

START SIDE A, TAPE 1

Ken Steeber: It is September 28, 1997. I'm Ken Steeber, a volunteer at the Shenandoah National Park Archives. I'm conducting an oral history interview with Larry McGlynn, Arthur Emory, Stanley Rozmus, and James G. Gecoma. Okay, all, all four of these gentlemen were former enrollees in the Civilian Conservation Corps, and all were stationed at NP-10. Is that right? Everybody was at--

Arthur Emory: No, I was at 1.

KS: Okay, you were--Stanley? You were at 1?

AE: Arthur.

KS: Arthur, Arthur was at 1.

AE: Right here at Skyland.

KS: Okay, let me just jot that down, NP-1. Okay, we are at the Skyland Conference Center at Skyland Resort in Shenandoah National Park. I want to thank each one of you for granting us this interview. At this time, I would like to note that you have agreed to sign the gift and release agreement which you will receive a copy of, and a tape copy of this interview. Okay, let's get started now. First of all, let me start with Larry. Larry, where are you living right now?

Larry McGlynn: I'm living at Charlotte Court House, Virginia.

KS: Okay, and your phone number?

LM: Is 542-4108.

KS: Okay, and your birth date?

LM: December 20, 1917.

KS: Okay. Where were you living when you signed up for the CCC's?

LM: I was living in Derringer, Pennsylvania.

KS: Were you living with your family at that time?

LM: Living with the family at that time.

KS: How large was your family?

LM: There was eight of us.

KS: How did the Depression impact on your family?

LM: Uh, say again, I didn't quite under--

KS: How did the Depression--

LM: Oh, the Depression.

KS: --affect your family?

LM: It affected our family very much, because I was the only one doing anything.

KS: Were you the oldest?

LM: I was the only, I was the oldest, and I was the only one doing anything. I was working for the WPA at that time. And then I signed up for the CCC's.

KS: How did you find out about the CCC?

LM: In the newspaper.

KS: Newspaper. And I take it you joined because, mainly to help out your family?

LM: That's exactly why I joined it, to help the family out, which I helped them for 28 months, sending my money home.

KS: What year did you join?

LM: 1936.

KS: And how long did you serve?

LM: I stayed in until late, late '37. I came out, I went to work in the coal mines for a while; I didn't like that. So I resigned up again, and went back in in '39 and stayed 'til late '40.

KS: Okay. And what was the, what was the last of school that you attended?

LM: I attended sixth grade.

KS: Sixth grade. Okay, fine. Thank you.

LM: At that time I, (laughs)--

KS: Well, sixth grade--my dad went to seventh. And so, that, that's par for the course in those days.

LM: Yeah.

KS: Okay, let me go to you, Arthur. The same thing, where, where do you live now?

AE: I live at Claremont, Virginia, 436 River Drive Road. It's, it's halfway between Richmond and Norfolk.

KS: Oh, okay.

AE: On the James River.

KS: Okay, I understand.

AE: And that's the same place I was living when I was, come to this camp.

KS: Well, that, that satisfies that question, doesn't it? (laughs)

AE: I lived, I lived in Maryland 36 years since that time, but I was able to buy the home place and I'm living there now.

KS: Oh, isn't that nice? That's, that's really interesting! I take it you were living with your folks at the time?

AE: Huh?

KS: You were living with your family?

AE: Yes.

KS: Yeah, okay. How many brothers and sisters did you have?

AE: Six.

KS: Were you the oldest or youngest?

AE: No, I was, I was the fourth one down.

KS: Okay. And how did the Depression affect your family?

AE: Oh, it was terrible. We didn't know where the next meal was coming from, a lots of times.

KS: And like a lot of the fellows, you joined the CCC's to take advantage of the employment?

AE: Right. Right. I don't know how I heard about the CC's. But a neighbor took me to Norfolk on a Harley Davidson. My feet was hanging straight out sometimes! (laughing) He took me to Norfolk on a motorcycle and I came up here on the train, to Luray. For Camp 1.

KS: Right, and where, and where were you, were you inducted at Charlottesville? Or where were you inducted in at?

AE: Right here at the--

KS: At the camp here?

AE: Well, there, there was a little get-together down in Norfolk.

KS: Okay.

AE: But they, we had to come here and get the shots for three weeks. And then, it's kind of like an induction here.

KS: Oh, I see. Okay.

AE: Right.

KS: Well, some, it differs for different people, where they got their medical, you know.

AE: Yeah, it was, different localities did it different ways.

KS: Right, okay, that's good. How long did you serve?

AE: I, I came in in July '36, I mean '35. And left in '36, July.

KS: Right. And you were NP-1.

AE: Right.

KS: Right here at Skyland.

AE: 334th Company.

KS: All right. And how long did you serve?

AE: Major Jenkins signed my discharge. No, he was a captain at that time, when he signed the discharge. But several years later he wrote me a letter and asked me to come to his office at Fort Lee, Virginia. He said he had a request for some information on me. What he, he, he didn't have a face to go with the name. So I went to, went down there Sunday morning, and the MP said I couldn't go in. So I told him to call Major Jenkins and tell him that I can't come. He said, "Man, go ahead, go ahead!" (laughter) So I went in and the major said to me, he said, "Oh, hell, now I know what to put in this letter! I got the face to go with it!" Said, "You worked on my car two or three times when I was up at camp." And, so, I went, I, I took his suggestion and went to the Navy at Annapolis and worked for the Navy thirty, thirty-five years.

KS: Oh, I see. At Annapolis?

AE: Uh huh. So then I moved back down here to the home place.

KS: Well, you're getting a little bit ahead of us. And we'll be covering more of that a little later on in the interview. But what was the last year of school that you attended?

AE: Seventh.

KS: Seventh grade.

AE: I started in the eighth, but I didn't finish the eighth.

KS: Okay, fine. Okay, now we'll go over to Stanley. Stanley, we'll do the same thing.

Where are you living now?

Stanley Rozmus: I lived in Slovan, Pennsylvania at the time I was, I signed up for the C's.

KS: Okay, you were there, you were living with your family?

SR: Living with the family.

KS: And how large was your family?

SR: We had eleven children, six girls and five boys.

KS: And where did you sit on the totem pole?

SR: I was in the center. (laughter)

KS: You were in the center. And of course, how did the Depression affect your family?

SR: It was pretty tough, because, well, we had gardens, cows, chickens and so forth, which helped, but otherwise it, it was pretty tough.

KS: I, I take it also that you went into the CCC to help your family?

SR: Yes, I went in to make it a little easier. They wouldn't have so many mouths to feed.

KS: Right. And you could send some money home.

SR: It helped a little bit.

KS: Did any of your older brothers or sisters, oh, sisters, of course not! But any of the older brothers go into the CCC's?

SR: Yes, my oldest brother, Frank, was in Danville, Virginia, in a CC camp for one year, in 1935, I think it was.

KS: Okay. Excellent. And how did you find out about the CCC?

SR: Well, my brother was in there, and it seems like everybody in town wanted to go to the CCC's, when I was young. And it sort of grew on you. And I was sort of an outdoor person, and I, I liked to, you know, do things out, plant trees and so forth. I thought that would be a nice life. So I decided to join up. Like I told you before, I joined up early, little bit too early! (laughs)

KS: How old were you?

SR: Sixteen.

KS: Sixteen. This is not uncommon, I, I, I've, all about ten or twelve interviews that I've done on the CCC, I would say, seven or eight of them were underage.

SR: Uh huh.

KS: So that's not uncommon. I had one that was fourteen.

SR: And most of them get away with it, but my superintendent, I guess he didn't like the idea of me being away from school.

KS: Well, I think the problem was, is that the CCC really had problems in bringing the camps up to 200 men strength. I think the average was around 160. So I think they would allow everybody to slide in. And, and what year did you join? I think you mentioned it, but--

SR: Now, here's the way I got into the camps.

KS: Okay.

SR: They used to have, have people sign up for camps, then you'd go to the office in Washington and from there they'd call out your name and you'd get in line and you was one of the fellows that went. Well, when they called the names out, if there was one fellow missing, or two or three, we were there as a replacement. And they said if somebody misses, you guys will get in. There were three or four of us. And so it happened. They missed and they put us in, put us in line.

KS: And how long did you serve?

SR: I served, I'm not sure, I think it was either four months, maybe three or four months, right around that area. I was with Jim here, ().

James "Jim" Gecoma: It was July and () you're in that picture, they were taken in August.

KS: Just a second.

SR: Yeah, I think I was in July, August, and September. I'm not sure about October.

[Tape stops and starts again.]

KS: Okay, I think we're back on. Yes, we are. Stanley, what was the last year of school that you attended?

SR: A junior in high school. I finished my junior year.

KS: Okay, fine. Alright, now we go over to James. James, where do you live?

JG: Cherry Valley, Pennsylvania.

KS: Okay, let me adjust this a little bit. [adjusts tape recorder; an echo now becomes apparent as volume is set too high]. Okay, I think we're, okay, go ahead, James. And your phone number?

JG: (412) 947-5988.

KS: And your birth date?

JG: October the 18th, 1923.

KS: And where were you living when you signed up for the CCC?

JG: Right, Cherry Valley.

KS: Cherry Valley. And of course, you were living with your family?

JG: Yes.

KS: And how many children?

JG: Four.

KS: Four. And where did you sit on the totem pole with your family?

JG: I was third.

KS: You were third? Third youngest?

JG: Two older sisters, one younger sister.

KS: Okay, you were the only boy?

JG: Right.

KS: Okay. And how did the Depression impact on your family?

JG: Well, it seemed like we, we managed to get by. You know, just like Stanley was saying, everybody had a garden and in them days, people knew how to do things to, you know, to take care of a family, you know. Not like today, they wouldn't be able to do it today.

KS: Right, it just, it's a matter like people who lived here in the mountains, the problem they had was the cash. They had the produce but they didn't have the cash.

JG: Well, we never had no cash, either, in them days, so.

KS: And what year did you join?

JG: '41.

KS: And how long did you serve?

JG: Six months.

KS: Six months. And this is at Camp 10?

JG: Right.

KS: Okay. And what was the last year of school that you attended?

JG: Eight years.

KS: Eight years. Okay. Stanley, I didn't get your birth date, or where you lived or when you went in, so, your birth date?

SR: My birthday is April the 25th, 1924.

KS: And I don't know if, did we get your home address, present home address? Let's get that now.

SR: Okay, I think you got it, but I'll give it to you again. (laughs)

KS: Yeah, give it to me again. (laughs) We'll, we'll drive, we'll drive the transcriber nuts, but we don't care!

SR: Okay, it's Slovan, Slovan, Pennsylvania.

KS: That's right. And the phone number, did we get that?

SR: It's 947-4223.

KS: Okay, great. At this--

JG: You didn't get my address either, I don't think.

KS: Okay, James, let me get your, let's do it again anyhow, just for the record. What's

your address?

JG: Three Cherry Street, Burgettstown, Pennsylvania, 15021

KS: Okay, fine, thank you. Joining us now is Petro . . . help me out.

Petro Kulynych: Kulynych.

KS: Kulynych. I got that now. Petro, where do you live right now?

PK: I live in Wilkesboro, North--

KS: Pennsylvania?

PK: North Carolina.

KS: Oh, North Carolina? Oh, right.

PK: W-I-L-K-E-S-B-O-R-O.

SR: I thought he was going to say Pennsylvania.

KS: I did too! (laughing) Faked me out!

PK: No, that's, that's Wilkes Barre!

KS: That's right, that's right.

PK: This is Wilkesboro, North Carolina.

KS: And what's your phone number?

PK: I can give you one at the house, I have an office, also, but I'll give you the one at the house: 910-838-8169.

KS: And your birth date?

PK: June 23, 1921.

KS: And where were you living when you signed up for the CCC?

PK: I was living in a community called Jamesville, Pennsylvania. The post office is

Smithmills, Smithmill, M-I-L-L, there's no "S" on it, Pennsylvania. It's 22 miles sort of northeast of Altoona, Pennsylvania, in the soft coal region.

KS: Okay, and who were you living with at the time?

PK: My family.

KS: Your family. And how many were in your family?

PK: Ah, I got to, we had such a big crowd that's the reason I had to go to work. (laughter)

Ah, living then, my mother had fourteen children but ten were living. The rest of them died in infancy because you couldn't cure pneumonia in those days.

KS: Yes, I understand that. Where did you stand in relationship to your brothers and sisters?

PK: I was, the nine that, the ten of us that were living, no, nine that were living, I'm number two, uh, three.

KS: You were on the younger end of it?

PK: No, no.

KS: Three from the top? Okay.

PK: Three from the top.

KS: Okay, fine. And how did you find out about the CCC?

PK: Well, my daddy was a coal miner and he wouldn't take me in the coal mines because most fathers, you know, remember all the people in our community were of ethnic background. And they all worked in the mines. There was no other work there. And he thought it was too dangerous and I was the first-born son, living, and so he said you're going to finish high school and you can go out and get a job any place you want to, WPA or whatever there is out there, digging ditches. And

so when I finished high school, I went to, you know, there were other people that left for the CCC's and I went to Altoona and set down with them and said, "I want to join." For the better life.

KS: And what year was that?

PK: 1939.

KS: And how long did you serve?

PK: Approximately 18 months.

KS: Eighteen months, okay. And what was the last year of school that you attended?

Oh, you, you mentioned that already.

PK: High school.

KS: High school, right. Okay, now we're going to get into the good part. I think we know from each one of you what camps you were assigned to. But, starting with Larry, tell us a little bit about the, the daily routine that you had in camp. And then, as I start this out, just kind of blend in with the conversation, if you would, so that we can cover, you know, among all four, all five of you what daily routine was.

LM: The daily routine was roll out of bed and get some work clothes on, get your breakfast and go to work. They'd take you out to the field and put you to work, either digging ditch or laying telephone line or things like that. And, of course, my job was different from the rest of the fellows because I was driving truck. I had a very easy job. (laughs)

KS: Ah hah! (laughter)

LM: I was taking the other fellows out to work and then going out and getting them in the evening and bringing them back. That was my job. So, I really didn't have it too tough. When I first went in, I was driving a Chevrolet dump truck, a '37. And I was hauling gravel out of the

Shenandoah River. Back up to the Skyline Drive.

KS: Yeah, that's your work assignment. But what we're talking about, like, camp life right now. We'll get to the work area.

LM: Well, camp, camp life was very good. We had a bunch of nice fellows in that camp and we, we all seemed to like our captain, and our, the doctor, Captain Wong. And everybody got along good together.

KS: Most of you fellows agree to that?

[group]: Yeah, yes, umm hmm. I do.

PK: I, when I came there in '39, I didn't, I didn't even hear of any problem, they said they had some problem in '37.

AE: There were no problems--

KS: That was a mutiny.

PK: Huh?

KS: That was a mutiny.

PK: Was it?

KS: They called it a mutiny.

JG: Pennsylvania and Virginia people, they were fighting or something, right?

PK: Somebody, somebody, I just learned that here, recently, but no, when I came, I thought it was a good life. But, of course, I, I kind of led a sheltered life, because I was the company clerk. As the company clerk, I had a little room in back of the office. And so I didn't, I spent most of my time in the office doing paperwork.

KS: But basically camp life was, you know, good, as far as, you know, camp life being

defined primarily as, you know, your quarters, getting up, you know, your details that you had to do, take care of the fire. All that type of camp life. Then we'll go over and get into some of the work details a little bit later.

LM: We had a couple of fellows in our company when I was in in '39. They were cousins and they were, they were, they come in out of New York state. I don't know if it was New York City, or where. But anyway, they're the only two troublemakers we had. They stole a bunch of army blankets and they had a car stashed out in the, out in the woods.

KS: Well, how did they handle discipline like that? I mean, I, I take it the military did?

LM: Well, well, we discharged them.

KS: Is that what it was?

LM: Out of the service, because they were stealing government property.

KS: I see. Was there any other, you know, outside of, you know, that's, to me that's a major discipline problem. But were there any minor infractions that, that had to be dealt with?

LM: Not really. Every once in a while you might have somebody that went out on a liberty trip and drink a little bit too much and you had to straighten them out a little bit.

KS: Okay. And that was, that was handled by, what punishment was given out for these minor infractions?

LM: I don't know of any punishment that--

AE: They'd restrict you.

KS: Restrict you?

AE: Yeah, restrict you to the barracks.

KS: Would it be like the military, too, they give you KP or something like that?

JG: Be a little bit of KP or something like that.

KS: Okay.

PK: And they wouldn't, you wouldn't get liberty on Saturday down to Luray.

[?]: That's right.

KS: Okay.

LM: That was the main thing.

KS: Oh, oh that must (). (laughter)

PK: Well, it was for us!

KS: I know it was! (laughter) I know it was.

PK: The other thing, the only other problem that I can remember, there was a tendency sometime, and Dr. Wong had to handle it, was if a guy didn't show up for muster in the morning, you know, when the first sergeant, Funk, read the role--

LM: Sergeant Funk.

PK: The number of people that were going to turn, turn over to the Park Service to work. They, you know, guy would play sick. And then the, but that was minor.

KS: They do that in the army, too, don't they?

PK: Yeah.

KS: It's like a mirror, almost, holding up to army experience to the, you know, camp life in the CCC is almost the same thing.

LM: You know, as far as Sergeant Funk was concerned, I can, I can picture him in my mind, just what he looked like. And Captain--

KS: Still, right now?

LM: Just look, just look like it was yesterday.

KS: Is that true of all you fellows?

JG: He brought up something about blankets. That was one thing that they, I didn't like what they did with us, about our blankets. One day we were out working, and they came, we had good blankets, but they switched our blankets. While we were out working, you know. And then they, they gave us orders that them blankets had to be fixed, or we was going to have to pay for them, you know.

SR: Yeah.

JG: Fix them up. I don't know if they ever did that to y'uns [typical western Pennsylvania expression for "you all"] or not, but--

LM: I know we had some fellows that didn't feel like doing too much work. So they'd break the shovel handle or pick handle or whatever they was working with. But when they found out by the end of the month they had to pay for it, why--

SR: That stopped that, didn't it?

JG: I can't see that was right, you know, cause, you know, they just, they just wanted them old blankets fixed. You know, if they were torn or anything, you know. But they switched our good blankets while we wasn't there.

LM: Overall, I think we had nice guys in there.

JG: And if we didn't--

LM: We had like, what, 250? 250 people in there?

SR: Yeah, about 250 in each camp, I think. [actually 220 maximum]

LM: Yeah. I like our mechanic we had, Mr. Huffman, I forget his first name. He lived

down in Luray, and he used to come every morning, he was our mechanic. Very nice fellow.

KS: Did, you had, most of the jobs were supervised by civilians, right?

LM: We had a superintendent, the camp superintendent was Eugene Gissey, in 1939. He was the superintendent.

KS: Was that a job superintendent you're talking about now?

LM: He was the overall superintendent. Then we had the LEM's [Local Employed Men], local people that come in and help us out, with directions on how to get here and there, and what to do, work to do.

KS: And who were, like, did you have on-site foremen?

[group]: Oh, yeah, yeah.

KS: You did have on-site foremen. Were these generally trained men, I mean, like masons or carpenters or things like that?

PK: Well, this guy that he's talking about, the superintendent, he worked for the National Park Service.

LM: Yup.

PK: And he hired the . . .

LM: The LEM's.

PK: You call them LEM's?

LM: They're local, they're local . . . I don't know what they--

PK: Well, they were, I remember the term because I went, I was in several other camps after I went with the Park Service. Woolwine, Virginia and Laurel Springs, North Carolina. And they, they called them foremen on the job.

LM: Yeah.

PK: They was assigned by the superintendent and, of course, you know, you had NPS people like landscape architects and civil engineers that some camps had that were assigned by the National Park Service. Because some of the work in these other camps I was in was, as we went south on the Blue Ridge Parkway, was still construction of the Parkway. You know, doing, in fact, the last connection to the Smoky Mountain was in Linville, North Carolina, what they call the Linn Cove. See, but a lot of it, you, it was, you had civilian contractors that I worked with on some of them.

KS: How about--

LM: The LEM's--

KS: Go ahead.

LM: The LEM's, some of them were quite old.

PK: Yeah.

LM: The fellow that rode with me, when I took, took the men out to work, the fellow that rode with me, he, he must have been fifty years old.

AE: Oh!

KS: Oh, an old man! (laughing)

LM: He was quite old, compared to us at that time!

PK: Oh, yeah.

[group]: Yes, yeah, that's right. They were.

JG: Somebody might have been 45, 50, but they were old.

[group]: Yeah, uh huh. (laughing)

KS: I understand, I've been there.

LM: If you remember, his name was Pops Johnson.

KS: Was he a local man?

LM: They called him Pops. He was a local. He was about 50 years old and he rode with me all the time. One of, one of the nicest guys you want to meet.

JG: Pop you said?

SR: Yeah, that's the guy you was talking about?

JG: Well, Pop was our mess sergeant, took care of the kitchen.

[all talking at once]

PK: You remember the guy who was chief cook?

LM: Huh?

PK: You remember the guy that was the chief cook? He was, he wasn't very tall and he was kind of sturdy built.

JG: That, that's probably Pop. That's the way, that's the way he was built.

KS: Were there any rivalries between your camps? You know, you understand what I mean?

[several men]: Yeah, like, friendly--

KS: Not bad, I mean friendly rivalries.

[all talking at once]

LM: Athletic-wise, athletic-wise there might have been some rivalry, but I don't think--

SR: Otherwise, no, no, I don't think so--

PK: I think that, of course, now, you, you did get honors as the camp of the year or

something, and that was done through productivity and all of that--

KS: Right, that's, right. And was there any kind of rivalry on that level, where, I, I guess it's a matter of pride--

PK: Well, well the--

KS: --or you just carry a lot of pride in the, in the camp--

PK: --Captain Attaway had a superior that came, I guess his office was probably in Cumberland, Maryland because that was the headquarters for the Third Army District. We were in the Third Army, under the Third Army out of Cumberland, Maryland at that time, and I'm sure that the records went to Cumberland, Maryland.

KS: I see. But everything was very friendly between the camps?

LM: Right.

KS: Okay.

LM: Do you remember, you were in when I was in, '39?

PK: Yeah.

LM: You remember when the fellows used to come over to that barracks and I'd show them a few chords on the guitar and everything? For 15 cents a lesson for a half hour?

(lots of laughter)

PK: No, I wished I had! (lots of laughter) I still can't sing a tune or pick a guitar!

LM: So that's what I was doing and that way I made a little bit of extra money when I'd go downtown on weekend.

PK: Seven dollars went a long way.

KS: I'm sure it did. Religious services, they were offered at the camps, weren't they?

[group]: Umm hmm, every Sunday, yeah.

KS: Did, did, did many people attend those? Many of the boys?

[group]: Yeah, oh yeah, umm hmm.

KS: Okay, anything enlightening about those, that, you know, was meaningful in their lives or your lives?

AE: They always had somebody come in and do the honors. Most of the time somebody'd come in from town.

KS: Oh, you'd have ministers and stuff like that?

AE: Some minister would come in.

SR: Yeah, we didn't have a chaplain.

KS: Okay, that's what I was wondering about. Did they have all, all, all denominations?

AE: All, all preachers, yeah, all--

KS: Because here in Virginia probably in those days was mostly Baptist and--

AE: Yeah, Methodist--

KS: Methodist, and that.

AE: Right.

KS: Did that become a problem with the boys?

JG: They had, they had Catholic ().

KS: They did have Catholic services, too?

AE: Yeah, they had Mass for the Catholics.

KS: We didn't touch on this, but what were some of the hardships of being in camp? I heard all good stuff. But what were the, what are the things that made it tough?

LM: Well, that ten feet of snow that we had in 1939 (lots of laughter) that blew across the Blue Ridge Parkways, why, that was one of the hardships!

KS: Okay.

LM: And we shoveled a few feet of snow.

PK: I don't know, you know, it's like anything else. It's not any different when my grandkid goes off to summer camp, you know. After about three or four days, the homesickness wears away, and, so . . . Now, I tell you, the most important thing, now I don't know about these gentlemen's backgrounds but the most important thing to me was that I thought I was performing a good service to feed my family with the \$14, or when I got \$21 sent home, or when I got \$35 sent home. Because they needed it, they needed it bad. I mean, we grew, like you said, we grew everything, we may have bought sugar, salt and pepper and a little bit of flour. Otherwise, everything, you know, the houses were built with dirt basements so that you could maintain your vegetables for a long period of time, you made sauerkraut, you made, you canned. We canned all the beef and the veal and as a kid my job on Saturdays was to smoke the hams and the sausage and all of that. Well, I felt like I was sending the cash that they needed at home to pay the light bill! You know, the light bill was important, 'cause I remember in those days, the inspector used to come around the, our community, and they didn't have sophisticated meters. If you knew how, you could jump the meter! (laughing) And beat the electrical company, see? Paying the light bill and the taxes was the only two things that they had to really pay!

[several voices]: Right, umm hmm.

KS: That's interesting.

JG: () in them days, too, they had a little bit of relief, for the people. If you was lucky,

you, you could get something once in a while, you know.

KS: Yeah, relief.

JG: But you couldn't, it wasn't nothing steady, you know. You just happened to be lucky and get something. You know, () something to hand out.

AE: You're talking about snow drifts. We actually shoveled through sixteen feet snow drifts, right on this Drive, to get to Luray. With the dump truck, to get some groceries.

KS: That's why they cleared the snow. (lots of laughter)

[group]: Had to eat! Yeah!

AE: We'd put eight men on a dump truck, with snow shovels, and shovel through those snow drifts and get what we could, you know, in the truck and they's got to bring the eight guys back, too. And we had to shovel back through the same drift! While we were down there, it filled in again.

KS: That's a hardship!

PK: That was a hardship!

KS: How, were the camp, were the barracks cold? I mean . . .

PK: Naw, you had a big, what you call those big wood furnaces? With--

JG: Potbelly.

PK: Potbelly--

SR: Two of them.

PK: --that had, so that if you walk in your sleep at night, why, you wouldn't run into the stove?

[group]: Yeah, they had a ring around, a ring around, sort of metal, stove.

SR: Yeah, but the guys that was the furthest away, they felt it a little.

JG: A little cool! (laughing)

KS: They had the extra blankets! (lots of laughter)

PK: Depends on how far away you were, they tried to put them in the middle of the barracks.

LM: If you were in the middle of the barracks, you didn't get very warm!

SR: No!

[group]: Huh uh! () the ends, by the doors. (laughter)

KS: But all the creature comforts were there for you?

[group]: Yeah, sure, uh huh.

KS: Good, and you were very satisfied?

PK: Food was good!

KS: Yeah, satisfied with all that?

[group]: Oh yeah, we had, we had, food's good, yeah.

PK: The important part of it, it was a lot better than what we left at home a lot of times, see?

[group]: Yeah, oh yeah, umm hmm.

KS: Okay, I guess at, at this time it's a good question is--

LM: At home you went to an outdoor outhouse, you know--

PK: Yeah.

LM: --here you didn't have to do that. (laughter)

KS: No. What part of camp life did you like most?

PK: Well, I, I had a full time job, day, you know, day. And at nighttime I also got the, Attaway gave me the responsibility to close up and monitor the canteen or what it is, where you could buy the--

JG: Post exchange?

PK: Post exchange, and all of that.

KS: Excuse me just a second. This concludes Side A, please turn tape over.

END SIDE A, TAPE 1

BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE 1

KS: Okay, we're back.

JG: I'm gonna' leave for a little bit, I have to take some pills.

KS: Go ahead, no, go right ahead. We'll wait for you.

PK: I, I enjoyed it, because number one, I thought that the life I got into at the camp was easier than what I had at home. I had a very strict father. I mean, he didn't believe in recreation, he didn't believe in smoking, he didn't believe in, I don't think they ever brought in--I never tasted a Coca Cola until I came to camp! I mean, you know, it was, we lived in an ethnic community and they were not educated. My father never went to school, my mother never went to school and he learned to read on his own. And so I lived a hard life, and I, I got among these intelligent people, at the camp, and I thought, you know, as the fellow said I thought I died and went to heaven!

KS: Found your niche in life!

PK: Yeah, and plus, I had a wonderful job and I was learning something every day. As I

said to somebody recently, I () memorizing every document that came from the Army to go into that Army manual, and what you had to do. Every day that you got some in the mail. I got to go to Luray regularly, every week I drove a pick-up truck, you know, went down to get the mail, went to the bank, ran errands for the captain, and I, does anybody remember the first lieutenant? He was the second in--

JG: Stevens.

PK: Stevens?

JG: Umm hmm.

PK: He played a piano, and he was good. He could play *Silent Night* in jazz. (laughter)

SR: In jazz? (laughing)

PK: Yeah, I mean this guy could tickle the ivories. In fact, they, he went to the west camp on a couple of occasions when they needed a program. And, of course, if you remember Attaway, he walked with that dog, and that crop, and he wore leggings and he was a graduate of Clemson College and he was in the, what you call it, the cavalry in those days. You know, the cavalry was still important. But I, you know, to me, it was great. It was an opportunity, I learned a lot, and then, of course, I advanced to the National Park Service, from \$45 a month to, let's see, it was \$105 a month at \$1060. And I was there, I would have gone up in the National Park Service had it not been that the War wanted me and I went into the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, an appointment from FDR. But I, I think each step . . . I kicked my butt to say, "Hey, you done well for yourself!" You know, you, you were lucky, you, you were in the right place at the right time.

KS: That's part of it, I'm sure. How about the rest of you? They, they, they offered educational programs there. Did any of you take advantage of that?

LM: I took some, some diesel training.

KS: Trade courses, yeah.

LM: It, it wasn't much, and it was new. Them days was, diesel was just coming out. So I didn't get much out of that. But anyway, I, what I got out of it kind of led me to, toward my work the rest of my life that I did. I was a mechanic with, with General Motors for a while, up in Bradford, Pennsylvania, then I went to Sears Roebuck in Richmond, Virginia and with them 18½ years with a, a, auto, auto technician over there. And that was, my biggest part of my life was mechanics. And then I, then I went into electronics. While I was at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, I was in a civil service over there and we were in testing guns and tanks.

SR: Well, where were you in school? Where was the school when you were in NP-10? Where did you have to go to school? Where was it?

LM: It was, they, it was just a little course, like, that they give you. It wasn't, it was for the whole park but I don't believe there was very few even was interested in. And it was just a little thing in the recreation room.

AE: They had instructors come in.

LM: It wasn't much. Just--

AE: They'd have an instructor come in for different subjects.

SR: Yeah, 'cause I remember that.

KS: Alright, then--

AE: You could get, you could learn anything you wanted to learn.

KS: Did the boys take advantage of, of a lot of the courses?

AE: They actually would send out and get stuff for you. Different books and things. It

was, like I say, if you wanted to learn, you could learn.

SR: Yeah, that's the part I remember, they'd send away and get you anything as far as learning, you know, books and stuff like that. They, they'd help you out on that.

KS: Did you, did you think, do you think that a lot of the fellows took advantage of the educational courses that they gave?

SR: I, I wouldn't say a lot of the fellows, but I, a few, a few did. But not a lot.

KS: Did you think that they, they, they tend to go, like, like James [Lawrence McGlynn] here did, went to more of the trade-type of courses, where they learned how to do something?

SR: Yeah, that's, that's, that's it, more, more of the trade-type.

KS: Okay.

LM: I tell you, the biggest part, the biggest part of my education come through Sears Extension Institute Courses. I took eight of them with Sears Roebuck. And two of them, they sent me right to the school. And the others I took by mail. And I would say I got, the biggest part of my education is through Sears Roebuck.

PK: I, I'm going to have to go. I have one more thought that I want to put in there. When I look back now, you got to remember, I was a young kid, didn't have the vision that, having traveled all over the world and having been in business for 50 years. We were under the Army. Most of the things that they did for the Army, the soldiers that they lined up, was part of our routine, see? And when you really look back, they were preparing, because in 1939, now I don't know about 1936 when it first was to help feed the families, but when we got further up in the '39 and '40, they figured they were going to have a lot of soldiers come out of those camps, too.

[group]: Amen, right, that's right.

PK: And the Army was orienting the instruction, because I learned every one of those. In fact, the War, in '39, was getting pretty hot. And then when I got out of the camp, down in North Carolina, the one camp in Woolwine was turned in, and they brought in, started bringing in conscientious objectors, to take over the camp. And they were working. There was nothing wrong with it, you know, people kind of turned their nose up at them, but they were good people. Just didn't believe in firing a gun to kill somebody. And that's what the camp was turned over to. I believe it was either Woolwine or the one at Laurel Springs.

LM: Well, somebody, somebody told me NP-10 was full of conscientious objectors.

KS: Yes, it was.

AE: Yeah, it was.

KS: Just a side note--

LM: During the War.

KS: Just a side note--

LM: That was people--

KS: Go ahead.

LM: --Amish, Amish people, Mennonites, that didn't believe in, you know, taking a gun and killing people.

KS: Right. There's a lot of, the Mennonites, there's a lot of Mennonites in this area, as you well know. There are still fellows living in the area, like yourselves, who served in that camp. And our, our intention is to find them and to interview those, too.

[?]: Well, good.

KS: So, you know, build up our, our, our history. Now, I know you have to go, but let

me ask you one question. Two things, one, I think we know from what you said about how the CCC did affect your life, but what kind of career did you have since you left the CCC?

PK: Well, I spent four years, went to the Academy, went in the Navy, came out of the War in 1946, January of '46 brought the ship back from Shanghai, China. I was the chief engineer on a Liberty ship. And I went to work for this hardware store in North Wilksboro. My wife is from Wilksboro. I was from Pennsylvania. I met her when I was at Laurel Springs at, working for the National Park Service. I came back, went to work for the hardware store, two brother-in-laws, and we built to today is 240, or 450 home centers called Lowe's--

KS: Really!

PK: --Home Improvement--

KS: I'll be darned! My favorite store!

PK: --and I was one of the originators, the founder, and the only living member that's still left of that, and I worked my way up to chairman of the board which I retired in '83, then stuck with the company. I left the board of directors because of age in May of 1997 and in January of 1997 I retired as chairman of the charitable foundation. But in December of '83, I left the company as an employee to get my retirement program and move it into an IRA. I have to say, that CCC meant a lot. That's one reason why, it gave me a start and I was very successful throughout. Not because of me, but being in the right place and, but I'll say one last thing before I go. It didn't come within, without hard work. Twelve, fourteen, sixteen hours a day, trying to build the company, and still trying to help out.

KS: Excellent, excellent. Well, I want to thank you for giving your time and your interview here--

[?]: ()?

KS: L-O-W-E-S--

AE: Hardware, I mean, the building supply store?

PK: Yeah.

AE: It is?

PK: Yeah.

AE: It is? Well, we buy from them all the time.

PK: Yeah, well, I, this is the, these clothes and this hat--nuts, I left it out there--fifty, we celebrated our fiftieth anniversary on November, in 1996, and they wrote a book, and I was given a fiftieth anniversary party for my service for fifty years. And I am the oldest employee alive. I don't know many that are still alive that maybe within five or seven years of that.

KS: I see. Now, one, I was just reminded of a question. What is, what name did you go by?

SR: Oh, that's right, you didn't (). (laughter)

PK: Yeah. When I came to camp, my name was Peter Kenneth Collenich, C-O-L-L-E-N-I-C-H.

KS: That was your real name?

PK: That was the name that my parents gave me. I didn't have a birth certificate when I got an appointment to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, so my mother and father had to go with a lawyer, in Houtzdale, Pennsylvania, take the church Bible, and transcribe it on a birth certificate, and naturally it was done by a Ukrainian Orthodox, or a Catholic priest, when I was baptized. You know, they baptize immediately after you were born, and in, in there, it was written Petro--

KS: Peter, okay.

PK: --Kulynych. Why, we, I have a brother who died in infancy and he, his name was Paul. My dad was very religious, Peter and Paul. And so that's how I had that name and then I had to change it, now everybody in the family is using it! (all laughing)

KS: Very good!

JG: And you're the one that started Petro, right?

LM: Peter, Paul and Mary.

PK: Petro, now that's my present name.

JG: Yeah, well, this is, the address is okay?

PK: Yeah, that address, 450 Shady Lane.

JG: I'm gonna send you them pictures.

PK: Okay.

KS: Now, before you go, I have to say I really appreciate your time, and your interview, and I appreciate your service to our country. Thank you very much!

PK: Well, thank you. Good to meet you all--

AE: How much KP duty did you do?

PK: None!

AE: None?

PK: None.

AE: I did a half a day.

PK: No, I, I, I didn't--

AE: I liked it too well.

PK: See, they always thought that the guy in the office could put in a good word, so anybody else, they, they kind of treated you pretty good at the camp! (laughter)

KS: We always love the company clerk!

PK: Okay.

KS: Take care.

JG: Have a nice trip back.

PK: [voice fainter as he walks away] Thank you.

AE: Okay, we'll see you.

LM: Nice seeing you.

PK: [talking to someone in the doorway of the interview room] You get an earful there!
Nice to see you.

LM: You know, when I was growing up, I, I'll think about him when I buy some two-by-fours!

KS: You'd better believe it! We have a Lowe's right down here in Harrisonburg.
(laughter)

LM: When I was growing up and staying at home--
[Kulynych returns to the doorway, is talking with Gecoma. Their words are indecipherable, but make McGlynn's comments difficult to hear]

LM: --besides working the WPA, I was carrying coal on my back in a bag and we didn't buy no coal for eight, eight years. I carried it all up, and all the coal we, we burned, I carried on my back to the house.

JG: From the slate dump?

KS: I know this, this has nothing to do with the CCC, but my brothers, during the, during the Depression, used to go along the railroad track in Newark, New Jersey, and where, where coal would fall off the train, and they'd pick that up and bring that home. And the tracks were always covered with people just trying to pick up pieces of coal.

[relative of one of the interviewees]: Just one more thing, you were, we, we were talking about education, and I think the story of where he watched the man write his name for the first time-

-

KS: Yeah, well, we're going to get into that. We're going to get into that. I think, one, I want to get a little bit off of where we're going and I want to talk more specifically about your work experiences. In camp, what you did. We already know, we got a good background on--

LM: Twenty-eight months of truck driving!

KS: Truck driving! And we know that there, but, Arthur, how about you? What were your duties or varied duties in camp?

AE: In civil life I was driving what they call 18 wheelers, now. And I went to sleep and turned it over, had it on top of me. In those days, the glass was plate glass in the windows. Gasoline tank was under the seat, gasoline was dripping down on my friend and I. A guy was riding with me just to learn to drive.

JG: Was that in CC camp?

AE: Huh?

JG: He wants to know--

AE: No, this is, this is, I'm telling him how, how I got to drive in the CC camp.

JG: Oh, okay, okay.

KS: Oh, okay.

AE: That's, I'm leading up to that.

KS: And this is before the CC?

AE: I don't want to drive no more. I lost my nerve in that wreck. A corner of the floor board was sticking between the two bones in my friend's leg, and so I don't want nothing to do with that driving. But at Crescent Rock Parking Overlook, they had a flatbed Dodge truck, and the guy that was driving it couldn't get it over to where they wanted to unload the stone. So the guy, the leader says, "Is anybody in here that can drive?" And I didn't say nothing but there happened to be a guy went in with me, knew about my background, and he told that guy. "Well, get in there and put it over here so we can unload it!" So I put it over there and I got out and got my shovel. And he took the shovel away from me and said, "You're a truck driver." (laughter) Well, I wasn't a truck driver!

SR: That's the way they do it!

AE: Yeah, so I finished out the week with that Dodge flatbed and then they gave me a dump truck. One of you mentioned a Chevrolet dump truck? I drove that damn thing down Whiteoak Canyon, down that road. And it, I was scared to death with that thing. So then later on, I was working with a man named Loudermilk, laying the stone along the fence, you know, along by Hawksbill Mountain? I was working with this guy, and Mr. Hodges came by in his pick-up truck, and the guy said, "Mr. Hodges wants you to go with him." And he takes me over to Camp 10. I don't remember that being Camp 10! But he takes me to the next camp and they gave me, actually a 4-wheel drive, with solid rubber tires. And, this mechanic, you mentioned his name--

LM: Huffman.

AE: Huffman. He put a rope on the crank and one of us pulled the rope and the other one pulled the crank to get it started. So then he shows me how to shift the gears. It's outside of a wagon seat, this lever. And he says, "Nothing to it, you can drive it." And I come back to my camp with that 4-wheel drive and when it got cold weather, you couldn't start it because the wheels would slide if you pulled it to try to start it.

KS: So they were slick wheels, I take it, right?

AE: Huh?

KS: The tires, the tires were slick?

AE: Yeah, solid rubber. And when it got cold so I couldn't start that 4-wheel drive, I went in the garage to work. So I spent the rest of the time in the garage. And a civil engineer named Brown ran into a white horse and killed it one night. Accidentally. And so we would holler when he'd come by, "What's the color of horse manure?" (laughter) And we'd say that again. And everybody would yell, "Brown!" He'd get so mad! (lots of laughter) I thought he was going to kill me one day. I was laying underneath the truck, working underneath the truck--

KS: Now, did you stay a truck driver all the while you were in the, the rest of your service?

AE: All the rest of the time, yes.

KS: But when, but when you went in, what did you, just--

AE: I signed up to be a cook.

KS: Did you, did you become a cook, too?

AE: No. I never, never even, I was telling him I was on KP for one half a day, out of the year. A half a day and I liked it so well they wouldn't put me on it anymore. (lots of laughter) Yeah.

KS: And so you went on a ground crew, like, with the pick and shovel, before you started

driving the truck?

AE: Yeah, for a little bit, yeah. And then I got on the truck.

KS: What's the most of the things you hauled? And I, and I know you hauled the rock, hauled the rock for the, the, the wall?

AE: For the, for those fences, along the . . .

KS: Okay, that was most of it?

AE: Right. Actually, if that 4-wheel drive, if one wheel spun, you couldn't go nowhere. If a, if a front wheel spun. I had to get on the back of the truck. Actually, I would roll it back into the mountain, to hold it. Then I'd get up on the truck and pile rocks up on that corner where the wheel was spinning.

SR: Pretty smart! (laughing)

KS: Now here, here's a question. It's for you, but for all of you. What kind of heavy equipment did the CCC boys operate? Now trucks I know, but would they ride, did they operate bulldozers or--

LM: Yeah.

AE: Yeah, we had bulldozers and road scrapers, and . . .

KS: You did all that work?

[group]: Yeah.

AE: It, we had all kinds of--

KS: See, the question, the problem I had, was that they told that since they were so, you guys were so young at the time, they couldn't operate the heavy equipment. But the photos we have show CCC boys operating this equipment. But you, you operated it all. And were you trained, I

mean, were you trained how to use it?

AE: Yeah, they had people to show you. You know, the older people like your--

KS: You know, here's, here's a wheel and here's a brake and go ahead!

LM: Like me, like me!

AE: Yeah. Like, like, like that lever, outside the wagon seat.

JG: All my time, you know, I never seen any equipment like that.

SR: No, I didn't either.

KS: () the heavy equipment?

LM: At N, NP-10, the only thing big that they had was their ton and a half stake body trucks.

SR: Yeah, I remember--

[all men talking at once, Steeber's voice finally heard above the rest]

KS: Okay. And you, and you were, you were, you were NP, Arthur, you were NP-1, which was here at Skyland?

AE: Right. Yeah.

KS: So I guess your jobs were a lot differently than these fellows there. 'Cause you had a lot of shops there.

[all men talking at once]

JG: I don't remember any of that.

AE: Yeah, we had our own sawmill, we cut our own lumber to build the barracks and stuff with it.

LM: I think each company had, had different types of work to do.

JG: Oh, yeah.

LM: They didn't all do the same thing.

SR: Ours was supposedly all labor.

KS: Well, what did you do?

SR: Supposed to be all labor.

KS: What did you do, mostly?

SR: Actually, I, most of my work was on the trails. Cleaning up the trails, fixing the trails, fixing the edges, and so forth. You know, pulling some of the trees out along the drives and--

KS: Did you do any planting of things?

SR: Plantings, planting trees, yeah. I had a foreman that sort of liked me and he sort of trusted me and he'd take me out and put me by myself doing different things because he knew I knew how to plant and so forth.

KS: Now, you saw the picture last night of the big trees, that were balled up with, with--

SR: That's, that's the one Jim was working on.

KS: Okay, Jim, now you worked, you worked on that project there--

JG: Yeah.

KS: Can you tell us about the mechanics of doing that? I mean, all we see is a big hole with a, a ball, ball, you know, a ball of roots wrapped with burlap. But how did, how did that go about, what's the steps involved?

JG: First thing you start, you dig a big trench.

KS: Right around it?

JG: Round, around it.

KS: You mentioned--okay.

JG: In other words, as wide as the branches. You had to go out that far, you know.

KS: And that was hand dug, right?

JG: You had to dig it, dig it so you'd get down in there, work, then you had to, you had to taper it, all the way down to that main root.

LM: And it would slide right down in there.

JG: Ugh! To get them on the truck, you used a block and tackle, with planks--

KS: Well, how'd you get the, the, the, you'd just pack it with the burlap, and then tie it?

JG: Yeah, yeah. But you had to cut--

KS: Well, who crawled underneath--

JG: You had to cut it this way--

KS: Who crawled underneath that? (laughter)

SR: Well, I don't think he crawled underneath!

JG: No, you--

SR: You could wrap the thing over top, in this fashion.

KS: Okay.

SR: But you see the guys underneath that tree, picking it up in that one picture?

KS: Yeah.

SR: Well, that's sort of the type of work they were doing.

JG: See, after you, after you dug your trench, then it gave you enough room after you start tapering it, you know.

KS: Right.

JG: Then you, then you'd have to get behind it and guys would pull it. You--

KS: Well, what you actually did is excavated out a ramp, right?

SR: Right, that's, that's--

KS: You dug out a ramp and then just dragged it out?

JG: Well, yeah, like, just like a ditch, like, you know.

KS: What bothers me, now, is that a lot of trees have that main center root.

JG: Oh, that's--

KS: How did you cut that?

JG: Well, you, really didn't--

AE: If you cut that, you'd kill the tree.

KS: So did you just dig that out?

JG: No, that was dug out. You know, you'll pull it and you'd, guys were behind it, they broke it, like, you know. They broke that main root. In fact, you could hear them crack, you know.

SR: I think that's, yeah, I think that's the reason you see these guys, you know, lifting, lifting on that tree. That main root was important, like you said. If you crack that root, that, that tree actually--

KS: So you got as much of it as you could?

SR: Get as much as you can.

KS: Now, where did you plant some of these trees? These were pretty big trees!

JG: Most of the trees that, well, I helped dig them out and I helped plant them, too. That was at the headquarters.

KS: Oh, headquarters!

JG: The ones that we dug.

LM: Down, down, down the valley?

JG: Yeah. I guess that was at headquarters, right?

LM: Yeah, it's still there.

SR: I, I, I tried to find that yesterday, but I, I kind of forgot.

LM: Well, I went, it's still there, I went past it last night.

SR: Yeah, yeah, we're going to go down there today and look it over.

JG: Then I also--

LM: Looks better now than it did then.

SR: Does it? (laughs)

JG: I also worked on trails, too. Buck Hollow Trail, anybody remember the Buck Hollow Trail?

KS: That's just leveling them off, getting the rocks out, putting, I see they put walls there, to retain some of the, the areas. Did you do all that work, too, with, with the stone?

JG: Far as I know, we never, we built, like, little bridges, like when you'd hit a stream or something, you know. You'd have, got trees and make a bridge-like, you know.

SR: A lot of them were washed out, you know, the rains and stuff, and they just, just looked terrible!

KS: We still have that problem.

JG: () whenever I got here, but you had to, had to keep them up, you know.

LM: Some, some of the work in our company at that time was putting the telephone line

down, too. Over on the other side of Panorama.

JG: Well, that was earlier, see, () earlier.

KS: Were those trenches all hand dug? The telephone lines and sewer lines, and all kinds of things like that, were they all hand dug or were they machine dug?

LM: I would imagine they were, they were hand dug. In them days, I don't believe they had machinery. They didn't have anything like a ditch witch or anything like that.

JG: I, that--

LM: I think that most, most of them was hand, hand dug.

AE: You dug the ditch with a shovel.

LM: What they call common labor, common labor.

SR: Yeah, I think in our camp that's the way it was.

KS: Blood, sweat and tears.

SR: Most of that was done by hand.

LM: But I know, the men that I used to take out to work was working on the other side of Panorama, about halfway up to that next camp. And they were laying, they were laying telephone lines, 40-some inches deep. In some places, you know, they, they're gonna hit a lot of rock.

AE: Umm hmm.

LM: And everything. So, it was kind of a tough job. But that telephone line was, was big around, and I think they said that it weighed 100 pound per foot.

AE: A hundred pounds?

LM: And they were laying all that lines in there. But I found out later on, that all them telephone lines went to that special place where the President used to go off to in case they had a air

attack.

KS: Oh, this is for World War II?

LM: Yeah.

KS: Yeah. Interesting. Now, one of the things I want to get on, you know, time is, is starting to run out on you guys, and on us, too.

AE: One, one--

KS: Let me ask you one, okay, go, go ahead.

AE: One thing I'd like to mention is I got a day off for working on Saturday or a Sunday, and a holiday. I got a day's leave each day I worked like that. So I worked every day. One of my best jobs was at the parking overlooks or someplace, directing traffic.

KS: Oh, okay. Good.

AE: I had to keep a note of each vehicle, where--what state it was from, and how many people was in it. I had a log sheet to keep it all on that. And that was good duty.

KS: Did you give, did you give directions to the visitors?

AE: Yes.

KS: Did you give out pamphlets or anything like?

AE: Yes, sometimes we'd give out pamphlets.

KS: Well, if you remember Reed Engle talked last night about CCC performing interpretive duties, but see, like, that's what the rangers do today in the Park. They direct people and everything else. So, essentially, this is the job that you did.

AE: Right, on holidays and weekends.

KS: And, was, most, how, how was somebody assigned to this? I mean, I know how you

were assigned, but they must have had regular people doing this.

AE: Yes, they did. Mr. Noyes was the superintendent of Camp 1, and he would give me orders what, what to do on Saturday or Sunday.

KS: Now, this was only on Saturday and Sunday?

AE: Yes.

KS: () service.

AE: Yeah.

KS: Oh, okay.

AE: The other job was regular.

KS: Now, how about other people during the week; did they have people giving out instructions and directions?

AE: Yes.

KS: All during the week?

AE: Uh huh. Well, well, it would depend on the traffic.

KS: Oh, okay. Whether, it would, it would, based, I guess you would say, on need. Rather, on need. If they needed somebody.

AE: Yeah, right, that's right.

KS: Okay. Well, that's interesting, that's something that we didn't know.

AE: Yeah, that's right.

KS: I'm going to move along a little bit faster, now, because I, I could ask you a thousand more questions, (all laughing) but I'm, I'm certainly not going to put you through that. I think by the tone of what you said that the quality of work that you guys performed, or the CCC performed, was

really of high quality.

AE: It was.

KS: About the best that could be gotten anywhere.

AE: I, I think so.

KS: Okay. And do you feel that the job assignments that you were sent on were well planned?

AE: Yes.

KS: I mean, you know, did you have to, you know, stand around and wait for things, or--

AE: No.

SR: No, I thought they were well planned.

LM: We didn't have to stand around and wait for anything.

SR: That's right, I thought they were well planned.

LM: The () was there.

SR: Right, exactly.

KS: One of the areas we want to talk about, and briefly if we can, is, is, you know, the mountain people. You certainly must have come in contact with it, with a lot of the mountain people. And there is a lot of questions in many people's minds today what exactly were they like, you know. And what were your impressions? Just go around, around a little bit, what were your impressions of the mountain people?

LM: I liked them, I liked them very much. Because some of the mountain people that we had contact with was, was the LEM's. People that lived in the area, knew the area, they're the guys

that had these jobs to show you how to get here and how to get there. So I think that's the only contacts I had with them, other than my girlfriend down in Luray. (laughter)

KS: We'll get, we'll get to that, too. How about you, Arthur?

AE: I found them all friendly and--

KS: Now, what I'm talking about really now is the people who lived here.

AE: Yeah.

KS: You know--

AE: Right.

KS: -- you know, the Stricklers and . . .

AE: I went with a guy to take census a little bit. We come to this one lady that had eight children. A different father for each one. (laughter)

KS: Is that right?

LM: Well, she was playing the field, wasn't she?

AE: She told us, she told us that.

KS: Now, did they get around to, you know, take the census in all these areas pretty well?

AE: Yeah, just for the people in the Park. And they were, a lot of them was mad because they had to move down in the valley.

KS: That I know.

AE: They, they still, are they still mad?

KS: Pretty much. (laughs) In fact, what's happened is their, their children--

AE: I, I really didn't see any need for that. I didn't, I think that they could have stayed up here.

KS: That was a governmental decision that came during Roosevelt's administration. But

...

AE: I really didn't see any need for it.

KS: Right. How about you other fellows? What are some of your experiences?

SR: I didn't have too much contact with them.

JG: Me, neither.

SR: But, you know, they were simple -- good people, that's what I, that's what I thought.

JG: We were, the only thing we, we know, is where they lived. 'Cause we used to go on a Sunday, you know, and go through their cabins at.

LM: I do know some of the, some of the people gave over their land to the government for this job, but some of them the government just took it. That's what I understand.

JG: They were all gone by the time I got here--

KS: The state of Virginia condemned it--

JG: --() know any of them.

KS: --and then after the land was condemned by the state of Virginia, they turned it over to the federal government for a park.

LM: Yeah. You know they still do that? The state highways come through and say they want a part of your property, well, you can't have it, well, we'll condemn it and take it anyway.

AE: That's right.

LM: It's legal?

AE: It's legal.

LM: Yeah?

JG: That makes it legal for what they do.

SR: Yeah, that's true. You might as well give it to them right off the, right off the bat, because they're going to get it one way or another.

KS: They certainly are. Just one second. This is going to conclude tape number 1 and this interview will continue on tape number 2.

END SIDE B, TAPE 1

BEGIN SIDE A, TAPE 2

KS: During the break we came, a question came up of did we fully answer the question of what we liked about camp life the most. So let's go through that once more again with each one of you. And, and, and, and just keep it onto camp life.

LM: Well, what I liked about the, was the camaraderie with all the fellows. And I liked the idea of, of the music and everything that we was making with our little instruments and all that. And I liked some of the, the trips we took to Luray on the weekend and things like that. All that, all that was enjoyable for me.

KS: Let me, let me, since we're on that subject, let's just add to it. I, I'm sure you had a lot of recreation while you were, were in camp.

LM: Oh, yeah, they had, they, they played ball and different things here.

KS: Did they put any shows on, bring people from the outside in, you know, to entertain you?

LM: Not that I know of, not that I know of.

AE: Once in a great while--

KS: they would have something?

AE: --I don't know, I don't know where they got the movie, but they would put a movie on for the whole group. But I don't remember where they got the movie.

KS: Okay, it was movies that they showed?

AE: Yeah.

KS: Regularly, or did they just do it once in a while?

AE: Just once in a while.

KS: Once in while. Well, how about you, Arthur, what, what did you like most about being in camp?

AE: I really don't know how to explain that part, I, because it was all good.

KS: You liked it all?

AE: Right. I learned more in there than I ever learned before. You could learn anything you wanted. All you had to do was request a book on something, and they'd get it for you. They had a little library and they, they, I, I remember like half a dozen different classes, or subjects. And like the guy who was telling you about learning to write his own name. Where else could you do that at middle life? You know, he was like 50 years old or so.

KS: And he wrote his name.

AE: And he learned to write his own name. So, where, where else could you do that?

LM: I remember one time, we had a, they took a couple trucks and went downtown, got a couple truck loads of girls and brought them up and they had a dance.

KS: Nothing wrong with that! (lot of laughter)

LM: They did that once in a while, I remember that.

AE: They did that once in a while.

KS: Okay, and how about you?

SR: I liked being with the fellows. I liked going down to Luray like, oh, what's his name?

LM: Larry.

SR: What was your first name?

LM: Larry.

SR: Larry. I like going down to Luray. Either going down to a movie down there, or to just walk around, but, and to, working with the fellows out in the woods. It was just plain enjoyable to me.

KS: Okay.

JG: I liked most everything about it, you know, the routine was, you know, got used to it, and I liked what I was doing. Like you say, like the, the guys that were there, you know, they were all nice.

LM: I remember one time going down there to a movie. Before we went into the movies, we went into the liquor store. And we got a half a pint of whiskey, put it in an inside pocket and we put a straw in it and we'd go to the movies. (laughter) You'd, you'd go in sober and you'd come out feeling pretty good.

KS: You fellows didn't partake of any mountain dew up here, did you? In the, were there-

-

LM: You mean white lightening?

KS: Yeah. (laughter) Did you know that they were making it up here?

AE: I went home with a guy that lived here in the mountains one weekend. And his, his father was kneeling down over a keg of white lightening. And he had a little bottle on a string and would drop it down in this keg and get up, take some of the lightening up with it and then he'd shake it and looked at the beads on it. And he'd pour a little water in the keg--

SR: That's how you could tell how much alcohol was in it.

AE: I said to, to the guy, I said--

JG: 150 proof!

AE: --"What's he doing there?" Said, "He's a-tampering his liquor!" (lot of laughter)

KS: Well, did you, did you know of anybody who was making the, the shine up here in the, in the mountains?

AE: He, he poked a cup, a Rumford baking powder cup, metal cup, full of that stuff at me and told me to drink it. Well, I was scared not to drink it, so I drank it. But I had to crawl up the mountain to get back to camp! (laughter) That was awful potent!

KS: Was there, was there a, a lot of, of moonshine kicking around the camps, the fellows-

-

LM: It, not around the camp, I didn't see-

[all talking at once]: I never seen any in the camp itself, no I never saw anything like that, not the camps.

SR: It wasn't allowed to start with.

LM: Right.

SR: And if you snuck it in, I didn't see too much of that.

LM: But I've seen a few places where they, where they clean out a liquor, a distillery.

KS: Well, we have movies, believe it or not, old 16mm of one of the CCC guys at a still, and partaking. Of a big jar, yeah.

AE: Partaking! (laughter)

KS: We, we come across those in the Archives.

AE: You know you could get a half a gallon jar of that stuff for a dollar in those days.

KS: Rub your sore back and drink the rest.

AE: Ain't that something?

LM: You didn't dare to smoke when you was drinking that. (lots of laughter)

KS: We mentioned it before, and let me just continue with the thought, what was a typical date in town like when you, when you were dating the girls? Before I get, before you answer, let me tell you a story that I heard. Our librarian in town, her mom was a young girl when you fellows were running through here, working on the mountain. And she told her daughter that if it wasn't for the CCC, there would be a lot of maiden ladies running around Page County. (laughter) So, you made an impact down there. But what was a typical date like when you went out to, to the towns?

LM: Well, it was more or less a movie date. You take your girlfriend to the movies, you take her home, and that was it.

KS: That was it? That true for all of you fellows?

[group]: Yeah, that's about it, uh huh.

KS: What was the best town? I mean, you had a choice of Harrisonburg, let me see, Harrisonburg, Luray, and Front Royal?

LM: New Market.

KS: New Market. Anything on the east slope? Sperryville wasn't much, it's not much

now, I don't know if it was anything then.

AE: No.

LM: I, I like Luray, but Harrisonburg was a little bigger and we liked it over there a whole lot. But we used to play some music a little, over there along Route 11, close to Harrisonburg. We'd play for square dances.

KS: Did you play for pay? Or for free?

LM: It was mostly for free.

KS: Okay.

SR: Did you ever go to that little town of Stanley? Down here right close to Luray?

AE: That's on the Shenandoah River, isn't it?

SR: Did you ever go there from here?

AE: No.

LM: Stanley--

SR: Well, one of the fellows that was with us, he worked there, down in town. Remember, when Stevie worked with the . . .

JG: Yeah.

SR: And he was so happy because they sent him down to town to work instead of out in the woods. And I can remember that like today. He'd come back, and he'd laugh at all of us, coming in all dirty and everything, he'd be, he'd come in--

KS: Now, he was a CCC boy?

SR: He went with the foreman and they were doing something in town down there. Well, they did the shopping, I guess, the--

KS: Oh, okay.

JG: They () more or less went, like, for some supplies or something.

SR: Supplies, yeah, for supplies and so forth. And then they did a few other things and he was happy to be working down there.

LM: Well, you know one of my jobs with the, other than the CCC, at the, at the time I was at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in the CCC's, I was tending bar at night in town. That's, that was what I--

SR: That's some () (laughter)

AE: That wasn't a volunteer job, was it?

LM: No, I got paid there. (laughter)

KS: Okay, I guess we're getting close to winding up this interview. And let me go through some post-CCC questions with you guys. Now, you've answered some of them in, in, in talking about other subjects. But let's, let's be a little bit more formal on this. What did you, one by one, what did you do after you left the CCC?

LM: When I left the CCC camps, I headed right to Aberdeen Proving Grounds and signed up with civil service. I worked over there 4½ years at civil service. Then I got drafted into the service, in General Patton's first armored division. And that's what happened to me after CCC's.

KS: What did you do over at Aberdeen Proving Grounds?

LM: We were testing guns and tanks, for the armed forces.

KS: No wonder why they brought you! And how about, and, and, was that your career? Did your career continue?

LM: No, my career didn't pertain to that at all. I got into auto mechanics and I was an auto

mechanic all my life, up until I retired.

KS: You, 'til you retired. I see.

LM: I was a technician over in the Richmond Sears Roebuck stores and I had nine stores in the area that I had to go to, one day here and one day there, to the different stores. More or less a trouble shooter, more than anything.

KS: I see. Arthur, how about yourself?

AE: I, I got a job in a pen factory at Petersburg, Virginia. I worked there 4½ years as a lathe operator. And tumbler operator--

KS: What, what, what that, in a pen factory?

AE: Making fountain pens and pencils. And actually my most, my biggest job was making the little band that goes around the cap of the pen, remember how the little gold band around there? Well, I cut those bands out of brass and then put them in a tumbler and polished them in the tumbler. And then I took them to the shipping department and let them send them out and get them gold-plated.

KS: Oh, I see.

AE: And I worked there 4½ years. Then I went to the Navy job up in Annapolis, Maryland. I worked there 35 years.

KS: And you retired from there. What did you do at Annapolis?

AE: In Annapolis I started off as a diesel engine operator, a mechanic. And I ran from 5 to 5,000 horsepower engines. Then I got, I had a thing happen to my skin, so I had to take a cut in pay and get a different job. So this guy's talking about the PX and all, reminded me I was, one of my duties was to maintain the administrative manual for that, that department that I worked with. And

if I have, if I was putting something in that manual, my little boss couldn't do a thing to me, no matter how bad it hurt him to see me sitting there putting those papers in there. It really broke his heart! He couldn't do a thing! So, so, I read everything that's in that manual. So I would get a ticket for illegal parking, and I would take the ticket to the security officer and tell him if he read paragraph so-and-so on page so-and-so in the administrative manual, you'll find it's perfectly legal for me to be there. He'd take the ticket, tear it up and throw it in the can, shake his head, curse under his breath and let me go.

KS: Now, did you retire from Annapolis?

AE: Yes.

KS: Okay, fine. After, what? Thirty years?

AE: Thirty-five.

KS: Thirty-five years.

AE: Right.

KS: Amazing.

AE: And I went there for a visit a year or two ago when the head civilian in the department that I worked with had gotten promoted up to the "Ivory Tower", we called it. So, I went up to see him. There's a guy fresh out of school chose himself to go with me up there, to show me the way. And that guy told him, he says, "You can go on back to 31," said, "Arthur knows his way around this place better than you do!" (laughter) And the guy's face turned red, he left, and -- Larry wanted to put me to work Monday morning. I said, "You got the same two reasons that I retired before." He said, "Yeah, but I'll put you with a different group; you won't have nothing to do with those S.O.B.'s. And I said, "Well, I'd like to take you up on it, but I better not."

KS: You stayed retired.

AE: I said, "You still have the telephone." Yeah, and those two guys would be calling me all the time. One of them was rated as a mechanical engineer and his wife was much more mechanical-inclined than he was. And he would be calling me about the most inopportune things he would call me about. And then--

KS: Well, did he rely on you for some information, is that what it was?

AE: Then this other guy was an alcoholic and he'd be, every morning he'd be tipsy. And they still got him there! He's, they, they put him in a, in a stable, I called it. It's in a room, a control room for a test cell, and he don't even have a window in there. He don't know whether it's raining or what! Of course, in his condition, it wouldn't matter. (all laughing) But, I, he was the last person in that group that I wanted to see, and he's the guy opened the door for me when I went there! Yeah, he opened the door.

KS: Oh, gee. How about you, Stanley?

SR: What did I do?

KS: Yeah, what, what was your career after you left the CCC?

SR: Well, after I got out, I went and finished my junior year in high school. Then after coming out of high school, I went to work in a mill. I worked there for a year and a half, then I was drafted into the Army, sent down to Fort Hood, Texas. And I spent three years in the service. Went over to the South Pacific. During the War, I was in the battle of the Philippines, Leyte [Island] and Luzon [Island]. I was wounded there for a little while and I was supposed to go on to Japan when I healed up. But that's the time Japan surrendered, and I come home from there. So I went back to work at the mill. And I signed up for an ICS in electricity. And I became an electrician in that mill

and I worked at the job 42 years. Retired there as electrician.

KS: Wow. Excellent.

SR: From the climax I'm living ().

KS: Yes, sir.

JG: Well, I, I went to a steel mill, worked in a steel mill. It wasn't too long, then I, then I joined the Navy. But, you just want to know what we did after--

KS: Yeah, after the CCC you went to the Navy.

JG: That's all I did.

KS: Did you have a career in the Navy? I mean, did you stay in the Navy? Was that your career, did you retire from the Navy?

JG: Oh, yeah.

KS: That's all you did? That's, I think that's rather significant!

JG: No, I mean I was only in three years. Just to--

KS: And what did you do when you came out of the Navy?

JG: When I came out of the Navy, I went, I went back and got my job back at this mill. They gave you 90 days, you know, to get your job. But, I just forget how long I stayed there. Then I went into the coal mines. I worked in the coal mines for a while. Then I gave that up and went back, back to the mill. I worked for the American Bridge Company.

KS: Oh, okay.

JG: I was there for a little over 30 years.

KS: Wow, very good. Well, gentlemen, I appreciate your time. And I certainly appreciate you coming here for the interview. And on behalf of Shenandoah National Park, I'd like

to thank you not only for, you know, having this interview, but for the work you did for the Park.

AE: We got to do anything we can to get the camps started again, to get the kids off the street.

KS: Well--

AE: They need it badly, right now.

KS: I understand that. From my point of view and it's just one point of view, is that there's different kids out there today, than there were in your time.

SR: That's the point today.

KS: And I always ask somebody who, who asks me about it, I always say, "Would you like to supervise them?" And there are people who would, I'd be, don't get me wrong, I'm sure they would. But it, it would be a hard task.

LM: It wouldn't be a dollar a day, either, it'd be a hundred dollars--(laughter) () money.

KS: You know, I always say that my wife will put down food for the dog and he won't eat it and I say, "That dog's just not hungry enough." And I think the problem today with, with children, and even my own children and my grandchildren, is that I don't think they're hungry enough.

SR: That's true.

KS: And that's the way I look at it.

SR: That's true.

LM: I think they should take a lot of these young fellows off the street and put them in the Americorps. That's a spin-off of the CCC's. They should put them in there and put them to work. The only thing about it, they would be making a hell, a heck of a lot more money than we did! They, two years ago, a little over two years I think it is, they got started. And they started out in Aberdeen

Proving Grounds, they got a base up there. They were getting, like, \$8,000 a year. Doing basically the same thing that we were doing. Cleaning the Appalachian Trail, starting up in Maine and working down and all that. Them, them people's making nice money for, and they were learning a trade. They should, they should keep that up and, and keep putting the people in there that, that want to go in it, and learn something.

KS: One of the points, one of the points that people make, and I think it has, has some, some truth to it, is that, one of the questions I asked you fellows was were the jobs well planned? And you all agreed that they were, you went there and it was--I find that there's a lot of jobs that are done, you know, by these, these groups that are trying to make work, that aren't well planned, and the kids really come in and don't have any direction to really work on them. So in fairness to them, at that, on that point, is that you really have to have something for them, something that means something--

AE: Yes.

KS: -not make work. And things that they can just look back with pride like you fellows do.

AE: Yeah, we could see the fruits of our labor.

KS: Exactly, exactly.

LM: In Pennsylvania, they had a group of Americorps up there, I don't know where they were based. But they, they sent some of them out to Oklahoma and all those places where the forest fires were, fight the forest fires and everything. And other groups, well, like the ones that went to the Appalachian Trail up in Maine, they come out of the Aberdeen Proving Grounds and sent them up there. And, you know, they all, all had different types of work. Some of them was working in

town with poor people, helping at nursing homes, and things like that. Because they got men and women both in Americorps right now. They, they had four camps of them, one at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, one in Charleston, South Carolina at the naval base, one at Colorado Air Force Base, and one in San Diego Naval Base. They got four companies of men there right now, with about, I guess they got over 200 in each one. And I visited the one in Aberdeen and they seemed like they had a good operation up there at that time.

KS: That's good, that's good to know. Okay, well, this will conclude the, you know, the formal interview, and once again, thank you very much.

AE: Did you say we get one of those pieces of paper?

KS: Yes, I'm going to do that right now.

AE: Would you put your mark on it, please?

KS: I sure will.

END OF INTERVIEW

Interview

with

ARTHUR EMORY, JAMES GECOMA,
PETRO KULYNYCH, LAWRENCE MCGLYNN,
and STANLEY ROZMUS

September 28, 1997

Interviewer: Kenneth Steeber

Transcribed by: Joy K. Stiles

Shenandoah National Park

Luray, Virginia

Original manuscript on deposit at
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Tape 1, Side A:

Arthur Emory, James Gecoma, Petro Kulynych, Larry McGlynn, and Stanley Rozmus are former Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees stationed in Shenandoah National Park. Emory was stationed at Camp NP-1, Skyland, from September 1935-36. The others were stationed at Camp NP-10, Pinnacles: McGlynn from 1936-37 and again from 1939-40, Kulynych from 1939-40, and Gecoma and Rozmus in 1941. All the men relate how they joined the CC to help out their families, still struggling from the effects of the Great Depression.

The men discuss the general atmosphere of camp, all remembering camp life favorably. They feel the enrollees got along with each other with few problems remembered. McGlynn recalls two men caught stealing blankets who were discharged from the Corps but that was the only major problem recalled. Minor infractions, such as drunkenness after liberty trips were dealt with using barracks restriction and KP duty.

The organization is discussed, beginning with the Camp NP-10 Superintendent, Eugene Gissey. The men talk about the Local Employed Men (LEM's), older local men who acted as crew foremen. When asked if there was any rivalry between camps, the men felt any rivalries were friendly, that all camps took equal pride in their work.

Sunday religious services are mentioned, then the men talk about hardships of camp life, with winter weather being the main topic. Overall, the men felt camp life was good, and for most, better than life had been for them before the CCC.

Tape 1, Side B:

Kulynych discusses his job as company clerk and supervisor of the post canteen. The discussion then shifts to educational offerings available to enrollees. Kulynych then observes the key role the CCC played in preparing large groups of men for military roles during WW II. He also points out that the camps themselves were used for conscientious objectors during the War. Kulynych then gives a brief summary of his life following his experience in the CCC which includes working for the National Park Service, serving in the Merchant Marine during the War, and being a founder of Lowe's Home Improvement stores, retiring as chairman of the board of Lowe's in 1983. He then has to leave the interview.

Emory then talks about his duties as laborer and truck driver. When asked what types of equipment CCC boys were allowed to operate, the men answer that they did it all, including bulldozers, road scrapers and other heavy equipment. There is some disagreement about what equipment was used, but it is agreed that the men were in at different times, some in different camps, and that jobs varied.

Rozmus' primary job was working on trails. He also transplanted trees within the park. Gecoma did a great deal of transplanting and describes the process of moving some of the largest trees. Gecoma also did trail work. McGlynn brings up the crews who laid telephone line, digging the trenches by hand. Emory then talks about taking extra duty on weekends directing traffic and giving directions and information to visitors. Overall, the men felt they did quality work and that their job assignments were well planned and well supervised.

The mountains are discussed next, with the differences in the time periods the men served

being apparent. McGlynn and Emory remember the mountain people and feel they were friendly, honest, good people. Emory recalls the mountain people's anger at having to move out of the Park area, and says he doesn't think their removal had been necessary. The mountain people were gone by the time Gecoma and Rozmus were in camp, with Gecoma relating how they would go through the remaining cabins during time off.

Tape 2, Side A:

The second tape opens with the men discussing the aspects of camp that they liked the best. The camaraderie among the men seems to be the most positive part of CCC life, along with educational opportunities. Moonshine is mentioned briefly along with dating and going to towns that surround the Park.

The men then describe their lives after leaving the CCC. The interview ends with the men wishing a CCC-type experience could be re-instituted for the youth of today.

Key Words

Americorps	p.63-64		
Attaway, Captain		NP-1, Skyland	p. 1,5,
p.21,26,			47
28		NP-10, Pinnacles	p. 1,10
Blue Ridge Parkway	p.19	Park visitors	p.46-47
Brown, _____	p.38	planting trees	p.41-44
CCC		playing "sick"	p.17
barracks	p.25	preparation for Army	p.30
camaraderie	p.52-53	recreation	p.52
canteen	p.26	regulations manual	p.27
company clerk	p.15	religious services	p.22-23
daily routine	p.14	sawmill	p.41
directing traffic	p.46-47	signing up for	p.
discipline problems	p.15-17	2,3,4,	
educational classes	p.28-30,	7,13	
	53	telephone lines	p.45-46
hauling rock	p.37,39	trail work	p.41,
heavy equipment	p.39-40		44-45
holiday work	p.46-47	troublemakers	p.15
KP	p.34,	truck driving	p.37
	38-39	winter weather	p.23,
Local Employed Men (LEM)	p.18-		24-
19,		26,38	
20		conscientious objectors	p.31
moonshine	p.54	Depression, Great	p. 2,4,
mountain people	p.49-51		6-7,10,35-
music	p.22,28	36	

Fort Lee, Virginia		p. 5
Funk, Sergeant	p.17	
Gissey, Eugene		p.18
Harrisonburg, VA		p.56
Hawksbill Mountain		p.37
Hodges, _____	p.37	
Huffman, _____ (mechanic)		p.18, 37-38
Jenkins, Captain		p. 5
Johnson, "Pops"		p.20
Loudermilk, _____		p.37
Luray, VA		
p.18,24, 27,53		
moonshine		p.54-55
mountain people		p.49-51
National Park Service	p.19	
New Market, VA		p.54
Noyes, E.M. "Skipper"	p.47	
Stanley, VA		p.56-57
Stevens, Lieutenant		p.27
Whiteoak Canyon		p.37
World War II	p.30	
Wong, Dr.		p.14