeah, mm-hmm. We had to cut wood. We had several places that used wood. Each barrack had wood stoves and then they had the laundry and the latrine and let's see, I can't recall whether there was any wood heat in the kitchen or not. I think that was all electric range in there. I don't see much else on here that's of any great interest. This is Captain Jeppesen and his family.

Now, did his family live in the local area?

No, I think they were in Seattle, if I'm not mistaken. This book I'm showing you here, the [Pictorial Review, Civilian Conservation Corps, Ft. Lewis District]... You see, they got Company 2919? Well, there's more to it than that. I think what they do, is they put our pages in the front and then as you get towards the back, they put in pages from other camps. See, Ft. Lewis District tells all the people that are in there and tells all the camps, where they are, see. But the pictures, from here on back are from many different companies. See, ours was 2919 and you'll see one of ours here and there. That's one of ours. The back part of the book could be used for any CC camp but you put your own in the front. This was the crew here that I had at the Lower Cispus. This was my crew.

How large was your crew?

I had three squads, eight men in each. Twenty-four.

Now, they talk about a Spirit Lake side camp.

Yeah, we had a side camp over there at Spirit Lake on Mount St. Helens and we had another one up at Cat Creek and they all came home during the winter.

Do you know where the exact location of that Spirit Lake side camp was?

No, I don't. I've been there. All I can tell you is there was a Girl Scout camp not too far from there. I think I only went over one time with somebody who was taking a load of supplies over.

Yeah, now, let's see.

I wanted to show you one man's picture. This one right here. His name was Ray Staudinger. Let's see, that's in the first row, right there [see photograph, page 245], Raymond T. Staudinger. He was a little Indian boy. He was less than five foot tall. When he got out of the CC camp he went in the army and they shipped him to Guadalcanal and he got on Guadalcanal and he started growing and he grew over one more foot tall. When he come home, his parents didn't know him. I met him at Ft. Lewis, named Staudinger. I thought, boy, he sure looks familiar but he's way too tall so I asked him, —Did you ever know a Ray Staudinger that was down at the CC camp?

He said, —That's me.” This is Don Fechtner, the junior forester that was under Jim Langdon. Harold Wasson, now there's a name that was familiar around the area here. He was under the ranger at Randle as a deputy ranger....

Did you ever have any experience working with these two men?

These two, yeah. Harold Wasson was around our camp quite a bit. I knew him because he was a good friend of my folks when they lived up here at Randle.

What kind of guy was he?

Oh, the nicest. Just, sort of quiet, you know, and just real good. We could use a lot more like him....

Now, Fechtner worked under Langdon, okay. So did he also work on the LaWisWis campground?

No, I don't think so, now, I'm not sure. This is kind of difficult to explain. We go back to where the army has charge of you on the evenings and weekends and the forestry [Forest Service] in the daytime, but the army is only right at these three camps or Packwood too, when it's up there. But, the Forestry [Forest Service] is everywhere and that means, under one ranger or another, you're still under one captain. It's very hard to explain. This guy, I see his name in the paper quite often, down around, maybe Toledo, maybe Winlock, in that area. He's got a metal shop so he could probably give you some things to say. His name is Baggenstos, right here, Arnold Baggenstos. Right next to him is James Foss. He and I were not only in the CC camps together but we were in the same squadron in the Aleutians in the Navy in World War II. He's in Winlock.

Now, the Spirit Lake side camp. What was there? Do you recall?

Oh, they did some road building. They did a lot of work around Spirit Lake itself to make it so the Forest Service could say they got camps and stuff there, you know. Picnic areas and whatnot.

Well, here in the book it lists all of the principal projects, truck trails, horse and foot trails, telephone lines through the Cispus Burn. Now, do you remember working on the horse trails and the foot trails?

Yeah, let me think of what trails we did work on. The Bishop Ridge Trail, which is from the Cispus coming back this way up towards Lone Tree Mountain, that area. We worked on that just at the lower part of it. Everywhere, the trails, they get trees and stuff down. The rain washed the bank loose and the rocks come down so every year you have to go over and you

just place em up. That's what we were doing. I don't recall ever making any trails with my crew.

Cutting new trails.

Yeah, we just maintained.

Do you recall anyone talking about in the area that you were on, an old Indian trail, or --

Not to my knowledge. The road from Packwood went on past Packwood up as far as Ohanapecosh Hot Springs and that was the end of it in those days.

It's funny when I'm talking to people. They keep talking about the end of the road. I was talking to one gentleman this afternoon and he said the end of the road was just beyond the ranger station, so the road was getting a little further, right, as you went along.... Now, Cat Creek side camp --

Cat Creek runs into the Cispus [River] on up further. That's getting up towards Mt. Adams and that's really God's country up there.... We like [Mt.] Adams to [Mt.] Rainier because it's unmolested. It don't have the commercial. There's no road going to it, you know. Once you leave Randle there's no stores, service station or anything u you get clear down to Trout Lake.

Cat Creek. They're talking about prune picking.

Well, whenever they blast, the rocks'd come down the road and they'd have to pick them up and throw em off of there, so --

So, they called that prune picking. Okay, there's a side camp, it looks like there were buildings there at Cat Creek.

That building was there not too long back. Meredith Cora was a fire guard up there. We run into him one year but he's dead now too but I think the building's gone now. I drove by there the other day and I didn't see any buildings.

Yeah, it looks like an old guard station of some sort. It has that type of construction. They have the boys drilling and cleaning up the road. It looks like you cleaned up a lot of roads.

Yes, we did that. Of course the roads in those days, even the one running from Randle over there, at that time was, you had to hunt for a place to get over where somebody could pass you going the other way. It was strictly a one-lane road and now they've got it black topped and line down the....

This is really neat, sharing this book. This is the Pictorial Review, Civilian Conservation Corps, Ft. Lewis District.

[Mrs. Sethe] Why did they call it Fort Lewis District?

Well, Fort Lewis was the army side of the CC's and they had all these camps that are listed here....

You were the athlete of the 8240, huh. Well then, each book was personally given to you then and signed by Jeppesen.

I don't know if he did that for everyone or just the leaders and assistant leaders or what. I'm not sure how far he went with it.

He was Company Commander, commanding Company 2919, CCC. What has happened, talking to people who worked in the CCC, there seems to have been a division. Some say the southern area was through Vancouver Barracks, whereas the northern area was through Fort Lewis, so I kind of need to talk to both groups of people to get some idea. Gee, I came here to talk about LaWisWis and I've learned so much more.

That story goes back to this man's picture here, Bob Lambert. We went up to La Wis Wis one time to improve the campground and put in some new campsites and extend the waterline and put in some new toilets. Let's talk about the toilets. We built some new toilets and we took those that we built and also the ones that were existing and we stripped the bark off the cedar trees and put on the outside of these. This Bob Lambert who was one of the most comical guys you ever met, we all called him "Nasty" Bob because of his language and what he had to say. He come down there grumbling one day where we was working and he says, —You guys putting that bark on them toilets, I had to climb five trees before I found one with a door in it."

Did he ever, ever pull any other one-liners?

Oh, all the time.... and he always had a few four-letter words in behind there. Oh, he did tell me about a yellowjacket that got in his pants leg. He said, —It went up my leg like a sewing machine and never missed a stitch." Oh, he was full of em, that guy.

Yeah, Bob Lambert.

One of my favorites....

We were talking about La Wis Wis. What did you find? What did the camp look like? Was it small?

Yeah, it was, at that time it was. Well, when we got through enlarging it, it was probably a little over half of what is there now, from the main entrance road downstream. I don't recall anything being upstream from the swinging footbridge or the entrance road. They were almost in a parallel. Now, there's quite a community kitchen and I don't know what all in there.

How long did it take you to make that swinging bridge?

Not too long. We had these three squads, twenty-four men, and they can do a lot of work in a day. We had the boat that we got from Uncle Herb⁸⁴ and all of the materials that needed to go on the other side, I rowed them across in a boat, cement, and the tools, and the iron. We put in a pretty good-sized concrete deadman over there and one on this side. The cables that reached across to support the bridge, we wrapped them around a log and then tied them to the dead-man. When you tightened up on the turnbuckle, the log would roll and tighten it up that way.... I don't know where they got the plan or the architecture. It was none of mine, I can tell you that.

⁸⁴ Herb Sethe, manager of the nearby Clear Fork Fish Hatchery at the time.

Were there any other buildings in the area that you worked on? That you were part of the construction at La Wis Wis?

Not at La Wis Wis. There was only the one building there when we were there and that was the guard place that was there, other than the toilets, that's all.

And the toilets [laughs], you keep coming back to the toilets. Well that was one of my assignments when I came to the area, to take a picture of one of the toilets at La Wis Wis.... because some of the original toilets are there.

I felt real bad when that party took those horses across and broke that bridge because even though it did have a little wow in the middle, I was still proud of it.

[Mrs. Sethe] Your mother wouldn't walk on it.

No, but everybody else did.

[Mrs. Sethe] She didn't want her grandkids on there. Our kids used to love running across that bridge --

And get it to bouncing.... It would not only sway, it would do this and it would do this at the same time.

It would go up and down and side to side.

[Mrs. Sethe] Isn't there another one over by.... trail?

Yeah, that's the one I was telling her about that we've got the picture of here. And that one, when we were falling these snags up here on the hill, we had to go across this bridge and it bounced. It would get waves like water in it. And —Nay” Bob would tell us no more than two people on the bridge at a time but we wouldn't do that. We'd wait until one got almost across, the other one about halfway, then the next guy would start out and just bounce it real good.

Oh, that was part of the fun, bouncing the swinging bridges.

Oh sure, see if you could make somebody fall down and in the meantime, you're carrying a crosscut saw across your shoulder and an axe in this hand and a wedge in your pocket and your lunch somewhere.

And you had fun.

Oh, didn't we. We had a five-gallon square kerosene that we made coffee in and as the leader it was my job to make the coffee. —Nay” Bob gave me the recipe. You put in however much coffee you think is right and then put in that much more and find the dirtiest stick you can to stir it with. The coffee, we'd put the water on and get it to boiling, then we'd put the coffee grounds in. Then, immediately it would start to boil over so I had two pair of pliers. I'd just pick it up until it quit boiling and I'd keep doing that, putting it back on the fire and taking it off until it would no longer boil over, then we'd let it boil awhile.

Wow! What did that coffee taste like?

It was good.... cause, most of the time we were up here falling these, the weather wasn't all that good. It's like it is now out there, cold and blustery and rainy and boy old strong, hot coffee really goes down good. And the cook would outfit us each with a lunch, which had a sandwich and some kind of fruit and the sandwiches were different. If you wanted two sandwiches, you could have 'em. One of 'em might be cheese and that was all that was in there, just butter and cheese. And another one might be butter and peanut butter and we got to where we would keep one shovel that was new, just keep it new and put it over the fire and toast our sandwiches.

On a shovel, a clean shovel, right?

One shovel was kept for a toaster.

Are there any other memories from that time that you can recall about LaWisWis, the campground or any of the other campgrounds?

I wasn't at La Wis Wis all that long. We just went up here and stayed at Packwood and then went on up and enlarged the campground and built the bridge. That was about the extent of our duties here in Packwood....

In 1940, it was either Christmas or New Year's, I can't remember which, a Boeing Stratoliner, which was a big plane in those days, two engines, had started out from McChord and headed for Sacramento and never showed up. They had had several search parties out looking for it. That must have been in October, November, something like that, but in December, we were going to have some kind of a big doings over at the camp, a dance I believe. When we were sitting down to dinner that night somebody came in and announced that somebody had seen a fire up on top of Huffaker Mountain and they wanted some volunteers to go up and see if it was that plane. So, I said I would and a lot of guys volunteered to go with me. We took a truck and went out there. This must have been about six o'clock at night when we left and we got back just as the dance was closing, probably 1:00 or 2:00 [AM], something like that. And we found out that it was a fire that a fern-picker had made and left there, so there was not trace of the plane. They later found the plane just out of Morton ways down there in the Little Rockies. I came in from that and made a report to Jim Langdon on what we'd found. As I recall, he fixed me a nice hot-buttered rum.

You know, we were talking about Bob. What kind of guy was Jim Langdon?

I think the best.

You know, he's a very cheerful personality and you talked about Bob Lambert having jokes and one-liners, well, what did Jim like to do for fun?

Well, you see Jim was over all of these foremen so I didn't really get to be around him in a sociable-type way but from what dealings I did have with him, he's just as good as you're gonna get. He was a real nice guy.

You had a dance that you recall in December. Were there other times -- ?

Yeah. The CC camp was usually doing something. When you get a group of that many people together, young ones, you'll find several of them have musical talent, one type or another. They play instruments and so we always had some kind of music going on. We had a ball team. The

army, on their side of the ledger here, they did not teach us anything military. They clothed us in old World War I military clothing, which was very durable and very warm.

Probably very good for this country.

You bet, and in the evening when we would come in from working, we'd take off our dungarees and take our shower and get dressed in our OD's. And then we would go out by the flagpole in two rows and stand at attention while we were inspected for haircuts and shaves, shined shoes, and that type of thing. Then we had to stand at attention while they lowered the flag and we marched from there, not necessarily in step, but in formation, over to the mess hall. That was the extent of anything military they had and I don't think that was military at all. They do the same thing in schools.

Well, kind of a group discipline, or something to kind of give the fellows a routine.

Uh-huh, and of course, once we were off work and the forestry [Forest Service] was through with us it was up to Captain Jeppesen and his crew to keep us in line so we had barracks inspections, clothing inspections, locker inspections, all this going on all the time. We had our own laundry.

Do you remember the fellows gathering to play cards in the barracks.

Mm-hmm. Oh yeah, we had card games going on everywhere. A lot of guys were trying to play the guitar and sing and somebody else yelling, -shut up."

Sounds like barracks living.

Oh, yeah, it was fun. But then when they'd bring in the new recruits there was always the hazing and the initiation and whatever. Nothing harmful.

Sounds like a bunch of young men having fun.

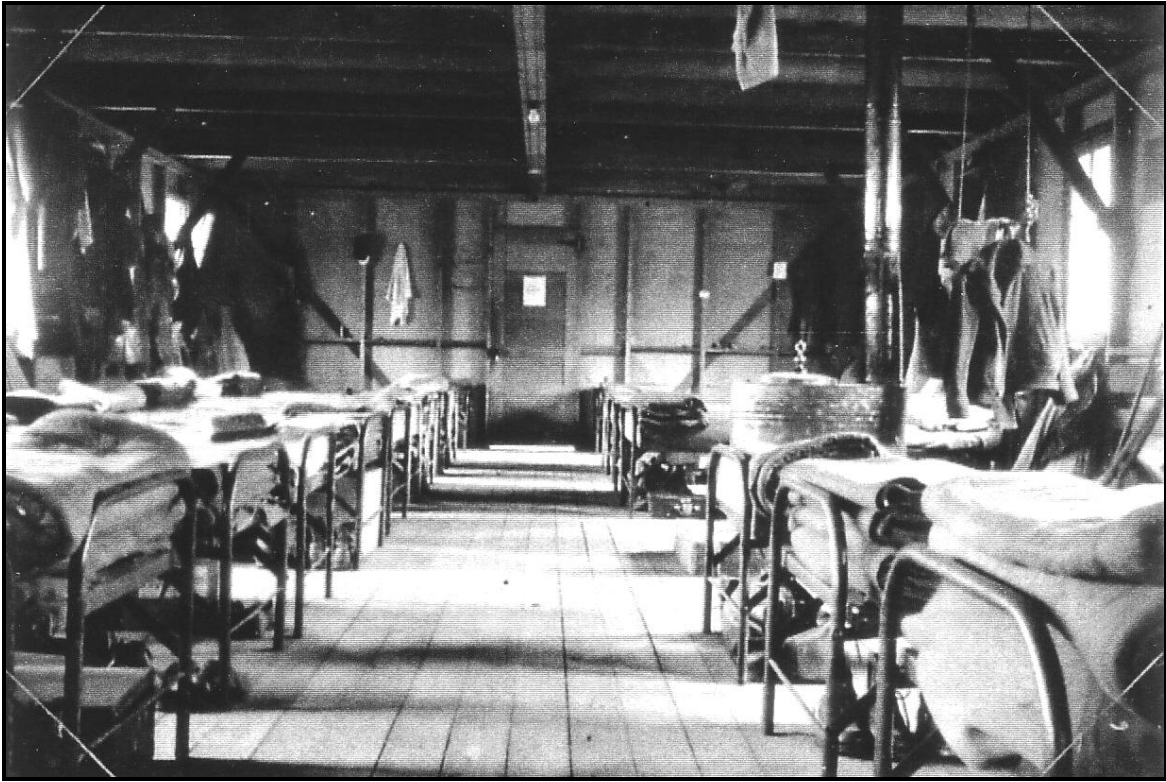
Mm-hmm. I think it was one of the best years of my life. I often wished that they would have come back with that instead of this Youth [Conservation] Corps. I think it would have straightened out a lot of these kids....

[End of Interview]

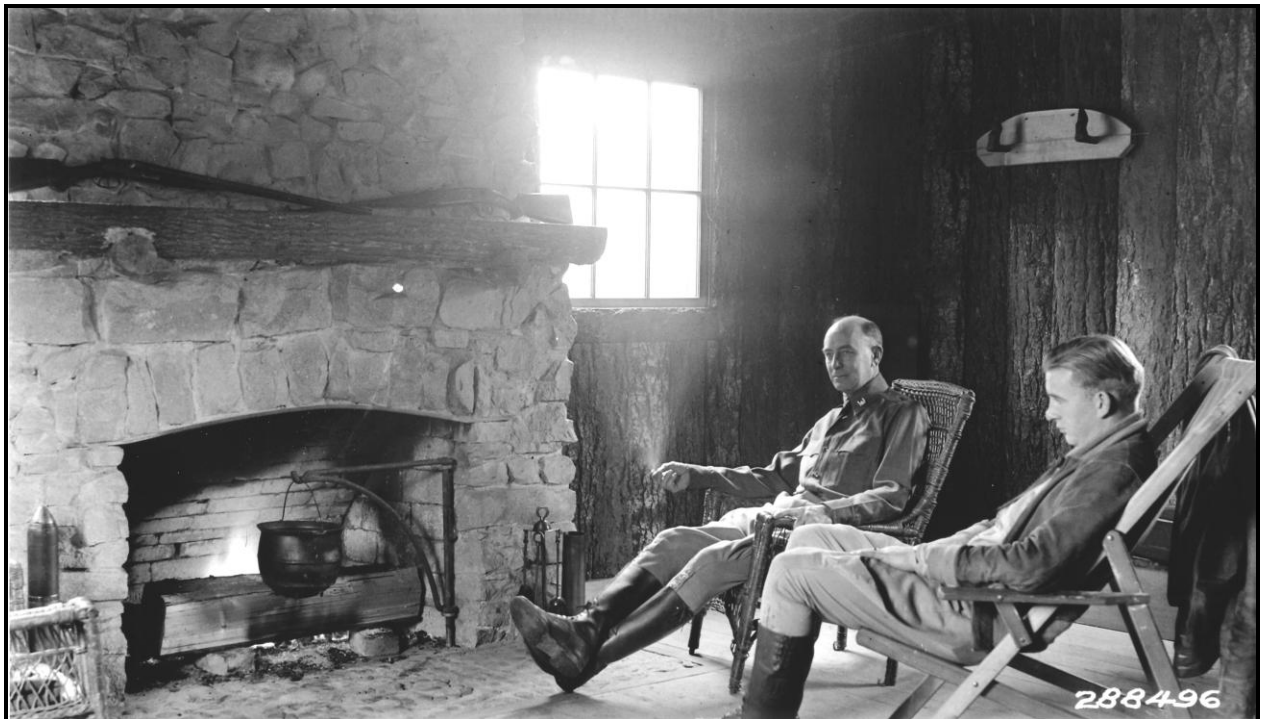
Transcribed by Imogene Marshall, November 2002.

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Interior of Barracks #3-35, CCC Camp Lower Cispus, above, in 1934 (Photograph by Cliff Smedley, from the personal collection of Mr. Smedley). Lower photograph shows army officers at Camp Lower Cispus, 1933 (A.G Jackson photograph, USDA Forest Service, courtesy National Archives and Records Administration).



Cliff Smedley

Co. 2919 (1934-1936)

Narrator: Cliff Smedley

Interviewer: Matt Hunter, Capstone student, Portland State University

Date: February 18, 2001

Place: Smedley residence, Fall City, Washington

Introduction:

Cliff Smedley was born May 20, 1916 in Port Gamble, Washington. His father was from Kentucky, and his mother was a Welsh immigrant. He grew up in Seattle and was in his final year of high school when he decided to join the CCC. Toward the end of his enrollment, he was an Assistant Technician for the Forest Service at Glacier Ranger District, Mt. Baker National Forest, for a year before limited funds eliminated the position. He went into the military after his tenure in the CCC.

How did you hear of the Civilian Conservation Corps?

During the Depression there was no employment. I was in my last year of high school and things were tough. I inquired around and heard about this, and of course, we got paid thirty dollars a month, of which twenty-five dollars went home to your family. Then we got five dollars a month. It was a means of support. I had a brother and a sister, and my mother of course, and that was twenty-five dollars. That doesn't sound like much today, but that was a lot of money back then. This was in 1934. I guess I heard about it, just from inquiring around to find out if there was some kind of work I could do, and this came up, so I took it.

What prompted you to join?

Well, to help support the family. That was the main reason, and I always liked the outdoors. When Dad was around, I'd hunted and fished when I was a kid, so this was outdoor stuff, so I took it.

What was your first impression of Camp Lower Cispus?

I liked it because it was really out in the boondocks. There was nothing around. The closest town was a little town called Randle. This was in Washington, south of Mt. Rainier. It was fifteen miles from camp, so we were really out in the wilderness, and it was pretty country out there, too.

What was the typical day like at the camp?

They woke you up about 6:00, 6:30 [AM]. There were four barracks to each camp, that is, main camps. There were fifty people in each barrack. The latrine was generally a hundred feet from the barracks, centrally located. You would go there and do your morning chores and then you'd go to breakfast at seven. After breakfast you'd go back and make up your bed if you hadn't already done it. They pulled bunk inspection everyday, that part of it was military. We were under military control when we were in camp, but when we were working, we worked for the Forest Service. They pulled bunk inspection every day, and then you'd go out to your work job. If you were close to camp, the trucks would bring you back into camp for lunch. If you were off at a distance you'd just take sandwiches and then they'd have someone build a fire out there and

make a pot of coffee. Then later on, they got big thermos cans that they could bring medium-hot food out. Most times it would be cool by the time it got there. You worked from 8:00 [AM] to 4:00 [PM] and had roughly an hour for lunch. Then you would come back to camp and eat dinner. I can't remember if it was 5:00 [PM] or 5:30, you'd have dinner and then the rest of the day was free for whatever you wanted to do. Generally, I think they turned the lights off at ten. Then the next day it was the same thing. Saturdays and Sundays you got off, and generally they would run a leave truck.

A big majority of the camp was from the Tacoma area. There were only fifteen of us from the Seattle area. Then the rest of them were from down around Chehalis, Centralia, Dryad, Doty, Mossyrock. All those little towns down in the Cowlitz Valley.

They'd run a leave truck every weekend. One weekend it would go to Chehalis and Centralia and the next weekend it would go to Tacoma. They never did run one to Seattle. I didn't come home very often, because there were too many things to do down there, but if I did come home, I'd either try to hitchhike from Tacoma to Seattle, I was the world's worst hitchhiker, or I'd take a bus. I think the bus cost, at that time, seventy-five cents from Tacoma to Seattle. Coming back, there used to be a little boat that is still running on the Puget Sound, called the *Virginia Five*. It went from Seattle to Tacoma, and it docked pretty close to where the leave trucks came. I think that only cost thirty-five cents to ride, so being economical with only five dollars, you have to stretch it quite a bit. That was that. Now I was trying to think the other day whether we got a period like the military. You get a week's vacation or something. I really don't remember of anything like that. Now there could've been, and I just forgot it, I don't know. That's about all on that subject.

What did Camp Lower Cispus look like?

As you came into camp, the first thing you came to was the garage and the Forest Service headquarters. As you continued further along the main road, there was a big recreation hall. It was big enough it had a basketball court in it. It was a big building. Just one story, but a high ceiling in it and a big fireplace. Just beyond that were the military officer's quarters. Behind the military quarters were the kitchen, and the four barracks, all in a row. They were kind of behind the recreation hall. The latrine was out behind the barracks about a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet away -- just a big old open building. In the barracks, there were two wood stoves at each end. You didn't want to have your bunk by the wood heating stove because in the wintertime everybody was huddled around the stove and you could never get to bed, because they were all sitting on your bunk. It worked out all right. The stoves burnt wood, and we had big old drag saws out there to cut firewood. I was on the wood cutting crew for a while.

What types of services were available at the camp in terms of medical, dental, any of that?

Well, there was no dental. If you needed dental work, you went into Fort Lewis. We had a camp doctor -- military doctor, and there were a couple three first-aid guys. They couldn't do any operating or anything like that. It was more for injuries and stomachaches. Once in a while, we ate out of mess kits. The old army aluminum mess kits. The way you washed them was just outside the mess hall. They had three big garbage cans full of hot water. They were sitting right on the fire, so they were hot all the time. Or, supposed to be. The first one had that old GI lye soap in it and the other two were rinse water. Well sometimes if the water wasn't good and hot, it wouldn't rinse them. Then you'd get a good case of the Missouri quick step. You get a camp with two hundred guys all with that, you have to make a reservation at the latrine. Very unpleasant, but they had something they'd give you to try and stop it. Generally it didn't.

Where did the camp get their supplies?

Well as far as food, it came out of Fort Lewis -- the army. The Forest Service had trucks. We had ton and a half stake body trucks, plus we had a couple of dump trucks and some equipment trucks. The army had two of them, and they would be about the size of what a weapons carrier is today -- probably a ton-and-a-half to two tons. They'd bring supplies out from Fort Lewis. Except for the fresh milk, which we picked up at the local dairy in Randle. We had to pick it up every night. I don't know, maybe they did some local purchasing, I don't know. I never worked in the kitchen so I didn't know too much about it. Stole a few things out of there.

What kinds of things did you steal?

Well, this will be kind of jumping ahead, but when we had a camp up at Sheep Lake I was driving truck at this time and we never got any fresh meat. All we'd get was Spam and other various canned meats. I had to go to camp every other night to pick up the milk to bring up there, because we had about a hundred people up at Sheep Lake. There was only two truck drivers. So we took turns, and it was about twenty-some odd miles down to camp. So after we'd worked all day, one of the two of us had to drive down there. One day I didn't eat before I went down. I figured well, I'll eat when I get down at their camp. I went in and they're eating beef -- roast beef. Well, where are they getting it, and how come we aren't getting it? So, when I was loading up the milk, I went into the cooler and there was about four halves of beef hanging there. When I left, there was one less. I snuck that thing right out of there, put it in the front of the truck, covered it up with a tarp. Man, the fuss that was raised over that when they found out about it the next day, this half or quarter of a beef gone.

Of course, when I got up to our camp I told the cook, --Don't put it in our cooler." Because we had a big cooler which was air-cooled and we'd get ice for it. I said, --Hang that out in the woods." -- It wasn't in real hot weather. -- --And you hang it away from camp, so they don't find it." We ate well there for a few days, but I did that two different times. Oh man, the military, they didn't appreciate it, but I figured to heck with them.

Did you have a mascot or a camp pet?

Oh yeah, we always had a couple dogs and a couple of cats. In fact, the original CC camp up there flooded out, and they had a camp mascot there, and he went away with the flood. About three weeks later he came back, showed up back in camp again. It was a big old scrawny yellow cat, and he loved peanuts. He'd eat peanuts just like a monkey would. I'd never seen a cat eat peanuts before, and I don't even know if he had a name or not. There were always a couple of dogs around, and deer. We had a couple pet deer that used to hang out right in the campground. They were there all the time. That was about all we had in the line of pets. Nobody had an individual pet. They were just camp pets. They'd stay in one barracks one time, and another one another time. The way you're asking these questions brings up a lot of things I had kind of forgot about.

What type of work did you do within the camp such as maintenance?

Well I didn't work, they had a crew. You mean like building inside the camp? Yeah, they had a maintenance crew that would take care of leaky water pipe, or fix the stove if it were bad, or someone's bed broke. Of course, usually on that, you fixed your own, but they had a maintenance crew that would change light bulbs and stuff. I was never involved in that. The closest I got to working for the camp was the wood cutting crew. We had, I think it was an old Wade drag saw, and we'd get a big log in there and saw it up into blocks. Of course everything was done by hand in those days, except for this power drag saw. Usually there were three or

four guys on the wood cutting crew, so it wasn't that big of deal. Of course you had to have wood for the kitchen too, because everything was wood burning. So it kept three or four guys pretty busy with all the stoves and big fireplaces. The Forest Service had a big fireplace in their building and so did the military quarters. The shop where they worked on the equipment, of course they had big stoves there. We burnt more oil in that one. We'd take the oil that you'd drain out of the trucks. You'd just run it with a drip pipe and just let it drip into the firebox. That was a pretty good way to get rid of the oil.

Being on the wood cutting duty, was that in addition to your normal duties?

No, no. That was a crew of its own.

What kinds of things did you do for fun? I know you mentioned the rec center, basketball --

Well, I did a lot of fishing because the river there had good fishing. There was some real good beaver ponds there. I still remember the game warden's name that was up there. He advised me to buy a fishing license, I didn't have one. His name was Buck Fruit. He was a good game warden and nice guy too. My falling partner, who I'll talk about later, Blackie, we used to do a lot of hiking. We used to like to [say], —~~That's~~ a mountain, lets go on top of it." We used to hike to different mountains. There was a big rock down there called Tower Rock and we decided to climb that one time. We did. Blackie saved my fanny from going off the edge of it. When we got up on the thing, it was pretty steep slope and it was shale. I don't know if you've ever hiked on shale or not, but once it starts slipping there's no stopping it. I slipped, and I was coming down trying to stop, trying to stop. Blackie just spread his legs. As I went between his legs, he grabbed my belt. Of course he planted himself, and once you get your foot planted, you're pretty good. It was close. Isadore Stegman was his name. Everybody called him Blackie, because he was almost black by the end of the summer. He really took a tan.

What kinds of things did you do in the evening?

Oh, played cribbage, played cards, and they had ping-pong tables and pool tables. Or read. I did a lot of reading in those days. Get some education I guess. I didn't get the chance to finish high school, but I did a lot of reading, so I kind of kept up on all that.

And there were classes available at the camp, did you partake in any of them?

Yeah, I took some math, because I always enjoyed math. And I took Spanish. We had a fella there who was a real good Spanish-speaker and he, I mean he wasn't a teacher, but it was his native tongue. I used to be able to speak a little, but that's been a few years back. With a foreign language, if you don't use it, you tend to forget it pretty rapidly.

What were some of the social activities that maybe the whole camp would participate in?

Well we had a baseball team. A lot of the guys would go to a dance they had every Saturday night. Not in our camp, but somewhere in the valley, there'd be dances. A lot of the guys would go to those dances. I never did. I felt that was a waste of energy. Never could see dancing, I don't know why. I never went to them....

Did you guys experience or participate in any initiation practices. I've read, like people putting breadcrumbs in their sheets.

Oh, we'd short sheet guys once in a while and stuff like that. Not too much, because you put in your eight hour day, that was enough. We were a hard working camp. Maybe some of these camps would just rake leaves or something, but our guys put in a day's work. So we didn't go for that. Like I say, once in a while. Over a weekend you'd do it, so when the guy came back from his leave, the trucks didn't usually get in until six or seven o'clock at night. He'd go to climb in his bed and [say], —Hm, my bed has shrunk.” But, no we didn't go into that very much.

What kind of work did you do in the forest?

Well I started out falling snags. Down there in that country there'd been a fire that went through there in 1902. Well, you probably got the history of some of those fires. Another one occurred around 1918. So there was a lot of dead standing trees. What they did was on the ridges, we would have to fall a band, I think it was a 150 feet wide, all the dead trees that were in that band. Then any tree that when you got on level, some Forest Service guy would mark the trees that we had to take down, but we'd go a lot further than the 150 feet. Like if there was a big, tall snag. It was to prevent fires from coming up a ridge and setting these snags on fire and then throwing these sparks for miles. So we'd just fall them. Most of them was way off in the woods, on tops of the ridges, so we'd just fall them, and let them lay there. But they could control a ground fire a lot easier than they could control if the snags were still standing. I did that for almost a year. We used crosscut saws. No chainsaws. Steel hadn't come along yet. I think our shortest saw was probably a five-footer and the biggest saw we had was ten-foot. Because you get some of those big old swell butt cedars, you needed that ten foot saw.

We did a lot of our falling off of springboards. I don't know if you know what a springboard is or not. If the ground is real steep, you have to level things out. So you'd cut a notch in the tree, and then you had a board with a metal cleat, with not really teeth on it, but a sharp edge on it. You'd put it in that notch and then you'd stand on that board and it would make it level. Or maybe there'd be a tree that the butt might be six or seven feet in diameter. But if you go up two or three feet, what we call a swell butt, it might taper down real quick to four feet. We'd put in springboards and cut at the four-foot, rather than saw through the eight-foot. Some of those trees, you'd think standing there that long, they'd just be rotted. But very few of them [were], and even those that were rotted, the shell was like iron. I remember one time, Blackie and I got into an area. We were using two and three saws a day on trees. They wouldn't bring out shavings, they'd just bring out dust. They were so hard. It wasn't our saw filers. We had excellent saw filers. One of the better ones was a guy we called —Pop.” His name was Craft. He had a great big mustache. I never will forget his big mustache. Then we had another guy named Webb.

Blackie, when we were falling a big tree with a lot of underbrush around it, he was slashing the underbrush and glanced off and damn near cut his foot off. So he was laid up for quite a while and I got a different falling partner. It worked out pretty good, because this other guy that I got with, his name was Dale Bradbury, he was about six-foot-two. So it worked out good. If it was on a steep hillside, he'd get on the lower side and I'd get on the upper side and that way it'd be level. He was a neat guy. He was from Kapowsin⁸⁵. Then when Blackie got healed up, while he was on the mend, he started hanging around the filing shed, and old Webb taught him how to file the crosscut saws. So then he started doing that and Dale and I kept working together for quite awhile.

What did I do next? I guess I got on that road crew. We had a, it wasn't a power grader, it was a grader which we towed with a [Model] 30 Cat. I was the sparrow. I don't know if you know what a sparrow is, but he follows behind the grader. Anything the grader tips up, like a big rock, you would throw that out of the road. In other words, you were following behind picking up

⁸⁵ In Pierce County, Washington, south of Tacoma.

what was left. Maybe it would be a limb of a tree or something it would dig up out of the ground. You'd just walk behind the grader, all day long, throwing this stuff off to the side. Because we had many, many miles of road to do, they were all just dirt road. There was no graveled roads. It was just whatever soil was there, that's what the road was made out of. We had lots of that to do.

Then we built a lot of road. I worked on that quite a bit, just building road, burning the junk wood from the trees that we fell and different things. Then finally, Vern the Cat driver, I don't know whether he quit the camp or not, but anyway I started driving the Cat. The guy that ran the grader, his name was Shelby Walker. He was a Cherokee Indian. Big guy, great big one. My gosh, he was six-foot-two, probably weighed 220. Real neat guy. I remember one time we was grading out the Iron Creek Road, and I looked up ahead of me, and there was a tree that had fallen. Not in the road, it was ten feet above the roadbed, maybe even higher than that. There was a lynx lying right on the log. I figured as I got close to it, he'd jump off and run away, but he didn't. He just laid right there and I went underneath him, and then of course Walker was behind me on this grader. You just stood up, you know. You weren't in any protection or anything. And I stopped with that cat right above his head. I said, —Hey Chief, look up above your head.” He looked up there and that cat was there. He went one way, and the cat went the other way. Oh man, he really just exploded off that grader, because with him standing up on that, he probably wasn't five feet from that lynx. It's the only lynx I've ever seen in the woods around here. I've seen a lot of bobcats, but it was the only lynx I had ever seen. But I thought it was funny, and he didn't mind.

I drove that Cat for quite a while. We used it for a lot of things. We used it for yarding trees we'd cut for guardrails and telephone poles. I got it stuck one time. I'd been going across this wet spot, and I'd been going across it, and heck, it was holding up fine. When all of a sudden, on one trip, the Cat just dropped right into it. The fuel tanks on those things were like a water tank, and they laid parallel. Well the Cat was down at such an angle that it couldn't feed fuel to the engine. So they had to bring in another 30 Cat and a 50 Cat to suck that thing up out of the mud. Man, that thing was really buried, but we got it out. I drove that for quite awhile.

Then we left Lower Cispus one year and went up to Ohanapecosh, which is in Mt. Rainier National Park. Supposedly our job was to set up a camp for a bunch of Easterners to move in. Well they brought in some of the Easterners, fact is, I think they brought in around, I don't know, fifty to seventy-five. I forget how many, but they kept us there. I guess we were supposed to teach them something. The foreman on the job, we called him —Nay” Bob. His name was Bob Lambert, and for every two words he'd say, three of them were cuss words. It just flowed out him. He wasn't cussing at anybody, he was just talking. But the neatest guy you'd ever want to know. So the Ohanapecosh River ran right through there. In the morning [it was] just crystal clear. So Bob told one of these Easterners, he says, —Go ~~et~~ some water so we can make some coffee.” So he handed him a bucket or pail, or whatever it was. The kid was gone about a half-hour and he came back and said, —~~Can't~~ find a spigot.” Bob just looked at him. We're out in the middle of nowhere and this guy is looking for a spigot.

We got to laughing and Bob says, —You ~~got~~ a whole damn river down there, get some water.”

The Easterner replied, —Well can you drink that?” Of course, being from New York, you know, he wouldn't have gone down and dipped it in the Hudson River I'm sure. But I never will forget him, he says, —I ~~couldn't~~ find a spigot.” There wasn't one within a mile of there, because that was one of the things we were doing was putting in water lines for the campground.

I worked on a survey crew there, and we surveyed a lot of the Wonderland Trail, which they now call the Wonderland Trail around Mt. Rainier. And I worked on other trails. I drove a 50 Cat there that had drums so that we could hoist the logs to build the bridges. It had double drums, so you could hoist and maneuver them around a little bit.

Then the Park Service guy who was on Shriner Peak Lookout got sick. They had to pull him off and they wanted someone to go up there. Well, being on the survey crew, I was pretty familiar with the countryside, so they said, —Yongo.” Well, prior to that we had a fire up there on Laughing Water Creek, which is about half way up to this lookout I went to. It was a pretty bad fire. We was on that probably two or three weeks. I ran a fire pump on that one. Carried one of those Pacific Marine fire pumps up there. That pump probably weighed as much as I did. They were a good pump. Anyhow, I went up to this lookout, Shriner Peak it was called, and on the way up there, there’s a horse coming down the trail. I thought, what the heck’s a horse doing out here? So I caught him and I thought well heck, I’ll just ride him back up the trail. I figured who it probably belonged to, because they brought a Park Service patrolman in and he was staying on the lookout until I got there. So I got this horse, and I don’t know what I used for a bridle, maybe he had a piece of something on him. Anyhow, I made up a bridle and got on him, and we started up the trail. He took about ten steps forward and one sideways. I didn’t make the sideways one. I continued on forward. He, just for some reason, took off. So I caught him again and I tied my pack on him and led him up the trail. At least I didn’t have to carry the pack.

Then I got up there and the guy says, —Hey you want some lunch?”

And I said, “Sure.” We went in there, I said, —God, where’d you get the chicken?”

“Oh,” he said, —They’re all around out here.” Well what it was, was grouse.

And I said, —Can you take these?” You know, you’re not supposed to kill any game in a national park.

The patrolman replies, —Ehh, there’s a lot of them.”

And I said, —What you shoot them with?”

He said, —don’t shoot them.” He said, —hit them with a stick.” He said to take a stick a couple feet long and get out there, they’ll make a noise and stick their head up, and you just fling the stick like a boomerang. He says, —You’ll always get one.” Well, I was a pretty good rock thrower in those days and I usually just took a rock and throw it at them. Yeah, I had grouse about every other day up there.

Bad thing about that one, you had about half-a-mile hike to get water. So you’d take these five-gallon cans and they were in a Trapper Nelson packboard. You’d go down there and fill up your can and come back up the hill. You only did your dishes once a day, because it didn’t take any more water to wash three dishes than it did to wash one. So, you tend to be a little conservative on water when you got to hike after it. Anyhow, we finished our tour up there. That was in 1935. Then we went back to Cispus.

We had a couple of side camps out of Cispus. One of them was an area they call the Pole Patch, which is just behind Burley Mountain. It was a tent camp, just out in the middle of nowhere. But anyhow, the summer of ‘36 we spent at what they call Olallie Lake now. It used to be called Sheep Lake. That was a neat camp because it was right on the lake, and that lake was just full of eastern brook trout. Oh man, that thing had lots of them. I built a raft.

After we closed up the Pole Patch Camp, I stayed on and did the cooking for a road crew. I think there was four people on this road crew, where they did what we called winterizing the roads. They’d dig ditches across them to drain the water off so that it wouldn’t wash the roads out. So I did that for the couple of weeks it took to do all the roads up there. They didn’t get any fancy baked stuff. What they got was fried. That’s about the only thing I knew how to do. I remember one time -- there was three in that crew -- they came in and they’d put in a long day. They ate about two-and-a-half pounds of bacon, and a dozen and a half eggs between the three of them. Plus bread, and probably hash browns and stuff like that. They’d put in a good day that day.

Going back to Sheep Lake, which is one of the areas I liked the best. I was driving truck there. You’d haul twenty-five guys out to the job and then if they were close enough you’d go back in and take them into camp for lunch. If not, you’d go in and get them lunch or they would pack a sack lunch. It depended a lot on where you were working. We built a road from there,

from the flat up there. It was right at the foot of Mount Adams, on the north side. There was lots of lakes around there. We built campgrounds at Takhlakh Lake, and at Council Lake. Then we built a road down the hill to the North Fork of the Lewis River. That's as far as we got because the camp from Guler was building the road the other way and we met down on the North Fork. I built this real neat raft there on Sheep Lake. It had oarlocks and everything so I could row it out and catch fish. Then the huckleberries got ripe in the fall. A lot of Indians came up there during the huckleberry season, because it was right on the edge of the Yakama Indian Reservation. The Indians came up to pick huckleberries. That is, the women and kids did. The men, they just sat around. We used to pick huckleberries and then when the leave truck would go in on the weekend, you'd have maybe ten or fifteen gallons of huckleberries. One of the guys would take them into Chehalis or Tacoma and they'd sell them, then buy beer and smuggle it back into camp.

Up there we didn't have any electricity. They did have a generator for the mess hall, and that's the only place that had any electricity in it. When we built our tent platform, there was the other truck driver, myself, the Cat driver, and the mechanic. I guess it was two Cat drivers. We built it just a little bit short. You're supposed to get six beds in there, but we shortened it up enough so we could only get five beds in it. The Forest Service could never figure out why ours would only hold five. They even tried to put six in, but it wouldn't fit. Anyhow, we took one of the boards in the floor loose and these guys would bring back the beer and we'd cache it underneath that floorboard. We hid everything under there. We had Coleman lanterns for lights and of course I was usually the one, either me or this other fella named Jack Batchey who was the other truck driver. Either him or I always brought the gas up. Well we'd bring it up in five-gallon cans and maybe they'd give us twenty gallons at a time. We'd found some one-gallon cans and we'd always take two or three of those and fill them up and shove them under the floorboards of our tent. A lot of times they didn't get gas to us soon enough. —Oh, we're out down here. We don't have any." So then you'd just have to have a candle or something.

Here was our tent all lit up and I remember one time Brad Clevenger, the Forest Service Cat driver said, —Where you guys getting your gas? You guys always have gas."

—~~We~~ we have some, Brad."

—~~We~~ how about giving me some?"

—No, you leave your lantern here and we'll fill it for you.

—~~We~~ okay." So we'd fill their lantern and take it over. We weren't going to divulge to them where our gas was hidden, they'd be in it all the time. Little things like that you think back on and really enjoy.

Brad Clevenger, I think he was from down around Chehalis somewhere, he was the strongest man I ever met. I remember one time a car came up and he slid off the road right by camp. It was a Dodge or something like that. Brad said, —Let's go out and put him back up on the road." Only two wheels went off. He said, —Couple three of you guys get up in the front and a couple of you come in the back here and we'll just throw one end up first, and then the other end." So we got up there and —~~on~~ two, three," and Brad's end went up all by himself. The other guys hadn't got there, and hell, we couldn't even budge our end. He said, —Get out of my way." He came back and threw the back end of that up.

My truck caught on fire one time, and I had a couple of drums of gas in it, and he jumped in the truck. Instead of rolling out the first drum, he jumped over that, grabbed the second drum just by its ridges. These are full fuel tanks, which is fifty-some odd gallons. He picked it up and threw it over the other one, then he picked up the other one up and threw it out. I remember another time when a tree had fallen across the road and nobody could get by it. All the guys, they'd just stop and walked on it. They just parked your rigs there and walked into camp. It was only about mile. Pretty soon, here comes Brad, driving in. —Somebody cut that tree out down there?" "No," he said, —Got out and mo mo-mo moved it." He stammered. And he did. He picked up one end of it and whirled it around and drove on through. He had a couple of

expressions, but I can't use them with the tape recorder on. Neat guy. The old Cats didn't have power steering controls. They were tough to pull. Of course, he'd been driving one for who knows how many years. His arms were like that [holding his hands in an eight inch diameter circle].

Boy, but Sheep Lake was a good camp. While we were there, it was getting close to the time to break the camp up and go back down the hill. Because at that elevation, they probably got ten feet of snow up there in the winter. We got called down to a fire down in Oregon. Well, it was pretty near the Oregon coast. We got down to some place south of Portland and they said, —You can't go down the coast highway.”

I said, —We're going to that fire that's down there.”

—Yeah but you can't get there because the fire has burned across the highway.” He says, —you'll have to go down to California and go across at Crescent City and come back up.” Oh man. So anyhow we did. California at that time, I don't know if they still do it, they stop you to see if you have any fruit. So, they stopped us.

—You got any fruit or anything in there?”

I said, —No, I don't think so.”

—Well, we better check your truck.”

I said, —Hey, your state's on fire. We came down here to put it out, were not going to wait while you go through and inspect everything.”

He says, —You have to.”

I said, —Good bye.”

We went over to a little town called Gold Beach and then we started fighting fire from there. About the third day we were there, I'd taken a crew somewhere and some Forest Service guy comes up and says, —I need your truck.” I figured he was going to take it and bring it right back. He was a Forest Service employee, so I couldn't argue too much with him. He took it, and I didn't see it. So they put me back to falling snags again. On those fires, the logistics weren't too good on them. If you needed to sleep, you just laid down and went to sleep. You hopefully, might get a sandwich sometime. I know we came across a burned out farm, and there was a couple of chickens that didn't have many feathers left on them. We knocked a couple of them in the head, cooked them up over a fire for something to eat. Yeah, that was a rough job. We were there just about a month. I think there was eight CC kids killed in that fire. None from any of the groups I was working with. Finally, we got it all mopped up and my truck appeared back. So at least I had my truck to bring back home again. Otherwise, I don't know how we would have gotten home. Walked I guess. We got up to the town of Bandon, Oregon and it was gone. When they say the fire went across there, there were no towns. Anything on the waterside there was a little strip of buildings between the highway and the water. In town all there was was chimneys and plumbing fixtures. There'd be bathtubs way up in the air, just held there by their pipes that they were plumbed into. No houses. It was terrible. I think that was 1936. I think on the Columbia River History webpage there's something about that fire in there.

Well I just thought I'd give you a little information on some of the supervision we had down there. The supervisor I worked under mostly was a fella named Jack Sutherland. He was a big, old Swedish woodsman. Real nice guy. Everybody used to pull a lot of tricks on him, but it didn't bother Jack at all. He was just one of those that just got along with everybody. Except one time I remember when we was going to mess, and apparently one of the fellers had had an argument with him during the day and he walked up to Jack while he was walking over to the mess hall, and just really clobbered him. I mean he really hit him hard. But Jack was so big that you weren't about to tip him over. The army guy happened to see it. Well, he came flying over there, and he was going to discharge this guy and everything else. Jack says, —What for?”

—Well, he struck you.”

Jack says, —Ah, nah, we were just having a little wrestling match, no big problem.” I mean that's the kind of guy he was. I don't know what this guy's beef was, but it was

something. Then our falling foreman that took care of the snag falling was big, old clumsy Harv Garrett. He was a local. He lived there in Randle. Clumsy, he'd trip over a matchstick if it were laying out there by itself. But another really nice guy, who took the time to teach you how to do things, and do them right. Then, of course, we had Brad Clevenger, the Cat driver. He taught us all a lot. Then, I think I already mentioned —~~Naty~~ Bob. Bob, all of his upper teeth were gold. Real weird thing. He'd smile and the room lit up. But another good foreman.

I think the best, and the one I learned the most from was a fella named Harold Wasson, who also was a local down there. Fact is, some of his family is still down in the Randle area. We called him —~~the~~ little man with the baggy pants." I never heard Harold tell you to do something. He asked you to do it. Like when I was driving truck, we didn't have to go out and do any work, maybe I'd be sitting there reading a magazine. He'd come up to me and say, —Hey, where you get around to it would you go into camp and get me a couple cases of powder or couple of shovels?" You know you'd be sitting on your behind doing nothing, but he'd say, —where you get around to it." Which meant go now, not five minutes from now, now. Harold and I got along real well. He did a lot of surveying for the roads and we were both at the same height. So it worked out well because we used those little Abney levels for grading. He could just shoot me right in the eye and it would be the same height that he was. So it worked out real well, but I never heard anybody ever say anything derogatory about Harold. I tried to look him up when I was down there last summer, but nobody seemed to know if he was still around the valley or not. They'd heard the name of Wasson, so there must have been some around. Jack Sutherland, after he left the Forest Service down there, he started the Kosmos Lumber Company, which I think was a division of U.S. Plywood. We got a new superintendent in that came from Granite Falls named Jack Healey. Healey was all right, but he was kind of like Eisenhower was for president. He didn't do much of anything. But he didn't give me any trouble.

What was the job you enjoyed most?

Well I enjoyed the truck-driving job quite a bit because it let me move around a lot more. I enjoyed driving Cat, too. Really there wasn't any job that I disliked. Well, I got K.P. sometimes, and everybody dislikes K.P., but that's normal. I enjoyed whatever I was doing. I never was afraid of work. I could lay right down along side of it and go to sleep. But no, there wasn't anything I didn't like. I'd say the truck driving was the most enjoyable. It was fun being up on the lookouts. Of course you didn't do anything up there except look. Enjoying the out of doors like I did, it was a neat place, because you could see the whole world from that Shriner Peak Lookout. You could look right down onto the Chinook Pass Highway at night and watch the cars weaving their way up the pass. Yeah, I enjoyed it all, really.

What jobs were the most difficult?

Well, as far as manual labor, falling timber was probably the toughest. It's a job and it's what you have to do, so you go ahead and do it. That was the toughest job because you pulled on one end of that saw all day for eight hours. Or you were chopping, whichever the case might be. Oh, I had another partner one time. A fella named Dick Stein was a falling partner for a while. Where was Dick with me? I think up at Pole Patch. I think of these names, they just kind of come to my mind. We were supposed to put out X amount of stumpage and all they'd do is measure across the stumps of all the trees you fell. They would take an average of that and total it up and you're supposed to fall X number of inches a week. Whatever crew felled the most, they gave them a carton of cigarettes. Well, Dick and I, we won that carton of cigarettes several times in a row. What we would do is take down a bunch of hard ones, and leave a bunch of real easy ones until we decided this week we need some cigarettes. Then we'd go

down and knock down a whole bunch of easy ones and way exceed the stumpage. Kind of cheating a little bit, but accomplished the purpose.

What was your favorite place to stay or what camp?

Lower Cispus was the only camp that I was actually ever assigned to. If you include the side camps like Pole Patch, Ohanapecosh, and Sheep Lake, I would say Sheep Lake, by far, because the scenery there was so beautiful from the lake. Plus, the fact that it was good fishing. We even spent three weeks at the old Upper Cispus Camp planting trees one year. That is the crew did. I was still driving truck then. I drove truck for better than half the time I was in. Sheep Lake would be my favorite. Fact is, I'd gone back after I got out back in the forties. I used to go camping up at Sheep Lake. At that time, the only building still standing was the mess hall, and it was about ready to fall down. I didn't mention that while I was in camp there, I took a Civil Service exam. I got an appointment to the Forest Service up in Mount Baker National Forest at the Glacier Ranger District and I was up there for about a year. Then, employment got better and they started cutting back on this emergency conservation money, and that was one of the jobs that they cut. I was what they call an Assistant Technician. I never did find out who this technician was that I was supposed to be an assistant to. Up there, I did everything: road survey, fire suppression, fire pre-suppression. There was a CC camp about five miles from the town of Glacier, and I had those kids out building trails and chasing fires, same kind of work I did in the CCs. Fact is, the fella that I think became head of Recreation for the Sixth Forest Service District, which is Portland, Tony Jerry, was on fire lookout up there at Glacier while he was going to college. It took him about ten years to get through college. Not that he was dumb, but he just didn't have the money. He'd have to work until he got enough money. He kept at it and he got this Forest Service appointment. I know he was stationed at North Bend for a while. Then I heard later that he was the head of all Recreation for the Sixth Forest District or whatever it is⁸⁶. So that's kind of about winds it all up I guess, unless you got anymore questions you want to ask.

What's your most significant memory of being in the CCC? One that stands out.

One that stands out is a row I had with the army. As I told you, I drove the crews to their job. Well one time we had a job in Randle. They built a huge barn. Oh, there's another little anecdote I'll tell you to go with that. I hauled the crew from camp, which was about fifteen miles, maybe a little more to Randle. The army had to send in their truck everyday to pick up the milk and mail and so I told them one time, I'll pick up the milk and the mail. I said, —th down there anyhow and it will save you guys driving in."

So they said, —That's great."

And I said, —Mmain job is to get my crew back home, but as long as it's there I might as well bring it." So anyhow, I got there one time and there'd been a wreck on the road somewhere between Randle and Morton, where the mail came out of. The mail wasn't there. I picked up the milk, but the mail wasn't there. So I waited maybe ten or fifteen minutes and then I said, —To hell with them. They don't need their mail that bad. I got to get this crew back in," because they'd put in their whole days work. So I took them all back to camp and took the milk over.

The army lieutenant says, —Where's the mail?"

I said, —It wasn't in yet."

—We why didn't you wait for it?"

⁸⁶ Region Six, the Pacific Northwest Region, with headquarters in Portland, Oregon.

I said, —No, I'm just kind of doing this as a favor for you.” I said, —My job is to get the crew back.”

—Oh, no sir, you're supposed to pick up the mail, ra-ra-ra-ra-ra.”

Well, I said, —I don't think so, but we'll see.”

So he says, —You're on discipline.”

So I went over and told Jack Sutherland, our superintendent, you know what had happened; I felt it was my job to get my crew back again. He says, —You're right.”

So that night at dinner the Forest Service personnel and the officers all sat at one table.

I said, —I'm going to go sit close to them,” because Jack said, —I'll straighten him out.”

Well this lieutenant came in, I think his name was Fleury, it was kind of an odd name. Well, he comes in, and he started in on me not getting the mail.

Jack looked at him and he says, —Shut up. I don't want to hear a word out of you. He did what he was supposed to do and that's get his crew home.”

The guy says, —I put him on discipline, he's not going to be able to do this.”

Jack says, —Don't give me that stuff. He did what he was supposed to do. And by the way, you guys go in and get your own milk and the mail. We're not going to haul it anymore.” He come down to my table and says, —Don't pick up the milk and the mail anymore, let them go after it.” End of conversation right there. I felt I was right.

On this barn that we'd built down at Randle, we had one kid in camp, name was Jack Jourski and he couldn't do anything. He would screw up anything he tried. He'd try, but he was the clumsiest character. Bob Lambert was the foreman on the job. Jack would see guys doing something and he'd say, —Hey, I think I can do that, Bob.”

Bob said, —Fine give it a try.”

They had some civilian shinglers, like I say this barn was huge. It was well over a hundred feet long and thirty or forty feet wide and all shingled roof. Jack looked up and saw these guys putting down shingles. A good shingle layer is pretty rhythmic at his job. Jack said to Bob, —I'd like to try that.”

Bob says, —Fine, get yourself a hatchet and get up there.”

Well, I'll tell you, we finally found his calling. It turned out [that] he and his dad had been contract shinglers. He made those civilian guys look like amateurs. He laid shingles so damn fast, it was a pleasure to stand there and watch him. He'd have a bundle of shingles out in front of him and put them down. Even these civilians, who was getting probably at that time maybe three or four dollars an hour you know, they would just stand there and look at him. They couldn't believe how fast he was laying shingles. Boy, anytime we had any shingling to do, we'd get Jack. He found his job. He was from Tacoma.

Who were you building the barn for?

The Forest Service

Maybe just describe, or if you have anything else you have to say about your experience.

I think it was one of the greatest programs this country ever had. They should have it right now, and I think we'd have a lot less problems with kids on the street, if you got them out there.

[End of Interview]

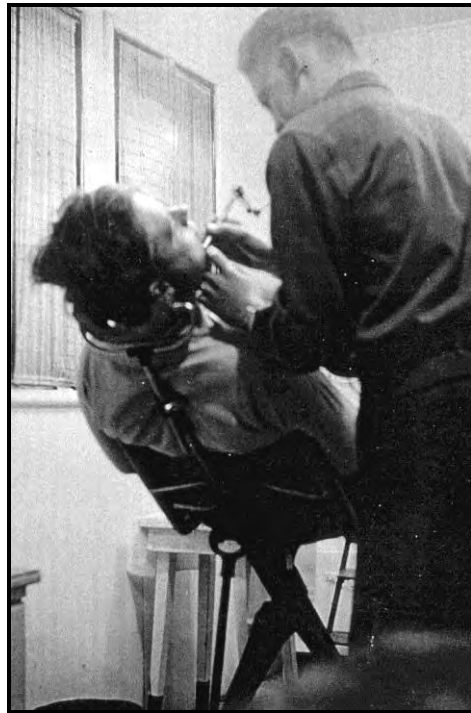
Transcribed by Matt Hunter, February 2001



Forest Service stock barn at Cowlitz Valley Ranger Station built by enrollees from Co. 2919, Camp Lower Cispus, in 1935. The barn, described in Mr. Smedley's interview, is currently used for the last remaining pack string on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.



Pat Sutherland, above and below, at CCC Camp Hemlock, 1939-1940. The photographs are from the personal collection of Mr. Sutherland.



Pat Sutherland

Co. 944 (1939-1940)

Narrator: Pat Sutherland

Interviewer: Brent Allison, Capstone Program Student, Portland State University

Date: May 6, 2002

Place: Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters, Vancouver, Washington

Introduction:

Harry "Pat" Sutherland was born August 17, 1921 in Vancouver, Washington where his family had lived for two generations. Pat came from a small family having one older brother, Edward. Prior to the Great Depression, his father worked as a truck driver but with the Depression, he was forced to take a lower paying job as a box-stacker at a local cannery. The family faced hardships during the Great Depression but were never on federal relief. During this time, Pat was in high school and thinking about finding work. He and a close friend signed up for the CCC in Vancouver, Washington, in July of 1939, soon after graduation from Vancouver High School. After military service in the South Pacific during World War II, Mr. Sutherland attended university, eventually earning a doctoral degree in education. His career in education included many years as a public school superintendent.

So, how was your family affected by the Great Depression?

Well, Dad had a job as a furniture truck driver and he went in one morning and the fella said, —We're cutting back and I'm going to have to let you go," and he was the only driver that they had so business was bad enough that, I assume that the owner was going to do his own driving. I don't know though.

So, Dad came home and said, —I'm out of work now." To give you an idea of how times have changed, his salary as a truck driver for ten hours a day, six days a week was \$17.50. Well, that was what supported the entire family. Then we didn't go on relief. He then went to town and began looking for work. And in those days, they had three large canneries in Vancouver that did canning of local products grown and prunes were one of the largest products we had, so the cannery did a lot of work with that. He went down there and got a job as a box stacker and in those days everything was in wooden boxes and you could see outside the cannery, these house sized piles of boxes that these fellows would stack up. And that was the job that he ended up with and that paid twenty-five cents per hour.

Do you remember what year that was?

It would have been about '35. 1935.

What experiences did you and your family have with the forest before your CCC years?

Well, before we went in the CCs, we camped a lot. And in fact one of the places we'll talk about, Government Mineral Springs, was one of our favorite camp spots, so we spent time camping there. We went up to Sunset where the Sunset Ranger Station was established and we camped there. [We] fished many of the creeks and rivers in the Gifford Pinchot but all of our connections with it was recreational.

What would you fish for?

Well, trout and of course the steelhead were in the Wind River but [we] never tried for them. [We] fished Trout Creek and other small creeks, Panther Creek, and picked up trout on those.

Okay, about the CCC, what do you recall about the first time that you heard about the CCC?

I graduated from high school in June of 1939. I had a cousin who was a very close friend of mine and I didn't see him for awhile. I checked with his parents and they said, "Well, he joined the CCC camp." So I went down there to find out what it was and how it worked. They had an office, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest Office was down where the barracks is now, near where Fort Vancouver location is, in that area. [I] went down to the office and found out that if your parents had very limited money you could get in the CCC camps, so a friend of mine and I went down together and we signed [up] and joined. That was how I became acquainted with the CCC camp.

So what was the significance to you of being in the CCC at the end there, in the late „30's?

Well the original requirements were that your family had to be on relief. That is, the government gave you food and what-have-you to survive, and that you were physically fit. Those two things were the main criteria, however, they relaxed the restriction on relief because there was so many young people who their parents were not of relief but they were very, very limited in their income. This was a way to do two things. It got the person out of the house so you had one less mouth to feed and it got them in an earning capacity, so that they contributed a certain amount of money every month to the family. So, you see, those two things together made it a little bit easier on the family to survive. And when you're talking about the money that you got, nowadays you would smile at the amount that we sent but it proved very valuable to the parents.

Was your family on relief?

Oh no, we never were on relief. Dad always was able to find a job somewhere.

Where did you first go when you signed up?

When [I] first signed up, I spent, [it] was supposed to have been a week but they shorted it because, I'll talk about this later, but 1939 was the worst fire season that they had ever had in the Northwest and they were actually anxious to get people into the camps. And so instead of a week, I spent three day in the Vancouver Barracks tents, down where the camp headquarters was. General Marshall, who was head of the army post, was also head of the CC camp. He had a number of military people involved. You got your shots and you got clothes issued to you and got all of the things that you needed to become a member of the CC camp.

I have something to give you. When you got your footlocker and your supplies, they made you a tag like this [hands interviewer his locker ID tag] and that was what you tacked on to all of your belongings. You know, the boxes and things that you had. They also used that on all the labels for equipment and things that [were] in the camp so when anybody picked up something, you knew that it belonged to the camp. So that was our camp logo there.

So the logo is a piece of tin. It says, "CCC Company 944."

The Civilian Conservation Corps, Company 944, yeah. Every company, of course, had its own number for distinction, yeah.

Where did most of your fellow company members come from?

Well, Hemlock was unique, in so far as all the people [there]. I shouldn't say that. Ninety-nine percent of the people were all local people from either as far north as Longview and Kelso and as far east as Stevenson and Carson so the great bulk of the people came from Vancouver. Now if you went over to Sunset for example, most of those people came out of either Chicago or New York. And they would have random groups, you know, from all over the area but they would be sent there. [The] Zigzag Camp⁸⁷ that I mentioned was almost entirely made up of kids from the lower east side of New York, so the make-up of the camps was very unique. We were unique in so far as we lived here and worked here.

So, would you say that was rare?

It was indeed rare. In the camps that I visited over the years, [I] seldom found people who had their CC camp close to where their home came from. Very few.

Were there any minorities in your camp at that time?

Let's see, we had a couple kids who would now be classified as ... well, I don't know quite what the terminology is. Anyhow, they were Mexican kids that came from Mexico. Their families had lived in the Vancouver area for a number of years. I know them both real well. But beyond that we had none.

Do you remember the day that you signed up for the 3Cs?

Let's see. I got out of high school in June and I went into the camp in July, so I signed up about the first or second of July, 1939. They ran it six years. Enlistment was for six months, January to October, I think it was. I mean June to October and then October to June. Six months at a time.

Where did you have to go to sign up?

Went down to Vancouver Barracks. They had an office down there for the Forest Service and [I] went down there and signed up.

Did any of your friends or family sign up with you?

I had one very close friend. He went out and joined with me. I had at least a dozen fellows who I knew very well from school days who were already in. One man, Oren Thompson, was a cousin of mine and he had joined six month before I had.

So, were you able to work with any of these people that you signed up with? Did they go to Camp Hemlock with you?

Yeah, oh everyone. All of us went to Camp Hemlock. Incidentally, it's interesting to note the people who I knew in the CC camp who later went into [military] service and were killed in the service. There were about six fellows who were in the camp with me who didn't make it through World War II.

⁸⁷ CCC Camp Zigzag (F-11), Mt. Hood National Forest, Oregon, was established in 1933.

How long were you in the CCC?

I was in for a little over a year.

Did you have the opportunity to sign up for additional service?

Oh yes. Originally you could only sign up for two years. If you left the CC camp after your two year enlistment, then you could stay out for a period of time and then rejoin if you wanted to. Every six months you re-enlisted and one of the ways that you got out of the CC camp was to find a job that would pay you more money than you were making in the CC Camp. It was necessary for the employer to write a letter to the CC camp saying that they planned to hire you, then you were allowed to leave the camp. You didn't have to complete your enlistment. One of the interesting things about the camps is they were run by the army. It was military supervision so a lot of the things in the camp were set up on the basis ... the outline was like a military organization. We had Commander Mann who was the head man at camp. We had a company clerk who was, I believe he was a sergeant. Those were your two main military personnel. Now, they oversaw the whole camp so when you signed up for it, it was signed up on a military basis. You signed up for a certain length of time. You had very certain rules. You adhered to certain regulations and as a camp, as a whole, it had this kind of military significance. Although they would never call it a military camp, it was organized under that basis.

The work we did was all under people connected with the National Forest, with the Gifford Pinchot Forest, so you had all of these leaders, all of these fellows who were the bosses who took you out to work in the woods. One guy had timber fallers and somebody else had the road builders and somebody else would have another group of some kind but they all had their own areas of skill that they were in charge of. So, you had the military that ran the camp and the Forest Service that ran the work.

So, was there encouragement to enter the army, the armed forces, after leaving?

Well no, but interestingly enough, I think the military, at least in the latter part of the CC from the late 30s on, felt that it was significant that we have a group of young people available quickly if something should happen. So, CC camps provided this. You had 180 fellows in one spot all who were of the age to be militarily active. And although it didn't affect me, because I had left before WWII had started, the fellows who were in the camp when WWII began were immediately encouraged to join the military. And if they didn't, when they went home they were drafted. It was a group of people available very quickly to make up a military force, so in that respect, [yes]. But pressure, no, I never felt any pressure to [join the military].

Okay, so let's talk a little bit about Camp Hemlock. What were your first impressions about Camp Hemlock?

I had been up there a couple times where we were camping up at the Government Mineral Springs. My dad took us up and we went through the camp and saw the barracks and saw the tree nursery and what have you. So I knew a little bit about it but my first impression of it was that it was a very efficient place. The guys seemed to know what they were doing. You were treated very nicely even though you were told what your limitations and restrictions were and what you could and couldn't do. It was done in a very proper manner. You didn't feel any threat at all. You soon learned who the bosses were and who the leaders were and you recognized their authority. But I found it a very comfortable place to be and having so many men around me who had been friends of mine in town, you know, didn't make me feel that isolated.

Can you describe the barracks that you were assigned to?

The barracks was a building that was, I suppose, sixty feet long. You had bunks on either side of it. You had a locker that held your clothes. You had a footlocker that you kept extra gear in and you had a —ing shower.” There was one little room at the end and that was where the leader of that barracks slept. He slept in this room by himself. I have one picture here that shows you just a little bit, recognizing the fact that we didn’t have real good cameras in those days. This is a picture of the inside of Barrack 4 where I stayed. Barrack 4 was unique because it was divided about two-thirds of the way down. All of the fellows on the other side of the division were members of the cook’s crew and they slept there because they had to be isolated because they were up so early in the morning to get breakfast ready.

Were these barracks lit with electric lighting?

Mm-hmm, but not very much.

Is there a fire extinguisher by the door?

Mm-hmm.

Any sort of heating?

A big stove [made] of two fifty-gallon oil drums stacked on top of each other. You [would] build a fire in the bottom one and then the heat would go up and be circulated by the other tank. The stovepipe would run out the side.

Like radiant heat?

Mm-hmm, it was all wood heat though.

Could you describe your daily routine, from dawn ,til dusk?

Well, let’s take the period of time when I was there [at Camp Hemlock]. The first three days that I was there we worked for the military and we were told it was to pay for the clothes that we got. I’m not quite sure that’s how it worked but for some reason our first three days in camp were assigned to military and/or what was called —do camp work.” This is work you did right in the camp itself because that’s what the military officer controlled, was the camp itself, so you did work in the camp.

The fellows that I went in [with] when I did, five of us, were put together taking out a big stump that was right in the middle of camp and [was] inconvenient. So our job was to dig the thing and chop on it and saw on it until we got it out of the ground. That took us three days.

Then when I left that job — you were immediately assigned to a company which was either tree-falling or whatever the assignment was and I happened to get into a tree-falling group. That meant we were up every morning around 6:30, got ready for work, went in to have breakfast, came out from breakfast, did our normal things and got ready to get in the trucks. Then they would take us out to where we were falling timber. Sometimes this might be an eighteen, twenty-mile run. There was a set time when you had to be back in camp, or were supposed to be back. Supper was set at a certain time. You were supposed to be back for that. When you came back you were usually pretty fatigued from a day of falling timber. But you came back, had your supper, sat around [and] did some talking, and depending on the time of

year that it was, you might go outside and engage in some kind of an activity but you were usually pretty anxious to get in the bunk.

You mentioned that you had breakfast in the morning. What types of things would you have for breakfast:

Oh, [it] ran the full gamut. Ham and eggs and hot cakes and everything. There was an interesting way that the meal was served. Every table was long enough to accommodate probably twelve fellows. Sitting at the head of the table, up at the end of it was the boss, the head man, what we called the forty-five dollar man. In this Thanksgiving dinner thing [menu], you would see the leaders listed up above, and then the assistant leaders below them. Well, the leader would sit on one side of the table and assistant leader would sit on the other. When the mess cooks brought the food around they gave it to the guys on the end. They took what they wanted and then passed it on down. When it got to a place where you ran out of food, then that last guy to have it, he picked the thing up to get the rest for the other guys. But they always smiled at these two guys on the end. [They] never went hungry because the plates came to them first [laughter] but it was delicious food. I ate so well [that] I couldn't believe it.

[We] had an interesting thing at camp. There was an old army cook by the name of Dutch Halle who had retired from the army and became the cook at Hemlock. [He] was an unbelievably skilled cook and turned out just great meals and of course, being used to cooking for a large number of people, he handled our camp very well.

How about lunch? You mentioned that you were out in the field.

Well, we used to have a good joke about lunch. It was always a sack lunch, put up this brown sack lunch. When you went out to fall, there was a trailer in the back that was the saw trailer. Now, unless you've lived around when they used crosscut saws, this probably wouldn't mean very much to you, but you take an eight to ten foot saw and they had this rack in there [in the saw trailer] and saws were slid into that. Then when you got there, well you went over there and took the saw by the handle and you pulled it out and leaned it on you shoulder and headed for the first tree. The lunches, well there was a little spot on the trailer where the lunches were stored in there. Then when you got out there, well the head man would blow a whistle or give a yell and then it was time to eat, so you took your half-hour off for lunch. The interesting thing [that] they used to say about Dutch Halle, he had a mixture of some kind that he would make sandwiches out of and they used to call it Dutch Halle special. Nobody to this day knows exactly what it was but you could always plan on having a Dutch Halle sandwich in there somewhere.

Were they good?

Well, yeah. I think they were pretty good. They guys had a lot of unique names for them but [laughter] it wasn't too bad. They used to say if you're giving Dutch a bad time about something, you could be assured that you'd have your sandwiches.

So, describe to me how the tree falling process worked.

Well, you were in a squad of three men. Now when you left to go out to work, you know, you got in the truck to leave. You had the crosscut saw. You had a set of springboards; that's two springboards. Each man had his own falling axes. You had a sledge and two wedges. That's what you went off to start with. The head man, the foreman, would go out and he'd get up on this ridge and he'd say, —~~Ca~~ay, these are the ones that have to go down.” He'd point them out

to you and then each of the three groups of fellows would be assigned an area that they had to work the trees down. So you'd go down there and start working on them and the boss would come by and say, —you've gotta get that one and gotta get that one,” and so on. So, you two fellows worked on the tree. The other guy stood back and watched because snags were dangerous, in so far as you didn't know how rotten they were and how much of that top, or how many limbs might come falling, so you were on the lookout. We rotated jobs. I was fortunate [that] I could shop wood from either side, left or right handed so it didn't make any difference which side I was on, I could still work the axe. Some fellows had to be on a certain side. If I got tired, I'd say, you know, —Put the saw for a while,” or what have you. And the procedure for cutting the tree is, you first cut a face in it. That was a notch. You sawed into the tree maybe a third of the way through and then you used your axe to cut an angle in there and that became the face. Then you sawed the tree off. When it got close to being ready to go, you stuck a wedge in and pound on the wedge to tip the tree up and tip it over. Because of the face being in front of it, most of the time you knew which way the tree was going to go.

You mentioned that you were cutting snags. Were those the targeted trees?

Right. You see, the whole area there had fires go through two different times and they were all lightning [caused]. Well, one was started by a man. The other was lightning struck. When lightning struck it, always hit the highest point and the highest thin on the point, snags. Now, you didn't worry about healthy trees because if you hit a green tree it wouldn't burn but if it hit a snag, the snag would explode and it would all be on fire. So, the whole rationale about this, cutting those trees down, was fire prevention because we cut beautiful wood. Sometimes the tree being burned on the outside didn't affect the quality of the wood at all. It made the tree very hard. It would be beautiful three foot logs that laying all over up there because they were snags that were dangerous.

What were you using the trees for that you were harvesting?

They never did, to my knowledge they did nothing with them.

Would you leave them lying on the [ground]?

They laid all over the place, yeah. In fact, I have a picture here of us falling timber and you can see the picture of the logs lying where this has already been cut off there. This was a tree that our squad cut and then the guy that wasn't cutting took that picture.

Looks like you can see the wedge sitting right there.

That's the wedge and there you can see the face cut in front.

I imagine that these were predominately Douglas-firs?

Yeah, I would say, oh ninety-percent of them were Douglas-fir. There were some cedars but the cedar withstood the fire better than the fir did so most cutting was Douglas-fir.

My impression of Camp Hemlock when I was there, I didn't see any hemlock trees. Were there hemlock trees back in those days?

Oh yes, lots of hemlock. You could always tell the difference between the hemlocks and the firs because a fir has a straight top up there and the top bends over on a hemlock. There were lots of hemlock in there too. They [hemlock] and Douglas-fir got along very well together.

Who was your commanding officer while you were at Camp Hemlock?

Oh, Captain Marsh and he was there the whole time I was there.

So, he was a military officer?

Yes, he was a military officer and then Frank Howard was his assistant. I don't know that these two men were military then but both of their men were associated with company officers. One was Dr. Simmons. He was the camp physician and Mr. Halstead who was the educational advisor.

What other assignments did you have while you were in the 3Cs? And then I'd like to talk about them individually ...

Well, for one week I was on the fire lookout ...

I just asked Pat about his other positions while he was in the CCCs and he mentioned fire lookout and that" where we got cut off.

Okay, let me take just a moment to go back and talk just a little more about timber falling. You were expected to fall a certain number of snags a day. Each squad was and the way they determined whether or not you were meeting your quota is they did what they called stumpage measurement. The boss would come around, or the assistant leader would come around with a tape measure and when you'd fallen a snag, he'd measure how big the stump was. Then he would credit you with that. At the end of a shift, there would be so many feet or inches of snags that you were to have fallen.

Now the main thing was to get the snag on the ground so what the fellows would do if there was another snag close enough, they would try to fall this one into that one and knock it down. Then they could get credit for it without sawing it. That was the gimmick that we used but the tragedy was that quite often the snag that you fell would hang up in the other one. Now you had to go in and work underneath that snag and hope to Lord that that thing didn't come loose while you were getting that other tree down. That was a common practice and then if you were not maintaining the level of competence and speed that you were supposed to, they would change squads or put you in with other fellow to make it go faster.

Did you use ropes at all?

[We] didn't use any ropes. [We] always guided them by the face. Oh, the greatest danger was if your tree had a severe lean to it in one direction. You very often would have to fall it with the lean because the face wouldn't be strong enough to pull the tree away. We used to do what they call corner cut. You would saw the tree all the way through on one side but leave six inches of wood on the other. Then, when the tree went, well that holding on that side would cause the tree to twist. So, you could sometime overcome the lean by the tree twisting away from where the cut was.

Were there any accidents while you were on this assignment?

The only one in the year that I was there, and I fell trees for about six months of that time, the only accident that I saw was when a fellow jumped from his springboard. [When] we fell the tree across the side of the hill, he fell when he humped and the tree rolled over him as it rolled down but he fell into a hollow and it just skinned his back up a little bit but it was absolutely deadly. It would have killed him in an instant if he hadn't hit the hole. That was the closest thing.

Of course, you know, you realize that these were sharp tools. There were young men, many of who had never had an axe in their hands and the amount of instruction that you got was when the boss said to you, —~~Us~~ this axe to chop that tree down, and you swing it like this." That was your instruction. Nowadays, of course, there would have been all sorts of training and all sorts of protection. We never wore a hard hat. The only protection that we had was when hunting season was on, we wore a red bandanna around our neck so that the hunters could see that we were up that tree because we were sawing it down. Not because we were an animal of some kind.

What sort of wildlife would you see up there?

Oh, [I] very seldom saw any cougar. I saw one, one time as we were coming back in the truck. [You would] see a few bear, a lot of deer. [We would] see a whole lot of deer up in there until hunting season came, then you couldn't find a one.

What about Indians? Did you encounter any of the Yakama Indians up there?

No, never saw any of the Indians up that way, never had any contact with them.

Okay, so back to your other assignments. I have fire lookout at Bunker Hill. What else?

Well, let's see. [I] did fire lookout. [I] was at two different side camps where we did side camp work. Then I went with ... we had a traveling dentist who came around once every six months. I went with him and was his assistant for about three months and then left him and came back to camp.

Weren't you also a smoke jumper at one point?

No. We had no smoke jumpers at that time, in that area. There may have been some somewhere else. We never heard anything about them.

So your focus was more on fire prevention, not firefighting?

Oh no. [I] did a tremendous amount of firefighting. You see, 1939 [was one of] the worst fire seasons anywhere. When we came in [to camp] in our truck, half of the fellows who came in with us [were] immediately loaded into another truck and took off for the Okanogan Forest up near the Canadian border. [There] was a huge fire up there. Some of the guys in that group never saw their barracks for the first three weeks they were in camp because they immediately went on fireline. Well, about the time those fellows got on the fireline at Okanogan, the huge fire at Tillamook started and almost took out the town of Tillamook. They took the guys in camp and they roused them out and they headed for Tillamook⁸⁸. While they were down at Tillamook the Wolf Creek Fire broke out, which was somewhat in the same area. So, some of the guys were

⁸⁸ The *Hemlock Breeze* on August 25, 1939 reported, —....Saturday nite August 5, enrollees were told that firefighters were wanted for the Tillamook fire in Oregon. Six squads of firefighters, foremen Calverly and Graham, and cooks and truck drivers were selected and sent...."

called off the Tillamook Fire and went there and what was left in the camp went down there and I got sent down to Wolf Creek. While they were at Wolf Creek, the huge Willard Fire started which was within fifty miles of our camp and so back we came, in trucks, up to Willard and took on the Willard Fire up there. So, you see, in that period of time, we're talking about quite a period that we were out away from camp on these different fires.

So, as a firefighter, I imagine this was intermittently that you'd work when a fire came up and then in between [fires] you'd go back to whatever assignment you had.

Yeah, your snag falling or whatever job you had. Uh, huh.

Okay, so let's talk about firefighting a little bit. What kind of tools did you use to fight fires?

The main tools that the regular workers had was a shovel, an axe, and a hoedag. Now a hoedag is a flat bladed tool on one end with an axe blade on the other end.

Is that the same as a Pulaski?

Something like a Pulaski, mm-hmm. What we would do is, they would get us in a line, one behind the other, and you would start walking through there. One man would chop the right side [of the trail] and the other one would chop the left side. You would clear all the debris back so that you ended up with a path that was about three feet wide. This became your [fire] break line. As long as the fire stayed on the ground, the firebreak line would hold it. When it treed, when the fire topped out on the trees, then you just ran. For example, on the Wolf Creek Fire, we were on there digging fireline for twelve hours without stopping. Then another group would come out and relieve you and you [went] back wherever, whatever you called camp, and got a few hours sleep.

So, describe for me, if you would, how the fire units were lined up. Would you be in a team with another person? Would there be a whole group of people?

When I worked on them [fires], you were assigned into a group of maybe twelve, fourteen men. Most of them would be from your own company. And, as I say, they would put you in this line and you would make [a] fire trail. Now of course they had bulldozers and they had graders and other things in there working but I was never connected to anything like that.

How were you transported to these fire lines?

Always by truck.

By truck, and would you have to hike in, in certain cases?

Well, when we talk about spot fires, you betcha. That was a different thing altogether, [on the] Wolf Creek Fire, the trucks could get within about two miles of where the fire was and then you could get in to the camp, where the main camp was and get squared away on equipment and what have you, and then head off for the fire line. But, very often you had to walk to the fireline because you couldn't get equipment in there.

As far as equipment, did you have a backpack that you would pack in? What sort of things did you carry?

No. The only guys that carried a backpack were the ones that had the water cans. They carried this water can on their back and sprayed a spot for little fires out here and there.

What about your boots? Did you have "hobnail shoes" or caulked boots, or ...?

You were issued two kinds of boots when you went in [the CCC}. One, they called "slipshods" because they were just a leather-soled boot without any caulks in it. The other one was the caulk boot. You used the caulk boot for ninety percent of your work. Certainly falling timber you wore the caulks. Your slipshods you wore around camp and then on jobs where you didn't need to have the caulks on.

Incidentally, the rules were very strict about the caulk boots. You never wore your caulk boots into the barracks or into the mess hall, because if a hundred and eighty guys walked across the floor in caulk boots, pretty soon your floor was gone. They were very strict about that.

I've seen pictures of them, but can you described them for me? What is a caulk boot?

Mm-hmm. It had a heel that was probably an inch and a half high and a sole that probably a half-inch thick. It was of leather. The caulks were small quarter-inch long spikes that had a screw attachment on the other end and there were metal sockets [in the boot sole] and they screwed those things into them. If they didn't screw them in, they had a point on each end and they had a tool [for] pounding them into the shoe. That's the only kind I ever had, was the kind they pounded in. The caulks worked beautifully as long as you used them the way you were supposed to.

When we felled trees, we used springboards, but when you got on a side hill, trying to fall a tree, if one man was way below the other one, you had to get on an even plan to saw. So, we would cut a notch in the tree and stick in a springboard and one guy would be on the springboard. A springboard was a two-by-six that had a metal plate on the end of it that was curved upwards and sharpened. You would cut a notch in the tree, much like the face that I showed you. You would put the springboard in there and bend down on it so the steel would bite in on the tree, and you would jump up on it and stand on that board while you sawed.

Like a diving board.

Yeah. Same principle. Then we used to take them and we would shave them down the sides and get that as thin as possible, because the board would then flex and it made sawing easier.

What kind of foods or emergency supplies would you carry with you while you were on this assignment?

Practically nothing. The truck had a first aid kit in it, some splints in case somebody broke an arm, things of that nature, but it was very, very simple.

Was there a medic or someone who was responsible for that sort of thing?

You had a doctor in camp but no medic in the field.

While you were fighting fires, were there ever any serious injuries?

[I] saw some fellows burned pretty severely. In the Wolf Creek Fire we had about fifty fellows, and they weren't in our company, that got trapped because the fire topped into the trees. The

thing that saved their lives was that they were by Wolf Creek itself. They got into the creek and stayed in there so that the fire passed over them and they were able to survive. They nearly died from loss of oxygen, not from the fire, but the fire took so much oxygen out of the air. But, I never saw any real serious injuries in all the firefighting that I did.

So, what was the typical burn like that you would go on assignment for?

I was never on one that was under about 3,000 acres. They were always pretty good-sized fires. You lay out an acre of land and think about 3,000 of them and that's quite a bit of property. Of course Wolf Creek and Tillamook got far beyond that. [It was] miles to go around those fires. But most of them, the ones that I was on at the time, [were] about from 1,000 to 3,000-acre fires. Willard was the biggest one that I was on and at that time, Willard had been burning for awhile before we got there because it started so suddenly. We were down at Wolf Creek at the time, so when we got there it was burning pretty good. My first job there was in the tool room. I worked all night sharpening tools for the fellows. Then, after I was there for a week, I got called from there to go out on the line.

This was at Wolf Creek?

This was at Willard.

Willard? I'm not familiar with that. Is that within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest?

Yes it is. You go up past Carson and it's due east of Carson some miles. There was a little town up there called Willard [and] there was a logging company up there called the Willard Logging Company.

So, would you set up make-shift camps?

Yeah, there was a camp called Big Cedars Campground. They had picnic tables and things there and people went up there for picnicking and what have you. That became our operating camp⁸⁹.

So, were there vacationers in the area when you...?

Oh, no. They were out completely.

They were out because of the fires?

Yeah.

So, you had the whole camp to yourselves, and this was a company of twelve or thirteen?

This was by the time we pulled the fellows off of Wolf Creek and Tillamook. [When] they came up, there was probably eighty of us up there.

How did it feel to be in a blazing forest fire like that?

⁸⁹ The *Hemlock Breeze* reported on August 25, 1939 that, —3men from this Company have been stationed at Big Cedars Fire Camp and were working near the town of Husan [sic] and also at Beezee Corner [sic]. The Hemlock firefighters returned to camp Wednesday, August 23, 1939."

Well, I was never in a position where I was close enough to feel that I was in any danger. If you can believe how fast a fire can move, when I was on [the] fireline at Willard, I was working a mile-and-a-half from the fire, because you get any closer than that and the fire would get by you. Then you [would] just have to go dig another one [fireline]. So, we were about a mile-and-a-half from the actual fire and now, interestingly enough, we dug our fire trail and quit about seven o'clock at night and went home. [We] went back and was out on the line again at seven o'clock the next morning and the fire [had] crossed the line, so it covered that mile-and-a-half in a relatively short time.

Was there any sort of air support in those days?

No, no air support. [It was] all ground work.

So, about how many burns did you fight between 1939 and 1940?

I fought on just the two. I fought Wolf Creek and Willard, but like I say, there were fires all over. Well now, I got some other fires that I fought and those were called spot fires. Would you like to know something about those?

Please.

Okay. During the time of the year when the thunderstorms were bade and the lightning strikes, the people working at Bunker Hill and the other lookout stations when the lightning hit, they were up all night watching to see where these hit. Now, when lightning struck a snag, the snag would explode and the fire would be spread out for maybe fifty feet in each direction. Well, the guy on the lookout would spot the fire. He'd get his quadrants and he would call in and he would say, —We got a spot fire that looks about this big and need x-number of guys to come in here.” So, maybe we're talking about five guys, maybe we're talking about fifteen, depending on how much the fire is moving, okay? So, then you would pack up and they would take you by truck, as close as you could get to that area.

Now remember, in those days there were not a lot of roads through there, so very often you just could [not] go very far [by road]. Then you'd unload and you'd take the tools that you need and you would hike in to where the fire was. Then you'd start to fight the thing. I remember two spot fires that [I] went on. It was a five-mile walk on each of them. We figured about five miles to get into where the action was, so we would get into the spot fires and then we would go to work and get that [fire] surrounded and get the water on it and get it under control.

That night the mule train would come in. There was a fellow living up near Carson who was a muleskinner. The [CC] company would call him and say, —We got fifteen guys out here working. They need blankets and food.” So, he would come by the camp and get what he needed, load up his animals and take them as close as he could get and walk them in. Here would come the mule train with your food and your supplies.

Were you ever injured while on duty?

Never. [I] never was hurt.

Did you have someone that you worked with primarily, or did they rotate different men in and out?

In timber I had the same group. There were three of us that worked together all the time I worked timber, falling.

Do you remember who they were?

No, I can't. Sorry, I can't tell you their names. I don't remember.

Were they from Camp Hemlock as well?

They were all from Camp Hemlock. One of them lived in Vancouver and the other one lived in Kelso.

Did you ever visit any other camps while fighting fires?

The only other camp I visited, well, let's see, when I was with the dentist I visited Goldendale and Zigzag, and let's see, I visited Stanfield.⁹⁰ I visited three camps. I would be there about a week, maybe ten days.

But no when you were fighting fires?

Not when we were fighting fires.

Why don't we jump to dental assistant? How did you get the assignment as a dental assistant?

Well, what happened was, when the dentist came into camp, they put the sign up that anybody that needs to have teeth work done, go to the dentist, and if you wanted your teeth cleaned, see the assistant. Well, in our camp he didn't have an assistant and so, when he was filling a tooth for me, I said, "How do you become an assistant?" He said, "You come in here and I'll show you what to do and you become an assistant." So I went to the camp commander and okayed my leaving. Then the dentist took me over and he showed me how to work the equipment and basically what I was doing to clean teeth. Then, that's what I started doing.

I was his assistant and [I] took care of the equipment, kept records of who we worked on and helped work at the side chair with him when he was working. Then, after he was through, in the evenings I would clean teeth. I think we charged fifty-cents to clean your teeth, twenty-five [cents] for me. But then, I'd have to get there in [the] pay line when the guys came through, to get my money. If they had gambling debts or something, usually I was too far down the line to get paid anyways. You know, we got thirty bucks a month and twenty-five of it was sent home. You got five dollars of your own to keep up there so it only went so far, you know.

Who was the dentist, do you remember?

The one I worked with was named [Dr.] Rogers. [I] know nothing more about him.

Do you know if he was just an independent dentist or [if he] was part of the military?

He was part of the military. I think he was a lieutenant. I didn't have to call him sir or lieutenant, but he was military. Because of our position, you weren't in the service so you didn't have to treat them with the same military respect that you did if you were in the service.

⁹⁰ CCC Camp Stanfield (BR-44), located in Umatilla County, Oregon, was established in 1936 and was home to Co. 569.

Did you receive any extra money or benefits?

The only money [that] I got was when I cleaned teeth. I was supposed to get twenty-five or fifty cents for each set of teeth I cleaned. [I] didn't get most of it.

So dental work was extra? The CCC boys had to pay for that?

No, it was free.

Well, what was the fifty cents then?

Well, cleaning. Cleaning your teeth was something that was done over and beyond the dental work.

I see.

You might be interested to know that the drill was a foot-operated drill. You pumped your foot up and down on it and that was how you made the drill go. One of my jobs would be to stand there and pump this thing. It was a series of [laughter] ... it was a series of cables and wires that went up and you would pump that, and the doctor [would] say, —To fast" you know, or —To slow." Then, the other things that he used, that you wouldn't find now was a chisel. He would drill into the tooth and the part that he would have to get rid of, you'd hold the chisel by that [part] and you'd tap it with this little tiny hammer, and you'd chip a part of the tooth away.

What sort of drugs or medication were they using?

[I] don't remember any. Don't remember any.

What about location, like where you did your work? Was there a special tent, or buildings or anything for the dental work?

Since you had a doctor on site at all of the camps, or as many as I was in, you used his office area.

Tell me what camps you went to and how that process worked with you leaving Camp Hemlock.

Well, when I left Camp Hemlock, it was a matter of them taking me off their records, and I was put on the records as the dental assistant. Then, he [the dentist] had a series of camps that he went to and he traveled around to those so that he would come back to each camp once every six months.

Now, we went to Goldendale as our first camp. When I went up there, one of the camp leaders asked me to bring back some information about Goldendale because Goldendale was what they called a Soil Conservation Camp which was entirely different work than what we did. I have a picture here to give you. [looking at photos] There's the company clerk in Stanfield which was one of them that we visited. Here I am doing my dental work and there I am with my office records. Here's a picture of the work done at Goldendale. You see that fence back there? That's the retaining fence for snow, to prevent snow from drifting into the fields. They would put those up, they also put in dams, they did irrigation work, all kind of works that involved making the soil more productive.

We would be at each camp, from the dentist's point of view; we'd be in each camp about a week to ten days. Then we had our own truck and they would load all of the paraphernalia in the truck and then I rode in the back. Then we would head for the next camp. [We] ended up in Stanfield, which is not too far from Pendleton [Oregon]. Then, from there we went down through Zigzag by Mt. Hood. Then, I left the dentist there [at Camp Zigzag] and went back to camp [Hemlock].

Did the CCC promote dental hygiene, brushing your teeth, flossing, and that sort of stuff?

I don't recall any dental floss but there was a strong feeling about cleanliness. One thing that the company commander and the leaders and assistant leaders would get on you about was cleanliness. If you had somebody that didn't like the water or didn't take baths, didn't keep himself clean, they would go right to him and talk to him about that. It was an essential of living there. Since we came home every other week, the fellows would have quite a laundry bag to bring home to mom to clean up before you went back. Dental hygiene was part of that. The fellow would walk up to you and say, —Where's your toothbrush?" You were expected to use it regularly.

Back to the other camps, what were your impressions of some of these other camps, in comparison to Camp Hemlock? Were they similar structure or were there different feels, when you would go to Camp Zigzag for example?

Well, let's go to Goldendale. That one was entirely different because they were building soil conservation things. There was practically no one in camp. They were all out working on the fields and then at night they would come back into camp. So you hardly saw anybody. In fact, I don't think he [the dentist] hardly worked on half a dozen people there in camp. If you were going to be worked on by the dentist, you reported to your boss and there was no problem about not going out to work that day. You could just stay in and see the dentist, but we didn't work on very many people. The camp seemed to operate just like ours. Everybody got along fine. The barrack setups were the same as ours [in Camp Hemlock], so I didn't see much difference.

How was sanitation of [dentistry] tools performed?

We had an arrangement for boiling tools. They had a tray and they had a little gas burner. You'd put the tools in there and then they [the dentist] carried alcohol that you used on your tools.

You also mentioned that you worked at the fire lookout at Bunker Hill for a period of time.

Yeah, I made two trips up there and both times I was to fill in for someone who was sick and couldn't go. You hiked up to the top of Bunker Hill and you did your shift up there. You were supposed to be awake all night because that's when the real danger could be, you know. Then there was a guy that came in and relieved you. You were in there twelve hours, and the guy came and relieved you. Then you came back down off the mountain. The great pride of Bunker Hill was that you were expected to come down off that mountain in a certain length of time. If you couldn't run down off that mountain fast enough, they'd give you a bad time about it.

And how long would that take?

I think that the record was something like two minutes and twenty seconds, or something. Somebody flew down the mountain there [laughter].

I imagine that it took quite a bit longer to get up there.

Yeah, it was a zigzag trail up to the top of Bunker Hill.

Could you explain how the training of the Osborne Fire Detector worked?

You know, all through the CC camp the training was almost hands-on training. Timber falling, you went out there and the guy said, ya know, —~~D~~n't cut yourself." In one case we did a corner cut because we needed to turn the snag. The foreman came down and he said, —~~Y~~our corner cut is too ... you're holding too much wood." You can actually turn that tree completely and it will fall the other direction. So then he came down and showed us what we were supposed to do, but that's about as much instruction or detail that they would give you. If you put yourself in a dangerous situation, they would talk to you about it.

What about the Osborne Firefinder?

Well, the training I got on it was that I went up to relieve this fellow and I said, —I've never been up here before." And he says, —Okay, this is the way you use this." You had your map laid out there underneath it, you know, and you'd use the Osborne to spot whatever you were looking for. When you'd spotted that then you could work out the coordinates so you could tell em exactly where it was located in the fire. But that's about as much instruction as you got.

And then there was a radio to dispatch the ... ?

Right, mm-hmm.

Did you detect any fires when you were ...?

No, not when I was up there. [I] saw some bear, got a visual of some bear up there.

What kind of bears did you see?

Oh, they were all brown bear.

I know you took some education courses when you were in the CCC. How did that education program work?

Well, you gotta realize that back in 1939 not everybody went to school. There were a lot of young people who, because of financial needs, were not in school very often. High school kids, you know, would be out of school. You only had to go to the eighth grade. They'd be home working, so many of them lacked a good formal education, so the Corps, the camp would offer classes that would help you become more literate. In fact, a friend of mine who is still living here, I used to read his letters to him from his folks because he could not read or write and that was not uncommon in the Cs.

The whole idea of the education program was to provide a learning situation for people who had some real gaps in their learning experience. Well then too, for those that did have a formal education, they offered interest classes that related to work in the woods. These were offered by the Idaho State Educational Department. At least the ones at Hemlock were. Mr.

Halstead would post up, —The following courses would be available.” So, if you saw a course that interested you, you went in and signed up. That’s how I happened to have this course in forestry that I completed. I didn’t take other classes because when I left with the dentist I was gone, I couldn’t get into the classes.

You would go in the evening, to your classes and then on some Saturdays and you’d have materials that were loaned to you. You didn’t have to buy anything. The books came over that you needed and the pamphlets that you completed test questions in and what-have-you. Mr. Halstead was supposed to be the man of all knowledge because he taught everything, so [chuckles] it was really valuable. I enjoyed learning something and the forestry class basically acquainted me with the different kind of trees and where they grew, how they were harvested, and things like that.

What can you tell me about Mr. Halstead? What were his credentials?

Mr. Halstead was a college graduate in education. [He was a] very understanding gentleman and very, very pleasant to work with. Not imposing at all. He offered you opportunities. I would have considered him, as I remember him, an excellent school administrator.

So, was he the only teacher?

Mm-hmm. He would call in other people for class presentations. For example, in the forestry class, he’d have Jess Adams come in, who was head of all the leaders. Jess Adams would talk to the class about different [parts of] the Pinchot National Forest and what the conditions of the forest were and what kind of trees were there and where they grew and about all the things connected with the forest. [We] also did some map work. We learned something about the layout of the National Forest and how you read elevation maps and things like that.

So, what kind of classes did you take? Were they just forestry classes?

Yeah, forestry was the only one I took, mm-hmm.

You just took the one course?

Mm-hmm, and usually the one course was about all you could handle at a time because the workload was such that you took your classes at night and on weekends and you couldn’t have very much of a class load and get through your work.

How long did the class last?

If I remember, it lasted something like twelve weeks, or something like that.

The typical college quarter?

Yeah, it’d be about the typical quarter, yeah.

Was this certificate something that was transferable to a university or college?

Well, it was interesting that I came home from the service in 1945 [and] I wrote to [the] Idaho State Department of Education [to] ask them if they could transfer the course for me. They indicated that their records from the Cs Conservation Corps no longer existed. It might be

something you would be interested in following up on. I'm going to give you this so you might start a correspondence there to see if there is anything [records] available.

Were the boys that took classes treated any differently than an enrollee?

Oh no, no. In fact, if you had the initiative to do anything else, for example, some of the fellows would go over to where they did repair on trucks and such and they would go over there on their own, just to learn something about repair work. So, no one ever put you down for being willing to... and even the fellow who were illiterate were never put in a position that was difficult for them.

Other than education. You have a picture here of you playing baseball. What can you tell me about recreation in the camp?

Recreation... we had a company baseball team. We had a company basketball team. Those were the only ones we had that competed in other places. We had camp track and field. We had races against each other. They allowed touch football. They did not allow tackle football, but five minutes after the game started, well, it was tackle football, so a lot of the rules changed pretty fast there. Nobody paid much attention to it. The other kinds of recreation were fishing. We'd go fishing. Some of the fellows did a little hunting. Walks, some take a stroll through the woods just to see what was out there. General conversation with guys.

So, were firearms allowed in camp?

Only in the company quarters. If you wanted to go hunting, you could go to the company quarters and you could sign out a rifle. Again, it was assumed that everybody knew how to fire a gun and knew how to handle the thing so you didn't get a lot of instruction.

I'm familiar with where the baseball field was but where did they have a basketball court?

We went down to Carson, Washington and we used their high-school gym.

And would they truck you down there?

Mm-hmm.

What about Trout Creek [Hemlock Lake]? Was there any interaction between the public and the CCC?

We didn't have very many people come up to the lake to see the lake specifically. They came through there, they'd be coming up to see the nursery and they'd say, —Oh look at the dam" and —Oh, ~~he~~ it's a CC Camp." That was about as much connection as we had. We did have quite a few visitors to the camp and [they] would come up and have dinner. My folks came up to see us two or three times and spent some time at the camp. You'd see other parents coming up ... friends coming up. The Trout Creek reservoir didn't really attract people up. There was a lot better fishing down the stream.

When we talked about dental work, you mentioned that some people didn't have money because of gambling debt. What was that about?

Well, at our camp, I mean most of the guys gambled for matchsticks but a few guys would get a game going. It'd be a [penny] game and just kind of off the cuff. Once in awhile a guy would bring in some dice and we'd roll a few dice but that's about all the gambling that happened. Then, if you did get in a situation where you'd gambled more money than you had, then the guy you lost to would be in the line the next payday to get his money. So, you'd get that five dollars in your hand then you'd start looking down that line to see how many guys you owed money to.

How far did five dollars go?

I almost always had money left over.

What would you spend it on?

The only money I would spend is every Saturday night those guys that wanted to could go down to [the] Carson American Legion Hall for a dance and it was really fun. We'd go to the dance and it would cost us ten cents to get in. Then on Sunday night you could go to the theater in Stevenson. You could go down and see the show, and that again, cost about ten cents. So then there were a few personal supplies that you would buy, a candy bar, shaving lotion, things like that. [We] purchased those in the camp store. Now, speaking about this gambling, to give you an idea of how the impact was different, depending on where the young people came from. When I was in Stanfield, the guy that ... I've got a picture of him here, he was a company clerk. There's a picture of [Hugh?] working at Stanfield. He and I got to playing a game of poker for matches and while we were playing, this young man walked up to us and said, —What are you doing?"

I said, —Well, playing a little poker."

He said, —For what?"

I said, —For matches."

And he said, —I wouldn't get any bigger without my cut."

Now this guy had come from an area in New York where there was a boss who ran all the gambling. You've probably heard of guys like Al Capone and such who ran these. He ran the gambling in that camp and nobody gambled with anything but what he got his cut and he had two very powerful young men with him, strong-looking young men who came with him. He walked up to the table and said, —You got eight guys playing? I need x-number of dollars or I need so much money." He absolutely ran all of the gambling in that camp. I had never seen this before. It was totally foreign to kids like us, living out here that anyone who would try to do that in our camp, you know, somebody'd deck ya [chuckles]. So... a whole different society, you see what I'm trying to say? A whole different society.

Yeah. What else did I have left here to talk about? Is there anything else that we haven't discussed that you'd like to add?

Well, let's see here. Just a couple things I might mention about the athletics. When we played teams, we played local town teams and then also other CC camps. I remember we played Sunset and played against Cascade Locks. Ever been up to Cascade Locks?

Yes.

They had a big Conservation Corps camp there. We would play, and if we had a good record among four or five places, then we were invited down to the Vancouver Barracks to play in the CCC championships. There would be teams from Seaside and everywhere around and as I remember, the year I went down with the team there were about six teams down there playing

and we continued against them. [We] stayed in the barracks down there in the post while the tournament went on.

What position did you play?

First base.

I see, in this picture, a dog. Were pets allowed in the camp?

That was our camp pet, Shep. He belonged to the camp. Nobody else had pets there. We had a guy that killed a mother bear and brought the two cubs into camp and we had the two cubs there for awhile, bottle-feeding them. But the Forest Service made us release them as soon as they got to this size [gesturing].

How long did you have the cubs for?

I think they were running around camp for a couple months.

Wow! [chuckles] Something that I didn't ask, but when you were on a dental assignment, you would travel from camp to camp. Where would you stay when you were in these different camps?

When I came into camp, they'd say that the dentist is in and they need a bunk for his assistant. I would go to whatever barracks they sent me to and would bunk there. Guys were friendly and didn't give me any trouble.

And the dentist would stay in the officer's quarters?

Yeah, mm-hmm. They always had officer's quarters for him, yeah.

I guess they didn't receive different treatment: You mentioned they sat at the head of the tables, but other than that, was there different treatment for the officers?

Oh, yes. The top men got forty-five dollars and all above the twenty-five dollars they got to keep themselves. The assistant leaders got thirty-six dollars, so it was a little bit of a pay raise for them and they got to keep that money. But they, as any boss, when we were out making fire line, they were watching us. They weren't working digging holes but you can guarantee that they were watching us. They weren't pulling the saw. They were actually in a supervisory capacity. They supervised the men and told them what they were supposed to do and how they were supposed to do it. And [they] watched to see that things were done properly. None of them were ever real aggressive in dealing with you, you know. They never hollered in your face or anything like that. They [were] intelligent men [and] would say, —Hey, hold it a minute.” Each of these fellows would be in charge of a barracks and Dusty Coleman was our camp barracks leader. He'd been in his third hitch in the Cs [or] second hitch. I guess he'd been in for two years and he got out, then he came back in again so he was quite a bit older than the rest of us.

Back to the money issue, you got paid thirty dollars a month?

Mm-hmm.

Five dollars you kept. Was your family living on your twenty-five dollars a month that was sent home?

When I came home, they had about half of it in the bank account for me. The other half they'd had to use for family needs.

And you said your dad had been earning seventeen dollars?

Seventeen dollars a month, driving furniture truck, ten hours a day, six days a week.

So, what was that like, since you got a job making nearly double that?

Yeah, well, I wasn't doubling his money because he was getting seventeen dollars and fifty cents a week and I was getting twenty-five dollars [thirty dollars] a month.

Pretty comparable though, you were making a similar wage at eighteen.

Well, twenty-five dollars a month, seventeen [dollars] in two weeks, he was ahead of me, you know. So, since I never saw the money, it didn't make any difference to me. They just handed you your five dollars when you came through the line.

So, did you use that money to go to college when you left the CCCs?

When I came out of the CCCs, I had this job that I got to get out of the CC camp, and went right from there into the military.

And what job was that?

Well, that's interesting. I came home and I got a job in the automobile parts house, selling car parts. Because of some things that happened on the job, partly my fault and partly somebody else's, I got fired. But then I went to work [at] Barnes Hospital, which is a big military [Veterans Administration] hospital in Vancouver [that] was being built. So, I got a job working at Barnes Hospital setting up furniture, the beds, office supplies, all the furniture. I had been there for two months when I went down and enlisted in the service in 1941. Then they said, "Well, you can't get paid by two government agencies. Which one are you going to stay in?" I said, "I'm going in the navy." So then I left that job. Now, the job I had at the automobile place paid me twenty dollars a week. The one I got in working for the government paid me nineteen dollars a week.

A little more money there. To wrap this up, I guess, what do you take from the CCCs that shaped your life? I guess what I'm trying to say is what has the CCC done for you, as a person?

Well, you know at the time, like every young person, you'd [be] like, "Boy, I'm going to get out of here." But when the sign-up time came, most of the guys would go in and sign up again. So, the first thing it taught you was that you could get along with people. You lived in a group of people; you learned how to adjust and you gave a little and they gave a little; you enjoyed yourself. I also learned some trade. I learned timbering. If I would have stayed to go into the timber business, working in the woods, they paid very good money for [fighting] fires in the woods but I didn't choose to go that way.

I learned something about authority; I learned that someone had the right to tell me what to do, and I was expected to do it. I had discipline at home but hated discipline in the

community. I learned something about that. Another interesting point was that when I went in the service, fellows that had been in the CC camp, very often became the head men in boot camp in the army and navy. They were called a squad leader and they got you lined up, and what have you. But, because they'd had that experience, they were picked to do these things. So, that would demonstrate that you also had lived with other men, in barracks with them in close quarters. [It] made it much easier to adjust to living with people in the military.

Did you find there were some advantages that you had over other men because you had a CCC background?

Only because of the fact that I could get along in a large group better than many of them could. I wasn't demanding. I respected authority much better than a lot of guys did. You know, I never said to anybody, —What right have you got to tell me that?" If he was the boss, he had the right to tell me that. So I learned something about operating effectively within a group where there was somebody in charge. The other point too, about CCC camps, the educational experience you got was valuable only because I took something that [I wouldn't have otherwise]. To many guys, that gave them something they could get nowhere else. They were never going to go back to school so the learning that they got was very valuable to them. Also, it was valuable if you came home from the CCC camp and you applied for a job someplace. If you could show them that you were out of the service with an honorable discharge, you were a little bit better person than someone who didn't have that. When you left [the CCC] you got an honorable discharge, a medical discharge, or a dishonorable discharge, depending on the conditions in which you left the camp.

So, there were a lot of reasons why the camp was a good thing, and you know, I've always conjectured whether there is a place for CC camps now. I don't think there is because society has changed so much that I don't believe you could put a group of young men together into a structured situation like that and have them be comfortable. But, the point is that the way you would do the work, nowadays, is so much more scientific that we did it. We pulled a saw; you'd take up a chain saw. We rode in a truck; you'd ride in a bus. You'd fly; we didn't know how. So, there are so many things that are different that I don't think even if Oregon had some kind of CCC youth arrangement, I don't see it being something that would be adaptable now. The reason they started it, too, was to provide employment and to reduce the number of people in the household so that you could survive during the Depression.

What do you think, had Hoover been re-elected and Roosevelt not been elected? What do you think would have come without the CCC? Do you think we would have exited the Depression right away?

Well, this is going to get a little political, but I was a strong Roosevelt supporter. Well, now the reason that Hoover was unsuccessful, and all the problems leading up to the depression were there before he got the job, he was not able to stop them. Now, Roosevelt went in and he used government money to start all of these programs and put people to work. And what a great idea because how in the world can people survive without working? Everyone liked Roosevelt because he got them a job.

Now, it's interesting to note that the government was starting into a serious financial bind because of the amount of money that Roosevelt had spent on his programs. As good as they were, they cost money and all of it was government funds. What saved him next? The war. The war came along. Everybody went back to work in the war defense and we got through the war and Roosevelt was a great leader because we made it through that. We came out of the war and went back to the private sector, operating, we teetered on the edge of another depression until everything got solidified. So, you see, Roosevelt was an opportunist. He put

himself in jeopardy by saying we're going to put everybody to work and this is how we'll pay for it. But right at the time, that difficulty of financing was coming about the [time] the war started and immediately there was plenty of government money.

Were they ever talking about re-establishing the CCC and the end of World War II to prevent another Depression-type scenario?

Oh, there was talk of it, but not very extensive. I don't know of any political figure from the State of Washington who ever went back to Congress promoting the idea of a CC camp.

There just wasn't a need for it?

Didn't see the need, and well, they were trying to get the people out of the government. You know, out from under the control of the government, rather than putting them in. When we were fighting fires, there would be civilians there. There was a group there called the Red Bandannas and they originated in Vancouver, about thirty-five fellows. They all wore that bandanna on their heads when they were fighting fire. They would come in and they got thirty-five cents an hour. They came in and they went out on the fire line with you. In fact, they were often in the more dangerous jobs and there would be these groups of people anywhere because it was a way to make a living.

Did they have the smokejumpers? I know that program was initiated, I think in 1939.

I believe they had them, although I never saw them on any fire. I never saw them and never saw them work.

What can you tell me about the landscape of the National Forest today, versus how it looked in your CCC years?

Well, all the timber that was gone out of the national forest when I was there in the CCC camps was gone because of fire. The rest of it was beautiful, three-foot and four-foot trees, Douglas-fir and hemlock trees. There was no logging except selective logging on it, and most of that was done under government regulation. The forest just went on forever. Even the private property around there; very, very few trees had been cut. When I returned of course, there had been a tremendous amount of logging done and a lot of work done. They began to open up the areas.

One interesting thing I forgot to mention, we were required in our camp to build a one-mile road a year. We had graders and we had bulldozers and we had guys with strong backs. This was building the Wind River Highway that you see going through there, and also the Beaver Creek Road. They would go out with all their equipment and built the base for it and when you were done, you had a nice gravel road to drive on. It was built by the CC camps. They started building it in '33 and I was there in '39. They'd made a sizable dent on the road up there.

We did trail maintenance, did a lot of work on trail maintenance. They were all fire trails so that if it ever got in trouble and had a fire, you had a trail to get there on. Another way of fire prevention that they did was what they called burning. When we took all this, the junk left over, from trees, all the limbs, all the bark and everything, we piled it up and we burned that. You'd see these huge fires all the way up and down that mountain road while we were burning the ... we called it slash, burning slash. So, that was another job that we did..

What was your role in building these roads?

When I went on it, all I ever did was pick and shovel work. They had one crew who spent all their time working on the roads. They called in the rest to finish up the stretch that they were doing. We did pick and shovel work and straightened up [the] sides and what-have-you.

Another thing we didn't get to, that you mentioned earlier and I promised we'd get back to [was] tin can pants.

Yeah, and they were very, very heavy khaki. You wore them all the time when you were working in the woods. [They were] Not particularly comfortable. They were regular protection. I'll tell you an interesting thing about tin pants. You could always pick out a logger because the bottom of his pants were frayed. You never hemmed the bottom of your pants and the reason was, that if you got in trouble and you ran and you got hooked on a snag, the pants would tear. Whereas, if you hemmed them on the bottom, they wouldn't.

So it was a safety precaution?

It was a safety precaution. Some of the fellows not only had the bottom cut, but they'd make maybe inch long slits around the bottom of it so that if they got hung up, there was a place for the tear to start. So, you could always pick out a logger by his [pants] bottom.

Did they truck you back to Vancouver to have a weekend to spend with your family?

Yeah. We'd come in on a Friday night and go out on a Sunday, about four o'clock. They brought us in by truck and then they had stops along ... where you had to be to catch the truck coming back. [I] Never saw a case of where somebody went AWOL on that. They always were there. Then, when you went down to the show on Sunday nights, you always wore your wool shirt and pants. Nobody came down there dressed in work clothes, and I just mentioned, I saw practically no drinking in the camp. I saw very little use of alcohol.

I saw one guy got kicked out of the camp because he had set up a still in the woods and they found it and [they] kicked him out of the camp. I was a little naïve myself. I didn't have anything to do with liquor and I didn't see any evidence of it there. Another thing, you were not allowed to have an automobile. The fellas who had cars would bring them in and park them about a half mile from the camp, back in the woods up there. Every so often, the commander would send a scouting party out to see if he could find any cars but he'd always stay close enough to camp so that he wouldn't see the ones that were way out there.

Did you have friends that snuck cars into the camp?

I only knew of three cars up there and I didn't ever have anything to do with them.

What about girlfriends while you were in the CCCs? You mentioned that there were dances you would go to?

Yeah, we would go to the dances and I only knew of one fellow that got infatuated with a girl. He skipped camp a couple time but got back in time for work so they didn't say anything to him. He had a girl in Carson. Most of the guys would go down to the dance and have a good time and dance with the local ladies and come on home. The sheriff of Skamania County was a lady and she had a beautiful daughter. She would come to the dance and bring her daughter. There was always a line of CC guys there to dance with the sheriff's daughter.

That sounds like a dangerous situation.

Yeah. [laughter]

Well, Pat, I really appreciate you coming to do this interview with us.

Well, I'm glad to do it. I hope it proves of some value to you.

[End of interview]

Transcribed by Bret Allison, May 2002

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Index

Bridges

Cispus Valley Bridge p. 17-18, 168-169, 175
Interstate Bridge p. 36
Wind River Bridge p. 20

Campgrounds

Big Cedars p. 292
Blue Lake Cr. p. 224
Council Lake p. 274
Cultus Creek p. 71, 74-75
Government Mineral Springs p. 108, 182, 188, 212, 284
La Wis Wis p. 119, 221, 231, 254, 262-263, 264
Moss Creek p. 63, 64
Ohanapecoh Hot Springs p. 261
Sunset Falls p. 281
Takhlakh Lake p. 274

Civilian Conservation Corps

Companies

Co. 602 p. 73
Co. 604 p. 73
Co. 933 p. 163, 219
Co. 944 p. 10, 46, 180, 205, 206, 282
Co. 945 p. 45, 46, 60
Co. 1456 p. 235
Co. 2907 p. 27
Co. 2919 p. 253, 262, 267
Co. 5481 p. 81

Main CCC Camps

Beacon Rock p. 34, 35
Goldendale p. 45, 55, 60, 137, 139, 157, 294-295
Hemlock p. 2, 4, 7, 9, 15, 17-19, 22-23, 33, 34, 46, 95, 97, 99, 100, 102, 104, 105, 106, 107, 129, 130, 138, 142, 145, 178, 179, 181, 183, 184, 197, 206-212, 234, 235, 236, 239-242, 244, 245-247, 284-285, 288, 296, 299
Lookout Mountain p. 7, 140, 176, 177-180, 184
Lower Cispus p. 7, 16, 17, 18, 23, 34, 110, 111-112, 120-122, 163, 164-165, 222, 224-225, 253, 254, 258, 264-265, 266-268, 277
Peterson Prairie p. 7, 73-74, 158
Rock Creek p. 7, 44, 45, 52, 55-56, 153, 155, 181-182

Sunset Falls p. 7, 45, 47-53, 80, 81, 84, 88, 91, 227
Twin Buttes p. 7, 44, 49, 52-54, 56, 153-155, 159-160

Side Camps/Spike Camps

Guler p. 65, 71, 91, 153, 155, 159, 274
Ohanapecoh p. 277
Pole Patch p. 281, 273, 277
Red Mountain p. 140-141
Sheep Lake p. 162, 163, 169-170, 222, 223, 226, 269, 275, 277
Siouxon p. 24, 181
Smoky Creek p. 7, 74, 153, 154, 155
Spirit Lake p. 7, 172-173, 259
Upper Cispus (Cat Cr.) p. 119, 164, 261, 277

Camps outside the Columbia NF

Cascade Locks p. 309

Cascadia (Oregon) p. 30
Denali (Alaska) p. 106
Mystic (South Dakota, Black Hills NF)
Reedsport (Oregon) p. 241, 242, 247, 254
Stanfield (Oregon) p. 302, 304
Wyeth (Oregon) p. 141, 143, 150
Zig-Zag (Oregon) p. 291, 302, 304

Education & Training

p. 19, 85, 110, 118, 177, 217, 218, 234, 243, 263, 278, 306

ERA

p. 25, 200, 232

Fire Fighter Fatalities

p. 29, 32, 275

Forest Fires

Oregon

Smith River Fire p. 245
Tillamook Burn p. 76, 122, 289-290, 292
Wolf Cr. Fire p. 289-290, 291-292

Washington

Cispus Burn p. 232
Dole Fire p. 161, 189
Willard Fire p. 135, 210, 290, 292-293
Yacolt Burn p. 48, 122, 161, 199

Indians (Native Americans)

In the CCC: p. 85-86, 107, 196-197, 260, 272
Local contact: p. 58, 75-76, 85, 198, 231, 274

Lookouts, Fire

Badger Peak p. 239
Bunker Hill p. 185-186, 296-297
Burley Mountain p. 219, 225, 230, 227, 228-229, 257
Dog Mountain p. 195
Flattop p. 73
Hamilton Butte p. 230
High Rock p. 230
Kiona Peak p. 230
Little Baldy p. 72,77
Little Huckleberry p. 67, 69
Lookout Mountain p. 193-194
Lost Lake p. 230
Mowich Butte p. 194
Observation Peak p. 196
Pompey Peak p. 230
Red Mountain p. 200
Shriner Peak p. 273, 276
Silver Star p. 193
Siouxon Peak p. 24
Sleeping Beauty p. 73,76
Sunrise Peak p. 119, 125, 230
Watch Mountain p. 119, 125

Mountains, Buttes, Hills, Peaks, Ranges, Ridges, and Rocks

Adams, Mt. p. 51, 73, 101, 119, 261,
Big Huckleberry Mtn. p. 135
Bunker Hill p. 132, 144
Burley Mtn. p. 121, 232, 257, 273
Dog Mountain p. 195-196
Gumboot Mtn. p. 131
Holdaway Buttes p. 228, 239
Hood, Mt. p. 14, 296
Huffaker Mtn. p. 264
Kirk Rock p. 228
Lone Tree Mtn. p. 220, 227, 260
Lookout Mtn. p. 101, 226
McClellan Mtn. p. 135
Mowich Butte p. 133
Rainier, Mt. p. 53, 55, 101, 261, 272
Red Mtn. p. 135, 147
St. Helens, Mount p. 101, 113
Sawtooth Mtn. p. 76
Silver Star Mtn. p. 21
Summit Ridge p. 197
Tower Rock p. 175, 252, 254
Twin Buttes p. 75

Names (persons)

Adams, Jess p. 13, 19, 21, 24, 25, 104, 131, 139, 197, 208, 209, 234, 245, 249-250, 298
Amoruso, Phil p. 8-25
Angel, Jimmy p. 92
Aust, Carroll p. 27-43
Ayers, Lew p. 88
Baggenstos, Arnold p. 260
Batchey, Jack p. 274
Bends, Albert p. 88
Betts, Wesley p. 44-61, 159
Bosworth, Lee p. 113, 114
Boyer, Bill p. 230
Bradbury, Dale p. 271
Brockman, Nig p. 178
Brown, Roy p. 167, 170
Brumbaugh, Philip p. 62-69
Burkell, Tommy p. 154
Bush, Lt. P. 57
Campbell (Boys) p. 129, 131
Cathcart, Stan p. 17
Cecil, K.P. p. 77
Chaplain, Commander p. 92
Clayborn p. 167
Clevenger, Brad p. 220, 274, 276
Coleman, Sam (1st Lt.) p. 29
Converse, Ray p. 12
Cora, Meredith p. 261
DeClew, Michael p. 161
Denne, Jack p. 140
Dix, Paul p. 40
Eyle, Frank p. 107
Fasel, Willis (1st Sgt.) p. 55
Fechtner, Don p. 260
Filloon, Ray p. 159
Filthy Phil p. 115
Fleetwood, Ed p. 167
Fletcher, Commander p. 240-242
Foss, James p. 260
Garrett, Harv p. 276
Goble, Clyde p. 220
Good, Fred p. 78, 79
Good, John p. 76, 78, 79
Good, Kenneth p. 70-79
Graham, Leonard —~~R~~” p. 11, 105, 106, 133, 140, 146, 289
Grant, General Ulysses S. p. 45
Green, Bill p. 219
Green, Bob p. 139
Green, Elmer (Pappy), p. 112, 114, 255
Green, Jim p. 123, 233
Grooms, Paul p. 80-93
Hall, L. H. (Captain) p. 29
Hall, Colonel p. 239

Halle, Dutch p. 4, 13, 17, 18, 108, 182, 286
 Halstead, Elmer p. 288, 298
 Halverson, George p. 140
 Hanson, Bill p. 22
 Harrington, Pete p. 230
 Hazen, Lynn p. 94-109
 Healey, Jack p. 276
 Hemenway, Charles p. 111
 Hemenway, Fred p. 110-127
 Hill, Ed p. 88-89
 Hill, Frank p. 227
 Hisel, Orie p. 131, 142, 186
 Hobson, Lt. p. 57
 Hockinson, Walt p. 10, 129, 133, 142, 182
 Hoover, President Herbert H. p. 303
 Howard, Frank p. 288
 James, Leonard p. 103
 Jarvis, Bernie p. 24
 Jensen, Allen p. 237, 238
 Jeppesen, William (Captain) p. 113, 114, 119, 121, 164, 165, 255, 262, 265,
 Jerry, Tony p. 277
 Jones, Captain Spike p. 139, 142
 Jourski, Jack p. 278
 Kehoe, Frank p. 123, 231
 Kelley, Howard p. 115
 Kindle, Ross p. 122, 125
 Kirkpatrick, John p. iii, 219, 225-226
 Lambert, Nasty Bob p. 155, 254, 255, 257, 262, 263, 272, 276, 278
 Langdon, Jim p. 255, 264
 Langfield, K.C. p. 74, 77, 79
 Leonard, James Jim p. 23, 86, 105-106, 109, 130, 146
 Leonard, John Jack p. 23-24, 86, 98, 105-106, 109, 128-149
 Lewis, Frank p. 124, 125
 Lewis, Mel p. 123, 223, 230, 254
 Lindauer, Walt p. 166, 257, 255
 Mann, Curtis (Commander) p. 284
 Marsh, Captain p. 288
 Marshall, Ben p. 150-161
 Marshall, Bill p. 158
 Marshall, Catherine p. 39
 Marshall, General George C. p. 26, 29, 39, 57-58, 91, 92, 239, 282
 Martin, Joe Gandy p. 105
 Martin, Merle p. 88
 McAllister, Ben p. 103
 McGowan, Stan p. 103
 McKay, Alex p. 191, 192, 197
 McMahan, Charlie Pat p. 162-175
 McMann, Lyola p. 230
 McNee, Ed p. 219, 220

McNee, Wade p. 10, 12, 14, 19, 133, 140, 191, 223, 232
 Merriman, Ed p. 223
 Moore, Leo p. 100, 135
 Moore, Pat p. 104
 Mullins, Scotty p. 221
 Nichols, Red p. 135
 Nimnitzer, Lyman p. 57
 Norman, George p. 140
 Olson, Ole p. 144
 Paladeni, Mike p. 24, 25, 165
 Paladeni, Pete p. 5, 87, 89, 135, 146, 176-203
 Paladeni, Quinn p. 161
 Peters, Kenova p. 219, 230
 Peterson, Jim p. 160
 Phillips, Dr. Bert L. p. 10, 20, 243, 250,
 Platt, Leonard p. 103
 Pollari, Jack p. 204-217
 Pratt, Frank p. 218-233
 Price, Charley p. 68
 Ray, Kenneth p. 234 - 251
 Read, Wilbur E. (Captain) p. 51, 59
 Rigger, Jack p. 14
 Rodman, Commander p. 57
 Rogers, Lt. (Dentist) p. 294
 Roosevelt, Eleanor p. 14
 Roosevelt, President Franklin D. p. 1, 14, 45, 257, 303
 Sethe, Bill p. 253-254
 Sethe, Charles p. 252-265
 Sethe, Herb p. 262
 Shelton, Bill p. 131
 Shepeard, Ross p. 131, 185, 187, 195
 Shooty (or Surly), Bill p. 236, 242
 Shrednick, John p. 195
 Skinner p. 134
 Smedley, Cliff p. 266-279
 Sparky, Red p. 88
 Spinning, Theo p. 22, 139
 Springer, Winston p. 13
 Stambaugh, Elmer (Capt.) p. 139
 Staudinger, Ray p. 119, 260
 Stegman, Isadore Blakie p. 270, 271
 Stein, Dick p. 276
 Styers, Jim p. 88
 Sutherland, Harry Pat p. 280-307
 Sutherland, Jack p. 275-276
 Szydlo, Joe p. 24
 Thompson, Oren p. 283
 Tooley, Cecil Red p. 10
 Wang, Jude p. 75
 Warren, Jim p. 103
 Wasson, Harold p. 167, 220, 223, 231, 260, 276
 Welty, Harvey p. 71, 74, 1511

Woodruff, Ralph p. 152

Names (Places)

Barnes Hospital p. 302
Fort Lewis p. 66, 102, 103, 269
Fort Vancouver p. 31
Ice Caves p. 73
Indian Heaven p. 76, 147
Indian Racetrack p. 13, 147
Marshall House (Ft. Vancouver) p. 92
Pearson Airfield p. 31, 106
Timberline Lodge p. 15
Vancouver Barracks (Army Post) p. 28, 35, 47, 60, 67, 91, 92, 97, 145, 206, 235, 237, 249, 282, 283
Wind River Nursery p. 2, 246, 251

National Forests

Black Hills p. 27
Columbia p. 1, 86, 87, 99, 205
Gifford Pinchot p. 1, 34, 71, 81, 93, 124, 284
Mt. Hood p. 89
Okanogan p. 289
Umpqua p. 89
Willamette p. 63

Pets and Mascots

p. 78, 85, 158, 165, 168, 171, 269, 301

Ranger Districts/Ranger & Guard Stations

Glacier RD (Mt. Baker NF) p. 277
Hemlock RS (Wind River RD) p. 71, 178
Mt. Adams RD (Guler) p. 65, 71-73, 155, 190
Oklahoma RS p. 64
Packwood RD p. 253
Peterson Guard Station p. 51
Randle RS p. 71, 122-126, 231

Recreation/Sports

Baseball p. 65-66, 86, 145, 157, 183, 204, 246, 248, 270, 280, 299, 300-301
Basketball p. 86, 183, 201, 299
Boxing (smokers) p. 4, 86, 105-106, 121, 139, 183, 157
Card playing & cribbage p. 107, 226, 265, 270, 300
Dances p. 36, 58-59, 68, 84, 106, 121, 138, 148, 156, 164, 166, 167, 201, 214, 215, 238, 264, 270, 300, 305
Football p. 157, 243, 299
Movies p. 121, 160, 242-243, 300
Wrestling p. 183

Rivers, Creeks, Lakes, Springs and Falls

Badger L. p. 166
Blue Lake Cr. p. 224
Boulder Cr. p. 224
Chambers L. p. 167
Cispus R. p. 117, 261
Copper Creek p. 159, 160
Council Lake p. 224, 274
Cowlitz R. p. 124
Cultus Cr. p. 68, 155
Harmony Falls p. 172
Iron Mike p. 108
Johnson Cr. p. 221, 232
Laughing Water Cr. p. 273
Lewis R. p. 67, 74, 101
Little White Salmon R. p. 135
Lost Cr. Ditch p. 151
Mosquito L. p. 58, 154
Moss Cr. p. 64, 66
N. Fork Lewis River p. 274
Ohanapecosh R. p. 272
Olallie L. (Sheep L.) p. 169-170, 221, 223, 273, 277
Panther Cr. p. 14, 21, 282
Siler Cr. p. 223
Silver Cr. p. 219, 225
Soda Springs p. 232
Spirit Lake p. 259
Steamboat Cr. p. 155
Summit Cr. p. 232
Takhlakh L. p. 274
Trout Creek (@ Camp Hemlock) p. 282
Trout Creek (@ Trout Lake, WA) p. 72
Twin Falls p. 154
Tyee Springs p. 10-11, 13, 21
Wind R. p. 243
Yellow Jacket Cr. p. 113, 117

Roads & Highways

Beavercreek Rd. p. 304
Burley Mtn. Rd. p. 257
Cispus Rd. p. 224
Cline Rd. p. 221
Iron Cr. Rd. p. 272, 257
Little Baldy Rd. p. 66
Lone Tree Rd. p. 218, 220
Lookout Mtn. Rd. p. 133, 226
Lower Siouxon Rd. p. 24, 25
Oklahoma Rd. p. 63, 65
Panther Cr. Rd. p. 18, 132, 133
Randle Rd. p. 154
Wind River Hwy. p. 304

Social/Economic Issues/Events

AWOL (Absent Without Leave) p. 35, 50-51, 305
Conscientious Objectors p. 88
Great Depression p. 1, 27, 37, 46, 81, 95, 96, 157, 205, 267, 281, 303-304
Initiations p. 113, 265
Literacy p. 37
Racial segregation p. 2, 113, 158, 213
Red Bandannas p. 304
World War II p. 87, 88, 95, 141, 151, 163, 173, 192, 205, 216, 235, 238, 242, 244, 249, 253, 281

Soil Conservation Service

Camp Goldendale p. 55, 295

Trails

Badger Tr. p. 166
Bishop Ridge Tr. p. 260
Greenhorn Tr. p. 166
Johnson Cr. Tr. p. 232
Silver Cr. Tr. P. 225
Squaw Creek Tr. p. 171
Wonderland Tr. p. 272

Work assignments, skills

Ambulance driver p. 32
Bridge & dam construction p. 16-18, 168-169, 184, 232, 257, 262-263
Building construction & maintenance p. 10, 65, 123, 184, 211, 278-279
Carpentry p. 56-57, 83, 181
Choker setting p. 49-50
Company Clerk p. 54, 57
Dental Assistant p. 280, 294-296
Equipment Operator/ Bulldozer/Road Grader/Power Shovel/truck driver p. 8, 10, 14, 16-18, 21, 33-35, 41, 72, 94, 99-100, 109, 133, 166-169, 218, 220-221, 222, 224, 232, 272, 274-275, 276
Faller (Snags & Trees) p. 50, 76, 91, 132-133, 134, 178-179, 189-190, 203, 207, 209, 258, 271, 276, 285, 286-289, 291
Firefighting p. 11, 89-90, 118, 129, 135, 186, 188-189, 210-211, 217, 256-257, 275, 289-290, 291-293
Fire Lookout p. 69, 93, 185-186, 193-195, 227-230, 296-297
K.P. (Kitchen Duty) p. 18, 51, 66, 155
Land Clearing p. 182
Log Scaling p. 189, 190
Mechanic p. 10
Mosquito Control p. 154
Powder monkey p. 52, 113, 134

—Pine picking" p. 116, 261, 271-272
Radio operator p. 11, 124-125
Revetment p. 55
Road construction and maintenance p. 14, 41, 54-55, 90, 93, 116, 134, 209, 232, 274
Rock crushing p. 47, 52, 54, 221
Sign-making p. 56, 98-99, 105
Slash burning p. 304
Supply steward p. 84, 86, 87-88
Surveying p. 90, 114, 133, 276, 277
Telephone line construction and maint. p. 87, 193, 227, 260,
Trail/Campground construction and maint. p. 10, 91, 114, 117, 119-120, 171, 188, 189, 198, 209, 232, 262, 304
Tree planting p. 47, 50, 91, 119, 160-61, 200
Wood cutting p. 112, 132, 259, 269-270

Works Project Administration (WPA)

Camps & Projects p. 14, 15, 45, 121

