

Oral History Interview with

JOHN TAYLOR

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At Skyland Conference Hall
66th Reunion of the Shenandoah Chapter
of the
Civilian Conservation Corps

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Park volunteer in archives

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Shenandoah National Park
Luray, VA

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Transcription

JA: Mr. Taylor, would you state your name please, and your address?

JT: John W. Taylor, 5345 Martin's Creek Lane, North Guard, VA 22959

JA: And Mr. Taylor, have you read the gift release and oral history release, have you read that?

JT: Yeah.

JA: And have you signed that?

JT: Yeah.

JA: Thank you so much. What dates were you in the CCC?

JT: I don't know exactly the date, but it was October '39, I uh, joined, well I was inducted into the CC camp at Charlottesville, Virginia. And I was brought up to Camp 10 on the Skyline Drive. I spent the winter of '39 at Camp 10 on the Skyline Drive. I was helped, do you want to know what I was doing?

JA: Yeah.

JT: Well, we went over the mountain next to Luray where a spring was, and we dug down 18 feet and leveled it out where the water could run out from the spring. And then we put a T in that was uh, 50-foot. And we filled that T up with rocks. We took wheelbarrows and went up on the side of the mountain and got rock and we brought 'em down and filled the whole thing up, the T up with rock up until about 18 inches or something like that, and then we put in gravel. And then uh, a little bit of dirt over top of that, and that took up 'bout my whole 6 months that I spent on the Drive.

JA: What was the project for? What was that...

JT: It was to put water into the park building down next to Luray. [Headquarters Administration Building]

JA: I see. So you worked actually the Luray area there.

JT: Yeah, it was in the Luray area. We went off the mountain at Panorama.

JA: Yes. Ok.

JT: And uh, while we was on the uh, we was 3 miles I reckon you'd call it west or north of the uh Tunnel, Camp 10 was. And a bunch of the boys would, out of our

company would go down and dig ice and load it on trucks out of that Tunnel, is where it would drip down. Every Monday morning, that was one job that someone had to do. Now of course I was in the crew that was building the spring.

JA: Right. Yes. But they brought the ice down, had to clear the Tunnel in other words?

JT: Yes sir. Yes sir.

JA: Once a week?

JT: Once a week. I [had it known] how water would freeze up. And uh, one time we went 3 weeks without any water, except we would melt snow to take a bath, and shave, and uh, course I guess they trucked the water up out for the kitchen, I don't remember now.

JA: It wasn't the easiest place to live in.

JT: It was rough up there in the wintertime.

JA: Well when you first enlisted in the CCC, did they sent you directly to the park, or did they send you someplace for physical conditioning first?

JT: Well I, the truck picked me up at Charlottesville and took me up to a camp at White Hollow.

JA: Mm hmm.

JT: Which is a few miles west of Charlottesville.

JA: Ok.

JT: And we uh, we had a meal there, and I don't know what else we did there, but I know we didn't stay there all day. They took us from there on, brought us up on the mountain.

JA: On the mountain, right. Well when you first, when did you first hear about the CCC?

JT: Well, I first heard about them when they was first started, because uh, but uh, I really did, I wanted to travel and I was 17 years old. And I think I had to put my age, I'm not sure but, anyhow I was 17 when I first started thought about joinin', and did join. And I was wanting to travel, but where I wound up at was up here on the Drive.

JA: Well, it was hard times in those early years.

JT: It was, I tell you, my father, back in those days sir, people called them good times. You could get a Coca-Cola for a nickel. But you had to work a half-hour to get that nickel, so uh, but then in, there's one thing I say I'm proud to thank the Lord, that he let me live through the Depression and World War II. I participated in World War II. I hit that beach D-Day with Private Ryan. I mean,

JA: Is that right?

JT: Yeah.

JA: You were in the army?

JT: I was in the army, but uh,

JA: But your family, how about your family during those years when you enlisted, what was your family doing?

JT: My father was uh, we was right fortunate. My father was an overseer of a big auction. And he got 30 dollars uh, 60 dollars a month, where the other people that worked got a dollar a day. And they worked from 7:30 in the morning 'til 5:30 every day. And uh, except Sunday, they didn't work on Sunday.

JA: What made you decide come to the CCC, as opposed to work for your father?

JT: Well, to tell you the truth, there was so many people that needed jobs, I was in a family, my father had a job, and uh they wouldn't give me a job working in the auction.

JA: You said your father was already employed?

JT: Yeah, my father was.

JA: So, you uh spent how long, 6 months was it in the CCC?

JT: I spent 6 months up here on the mountain. But then in the spring of '40, they transferred a bunch of us boys out of Camp 10 to Covington, and brought a bunch of boys from Covington up here on the mountain. And what it was, they took all the Virginia boys out of Camp 10 and sent them over there, and took all the Pennsylvania boys from over there and brought them up here on the mountain. 'Cause,

JA: Give them a chance to work on the Drive I guess.

JT: Yeah.

JA: That's very good. You had, you say you had, you came down from Camp 10 every day down here to headquarters and worked there?

JT: Down to, next to Luray.

JA: Yes and then you went back in the evening. Did you have a lot of free time in the evening to do things that you enjoyed doing?

JT: Well, yeah, well the only thing you could up here on the Drive was to go sightseeing, I mean you walk through. I was born and raised in the country, I's an old country boy and I love the country. And uh a bunch of used to walk through the woods. But uh, we was up here in the wintertime, so it was really cold and you didn't get out much.

JA: No. Did they have education programs for you to uh?

JT: Yeah, they had some, they had education. I had uh, workshop, learning a trade. I've got uh, a lamp, 2 lamps that I've got at home now that I made in the workshop over in Covington.

JA: Did you?

JT: Yeah.

JA: So do you think that your time in the CCC's was good times, did you enjoy doing that?

JT: Yes sir. I enjoyed it.

JA: Did you think you learned something from it?

JT: Yeah, I learned, well I think what a lot of young men miss today is what we got back in those days. Living together under, you know, we didn't have any money, we uh, but we lived together and we got along and I think that's what helped me in the army, that I learnt to, you know, you couldn't run wild. You had to take orders and obey them.

JA: Right yes.

JT: 'Cause at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, we went under the army. And at 8 o'clock in the morning we were under the park service.

JA: The park service. So you had 2 different bosses in those days. Yes. Well that's very interesting. And I think your experiences here working at

headquarters is one of the few, we don't have too many guys that talk about the headquarters experiences and I appreciate you doing that for us. Well, Mr. Taylor, thank you for time you've spent with me today, I've learned a little bit more and I appreciate it.