

**Oral History Interview with**

**W. "CURLY" HARVEY**

Saturday, Sept. 25, 1999

At Skyland Conference Hall  
66<sup>th</sup> Reunion of the Shenandoah Chapter  
of the  
Civilian Conservation Corps

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Shenandoah National Park  
Luray, VA

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## Transcription

CJ: Saturday, September 25, 1999. We're at the Skyland Conference Hall, at the CCC Reunion, and my name is Carrie Janey and I'm interviewing Mr. Harvey. Uh let's begin with, can you tell me a little bit about when and where you were born?

WH: When and where I was born? Corinth, West Virginia, April 8, 1916.

CJ: 1916?

WH: Mm hmm.

CJ: And who were your parents?

WH: Uh, John Thomas Harvey, and my mother, do you need to know, which name? Either way? I'm just confused here, what I, didn't I give her name? One second to another I lose the topic, and that's as far as I got, ok.

CJ: Well what did they do? Were they farmers?

WH: Well he was a farmer, and ended up being a coal miner. I got my thoughts back now.

CJ: Ok. So do you remember the Great Depression hitting?

WH: I do.

CJ: And did, were things different, I mean did it change your life?

WH: Uh, well, I was going to school then, it didn't seem to make to much. I often wondered just how my father was, father and mother was able to keep me in school during the Depression. One thing in particular, and I've used this a couple times. My father used a pair of shoes to work at night, and I used the same shoes to go to school the next day. And that went on until I graduated from high school.

CJ: Really? So at what point did you hear about the CCC?

WH: My brother was in the CC ahead of me.

CJ: Uh huh.

WH: And when he come home that made me eligible to go. And I went.

CJ: So what year was that?

WH: In 1934.

CJ: 1934. And where did you go to and what?

WH: Uh, Oakton, Maryland.

CJ: Ok. And did you go somewhere for training before you, you came to Camp?

WH: I went to Fort Meade.

CJ: Fort Meade?

WH: Right. Was there about 2 or 3 weeks.

CJ: And they gave you shots, and all those good things there?

WH: Oh yeah, yeah everybody had a needle and a club. And Fort Meade was, that was, I couldn't say much for that.

CJ: Really?

WH: No. I went, if I went out on the street, somebody'd holler at me. I went to the movie one night and they wouldn't let me in because I didn't have a dress uniform on, and I didn't even have one.

CJ: Hmm. So you took a train?

WH: I was glad to get away.

CJ: You took a train to come up here?

WH: Yes. A train. I don't remember now how or when. Or know how we got onto the train, I can't remember that. But I remember getting off in Luray.

CJ: Mm hmm. And then you took trucks up?

WH: A truck up to here.

CJ: And which camp were you at?

WH: At number, SNP number 1.

CJ: Skyland.

WH: That's right about a mile down the road.

CJ: Uh huh. And what happened that first day when you got into Camp? Do you remember?

WH: Yeah, I. I went in, and there was a couple of boys sparring around with boxing gloves. And as I was walking down through the barracks, somebody said, "There's a guy, let's get him, give him them gloves." And I got a good introduction right there.

CJ: You did?

WH: I didn't get hurt any, but I, I had 4 or 5 people. My name was all over the Camp the next day.

CJ: Pretty popular, huh?

WH: Yeah, yeah, I got on real well there.

CJ: So what type of work did you do?

WH: I started off sawing down dead chestnut. Cuttin' them up. Then I worked as a truck driver. And then I worked in the tool, the park service tool shed. But I was still CCC now, not, not, I wasn't working for the park service. I's just in their building.

CJ: Mm hmm.

WH: I was in their building, but I was still a member of the Camp. And then I went from there to driving the army truck. And that was for the CC Camp. The Camp itself. And then I went from there to Leader in the men in the barracks. And then I went from there to First Sergeant, and I stayed there until they chased me off.

CJ: Until they chased you off. How long were you here then?

WH: I stayed until sometime in the, '39.

CJ: So do you remember old Doc Blevins?

WH: I do, I, he was one of my good friends.

CJ: Was he?

WH: Yeah he was. A nice, a heck of a nice guy. I knew his wife and his 2 children, but I forget, I don't remember very much about the kids. But I still see her every now and then.

CJ: Uh then, so you boxed?

WH: Yep, I loved to.

CJ: Did you play football or anything else?

WH: I did, I played football, baseball, anything that they had except basketball.

CJ: Except basketball.

WH: I couldn't go for that to save my neck. I don't know why, but I just never, I think because, mostly because I couldn't have been very good at it. I just wasn't a thing that I wanted to do, so I stayed out of it.

CJ: And on the weekends did you go down to Luray?

WH: Yeah, and during the week, too.

CJ: During the week, too.

WH: Yeah, I had my own car hid out in the brush.

CJ: Oh, you did? How'd you get that out here?

WH: Well, I, I don't know, it wasn't, it was against the rules, but uh, I would hide it. You know where Crescent Rock is?

CJ: Uh huh.

WH: Just up this way from that there was a little road back there. I'd park it, come from town up, and uh, I'd park it up there and walk back to Camp. So damn dark you couldn't see, and one time I had to feel the wall to get, I wouldn't, I wouldn't do that again for nothing.

CJ: Never ran across any ...

WH: That's what those little gals do to you, see.

CJ: So is that where you met your wife?

WH: Oh yeah. In the Camp. We got married, and had 5 children. And I don't regret a minute of it.

CJ: So what do you think you gained from the CCC? What was the impact on the rest of your life?

WH: It was a better part of my life. What I learned in the CC Camp went a long ways with me. And I heard something about the, was talking about what the army gained from it. But the army knows that the practically everyone that was in the CC Camp made a heck of a lot better soldier.

CJ: So were, what did you do after you left?

WH: After I left I, I worked at the American Viscose in Front Royal. You probably heard of it and pollution. And I was, I worked my way up in about 6 months to a shift clerk. And uh they would talk pretty good. Not only that, but I, I think I learned pretty quick.

CJ: Uh huh.

WH: And they, after, um the shift foreman for oh, quite awhile. And uh, during the War, I, they sent me down to Richmond every 90 days to be examined and sent, and they'd send me back. I worked in the dangerous section, in where the carbon disulfide, which would blow up, tear up anything that's around it. And uh, well everytime I'd go down there, they'd send me back. So my War service was in the American Viscose Plant. And from there I went to Blue Bell and worked for them awhile, and then, and then carpenter work for awhile. And then I had my own business for 26 years. Floor covering.

CJ: Mm hmm.

WH: And after that I don't know, I think, I think I quit.

CJ: You did?

WH: Yeah.

CJ: Was there anything else you could think of, any other little stories, or anything that you'd like to share?

WH: Yeah, there's one thing that I'm real proud of. And uh, when I first come to this place, this Camp over here, I was roaming around and I found there was a nice trout stream there. So I wrote home and they sent me my trout, my telescoping trout rod, and I fished down on that stream for quite awhile, and one day, one day I met a, a nice looking gentlemen, too well dressed to be a trout fisherman. But he had all kind of fancy things, but we introduced ourselves and we set down and I remember when he got up and left, to leave, he said, "Mr. Harvey, there's one thing that I know for sure. That for every day of trout fishing you do, you gain one day of life." And I'm 83 years old and I'm still trout fishing.

CJ: So who was that man? Do you know?



WH: I don't know. I've regretted, I've often regretted that I could never remember his name.

CJ: Did you ever meet Mr. Pollock?

WH: Oh yes,

CJ: You did? What was he like?

WH: Ornery, mean, and a gentleman at times. And uh, he, I learned to uh, to get, to earn his respect enough that I could visit him most any time I wanted to. And one day he says. "Curly, I've got to have 2 or 3 rattlesnakes. Can you get them?' So I went to Camp, Camp -1, and asked if they had a gooseberry line. A gooseberry line, that was when they went through the woods pulling up the gooseberries and so forth.

CJ: Mm hmm.

WH: And they had 3 snakes, they had 'em in a feed sack and they give 'em to me, and I went over, and I told him what I had. And he says, "Well open up the bag." And I opened it like this. He just run his hand right down in there, picked up one and brought it out. Didn't look, didn't do nothing. And them damn snakes never moved a muscle. Now you tell me what happened, I don't know.

CJ: Hmm.

WH: It was kind of frightening.

CJ: I don't suppose you stuck your hand in the bag?

WH: No, I didn't want to try that, no.

CJ: What about um.

WH: He used those things for something. I think it was to, to aggravate, to show, aggravate the people. And the main thing, most of the aggravation was, well you know have you seen the cabin there, you know that little thing that's built out?  
[Massanutten Lodge]

CJ: Mm hmm.

WH: He come out on there with the bugle, every morning at daybreak. He'd blow that damn bugle and keep all, they'd raise all kind of hell then.

CJ: I've heard he was a character. What about any of the people who lived on the mountain, any of the, the landowners?

WH: Oh I got to know quite a few of them, nice people. And uh, some of them's very, very suspicious. So I can tell you a couple stories there if you want to hear them.

CJ: Sure, I'd love to.

WH: Well, the one, one in particular, I was, me and one of the mountain boys, and, and uh a friend of mine from over in the Valley, I can't remember, I guess it was Madison County.

CJ: Mm hmm.

WH: Uh, we was going from one place to another inside the park, and taking a consensus [census] of the people. And it was done, being done for the park service. But uh, we uh.

CJ: Do you remember what year that would have been?

WH: I, I just can't remember the year there, but it was in the latter, it was before I got to be the sergeant, and that was a long time after that.

CJ: OK.

WH: And this fellow Sisk, he led us to one person that had a, he had a road going into his house, there was a big sign about so big and it says "Keep Out." Well then we went about a couple hundred yards and then there was another sign and it was that big. And then we got to where we could see the house and there was another sign and it says on there "Keep out, goddamn you keep out" and that's when we stopped right there. We didn't go any further. But Mr. Sisk went up and talked to him.

CJ: Uh huh.

WH: In about 15 minutes they motioned for us to come up, but he never set that damn shotgun down the whole time we was there.

CJ: You don't remember who it was?

WH: I don't remember, or have any idea. And the comical one, one's, her name was Dicey Corbin.

CJ: You knew Dicey Corbin?

WH: Oh yes.

CJ: Tell me about Dicey.

WH: Well, the one thing about Dicey, when we went on this uh, consensus [sic] Sisk knew her very well.

CJ: Uh huh.

WH: And we went in, set down and talked, and uh, I asked her how many children she had. She had five. She wrote down their names. I said now, who is the father of each one of those children. She started writing, er writing, somebody's writing for her. She put down 5 separate names, a separate man for each one. Each child had a separate father. And uh, Sisk asked her, said, "Dicey, what did you have for, what'd you have for some breakfast?" The table was there, kind of bare with a little corn and stuff on it. And then she said, "Corn pone." And well "What did you have for lunch?" She said, "Corn pone." He says, "Well what are you going to have for supper?" She says, "Corn pone you damn fool." She was getting tired of saying, and that's what they had. Didn't have anything else. Corn pone. They was healthy looking kids. And, they jabbered a little bit, I never could understand much what they was saying.

CJ: Was she a friendly person?

WH: Oh yeah, she was, she was very very friendly, even if, I don't we could of made her mad.

CJ: Really?

WH: No, but uh, oh I seen a few things. One thing I seen was a gentlemen, an old farmer gentlemen walking down the road smoking his pipe, and on, and about 50 yards behind, here's his wife walking along smoking her pipe. Now that was the rule. She had to stay behind him. And.

CJ: Now the census that you were taking, do you know what that was for? Were you finding out how many people lived in each house?

WH: No, just to find out where they were and what was in it there. And I don't know what they done with that. And all because, I wouldn't, I wouldn't attempt to say anything because the park service would pick it apart, and so I don't want no part of it.

CJ: Alright, well thank you so much it's been a real pleasure.

WH: Well, I've enjoyed every minute of it. And now you go get yourself something to eat and rest up a bit.

CJ: Alright.