

## FINDING AID

# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT 1935-2001 (bulk dates: 1935-1941, 2000-2001)**

Prepared by  
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Collection Number: MSC 180

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## *HISTORY*

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Yellowstone Documentation Project was undertaken by the Yellowstone National Park Oral History Program and Volunteer in Parks (VIP) researcher Mary Swier Bohuis. The goal of the project was to document the role of the CCC in the Park and gather a variety of materials, including publications, interviews, photographs, and ephemera that helped to tell the story from a more personal view as a supplement to the official records already contained within the Park Archives and the National Archives.

Mary Swier Bolhuis is a history teacher and researcher. In 2000-2001, she took a sabbatical from her work as a high school teacher in Bozeman, Montana, to work as a VIP, conducting research and documentation on the story of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Yellowstone National Park as part of the Park's Oral History Program. Mary retired from the Bozeman Senior High School in 2005. She moved to California, where she served as a teacher and department chair at Ripon Unified School District in Stockton, California. She currently teaches as an adjunct professor of history and political science at Modesto Junior College.

The Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) and its successor the Civilian Conservation Corps operated in Yellowstone National Park between 1933 and 1941. Groups, or companies, of young men were hired, trained, and organized to perform infrastructure and maintenance work including fighting fires; constructing walls, trails, and roads; and logging and hazard tree removal. There were a total of eight camps as well as numerous spike, or temporary, camps. YNP-1 was located in Mammoth. Companies that served included 1252, 501, and 535 (also recorded as 835). YNP-2, located at Canyon included companies 1259, 581, 550, 730, and 533. YNP-3, at Lake, housed companies 560, 736, 572, and 5435. YNP-4 was known as West Gallatin and was located near West Yellowstone. Companies 268, 550, and 1506 served there. YNP-5 was known as Nez Perce and was located nearest to Old Faithful. Companies housed there included 1260, 596, 581, 2512, and 5447. Additional camps appear to have been more temporary. These included YNP-6 located near Gardiner and served by company 586, YNP-7 at Glenn Creek near Mammoth operated by company 544 (also recorded as 844), and YNP-8 at Cascade Creek near West Yellowstone and housing company 2844. As companies moved, reformed, or were renamed, it is likely that this list is incomplete.

The first companies that came to Yellowstone were from the east coast. In subsequent years, the majority of workers came from the "Fifth Corps" areas of Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana, and Kentucky. Later companies were drawn from the upper Midwest and deep south. CCC workers rarely were assigned to camps near their homes. Although many were accustomed to hard work and often came from a rural--or at least self-sufficient--background, the landscape, wildlife, weather, and distance from home often proved a challenge. While some enrollees only served a single tour and then returned home, many reenrolled and continued in the program until World War II commenced. The program ended in 1942 as funding and the draft shifted focus to the war effort.

## *SCOPE AND CONTENT*

### CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT 1935-2001 (bulk dates: 1935-1941, 2000-2001)

*COLLECTION NUMBER* MSC 180 (YELL 69595)

*VOLUME* 1.25 LF

*DESCRIPTION*

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Yellowstone Documentation Project contains oral histories, photographs, yearbooks, and ephemera documenting the experiences of men who were stationed in Yellowstone National Park as part of the CCCs, 1933-1941.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Yellowstone documentation project was an effort coordinated by Volunteer in Parks (VIP) Mary Swier Bolhuis to document the experiences of members of the CCCs who served in Yellowstone National Park. The effort initially began as a way to gather existing published documentation related to the CCCs in Yellowstone, but soon expanded to a primary goal of collecting oral histories. Those who contributed recorded stories--and a few who were unable to complete tapes due to ill health--also sometimes contributed photographs, yearbooks, enrollment certificates, menus, and other memorabilia. These artifacts may be originals or may have been reproductions from originals retained by the donor.

The majority of recordings are self-interviews, where the narrator talked into a cassette tape while responding to a printed list of questions sent by Bolhuis. These interviews were often started and stopped repeatedly as the narrator took time to read the questions, compose answers, or take a break; variations in the levels and quality of recordings may be apparent as a result. There are also two more traditional interviews, one conducted via telephone and one in-person at the narrator's home.

The interviews generally document a bit of family history, how the narrator first heard of the CCCs and the process for enrollment, and sometimes details of the places they may have been assigned prior to relocation to Yellowstone National Park. Many of the enrollees were from the Midwest or central states of the South. Quite a few spent time in their home states as well as Nevada, California, Idaho, and Montana prior to moving to Yellowstone. The narrators then describe their time in Yellowstone, including the design and construction of the camps, the food, the social activities, and the sorts of work they were assigned. The enrollees were stationed at one of five camps within Yellowstone: Mammoth Camp (YNP-1), Canyon Camp (YNP-2) Lake Camp (YNP-3), West Gallatin Camp (YNP-4), Nez Perce Camp (YNP-5). They were also occasionally located at more informal temporary or spike camps.

Social activities included baseball and touring the Park. Most work details appear to have included firefighting, cutting lumber, and building and maintaining trails. Some enrollees learned other skills such as photographs development and first aid. Most narrators also mentioned particularly memorable events such as encounters with wildlife, particularly bears, as well as other enrollees or supervisors who made an impression. Several narrators recalled vehicle crashes or other accidents that resulted in injuries to themselves or others. At least one narrator recalled the death of a young man in his company. The narrators generally conclude their recordings with brief descriptions of their exit from the CCCs, their service during World War II, and their careers later in life.

## ●ORGANIZATION●

The collection consists of three series:

- I. Administrative Records
- II. Interviews & Documentation
- III. Reference Materials

Series I. Administrative Records is arranged by format and then alphabetically. Series II. Interviews & Documentation is arranged alphabetically by the name of the narrator/donor. Within this series, the interviews and photographs have been digitized and made available electronically at [www.mtnmemory.org](http://www.mtnmemory.org). The original cassettes have been separated to cool storage. The reference material is arranged alphabetically by source.

## PROVENANCE

The documentation project occurred fall 2000-fall 2001. Interviews and ephemera donated by the individual narrators, 2001.

## RESTRICTIONS

No

## ASSOCIATED MATERIALS

- Yellowstone Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Enrollees' Collection (MSC 179), Yellowstone National Park Combined Archives
- Camp Newspapers, Year Books, and other published materials related to the CCC, Yellowstone National Park Research Library
- Yellowstone National Park Facilities and Maintenance Records (RG04), Yellowstone National Park Combined Archives
- Additional photographs and other memorabilia, Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy (Edinburgh, VA)
- Additional photographs and other memorabilia, especially pertaining to those camps in Montana, The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula (Missoula, Mont.)
- Tim Mann's CCC research project, History Program records (RG01-HIST) Yellowstone National Park Combined Archives

## ***SERIES DESCRIPTIONS***

### *Administrative Records*

This series consists of the records documenting the work of the project and the project leader, Mary Swier Bolhuis. Included is correspondence, monthly reports, forms and guides, a logbook, and research materials.

The correspondence includes letters to other researchers and historians interested in the Civilian Conservation Corps as well as exchanges with leaders of the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni (NACCCA) and a few local chapters. Correspondence with oral history and memorabilia contributors can be found in Series II: Oral Histories & Documentation. Monthly reports run from 2000 to 2001 and summarize the accomplishments of the project to date; however, the reports do not cover the entire length of the project. The forms and guides include sample letters to respond to potential contributors as well as a guide for recording a self-interview. The logbook is a chronological record of the steps taken during the project and includes additional details concerning some of the contributors, recording during initial telephone conversations. Finally, the research materials include a list of NACCCA members by company, a grant application (apparently not received), and additional notes concerning the CCC in Yellowstone.

### *Oral Histories & Documentation*

This series consists of oral history interviews, photographs, yearbooks, menus, and other documentation about the CCC in Yellowstone contributed by individuals who were assigned to the various CCC camps in Yellowstone National Park.

The oral histories include both traditional one on one interviews as well as self-interviews, where the narrator responded to a written list of questions sent to him. In addition to the interviews, several of the narrators sent photographs of their time in Yellowstone as well as other memorabilia such as menus and enrollment certificates. There are also a few yearbooks, which were published booklets produced by individual camps containing images of the camp and the members, and providing a list of all members present in a given year. The memorabilia is a mix of original and photocopies or photographic reproductions. For access to these materials, see [www.mtmemory.org](http://www.mtmemory.org)

### *Reference Materials, 1933-1941*

This series contains digital reproductions of photographs and photocopies of memorabilia from other museums pertaining to the CCC in Yellowstone National Park. The images include informal snapshots from companies 501, 536, 539, 1260, 1954, 4429, and 4607. However, there are few identifications or captions. There are also traditional images of Yellowstone including bears, other animals, and thermal features. The paper memorabilia includes a copy of a roster for Company 535, stationed at Mammoth Camp (YNP-1) in 1939.

These materials are for reference purposes only. For reproduction or use, the researcher must contact the owning institution.

## ***CONTAINER LIST***

### **Series Nbr    Series Title**

**01            Administrative Records**

<b>File Unit Nbr</b>	<b>Title</b>
01.01	Correspondence, 2000-2001, 2000-2001
01.02	Correspondence sent, 2000-2001, 2000-2001
01.03	Grant application, 2001, 2001
01.04	Inquiry letters returned, 2001, 2001
01.05	Inquiry letters returned, non-Yellowstone, 2001, 2001
01.06	Logbook, 2000-2001, 2000-2001
01.07	Monthly reports, 2000-2001, 2000-2001
01.08	NACCCA members by company, 2000, 2000
01.09	Self-interview guide, 2001, 2001
01.10	Yellowstone CCCs, local stuff, 2000?, 2000

### **Series Nbr    Series Title**

**02            Oral Histories & Documentation**

<b>File Unit Nbr</b>	<b>Title</b>
02.01	Bishop, James W., oral history, 2001, 2001
02.02	Boze, Elmer E., photographs, 1935, 1935
02.03	Chandler, Lewis C., oral histories and photographs, 1940, 2001, 1940, 2001
02.04	Christensen, Martin G., oral history, 2001, 2001
02.05	Curran, John E., oral history, 2001, 2001
02.06	Dreschler, Herman K., oral history, 2001, 2001
02.07	Dreschler, Herman K., newsletters and memorabilia, 1981-2000, 1981-2000
02.08	Halliday, Robert B. "Doc", oral history, 2001, 2001
02.09	Hart, Harry T., oral history and memorabilia, 1941, 2001, 1941, 2001
02.10	Harvey, Glenwood, oral history and photographs, 1941, 2001, 1941, 2001
03.01	Hogan, Edward J. "Eddie", oral history and photographs, 1935, 2001, 1935, 2001
03.02	Kramer, Richard S., photographs and memorabilia, 1935, 1935
03.03	Mancino, Albert, photographs and memorabilia, 1941, 1941
03.04	Martin, E. J. "Gene", oral history, 2001, 2001
03.05	McQuery, Hobert., oral history, 2001, 2001
03.06	McRobert, Ira C., oral history, 2001, 2001
03.07	Rylosz, Michael, oral history and photographs, 1937-1938, 2001, 1937-1938, 2001
03.08	Samay, Paul, oral history and map, 2001, 2001
03.09	Scherzinger, Narvel, oral history, 2001, 2001
03.10	Teets, Warren W., oral history, 2001, 2001
03.11	Tripphahn, Mel, menu and roster, 1938, 1938
03.12	Westley, Volney J., oral history, 2001, 2001

<b>Series Nbr</b>	<b>Series Title</b>
●3	Reference Materials, 1933-1941

<b>File Unit Nbr</b>	<b>Title</b>
03.13	Fort Missoula museum? memorabilia (photocopies; for reference only), 1939, 1939
03.14	NACCCA photographs (reference only), 1933-1941, 1933, 1941

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

**CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN  
YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

**JAMES W. BISHOP  
YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS  
WITH BERNADINE BISHOP**

INTERVIEWED BY  
MARY SWIER BOLHUIS,  
VIP, YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

JULY 1, 2001  
AT THE BISHOP HOME IN  
WEBSTER GROVES, MISSOURI

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P O Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 69595-OH1A

**NARRATOR:**

James William Bishop was born March 28, 1920, in Huston Chica, Mississippi. The son of Ira Tillmon and Maida Ludene (Rhodes) Bishop, James grew up in Arkansas as one of eight children.

In 1940, at the age of 20, Bishop enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps. After boarding a train in Little Rock, Arkansas, James was sent first to Cody and Shoshone Wyoming, as part of Company #1723, before being transferred to the Nez Perce Camp( YNP-5), near Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park. Following the U.S. entry in World War II, James served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 157<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, achieving the rank of Sergeant and serving in the European theater. He earned a Purple Heart, with three Oak Leaf Clusters; a Distinguished Unit Badge; a Silver Star; a Bronze Star; and the British Military Medal.

James married Bernadine M. LaRose on July 26, 1947 in Washington, D.C. The couple had one son, William Rhodes. Bishop was a member of the 157<sup>th</sup> Regiment Association, CCC Alumni Association, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, and Veterans of Foreign Wars. James W. Bishop died February 6, 2005 in St. Louis, Missouri.

**INTERVIEWER:**

Mary Swier Bolhuis is a history teacher and researcher. In 2000-2001, she took a sabbatical from her work as a high school teacher in Bozeman, Montana, to work as a Volunteer in Parks (VIP), conducting research and documentation on the story of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Yellowstone National Park as part of the Park's Oral History Program. Mary retired from the Bozeman Senior High School in 2005. She moved to California, where she served as a teacher and department chair at Ripon Unified School District in Stockton, California. She currently teaches as an adjunct professor of history and political science at Modesto Junior College.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:**

- Interview of James W. Bishop by Mary Swier Bolhuis on August 28, 2001, Civilian Conservation Corps in Yellowstone Documentation Project, Yellowstone National Park Archives (YELL69595-OH1B)
- James William Bishop Collection, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, The Library of Congress (#AFC/2001/001/48770)

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 60-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 16 pages.

James Bishop

Interviewer: Mary Bolhois. All you got to do is push play.

JB- yeah I got it.

MB-Now, you guys can help me. Today is July 1, 2001 and I'm in Jim and Bernadine Bishops' house and Jim was born on, what day?

JB-(can't understand too far away from microphone)

MB-now I'm going to hand this to you, cause I want, can you hold it?

Another voice and MB discuss him or he holding the microphone.

MB-How old were you when you joined the CCC's?

JB-20

MB-and what year, do you remember?

JB-1940

MB-what month?

JB-April

MB-do you remember what camp number you went?

JB-well, not the camp number I remember the company number, the company number was 1723.

MB-what part of Yellowstone Park did you live in?

JB-well, we first went there and lived in a tent camp at um,

MB-Mammoth?

JB-no, Nez Perce

MB-Nez Perce

JB-Nez Perce a tent camp.

MB-so you didn't have any barracks

JB-not then, we built some while we were there

MB-so that was part of the job?

JB-I guess it was, but you know I was telling, I've talked to Vernsie a lot about that, and I talked other like we were the only there. But there were 6 companies there when I was there, that'd be 600 men, I don't know. A company of CCC is 200. So, this would be 1200.

MB-so there were a lot of men.

JB-now, they had the buffalo herds there and uh, it they did so well, the buffalo did so well they just turned them out to the woods and they did fine.

MB-and they still are, and they are still loose, everywhere in Yellowstone they used to keep of them sort of like when they would farm them, they'd keep them in corrals and then in the winter they'd feed them. But they don't do that anymore, they have really changed their management policies, now they just put the buffalo out to pasture.

JB-we had a beautiful old bull elk that stayed in our backyard out there at Nez Perce tent camp, he was there when we got there and he was there when we left.

MB-sure, he probably got fed a little bit? Do you think?

JB-I don't believe he did, I think he just decided to keep grazing there you know, the grass was about knee deep.

MB-he wasn't afraid of any of you guys?

JB-well we didn't get close to him

MB-no, you respected him

MB-all right now I want to ask you, how did you first hear about CCC?

JB-well, when they first had it in 1933, some of the older boys, I wasn't old enough to go. Some of the older boys went to the CCC's. And when I became old enough to go, and I wanted to go, but I never could figure out how to do it. I'd go over to Hamburg, Arkansas and sign up and nothing happened. Somebody told me, you go into Bill Scribes office and sign up. I figured since then that he must of been the, what do you call it? Welfare Office.

MB-yeah, he was, today we call it Social Services, but back then it was like the ??, he was the guy in charge of taking care of it. Now, this was in Arkansas.

JB-yeah

MB-OK, what town?

JB-Hamburg was the county seat, where I signed up.

MB-and where did you live?

JB-I lived in, whatyacallit, Parkville.

MB-during the depression, Jim was it poor in Parkville?

JB-oh yeah.

MB-Arkansas had it tough during the depression.

JB-yeah we did.

MB-how many brothers and sisters did you have?

JB-Mama had 6 girls and 2 boys.

MB-a lot of mouths to feed.

JB-my oldest sister she was gone, as long as I remember. She was my Mama's daughter from a previous marriage. They had about 6 faces.

MB-yeah, OK. Now, did your Dad farm?

JB-yeah, tried to.

MB-OK. Arkansas it was poor there, no water during the depression, and not very much rain, no farm prices is that right? So, you thought you'd go into the CCC and

JB-see what happens.

MB-yeah and see what happens.

JB-but my brother, he went to Hamburg and signed up and he never got to come. He was 8 years older than me.

MB-they wanted young men?

JB-no, they didn't know he was living there I guess.

MB-huh, all right now, when you signed up and go the word to go, did you go to Yellowstone on the train?

JB-not from there.

MB-how did you get there?

JB-I have to remember how they did this, but I went to Little Rock, AR. They did introduction there and then we left there and we went to a place, let's see we went to Shoshoni. Shoshoni, Wyoming.

MB-yeah

JB-and uh, did you ever know the name of the towns around Shoshoni?

MB-not very many, it's not, it's kind of out in the middle of no where.

JB-it is, and they told us that we'd be better off if the train came around would take us into Cody, because that's where a lot of things happen there. What, in Shoshoni, there wasn't anything much going you know, so we were there about I guess 5 weeks, 6 weeks and Captain Clubkey, he told us we were going to move out and would be going to Yellowstone Park, (clap hands, hoorah, hoorah).

MB-that's right.

JB-but, anyhow we went on, and we went to Yellowstone Park, and we stayed there during the summers too.

MB-Ok, now do you remember when you arrived? The day you got there?

JB-I don't remember the date we got there, but I remember the day very well.

MB-how did it feel when you first arrived?

JB-Oh, I felt like we had a good deal there.

MB-yeah, more to do. Did you arrive in Gardner? Where did the train leave you?

JB-we came into West Yellowstone.

MB-oh, you came to West, OK. Then did they truck you?

JB-yeah, but we I don't know why, oh I'm sorry. (the microphone was to far away) We had, well we was a brand new company really. All the others had been there a month or two month, so we got aboard trucks and went out to Nez Perce Creek, and we stayed there I guess about a month, maybe I don't know how long, well maybe longer than that I guess, maybe a couple of months. So, we hauled in barracks ?? to build a new barracks. Some of our guys were good truck drivers, they got on there and drove truck all the time

while building was going on, so by the time we finished up, there wasn't anything else to do and we just hung around camp a little while, and then they shipped us out to Salmon, Idaho.

MB-ok, cool.

JB-that wasn't much fun up there.

MB-no not like Yellowstone. Now, how long were you in Yellowstone, totally do you remember Jim?

JB-no, I don't but it was a full summer season.

MB-so it was at least 3 months.

JB-more than that.

MB-ok.

JB-maybe four and half to five months.

MB-sure, you probably got there by May. Most often they'd get new recruits in May. And you probably stayed May, June, July and August, and probably part of September. When the first snow, or were you there when it snowed.

JB-it snowed a little bit down there.

MB-yeah, it does all year long

JB-it wasn't the regular snow season.

MB-no, that's right. Alright now you said some of the men drove truck? You said they were good at it? What did you do?

JB-Well, I used a pick and shovel

MB-you were you good at that?

JB-well, I'm good at anything

MB-ok

JB-????

MB-no, oh no everybody tells you right? And you were doing work, is what you were doing was important building these barracks

JB-yah, well we put in sewers, storm sewers and regular sewers and things like that, and then the other people, the rest of the company, was working on the camp

MB-what else did you do beside work with a pick and shovel, anything else?

JB-yah, being a boss. Laughs. I was a, what they call assistant crew leader

MB-what does that mean?

JB-well that means that you have a group of men that you are supposed to keep occupied and tell them what to do and what not to do

MB-were you good at it?

JB-yah, I had a knack for doing that. The Sargeant came from somewhere in North Dakota, he'd been admiring me and he was a leader. And I was just an assistant and I'd always Chuck want you to do this, Chuck wants you to do that

MB-yep

JB-they didn't gang up on me anymore

MB-no. you were an excellent leader

JB-nobody wanted to jump on Chuck because he was a golden glove nominee

MB-I know what you mean by that, how many men did you have working under you?

JB-anywhere from 10-30

MB-when you were working, did you come back to your tents every night? Or, did you live out in the woods sometimes?

JB-no, we came back, we came out every night, and uh, I'm just trying to figure, we stayed out when we was on fire, we was on a fire

MB-then you lived out in sleeping bags out in the woods

JB-yes we did

MB-is that right? What was that like?

JB-yes, and somebody well that was ok.

MB-you didn't mind?

JB-no. if it was cold at night, it was cold at night up there in those mountains you know. Let's see what was I going to tell you, oh. Some of the guys, they never did this to me but, they go and get a piece of meat or something and tie it on to a rope and tie it on to the foot of the guys sleeping bag, and during that night, during the night sometime the bear would come and take the piece meat and drag you out in the woods you know, those guys would get out of those bags in a hurry

MB-this was went you were out in tents?

JB-yah

MB-when you were sleeping ????

JB-yah, uh huh

MB-yah, boy today we try to avoid bears, sounds like you were pretty close to the animals

JB-well, we ??

MB-see a lot of bear?

JB-we saw, this, oh we saw a lot of them , a lot of bear around the camp and around Nez Perce Creek and all that, but uh we didn't try to ???

MB-but you never tried to feed them?

JB-huh?

MB-did anybody ever try to feed them?

JB-no, not in our group. But I saw a gentlemen down, and he was making picture???? He was shooting a picture you know, and the bear was running after him he was running with his mouth wide open. And I don't think he ever did get a picture there you know

MB-yah

JB-we was in the truck and we kept going

MB-???

JB-hmmm

MB-I want to ask you a question about what you did when you weren't working. What kinds of activities did the CCC's offer?

JB-well, I'll tell they had a you know where the lodge is at Old Faithful Inn?

MB-I do

JB-well they used to have a dance there every night

MB-hmmm

JB-some of the fellows went there to dance

MB-where did the girls come from?

JB-I guess they came from somewhere else, I don't know. There was a ????

MB-oh, we want to hear you

JB-???

MB-sure

JB-and I think some at Old Faithful over 200 girls???

MB-oh

JB-and believe you me they had a every dark spot in that camp had a light ???

MB-laugh

JB-when it came the time of night to turn on the lights, those lights came on too

MB-yah. They keep everything well lit, so that nobody would find???? What did you do when you weren't working besides go to a dance? What else was there, sports?

JB-yah, they I know they played ball all the time, I didn't play there, some of the ?? had a little softball every night now and then

MB-uh huh. Did you ever go hiking?

JB-no. Well, maybe once in awhile maybe, but not too often.

MB-was there a library?

JB-I expect there was 2 or 3 of them

MB-but you don't remember what you did personally during the off time?

JB-no. I don't remember what I did

MB-goofed around with all your friends? Just goofed around with your friends?

JB-that's about it

MB-OK, tell me what were your ?? like?

JB-well there was some good people and some bad ones you know

MB-yah. Yes, I do.

JB-but I think most of them were pretty good guys, I remember some bringing the girls in there and got in trouble,

MB-tell me about the food

JB-well, we had pretty good food, they didn't know how to make cornbread, but we had good food

MB-every southerner says that-laughs

JB-laughs

MB-you were in the norm

JB-yah, we were at the Shoshoni and I guess we'd been there about a week or maybe a little less and anyway this southern boy said, cornbread? And they put sugar in it

MB-oh dear, pretty sad huh?

JB-yep

MB-yah. How about when you were in the tent camp when you were in Yellowstone? Did you have a mess tent and a Mess Sergeant?

JB-you know, we had a there at Old Faithful they had the guys come in for lunch that was working around there and they had a oh, what do you call them a mess tent I guess you'd call it. And the food would come over there, the kitchen would come over there with big pots full of ??? kind of food that they served up there, you know? And they'd have a couple of men that would stay behind and clean up the mess.

MB-you never had kp?

JB-nope, we didn't because see, in the Army I had it

MB-yah

JB-but in the CCC's they had people that signed up for it you know?

MB-sure

JB-always wanted to, a guy would sign up to take on kp jobs, but all, the first thing you know he'd be a cook you know?

MB-sure

JB-I don't know but he'd be a half, well not half??? And some of the people were, they had what they call,

Side conversation

JB-any way they have people there in they what they call a specialist, give them a special rating of some kind and he might be a ???? assistant road leader, 36,000 extra???

MB-un huh

JB-and then uh, he'd a bread baker and then the next on up would be a cook

MB-sure

JB-I think the, the higher up, what do you call it, I can't think of what I was going to tell you

MB-well, let me ask you a different kind of question

JB-you do that

MB-do you remember anything about park employees, when you worked there, like rangers?

JB-well, we had rangers with us

MB-ok

JB-like uh, we'd get a big husky ranger and he'd walk your backside off up to the mountains you know ??

MB-yah. What was he there for, in your camp?

JB-supervise the fighting of fires and different things like that. We had one ranger that was humped over like that, but he would walk you to death. laughs

MB-he was used to being outside

JB-probably

MB-yah. Alright now I'm going to ask you this. What did you like best about being in Yellowstone Park working for the CCC's?

JB-I don't know, it was a good outfit to be with, good people. We had, I told you about Captain Lowkey? The preacher

MB-yah

JB-we had him a year, within the year, and uh when I left he told me, he says here ?????

MB-???

JB-yep

MB-was there any part of being in the park in the CCC's that you didn't like?

JB-I can't think of anything that ??? you know? ??????

MB-let me make sure that we've covered everything. Did you ever earn any awards, when you were there? Some of the men said they got some kind of citations, do you remember anything like that?

JB-did I get a citation?

MB-yah, or and award or citation of some kind?

JB-I don't remember, I don't remember one

MB-you were just an average

JB-I made the, I, I got a promotion a lot sooner than most anybody did, I don't know how I did that

MB-???

JB-I think I had ??? he came down and he moved him up to Mammoth, but he took And made me an assistant crew leader before he left. ???

MB-yah. Um, what kinds of skills did you learn while you were in Yellowstone Park, that maybe you brought to your professional life later on after the war?

JB-I can't remember any

MB-what kinds of things do you think the CCC's taught you?

JB-what was that?

MB-what kinds of things did the CCC's teach you?

JB-Can't think of any

MB-ok. ?? after the war started where were you? Were you in Salmon, Idaho?

JB-nope. I was in the Army?

???-no she said as soon as the war started

MB-oh

JB-well now I was in the Army got right in the Army, I was already in the Army rather.

MB-when the war started were you in the Army already?

JB-uh huh. I went in the Army December, November the 7<sup>th</sup>, 1940. And the war started a month later.

MB-uh, ok so 1940. 1941,

JB-1941. But it also started December the 7<sup>th</sup>

MB-that's right. That's was a ???

JB-it was my Momma's birthday that's why I remember

MB-you were in the Army right? Not the Navy?

JB-in the Army

MB-and when you went into the military you shipped out to Europe, you were not interested? Is that right?

JB-yah

MB-have you ever been back to Yellowstone?

JB-yep, my wife and I went back there in

???-79 I think it was one time

JB-or was it 78 or 79, it was two years in a row

??-yah

JB-78 or 79 I guess it was and the first year, we were back we stayed in Three Bears in,

???-West Yellowstone

JB-West Yellowstone. And then uh, we stayed the next time the park in a regular cabin like they used to build up there you know?

MB-uh huh. How had it changed

JB-well, I don't know. I guess I was pretty much committed to the CCC's kind of life and I didn't ???

MB-have, was your camp there when you camp back in 1979? Or was your camp gone?

JB-I believe they'd moved out. They put something else in there or something like that you know? But I did see, we had some trucks that went out and took about 6-8 men, boys, and a driver when I was a ????? I was offered that job when I was there as a CCC's boy, but I couldn't drive, didn't drive at the time

MB-now when you went back to visit many years later in 78 and 79, could you find anything that you had worked on? Like where you laid sewer lines and all of that, that was all missing or was it still there?

JB-I guess it was still there, a lot of that stuff is underneath the ground you know?

MB-yep that's right. Well, now

JB-would you like me to go up there and look at it again?

MB-well that would be lovely, wouldn't you like to go back one more time?

JB-yah, I would

MB-can you think of anything that you'd like to share that we haven't talked about? Any stories that you remember? About animals, or about friends, or about people that you would like to add to our tape?

????-what about the man that got the washing machine for you?

JB-oh, that was Captain Monkey?

MB-tell me about that

JB-we got a, he took some kind of sign we had, we like to have fun

MB-yah

JB-in one way or another. And he bought this big washing machine and brought it in, it was like a barrel, one barrel inside the other one you know? We had two men that run that, one of them was named ??? he was in charge of it, and a guy named ??? was the assistant there. And I saw ??? after the was and he'd started, he got out of the CCC's, he got out of the CCC's and he was, I saw him in Little Rock, Arkansas. He was going to, oh hell, oh I shouldn't have said that,

MB-laugh

JB-???-anyway somebody told me that ??? lives in Parkdale, AR and that's why he was there, ???

MB-what happened with this washing machine?

JB-oh, well, we washed our clothes with it, and there was a press too, to press your ?? you know? I don't know if they charged for that or not? They charged for the washing machine I know that.

MB-uh huh

JB-about 20 cents. It was a pretty good deal

???-tell her about when you took ??? flying

JB-oh, well that was in ??? We made a cabinet for the, I guess it was the back street of the camp we put ??? on it and then the ??? man we were making it for, put a deadman up here and then another one down at the other end?? That was the line. And huh what would be a deadman in construction work like that is a

MB-bowline or something like that

JB-yah that's what it is, its' a, they put

???-something to anchor the clothesline to

JB-yah, yah and they put a, what you call it on each end and then ??? what am I talking about. ???

MB-they thought they were going to get some dead guy

JB-yah-laugh

MB-wonderful. Bernadette can you think of anything else we need to put on here?

???-no, I guess he, the only thing that I was thinking about was when he went into, when he first went in he told that he rode the horse into, where was it?

JB-yah, ??? a couple of miles

MB-that was the very beginning of your CCC's tour, it began on horse?

JB-my brother walked up. The reason I rode that, the reason I rode that was it rained the night before, a couple of nights before and the mud was about up to your ankles, and uh, you'd get it all over yourself. ??? that's why we got the horse. After I left, ??? I was tired about that.

???-one other thing, when you ??? in the Army out there you went to Lake Katherine didn't you? In the Army.

JB-yah, yah. Lake Katherine down there in Arkansas. Me and a, me and a leader, we built a diving thing, a diving board and a dock and all that. And is was an interesting that Lake has got a water shoot on it, they took me and the boys over here and we made the dock, made up the dock and then we, with the rest of the lumber we'd need on a dock and then we took the motor, the boat motor from over at camp and put it on there, and we'd motor up through the lake and know right where we wanted to put it where, right where we wanted to keep it. So, it was still there when I left, I guess it was, I know we built if for diving school, life saving school and they needed a dock there to dive off you know. And we took the darn thing, and ?????, he said just tie it to one of these big anchors. So we put it out there and we put a big ?? a big board to hold it steady and then we had a wire, a cable come in from an angle, corner there. ????? it got a little deeper????

MB-just right

JB-hmmm. Thank you for your interview. I enjoyed it.

MB-Jim, thank you for everything this has just been a really really fun time and a good tape and I appreciate you putting out all the effort and it was just great and will make it

JB-????

**MB-I certainly intend to. We'll put it on, in the archives and anybody who wants to come years from now, your grandkids can come to Yellowstone and long after we're all gone, they can listen to Grandpa talk.**

**Thank you again**

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

**JAMES W. BISHOP  
YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

INTERVIEWED BY  
MARY SWIER BOLHUIS,  
VIP, YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

AUGUST 28, 2001  
AT THE BISHOP HOME IN  
WEBSTER GROVES, MISSOURI

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H1B

**NARRATOR:**

James William Bishop was born March 28, 1920, in Huston Chica, Mississippi. The son of Ira Tillmon and Maida Ludene (Rhodes) Bishop, James grew up in Arkansas as one of eight children.

In 1940, at the age of 20, Bishop enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps. After boarding a train in Little Rock, Arkansas, James was sent first to Cody and Shoshone Wyoming, as part of Company #1723, before being transferred to the Nez Perce Camp( YNP-5), near Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park. Following the U.S. entry in World War II, James served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 157<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, achieving the rank of Sergeant and serving in the European theater. He earned a Purple Heart, with three Oak Leaf Clusters; a Distinguished Unit Badge; a Silver Star; a Bronze Star; and the British Military Medal.

James married Bernadine M. LaRose on July 26, 1947 in Washington, D.C. The couple had one son, William Rhodes. Bishop was a member of the 157<sup>th</sup> Regiment Association, CCC Alumni Association, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, and Veterans of Foreign Wars. James W. Bishop died February 6, 2005 in St. Louis, Missouri.

**INTERVIEWER:**

Mary Swier Bolhuis is a history teacher and researcher. In 2000-2001, she took a sabbatical from her work as a high school teacher in Bozeman, Montana, to work as a Volunteer in Parks (VIP), conducting research and documentation on the story of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Yellowstone National Park as part of the Park's Oral History Program. Mary retired from the Bozeman Senior High School in 2005. She moved to California, where she served as a teacher and department chair at Ripon Unified School District in Stockton, California. She currently teaches as an adjunct professor of history and political science at Modesto Junior College.

**Summary:**

The collection contains two oral history interviews conducted about a month apart; the contents of each interview are similar. James W. Bishop served in Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Company #1723, stationed at the Nez Perce Camp (YNP-5) in Yellowstone National Park. His interview recalls constructing barracks, digging storm sewers, and going to dances at the Old Faithful Inn. He also mentions the buffalo corrals, elk, and bears. Memories of the Park Rangers and a story about a man who brought a clothes washing machine into camp are included.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:**

- Interview of James W. Bishop, July 1, 2001, CCC in Yellowstone Documentation Project, Yellowstone National Park Archives (YELL69595-OH1A)
- James William Bishop Collection, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, The Library of Congress (#AFC/2001/001/48770)

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 60-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Transcribed by Anne L. Foster, Yellowstone National Park Archivist, March 2017. Audited for accuracy and edited for clarity by Jackie Jerla, Yellowstone National Park/ Yellowstone Forever Librarian. Transcript 5 pages.

**James W. Bishop interviewed by Mary Swier Bolhuis  
in Webster Groves, Missouri, August 28, 2001**

**Narrator:** James W. Bishop (JB)

**Also present:** Bernadine Bishop (BB)

**Interviewer:** Mary Swier Bolhuis (MB)

**MB:** Today is August 28, 2001. This is for Jim Bishop. He was born on March 28, 1920. He was 20 years old when he entered the 3-Cs on April 8, 1940. He served in camp number 1723 at Yellowstone. Can you describe something about your camp?

**JB:** Yes, we were about half way through the Park. Let's see, I guess were about thirty miles or forty miles from –what do you call that?

**MB:** Old Faithful?

**JB:** No, we were at Old Faithful.

**MB:** What is your family's background? Were you a native to America or were you recent immigrants?

**JB:** I guess I was a native to America.

**MB:** How many brothers and sisters did you have?

**JB:** I had six sisters and two brothers. Since we were born, two brothers passed away along the line and I had three sisters that passed away.

**MB:** What was your level of education?

**JB:** Eighth grade.

**MB:** How did you hear about the 3-Cs?

**JB:** I saw it in the paper.

**MB:** Were you recruited?

**JB:** No.

**MB:** Did you have any say in where you would go?

**JB:** No.

**MB:** How were you assigned to camps?

**JB:** I don't know. They put us on a troop train there in Little Rock and we went west. We had one train and it was going to Cody, Wyoming. And another one –I don't know where it was going.

MB: Where did you hear that you would be going to Yellowstone Park?

JB: After I'd been in the CCCs about a month.

MB: Do you know how you felt about having to go there?

JB: Oh, I loved it.

MB: When you joined the 3-Cs, where were first you stationed?

JB: Well, we went to Little Rock. Then we got outfitted, a couple bags full of work clothes and stuff. And away we went. Went to [unintelligible].

MB: Do you have any memories of the day or night you arrived in Yellowstone?

JB: Oh, yeah.

MB: What were your feelings? What were your first impressions?

JB: I thought it was kind of nice.

MB: Was your camp a tent camp or did you live in barracks?

JB: The first camp that we went into in the Yellowstone Park was a pyramidal tent camp and it had enough room for six bunks or, to make it a little better, you could have five in there.

MB: How many roommates did you have?

JB: Well, if you had six in a camp, you'd have five roommates. If you had five in a camp, you'd have four roommates.

MB: Can you recall the layout of the camp?

JB: Not the camp.

MB: Do you know anything about the arrangement of the tents and buildings?

JB: No.

MB: Where did you eat?

JB: We had a nice, first-class mess hall down on the riverside.

MB: Where did you store your supplies?

JB: We had a storage room for that.

MB: Did you have a baseball diamond anywhere?

JB: Well, there were several of them around there that were constructed to play a little ball, softball and whatnot.

MB: Was there a garden?

JB: No.

MB: What was your official job?

JB: I was assistant team leader.

MB: What did you do while you were in Yellowstone? Where did you work?

JB: Well, we worked around the Old Faithful geyser area. We had one crew that built a camp. It was built with portable barracks.

MB: Did you do anything that specifically added to the Park, like new trails, or bridges, or roads.

JB: I don't know. In my group, we just worked around the camp and then we went and we fought a couple of fires.

MB: What did you like best about your work?

JB: Well, [unintelligible] that was nice. Being among all the young men, you know.

MB: What did you like least?

JB: I don't know. Unless I'd run into somebody that was obnoxious, maybe I didn't like them too well-didn't have too many of them.

MB: Who were your friends?

JB: From home we took Arnold Ayle[sp?], and Cessler Haygood, and Ned Murphy, and Mary Murphy -and that's about all I remember the names of.

MB: What were your fellow enrollees like?

JB: They were nice kids. They wanted to get a little money or something like that, you know. And we went in, and a lot of those boys they wanted out as soon as they got in, you know, because there was going to be six months at very least before they got out of there and that seemed like a long time. But, a lot of them stayed on.

MB: What did you do in your off hours? Did you go to school, or did you play sports, or did you make trips to a nearby town?

JB: No, no nearby towns around that I ever heard of. But, we'd go sit in a reading room. Or they had a pool hall and part of the time it had been taken apart and hadn't been put back together.

MB: What did the men think about the food?

JB: They loved it.

MB: Do you remember any of the things you had to eat, there?

JB: They had just like you had at home, here, I guess.

MB: Where you there over any of the holidays?

JB: No.

MB: Do you recall any stories or incidents that involved large animals like the bear, the elk, or the moose in the Park?

JB: The bear, the old bear that got out of control there and wounded a man very bad. He was a – what do you call it – a civilian, he wasn't a CCC boy. I heard that they had to take his arm off, I don't know, but I know they had to take the old bear down to the incinerator and shoot her and put her in the incinerator.

MB: Do you have any funny stories, or any funny memories, that you remember, or any sad ones?

JB: It's kind of a sad one. We had a man from a different company, he wasn't from our company, but he was from a different company. I heard he was sixteen years old. A tree fell on him.

MB: Did you fight any fires?

JB: Yes.

MB: What was that like?

JB: Well, you'd never believe it, but you go out there and they give you a hoe and then they give you what they call a lady's shovel – it was just like a shovel you dig in the garden with only it was about half the size – and I guess the reason why they had them small like that, was so that it would be easy to carry. You could carry more stuff when it's small like that. I guess, I don't know. But, that seems right. They put those tools out there – and they what they called a Pulaski tool – you ever heard of a Pulaski tool? It was just like a double tipped axe, only the one side, instead of having an axe blade on one side it had like a Maddox blade. You could dig in like for a Maddox or for an axe.

MB: What part did you play in fighting the fires? What did you have to do?

JB: Well, I directed the men.

MB: When you say direct them, direct them how?

JB: Di-rect. Well you put them out there and the foreman or superintendent or somebody'd come along and say "Let's put this next trench right down through here." And you go out there and then they'd dig all the way down to what they called down to [mineral?] soil.

MB: What challenges did you face as an enrollee? What were your worst times?

JB: Oh, I don't think I had any bad ones, that I know of.

MB: Did you, during your time that you were in the Cs, did you get any awards or citations?

JB: No.

MB: As soon as the war started for the United States, what did you do?

JB: I was already in the Army when the war started.

MB: What resources, tools, and skills did you learn when you were in Yellowstone?

JB: I learned how to saw wood. I already knew that, I just got a little better at it.

MB: Have you ever been back to Yellowstone and the scene of your camp?

JB: Yes, but I don't remember going back to the old camp scene. Went back to the Park.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **LEWIS C. CHANDLER YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

**SELF-INTERVIEWED**

**FEBRUARY?, 2001  
AT THE CHANDLER HOME IN  
EAST RIDGE, TENNESSEE**

**Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168**

**Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H2A & PP21-PP31**

**NARRATOR:**

Lewis Clarence Chandler was born February 9, 1916 or 1917, probably in Alabama. Little is known about his early life.

Chandler joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1936, at the age of 20. At that time, he served with Company #4436, which worked as part of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). He left the CCCs briefly after his first “hitch,” but reenlisted in 1939, working with Company #4428, primarily for projects under the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). His work took him to Greenville and Evergreen, Alabama; Boulder and Escalante, Utah; Tuscarora, Nevada; and Berkley, California, before being relocated to Yellowstone National Park. In Yellowstone, Chandler served at the Canyon Camp (YNP-2), near the Lower Falls of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.

In July 1942, Chandler enlisted with the US Navy. He served 30 years, achieving the rank of Aviation Structural Mechanic Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class (AMH1) and fighting in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

Later in life, Chandler married Edith Carter of Chattanooga, Tennessee. The couple lived in East Ridge, Tennessee, where Chandler served as the South Central Regional Director for the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni (NACCCA). Edith died on January 26, 2009, and was buried in Lakewood Memory Gardens South in Chattanooga. Lewis passed away April 28, 2010, in Shady Grove, Alabama. He is buried in the Chattanooga (TN) National Cemetery.

**Summary:**

Lewis C. Chandler served in Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Company #4429, stationed at the Canyon Camp (YNP-2) in Yellowstone National Park. His interview recalls fighting fire, working as a tool clerk and Assistant Leader, the food, shooting bears with a sling shot, watching the Park Service trap bears, and climbing the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Memories of his time with Company #4436, stationed in Alabama, Utah, Nevada, and California, including working in Wildcat Canyon near the University of California, Berkeley, are also mentioned. This folder also contains four original and seven reproduction photographs of Lewis C. Chandler's time in Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park fighting fires. Images include his fellow CCC workers as well as images of active fires and the post-fire landscape. The contents of a second tape, recorded earlier, but numbered as OH2B, is very similar.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:**

- Lewis C. Chandler Photographs, CCC in Yellowstone Documentation Project, Yellowstone National Park Archives. The four original and seven reproduction black and white photographs depict a wildland fire, firefighters, the Canyon Camp (YNP-2), and members of the work crews.
- Interview of Lewis C. Chandler, February? 2001, Civilian Conservation Corps in Yellowstone Documentation Project, Yellowstone National Park Archives (YELL69595-OH2B).

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 60-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 8 pages.

**Lewis C. Chandler, self-interview  
in East Ridge, Tennessee, on February 9, 2001**

Narrator: Lewis Chandler

February the 9th, 2001. My name is Lewis Chandler I was born 2/9/1916. I was 85 years old at that time. I entered the CCC when I was 20 years old. I served in Alabama, Utah, Nevada, California and Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. I first entered the CCC's in 1936; that Company Number was 4436. It was SCS-Soil Conservation Service Company. We cut brush under those big, beautiful pine trees that were there then, that are gone now. And we also made dams in small streams on the side of the farmers' fields to keep the water from washing the farms away. That was in Alabama.

When I, I got out shortly after that, after the first hitch, and entered the CCC's in 1939. At that time I was sent back over to Greenville. And in a few weeks we were processed physically again, received the necessary shots for health reasons. Then we went to southern Utah; that was a forestry service camp. The work that I did was road work. We were building a road over a small--over a mound. Over to a little town called Boulder. And another crew we had worked in the forest, doing whatever the Forestry Service asked them to do. I never was on that crew. We had another one, crew that worked for the Fish and Game. They worked indirectly with the hatchery supplying eggs that the CCC boys had caught in the creeks, streams around there. Someway, I don't remember how they caught them, but I have a picture of two guys in a lake doing that.

And then, when we left there we went to a place called Tuscarora, Nevada, fifty miles north of Elko, Nevada. Up there we had tents, six men to the tent. The only big building that was made of wood was the mess hall. That was a fine mess hall there, compared to the tents we had. Our washrooms and bathhouses were half tents and half wood. The roofs were tents stretched over a wooden floor with wooden sides around it. I guess that was a WWI type of a tent they had. What we did there was build a dam for water catchment for the cattle. And I worked on that dam until I got strong enough I could pick up them big rocks and roll that big wheelbarrow around there, just like I knew what I was doing. We had another crew that we worked on; we called it insect control, but what it was crickets--big, long, black crickets. They couldn't fly and they would crawl right across that flat desert just as thick as your hand would come. Well, we put up some galvanized sheeting, like you put on a roof of a building now, and formed a "V" out of it, and these crickets would come down this galvanized sheet metal. And we had a hole dug there, about a 12 x 12, six to eight feet deep. They would drop into that hole, and when it got full, we'd put diesel all on it and set it afire. And while they were crawling in that one, one man would guard them and make sure that everything went right, we were digging another hole. And they seemed to come in batches; one day we would get them all, we thought, and then up the road, up the ranch a ways, they'd be coming again. And we'd move our equipment over there, did a new hole, and trap them that way. I worked mostly on the dam, but I was on that for a few times, and it was very interesting how we figured out how to capture those boogers. There was a small stream that went down through there, and they'd crawl up to the stream, and would crawl on to each other until they made a bridge across that about eight or ten feet wide. And actually, that would swing down as the water flowed down, and when it eventually hit the other side that would be the bridge. They didn't swing down too far, not very far, because they--the water wasn't too fast and they could go almost directly across sometimes. But we had to watch that; the water would carry a lot of them downstream. And when they got way down there, maybe a half a mile, in two or three days we'd look down that a way, or go down there looking for them,

and boy, we'd have another big problem bearding up those and catching them. But we eventually had a lot of fun doing it. We were young and we liked it.

And we had a ball team there. We went up to northern Nevada; I believe it was Battle Mountain. We played the Indians, they--Indian boys up there had a baseball team. They were fairly good, too. They were awful hilly up there and our ball field was almost on a hillside. But whenever we caught up with the ball, we'd play it again. We liked that very well. The next sport we had there, we'd go into Elko about every three weeks, once a month depend on when it came your time to go. See we would take about, I don't know about 25-30 guys would go. Well, the next week when the truck took down there, they wouldn't let us same guys go again. They would, they knew who went. The leader always, he knew everything, that big, ugly guy. He wasn't ugly, he was a nice guy, but he was very strict. Now speaking of LEM's [local experienced men], I don't remember anything about the LEM's. I remember seeing one when I was in another camp, but not a Tuscarora. We had one elderly man from WWI there. He stayed with our camp. He had the privilege of doing whatever he wanted to. If he wanted to work, that was good; but if he didn't want to work, he'd tell us stories about WWI. And we was in the valley, and on top of the mountains nearby there was snow. So me and another guy, there was three of us rather, walked one time, one Sunday, up to the top of that mountain up there in the snow. So, I had my little box camera with me and we pulled off our clothes, off down to just our shorts, and we made a picture sitting up there in that snow. And I have that picture now, and I believe I wrote under. It said June in Nevada, or whatever. I wrote something under it, I remember it. I still have that photograph. And I don't remember much else about our sports except that little ball club. I worked about a month in the Education Advisor's Office there, but I was glad to get out of there; I wasn't cut out to be an office personnel. So, when I got back up to laying them big rocks and rolling that wheelbarrow, I seemed to be more or less happy about that than anything else.

We had fairly good food when we was up in Tuscarora. The cooks seemed to get their act together pretty good, with what they had to do there. See, they had to carry everything in from Tuscarora. Tuscarora didn't have nothing but a service station, and it looked like a little old hotel was there, maybe a hundred years ago. Other than that, they had to go into Elko to get everything that we eat. And of course there wasn't too much going around Elko, so it was shipped in from the farmers to there, and by the time it got to us it was about medium. Most of the time, we had pretty good food when we was there at Tuscarora. To give you an idea; back to the cricket situation. They were so thick at times--if we drove on the trucks, if they would drive over to Tuscarora for something--. From our camp over to Tuscarora was 7 miles. And when they would go over there and where the crickets were crossing this road, before they'd get back to camp they would have to take a crowbar and knock off the crickets off the tires where they'd run over them so thick they'd build up and hit the bottom of the fender on the truck and it made it awful slippery. So, they'd had to get out in that mess and gouge them things off. When they'd come back into camp they was always telling us to get out there and get them crickets. But that was interesting.

The fall of the year came and we headed to California. We went to Berkley. That was right behind the University there, is where our camp was; down in a canyon called Wildcat Canyon. We liked that part of it, because we was close to the University. Some of the boys got dates with the girls students and Sunday afternoon they'd take them down to the movie, or go get a coke, or what else they could find to do in that town. At that time Berkley wasn't too big, but it was well known. You could take a street car. In Berkley, it'd take you all the way downtown. We liked that; that was a pretty good. It would take you downtown through Oakland and back. And we'd ride that thing down there and back once in a while. It'd take a dime. Couple of times when we was off, we went down to Oakland and caught a ferry, and we rode that ferry for a while. It went

all the way to San Francisco. That was about 15 cents, I'm not sure. It wasn't nothing much, but we enjoyed that ride. They had a music machine on there, I remember one of them old fashioned Rock-Ola machines. Everybody would be playing that thing and we'd ride over there and back on that.

The type of work we did while we was there in Berkley was, we built a lot of water lines and sewer lines from the various restrooms they had throughout the park. And we also built a couple of buildings for the Park Service. Park Service personnel lived in them. One of them we built was a nice rock building. It was for the Park Superintendent. He lived there awhile and I went back there years later and that building was still there, and someone else was living in it and-- but it still looked good. He told me that it had burned once and they had repaired it; but we built the building, anyway. We didn't do too much other than those two things. We built some signs out of redwood boards and put them throughout the park. And like if you wanted to go to a place of interest in there, we'd build a sign for that. Like you'd go up to camp caves, or go up to the swimming pool or up to the tennis court. They had this tennis court in the park. There was a lake there, too--DeAngela Lake [Lake Angela?]. And we used to go up to this lake sometimes, when we could slip off and go up there, and we'd go swimming in it. I don't know whether that was the water that supplied Berkley or not, but we sure swam in it. Until we told someone about it, and we were told not to go in there anymore. That was the coldest water I'd ever been in. It was coming right out of the bottom of that canyon, I guess. And we built those signs and put them all around and down. Up towards Berkley, we put a big sign right on top of the canyon, right behind the University up there on Spruce Street. We put one sign that said Charles Lee Tilden Regional Park, Wildcat Canyon. That one was, oh, it must have been eight foot tall. It had big timbers in it; it was a mammoth sign. And I had the job while I was there for a while, cutting these letters in these signs. We'd take and draw these letters on the board til we figured it was nice enough to have. Then we'd cut that letter into av-deep. See when that redwood is green it is easy to cut, easy to saw. And we'd cut them signs and someone else would go put them up, and that kind of stuff.

In May, sometime, we was told to remain in the mess hall in the evening after we had finished our evening meal. And our company commander came and told us we were moving. Said the company was gonna go to Yellowstone Park. Boy, everybody wanted to go to Yellowstone Park. But we hated to leave Berkley; that was our little paradise down there. But we rode a train. I don't know if it was overnight or not, but it was part of the night and day. It went up to Pocatello, Idaho, and up to West Yellowstone, Montana. We got off the train, then we sat on an old fence out there. I got some pictures of all of us sitting on that big fence, waiting for two trucks to come and pick us up and take us down to the Lower Falls in the Park. Our camp was down in there, I believe it was. Part of the name of it was Canyon Camp, I'm not sure. We were just a small ways away from that falls. You could almost hear it, roaring down there. We was far enough away to, we didn't hear it too much. But every time we would leave there and go by there we could really hear it; when we was going on fires.

Well, we got down there the first day and boy we hit the ground running. Every time a cloud would come up a little lightning, we was on the truck going to put the fires out. We was out on many of them small fires, but we went on a big one, one time, over in the Tetons. Foothills near there, about half way up some of the mountains there. I was told one time there was 2600 men on that fire. Boy, it seemed like we just stayed on that fire. I never eat so many peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and apples and oranges in all my life. I was glad to get back to camp and get a rest and get some lima beans and salmon meat loaf. It seemed like we had that a lot up there in Berkley--I mean not Berkley, up in Yellowstone. That was our only reason for us to be there I guess, because I can't remember any crews going out and doing anything other than fighting

fire. I was on a spike camp, they used to call them spike camps or fly camps. Four or five of us went up to the top of one of the highest ridges around there, or mountains around there, and we stayed three to four days. We was known as watching for a fire. Well, we watched for fire alright. Until one night the ranger that took us up there and stayed with us--. I guess he was a park worker, I'm not sure; I don't think he was a ranger. He begin to gather everything we had in a big half tent and put a rope around it and was throwing it up in this tree. We said, "What the heck is he doing now?" But anyway, he pulled it up in there and tied it off. And we asked him, "What was he doing with that food up in that tree?" He says, "Well, if we don't put it up in that tree, that bear will eat it before midnight." So, then I didn't sleep a wink that night because if that bear was after that food, he might be after me. Well, I don't remember if we spotted a fire or not, but we stayed up there two to three days. And then we come back down to camp, and then we joined the rest of the firefighting crew. If this fire burned across the top of these cedar and pine trees and fir trees, they called them crown fires. The wind would blow and it'd go across there like a train. Blowing. If it seemed like it was getting louder and louder, we'd head the other way. But then, whenever it did go over, it would drop fire down on the ground. And that's where we came in. We was putting out them ground fires. We didn't want it to catch fire, and bum on the ground and step in it, and bum your feet off before you could get out of them.

If you have the September issue of the journal that the CCC published in St Louis and sends it out, there's three photographs. Three pictures in there, that I made when I was in Yellowstone Park when we was out on the fires. I still have the photographs and I have the negatives of them. But, the story about that fire is maybe related to the pictures I made someway. But the article in the September issue, September last year, was over in Idaho. That's where the fire were, but the pictures were made in Yellowstone.

As I told you on the other tape I made, as I told you on the other tape that I sent to you, we would shoot these little bears that was up the tree, little cub bears, with a sling shot. We'd make it out of inner tubes the mechanics would give us when the tire tube would break. It would hit him, he'd holler and run down, and we'd laugh. We'd get back to camp and tell our buddies about it. This big leader got all over us about that. He said, "You didn't know that mother bear was sitting right there in the edge of them bushes looking at you?" He said, "If you didn't, if you hurt that little bear much, or got too close, then that big bear would come out of there like crazy. And you'd wish you was back in Georgia or wherever you was from." But anyway, we didn't mess with that anymore.

Then another time, for a little excitement, me and a fellow named Lawrence Floyd went to the bottom of that lower waterfall [Lower Falls, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone], almost up to the where the water fell in. That was very exciting until we tried to get out of that place. We musta went a half a mile down that creek, down that river--I believe that's the Snake River--before we ever crawled our way out of there. But boy, we was, when we went to camp, we was tired and ragged and dusty getting out of that place. We told a few buddies and eventually the word got back to that big leader again. When he got through with us we didn't even want to hear nothing. Every time we went by that waterfall on a fire back and forth, I thought about how deep it was and about how dangerous it was. But that was one lesson I learned, they taught me. Me and that same little young man, in 1942, joined the Navy together. I don't know where he is now. His parents was--one of his parents was out of Chicago, that's all I know about him.

One day when we came in from a fire fighting, we was all dirty and burned all the dirty clothes. This leader told me, he said, "You have been made a tool clerk." I said I thought that was a good idea, I was a clerk. Whenever everybody jumped off that truck, here was Chandler unloading all them old muddy fire burnt tools. Threw them down on the ground and cleaned them up real

good, put them in the rack ready to go the next morning, on the next fire. It didn't take but about two to three days like that and I didn't appreciate that word clerk. I says, "Hey I gotta get outta here, this is killing me." And when I got them all in that rack and all ready to go, I had to get on that truck with the rest of them guys. In the evening I had to clean them all up and put them in the rack like they were, the next day. After three days of it—. But, I was the tool clerk, so I had to watch what kind of jobs I got there; they liable to promote me to something that I couldn't do. Well anyway, later on in the latter part of that summer before we moved, I was promoted to Assistant Leader. That gave me another \$6 for that month. A total of \$11. Man, I had money in every pocket.

So, in September the snows come. Everybody was glad to see the snow, but it was aggravating wading in that snow. Some of it looked like it was 3 foot deep before we got out of there. I got some pictures made there with me standing up to my knees in it. Actually, I'm not up to my knees in that one, I'm just standing on my knees, it looks like I am. But that was a, we was glad to get out of there. Now I left before--eventually left. My time was up getting up.

So I had, they transferred me back, pardon me. They transferred back down to Alabama. They put me in a company, I believe the name, the town, was Evergreen, and I think that was 4420. It might've been 4436 moved down there, I'm not sure right in there. But, I stayed down there until another 6 months and I had all my time served. And when I was down there, we went back into that SCS stuff, cutting brushes and building alongside of the roads cutting brush and all that stuff, filling in holes with our bulldozers. You know, that shoveling hole bulldozer crew. So, down in there, I don't remember what we did too much, except worked with fishing stuff. Some of the guys might'd had different crews that they went out on, but that was the best I could remember. I know one thing, when I checked in down there, they put me in one crew, under Mr. Garrett. I went out with Mr. Garrett, and there was a leader there, and an assistant leader there. And they told me where to go to work, and I says, "I'm assistant leader, I don't do that kind of stuff." Well this, they have a big leader in every camp. He reminded me they had enough assistant leaders, and my job now was to take that axe and cut them brushes. So, I'd been out west, see; I learned a little bit. They thought I was a smart aleck or something, so I, "I'll show you. I'll just get out of this outfit when my time is up." Course I had to get out, my two years was in. I didn't enjoy the southern camps like I did the western camps. Even though I lived down in here until I was 20 years old. But, when you leave a place and stay as long as I did, man, it was about 56 years before I come other than a visit. So, you can tell from my southern accent, I still have a twang to that. I don't know if it's western Texas or southern Alabama, but I learned a lot of things about talking out west. You didn't act like you was from the south too much, they'd made fun of you. And, but now, there is so much industry everywhere it don't make no difference where you're from, you'll do alright.

Company 4429 was scheduled to move to San Clemente, California. I guess they left right after I did, because I had heard later, when I was in Evergreen that that's where they went. And if I remember just right, years later I read that that was President Nixon's little White House down there, where he done a lot of his presidential office work. But I came on back down to Alabama and done my thing down here. I stayed down here in Alabama a few weeks, and then I went to, back out to California and went to work for Dr. San Kraft Company. I was at Santa Monica, California.

In July I was so close to being drafted, I went into the Navy, me and my friend. And I didn't have a bit of trouble with the training in the Navy at all, everything was already taught me. I had the discipline and I had learned to keep my mouth shut, and I learned to do what I was told, and I credit every bit of it to the CCC's.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **LEWIS C. CHANDLER YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

**SELF-INTERVIEWED**

**FEBRUARY 9, 2001  
AT THE CHANDLER HOME IN  
EAST RIDGE, TENNESSEE**

**Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168**

**Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H2B & PP21-PP31**

**NARRATOR:**

Lewis Clarence Chandler was born February 9, 1916 or 1917, probably in Alabama. Little is known about his early life.

Chandler joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1936, at the age of 20. At that time, he served with Company #4436, which worked as part of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). He left the CCCs briefly after his first "hitch," but reenlisted in 1939, working with Company #4428, primarily for projects under the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). His work took him to Greenville and Evergreen, Alabama; Boulder and Escalante, Utah; Tuscarora, Nevada; and Berkeley, California, before being relocated to Yellowstone National Park. In Yellowstone, Chandler served at the Canyon Camp (YNP-2), near the Lower Falls of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.

In July 1942, Chandler enlisted with the US Navy. He served 30 years, achieving the rank of Aviation Structural Mechanic Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class (AMH1) and fighting in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

Later in life, Chandler married Edith Carter of Chattanooga, Tennessee. The couple lived in East Ridge, Tennessee, where Chandler served as the South Central Regional Director for the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni (NACCCA). Edith died on January 26, 2009, and was buried in Lakewood Memory Gardens South in Chattanooga. Lewis passed away April 28, 2010, in Shady Grove, Alabama. He is buried in the Chattanooga (TN) National Cemetery.

**Summary:**

Lewis C. Chandler served in Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Company #4429, stationed at the Canyon Camp (YNP-2) in Yellowstone National Park. His interview recalls fighting fire, working as a tool clerk and Assistant Leader, the food, shooting bears with a sling shot, watching the Park Service trap bears, and climbing the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Memories of his time with Company #4436, stationed in Alabama, Utah, Nevada, and California, including working in Wildcat Canyon near the University of California, Berkeley, are also mentioned. This folder also contains four original and seven reproduction photographs of Lewis C. Chandler's time in Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park fighting fires. Images include his fellow CCC workers as well as images of active fires and the post-fire landscape. The contents of a second tape, recorded later, but numbered as OH2A, is very similar.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:**

- Lewis C. Chandler Photographs, CCC in Yellowstone Documentation Project, Yellowstone National Park Archives. The four original and seven reproduction black and white photographs depict a wildland fire, firefighters, the Canyon Camp (YNP-2), and members of the work crews.

Lewis C. Chandler, February 9, 2001 (YELL69595-●H2B & PP21-PP31)

- Interview of Lewis C. Chandler, February ? 2001, Civilian Conservation Corps in Yellowstone Documentation Project, Yellowstone National Park Archives (YELL69595-OH2A).

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 60-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 9 pages.

**Lewis C. Chandler, self-interview  
in East Ridge, Tennessee, February? 2001**

Narrator: Lewis Chandler

I was born in 1916, I am a Native American, and my family is also. By word, I heard about the CCCs, by word of mouth and by the neighbors.

Early in May of 1940, I went to Yellowstone National Park. Our purpose for being in Yellowstone Park was to fight fires. We did not know exactly what we were going to do before we hit the ground running. It wasn't long before we knew what we were supposed to do. Lower Falls, we could almost hear the water roaring over the falls from our position. This was a tent company; we had six men to the tent, and they was in several rows. Our company consisted of approximately 200 men. That included everyone there, officers and all.

I am a Native American, my family background is the same. I had three brothers and three sisters. Two of the brothers are gone, two of the sisters are gone.

I found out about the CCC's by the word of mouth and by neighbors. I found out I was going to the CCCs when some guy told me. Then, I walked to my nearest town which was Luverne, Alabama. And I signed up there and they sent me to Greenville, Alabama, in Company 4436. That was in 1936. That company there was barracks. It had four big barracks, consisted of about fifty men in each barracks.

From there I was sent to southern Utah. Escalante, Utah. That was a Forestry Service camp, but we built roads when I was there. That was our main job building roads in southern Utah.

Then our company 4429 moved to a town called Tuscarora, Nevada. That's fifty miles north of Elko, Nevada. When we were there we built rock dams for water catchment for cattle, and we also had an insect control program there. There were a lot of crickets, or they were called insects. Anyway, they would crawl across the desert and we would put up galvanized tents to direct their crawling, and we'd dig a big hole and they'd crawl into this big hole. And we'd put diesel all on them and set them afire. While they was crawling in that hole, we'd be digging another one. And that would go on for four to five days, until we diverted or captured most all of the crickets that were there. Now, that was another tent company, but we was still in 4429; it was the same company. While we were there, I worked in a field along with the rest of those boys.

After about 6 months of that we picked up and moved to Berkley, California. And we was in barracks company there, but it was still 4429. That company was a metropolitan area company-MAJ. We worked in a park there. We laid pipelines, waterlines, and we built buildings--a few buildings, three or four for park personnel. And we built a lot of signs throughout the park. These signs was for people, like tourists would come in there, and they wanted to know where something was, and we could tell to go to this

Lewis C. Chandler, February 9, 2001 (YELL69595-●H2B & PP21-PP31)

certain sign. And after we stayed there, well, while we were there at Berkley, we were real close to the University of California at Berkley. We was right behind it, down in a canyon, it was called Charles Lee Tilden Regional Park-Wildcat Canyon. Well some of the boys got to know some of the students well enough that they changed names and other things and carried, some of them took them to the movies. But they thought we was soldiers until we told them we was different.

Then, we moved from there. The first part of May, they told us we were going to Yellowstone Park. Oh, everybody wanted to go to Yellowstone Park; beautiful place. It took us overnight on the train to go to Yellowstone. The train unloaded us at West Yellowstone. Then some trucks picked us up and took us to our camp, fed us good, and the next morning we hit the ground running. And from that day until I left in September, it seemed the whole park was afire. Which it was not so, but that was our main reason for being there was fighting fires and boy, did we ever do it. We would go out on the fires that was in the park, small ones. We ended up on a big one in Teton Mountains and that was a huge fire there. At one time, we were told we had 2600 men on that fire. The crown fires would catch the top of the trees afire, and a little wind would blow on them and it would just roar, sound like a train was coming through there. Well, if it sound, if we could hear the roar, close enough to hear the roar, we would try to go from the opposite direction, keeping it from catching us. Then, when it went over we'd go in behind it with our shovel and hoe, that was our bulldozer and airplane firefighting equipment. We would put out the fires that fell down from the top of the crown fires so they wouldn't spread on the ground and burn the underbrush. Well, that continued there until September, and that was our main reason for being there. And if there was any other crew that was there that did something else, I don't remember that.

But anyway, in September, a big snow come and we got out of there. I was sent back to Alabama to another company 4420, and that was at Evergeen, Alabama. And I stayed down there, oh, another six months. So from there on it was just work, work, work, until I was discharged in 1941.

When I was in Yellowstone Park that was from May to September 1940. We would ask a guy would he show him around? He'd say, "Yeah, I'll show ya, I'll show ya." So, he'd told them, and he rode with them through the park, and they made a lot of tips that way. Some of them would get as much as a dollar, and they thought that was the biggest money in the world until they told everybody about that too. Then that big, loud-mouth leader got on them, so that stopped that good deal. While I was in Yellowstone Park some of the things we did for fun turned out to be other than that. A friend of mine and myself went to the bottom of the Lower Falls [of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone], where we was up close to the falls. We found out it was easier getting down there than it was getting out. But anyway, we went down the river a long ways and finally we scratched our way out of that, went back to the camp, and told some of the boys what an experience we had and it is fine. Well, that got back to that leader again. Well, that loud-mouthed, big, tall, ugly boy got through with me and my friend, we decided not to go down there anymore. But we found other things to entertain us

when we was in Yellowstone Park besides fighting fires. We used to try to make our sling shots out of some rubber tubing we got from the mechanics. We'd shoot the cub bears when we could get close enough to them. They'd run up a tree; if we hit one, he'd holler. He'd come down a running. And we went back and told our friends about what a good time we had shooting them bears. We didn't know that that old mother bear was sitting on the edge of the bush ready to end that. So, we told our buddies, and the buddies told the leaders, and there we were again with that big guy. So we didn't go out there and mess with those little bears anymore. I did get a kick out of the way the forestry service and the park personnel handled those unruly bears that would come up around the mess hall at night and tear up things. They had a big cage with wheels on it and it was behind a pick-up truck. They had parked it behind there, behind the mess hall. And they'd open the back door, and put some bait in there, and when the bear went in it, he would trip and catch himself in there, and the door would come down. Well, I remember one occasion where they caught a big grizzly in there. Boy, did he ever try to tear up that cage. They told us they'd take him as far as the Tetons and turn him loose again. It'd be two or three weeks before they'd be back. Same thing would go on again, but we didn't tell that big leader about seeing that big bear in there, because he would've stopped us from looking at it. Boy, he was mean. But, we enjoyed every bit of it when we was in there, when it was all over.

To this day I've run into two guys, two of them guys. and now I heard recently that both of them has passed on. So, today makes my 85th birthday and it won't be long, I don't imagine, things will start happening to me. I haven't been back to Yellowstone National Park since I left there in 1940. I hear there have been a lot of changes, and I would sure like to go back, but I doubt if I'll ever get back out there.

As I said before, I was born 2/9/1916. I was 20 years old when I went in the CCCs the first time and that was in 1936.

As a rule, the food was very good to us. Like all young boys, we worked and we always was hungry. On Thanksgiving and Christmas, we would have ham and turkey and all the trimmings, and sometimes a pack of cigarettes, or piece of candy on the side. That was very good and we always enjoyed to see the holidays come by. I didn't have a Christmas or Thanksgiving in Yellowstone; that was always at the other camps that I was in.

While at Yellowstone I become a tool room clerk. And I tell you what that consisted of: I thought it was a great deal going around there telling the guys I was a clerk. But, I found out after about two trips that job wasn't so good. After we'd come in from two to three days of firefighting, and dirty and scroungy and tools all over the place, my job was to unload them tools off of that truck and clean them up and put them in the racks in the tool room, in the little tent we had there called a tool room. I got them all scratched out and put in there; it was already time to go to chow, and I wasn't even ready. But, it wasn't long before I said, "Gee,"--I didn't mean to use the word gee--but I told the leader there I says, "I just can't do this work in here, it's just getting to me." So, he let me go back out in the woods and fight fire. Anyway I had a grand time doing that

tool room clerk.

And along about that time when we started to leave Yellowstone I was promoted to Assistant Leader. That gave me six more dollars a month. Man, I had money at every pocket. So, when I, when we eventually left there the company went to, I believe it was San Clemente, California. They went down there, where Nixon's little White House was, I understand. But, I was sent back to Ft McClelland, Alabama. And then from there, they send me back to Greenville, Alabama, to a, well it was a little town called Evergreen. The company 4436 had moved down there. And boy, when I got down there, they gave me an axe and we went through the woods cutting underbrush in them big pine forest down there. I reminded them I was an assistant leader and I didn't have to do that. Course that leader down there said, "We have our own assistant leaders, young man, get the axe and get with it." So, that didn't last long because after my hitch was up, they gave me a little bit of respect. I was almost ready for a discharge and finally in April in '41, I was discharged back into civilian life.

So I took up residence in California. I worked with a friend out there, Doug Bissacraft Company for a year. Then, that was right after the war started, so in July '42 I joined that big US Navy. I got my final discharge in 1972 after 30 years in the Navy. And I enjoyed that CCC company and what they did, and the relationship with all the boys that was in it, more than, I believe, more than I did when I was in the Navy. Course there was WWII; that wasn't much fun for anybody. I was in the aviation department, did a lot of mechanical work, a lot of flying, but I was not an officer.

So, the CCC days, I remember very well. They taught me a lot, and the experience I learned in there has been through my life every time--the discipline, the leadership, and the respect for others, taught me a lot in the CCCs.

Now, outside I'll try to bring in some of the details, the other portion I was talking about was just general what we did.

When we went to Escalante, Utah, we were working on roads. We was building a road from Escalante over the mountain to a little town called Boulder. We used dynamite to blast it away, and wheelbarrows, and pick and shovel to build that road. I talked to a guy later--oh many years later--and he said that was a four lane road over the top of that mountain now, to the little town of Boulder. That was one job we had there; that was a forestry camp there. And a lot of the boys worked in the forest around there, and cutting underbrush, and stuff like that. And another detail we had there, we had a crew that worked for the Game and Fish, and they caught rainbow trout. And they would milk these fish, so to speak, for their eggs. And the Department of Fish and Game there would take the eggs, and eventually hatch them out to little small fish, and re-stock them in the lakes that was there. And Escalante is about ninety miles off of Marysville, back in southern Utah; fairly close to Bryce Canyon, but not too close.

Then when we went to Tuscaror--that's Nevada--fifty miles north of Elko. We had, all I could remember there was, we had two crews. One was combating those insects,

crickets, there that I mentioned before, and got them under control. And another one was building this big water reservoir. It was called the Wylie Dam, I believe was the name of it. We used dirt to make the dam and then we laced the outside of it with big rocks--that was to keep it from washing away. And when I first went out on the job, I picked up a little rock about the size of a shoebox, and I said, "Boy, this is a heavy rock." By the time I got through working out there, and building up my muscles and all that, I could pick up a good sized rock; it wasn't heavy at all. That's what good hard work did for us. And we were up there six months in that valley. It seemed like we worked on that dam an awful lot. I remember rolling a wheelbarrow to the extent that I didn't want nobody to touch my wheelbarrow. But that was the other project we had. And about every month a detail was picked out. It wasn't a detail, a group of men was picked out to get to go to Elko--that was around fifty miles back down there. There we would get to go to a movie and buy some coke, little candy, and walk around the streets. And it was a big town. It had a one little hotel, a service station, and movie house. Now, I understand it's a big city. But you couldn't get to go every weekend. They would let you wait about three weeks before you could go again. But, when you found out you was going to get to go, you'd save up your nickels and dimes from payday and you'd have a dollar, dollar and a half, to spend when you got to town. And we had a baseball team there, believe it or not. There was a company called Mountain City. It was north of where we were, and we went up there and played the Indians in baseball. And that town was kind of on a hill, and that baseball diamond was downhill all the way. So, we had a time chasing that rolling ball, but we had a good time playing baseball up there. And it was good worth it to play ball all the time because it was hot when we was up there. And we didn't have much other sports to play, but baseball. Sometimes, we would hike to the mountains when we wasn't doing anything, because Independence Mountain was high there, and there was snow on top of it. I have pictures of all that, too, since I was an avid photographer. But a little box camera and a few film didn't make you a photographer; I found that out.

Behind the University there, we didn't have any sports that I remember at all. But, we did have school every night. We had everything from English classes, history classes, reading and writing, and spelling. None of this high tech stuff. We had an elderly gentleman that taught most of the classes and we were required to go. After we finished our evening meal, the bell rang for us to go to school. Course it wasn't a bell; we knew to go or that big leader would remind us to go, in his harsh way, and I got into a crew there cutting signs. I told you previously that we had a lot of signs made to stick around in the park where the tourists could see them, and know which way they were going, and what they wanted to see, and stuff like that. This big 2 x 3 foot slab lay on a table. Myself and another guy cut with letters on it, to like a certain trail or the certain swimming pool. There was a big lake up there. We wasn't supposed to go swimming in it, but Sunday afternoon when everybody else was there except--was gone, or asleep, or something, a few of us would slip off up there and we would go swimming in it. We had a sign pointing toward that swimming pool, but I don't remember any sports at all we had. Now one night, well let me back up a minute here. We had school every night except Saturday night and Sunday night. But one night a week, I went to San Francisco to school, it was a Samuel Gunther's Trade School; a well know school that may be still

in San Francisco, I don't know. But anyway, when I went over there, I went to take up, he said you could take what you want to, and I took up Aviation. I didn't know that would mean my career. But anyway, he studied me how, he taught me how to shoot rivets and buck rivets, and how to cut sheet metal, and all of that metal stuff. Well, that went on for a couple of months and that's when we was getting ready to move up to Yellowstone. But as far as any sports, athletic situations, we didn't get into that.

One day they called us in and said--we was at the mess hall--and said we all going to Yellowstone. But when we got to Yellowstone, we didn't have any sports either. Trying to stay on this sports deal: we didn't have anything to play up there ball, bowling, shoot the pool, nothing. Well, every time a cloud came up and it thundered, we had something to do. And from there we could go in on Sunday afternoon, we could go downtown to Berkley, and go to a movie most any time when we was off. That was a pretty good deal, while we were there. And at Berkley, we always had good food for some reason. The food there was better than it was in any other camps, it was just--the cooks seemed to be better.

What I did was make a tape, record the tape on the tape that I have. Now, when you get this tape it is already rewound and it's ready to be recorded on your tape, that I am sending back to you. As you stated you wanted to be sure that the tape you sent would fit your machines that the park has. So, in closing I want to say this; when Mr. Tom Brokaw wrote that book, "The Greatest Generation," he left out a very, very important nine years to this country and many men it was there.

Thank you very much.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **MARTIN G. CHRISTENSEN YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

INTERVIEWED BY  
**MARY SWIER BOLHUIS,**  
VIP, YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

**JANUARY 24, 2001**  
VIA TELEPHONE

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H3

**NARRATOR:**

Martin George “Marty” Christensen was born February 27, 1917, in Cincinnati, Ohio. The son of Junius Peter and Susanna “Susie” (Martin) Christensen, Martin had one brother and five sisters and grew up in Cincinnati.

About 1934, Christensen enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). After enrollment, he was sent to Fort Knox and Louisville, Kentucky, and then boarded a Pullman train to Marysville and Dobbins, California, as part of Company #555. In 1935, the company was relocated to Yellowstone National Park, assigned to the Canyon Camp (YNP-2). In Yellowstone, Christensen fought fires.

Christensen enlisted for service in World War II on June 1, 1943. He served in the Army Air Corps, first as part of the 392<sup>nd</sup> bomb crew and then in the 14<sup>th</sup> combat wing. Stationed in England, he met and married Lillian Attewell on August 1, 1944, in East Dereham, Norfolk, England. The couple had one daughter, Carolyn.

Lillian passed away September 22, 1975, in Hamilton County, Ohio. Martin died on December 10, 2004, in Cincinnati, Ohio. Both are buried in at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Montgomery, Ohio.

**INTERVIEWER:**

Mary Swier Bolhuis is a history teacher and researcher. In 2000-2001, she took a sabbatical from her work as a high school teacher in Bozeman, Montana, to work as a Volunteer in Parks (VIP), conducting research and documentation on the story of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Yellowstone National Park as part of the Park’s Oral History Program. Mary retired from the Bozeman Senior High School in 2005. She moved to California, where she served as a teacher and department chair at Ripon Unified School District in Stockton, California. She currently teaches as an adjunct professor of history and political science at Modesto Junior College.

**Summary:**

The interview was conducted by Mary Swier Bolhuis and conducted over the telephone. Martin George “Marty” Christensen enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), serving with Company #555, stationed at the Canyon Camp (YNP-2). In his interview, Christensen recalls fighting fires, numerous incidents with bears, dating a concession employee, and operation of the camp. He also recalled his time at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and Dobbins, California as well as his service in the Army Air Corps in World War II.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** Christiansen/Martin Family Tree (including photographs and scanned documents), Ancestry.com.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 60-minute tape.

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 28 pages.

**Martin G. Christensen interviewed by Mary Swier Bolhuis  
via telephone on January 24, 2001**

Narrator: Martin Christensen (MC)

Interviewer: Mary Swier Bolhuis (MB)

MB: Recording you, I mean.

MC: If you don't like it, you can just erase it.

MB: That's right.

MC: But you can get what you want out of it, but run it through what I got.

MB: OK.

MC: And uh, then you can see what we can do with it later on.

MB: Alright that sounds good. Alright, now, are you on the first page there where it says, today is--?

MC: Yeah. Now, I haven't got everything just exactly like you have it in the thing there. You said if that disturbs you, do what you want to put in.

MB: That's right, good.

MC: But, I tried to get everything in here. But, I'll think you'll like this, if I get it out here all nice. I'll try that.

MB: Alright, well let's make sure. Yes, that sounds great. Now today is January 24. Year 2001.

MC: Yeah, I got all that.

MB: Alright now, you fill in the blanks. My name is--.

MC: I got that already.

MB: OK, now you say it.

MC: Today is January 24, 2001. My name is Marty Christensen. I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, February the 21st 1917. One brother and five sisters. Education: high school.

Now living in Pine Harbor Lane, Vero Beach, Florida.

MB: Now, how old were you when you entered the CCC?

MC: 17.

MB: And what month of the year? Do you remember?

MC: No, I'm lucky I remember the rest of this stuff. It's been a long time.

MB: Now, what year did you get into--?

MC: Well, let's see. I was just out of high school. I was 17. Let me see. Well, I can't say. If I mention that now, it's going to disturb the dates that I got in this. They would say now how in the hell did he do that when he was, you know? So, what I got here: I got born in February 1917, I entered. And later on down here I got, I entered. I'm going to put that in. I haven't got it in, I'll make it out. We can make it now and I'll throw it in as I go by.

MB: Now, do you remember what your camp number was?

MC: Well, I think, I don't remember. I think Robins' number, when we were there, was 550 and I think we kept the same.

MB: Alright. And what was the name of your camp? Was it Canyon?

MC: Canyon, Camp Canyon. There was Canyon and West Yellowstone, I think, and then, Old Faithful. And then the other one was down by the Norris Geyser Basin

MB: That's right.

MC: I guess they called that Norris Geyser Basin area. It's a--we were--they called that the Canyon area. That's how they put that in there now. The camp was all set up when we got up there; it was constructed. The washrooms, and the cafeteria, the mess hall was all constructed when we got there. The tents were already set up and I don't remember just exactly how many men were in them, I think it was four. I think I forgot. I didn't really know how to put them in there right.

MB: So, those were four man tents.

MC: I think there were four in a tent. The washrooms were of wood and concrete construction and--which they'd almost have to be, because you'd have to have the pipes covered because of the cold weather.

MB: That's right.

MC: Fact is, that's why we had to get out so early, because the pipes were all frozen; we couldn't get running water. So, that's why they moved us right away. Or, they moved us over to, I don't know, Missoula, Montana, or somewhere. I don't remember; we only stayed there a couple of weeks. Then they sent us back to Fort Knox again. We got on the--. But, it was all good. They even gave us all they gave us all Pullmans. In fact, we weren't just sitting out on the, for 24 hours.

MB: To get to Yellowstone, they gave you Pullmans?

MC: Oh, yeah. We got Pullmans all the way for five days, from Fort Knox to Dobbins, California.

MB: OK. Now, when you got to Fort Knox, how did you get there? Do you remember being recruited?

MC: No, well I was recruited in Cincinnati. At Fort Knox, they just took your name and everything and then they sent us to a barracks. And we stayed there in the barracks and they showed us where the mess hall was, and they told us what time we ate, and everything. So, we just stayed there and I think we were there about two to three days, was about all.

MB: Did you have any, did you get to pick where you were going to go? Or, did they just assign you?

MC: No. No, they told you where to go. I wanted a, first place though. A friend of mine told me: he was sent up about 150 miles from where we lived in Ohio. You know, that's not very attractive.

MB: That's right.

MC: Cause we lived there. And he said, "Some of them go to California, as far as California." I said, "Gee, I'd like to go out there." And you know, I went down, as sure as the dickens, that's where they went. But, I got so homesick, oh my god. I'd never had been away from my family.

MB: And you were young.

MC: Oh my god, I was homesick. But then, I got to knowing the fellows and everything. And, you know, going around with the fellows. Gee, I even missed it when I came home.

MB: You were homesick for the CCC?

MC: Yeah, yeah. Because I really enjoyed it. You know, they didn't kill you. We made these big, we worked these big trees; we used to fall up there. You said you lived up there. You know how it is up there.

MB: That's right.

MC: And they were building these fire trails. So the fires wouldn't jump from one area to another. These trails were about, oh I'd say, about 500 feet, 5-600 feet wide, to keep the fires from jumping.

MB: Sure, right, like a firebreak.

MC: Yes. We had to get all them down. We had, all the way down and dynamite the all roots out. We did all that, a long way. The guy that owned the ranch--it was on a ranch--and I never did see a ranch house.

MB: It was so big, maybe, it was--.

MC: It's a big area. The ranch house was maybe ten miles from there.

MB: It could've been, yeah.

MC: Probably was, because we were way back. We used be awakened in the night by the mountain lions. You'd hear them yelling, you know.

MB: Yeah. Now, when you took the train from Fort Knox to Yellowstone, you said it took five days?

MC: No. It took five days from Fort Knox, Kentucky--that's Louisville, Kentucky. Louisville, Kentucky, it took five days to go, to get to Marysville. That's where we--.

MB: Oh, to California.

MC: To California. I think it's about twenty miles east of there right?

MB: That's right. It's still there, Dobbins. Now--.

MC: Is it still the same?

MB: No. Nothing ever stays the same.

MC: Are there still a couple of little stores there?

MB: Yeah, there, yes. The downtown area of Dobbins is somewhat similar, but a lot of people have built out from Sacramento.

MC: Well, there wasn't any homes in Dobbins. Dobbins was a store. And miners all along the highway would have their cars parked. Gee, they were all brand new cars too. And they used bring that up to this place, and just a first as you come into Dobbins. It wasn't much of a town. You couldn't call it a town because it was only about 4-, 7-, or 800 feet long.

MB: Yeah, just a village.

MC: Then the next building was a saloon. All that was there. They had barrels right on the counter. It was wine. Who in the hell wants to sit and drink wine? You know, I'd like to drink a glass of beer. Anyway, there was nothing there to attract you, you know.

MB: Sure. But, that was kinda at the edge of the California wine country, too. So, you know--probably even--.

MC: Yeah, there's a lot of history. I don't know, I think I mentioned to you, about years ago the old timers told us that they--all their spruce boxes up there--they'd get their gold and give it to this priest. We used to come up there and hear mass. All these little homes up there, little areas up there. And uh, they would always save their money. They'd take it to town, to Marysville, and give it to this priest, because nobody would rob him.

MB: He was trustworthy.

MC: Oh yeah. Well, nobody would rob a priest.

MB: No. Yes, that's right.

MC: That's the reason they did it, I'd imagine.

MB: Yeah, I'm sure.

MC: That's the story, anyway.

MB: Now, when you left Marysville, did you take the train up to Yellowstone?

MC: Yeah.

MB: Do you remember the night you arrived? Or, the day you arrived in Yellowstone?

MC: No. It was in May.

MB: It was in May of 1935?

MC: Yes.

MB: OK. Now, you've kind of told me a little bit of what your tent camp looked like. Most of the buildings, however, like the mess hall? Those were permanent buildings?

MC: That's what I just got through telling you, they were concrete and wood construction. The cafeteria and the washroom would have to be because--.

MB: Of the cold, that's right.

MC: They couldn't keep, they had to have running water to take showers and all that.

MB: Was there a hospital there?

MC: No. We had a doctor. We had a, I don't know what you'd call it, it was a small room there. He'd take guys there for first aid. That's why I, that's--we had to take a guy there who was attacked by a grizzly there. Yeah. And we got him in here and then they—oh, he was bad. I just looked in; opened the door and looked at him. His whole back was, all the skin was off of it. He went for a tree, that's the first thing. That's one thing they should never do in Yellowstone Park is: never go into an area by yourself.

MB: That's right.

MC: Because this guy, he parked his car and went in there. Nobody knew he was in there. And hell, when he was in there, a grizzly. Hell, that's normal.

MB: Yes, it is. The bear is acting as bears do.

MC: That's right. Course what we did, we trap them. We would set a trap for them, if we seen one back there. We'd get them grizzlies and drive him to the top of the mountain and let him loose.

MB: Sure, yeah.

MC: That was the normal thing to do. That's what the rangers did. We worked with the rangers. There's times when the bears don't even bother you, unless they are just coming out of hibernation.

MB: That's right, and they have cubs.

MC: They are hungry. You know, they haven't eaten anything for months. They go down the Yellowstone River. You outta see them fish down there. They go down there and grab them fish out of the water.

MB: Do you remember seeing that?

MC: Oh, sure. They stand there on the edge and watch. They look in there. Then they'll see, a lot of times, there will be a bunch of fish. Other times, there's just one or two of them, but they are mostly trout was in there. And that's good fish.

MB: That's right.

MC: They'd stand there and, all of a sudden, you'd see the paw go in there, and take it out, and put it in his mouth, and walk up on the bank.

MB: Yep. Now, you said that you worked with rangers from the park?

MC: Yeah, I didn't myself, but my friends did. They worked with the rangers. I don't go for this high stuff, but--unless I get something out of it. We had a big tower there and we used to, we always had a lookout man up there to look and spot fires from it. We could spot a fire a hundred miles away up there

MB: Do you, could you?

MC: It was high. I didn't do that.

MB: where was this tower at, from where you were staying at Canyon?

MC: It was a little bit away from the Canyon area. It wasn't too far away. It was just a day's work. The ranger station was close there, in the Canyon area. Right by the, it wasn't right by the camp. It was in that area, where you could drive to it, or walk to it.

MB: Ok. You know when people from the park, like rangers or backcountry people, worked with the CCC. How many of them were there? Were there a lot of park people that worked with the CCC? Or, not too many?

MC: No. We had some. They weren't rangers. They were just civilian men. They were people that lived in, like, West Yellowstone. And most of them were older people. This one guy was a worker. He was in his 80's, I think, but he was a hell of a worker. And he told me, he pointed, "Marty," he says, "See that mountain right there? That's full of gold. But you can't touch it." You know, he lives there and he knows that. He said, "What the hell. Why don't you go and get some of it." He says, "Oh, you can't dare do that. Rangers catch you over there trying, oh hell, you." He said there was so much in it, you could go over and dig around it, and get gold.

MB: Did you believe him?

MC: Why, sure. In California, up there in that Dobbins area, there was a lot of gold up there.

MB: Yes, that was California gold country.

MC: This old guy, he was telling me the truth. I know he was.

MB: Sure.

MC: He was a good worker.

MB: And he'd lived there all his life.

MC: He told me that. "My gosh," I says, "Why don't the government get it?" He said, "They won't do, that's a park." People wanted to see this. "But it's full," he said. "It's a solid streak in there, probably worth millions of dollars." He pointed to the mountain. I don't remember just what mountain it was.

MB: Could you see that mountain from Canyon?

MC: Oh, sure. It was right in the Canyon area. He pointed it to me. I don't know which one it was, though. Well, we were out in the area. I don't know where we were working, but we went out there several times. When I was in Dobbins, we had local men working with us, too.

MB: Sure.

MC: They were mostly Indians. This fellow, he had it in his mind, while he was working with us--and hell, they, back in those days, those guys. Well, we were getting \$30 a month, I think. And I imagine those guys were getting about, not much more. Not much more. Now, this guy, he lived right in that area. He was raised up there and he used to trap, I don't know what he did, but he hit a vein. It was worth millions of dollars, what he hit.

MB: Can I ask you something about what you did, besides build fire lanes? Or fire lines? Do you remember doing other jobs besides working on the fire lines?

MC: I was just wondering. There's a, we could have--. I--that's pretty far back to remember.

MB: I know.

MC: There's some trails up there, some walking trails in the foothills. See, this was in the foothills of the Sierras. You could look over and see the snowcaps.

MB: Right. Now, how about when you were in Yellowstone? Around Canyon, did you build any trails there?

MC: Oh, yeah. We worked--well, we didn't build them. When we went up there, at first they were all full of snow.

MB: Yep, because in May. It was melting, yep.

MC: Oh, yeah. We had to clean all the snow off of them. And then, of course, the snow had a lot of weight on them, and we had to repair them. We repaired all the way to the top of the highway, down to the bottom of the Yellowstone River. And there's a lot of trails, and that kept us busy. And course, we had fires. We got pawnd out to some of them were short, you know. I was on a couple of them. Everything was fascinating, because I never did any of that before.

MB: Now, it--.

MC: I got it down this one. I was going to put it on this tape. They don't tell you, recruit you. They call all the men together. They say, "Now, we got a fire here in Yellowstone. Now, we want volunteers. You'll get a day off, two days off, for every day you go. Now, do you want to go?" If you want to, you don't have to; it's not like war. So hell, I went to both of them. I fought on two of them. Hell, you come back and you get a week off, you know. Over in Montana, I got a week off for that one.

MB: Was that the one that was up near the Canadian border?

MC: Yes, it was a long ways. It was 36,000 acres. It went all the way. It was a good part of Yellowstone it was in. It went all the way, because I put down here, it was started in the early part of July, and we got called on it the middle of August. Now, it was going all that time, just getting bigger and spreading and spreading. But, as many fires as we had, we had nothing like this, like we had this last summer. Do you remember reading about all those fires putting out there?

MB: We were right in the middle of them, Marty.

MC: Oh my god, it was terrible.

MB: Yeah.

MC: Worst in history.

MB: Yeah, it was bad.

MC: There was thousands, thousands--actually millions--of acres of land between California and Canada. All the way up to Idaho, to Yellowstone. See, Yellowstone takes in Idaho, Wyoming and Montana.

MB: Just Montana and Wyoming. Not Idaho.

MC: I thought Idaho, too.

MB: Nope--just Montana and Wyoming. It's kind of a square, Yellowstone Park is. [The interviewer is wrong. Yellowstone Park includes a small portion of Idaho.]

MC: Because I thought Pocatello was part of--.

MB: Oh now, yes. You were part of the Pocatello District?

MC: Yeah

MB: That's right. But Yellowstone Park is just in two states. But you worked under the Pocatello District. That Idaho district is where your CCC camp was administered from.

MC: Yeah, that's what I thought. I knew there was associated in some way. I thought part of it was in Idaho.

MB: Now, tell me--.

MC: Just Montana

MB: Yes, that's right. Now, if I asked you what you liked best about working in the Cs, what would you say?

MC: Well, depends on what location. You mean in Yellowstone?

MB: In Yellowstone. What did you like best about working for the CCC in Yellowstone?

MC: In Yellowstone, I liked—well, I didn't work with the rangers. I think I would've liked that best if I did. But, I just--we did different jobs. I can't remember all of them, but the trails was the main. There's a lot of trails.

MB: Did you like being outside?

MC: Oh, yeah.

MB: Were you an outdoor guy?

MC: Oh, yeah. I lived right across from the golf course in Cincinnati, when I was there. I used to go over there and caddy all the time. Then, I grew up there. Then, I got into some tournaments. I started playing golf when I was about 12. Then, I got in tournaments. They entered me in the Greater Metropolitan Open, in Cincinnati, when I was in high school. And I was always on the outside.

MB: Yeah, now if you had to tell me what you liked least about working in Yellowstone, what would you say?

MC: Well, that'd be a hard question, because there wasn't anything that I dislike.

MB: You liked, you just liked everything they asked you to do.

MC: Well, I did. All nice people, the rangers. You had to do what they told you, if you worked with them. This guy--I'll never forget this--they brought this one in, you know. I don't remember whether he was the one they brought in. They grabbed this guy, this one guy. I don't know if he lived or not, but they just, they just trapped him. They just went and trapped him right way. They brought him there. This guy, this ranger, said that these guys were--they are like a big barrel, these traps are, like a big cast iron barn. And they got a big gate on the front of them. And then they have these things, they put these baits in the back of it. They go

in there, and they hit that bait, that food, that's got the sweet stuff on it. It shuts the big iron gates like a jail.

MB: There they are in that big--.

MC: It drops, see. Well, there's enough room in there so he can turn around, but he can't get out. So, he was mad. And before they brought him down, before they brought him up by the station, you know, where we lived down there--. And the ranger said, "Take that skillet there and get some water in it, and slip it in under the gate there. And this bear probably needs some water." This gate was about 20 inches wide. One of them big ones, the ones they use when they are out. He slipped that thing under there. It scared him half to death. He saw that bear pick up his paw and lift that thing up and broke it right in half. One half of it flew out of the bottom of the trap, the other half stayed back in. And my god, he jumped back twenty feet.

MB: That bear was mad.

MC: Yeah, he was mad. When it went out the cage, it slipped right by him. It could've hit him and killed him probably.

MB: Yeah. Oh boy now, one time you told me a story about a bear in a cabin.

MC: I wrote that down.

MB: Can you tell me that now? Tell me about that bear in the cabin with that woman.

MC: I like to take walks. I guess it was probably one of my days off from fires, because otherwise I'd be working. It was strange. I like to walk down to the General Store there, go down with the guys and buy stuff. I heard a scream. There were about ten cabins on each side, and an office, and the cafeteria was up there, too. And I heard a scream as I was passing there. And just as I heard the scream, I looked up and I seen this woman running out of the cabin and a bear--she was running out the door and the bear jumping out the window at the same time. I had to laugh. I was going to run up and help here, but people came out of the other cabins. What happened is, what I think happened, she was out, shopping or something. And she came home, and to go into her cabin, and she walks in and there's a bear there. And I guess, she came running out screaming, and the poor bear was as scared as she was. The bear jumped out the window.

MB: Now, tell me about that box of candy, on the--.

MC: Yeah. That's well, see, back in the 30's they used to--. A lot of the cars, the back on all the way back down to the floor, I guess, they had them like that, but they had a canvas top instead of steel. Not a convertible; not that kind of canvas, it's a thick canvas. About an inch thick, you know.

MB: On trucks and things, too? Or, just cars?

MC: Just like the canvas they throw on trucks. Truck has a canvas to cover the material they are hauling.

MB: Right, like a tarp.

MC: But this canvas was like, it's probably cotton in the middle of it. You know, it's probably about an inch and half thick. They had to have something to, you know, the water would get you, the rain and everything. That'd be tough on the top. It's a real tough canvas on top; course underneath is just like the cars today. Like that. But, this bear--I guess one of the kids they had was eating a box of candy, and she left it when they went out, on the backseat. And the bear, the bear went right after they're out. They were gone; comes right up on top and tears the whole top apart. Went right on down and got that candy.

MB: He had good taste.

MC: That actually happened. It funny, I told you about that dog.

MB: Yeah, tell me about it again.

MC: Well, I think this was at Norris Geyser Basin. I was told this, like the other things. This guy came in. He had this police dog, a Rottweiler. How it got through the gate, I don't know. But anyway, he had this police dog and he wanted to get out and walk around at the Norris Geyser Basin. So, he left his window open about three to four inches, so the dog could get air and he was sitting in the back seat. Well this bear, of course, was moseying along like everything normal for a bear to do and that dog, I guess, was probably barking at him. So, he came up to the car to investigate the barking, I'd guess. The bear, it was a normal thing to do. So, it was only four inches, and I guess the dog stuck his nose out or his head out to, you know, bark at the thing. And the bear grabbed him by the head and pulled him all the way out, ripped his body. The fur and everything right off his, the guy came back and his dog is laying there with his half of his body skinned off. Gee, that was terrible. That was told to me by one of the guys down there, but that did happen.

MB: Oh boy, yeah. Now, when we talked a couple of weeks ago you told me about crossing a bridge at Canyon and running into a mother bear.

MC: There's a bridge going across there, isn't there?

MB: Yeah.

MC: That's what I remember seeing. But, I used to walk up there nearly every night. See, we always used to go, three or four of us at a time. We didn't, you know, go by ourselves. But this one time, nobody seemed to want to go up. And I, well, I'll go by myself. So, I started walking up there--you go around this corner there, it's a pretty steep jump down there to the canyon. And I walked over. And I seen this bear and she had five cubs. She was right in the middle of the street. So, I figured I'd go up the side of the mountain side, see. Just walked by her then and drop off. So, just as I walked by her, I looked out of the corner of my eye and she made a dash for me. Scared the hell out of me. I started running and I kept running, because I thought she was right behind me.

MB: Was she?

MC: No. Well, I got to the bridge and looked around. I'm all winded out and she must of only ran about twenty-five feet. Which that's a normal thing, she wouldn't leave her cubs. So, I

didn't even think of that, all I thought of was to run. And I ran and she ran, about twenty-five feet.

MB: She had wanted to get rid of you.

MC: Yes.

MB: That was the point.

MC: Yes. And another thing, she didn't want to leave her cubs. Because she wouldn't leave the cubs by themselves.

MB: Five cubs?

MC: Well, I think maybe it was more, but at least five of them. They're really cute. I'd seen them before, but never got close to them. They say that mother will attack you.

MB: Oh, yes, she will. They are good mothers.

MC: Yeah, can't blame them.

MB: No, you can't.

MC: They're the cutest thing. You know, the mother bear can't go up a tree. Those things go up like a squirrel.

MB: Yeah, they do. Now, when you said that bridge? Was that the same bridge where you spooked that moose?

MC: Yes.

MB: Now, tell me about that?

MC: Well, I was coming off of the bridge right in that same area; that same area. And I stayed a little--maybe it was that same night--but I stayed by. A little late because it was getting dark; in fact, it was dark. I wouldn't do that now. But anyway, it made the loudest noise when it jumped. The moose was about the size of a large horse, you know. That thing jumped up. I guess, it was only off the road about two, about three feet. He jumped right alongside of me. Oh my god, did I get scared. That scared him, too, you know.

MB: So, he didn't act like he was going to attack you?

MC: No, oh no. He just jumped and ran, you know. They don't attack

MB: Do you remember if it was a bull moose?

MC: No, it was too dark. In fact, all I could see was the figure. It was right alongside of me and it was the size of a horse. It would have to be a moose.

MB: Did you ever get close enough to any wild animals to touch them?

MC: I touched bears.

MB: You did?

MC: Yeah.

MB: Those little guys.

MC: Yeah. I touched them, petted them, you know, like a dog. They--it didn't bother them. But, I bet if you just stood there and pet them, I bet they'd try and snap at you, probably. There not harmful. The cinnamon bears and black bears aren't harmful. But, the only time that they'll attack you, they might if you had something sweet on you. Or, when they come out of hibernation. When they're hungry. Otherwise, they won't attack you, they're harmless.

MB: They are not the same as grizzly, that's for sure.

MC: Grizzlies got the hump in the back.

MB: Yep, that's right.

MC: Tell me, grizzly--.

MB: And kind of a dished out face.

MC: They used to, they had a feeding ground up there; all the hotel, all the waste. And they built this, a big--it looked like a baseball area where the batter is, you know? That big screen like in the back? They built one of them around that so the people, the tourists, could drive their cars up on one side, on the side with fence on each side.

MB: Interesting.

MC: And then they had guards on there. These trucks would come from the hotel and back in there. And they used to do that once a week, or a couple times. They called it the bear feeding ground.

MB: Now, this was at Canyon?

MC: Yes, at Canyon, too. I used to walk up there and watch. Walk--.

MB: How many bears would come there do you think?

MC: Oh god, I watched, I don't know how many. They'd fight. You know, over the food. I don't know whether they still do that? They probably still do that.

MB: No. They've, well, there's been--you know, Marty, that's a real controversy in the park. I remember when I first moved here, they had places to feed the bears. But, those things are all gone now. They are really--they're really making a concerted effort to return bears back to the wild; and discouraging people strongly from feeding bears.

MC: Well, this didn't have nothing to do with people feeding. The people, this was a big wall about ten to fifteen feet high. And it was all the way around and it had two men with 30-30 rifles on each side. So, they couldn't, people could come in and sit down. You could watch it. It was like a baseball.

MB: Yeah, I can picture it.

MC: The bears came through there. The only way you'd have to come around was 100 feet down, or a couple hundred feet around and then come around. Like going out to the baseball fields to the bleachers. Not the bleachers, but the seats in the baseball stadium. They were big, high, strong fences that bears wouldn't get through.

MB: Bear proof.

MC: And these, there were two or three or four men. And every time the trucks went in there'd be two on each side. If that bear dare made a move, it'd be dead. So, it was interesting and the poor bears got something to eat. See, it was a bear feeding ground. Funny thing, you never heard anything about it, because that was a popular thing.

MB: Do you remember any other animals besides moose and bear?

MC: Sure. That bear feeding ground, everything came in there.

MB: Like, what's everything?

MC: Fox, bear, some deer came in there. The deer were sort of backward; they don't like to be around you.

MB: Elk?

MC: Deer, they'd come down. There were mostly bears and coyotes.

MB: Elk, did you ever see elk down there?

MC: Oh, I saw all kinds. I used to, bears would fight, you know. They'd get over something and they'd stand up like human beings. They would be knocking the hell out of one, you know. The guards would stand there and watching them. Boy, they'd make one move they'd be gone. There was a guy there, I was talking to, standing where the tourists--. He told me that he did some hunting in Africa, wild game hunting. He had said, he told me, "I'd rather tackle one of them in Africa, because I wouldn't want one of them grizzly bears." He says, "That's how bad they are."

MB: They're that fierce.

MC: That's what he told me. He actually told me that, stood right alongside of me. I didn't know the man, but he was telling the truth because you could see, you know. He told me that, he said they're mean

MB: Yea, they're fierce.

MC: It would take at least a 30-30 to bring them down.

MB: Can I ask you about what life was like every day during the CCC time there? Can you maybe tell me a little bit about, do you have any memories about food? What was the food like in the mess hall?

MC: It was good. It was good.

MB: Were you there over any holidays?

MC: Pardon?

MB: Were you there during any holidays?

MC: During the holidays?

MC: Oh, yeah.

MB: What kind, do you have any memory of special meals that they prepared for you because of the holidays?

MC: No, but I'm quite sure they did.

MB: OK.

MC: Like at Thanksgiving usually, they did the same thing like in the Army. They had a, our CO was not a Captain. And the funniest thing, since you mention that: the other one who was our boss, we had a Lieutenant, who was a doctor. We had a, we had a First Sergeant who was regular Army Sergeant. And they were all real nice people. But now it was these same personnel, they moved from California along with us. They came right with us up there.

MB: They were part of the 550th?

MC: I think it was either 50 or 550, I can't remember. But, it seems like it was 550-camp 550—and well anyway, the bears up there used to get around the kitchen there and used to give them a fit, because they'd come and get in their garbage; get it all up set and splattered all around. But this doctor, this lieutenant, he put a real mild shock to the cans.

MB: That'd teach the poor bear.

MC: Well, if he touched it, it shook him, and he wouldn't fool around with it. That took care of that. In fact, this one guy he was a doctor, a company doctor. I think he was a First Sergeant. He was a pretty strict guy. He was a likeable guy, if he liked you. And then we had some, me and another guy--he was a real tough monkey--was in charge of, he hadn't had any education. The one in California, he came to me one time. I couldn't see him coming up and talking real soft. But, he came up to me and he asked me he says, "Marty, would you write a letter for me?" And I says, "Write a letter for you?" "Course," I said. This guy was about thirty years old, you know; thirty-five, I'd guess. And he's a big husky man, you know. And I says, "Why, sure. Why don't you do it yourself?" He looked down and he says, "I can't." He says, "I get letters and I'd appreciate it if you'd read them for me." So, that happened in

California. This guy lived in California; he didn't come to Yellowstone. But the doctor, he was the one that did. But this other one, he was a First Sergeant, he went to Yellowstone. He was real fine. But anyway, when World War II started, I was working in a, before I went in, before I went down and enlisted in the Air Force, I did mention that didn't I? But anyway, he came to look me up and he was an officer there. I don't know whether he came with a company and wanted me to go with him, check in and enlist, or what. He didn't live anywhere in the area where I lived in. I think he lived in maybe Cleveland. But he was the nicest guy. I thought it was awful nice of him to, I think he was just visiting--he was probably in Cincinnati and he was just visiting.

MB: But, he stayed in touch with some of the men that he had worked with, didn't he?

MC: Yeah, that's what he was doing. Trying to get in touch with the men he worked with. I just wondered about him, I guess. The poor guy, I guess. See, I was only seventeen and you figure back in 1935, I was seventeen and a lot of them guys were in their thirties. I'm sure they're not around. He wasn't any youngster, you know. He was intelligent; you know, a very intelligent guy.

MB: Can I ask you to tell me again, about the kind of entertainment that they would have at Canyon? Right at the very beginning you were telling me about the different groups of people that would come, and you said that you would go in the evenings to listen.

MC: The entertain, that was at the hotel. Well, they had that. I don't know, it was maybe twice a week, at least. They had entertainment at the, they had good music. They were all professionals. They don't, don't they have that anymore?

MB: No, now they hire college students that play instruments. Or, you know, a lot of the kids that work there during the summer also entertain in the evenings. But they are not professional entertainers.

MC: Well, maybe that was them doing that then.

MB: Well, it could have been. Now, what was the name of the--?

MC: Now, I used to date one girl that worked up there.

MB: At the hotel?

MC: Yeah. When you go in there, especially for the women, you know. You have to holler, "Man in the Hall."

MB: Man in the hall. Yeah, that's right.

MC: I used to hate that, you know. Walk in there to see her, you know, and she'd say "Who do you want to see?" You'd have to holler that. Then she'd come back out, you know.

MB: Now, in the beginning you told me there was a very famous lawyer who came to Canyon.

MC: That was, we was just talking about that.

MB: Yes, now what was his name?

MC: You mentioned it, I can't remember.

MB: It was Clarence Darrell.

MC: Oh, yeah.

MB: Do you remember any other famous people that were there?

MC: No. I don't know. There was people coming, but I don't remember. People, other people, would tell me they saw them up there. I think a lot of Hollywood people came up there, too. Probably some of those people there--.

MB: Did you ever make a trip out of Canyon, to a nearby town?

MC: No, there was nothing, besides it was too remote, wasn't it? They had everything right there.

MB: Sure. Did you play sports? Were you an athlete? They didn't golf at Canyon did they? Or, did they?

MC: Pardon?

MB: Did they golf at Canyon? Did you play any?

MC: We had no golf course.

MB: Did you play any other sports there?

MC: I, not in Yellowstone, but I played golf. I've been playing since I was ten years old.

MB: But, when you were at Camp Canyon, you didn't.

MC: No, there wasn't any golf courses around at Yellowstone.

MB: Any other sports that you played?

MC: Yeah, I played baseball.

MB: And you had a baseball diamond at Camp Canyon?

MC: No, we didn't have anything like that there. We didn't have the room for it. We had a large area for the camp. Really, we didn't have too many men. It wasn't like an Army post. Very small, I think the tents housed four guys, I think it was four. I was coming home on night. This was right after, not too long after, we were there. See, I think it was four in a tent. And I came in one time, I came back in, and it was dark. And I looked in. There were, they were all in bed. I don't know what I was doing up that late. But, I came in, because they were all in bed everything was dark. I seen this thing in front of his, this friend of mine's bed across there. And I said, "My god, there's a bear laying there." It was about the size of a bear.

So, I said, "God Almighty, I'm not going in there."

MB: This was in the tent?

MC: Yeah, in the tent. So, I didn't know what the hell to do. I wanted to go to bed. It was only about 8 o'clock. So, I went out. I walked up and down. I found this guy; he had a flashlight. He said, "Well, let's go down and see what we can do about it." So, we came down. The guy had his footlocker pulled out. He had it pulled out and didn't bring it back. Put it alongside his bed.

MB: But, it spooked you.

MC: From there, you know, I--but he had it there. He did this after I left, and instead of putting it back when he went to bed, he just left it there. It was about the size of a bear.

MB: Looked like a big bear.

MC: I didn't want to walk in there, if a bear was in there.

MB: Did you ever earn any awards or any citations? Did they do that in the CCC's?

MC: No, no.

MB: You know, the military did that a lot.

MC: When I was in the Air Force in France—no, it was in England. We had, I went over with the 392nd bomb crew. And I ended up, I went from the 392<sup>nd</sup> to the 14th combat wing. It was a wing that took care of the three groups. Two of them was 44<sup>th</sup> and 392<sup>nd</sup>, and the second air division. So, they wanted, they started, this 14th combat wing, which was in charge of these, or had to give out all the orders and everything. I worked with this General. They wanted me to work there. So, well before I left the 392<sup>nd</sup>, the 44<sup>th</sup> went on that raid in Romania.

MB: Ploiesti, Ploiesti Oil Raid.

MC: They went on that raid. And this General I worked for in the 14<sup>th</sup> wing, led that when he was a Colonel. He was with the 44<sup>th</sup>. Then, I had, when Germany gave up, I was associated. They had to break up 14<sup>th</sup> combat wing, so I had to be back in the 44<sup>th</sup>. So, when the 44<sup>th</sup> was in there, they did get a citation. Now, they gave the General the Congressional Medal of Honor. He was the one that led the raid. The 392<sup>nd</sup> division.

MB: That's quite a story.

MC: So, we got the whole group, 44<sup>th</sup> got five battle stars, so I got five battle stars.

MB: Wow. What did you do in the Airforce? What was your job?

MC: Well, that's what I did, I worked between the war room. Between, we had to use teletype because that's the only way communications couldn't be tapped in. We used teletype. So, I used a teletype room, set up right there in the war room. And I would get all the messages from the general and send them out. He would get them from the second division, then I'd, he

give them to me and all the generals would get around wondering what do with it. They'd give it to me and then I'd send it on out to these groups. See, and where the target was, and then, in the afternoon when they'd come back, they'd have to put what they did see. I'd have to put this out, see. After the battle, see what the results were. That was my job, but then like on D-Day, I had two guys behind me with machine guns. Nobody to get in the room.

MB: Really?

MC: Yeah. That's, you know, D-Day when they sent all the--.

MB: Yes, I do.

MC: That was really tight.

MB: That was. That made it because it was so top secret and classified. The whole operation depended on it staying classified.

MC: Yeah, it did. Nobody could get on the ground. They wouldn't let anybody. But, I look back at those days, and I now I see all this television now, and I can just see myself there.

MB: There's been such a wave of good World War II history written, and a lot of great programming on television, some good films in the theaters about what happened fifty to sixty years ago.

MC: Yeah, a big part of that, it's all true.

MB: Sure.

MC: They got a lot of the pictures now. Eisenhower had these guys down there in south Florida training for months. Nobody knew about it. He had thousands of them down there. They, those fellows, were recruited just for that.

MB: Yes, they were. Just what did they call them? Special Forces, in those days.

MC: Oh, they were tough. We lost on the first sweep. We sent planes over, our planes were all in it, but they took a beating at the first landing. That was awful. I think they lost about 10,000.

MB: It was high, high casualty rates.

MC: About 10,000 the first day.

MB: But, Eisenhower knew that going in; he knew it was going to be terrible.

MC: They knew that, too; all of them. These fellows knew that, they trained for that, for months. They knew what they were getting into. You know, they knew what they were getting into. They wouldn't just send them out, they made sure they did it at the right time and everything. They did catch them, they caught a lot of the Germans, off guard. The reason, I find out now, course I didn't know it then, but from what I see on television and in the movies they were off guard.

MB: Yeah, they were. They were not expecting us that day.

MC: But we did send paratroopers. The paratroopers they landed behind them the line. Well, couldn't be behind the line, there was no line then, before the ships go in there.

MB: That was the 82<sup>nd</sup>.

MC: There was two of them.

MB: And the 101<sup>st</sup>.

MC: That's right, both of them. I had a good friend of mine that was an officer. Then I had another one, he was in the other barrack there. He was a jumper; he jumped and got captured by a bunch of German people. When he landed in a parachute, they come around and captured him.

MB: A lot of those paratroopers were captured that first day.

MC: Yeah, well, they didn't know. A lot of that stuff, it didn't go the way they thought it was going to. Like these gliders, they brought these gliders in and I flew over there. I had a flight over and I saw all those gliders laying there, hell burned and everything else. They weren't too lucky with those gliders.

MB: No, the gliders had a real bad track record that day.

MC: Yep. We flew over. I took pictures. I didn't go over any combat flights, but I went over on reconnaissance and we took pictures--I didn't, but I went with. But we flew, we came over the English Channel, we came over through Belgium. And that's where they had these, they thought the war was over. That's when the Germans came in the Bulge, they called that. They lost more men in the Battle of Bulge than they did in Gettysburg.

MB: Oh, I do know that.

MC: That's the Battle of Bulge. They lost more men than they did at the battle of Gettysburg. Gettysburg they lost a hell of a lot of men.

MB: That's right. We really had let our guard down. We thought we were rolling to Berlin and what Hitler was doing was gearing up for this major offensive.

MC: Yep. They thought it was over, but boy, you know, they just came in like that. You never know what you're going to come up. They tried, but at the last thing--.

MB: Yeah. War is about two sides and one is going to win and one is going to lose. Well, I would like to ask you this: do you think that there were any skills that you learned while you were in Yellowstone Park that helped you in your professional life? In your growing up years? When you were in your twenties and thirties and forties and out in the workforce, were there things that you learned in the CCCs that stood you in good stead the rest of your life?

MC: Since you asked me that, there's a fellow a friend of mine that he was a, he was from Wyoming or Montana. And he wanted me to come back, you know, come back. He said I'd like it and everything. I told my mother and she said, "I don't think you should go back." Then anyway, he was such a nice guy. He was a great hire. He could fish; boy, he was an outdoorsman. He wanted me to come back and he said, "I'll make sure you get a job and everything." "Oh," I said, "I'll think about it." I always had to ask my Momma.

MB: Hey, nothing wrong with that.

MC: Years before--.

MB: What, you know when you look back on your time in Yellowstone, what memories do you have of friends you made.

MC: Well, I had a, I tell you what, I wasn't much of a romance guy, but that girl I met up there was one of the nicest. I thought she would have been a wife of mine, but I never had a chance to get out and see her. She was just going to school there, she was from California. She was, at the time, I think it was the University of Southern California. The one in Los Angeles.

MB: Yeah, UCLA.

MC: UCLA. She was a genuine and I liked her. I really got along with her. But, I lost track of her. Aand then after I got out of, then that guy wanted me to come back to Yellowstone; to move out there. Then, the war came along, and everything and I didn't get a chance. I don't know if I, is there a place called Worland, Wyoming?

MB: Yes.

MB: Just a second. OK, here we go again. My tape ran out, so I had to turn it over.

MB: If you had to say what you learned from being in the CCC, what would you say you learned?

MC: Well, association for one thing. With other people, and learning their habits and learning what they like other than what you like. Things like that, it's educational. It is, it's not exactly like the Army. The Army was a different thing. You are under restrictions, so much restrictions in the Army, where the CCCs wasn't like that. And you had a couple of officers and they'd treat you fine. If you didn't, that's why it was popular. I never met a fellow yet that didn't like the CCCs.

MB: Me either, and I have met a bunch of you. And every one of you say we had such a good time.

MC: Yeah, everybody got along with one another. You didn't see fights and all that stuff like that. Very seldom see anything like that and yet, it was just, you were together all the time. And like I say, even on that train ride, we were five days on that train. I never forget that. You know, they'd take and pick you at random. They'll go through the car and pick three, four guys for KP [kitchen patrol]. I happened to be the one they picked, you know. They'll say, "Marty, you and you, Bill, come on now back to work." Each guy would take their turn. I

think that's the way to do it. That way you got the job. Boy, this train was flying over the desert. I think it was one of these garbage type pans. I guess it was three or four foot high. Then, he had a big table there and he had a big box of bread. There must have been a hundred--oh I doubt it--maybe twenty-five, thirty loaves in it. And he said, "Now, slice all them." And that took me two hours to slice all that; it musta been thirty-five loaves or something. The train was going back and forth and back and forth. I got this big knife and trying to slice that. It didn't bother me though. I was looking out the half door, it was like a boxcar. It was the cafeteria, the place where they arranged all the food, you know.

MB: Sure, the kitchen.

MC: Yeah, the kitchen, sort of built on a boxcar.

MB: And then it must have been right next to the dining car.

MC: Yeah, it was a regular Pullman place. But, we didn't have any place, but like the ones they have now; they have a place you can go in and get a drink. They didn't have that on them. But, they had comfortable sleeping. We had the only all the, what do they call them, the guys that come up and put the stools on the thing and get you upstairs, at night time. They'd pull your bags out, the porters, I guess.

MB: The porters, yeah.

MC: Yeah and we had all that porter service and everything, you know, just like a--.

MB: A regular train.

MC: Yeah and all that comfort. And then, when we went under the high bridge over highway 50--it's the highest bridge in the word--it's over the they call that, Royal Gorge.

MB: Royal, that's right.

MC: Royal Gorge. The train tracks along there, I think that's the that river, there .

MB: Is that in Utah?

MC: No, this was in Canyon, in Colorado.

MB: So, it had to be the Colorado River?

MC: Yeah, that's what I'm trying to think of, the Colorado River. Now, the train stopped right under this bridge, and let everybody get out and see it--that was nice of them. To do that. We got out and that bridge looked like, about I'd say, about three inches to your eye, it looks about three inches wide. That's how high that thing is, that's how high that thing was.

MB: Yeah, and you went right across it?

MC: No, we were underneath it, right along the Colorado River. The train tracks are down in the bottom. And the guy stopped the train down there so we could look up at it.

MB: So you could look up at it, ok.

MC: They don't have no trains go over the bridge. No, that's an expensive bridge, and boy that is high. I don't think they'd try with a train.

MB: It was just for cars?

MC: Pardon?

MB: It was for cars? For car travel? The bridge was the bridge was for--.

MC: Just for cars, no railway. But the railroad was down there. It was such a nice view down there, it was beautiful down there. Later on, we took, my wife and I, took a trip out there. But, we didn't go over the bridge, we went through the gorge. On that highway, but I would never do that again. Boy, the big drops, you know, you only got a rail about two, three feet high on each side. If you go off of it. And we stopped at a, I guess it was a motel or something, after we got through. And boy, it was terrible. We were starved when we got there. And, oh god, it was terrible. I talked to one guy there, "What would happen if you went off there?" "That's it," he said, "that's all."

MB: They pick you up in the spring.

MC: Yeah, they can't get down there, that's a big drop.

MB: Now speaking of trips, have you ever been back to Yellowstone?

MC: No, but I often wanted to do. I was back in places. I showed my wife, you know, and daughter, what it was like. Yellowstone, you know, closest I could show them it was like Yellowstone was like Utah. I showed them places in Utah. And in fact, we didn't get to Montana or Wyoming at all. That's the prettiest part of the west.

MB: Well, I'm kind of prejudiced. I think so. I don't think we live in any prettier place. There's no other place that I like as well.

MC: That's Yellowstone. It's one of the prettiest places I've ever been.

MB: It's just magical.

MC: Everything is natural. It's just like another world up there.

MB: That's right. Ok now, let's think about everything we've talked about. Is there something that needs to be recorded that I didn't ask you about?

MC: Do you want me to read you this what I got you here? I got this typed, what I wrote out here. I got this if you want me to read it.

MB: You do that.

MC: Alright, I got on the top here. Let me put my glasses on. Today is the 12th of January. No, today is January the 24th, year 2000. My name is Martin Christensen. I was born in

Cincinnati, Ohio, February the 27th, 1917. I have one brother and five sisters. Education: high school to college. Now living at 26 Pine Arbor Lane, Vero Beach, Florida. I found out about the CCCs from a friend of mine, and I went down right away. With my mother's consent and went down and enlisted. So, we got on the Pullman trains in Cincinnati and we went to Fort Knox, Kentucky. Stayed in Fort Knox, we stayed a few days in Fort Knox, Kentucky. Then, we went to 550 camp, Indiana Ranch, Dobbins, California. For four months we were there. Then, West Yellowstone National, or Yellowstone National Park. Arrived in Yellowstone in May. There was about five foot of snow on each side of the highway. And we got to the camp, the camp we went to was a tent type area. It was all constructed, the mess hall, and the washrooms, were all wood and concrete construction. It was a very nice place. It was a large area. We, the first thing we did at the time, was clean the snow off the trails. And after that, we went around to all the trails and we repaired them which needed it. So, we also did some work with the rangers. And one time, we had a few times, we have to, the grizzly bears would get out of hand and we'd have to trap them and take them up to the top of the mountain and turn them loose. And one we brought the cage and everything back to the station and the rangers had to arrange what they were going to do right away. So, they told this one friend of mine, they said, "Take this big skillet and put some water in it and take it and stick it in under the gate and give the bear some water." So, he went and did that. The skillet was about twenty inches wide and thick. He half filled it with water and he stuck it under the gate and that thing took a swat at it and busted it right in half. [Laughter].

MB: I would like to have seen that.

MC: OK, I fought a couple of forest fires. One was a large one-36,000 acres. It was burning in the early part of July and we were called on it the middle of August. And after riding about 100 miles on the truck, we had to walk about twenty miles to the fire line. They were thinking about riding us horseback, but they were all city boys, and it'd be too dangerous because we had to ride right along the cliffs to get down in the canyon. We camped in the canyon for one week, until we got help. And I had a couple of scares, but I got out of them. I won't go through what they were, but anyway, thank god I got over that.

MB: This was fighting the fire?

MC: Yes. This was fighting the fire. I got a couple of scares. And well, one in particular: there was five of us. We had to go over to the other side of the gorge. We were camped down in the bottom of the gorge. We had all our food and everything and water and k-pots and slept in that. And five of us went on over to this other side of the mountain so we could see what, how the fire was doing on the side we were on, on the other side. And it was all a shale mountain and we were about halfway up it. We got up there and it started, little stones started coming down, then all of a sudden the big stones start coming. It was a slide and there were big boulders flying over our heads and we were laying flat on the ground and they were just flying right on over us. Thank god, and all of a sudden, it stopped. And another time, we was in a, we were back in there fighting this fire and trying to get these trees down and everything, and the thing crowned us. The wind changed. It started crowning right over the top of us. We didn't know which way to go, but we finally got out of that one ok. So, let's see what else we got here. [Long pause] Guess I filled out--. I like to take walks and in my time off, I was walking by this log cabin area for the tourists, and heard this scream. And just as I saw a woman running of the front door, a bear jumped out the window. I think they both scared each other. Anyway, another time I was walking to the hotel in the late evening, the late part of the day, and about fifty yards before I came to the bridge, there was a bear with

about five cubs. And just as I went to pass them, the bear made a dash at me. I ran as fast I could and stopped and looked, when I got to the bridge. And I got there and looked back and I looked and he only ran about twenty-five feet. All that running for nothing, see.

MB: She'd done her job.

MC: Yeah, in about twenty-five feet. And after that, she wouldn't leave her cubs. But anyway, let's see. In 1934 and '35, automobiles, some of the cars had canvas roofs. And people left their car. They had one of these cars and they left their car to go out and watch the scenery. And one of the kids, I guess, left a box of candy open in the back seat. And when they got back the roof was gone and also the candy.

MB: A bear with good taste.

MC: Yeah. [Pause]. I used to take walks in the evening and they were always good entertainment. And I would meet some very fine people, some of them were very famous. And we arrived in May, snow was drifted to the second floor of the cabins.

MB: When did you leave Yellowstone?

MC: We left Yellowstone when the pipes were frozen up in the kitchen and in the washrooms. I think that was in, I guess, September.

MB: OK, so you were there from May to September; May, June, July, August, about five months. Well?

MC: Then let's see if there was anything else I wanted to tell you, about the feeding ground. Did I tell you about the hotel, the snow was drifted all the way up to the second floor? The snow would hold you and you could walk right to the top, and walk right in the second story window. That's how much snow was there.

MB: Yes and Canyon still gets lots of snow.

MC: Yep. That's about what I got to tell you. You got most of this down don't you?

MB: Yes I do. And all of this is on tape now.

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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **JOHN E. CURRAN YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

**SELF-INTERVIEWED**

**MARCH 19, 2001  
AT THE CURRAN HOME  
IN WESTCHESTER, OHIO**

**Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168**

**Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H4**

**NARRATOR:**

John E. Curran was born October 25, 1917, in Cincinnati, Ohio. The son of Ed and Mary Curran, he was one of three boys growing up in Hamilton County, Ohio.

In January 1935, John enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Initially, he was sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky, before joining Company #534 in Athens, Ohio. In about April of 1936, the company was relocated to the Nez Perce Camp (YNP-5), near Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park.

After leaving the CCC, John married and began work in a defense plant. After the start of World War II, he joined the Seabees, serving in the Pacific as part of what later became known as the Island X-1 Seabees.

John and his wife, Catherine L., had seven boys (Lawrence, Richard, Michael, Timothy, Jon, Dan and Anthony) and three girls (Jeannette, Mary Ann, and Cathy). Catherine passed away November 23, 2005. John died on November 18, 2008. Services for both were held at the Corpus Christi Catholic Church in New Burlington, Ohio.

**Summary:**

John E. Curran enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), serving in Company #534 stationed at the Nez Perce Camp (YNP-5). In his interview, he recalls working as a timberman, clearing the Howard Eaton Trail and cutting wood for the Old Faithful Inn. He also recalls the workings of the camp; playing baseball; and several accidents in camp, including his own. The narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** None.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 60-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 5 pages.

**John E. Curran, self-interview  
in Westchester, Ohio, on March 19, 2001**

Narrator: John E. Curran

God damn, it I did it again. Today is March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2001. My name is John E. Curran. I am at 9076 Cattail Lane, West Chester, Ohio, 45069. I was born on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1917. I was 17 years old when I entered the CCC in January 1935. I served at YNP-5 at Nez Perce Creek. Immediate family were all born in the United States; Mother, Father, and two brothers. Grandparents were of Irish and German descent. My highest grade level was 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

I have no recollection of when I first learned of the CCC. All I remember was my dad taking me to a local welfare agency to sign up. We had no say in where we would go. I guess we were assigned camp by their need for replacements. I recall hearing about being assigned to Yellowstone in April of 1936.

When I first joined the CCC we were sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for about a week--physical check-up, shots, and indoctrination of sorts. Next stop was Company 534 Athens, Ohio. We stayed there for about one year. We were under the forestry department. Camp numbers were PE82 and F7. From Camp Athens, it was a train ride to Idaho Falls, Idaho, and a truck ride to Camp Heise F405 at Heise, Idaho. At Heise, I worked as pick and shovel man on the road, blacksmith's helper, and truck driver.

We arrived at YNP-5 in the daytime in the rain and most trucks got stuck in the mud on the service road that lead from the main highway to the campsite. It must have been used before because it was all set up when we arrived. Some of us were apprehensive of the bears that were lingering around, but figured it would be one great place to see when the mud and the snow were gone.

We were quartered in tents. Inside consisted of four or six bunks and a cone shaped stove in the center. Camp was laid out like a quad; tents on all four sides. The center was all trees which small bears frequently frequented. The smaller bears would climb the trees and us crazy people would climb up another one several feet away from them. We had our own mess hall, a solid building, place to shower and work clothes--wash clothes--a combination rec hall and library. We had ping-pong tables and baseball diamonds across the creek from the camp. We had two first aide tents. Actually they were half wood and half canvas.

My official job was listed as axe man, timberwork. I did hack a few trees down. We worked on the Howard Eaton Trail and spent countless hours cutting wood for Old Faithful Inn. Total stretch of fence along the western boundary and erected new flagpole at the West Entrance.

We had several park personnel, rangers and supervisors. They were instructors and watchdogs of the sort. They made sure that everything was according to YNP regulations.

I had several close friends in the park. Ira J. Hoffinan was the assistant to Andy Anderson the educational advisor. Ira was from Germantown, Ohio, close to Dayton. Forest Stout from Norwalk, Ohio. Joe Dennis from Missouri. John Lolly from Nicholasville, Kentucky. Some were from Cleveland and Toledo and other towns in northern Ohio. Some were from Cincinnati, the Dayton area: Joe Akotis, Carl Brash, and a couple more, but I don't remember their hometowns. Joe Gronic, Steve Ronyits, John Forbes from Nelsonville.

I liked the work, while sometimes boring and repetitious. It was something to do and it was beneficial to the park and to the visitor.

In our off hours, we played baseball among ourselves or with teams from the camp at Gardiner and Canyon. I personally never went to West Yellowstone. Lack of money was the prime reason. We made trips to Old Faithful, to Gardiner, to Yellowstone Lake, and Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. While there weren't many cameras in camp, we took lots for pictures and swapped them. The food must have been ok, no one lost weight. The only holidays we spent in the park were Fourth of July and Labor Day and they didn't warrant anything special.

We did see bears and elk and deer but I don't really recall anything out of the ordinary. One time, though, we came upon a herd of deer and as they scattered a fawn separated from its mother and went to a fallen log and hid. If I hadn't seen where she went, I wouldn't have seen her. I did get close enough for a picture. Other than that, I didn't disturb her.

I was fortunate enough that I went, that I wasn't called on, to fight fires or any rescue attempts. During my stay in a CCC I had one Letter of Merit from Superintendent Harvey Glick in Heise, Idaho, as a truck driver, even though I almost ran over him out on a job. Some were certificates for correspondence courses in forestry, conservation, and auto mechanics and diesel mechanics.

No actual skills that helped me in my work after the CCC. I did learn discipline, punctuality, and cooperation with fellow workers. I was not in a CCC when World War II started. I was married and working in a defense plant.

I went back to Yellowstone with my wife and a couple of the kids. We didn't get to see the camp. There was a gate designed—designated--as a service road. Instead of a sedate drive around the park, I thought I was on an interchange on the freeway. Boy, what a difference. I'm all for a park and ride, a tour bus.

A couple of stories, not funny at the time: It was the end of June and Captain Smith made the announcement that July would be safety month and guess who was the first casualty--good old John. The very first day of July we were out behind the camp gathering firewood and I was splitting a small log. While holding the log upright with my left hand, I hit the left index finger; went in the top and out the bottom. I walked back to camp and looked for the first aide man and the doctor. I must have fainted. When I woke up, I was lying on a table and the doctor was preparing to shoot me with a shot of Novocain to deaden the pain. That needle hurt worse than anything else; took thirteen stitches to hold it together again. Captain Smith wanted to shoot me but he had his service revolver in mind. No bad after effects, no stiffness, was playing baseball again in late August. Nice work, Doc--Doctor Burton L. Forbes. He was with us in Heise, Yellowstone, and Rupert, Idaho.

The other foresaid event was something that shouldn't have happened but did. Not everyone did the dumb trip but some of us did. We had a hot pool not far from the creek where we went to wash clothes. We had a wire basket that we used to swish around and up and down similar to a washing machine agitator. Well, Woody and Smitty were doing this thing when Woody fell in. Smitty, who was about half Woody's size, pulled him out and ran for help. Woody's left leg was scalded to the hip. He was rushed to the hospital in Bozeman, Montana. We heard that he eventually wound up in Walter Reed Hospital. That's the last I heard about it.

Not much else happened worth mentioning. As soon as the snow started to fall in October we were making plans to decamp. All in all, the few months we were there was very educational and

warranted a return visit. I guess most of them did. I know I did and that's about it.

As an afterthought, if you can get a copy of the Pocatello Chieftain it has pictures and names of all the camps in the Pocatello district. I had one, but I donated it to the CCC museum years ago. If you could borrow it, it would be invaluable. Or, better yet, write the monthly paper and ask them to print a request for a copy. It's a hardcover book so it would be a hard job to run off on a copy machine. I do hope these ramblings will be of some benefit to your efforts and good luck.

John E. Curran CC5104854

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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **HERMAN K. DRECHSLER YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

**SELF-INTERVIEWED**

**MARCH 6, 2001  
AT THE DRECHSLER HOME IN INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI**

**Yellowstone National Park Archives P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168**

**Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H5**

**NARRATOR:**

Herman Kurt Drechsler was born October 5, 1915 in Kansas City, Missouri. The son of Kurt and Elsa (Stein) Drechsler, he was the eldest of three (two boys and one girl). He grew up in Kansas City.

In 1933, he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Sent first to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, he was part of Company #1742. After being discharged in 1934, he rejoined the CCCs in 1935. Assigned to Company #736, he went to Leavenworth, Kansas, working in rock quarry, then to Bethany, Missouri, followed by Moapa, Nevada. In 1936, the Company was relocated to Yellowstone National Park, starting at the Nez Perce Camp (YNP-5) near Old Faithful before moving to a spike camp at West Thumb. At Yellowstone, he fought fires, worked on a section of the Howard Eaton Trail, and learned to develop photographs.

Drechsler left the CCCs in 1936 and went to work at National Bellas Hess, a mail order company. After 32 years, he retired and then joined Bendix, Black & Veatch, and TWA, working as a machinist engineer. He retired fully in 1978.

Herman married Bernadine (aka Bernadean) Barker on September 8, 1945. The couple had one son, Michael Kurt. Bernadine passed away in 1995. Herman died on May 1, 2016, at the age of 100. Both are buried at Mount Washington Cemetery in Independence, Missouri.

**Summary:**

Herman Kurt Drechsler enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), serving with Company #1742 and Company #736, stationed at the Nez Perce Camp (YNP-5) near Old Faithful. In his interview he recalls fighting fire, assisting with maintenance on the Howard Eaton Trail, fishing; and a concession employee with a pet deer. He also recalls his time in the CCC working near Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Bethany, Missouri; Moapa, Nevada; and Minnesota. The narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** Herman K. Drechsler newsletters and memorabilia, 1981-2000. CCC in Yellowstone Documentation Project, Yellowstone National Park Archives.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 60-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 10 pages.

**Herman K. Drechsler, self-interview  
in Independence, Missouri, on March 6, 2001**

Narrator: Herman Drechsler

Today is Tuesday March 6, the year 2001. My name is Herman Drechsler, D-R-E-C-H-S-L-E- R. I'm at home at 14509 E 44151, Independence, Missouri. I was born on October 5, 1915, in Kansas City, Missouri. I was 18 years old when I entered the CCC, in October 1933, and were sent to Minnesota. I arrived in Yellowstone National Park in '36, camp number 736 at the main camp at Old Faithful.

When we were not working, we could rent a row boat for twenty-five cents per hour, and a rod and reel, with a Colorado Spinner on it for bait. We could row and troll, and we even caught some lake trout, which we took to camp to cook and eat; tasted pretty good.

We did park maintenance repair and cleanup work, later some of us were sent to a spike camp at the West Thumb area. We had the opportunities to see all the attractions. We were taken by camp trucks to them all. The lookout tower saw some smoke and we, I went with a crew to find and control it. We were taken by truck to a point that we could hike to a fire. We had trouble finding it; one of the men had to climb a tree to finally locate it. When we found it, we found out it was just a small ground fire, so we trenched around it and put as much of the fire out that we could. And then it was getting pretty late, so we had sleeping equipment with us, so we turned in. I woke up in the morning and saw that the fire had started up a small evergreen and I thought boy, here we go again. But low and behold, here come a relief crew from camp and they took over and we had a chance to go back to camp.

We were warned not to get between a mother bear and her cubs. So, we had to go to, but if we wanted to see some bears we could go to a local dump, which was not too far away, and they'd go there looking for something to eat. One time, I remember, one of the fellows got on his hands and knees and kind of whoofed with the bear, and one of the bear started towards him, and he took off. The bear stopped and went back to what he was eating and so forth, but I thought it was kind of funny because he wasn't going to argue with the bear.

When we were discharged from the camp at the Yellowstone Park, we were taken by truck Pocatello, Idaho, then by train home. When I first joined in 1933, we went sent to Fort Snelling, which is an Army base and a place where they send them to different camps. And I was sent with a group from Kansas City and some from St Louis to be in Minnesota Company 1742. I was discharged in April of 1934. I joined again in 1935 and went to Leavenworth, Kansas, Company 736, and worked in a rock quarry. We rode to and from camp to the quarry in an old WWI Liberty truck. One time, when we were at the quarry, they had to take the back road with the truck because, when they use the firing range, the regular road gets a stray bullet once in a while. So, we went on the back road, and as we were coming down the hill, another stake body truck come up the hill and our truck had to pull too far over on the shoulder, and we turned over. Our section leader turned around and hollered for us to jump and when the truck turned clear over, he got his neck broke and he died. All the rest of us came out pretty good. I had my shoulder blade broke and I spent

some time in the Army hospital, to kind of get healed up. But later on, we went to Bethany, Missouri, and worked on soil erosion in all the farmers' fields and so forth. Then Company 736 was sent from Bethany, to Moapa, Nevada, and we spent the winter there, in the nice warm part of the country. We worked on the division of grazing. We build barbed wire fence along the highway, and every now and then we run a row of fence clean to the mountain range. The idea of it was to keep the cattle in a certain area that they leased to the cattle people there. I looked at the ground there and the fodder there, and it didn't look fit to eat, but I guess some cattle could survive on it. Anyway, we all got a pretty good tan and so forth. When in the spring we were sent to Yellowstone National Park, still Company 736. And we were in three locations all together, in 736. First it was Leavenworth, Kansas, then it was Bethany, Missouri, then Moapa, Nevada, and finally we ended up in Yellowstone Park.

While in Minnesota, we slept in barracks. Course it was wintertime when we first arrived there. Being in Minnesota, we had all Army issue coats and clothes. And the first thing we saw, when we got off the train, was a water tower and it was one icicle from top to bottom. They must have filled it too full and, I mean, it froze. Then when we moved, when I was in the second time, at Leavenworth, Kansas, we were in barracks. And then in Bethany, Missouri, we were in barracks, and also Moapa, Nevada. But when we got to Yellowstone Park, we slept in tents. It was pretty good sized tents at Old Faithful. And then when we were transferred to West Thumb, we were in smaller tents. There were just four men to a tent. And our crew was, one of the men in our crew, was the one who took care of the power plant, the lights, and all that.

We had a chance to learn to develop and print pictures. And we even built ourselves an enlarger. So, we developed just about all the pictures that were taken in Yellowstone Park. And every time we got a chance of some real good picture, we'd print ourself one. So, we had a big advantage, I think. For an eight exposure roll, I think we'd charge twenty-five cents. We had plenty of business. And we had an instructor there that taught us how to do all that, and I really appreciated that. And we could order clothes, and film, and printing paper, and stuff like that right from the camp.

My family background: my dad came from Saxony, Germany, and my mom came from Frankford, Germany. They met and married in US in 1913. There were three of us children: myself, my sister two years younger, my brother four years younger. I graduated from grade school in 1929. In high school, I threw the Kansas City Star. Got up in the morning at 4am, and then left from school at 4pm to throw the paper again. I wasn't one of the best students. Dad was laid off after sixteen years during the Depression, and worked at any odd jobs he could find. I earned \$5 a week throwing papers. And Dad even sold our hot water tank just to make some money, and we had to heat our bath water in a wash tub on the kitchen stove. And use a teakettle for washing face and hands and so forth. We heard from welfare about CCC. That's how come I joined. Course when I could earn \$5 up there and get \$25 sent home, why that was kind of a blessing to us.

I was looking for some of the pictures. I hope I have some left I took sixty-five years ago. I know one thing, I may have to dig out all the old black and white negatives and maybe have some more printed. It is just strange that so many things can get away from you.

Now, I'm supposed to make some comments about my life and so forth. I was married for five days less than fifty years. I didn't get married until 1945. My wife died five days before our 50th anniversary; she was only 72. And I was really thinking I'd be the first one to go, because all her family lived way up into their 90's. Another comment I've got, I know even in Yellowstone Park they had a dump, and people put things in the dump. Now, here in Independence we'd put a great deal of effort into recycling and I think that's going to be the future for the next generations if we don't recycle plastic, glass, and metal, and whatever we have. Two days a week here in Independence, where you can recycle all that stuff, and another two days in another location in the same, two days later in another part of town to recycle. And it just makes a lot of sense. I recycle so much I don't hardly have any trash to put away. And I know these people with a big family, they'll have four or five bags and I won't hardly have a bag. But even in Yellowstone Park, there was an old Model T Ford body there. And we can even recycle tin cans and aluminum cans. I think that's going to be part of our future.

Going back to Yellowstone Park, we did meet some of the rangers and park employees there. In fact, right next to West Thumb we had kind of an area where the rangers could eat and so forth, and I'd imagine some of them could bunk there. They had a red-headed there who did some cooking, and she made quite a pet of a deer. One time, she kind of I don't know, tried to put her arm around the deer and the deer got excited and she got kind of speared with the hooves on her ankle, and she got a pretty bad cut. But we also, course we knew some of the employees, like the person that rents the boats and so forth. I think I'm sure, we worked on the Howard Eaton Trail, which is a trail that goes from one part of the entrance to another and we made it. It's forty-two inches wide, and it's switchbacks and so forth, and we'd cut down a tree if we had to, to make it go. The people that use the trail usually go on horseback. And I guess a lot of people, I don't even know for sure if you can rent horses there, or whether people brought their own horses. That was kind of interesting to work on that. We had regular specifications and certain grades we would have to make the trail proper.

In Minnesota, one of the things I remembered quite well was, we were to start at the road and drop all the trees and pile them up in eight foot lengths for the local people could buy real cheap for heating and so forth. And then from 100 yards to 500 yards back, we just dropped all dead trees and just left them lay to deteriorate naturally. Sometimes, in the cold wintertime, when we was out on the job all we'd do to get the fire started and hang around the fire. And once in a while, we'd have to stop and take off our boots and warm our feet. Another thing I remember quite well about Minnesota, we went to Mud Lake one time and pulled trucks and everything out on the lake and we cut a hole in the ice and they marked the ice in big squares, with a sled and a horse. Then they sawed, they cut the corner hole out. Then they took an ice saw by hand, and sawed those blocks out. Then they'd put a tripod up with a pair of tongs on it, we'd lift that out and put it on the ice and or put it on the truck. A lot of times, one time I can remember, we was getting close to quitting time so instead of just leaving the ice in the water, they lifted the ice out with the tongs and set it up on top of the ice. And with the trucks on there and the ice on there, the ice sunk just enough for water to run over on top of the ice and they very quickly took the trucks off so they wouldn't break

through and so forth--but the ice was pretty thick. And I don't know, I didn't get on the crew the next day, I don't know if those blocks of ice were frozen on the ice and they couldn't get them loose or what. I would think that might be a problem. Also, we went in the same area in Minnesota where they had a windstorm I guess the last summer or whatever, and it blew some of those trees over. And it seems that those trees, when they're roots grow along the ground, they don't even have a tap root. And when the wind blows those big trees over it looks like an umbrella set up on end. We had, of course, to cut them off and get them out of the way. I know around the city area here, a lot of those trees have tap roots and they wouldn't tum over like that.

Then I remember, before I went to Minnesota, Dad and I had swore off smoking on New Year's 1933. So, when I got ready to go to Minnesota in October, Dad said, "Well son, forget about swearing off from smoking. Everybody else is going to smoke, just go ahead and smoke like the rest of them." And that's another thing I want to kind of comment on: seem like everybody smoked and when the wife and I got married we smoked. But, we quit smoking, oh, three or four years after we got married, I feel it was good for our health and that was even before the Surgeon General was warning about the danger of smoking.

I can remember when we were in Moapa, Nevada, we had one of our trips take us to Boulder Dam then course it's Hoover Dam now. But when we could get on the dam and look on the upper side of the lake, the water was way down there--it was a long way from filling up. Just looked awful small. I thought we had a good opportunity to see the dam before it was anywhere near full. Also one time, we went, well more than once, several times, we went to a show in a town a few miles away. But the funny part was we crossed the time zone, you'd go one way and we'd get there before we left and visa versa, we'd get there an hour or two late, you know. It was just a problem you had when you were that close to a time zone between Mountain Time and West Coast time, I think is what it was. But that was another unusual thing that was interesting.

You have a reference to LEM, and you call them Local Employed Men and we always called them Local Experienced Men. They were usually from the neighborhood there that knew the area and so forth and were a little bit more knowledgeable about the area and what we were supposed to do. These LEM's, I can remember one, I think it was up in Minnesota, I can't remember his name. He was kind of short, and was bald on top. He said--well, he wasn't exactly bald, he just had a bigger face. But I can remember one, we would, he would be kind of a foreman, but somebody would suggest something to change how to do a job or something, and if he agreed with you he'd say, "Well, that's what I tink, what do you tink?" So, he was fun to get along with those people.

I know once in a while we'd hear about somebody going over the hill. In other words, they couldn't take the camp life anymore. I knew one person, I don't even know his name, that went over the hill in Minnesota. And he went on home. And another person, when we was, when Joe Lewis was just training, there was one fellow in our camp that something to do working in one of his training camps. And he thought Joe Lewis was real good, and he was right. But one of the fellows put a bet against Joe Lewis every bet he could get. Everybody would take a bet. He was so sure he was going to win; when Joe Lewis won he went over

the hill. He just said he had no chance of paying all the debts that he had. So, he just took off. I guess that was ok too, I didn't bet with him or against him.

When I got out of the CCCs in 1936, I found a job at the National Bellas Hess. For eighteen cents an hour, as kind of an order picker. We'd get the orders and I'd go around the stock area, and pick the order and put it in a basket or something to where it's all together and then I'd put the order with it and send it on down and someone would package it and send it out. And as well, part of the time, I used roller-skates to go around and pick up stuff, to make, to fill the orders. And I really had to talk to get a raise to twenty cents an hour, but after the Christmas rush, I got laid off. And my dad at that time had found a job at Black and Veatch, so I went there and got a job, too. I was up to forty cents an hour. I was living high. We worked forty-eight hours a week, then finally we only got to work four hours Saturday and so it was only forty-four hours. Then within the year, the union got in there and we got fifty cents an hour. So, things really seemed to be flying and course after that I spent thirty-two years with raises and all that, you know, and more vacations, and all that. Thirty-two years and about eight months there; then we got a contract where we could retire after thirty years. So, I retired and went to work at Bendix. Well, after five years at Bendix, why the work got slack, so I got laid off there and went to work for TWA. And course wife--I got married in 1945--we took full advantage of the passes and so forth. Course the passes weren't free until you got over ten years in, and I never had more than eight years in. But gosh, we went to Australia, New Zealand, and all over Europe and Spain, England we had, we went to Athens, Greece and we went Egypt, Israel, and a lot of places like that. We went to Alaska and all over the United States; went to Hawaii, course, a couple of times. But, I feel that I am real fortunate, and I don't know, I think that's about all I got to say right now.

Another thing I was asked, you know, what my likes and dislikes were. I had most of the things were real pleasant all. Had a lot of friends there. They had a system on KP [kitchen patrol]. When you worked in the kitchen, they would start with the front of the alphabet and take two or three, whatever amount they needed, to work in the kitchen. They had to serve there for a, I don't know, a week or two or whatever it was. And then they would go from A, then go to B, and C and so on, then we got past D, and then somebody decided they kind of liked KP, they didn't want to work do the hard labor or get dirty out there so they'd take KP steady. So, it stopped this system of alphabet time on having KP. But after a while that guy that was in there, the people that was in there regular, they got tired again. So, they start at A again, and that happened about two or three times. And just before we were getting ready to leave Yellowstone Park, they decided well, we'll start at the back of the alphabet, but they only had one session there before they quit the camp and we all went home. So, we hadn't gain much by that new thing. But, it seemed like every time they had somebody in there steady, after while they'd get tired of it, and they'd have to go back to the old system.

Another thing I remember about Yellowstone Park there was one fellow that had a bump on his head about half almost half the size of a ping-pong ball. They had a doctor come around to the camp, you know, just whenever, every now and then. The doctor looked at that fellow, we called him knot head, and he looked at that and he said heck, he could take that off. So, we all watched the operation. The doctor just split the skin there, and took out something kind of a spongy looking white thing and sewed it back up. The funny part was,

we'd always called him knot head, didn't even know his real name, and we didn't know what to call him after that. He wasn't, didn't have a knot head anymore.

One other thing I wanted to kinda mention, the CCCs many parks in the United States, they say way over 500. Now in Missouri alone, they worked at Bennett Springs, Roaring River State Park, fish hatchery and so forth. I know they built some arch bridges down there in the Park; they planted many trees up there in Washington where they had that volcano. And they planted billions of trees I guess, usually pine type trees for reforestation. But many of those was destroyed that was planted about fifty years before up there in Washington when they had that eruption up there. [probably Mount St. Helens volcanic eruption in 1980]. And right now, well, way back in '79, somebody got the bright idea to reorganize and try to get the CCCs started again for people, well able bodied people on welfare. And I'm not sure that I'm correct on this, you might want to check with Lloyd Milkie. But when Reagan was President I think we had a bill before both houses that passed both houses of Congress to start something similar to the CCCs again where people on welfare, able bodied, and Reagan vetoed it. And what surprised us on it, when Reagan was a governor of California they had a CCC program there that, in the rainy season they would put plastic on the hills to keep them from washing away, and in the dry season they would try to cut fire breaks through the hills when it was real dry, you know. To keep the fires from spreading and it looked to me like, when Reagan was President, he would have been in favor of that. Course I don't know about politics and so forth. But like I say again, I'm not real sure that it really passed and Reagan vetoed it. But you may check with Milkie; he may remember just what it was. But I belong to Chapter 11 in the CCCs, and I don't know how it goes, there's a northcentral division, there's a southcentral and there's a east, northeast division, and southeast division, and same way on the west and central. And there are many old timers that are still left, still working things, and kind of remembering the CCCs.

One thing I forgot to mention, that after Raymond Burr was a CCC boy, way back a long time ago. Course he's not with us anymore. A lot of people that came up quite a bit and got pretty famous were in the CCCs. I think it was a good thing.

Another thing, not important thing, but it's quite a concern to me. Seemed like in camp, like that bunch of men there did a lot of cussing, you know dirty words and so forth, I don't mean anything, just put it right in there language and boy, when I came out, I had to watch my talk for a while, until I got used to talking with civilized people. So, it was another problem that we run into.

Another thing I forgot to mention about Minnesota, outside of skating on the lake and so forth: the local people would build a kind of a shed and have a trap door in the bottom of the floor. They cut a hole in the ice and pull that sled over the hole in the ice. Then, they take a wire and put kind of an artificial fish, in fact the one I was watching was just whittled out of wood, and he had some hooks on it, he dangle it in the water and make it look like a crippled fish, a northern or something pretty good sized fish would come up there and grab it. I watched them catch one fish. This fellow had a couple of them laying out on the ice, kind of being like an icebox you know. He had already caught a couple. I don't know what

the rules are, I've heard if they don't get those off the ice quick enough in the fall, in the spring sometimes they end up in the bottom of the lake.

I said that wrong about the hooks being on the wooden fish that they used as a lure. That's not the way he did it. Once the fish come up close, he could see them for quite a ways. He would drop a bait or hook with minnows on it that the fish would actually grab. They wouldn't ever go after the wooden decoy.

And well especially while we were in Yellowstone Park started barbering, I think he only charged about fifteen cents, maybe twenty cents a haircut. Course it was just a basic haircut, but they looked pretty good. And I can imagine, using your hands, they didn't have any power clippers even, I imagine he got tired after while if he had very many customers.

The thing I remember about Yellowstone Park was the altitude; how quick we got tired at the higher altitude. It took about a week, or maybe two, before we were regulated to the altitude and so forth, and we would breathe normally and not be short of breath all the time. But that was kind of a new experience to us, too. I don't know, I think we were about 7,000 feet or something, maybe a little more.

Another note on personal things: my sister and her husband passed away in the last couple of years. Her husband first; they had been married about sixty-five years and had two sons--one worked for General Electric and the other was a chemist, worked for Dow Chemical and other places. My son, he died at age forty-six, never did get married. So I don't have any grandkids. My brother's got eleven grandkids, so I kind of feel like I'm left out on that. But, then you can't have everything.

It asks if we've ever been back to Yellowstone Park. My wife and I went to Yellowstone Park, now I'm not sure of this fact, whether it's a fact or not. I think they had a slight quake there at one time. It looked to us like the lakes, one of the lakes had kind of tilted; one of the shorelines on one side was above the waterline and the other side it was below. Now, this may, I may be wrong on this so I don't want to be quoted on it, unless somebody knows more about it than I do. I guess that's just another thought. [Probably the 1959 Hebgen Lake earthquake].

My wife and I only moved twice from where we were living when we got married. We went from 1012 Topping in Kansas City to 96 Terrace, which is south. Bought a house out there, then, when we sold it we took the profit and bought a house here in Independence. But, in that moving and so forth, I'm sure we lost some of our pictures and so forth. And I've been looking high and low to see if I can still find any. And I know there's a lot of corners and nooks and crannies where they might be stuck. And I still have some black and white negatives. Now, I'm not forgetting about this just because I'm sending this back to you, I think what's your name, Mary? And I will keep trying to give you some more information. Course I know you're mainly interested in Yellowstone Park, but I think in general you're kind of interested in all the CCCs. So, I'll keep trying and I think maybe I'll send this back to you tomorrow in the envelope that you provided. Today is the 6<sup>th</sup>, so tomorrow will be the 7<sup>th</sup>. I ought to be able to get it to you then, I hope.

Mary Bulhois 3200 Bittersweet Road, Manhattan, Montana 59741. About Yellowstone Park information. I'm not going to forget you and I'm going to keep looking for more information, especially pictures and I know there's a lot of things I've forgotten. I'm going to make myself a copy of this tape, but I'm going to break the safety things out of both sides of this tape, although I've only used one side. I imagine if you, I'm sure you can edit the tape and arrange some of my statements around the way they should be because I know I did a very poor job. And I kind of mulled around about it for quite a while before I even got around to it, but I didn't forget you and I won't forget you and I thank you for your efforts. And I'd kind of like to know you. Course it's, I'm not proposing or anything like that, I'm just an old man that likes to make friends, and I think you are probably a pretty nice person and I want to thank you for your effort, and I think I'll send this away tomorrow and thank you, and good luck to you, good-bye.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **ROBERT B. "DOC" HALLIDAY YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

SELF-INTERVIEWED

JANUARY 15, 2001  
AT THE HALLIDAY HOME  
IN VERO BEACH, FLORIDA

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
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**NARRATOR:**

Robert Bradt "Doc" Halliday was born May 13, 1917, in Cuba, New York. He grew up in Olean, New York, and graduated high school in 1917.

Halliday joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) at the age of eighteen and was sent first to Fort Dix, New Jersey before being sent to North Carolina and then Nevada. While in Nevada, he was sent home to complete his high school diploma. Upon graduation, he reenlisted with the CCCs and was sent first to Red House, New York, as part of Company #249. He was then sent to Dillon, Montana, where he joined Company #3282. In late 1940, he was transferred to the Mammoth Camp (YNP-1) in Yellowstone National Park to teach Red Cross first aid.

In 1941, Halliday returned to New York and went to work for Link Aviation. Shortly after the start of World War II, he enlisted in the Army Air Force, flying more than thirty missions over Japan as a radio operator. He was awarded several Air Medals and the Distinguished Flying Cross with Cluster. After the war, he returned to Link Aviation where he worked until retirement in 1972. He then joined Edwin Link in Florida as part of the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute Foundation. He retired a second time in 1982.

Robert and his wife, Shirley, had three children: Robert, Beth, and Kim. Robert passed away on February 16, 2006. He is buried in Crestlawn Cemetery in Vero Beach, Florida.

**Summary:**

Robert Bradt "Doc" Halliday enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), serving in Company #249 and Company #3282 stationed at Mammoth Camp (YNP-1). In his interview, he recalls earning a promotion and supervising the camp, numerous VIP visitors, watching movies, swimming, incidents with bears, and fighting fires, and being buried in snow on Beartooth Pass. He also describes his time stationed at Dillon, Montana, and North Carolina as well as returning to the Park to work as an electrician's assistant just after the war. The narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** Collections related to Edwin A. Link and the Link Foundation may be found at Binghamton University, Florida Institute of Technology, and the Smithsonian. It is unclear if Robert B. Halliday is represented in these collections.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 60-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 7 pages.

**Robert B. "Doc" Halliday, self-interview  
in Vero Beach, Florida, on January 15, 2001**

Narrator: Robert "Doc" Halliday

Today is the 15th of January, 2001. My name is Robert Halliday and I'm at 711 16th Ave, Pearl Beach, Florida, 32962. I was born on May 13, 1917. I was 18 years old when I entered the CCCs. I wasn't sent to Yellowstone Park, I was sent to several others before. But the camp in Yellowstone was at Mammoth. My family were German, Scotch, and English. Our grandfather was German, a Prussian actually, and other parts of my family, grandmother, was English. But, we were native born here. I had one brother and three sisters, and as my mother would put it, she had three kids, one boy, and you.

How did we hear about the CCCs? We were in a Depression time and everybody knew about the CCCs because that was a last resort. That twenty-five bucks we got every month was real handy to have. We had nothing to say where they sent us. I told my folks if I didn't get in the CCCs I was going to go on relief so, that meant I was going to be on the CCCs. We had no way of knowing where we were going to be assigned. They put us on trains and shipped us down to Fort Dix, [New Jersey]. And they made up the different camps there and shipped them out to where they were going. We had nothing to say about where we were going, but I was quite happy with where they sent me.

The first camp I was in was in North Carolina. It was a very unhappy deal there. We got in there a big, they weren't very happy to see us, because the people there thought we were the Northern Army coming in there. We only stayed there about a week. Then, we shipped out to Nevada. I stayed there in Nevada camp for, oh, maybe three, four months. Then, I got called on the carpet and said they were going to send me home to go back to school. It seemed somebody back there was pulling some strings, figured I was pretty smart I oughta go back to school. So, they sent me back to New York state to go back to school.

I stayed there at school that last year. I graduated and jobs were just about as scarce then as it was when I went in. So, I signed up again in the CCCs and they sent me down to a camp not too far from where I lived in a place called Red House. It was CCC camp 249. And I was there maybe two months, and I got shipped out to Montana. They wanted to know if I'd like to go to Montana and I said you betcha, so they shipped me to Montana, Dillon Montana, 3282.

As I recall, it was about the late 1940, was before they broke up the camp in '41, anyway. In the CCCs I got to be a LEM [local experienced man], because I stayed more than three years. I was in charge of the whole camp as far as that goes; I ran everything. I had the oil and gasoline; I ran the place; I was in charge of it. The officers depended on me to keep the place running is what it amounted to, so I just kept staying over and over and over. So, when it came time for this school they were going to have for Red Cross training and first aid training, they came to me and sent me over to Yellowstone. That's how I got there, to teach them how to do all the first aid Training. So, they were calling them from all over the state there to send them over there to go to the school, so I got elected. But like you asked, what

did I think when I got to Yellowstone Park? Really, I don't know. I'd been up in the mountains up there so long that the mountains didn't impress me too much. But, when they took us on a field trip and took us over to Lake and the places, we really thought that was pretty wonderful. But, the camp itself was a VIP camp. People from Washington and stuff, were going over to check on the CCCs, officials and, they naturally wouldn't send them up in the mountains where we were in Dillon. So, they send them to a VIP camp which was, what we considered a VIP camp, because when we went down there the food was much better. Everything was much better in Mammoth, than where we were located. But, like we said, the cook stood out there on the back with a piece of bread in his hand and when the deer come along we had fresh meat. That was just a joke with us, but the food was much better.

We were in barracks, we weren't in tents, and they were H-shaped. There were two barracks with a cross member between them. You could walk from one barracks to the other without going outside. Which brings to mind a little anecdote you might be interested in: they made us stay in the tents while the VIP's came through, congressman and so forth. And of course, we're all standing there at perfect attention and, people were about half way down the barracks, when a bear came in the back door. Course we were living right there with them, bears were quite common. They'd walk right in the back door. Well, you've never saw such a scramble in your life; those people, all those people, trying to get out the other end of that barracks. We're standing over there laughing about it, trying to keep from smiling of course. We were very nice people.

I would like to elaborate on what I did in the camp at Dillon, 3282: I taught classes in radio. I was a radio amateur before I went in service there, or in the CCCs. I had classes of several people. I was supplying the tubes and everything myself, which finally reached a point where I couldn't afford it, so that was the end of that class. I taught other things at the same time. We had a very good deal with the college in Idaho, University of Idaho, and they send us correspondence courses. And we had very good relations with them and there were a lot of the guys who got degrees from high school. It was very good. I stayed more than two years, so I had to be made a LEM. I did everything: I ran the generators, the water system. I installed the whole water system, built the oil house, ran the generators for the fire. They put me in charge of the gas tank and they gave me about 1100 gallons of gasoline every week, every year, every month. I couldn't possible use 1100 gallons though. We had two generators than ran up until 9-10 o'clock at night, and depending on the season, and it was never very awful dark in there at 10. So, the generators got run very seldom. So, I had so much gasoline there that I could pretty much take care of everybody around the camp there that needed any, which I did. I probably could get in a lot of trouble for admitting I did, even now, but I did. Almost everything was overdone. I needed some, anything, I asked for up at the Fort they'd send down ten times as much, but it was good. I built a radio system that we, we had a transmitter to operate up to Fort Missoula, so I built that for them. Oh, I don't know I had a lot of fun.

We had movies twice a week. Course I ran the movie projector, which I got extra pay for. I got \$5 extra for teaching classes and I got \$5 extra for running the movie projector, which gave me \$10 more--and while I was assistant leader, which gave me \$10 and \$36, so

\$46. I was making one buck more than the top chief was, which was a little bit of static with them.

They allowed us, once in a while, to go out on little field trips to go swimming or something. There was a swimming pool not too far away out there, hot springs. They found out that I was the only one in that camp that had a water safety badge, so I had to go anytime they went swimming. I had to go, which was very nice. I like to swim too. Another feature that I thought was very good was, I loved to fly fish, and every free moment that I could get I'd go trout fishing up in that country or high country, 11,000 feet up to the top of that mountain. And all those lakes up there hadn't been fished in years. You think I didn't make the most of it? I thought it was wonderful. I got three meals a day and do a little work on the side and go fishing every night; it was wonderful.

I'd like to elaborate a little bit on this: the camp is a ward I say, a camp or a ward. But anyway, we had a, in the morning we had Reveille and everybody'd get up. And then, we'd all get up and take our showers and so forth, and off to breakfast. And then, we'd come around in the afternoon and they'd give us a meal call. Right on the steps in front of all the barracks, they'd yell out names of the people for meal. But, we didn't have any drilling as such, military drilling as such. I don't know if it was an understanding with the other companies or what, that we wouldn't in the CCCs, but we didn't. We had calisthenics, but we did not do any drilling. That was something that kept coming up on the questionnaires, and I thought you'd like to know about that.

The food was usually pretty good. Once in a great while we'd have something that would run short or something, and the boys would do some bit of complaining, but it wasn't that bad. We'd get mad once in a while and complain bitterly, but we'd get over it.

That pretty much covers the camps that I was in there, Dillon and Yellowstone Camp. But, I have to go on about when I was there later, I think it was around 1950. I went to work right there in the park at Mammoth for Lloyd Seasholtz. He was running the power. That was before Montana Power took over the power in the Park and we had generators there at Mammoth and power plants all over the Park. I worked for him taking care of the fire network, transmitters, and receivers that we used on the fires. And I made sure all of them were working and lined up in their right length of wire and all you had to do is hang them over a couple of limbs out there and get all ready. And they thought that was wonderful and I took out and showed them how to work them and everything. And we worked my butt off, and what happened? We didn't have a stinking fire that year. And boy, was I disappointed.

But you know, when you are working in the Park, you had to break up bear jams. If you ran into a bear jam you had to be stopped. We were in an official car, so we had to break up bear jams. And I tell you that was something, we ran into people, and stupid people of course, or they wouldn't be getting themselves into trouble. But we had a fellow there that was doing his damndest to put a cub in the back of his car. And he was throwing food in there and mama was standing right there. So, when I came up I told him, I says, "If you, if that cub squealed once that bear would take you and the car apart to get him out of there." He says, "Oooh, really!" And I came up on one of them, and I stopped, and it was a lady there and

she was laughing her head off. And I asked her what happened, and she said, “We had some joker come up here, and he walked over and put his arm around the bear, and said take my picture. And the bear knocked him flat and they took him over to Mammoth to the hospital and he recovered. He wasn't hurt too bad.” But, I asked her if she got the pictures and she said, “Oh, I guarantee, I got the picture.”

But as I say, most of the people that get in trouble with the bears over there were stupid; they did the dumbest things. I was there at Mammoth and I was camping right down on the bottom of the Terraces down there, where you park. They had some picnic tables there, and this group was down there. And I came down at the end of the day, walking down in uniform of course, this bunch of people were standing around that table where all the food, and the bear was sitting right in the middle of the table and he was having a ball. So, I stood there and looked at them and they said, “Well, do something.” I said, “You could do something, same as I would.” And they says, “What?” I picked up a rock and I pelted the bear. That bear went up a tree; it was just a cub, black bear. So, he went up the tree and they says, “What are you going to do now?” I says, “He's afraid of me, to get near me, he's not going to do anything.” I took a rock and I banged on the tree and he thought I was coming up after him and, oh, what a fuss he made. But, we had a lot of fun with the bears. There was a one of the men's and ladies' rooms there, when you walked along. On the inside, it had screws at the top and just the top of your head would show from outside. And I'm walking down at night, and there was a lady walking down on the outside—or, no, I'm sorry. There was a bear walking down on the outside and I saw her head on the inside, and we were going to meet at the end, no question about it. So I stood there and watched it, what a war whoop I got out of her. Scared the daylight out of that poor bear, oh boy.

You asked if we had any forest fires. Yes, we had quite a few very big fires. Course, they'd pull the whole camp out for that and you wanted to know what my position was. Well, as an assistant leader I had the stripes, of course. And I would more or less control what was going on in the group. But, there was, you wanted to know if some of it was hilarious. Oh, yes. We went into a fire up in Lolo, up out of Missoula, and we first we had fourteen miles. We had to walk into the fire, just thirty men, and it was good. We had to walk the fourteen miles and the huckleberries were just ripe and everybody was eating huckleberries. But, we finally got up to where we could see the fire and we heard someone screaming and hollering down there in the woods. And we went down, and it was one of the smokejumpers out of Missoula was stuck up in a tree. He had landed there the night before, up in a tree, and he couldn't get down. He'd lost his line. And course, I got a bunch of guys back in New York state they thought nothing of cutting the tree down, so they cut the tree down with him in it. You should've heard him screaming. But, as it tipped over he swung free and we got him down. But, we thought that was a little bit funny.

We went from one fire to another, it was all summer. We was supposed to get one day off between fires. But, we were on fires every time. We'd sleep going between fires, on the truck. But it, there were years, we didn't lose anybody on the fires. But that Spirit Lake Fire was over in Idaho and several CCC boys caught up in that, but we didn't.

I had to deliver a refrigerator over to Red Lodge. Got the thing loaded, got over through Cooke City, and everything was fine. We stopped at the road control place over there and asked them if it was alright to go on over, it looked like smoke. And they said, "Yes, it's all clear to go by car." So, we got almost up to the top and it was snowing us in. It was snowing hard and we were going to, it wasn't just me with my outfit, but there were other cars already caught in it. So, another truck came up behind us that belonged to the Park, and he says, "If the snow covers your car, be sure you don't start the engine, because if it does you'll get carbon monoxide and it would be bad." So, we said, Alright." I had my heavy clothes on, so I just curled up on the seat there. And in the morning, during the night, I heard a car running and it ran there for a long time, finally it quit. So, there were several cars up there buried in snow, completely covered in that. So, they came in with the rotary from the Park side, and they got real close to the last guy in the line and he started his engine and backed right into the blades. So, that was the end of that side. So, they called over to the Red Lodge side, and they brought the rotary up from that side and they finally got us out. Well, there was a pickup truck down there with two dead men in it, and that was the one that came up over the hill and told us not to run our engines. And that's the two that got killed, the two that were dead. And they were both Park workers. I felt sorry for them. [Vernon E. Kaiser, John P. Baker, and Richard W. Huckels died on June 20, 1947]. And you run into some pitiful ones, and I did run into one once in a while.

In 1941, I took a trip back to New York, with the understanding that I would be coming back to Montana. But, the war was ending and we were allowed to take a job. If we could find a job, we could be discharged from the CCCs. I lucked out and got Major Kelly's approval in the CCC camp back there late in the system. He got wind that I joined the school of aeronautics and set me up to work for Mr. Link, Link Aviation. We were trainers and taught people how to fly on the ground. Well, I went from--I stayed there less than a year. And then I re-enlisted, because the war was ended and I knew I was going to go--. I didn't have to go, because I had a job there that they, it was OK that I stayed. But, I said, "No, I had already enlisted." So, I washed out of cadets. I was going to be a pilot, but it turned out that I wasn't good for that. So, they made me a radio operator on a 8-29, which was good. I put in thirty missions over in Japan. People don't think thirty missions is very much, but that was the top. They only made us go thirty and then they would just send us back. So, that was it. But, I got back to Link Aviation after the war and worked there from then on until I retired at fifty-five from them. Then, I went down to Florida and I opened what they called Harbor Branch Foundation. We did underwater work. We built submarines and we did underwater research, and lowering ships for bringing up treasure, and we brought considerable treasure up. It was just a lot of fun, but Mr. Link was interested in that, so I worked for him. Not to brag about it but I got air medals and a DFC, which is a Distinguished Flying Cross, which is very unusual for us hero's to get, but I got one.

Big trouble and I'm 83 years old and my grammar is not what it was. I usually put my only's where they are supposed to be, and I noticed quite a few places there and I didn't want to go back and correct it, so I just left them go. Anyway, it's been fun talking to you. Someday, get me to tell you about the war; that was interesting too.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **HARRY T. HART YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

SELF-INTERVIEWED

APRIL 22, 2001  
AT THE HART HOME  
IN YUMA, ARIZONA

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H7

**NARRATOR:**

Harry Thomas Hart was born January 23, 1922, in Cadiz, Ohio., to Harry J. and Rosie I. (Mattern) Hart. He had three brothers and three sisters, several of whom died in infancy. At the age of six months, the family moved to West Virginia, where Harry attended school New Martinsville.

Halliday joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) at the age of eighteen in October 1940, and was sent first to Moundsville Camp and Yellow Springs Park, Ohio, before volunteering to go to Yellowstone National Park as part of Company #544. The Company was stationed at the Glen Creek Camp (YNP-7), located approximately seven miles from Gardiner, Montana. Harry worked in a variety of jobs including beautification of the roads near the Mammoth Hospital, working in the nursery located near Stephens Creek, assisting surveyors at the campgrounds at Fishing Bridge, and serving as night watchman at the CCC motor pool. Near the end of his tenure, he was assigned as a plumber's assistant.

Hart left the CCCs in November 1941, returning home to attend machinists' school. He joined the Navy in 1942, serving on a destroyer during World War II. While in the service, he learned plumbing and machinist trades. Following the war, Harry worked for the B & O Railroad in North Vernon, Indiana, for fifteen years before relocating to Yuma, Arizona. In Arizona, he worked for the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) and with the state before retiring.

Hart married Geraldine Joan Kenyon in 1946. The couple had three sons: Thomas, Robert, and Harry H., and two daughters: Linda and Dorothy. Harry passed away on June 24, 2009, and was buried at Desert Lawn Memorial Park. Geraldine died on October 13, 1916. She is also interred at Desert Lawn Memorial Park.

**Summary:**

The collection contains an oral interview on one cassette; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. Harry Thomas Hart served with Company #544 of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), stationed at the Glen Creek Camp (YNP-7). In his interview, Hart describes the layout of the camp; his various jobs, including fighting fires; the food, including a Thanksgiving meal; and a truck accident. Hart's enrollment and discharge certificates and a yearbook entitled the Pictorial Review, Co. 544 CCC, YNP-7 Glen Creek.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** Harry T. Hart Memorabilia, CCC in Yellowstone Documentation Project, Yellowstone National Park Archives. Photocopies of enrollment card, discharge, real photo

postcard of the Gardiner railroad station, and the Pictorial Review for Co. #544, NP-7 Glen Creek.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 110-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 6 pages.

**Harry T. Hart, self-interview  
in Yuma, Arizona, on April 22, 2001**

Narrator: Harry Hart

It is April the 22nd, 2001. I am at 11392 E 25th Place, Yuma, Arizona, 85367. My name is Harry T. Hart. I was 18 years old when I entered the CCC's in October of 1940. I served at NP-7 at Glen Creek, Yellowstone National Park. I was about seven miles from Gardiner, Montana.

My family are Native Americans. My Dad was a railroader in Ohio, before the First World War. After he came back, we moved to West Virginia; I was 6 months old. I lived in West Virginia until I went into the CCCs and the United States Navy. I have three brothers, two died as infants; three sisters, one died as infant. I finished three years of high school; got a GED test after I came out of the Navy.

I read a lot. I read about the CCCs in the newspaper, I wasn't recruited. I went to Moundsville, West Virginia, on 10/14 of 1940. I was there until 10/19/1940. Then, I went to Yellowstone, Yellow Springs Park, Ohio. I was in Yellow Springs, Ohio, from 10/20/40 to 10/21/40. Then we got on a train the 10/23rd and was on the train until 10/24/40. I stayed in Yellowstone Park 10/24 to 9/9/41. When I went to Moundsville, West Virginia, they asked for volunteers to go to Yellowstone. All there that was with me stepped forward and we went by train to Yellowstone via Yellow Springs, Ohio. Why did I want to go to Yellowstone? I always did want to go to the west.

I was only in Moundsville Camp, then we went to Yellow Springs, Ohio. Then from there, we went to the railroad station and got on the train and stayed there until we moved to Yellowstone Park. Then, we got on trucks from this railroad station and went up the mountain to camp. I was assigned to Bear 2. There, we met with the officers for orientation. Then, they fed us in the mess hall. There were four barracks, two on each side of the parade ground. In the middle was the mess hall, and above the barracks was the officers' buildings, the canteen, the rec. hall, and behind that was the carpenter shop and maintenance building. How many were in the barracks? There were twenty-five to thirty of us, two rows. It was finished on the inside with sheet rock and it had two stoves in it, one at one end and one at the other for heat in the winter.

Layout of the camp, I don't know if it is east, west, north, or south. I have a picture in the book that I am sending you, that you can see how the camp was laid out. I will try to say and tell you here, the camp was laid out as follows: coming into the camp from Mammoth Hot Springs, there was a "Y" or a "V" in the road, the main road going past the officers' clubs, canteen, the rec hall, and the library and repair shop, plumbing and carpenter shop, dispensary and laundry. The barracks were two on each side of the parade ground; the mess hall was at the end of the barracks, between the four barracks. The motor pool was behind barracks one and two coming into camp.

I had no special job until the last month. Last month or two, I was made a plumber's assistant. I worked on the road, beautifying the roadsides right below the hospital. I worked with the surveyors about a month, worked in the nursery, and night guarded the motor pool during the winter. We changed jobs a lot each month, so no one would get all the dirty details duty, but I always liked it. I didn't have no special

jobs at that time. The only thing we did was landscaping, like I said, along the roads, surveying campgrounds at Fishing Bridge, and of course, raising small pine trees and other trees.

Park personnel was over us; they told us what to do and where to go. The foreman was William L. Sheridan, Camp Superintendent; Ida Halverson, Foreman Firefighting; Harrison Wade, Senior Foreman of Landscaping; James R. Williams, Junior Foreman of Plumbing. They were the overseers of personnel working under them. They made all the assignments.

I didn't have any special likes or dislikes of the job, I liked them all. I don't think I had a job I hadn't done.

My friends they were all from Ohio and West Virginia. They were all friendly. They all came from poor families. Every one was goofier than the other.

What did we do in the off hours? I didn't play any sports. We went to town, Mammoth Hot Springs, Gardiner, Montana, and Livingston, Montana--went there for rodeo.

I think I had every sandwich of all kinds of wild meat there was. Our food in the camp was pretty good food, it was prepared good. Just remember all the fellas came from poor families, there was very little to eat. I don't remember lots of menus, but there was plenty to eat. Things at the holidays: we had turkey for Thanksgiving and all the trimmings.

There was very little incidents with the grizzlies in the park. We were told to stay away from them and don't feed them. We'd see an old bear out loose at night. We had a bear living underneath the mess hall, but she had cubs, every year--twins. At night, they'd come out and eat out of the garbage cans. We fed the deer, about the only thing we ever fed. And we fed them bread or whatever we had. They just got used to people being around them, but that was the only animal I go closed to.

I don't remember any funny stories, except trying to skiing. And a sad story is: we were coming from out of a job at the nursery. The driver of the stake body truck turned a corner in loose gravel and tipped over from the turned the corner too sharp and the backend went up over the cab. I was sitting next to the cab, and I got knocked out, cut on the forehead. One fella lost his life, he was from Fairfork, West Virginia [Fred Jacques of Fairmont, West Virginia, died on August 3, 1941]. Another one had most of his muscles cut out of his arm above the elbow, and others were hurt with sprained wrist or arm or shoulder. That's about all of that.

We did have to fight fires, but we learned how. Summer time, we'd go out and simulated fires and how to put them out. And we didn't have to rescue anybody. There was another camp, Camp 535, right behind us. Oh, it wasn't more than fifty feet from us. They did a lot of firefighting. But we never had to go.

The men in our Company were just common lifers, we never had any local men working, except the Park Service people. The only challenges I faced was each job, each job was a challenge. And I don't think there were any worse times, I enjoyed working.

There weren't any awards or citations, except a certificate for \$169 for a machinist trade.

I was out of the CCCs when the Second World War started. I was home going to machinist school. I went in the Navy in 1942. Among the skills I learned in the Navy was hard work, plumbing, and machinist trade.

The wife and I went back to the old camp, Yellowstone, in 1989. I could not see any of the barracks. There were other buildings that housed the young people who worked for the Park Service, I think they said. I guess they were college kids.

I don't know, I--important history of the park. I am sending you a book, a pictorial review of the CCCs and it has a lot of history in it.

I still think the United States should begin the CCCs again. There is so much young people can do for our national parks and keep them off the streets, and let them learn something besides standing around on the corners selling dope, and drinking, smoking.

That's about all I've got to say. I hope you can understand it, what I've said. I've got emphysema and it's hard to talk, thank you very much.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **GLENWOOD HARVEY YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

SELF-INTERVIEWED

OCTOBER 26, 2001  
AT THE HARVEY HOME  
IN WILDWOOD, MISSOURI

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H8

**NARRATOR:**

Glenwood Harvey was born August 19, 1923, in Tunnelton, West Virginia, to William and Leto (Ordway) Harvey. He had one brother, James Preston.

After completing high school in Tunnelton, Harvey enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). He served first with the National Youth Administration in Arthurdale, West Virginia, before transferring to the CCC and relocating to Yellow Springs, Ohio. He then was assigned to Company #544 stationed in Yellowstone National Park. In Yellowstone, Harvey was assigned to the Glen Creek Camp (YNP-7) near Mammoth. His main duty was as a supply steward. He also attended training for work in a machine shop. At some point, he also served in Company #535.

Harvey left the CCCs after a year, obtaining a job at the Curtiss-Wright Flying Service in Columbus, Ohio. He enlisted in the Army Air Force on April 6, 1943, as a private. He appears to have remained in the service following World War II, transitioning to the United States Air Force when it separated from the Army.

Harvey had two children: Shirley and Glenwood, Jr. He passed away on October 3, 2015, and was buried at Valhalla Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.

**Summary:**

The collection contains an oral interview on one cassette; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. Glenwood Harvey enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), serving in Company #535 and Company #544 stationed at the Glen Creek Camp (YNP-7) near Mammoth Hot Springs. In his interview, Harvey recalls recreational activities such as pool, Ping-Pong, and trips to Old Faithful and Gardiner, Montana; jokes such as snipe hunting; and a visit from three girls who were hitchhiking. The folder also includes four original photographs of Harvey, George Anderson, a pet deer named Ole or Old Bill, and a panoramic image of the Glen Creek Camp.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** Glenwood Harvey Photographs, CCC in Yellowstone Documentation Project, Yellowstone National Park Archives. Four black and white original photographs showing Harvey and a coworker feeding a deer nicknamed "Old Bill" and a panoramic image of the Glen Creek Camp.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 110-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 5 pages.

**Glenwood Harvey, self-interview  
in Wildwood, Missouri, on October 26, 2001**

Glenwood Harvey

Today is October 26th, 2001. My name is Glenwood Harvey and I'm at 18820 Melrose Road, Box 71, Glencoe, Missouri. I was born on August the 19th, 1923. I was eighteen years old when I entered the three-C camp [CCC]. That was in the month of June, I presume. I served the three-Cs, YNP 544, at Mammoth Hot Springs, or right north of Mammoth Hot Springs.

My family's background: My father was born near Grafton, West Virginia, and he was raised in the coal mining region. He was a mining superintendent until he passed away. My mother was born in Fredonia, Kentucky. I have one brother who has passed away also. My education consisted of graduating from high school in Tunnelton, West Virginia.

How did I hear about the three-C camp? Well, there was a woman from Kingwood, the county seat, came around and was inquiring anybody that would be interested in joining up. So, after graduating from high school I decided to give it a try. I first went to the NYA [National Youth Administration] camp in Arthurdale, West Virginia, and transferred later to join the three-Cs and went to Yellow Springs, Ohio, which is a processing center for this area. At that time, we caught a troop train to Yellowstone Park.

That was the only camp I came in contact with was YNP 544, Yellowstone Park. There must have been about thirty fellows that lived in the barracks. I later, after I got a job in a supply room, I started sleeping in the supply room. There was four barracks in YNP-7. There was also a camp 535, which was adjoining our camp. They operated separately. They had schooling down in Mammoth. Several of the employees, or not employees as such, but several fellows took up welding. I went to school taking up machine shop training.

Occasionally, we'd go. We made a trip out to Old Faithful. That was just one of the recreational deals we had. After getting out of the three-Cs, later I went--made a trip through Yellowstone just to see where the old camp had been located. I was surprised to see that they had a, some sort of a youth camp set up there. I guess they did training and such. The training we received was very similar to Army training. You know, putting up a flagpole, saluting a flagpole, having Taps, and etc.; the same routine that the Army goes through. It was quite interesting. We ate at the mess hall as a group, did different chores around the camp there. One of the jobs they had, they had a nursery down in Gardiner, Montana. In fact, they had an accident where a truck turned over and one of the old boys that I knew quite well, he spent a certain amount of time in the hospital down there, and he got all right. One fellow got killed and he was originally from Fairmont, West Virginia, and I think they sent his body back there to be taken care of [Fred Jacques died on August 3, 1941].

For recreation we had, well, we had pool halls, Ping Pong, and such. And once in a while, some of the boys would go down to Gardiner. We did a lot of snipe hunting [laughing]--that's one of the deals that we did. One of the boys that was snipe hunting, about four of us guys went up the hollow there and put this guy, he was holding the bag, had a pillowcase to catch the snipes in [laughing]. And when we, the four of

us, went on back to camp and left him up there holding the bag. And it got dark and we got worried about the fellow and called the rangers from down at Gardiner and they came up to check things out. In the meantime, this guy had walked over on the road and came back into camp and we were all relieved from that little episode. It was quite frightening at the time because we didn't know--since there was a lot of animals, wild animals in the Park--we didn't know what happened to him. But, he came in and everything blew over. The lieutenant in the camp there seemed to forgive us for little experience we had.

There was three girls from Oregon hitch hiking to Salt Lake City. I'll never forget this little deal. It was getting late in the evening, one evening, and they didn't have a place to spend the night, so they made arrangements for them to go down to Gardiner. And I think they ate at the mess hall before the lieutenant drove 'em down there. And they spent the night at Gardiner. I don't know if they had barracks there or what it was. One old boy from, he was an assistant cook in the camp, he fell in love with one of them gals. And he left camp and after falling in love, he went down to Salt Lake City to meet up with the gal, and I don't know whatever happened. I never heard any more about it, but it was kind of an episode that I guess it could only happen to some young boys that didn't know what to expect or whatever, but it was quite interesting.

[End of recording.]

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **EDWARD J. "EDDIE" HOGAN YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

SELF-INTERVIEWED

[UNKNOWN] 16, 2001  
AT THE HOGAN HOME  
IN NORTH CANTON, OHIO

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H9

**NARRATOR:**

Edward Joseph "Eddie" Hogan, Jr., was born November 19, 1916, in Cleveland, Ohio, to Edward J. and Eva (Smith) Hogan.

After graduating from McKinley High School in 1934, Eddie enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). After initial intake at Fort Knox, Kentucky, he was assigned to Company #550 and sent to the Canyon Camp (YNP-2) via Gardiner, Montana. Hogan worked at cutting wood for the hotel and fought fires.

Following his service in the CCCs, Hogan spent thirty-one years working for Bearings, Inc. He was married to Bette Glaeser Marshall, who passed away in 1968. The couple had a son, Patrick J. Eddie died on December 2, 2006, and his remains were cremated.

**Summary:**

The collection contains an oral interview on two cassettes; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. Edward J. "Eddie" Hogan enrolled in Company #550 of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), serving at the Canyon Camp. In his interview, Hogan recalls cutting trees near the Canyon Hotel, playing basketball and baseball, watching the grizzlies at the Canyon dump feeding ground, his tentmates, and working at the Buffalo Ranch. The folder also contains fourteen original photographs of Eddie, fellow Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enrollees, the Canyon Camp (YNP-2), and sights in Yellowstone National Park.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** Edward J. Hogan Photographs, CCC in Yellowstone Documentation Project, Yellowstone National Park Archives. Fourteen black and white reproduction photographs showing Hogan, fellow enrollees, Canyon Camp, and Yellowstone National Park. There are also two hand drawn maps showing the placement and layout of the Canyon Camp.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 110-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 8 pages.

**Edward J. "Eddie" Hogan, self-interview  
In North Canton, Ohio, in 2001**

Narrator: Edward Hogan

Hello, my name is Edward Hogan. Today is the 16th of 2001. My name is Edward Hogan and located 1259 Los Angeles Northwest, North Canton, Ohio. I was born the 19th of November 1916, in Cleveland, Ohio. I was 18 years old when I entered the CCC in June of 1935. I served in Yellowstone National Park, Company 550, Camp Canyon.

Now, something about me: when I retired in 1982, I decided to follow up my genealogy, found out my ancestors were here in 1709, 1738. My grandfather, they came from Germany. My grandfather came from Ireland in the 1850's. I have one half-sister who is seventeen years older than I am.

When I got out of high school, there were no jobs to be had. We had a little trouble. I kind of bummed around for a year. Finally, I went to my father in Cleveland--I was living in Canton--I went to my father in Cleveland, told him I wanted to get in the CCCs. He says, "What's that for?" I said, "I don't know." I had seen the boys, there was a camp out in Euclid, and I had seen them walking around, and I figured, "Well, I'm gonna bother?" Two of us had tried to get in in Canton; we couldn't because he had four brothers that were working. I then talked to my father and his company had gone on strike, so I said, "You're on strike, let's go down and apply for welfare, and see what we can do." Well, we went down and applied for welfare, went in the office. The welfare office was on Hayden Avenue in Cleveland in an old apartment. We went in. Finally, some lady came out and said, "Come on." So, we went in and sat down and she asked the name and everything. And she looked at my father and she said, "Did you ever live in Newberg Heights?" Which, at that time, was part of Cleveland; in fact, it still is. She said her name, "Oh, you know my brother. You want to get in the CCCs? OK, just a minute." And she started writing. Finally, she told me to sign all the papers. We had to go down to--we had to go to Old Gray's Armory in Cleveland for the physical. I think it was the next. I went down, managed to squeak enough money to ride the street car down, went in and took my physical. There was a debate because I have a bad ear. But, they decided I was alright, that they could take me.

Well, I had about three hours. My mother, at that time, was out at Willoughby, at my sister's. So, I got on the street car for a whole nickel or dime, rode it to the end of the line, hitchhiked out to Willoughby, saw my mother for a little while, said goodbye. Then, I hitchhiked back because we had to be at the Cleveland Union Terminal at 5 o'clock to get on the train. We don't know, I think it was Fort Knox. They did tell us where we were going. We got on the train. They gave us a box lunch for supper. Got on the train and rode, we rode

all night; had to sleep sitting up and everything. We got into Fort Knox, Kentucky, the next day. And they first, I think they fed us--they better because we were starved. Then, along came the shots. Then, we got clothes. The Army, they have two sizes: too big and too small. Somehow or other, we managed to find enough to fit us. They assigned us tents. And in the tent were two other fellows from Cleveland and myself. They were Chris Eck and Ben Randell. And we stayed together all the time we served in the CCCs. Well, after we got organized and everything, they had--they didn't want us to loaf. So, they had us go around and clean up the offices that were left at Fort Knox and do things. It was hot; to put it bluntly, it was HOT. So, they had old showers that they had used for the civilians down there that worked in the camp. So, we were taking showers every day.

Then, one day, they came and they told us this is where you are going. They didn't tell us what company. They did--I don't know how we got assigned. But anyhow, we were assigned to 550. And they said, "Gardiner, Montana." "Oh boy, where is Gardner, Montana?" Everybody was over to the map on the wall looking. "Wow, Yellowstone National Park right there. I hope we get to go to that Yellowstone." We did, right smack dab in the middle of it. Well, finally they put us on troop trains. We left Fort Knox, Kentucky, and traveled through--well stopped--in Marshalltown, Iowa. As usual, there were woman at the station, and the boys were sticking out their heads giving them telephone numbers and addresses; telephones were well known. And things were--we got into Gardiner, Montana, just about dawn. Believe it or not, it was COLD. All of our clothes are warm clothes, our jackets and everything, were in our barracks bag and we couldn't get to them. So, we ran around and tried to get warm. There were three or four other camps that were there at the same time. All the trucks came and picked them up. We are standing around; we are still freezing. And they finally came and said 550 will be here pretty soon. So, they came, they threw us in stake trucks, and we started back to, they said we were going back to camp. "How far is it?" "Oh, it's about sixty miles." "Ooooh." Well anyhow, we got in. And we got held up in traffic because a lot of people decided they were going to feed the bears. The black bears came out and they fed them. Then, we moved a little bit farther. We got someplace. We saw snow on the 4th of July, and we got into camp. We were hungry, so they fed us. Then, they started giving out shots. I was fine, except I got kind of sick. I think, I went back and laid down. And they checked up on me and then I was all right to eat again when supper time came around.

We didn't know what we were going to do. They told us we were quarantined up in camp; couldn't go anyplace for two weeks. Well, some of the guys, the next night, managed to sneak out. They--I don't think they paid that much attention to us. And we found out what we were going to do. Well, they put us on a work crew. We went out grubbing stumps, that's cutting down trees and taking the stumps out. All we had then was a crosscut saw, an axe, a pick, and shovels. That was quite a project. They sent us up near the hotel, to do that. Well, it was--I believe--Inspiration Point was near that point. Near the place we were

working. People were coming up talking to us and asking us questions, "What were we doing?" And we'd talk to them; told us everything. Well, we'd go back to camp, get cleaned up a bit, ate supper, we lay around. And we kept going up there all the time. Finally, one day we came along, the ranger said, "We need someone to help us out." So, one of them says, "Anybody want to volunteer?" Nobody volunteered. So, he said, "You, you, and you." Well, that was me and two other fellows. We got in the back of the pickup. He went down the road, one of the main roads. He stopped, unlocked a gate, and we went back perhaps a mile or so. And came across a beautiful little lake back there, with a fire warden, fire cabin on it, and we had to clean that up. We cleaned that up, walked around. We were all done about noon. We ate our lunch, fell asleep. "Oh, no use going back now." So, we walked over and looked at tracks of the animals around the shore of the lake. And it was sand there; we could see it very plainly. Then, we went back.

We stayed in Yellowstone and I got--I was on the basketball team. We went around to other camps to play basketball, baseball things. And we found out some of the other camps were being fed--we weren't getting fed so well. You got--they had ice cream and chicken. I don't know if it was just for our benefit or not, but anyway, we were fed pretty well. So, we came back to camp and it kept on going, the camp.

Oh, the work we did. We built a bear feeding ground. All the garbage from the hotel and the lodge was taken down to the lodge field and dumped out. And the bears used to come out of the woods and eat it. And every night, there was this one big grizzly. "Oh, he was mean. But anyhow, we built a fence; a place around there where people could sit and watch all this going on. And every time we went in, the rangers and the officers from camp had 45's and rifles--a good armament to protect us. Well, that was one thing we did.

I don't know what some of the other fellows did, but we went out and they had a spike camp. A spike camp was a camp that was a satellite from a main camp. We went up to build a buffalo corral. There was only about fifteen, I think, or twenty of us there. We had to put these posts in the ground. Well, we had bunch of guys, "Well, let's go." So, we started and put posts in the ground. The boss comes up, the foreman, and he says, "You guys are going too fast." OK, so, we do a couple then we'd sit around for about three or four hours and read magazines. We had a cook and everything. And one night, it was one of the fights, Jerry Lewis and someone was fighting. We went back to camp that night for something, and going in we could see off in the distance, smoke and flames; a fire. We went into camp and said "You guys are going on a forest fire pretty soon." "Oh no, we're not." "Oh yes, you are." Well, the next morning we were rudely awoken as the trucks went by. We were back off the road, but they still made enough noise that they woke us up. They came back in about three weeks later. They had fighting the forest fire in Wyoming and ended up in Montana and Idaho and somehow doing that. That was one thing we had. Then one day, we were on a

truck and trucks had three letters painted on the side: ECW-it really stood for Emergency Conservation Work. So, one of the women or somebody going through the campgrounds yelled out, "What does that stand for?" So, one of the wise yelled, "every cent wasted."-- which wasn't true because we really worked it. Then, for recreation some nights, we'd go up to the lodge. They had a little orchestra; they had dances, things like that. And they didn't really care too much for us, but nonetheless, we put up.

Now, I was there in 1982. When I was there in '35, there was a pass that you could take that went right down alongside the Yellowstone River. And there was a hot spring right alongside the river. But in '82, you could not go down that path. And they had it arranged so you take only so many steps and you had a list--don't forget we were 5,000 feet up in the air. And we had--one day, there was some excitement in camp. The Rangers brought in a fellow that had been walking on a trail and he explained it to our doctor. The last thing he heard was a growl, and he tried to climb a tree, and a bear attacked him. And he had big claw marks across his back, his one arm was broken. And they threw him in the ambulance we had in camp and sent him up to Mammoth Hot Springs to the hospital. I don't know how long he was up there or anything else about him.

In Yellowstone, there were three or four other camps besides us. There was one at West Yellowstone, one at Old Faithful, one at Mammoth Hot Springs, and I believe there was another one somewhere around, but I can't remember where. The only permanent building we had in our camp was a mess hall and canteen; that was permanent and the rest of camp were all in tents. I believe it was six in a tent. Let's see, six in a tent: we had Ben Bando, Chris Eck, Warren Dixon, myself, and another fellows. We had little stoves in the middle of the tent, put on sand and dirt and everything. We used to put all the firewood in there the night before, because when we got up in the morning in Yellowstone, it was COLD, no matter how you look at it. We laid a fire and put the wood in the stove, so the night watchman, all he had to do was drop a match in and we were warm.

Next thing, a lot of people think that people in there were a bunch of bums. Well, we weren't. The simple reason, we had three or four fellows had gone to college. Fortunately, they didn't have the money to finish and they joined up and helped us out. We had one that went to the New Mexico School of Mines at that time; I don't know what the present name is. And every time we had a rock or anything we wanted to know anything about, we ran to see him and he would tell us all about it. In fact, we found some shells laying out there, seashells, laying out there someplace and found those.

What else? Our camp was mostly comprised of fellows from Ohio. We had about, I don't know how many we really had, but I think six, seven, maybe ten from Indiana. And we and the Hoosiers got along fairly well together. We had, all the tents, had floors in them of

wood. While we were there we learned how to make our own beds, put our own things away, square corners on the beds. Our sheets, I think, were changed every week, towels and everything. We lived the life of kings--everything was furnished. All we had to do was get up in the morning and do some work and eat, do some work and eat, and fool around in the evenings.

When I was out there in 1982, at Mammoth Hot Springs, they had walks all through the area where the hot springs were. When we were there in 1935, you couldn't do that--there were continual steam and water coming out of there. There had been an earthquake out there and I believe it ruined the whole blooming thing.

We got paid five hours a month, once a month. Truthfully, I don't remember how we got it, whether we got a five dollar bill or not. But we didn't need any money. All we needed was a candy bar every now and then, and maybe buy some stamps. Of course, people were sending those to us.

We had a colored fellow in camp that was, he spoke with broken English. And he was a real good Catholic; he would not eat meat on Friday. Well, I always told him, "You can eat meat on Friday, it's all right." Well fortunately, we had only been a couple of weeks and in came a priest, what he had. When the fellow asked if he could eat meat on Friday, the priest kind of smiled and laughed and said "Yes, you have special dispensation for the simple reason that you are out in the other place."

I have marked down on the map a road that is no longer there. I remember when I was there in 1982, the road went through the meadow, or the place where the bear feeding ground used to be, because that was, they stopped putting the garbage and everything out for the bears. The other thing is: I stopped where we were putting up the fence, the buffalo corral. Our foreman was a fellow named Dustin Hollo, and he was from Sheridan, Wyoming. And I stopped in Sheridan and made some inquiries. And found out that he had been there, or he was there for three or four years back then, but he had later moved on.

We had a boxing ring out there, but you could only box for one minute because of the altitude and the thin air. Going into the CCCs when we did, we were replacements. The enlistment periods are March and September. We were just replacements for people who'd gone out, or fellows that left by request, or they had some reason, maybe they weren't [unintelligible] to begin with.

Somewhere in here I mentioned Ben Bando. Ben Bando now lives in southern Ohio outside of Cleveland. He had two sons: Sal Bando and Chris Bando. Sal was a 3rd baseman for the Oakland A's and Chris Bando was a catcher for the Cleveland Indians.

Another thing that happened while we were out working: people came and talked to us. There was a couple talked to one of the fellows, and they had started out from the east coast to drive to Yellowstone. Remember now, this is 1935. They got as far as Chicago. I don't know what they did with their car, but they got on the train to come the rest of the way. In those days, there were no motels, no restaurants, nothing along the way. And it was kind of desolate. When I was in Yellowstone in 1982, I talked to one of the Rangers there, and I told them there was a road going down there. She said they had no trace of a road; that she had been all over Yellowstone looking for things but there was no trace of it. Course after forty-seven years, and pine trees and everything, there probably wasn't. When the boys went out on the forest fire, after about ten days, one of the men disappeared. Went out looking for him, and they found him out behind a rock praying for rain.

This is more: I said back there that we had a baseball team. We didn't have a baseball team for the simple reason we didn't have any place to play. It was all hills and no recreation around there. What else? Oh, one day some of us got a brainstorm and went down into the Canyon and we were going to climb out of the Canyon by going up the walls. Well anyhow, we started up. Well, I got part way up and I--I'm not going any farther, so I backed down. Well after I'd seen Ben, he told me about that he got so far up and he froze. A couple of fellows were ahead of him, and they came back down and brought him back, so he could join us. And that was the end of the canyon climbing.

I went up to see Ben, and he has some pictures. But I don't know if, I just called him and he can't locate them. So for now, I will send this out to you and wait for the pictures. And there's a lot of other things there.

Thank you. I will never forget my experience out there. The nine months I spent in the CCCs. We had food, we had a warm place to sleep, we had cold and we had a lot of great fellows out there with us.

[end of recording]

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **E. J. "GENE" MARTIN YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

SELF-INTERVIEWED

**2001**

AT THE MARTIN HOME  
IN PALATKA, FLORIDA

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H10

**NARRATOR:**

Eugene J. "Gene" Martin was born June 2, 1921, in Slidell, Louisiana. He grew up in New Orleans, Louisiana, and later Perry, Florida, where he graduated from Taylor County High School in 1938.

Gene enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in June 1938 after a family friend who worked for the CCCs ensured he would be sent to Yellowstone National Park. After initial intake at Fort McPherson, Alabama, he was assigned to the Lake Camp (YNP-3) in Yellowstone. His work included installing water mains near the Canyon Hotel and building a dock in front of the Lake Hotel.

Martin left the CCCs in 1939, and returned to Florida to attend college. He enlisted with the United States Marine Corps in 1942, his experience with explosives while constructing the Canyon water mains serving him well during the war. He was assigned to Cryptologic School and saw service in New Zealand, Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam, Pearl Harbor and Iwo Jima. Following World War II, Martin worked for Florida Light and Power Company for thirty-nine years.

Gene married Mary Edith "Billie" Martin in 1947. The couple had a son, Michael, and a daughter, Karen. Billie passed away on June 6, 2002, and Gene died on August 12, 2012. Both are buried at Oak Hill West cemetery in Palatka, Florida.

**Summary:**

The collection contains an oral interview on one cassette; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. E. J. "Gene" Martin enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), serving at the Lake Camp (YNP-3). In his interview, Martin recalls the layout of the camp, installing water mains, building a dock, digging ditches, and visiting Fishing Bridge and a trading post. Bears, a porcupine, and other wildlife are discussed. Martin also mentions his time at CCC camps in Death Valley, California, and Ely, Nevada, as well as his service in the Marine Corps during World War II.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** None

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 110-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 5 pages.

**E. J. “Gene” Martin, self-interview  
in Palatka, Florida, in 2001**

Narrator: Eugene Martin

2001. My name is Eugene J. Martin. My address is 3424 Kennedy Street, Palatka, Florida. 32177. I was born on June the 2nd, 1921. I was 17 years old when I entered the CCCs in June of 1938. I served in Yellowstone Park; I believe the camp number was 544. We were stationed at Yellowstone Lake, up the hill from the big hotel. A friend of the family was recruiting for the CCC. I talked with him and he promised I would be sent to Yellowstone Park, but I had to act quickly. I had been promised a job in a boarding house at the University of Florida and I wanted to attend in the fall. My sister and I decided if I went to Yellowstone Park, I would be more mature and would adjust to college life better. I was sent to Fort McPherson, Alabama [Georgia?]. In a few days after I arrived there, a group of us boarded a train for the long trip to West Yellowstone City [West Yellowstone, Montana]. Trucks took us to our camp at Yellowstone Lake. The scenery going from West Yellowstone to the camp was beautiful; it was just breath taking. We had never seen, most of us, had never seen mountains before.

The camp consisted of tents with wooden floor. There was a long building with the mess hall and showers and latrine. There were four to five boys to each tent. We each had a footlocker to store our belongings in. The thing that concerned me most when I arrived at the camp was the high fence that was around the camp. I was concerned about that high fence; we later learned that was to keep the bears out at night.

During the summer of 1938, we installed water mains over near where the Falls are [Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone]. That was interesting because we had a--the fellow in charge he was really doing a good job. He wanted everything to be exact, the right depth on every ditch that we dug. This was interesting work. Later on, I was transferred to another crew and we were--we built a dock there in front of the big hotel, out into the lake. This was, I imagine, the best built dock in the world because we used logs, old logs, old trees, and everything was put together to be permanent. We had a lot of fun building that dock. I remember it was just a blast. If you fell in the water, you had to go back to camp because you'd freeze to death that water was so cold in that lake. You had to change your clothes. Other than that, I remember that it snowed in July, we had snow everywhere. We left Yellowstone around September the 5th because the weather was getting too bad.

Some of the things I remember about Yellowstone was: there was a trading post down on the highway there, and we'd go down to this trading post at times. And we were never allowed to go down there alone; we had to go in groups of four or five because if we stayed

until after dark we had to come back in a group because of the bears. There was always a bunch of bears hanging around down by the trading post at night. They never did bother us; we'd walk right by them and they would just go on about their business and we'd go on about ours.

I remember one time we went to--we took a hike over to Fishing Bridge to see all the fish and watch the people. There was a big campground there, and people were fishing off that bridge and trying to catch those trout. I remember on one day we were going over there, and we were cutting through the woods, and we saw something moving in the bushes, so we went over to investigate and it was a porcupine. And the porcupine he didn't like us, so he swished his tail and we got those quills all over our pants. I kept a souvenir of them for years and years. Over the Fishing Bridge it was very, very nice; the people were nice and they always wanted to talk to us and we'd talk with them. One fellow was very good at fishing and we got interested in why he was catching all the fish that he did, and he was using P&G soap. And those fish just loved that soap.

I never disliked anything about the work that I was assigned to do. We always had a lot of fun and everybody was buddy, buddy in those days because--. I don't know, I think one of the reasons was everybody was poor. They didn't realize they were poor but we just got along just fine. There was only one incident that we had one fellow from Georgia that had family problems, had to be sent home. Couple of days after he left, I found out my beautiful gold watch that I was given for graduation was--it left with him, because we never could find it. Nobody had locks on their footlockers, everybody was trust each other.

We went to school two nights a week. Everybody that--they had several subjects that you could take. And we'd split up in groups and study those, the material that they gave us about those subjects. It was real interesting. The park personnel, the Rangers, would come by at times and show some slides or give us a lecture, tell us about some of the animals. We saw a lot of wild animals: there were deer, and we'd--I don't remember what all we saw, but a there was a lot of wild animals, everywhere.

One of the things I remember, we never had church. I guess it was just too far for a preacher to come and hold a service, where we were. We didn't--we never went to town. We did play a little ball. The food: we had great food. We had Cajun cooks. I never will forget that. They spoke very little English, but they were excellent cooks. I have eaten a lot of food since then and I never have found anyone that could make French toast the way those fellows could, that was the best French toast you ever had.

I don't remember many of the people. I see their faces once in a while in my memory, but one of the people I remember most of all was our Sergeant. He was a big, burly fellow and

he was always nice to me. But, he was kind a rough on some of the people that didn't want to buckle down and enjoy the life that we were living. I remember that if you borrowed a dollar from him before payday you'd have to--come payday--you'd have to give him two dollars. So, I never borrowed any money from him, I'd always go without.

I was not in the Cs when the war started. I'd been out a couple of years before I joined the Marine Corps. I was able to adapt to the Marine Corps pretty easily because of my tour of duty in the CCC. I knew how to get along with those fellows. I have not been back to Yellowstone, I've always wanted to, but never able to get enough time to make that long trip. I learned--I was--when we were building that pipeline, that water main over there near the waterfalls, we had to use a lot of dynamite. So at first, that was kind of frightening using that stuff. But later on, I didn't have any problems getting used to explosives in the Marine Corps.

After we left Yellowstone we went to Death Valley, California, and we stayed through the winter there. And then we went to, in the early spring of '39, we went to Ely, Nevada--out in the middle of nowhere, nothing but rattlesnakes. But in Death Valley and in Ely we were in barracks. That was better living in the barracks. I wish I could tell you more, if you have any questions that I can answer just contact me.

Thank you.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **HOBERT MCQUEARY YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

SELF-INTERVIEWED

AUGUST 12, 2001  
AT THE MCQUEARY HOME  
IN SWEET HOME, OREGON

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H11

**NARRATOR:**

Hobert Owsley McQueary was born January 28, 1916, in Ely, Kentucky to John and Helen (Chrisman) McQueary. The second of seven, he had one brother, Charles (Bennett) and five sisters: Ruth, Chloe, Ruby, Juanita Faye (Bennett), and Vivian (Bennett). One other child, Jewel, died in infancy. John McQueary died in 1919. Helen married Enos S. Bennett about 1928 or 1929, but by the mid-1930s she had apparently divorced, leaving her caring for five children still at home.

Hobert enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) about 1936 to help his mother with family expense, sending home \$25 a month. After initial intake at Fort McPherson, Alabama, he volunteered for Company #544, which was assigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> Core area in the far West. He worked in California and Idaho, depending upon the season. In 1937, his company was moved to the Canyon Camp (YNP-2) in Yellowstone National Park. Here, McQueary became a cook. In winter, he worked at the Mammoth Camp (YNP-1) and for the new camp being set up at Glen Creek (YNP-7), near Gardiner, Montana. He also served as cook in a number of spike camps located at Cooke City, Montana; Tower Falls in Yellowstone National Park; Bridger, Montana; and Jordan, Montana. Eventually, McQueary took the opportunity to cook at a new camp near Pineville, Kentucky.

Martin left the CCCs in 1939, and moved to Portland, Oregon. During World War II, he built Liberty Ships at the Kaiser Shipyards. He then became a business agent for the Painters-Sandblasters Union. He later co-founded the Willamette Fiber and Chipboard Company in Sweet Home, Oregon, the first particle board plant in the West. He also owned and operated Inter-Pacific Resins, also in Sweet Home.

Hobert married Agnes Duncan on March 12, 1942. The couple had two sons: Dennis and Tim, and a daughter, Lorna. Hobert died on July 23, 2003. Agnes passed away on July 9, 2005. Both are buried in Gilliland Cemetery in Sweet Home, Oregon.

**Summary:**

The collection contains an oral interview on one cassette; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. McQueary recalls his arrival in Yellowstone via the railroad in Gardiner, Montana, and moving to various other camps and spike camps. He recounts a number of incidents with problem bears as well as the various sanctioned and un-sanctioned ways they tried to keep the bears away from the food stores.

McQueary also worked in Banning, California; Camp San Antonio in California; Camp McGee Creek near Enaville, Idaho; Tulelake, California; Lava Beds National Monument (California); Redwood National and State Parks (California); and Prairie Creek State Park (California). In these locations he worked on fire breaks, irrigation ditches, blister rust control, and running the

canteen and a recreation room. He mentions a railroad accident near Jordan, Montana; opening caves and catching rattlesnakes in Lava Bed National Park (California); and a flood on the Cumberland River near Pineville, Kentucky. He also mentions an outbreak of spinal meningitis and riding the Red Car streetcar line.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** McQueary, Hobert. *Oregon Trail Videos: Early Linn County Pioneers, Volumes 1-4.*, circa 2000. Linn County Genealogical Society. (McQueary was the interviewer).

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 110-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 11 pages.

**Hobert McQuery self-interview  
in Sweet Home, Oregon on August 12, 2001**

Narrator: Hobert McQuery

This is the 12th of August in 2000 [2001] and my name is Hobert McQuery. I joined the 3Cs—that means the Civilian Conservation Corps—in October of 1934 and I was 18 years old at the time. I was born in Ely, Kentucky. Ely, Kentucky, is a very small spot on the map, and I was through there about four or five years ago, and saw the little community. But I'm told that where I was born is probably now at the bottom of the beautiful Cumberland Lake damming the Cumberland River. The Cumberland River, I'm told, has about 1200 miles of shoreline because of all the inlets from the various streams emptying into it; it's quite an attraction in that part of the country. But of course, everything is different now, as it was then.

Anyway, my mother had five children to support and by joining the 3Cs, which a friend had told me about, I was able to contribute twenty-five dollars a month to the care of my mother and five children. Things were pretty tough back in those days, as everyone knows who lived during those days. Twenty-five dollars went a long way in providing food for that many people. Incidentally, Ely, Kentucky, is in Russell County. And prior to joining the 3Cs, I had only been out of Russell County one time. I spent a few months in Ohio working on a farm. I had never been anywhere else.

When I joined the 3Cs, I was sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky. Fort Knox is where they have all of gold is stored now, but they didn't have it at that time. We got to Fort Knox and spent a period of time, which would be similar to boot camp if you went into the Army. I suppose it was to teach us some discipline and several other things, which we, sadly, were short of. We were there for two or three weeks and we were brought out into formation one day and told that we're ready to be shipped to the various companies—camps—where we were to serve. And we were given a choice of serving in the 5th core area, which was composed of Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia—I think that's all of them. We could serve the 5th core area, or we could be shipped to the 9th core area in the western part of the United States. And I was always the sort of a person that wanted to go somewhere else and get more experiences, so I chose to come west.

The first place I landed was Banning, California. Banning was a very small town, kind of out in the desert. And was about twelve or thirteen miles from what is now Pahn Springs. It was Palm Springs then, but it was barely a wide spot in the road. So, we had been at the camp in Banning. And I didn't keep track of the camps, I kept track of the company I was in; it was Company 544. We were there for a few days and we were called out onto formation, and we were told that they had received in recruits three more than they needed, but that interestingly enough, another camp that was fairly close by had been shorted three people. So, they asked for three volunteers to go to Camp San Antonio, which was up the San Antonio Canyon, on the San Antonio River. It didn't flow except in the winter time. But, we were taken there. And what we were doing there was mostly working on firebreaks. They would go to the top of a ridge and clear all the vegetation off for, oh I think sixty, eighty feet or something like that to break the fire that got out of control and was coming up the mountain. And it worked pretty well. I worked on the firebreaks for much of the time that I was there in Camp San Antonio. And I remember some of the

experiences I had there. Just above our camp was a resort area. Camp Baldy, which was really Mount San Antonio--but that's what it was called there--was a few miles above our camp. And there were lots of resorts there. Ice House Canyon, I remember that one; and I think Seven Oaks or something like that. But anyway, there was one that was Curry's Camp Baldy, that's c-u-r-r-y. And I was up there one time with a fellow who took her some rattlesnakes. There were lots of rattlesnakes there and we caught a lot of rattlesnakes when we were out on detail. But, she was buying rattlesnakes from this guy. And, depending on the size I think we got a dollar or two, or something like that. She had a lot of Hollywoodites, who were her customers, coming out there from Hollywood all the time and they liked exotic foods. So, we started selling her--I started selling her rattlesnakes also. And one time we were up there delivering some snakes and she asked us if we had ever eaten rattlesnake. We hadn't, of course. So, she prepared rattlesnake for us and I thought it was delicious; it tasted something like chicken.

But anyway, I didn't know it at the time, but I was joining a company, that was called a gypsy company. It was designated initially to spend its winters in southern California and its summers in northern Idaho. So, in due course, the next April I think it was, we were loaded on a train and taken up to Enaville, Idaho. Enaville is, I think, about fifty, sixty miles north of Coeur d'Alene. And it was the closest rail town to the camp where we were headed, which was Camp McGee Creek, it was on McGee Creek. And they loaded us on trucks when we got off of the train and we headed out. And we were seeing--this is pretty early in the springtime--and we were seeing huge snow drifts on either side of the trucks. Incidentally, we rode on the backs of trucks that were called a stake bed truck. It was a flat bed and they had benches for us to sit on. So, that was our normal form of transportation when I was in the 3Cs.

Anyway, we went up to Camp McGee and I worked mostly in the camp. I was running the company store; we called it the canteen. In addition, I was running the recreation room. But, I got involved in other things. I was a night watchman for a while, but I never did go out on the job where the project was that we were really there for. Our purpose in being there--we had 200 men per company--and we were trying to control that dreaded tree enemy: blister rust. It attacks pine trees. It causes damage to the inner bark and it causes blisters to erupt on the outer bark. But anyway, the host of that blister rust, when it is at its younger stage, is a couple of plants that were prevalent in the area. They called it--the family is Ribes, I think--r-i-b-e-s. They transferred a little bit later, after they'd gotten started on that plant, to the pine tree to do their damage. The fellows told me that what they were doing, they would go out in the area where this Ribes was and they would string twines about ten or twelve feet apart, whatever was the best to use. And they'd make lanes and then they'd work inside these lanes, so that they got everything. And I don't know whether they were eliminating all the growth. It was wild gooseberry and wild currant plants is what they were called. And whether they were taking only those that were affected or just whether taking everything, I really don't know, because I never was out there.

But anyway, Coeur d'Alene was our liberty town, as we called it. And I think it was fifty-four miles that we rode back and forth when we into town for recreation. We were riding on the backs of those trucks again, on those benches. And it wasn't very comfortable, but we were willing to put up with all of that misery in order to get into town once in a while. And the fishing was wonderful in McGee Creek. If we ran out of flies, we could use any bright colored cloth, and tie it on a hook, and we'd catch fish all the time.

Well, we got through with that camp there in October, I think it was. And we didn't go to southern California as we had expected this time. We went to Tulelake, California. For those who were working out on detail, as we called it, they were working the irrigation ditches. In the news now, you hear about the farmers around Klamath Falls having trouble with water. Well, those irrigation ditches that those guys were using were the ones that our people were working on. If you met a new girl, instead of asking her what street she lived on, we'd ask her what ditch she lived on and it made them furious, of course. But, we were there for over the winter.

And then, we were moved to Lava Beds National Monument. It was in California, just below the border. And what we were doing there was opening up new caves, or old lava caves, all over the place. And we were opening them up so the tourists could get in there and enjoy them. And they've opened up some caves that had some human remains that had been burned. I guess they learned through some research that that was one method of disposal of bodies when the folks died in the Klamath Tribe of Indians that were there, the American Indians that were local to the area. And also that was the location of Captain Jack's stronghold. Captain Jack [Kintpuash] was what they would call a renegade Indian. They put them on the reservation and he didn't like that. He led some of his people back into the lava beds because that was their home. General Canby brought in a bunch of soldiers to arrest Captain Jack and some of his followers. And they had a little area within the lava beds that was very easy to defend. And they held off quite a number of American soldiers for a long, long time. Finally, they declared a truce. At long distance of course, they talked to one another, and someone came out waving the white flag. And in the ruckus that occurred, General Canby was killed, and we helped establish a permanent marker there called Canby's Cross. I suppose it's still there.

But anyway, we had a lot of fun. In the Lava Beds National Monument, it was very, very hot. It was absorbed by all of that lava and then reflected off into your face. And that's a place where there were an awful lot of rattlesnakes. A crew of fifteen or twenty men in a given day, it wasn't unusual for them to bring in a half dozen to ten, twelve rattlesnakes. Some of them were a pretty good size. But, we didn't eat them.

We finished out there. And fall was coming on and we were moved to the Redwoods in northern California. Our location was Prairie Creek State Park, which we largely built. It's now a state park. And when we were there, the elk that you see there in the park, alongside 101, were running all over the place when we were there. And now, they have corralled them and feed them there, I think. And I've driven by in fairly recent years, and see the elk there, and reflect on those days. They were very peaceful days. I was cooking, in the meantime. We worked for two days and then we got off for two days. And I've always like to read. And I would go out in the redwoods, sit under a tree, and it's one of the quietest places I've ever been, under those huge redwoods. They're soaring away up in the air and whatever breeze there is, is up there, it's not down here. And I used to enjoy that.

And while we were there—this is worthwhile to mention—we had a bunch of recruits come in and one of them had spinal meningitis. And they hadn't caught that at the point that they shipped him. We had him in the emergency room—we didn't call it "emergency room"—I've forgotten what we called it. But, one of his buddies came in to visit him while he was there, and they had him on oxygen, a mask of some sort. And his friend took the mask and playfully put it on himself and breathed through it, and both of them

were dead within 24 hours. Well, we had learned in the meantime that we were scheduled to go to Yellowstone National Park. And we were all excited about that. I suppose that most of us would never even dream that we would have had such an opportunity to visit Yellowstone Park--but here we were going there. But, due to the two cases of spinal meningitis and the two deaths, we were quarantined. And it was quite a while before the quarantine was over, I don't remember how long. But they tried a new vaccine, I guess it was, and I volunteered as one of those that volunteered to be tested to see if it worked. We never knew at that time, but I talked to doctor who was our camp doctor at the time. I talked to his son, back in January of this year, and he told me that he thought it was successful.

Well anyway, we were scheduled to go to Yellowstone Park. And we could hardly wait. Quarantine was lifted, and we headed out. And that was the time that I cooked on the troop train. I had never cooked on a train before, at pretty close quarters. We had difficulty with preparing the food when we were going across the Rocky Mountains because of the elevation, I remember that. I also remember that we had a baker who was quite fond of alcoholic beverages and he would drink anything. And there was quite a bit of alcohol in some of the extracts, particularly the lemon extract. And he got drunk on that and challenged the conductor who tried to bring him under some degree of order.

Our arrival at Yellowstone Park was through the northeast entrance [north entrance] at Gardiner, Montana. And we got off the train at Gardiner and got on trucks to be transported to our new location, which was at Canyon. Canyon is one of the main centers in the Park. They have just about everything there, at least they did then. They had a lodge, they had Hamilton Stores, they had—I've forgotten the name of the people who had the photography business, but they were all over the park. And then, I think Brown Hotels had all the hotels in the Park [Yellowstone Park Company]. They bidded in for a certain length of time, as I recall, and operated them under some kind of a lease basis. But anyway, we got to Canyon. The camp was located above Canyon Center. And it was on top of a little rise and it was a flat area. And the tents were already set up, and I think there were six men to a tent. The sides of the tents rolled up for better ventilation, but it also was access to bears. We had an awful lot of bears there and they were quite an irritation to us as time wore on. We kind of got tired of them. I remember that some of the fellows, to play a trick on their buddy, would take some fish, or something that the bears liked real well--a piece of bacon. And they would put in underneath of the top blanket and he didn't know it was there. And maybe sometime during the night, a bear could be fumbling for that. And that wasn't much fun to the guy who was frightened out of his wits, but it happened, several times.

I also remember that when we first arrived at the Canyon location of where our camp was located, the mess hall was a long building that would house 200 men. And one side or one end of it, rather, was down on the ground level, but it was kind of a hillside, and by the time it got out of the other end, the floor must have been eight or ten feet off of the ground. And as we entered the area--and this was before we had any experience with the bear population--but someone saw a bear go underneath that mess hall. And of course, we went wild. We started chasing that bear. And we chased him underneath the mess hall and he got up underneath the area where it was very close to the ground. And all of us guys were there; we were going to keep him from getting out. We were going to catch him; I guess that's what we thought. And we didn't realize how dangerous it was, what we were doing. So, he charged the line a time or two and then went back, he retreated. And about that time the company commander, who was a first lieutenant, saw

what was going on and he came out and told us to scatter and get the heck out of there; it was very dangerous. And he explained the whole thing later. We didn't realize how dangerous it was.

I remember another incidence with bears. A fellow whose name was Richard Sams, s-a-m-s, had been over to the lodge--it was on, apparently, a Saturday night. The lodge, as I said, was across the river. And there was a dance over there that night, and coming back he crossed the Crittenden Bridge, as I recall, across the Yellowstone River. And then you crossed the road and you came up to our camp on a trail that was fairly wide, maybe five or six feet wide. And he saw what he thought was one of the 3C guys that was lying alongside the trail, and he thought he'd passed out from too much booze. So, he intended to arouse him and tell him to get back up to camp. And it was not a guy; it was a bear. And that fellow knocked him down, oh about ten feet, over to the road. And he had some broken ribs. I think he was the only person I knew of that was injured at all while we were in the Park.

But, one of things that was going on then--which is not going on now and hasn't been for many years, I understand--was that they were feeding the grizzly bear. The purpose was to keep them coming down out of the mountains. They did that only to get them out, so that the tourists could see them. And what they were doing, they were taking food, leftovers, from the hotels and they put it inside a circular wrought iron cage, of sorts, that was mounted on wheels. And then they would couple that to a truck and tow that through this area. And the bears would see that and they knew it was mealtime. And they would come down and start eating their food. And the tourists who were watching this scene were in a cage of their own. It was made also made of wrought iron. It was kind of an enclosure; it would hold fifty people or something like that. And they had a gate entrance which could be opened and closed. And to keep them more protected a Ranger was standing at the entrance to this enclosure with a high powered rifle, in case that the bear decided to come up there, he could probably take care of him.

I think that I was supposed to say whether or not that I have been back to the Park since I was there in the 3Cs. I have, twice. I've forgotten what year it was, it was sometime in the early '60's. Our oldest son was back at Valley Forge in the Scout Jamboree, so we took our other two children through the Park. My son and I fished for those beautiful, large lake trout just below Fishing Bridge. And about as fast as we would put our hook in the water, we'd caught a fish. But they were all too large to get in because we had no net with us. We finally caught one that was twenty-five inches, maybe, that we managed to get into the boat. That was great fun for my son. And we often, when we were fishing along Yellowstone River, would see a mother bear and her cub fishing also. And I remember several times, seeing a mother who was catching fish for her cub, who was on the shore. She would take her paw and toss it out, so that the cub could have a meal also. And I remember outside of Gardiner, not too far, Sportsman Lake. And we used to go up there frequently and we'd catch the Montana grayling and, of course, the rainbow trout were in there. It wasn't difficult to catch a fish anywhere in Yellowstone Park, for some reason. And I know it was heavily fished, but they were always there. And of course, Roaring River?--Firehole River! We caught a lot in there. And just anywhere we went, Yellowstone Lake, Fishing Cone—I caught them off of Fishing Cone.

But, another thing that we started doing--we shouldn't have done it. I didn't do it because I wasn't out on detail, I was cooking. But, the guys who were going out on detail and were working the various project in the Park got to the point they hated those bears because they would come out and stop the trucks and want something to eat. So, they started loading up with stones before they left and would drop stones on their

heads. And I think that if the Park Rangers had learned about that, they would have stopped it. They shouldn't have done it, but they did.

I also was in several so-called spike camps. And one of them was at Cooke City. And that's another entrance to the Park. If you go that road, I've forgotten the number of that road, but you travel sixty, seventy mile and you come to Cooke City, Montana. It's called the Red Lodge-Cooke City Highway [Beartooth Highway]. And you have--from one position on that road--you can view seven switchbacks and about thirty-five lakes. And it's quite a view from up there, looking out over all that expanse of mountains and forest. But anyway, Cooke City was where I was in spike camp for a while. I was cooking. And the bears were all over the place. We had a box that was covered with a pretty heavy screen and it had a pretty heavy bottom, and I would put meats and things that would attract the bears in that box and swing it up between a couple of trees. The guys had built all of that set-up for us. And they would pull it up there with a pulley and then tie it off on a tree. And one time, I had some meat—I think it was ham—and there was a watermelon in that thing, swung up. No, the watermelon was in a stream that was close by. So, I went out there and that bear had somehow or other gotten that rope; it wasn't broken. He'd gotten it down and he'd taken all the meat away. And he also got the watermelon out of the stream, and we found some rinds all over the place, so he'd dined on that also.

And they were causing a lot of problems. And one of the guys, who drove a dump truck, I talked him into helping me in this project. I got a rope and made a noose out of one end of it. He would take the garbage down to a certain point and then would later be picked up by some of the Park people. I put that noose over the top of that garbage can and I got in the back of the dump truck. And he stayed under the wheel with the motor running. I was supposed to jerk, when he stuck his head in the garbage can as the driver told me always did. As quick as he got back in his truck, the bear stuck his head in the garbage can. Then, I pulled the noose--I was supposed to. And then he was supposed to drag him a while, and kind of scare him, and maybe he wouldn't come back there anymore. But, the bear came out from the bushes, and he nosed around, and he took his front paw and he flipped that rope off of the garbage can and stuck his head in there. He was smarter than I was.

I was in spike camp in several different locations around the Park. I was at Tower Falls for a while. And those of you who have been to the Park know about Tower Fall. It's a beautiful scene. Then I was at Bridger, Montana, for a while. And another interesting experience, I was at Jordan, Montana, for a while. Jordan is about, I think, 90 miles from the nearest railroad, which is at Miles City, Montana. And, right now, I think that the Fort Peck Dam might have the water dammed up to Jordan or in that area. But I remember, while we were up there, they had that very serious train collision. I don't recall if the train ran off the track or if two trains came together but there were several people killed.

I did want to mention before I forget, a very important part of my stay in Yellowstone Park. We spent a winter at the headquarters at Mammoth Hot Springs. And what a winter it was it was. It was 40 below for two weeks without a let-up; it didn't change for two weeks, 40 below. And during that time, there were three or four of us that were brave enough to go to town for one night for a picture show. And we were also foolish enough not to get back to the truck on time, so we had no way to get back to camp. It was about five miles, as I think I said earlier. But we were well bundled up and there were three of us that walked that five miles that night, without getting any frozen ears or noses.

I don't recall why they had these huge kitchens there. But we had everything we needed and we had room for the 200 men who were stationed there, that lived comfortably through all of that snow and cold, cold weather for that winter. And I might mention also, that the time that it was 40 below at Mammoth, at West Yellowstone it was a little colder. I've forgotten where it got down to. It wasn't a record, of course, for that area but it was pretty cold.

I forgot one location where I was stationed in the Park. While we were spending the winter at Mammoth Hot Springs, they were building two camps near Mammoth Hot Springs. And one was at Camp Glenn Creek. And the last location that I was located was at Camp Glenn Creek, just outside Mammoth Hot Spring. But, there was another camp located built right next to that one, each containing 200 men. I've forgotten the name of that camp. I always remembered my company name, but I never remembered the numbers of the camp. They each had a number and another identification--YNP for those in Yellowstone Park.

There is one thing that I did not give enough attention to. This was a very unusual time, the Great Depression in the United States. I don't think enough can be said for the people who were our leaders at that time. There was nothing being done for the young folks just getting out of school. They got out and there were no jobs. Preference was given to the older folks because they were supporting families. And as I mentioned earlier, you had the WPA [Works Progress Administration] and the PWA [Public Works Administration] and various other programs. But, here the guys were getting out of school and nothing to do, absolutely nothing. And nothing better could have developed, in my opinion, then what happened. I don't know who advised Roosevelt, whether it was his idea, or someone advised him to establish this program. But, if it was somebody who advised him, I want to take my hat off to that person. And I also want to take a hat off to our late President Roosevelt for listening, if he did listen. Because it was a great program and I know it prepared me for many things that I later did in my life. After leaving the 3Cs, I came to Oregon and have been here since 1939. And I've been employed almost all the time that I have been here. I have done various things. I worked in shipyards for Henry J. Kaiser at Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation that built ships for the war efforts; freight ships, 10,500 ton vessels mostly, called Liberty Ships. I served as a union business agent in Portland at one time, I think for four and half years. No, it wasn't four and half--maybe three--I was a business agent. And I think I was the youngest union business agent in Portland at the time.

Finally, after the war, I stayed around Portland for a little while still working for the union; pretty much of a pressure job, great pressures. And I decided to get an easier job and went to Willamina, Oregon. My wife's folks lived there. I worked in a plywood plant, at Willamina, for quite a while. And then another fellow and I could see the idea of building a particle board plant. Particle board was becoming quite a new industry in Germany, but very little had been done here. So, we became the pioneers in the United States in particle board. Then I got into research and development in the same field. I also had a chemical plant, which was supplying the particle board plants that had subsequently been built. And when I left the company that the other fellow and I formed, I was President and General Manager, Willamette Fiber and Chipboard Incorporated, Sweet Home, Oregon. While I was there I learned quite a bit about all the resins that I was using. So, I had an opportunity to get involved in a chemical plant producing [urethra amide?] resins and eventually I owned the company. And I was president and general manager of that. Initially, I

was a third owner and in '60-61, I became sole owner; had a lot of interesting things there. And then I built the laboratory, as I said, to do research and development. I continued that work and getting involved in process development and I developed a process, which I patented. And the last work for which I got paid, I was an Oregon State Senator for a short while. I was appointed to fill an unexpired term of a fellow who resigned. But, I think that all of these things that I did, some direction had come into my life due to my experience in the 3Cs; I kind of grew up in the 3Cs. Because I was barely dry behind the ears when I left Kentucky.

I am trying to pick up here and there for things that I might have missed. And I thought of one thing which historically is, I think, pretty important. When I was in southern California, they had what we called the Red Car lines and you could pay one dollar and get a pass and practically go over all of southern California, for that one dollar. That was the Red Car lines and they were on rails. And they were widely used; very inexpensive. And due to some maneuvering from people who built buses and so forth, those were—in big cities all over the West and, I guess, all over the United States—they were covering up their street car lines and the Red Car lines in southern California and using buses instead. And I think that in looking back, most of us would say that was a mistake.

I have one more camp that I served in. But before I do that, I wanted to thank our grandson, Tony Monson. Tony was willing to travel 100 miles to help me do this tape. He knows the equipment quite well. I don't see as well as I used to see the numbers and the buttons on the equipment and he very kindly agreed to do this job for me. So, I want to thank him for doing this and I also wanted to say a few words about the last camp where I served.

I was still in Yellowstone Park and I learned that there was an opportunity, if I wanted to do so, to travel back to the Fifth Core area. There was an opening for a 1st Cook at a camp located at Pineville, Kentucky. That's the eastern part of Kentucky out back where they have the coal mines. Hazard and some of those names, which might ring a bell during the battles that the mine owners had with the unions back in the early days. And the area around there was even still populated by miners mostly, because there were miners all over the place. And one of the things that I wanted to talk about, too, before I forget it: we were evacuated from that camp due to a flood on the Cumberland River. The roads were all covered up and we couldn't get supplies in. So, the Army made an arrangement with one of the large coal mines, who had a company town. So, we were transported by train. The tracks were not covered, and it ran by our camp. So, we loaded onto trains and went to this mining camp. And we stayed there and had our meals, until the waters went down. I don't recall—not too long, of course. But, I remember when we were ready to move out, the barracks where we lived had double bunks, they were built out of lumber. They were told to put our lockers and all of our possessions at least on the lower bunk, but better still put them on the top bunk; otherwise they might get floated away. And some folks, who were late in leaving, said they saw lots of lockers and other stuff floating down the streets of the camp before they left. And a lot of people lost a lot of their stuff because they didn't do what they were told.

I now want to take the opportunity of thanking all of you who will listen to this later. And I hope that you will overlook some of my lapses. I know there were some, and I apologize for them. But, I have enjoyed doing it. And I do realize the importance of history. I've often said, "If you don't remember your history and your past, it's hard to believe that you know where you're going now." Thank you very much.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **IRA C. MCROBERTS YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

**SELF-INTERVIEWED**

**MARCH 7, 2001  
AT THE MCROBERTS HOME  
IN ARLINGTON, KENTUCKY**

**Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168**

**Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H12A**

**NARRATOR:**

Ira Clay McRoberts was born on October 19, 1919, in Cincinnati, Ohio, to Thomas and Sarah Susan (Smith) McRoberts. One of eight children, he attended school to the eighth grade and then three years of trade school, before dropping out to deliver newspapers.

Ira enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1937, following an older brother and earning money to assist at home. He was assigned to Company #2512, which was located at the Nez Perce Creek Camp (YNP-5) in Yellowstone National Park. His duties included maintaining roads and trails. He reenrolled in December 1938, and was assigned to Company #1506, located at Cub River Camp in Preston, Idaho. There, he sustained an injury to his eye and was sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky. He left the CCCs in June 1939 and was prevented from reenrolling due to the injury.

During World War II, McRoberts worked in a plant making war materials. Later, he worked as a Gateway Transportation truck driver for more than forty-four years. He married about 1940 and had three children: Larry, Terry, and Joyce Ann. He remarried about 1951 to Delores Kidwell and the couple had five sons: Alan Dale, Jeffrey Wayne, Timothy, Stephen Douglas, and Patrick Neal. Ira died on December 13, 2005, and was buried in the Beechwood Masonic Cemetery in Owen County, Kentucky. Delores passed away on May 7, 2015, and is buried at the Watson Cemetery in Owen County, Kentucky.

**Summary:**

The collection contains two oral interview on two cassettes; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. The two interviews are similar, but not identical. The first interview, recorded on March 7 was described as a practice tape. The interviews are transcribed in reverse order in the transcript (i.e. the practice tape recorded at an earlier date begins on page 5 of the transcript).

McRoberts recalls his time in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as part of Company #2512, located at the Nez Perce Creek Camp (YNP-5) and various spike camps in Yellowstone National Park. He mentions his work fighting fires and cleaning roads and trails, including the Howard Eaton Trail. He recalls the camp layout and recreational activities such as visiting the Old Faithful area and the town of West Yellowstone, Montana. He recounts incidents with bears and moose, a visit from President Roosevelt, and the deaths of several CCC members from West Thumb in a forest fire. McRoberts also talks about his time as part of Company #1506, located at Cub River Camp in Preston, Idaho, and Fort Knox, Kentucky.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** None.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 90-minute and one 110-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 10 pages.

**Ira C. McRoberts, self-interview  
in Arlington, Kentucky, on March 7, 2001**

Narrator: Ira McRoberts

Hello, today is March the 7th, 2001. My name is Ira McRoberts, and I live at 2865 Arlington-Georgetown Road, in Arlington, Kentucky. I was born on the 10/19/1919, pretty far back. I was seventeen years old when I entered the 3Cs in the month of June 1937. I served at Yellowstone National Park, Company 2512, at Camp Nez Perce Creek. Our camp was located somewhere between West Yellowstone, Montana, and Old Faithful Geyser, which I believe is in Wyoming.

This first question, what's your family background? Well, as far as I know my parents, their parents, and their parents, I guess, were all born in the USA. And I guess we are probably Scotch Irish. How many brothers and sisters did I have, and my level of education? I have five brothers, three sisters. I went to the 8th grade, and then three years trade school--shop work, most of the time. And I dropped out early because I also had a paper route, delivery.

I heard about the 3Cs--my brother joined the 3Cs couple years before me. And me and some friends and I went and signed up, downtown Cincinnati. The first time I tried I couldn't make the weight. So, I went back home, ate a few bananas, and made the weight the second time. Didn't know where we were going, where we'd end up me and a few friends. We left the Cincinnati Union Terminal somewhere in June and was sent to Ft Knox, Kentucky, to get processed; our uniforms, shots, and whatever else. We were first sent to Yellowstone National Park, we didn't know we were going there, but we found out on the train along the way.

When we arrived in Yellowstone, what was my first feelings? Well I was all eyes. I enjoyed it, the animals, the wildlife, everything around the camp. And we also were not far from Old Faithful Geyser. Yes, we lived in tents. But the barracks, I believe, were where we ate; the mess hall was in barracks, latrines, officers' quarters, but we were in tents. And I believe there wasn't really people in that camp when we got there; we were replacements, I guess. And I think that camp was really just for in case of forest fires in Yellowstone National Park, like many more of them in there. The work we done was cleaning up roads, trash. We'd go out with long sticks with nails in the end of them. Me and a friend and a couple of bears go out along the road picking up the trash and stuff that people throw out. We cleaned it up, put it in bags, and wait for the trucks to come by and pick up the bags. They dropped us off, a couple of guys for every couple of miles, to do this kind of work.

I couldn't make a sketch of this camp, it was too small. There were maybe only five or six tents. A little story I can tell while we were on the road picking up these papers and cleaning up the trash. People would stop in their cars to feed these bears and try to get pictures of them. Well,

one incident, I watched a man get out, bear came up to the car, he tried to get the bear to stand on his feet while he was trying to feed him crackers, and his wife was outside trying to get a picture of that. But, he teased the bear. Finally, the bear did get the cracker and I guess part of his fingers. They all jumped back in the car and took off. This happened quite a few times in Yellowstone even though they have signs all over West Yellowstone, Old Faithful, everywhere: "Do Not Feed the Bears of Animals."

Now, let's go back to describe the camp that we lived in. We had no ball diamonds, or gardens, or anything in this camp. We sure did not need a garden to feed these wild animals that came in there and took whatever they wanted out of the garbage cans, or out of your tent, or wherever they could get and whatever they could get until we get a gang and run them off. Glad they didn't get a gang and run them off. If a bear would come in your tent and you had candy in your pockets, the bears would get your candy. That was in the middle of the night while you were sleeping, the bears would get the candy. Maybe take your pants with them, but they would get that candy out of your pockets and leave while we were outside. They'd run us out, when they got finished, they'd run us back in. So, we went back in and straightened the mess that they would make. That was a few of the bad things about the Park. Everyone was told not to keep candy, but some guys did anyway. That was some of the life around Yellowstone Park.

Like I say, the work we done cleaned up the roads, worked on the horse trails, bike trails, walking trails, all the things you can do around a big, I guess, amusement park. Plus, once in a while we were sent out to maybe dig ditches to block crown fires. I never had the thing about going to actually going to a fire, never was close to one. And I'm glad that there were people in Yellowstone, 3C boys that were into the fires, some lost their lives over around West Thumb while we were there. We were only there four months. That's why I believe our camp was really just for fighting fires in West Yellowstone and around Old Faithful.

For recreation we'd read at night, or go to town on the weekends, the town of West Yellowstone, which I enjoyed very much. I enjoyed this whole place my whole time I was in the 3Cs, I can say that.

Let's go down to some more questions here. What was my official job, did you move around? Well, I just told you, worked on public highways and Old Faithful Geysers.

Did you do anything special to add to the park? No I think most of them were already there, we just worked on them: the parks, new trails, bridges, roads.

Did I come in contact with any park personnel? Nope. I didn't come in contact with them. I seen them, noticed Rangers all over the place. And I do remember one person, personnel whose calls that I came into the 3Cs. His name was Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who came through in his

touring car with his wife. Probably for a visit, checking out the camp. That's the closest I've ever been to a president in a life, my life. The rest of the presidents I've always saw on television or in newspapers and all that. But this guy, Mr. Delano Roosevelt, was pretty close to us when he came through the camp.

What I like best about my work? Well, just about everything. Course we had discipline at camp. If you didn't obey the rules, you would get to clean out grease pits, or work on KP [kitchen patrol] in the kitchen. We all went along with it and I didn't care, I liked it.

Who was my friends? Well, I made quite a few of them while I was in there. Course when we went there--do I share any stories?--when we first got there, seemed to be a guy in camp, he was a head[?] boxer. And the people I come out there with, there seemed to be a guy in our bunch that boxed from Chicago. And this one and two trying them out set out one bright evening, well, we had a little boxing match. They lasted about four or five punches and that was it. The man with us knocked the man out who was already there.

What did I do in the off hours? Well, that's one of the things we did in the off hours. One of my friends, after one year he didn't stick around, he left. But he left, he was transferred to Cub River Camp, Idaho. What did you do in your off hours, did you go to school? Did you play sports? No, not in Yellowstone. Did you make trips to Yellowstone? Yes. Can you tell about these events? West Yellowstone; we went out on weekends. Well, on one visit there, a visitor from Cincinnati asked me where I was from. I told him and he asked me if I'd heard about the Bearcats, which I hadn't heard about the Bearcats, which is a basketball team. I do hear about them now, and he couldn't get over me not knowing about the Bearcats being from Cincinnati, Ohio. That's the way it goes, too much on my mind at that age. Besides, I couldn't afford to go see the Bearcats anyway.

Were there any special meals prepared because of the holidays or events? Well, there weren't too many holidays when we was in Yellowstone. We had no complaints as far as meals. I believe most Sundays were just cold cuts, but all the weekday meals were good solid food. And you also had a chaplain. No matter what religion you were, you had a man in them camps to take care of your religion if you want to go see him, whether in a group, or by yourself, or whatever.

Let's get through another one of these questions, collect any stories or evidence? Yeah, I told a couple of stories there. How often did you see animals? About every day, but we were told hands off. And from what I saw of them, I didn't want no hands on from those vicious grizzlies or mountain lions, anyway.

Share any stories or memories that were from your set. Well, there was a gang of them; that was way, way back. As you can see from the time I went in, it was hard to remember all that happened while I was up there.

Did you fight any fires? No. Any Search and Rescues? No. Just going out, maybe, and digging a long ditch and wide spaces for about a mile and the Rangers would say that was done on a count of crown fires that were heading that way. A crown fire is where the fire gets up in the trees and the winds take it for miles and miles and start other fires. I believe that's the way crown fires work.

Was there any men that had special categories? Oh yeah, we had truck drivers that went into town every day to get the mail, and the drivers that rode us out to the job and back, and cooks and KP men, everything that was needed around that camp.

What challenges did you face as an enrollee? Now, up there we didn't have too many challenges, only to go out on them dig them places like for fire, and get close to the animals that was a pretty good challenge, get close to Old Faithful was a challenge. You couldn't do that as often at all. Old Faithful back then, is nothing like it is today. Back then, you had a geyser that went quite a few feet high in the air and it roared and it shook the ground. Now, I went back out there and it is nothing like it today.

Did I earn any awards in the 3Cs, or citations? No, I don't think I was good enough.

As soon as the war started in the United States what did you do, were I still in the 3Cs? No, I got married when I was twenty years old and had a wife and three kids and worked at a plant that made war material. Plus, an injured eye that I received when I was transferred to Camp Cub River in Preston, Idaho.

What resources, tools and skills did you learn while you were in Yellowstone National Park and the 3Cs you brought to your professional life afterward? Well, after I got out of the 3Cs, it was still hard to get a job, but I learned how to drive a truck, I worked in a few factories. I learned how to use a jack hammer, run an air compressor, and lots more things that I would have never learned outside the 3Cs.

Have you ever been back to Yellowstone and to the scene of your old camp? Yeah, I went back out there went out to see Old Faithful--like I say, it doesn't go as high anymore--to get to my Camp Nez Perce Creek, we missed the turn, and I don't know if they tore it down or not, which I heard they did. But I did see Nez Perce Creek, because it was a long, pretty long creek. There is nothing about Nez Perce Creek that I forgot to tell. It was a real cold stream with hot pools all up and down it. And I was told, oh gosh, there weren't any fish in it, but I was told

Indians would fish in that creek and cook the fish right alongside the hot pools that were in alongside the creek. And I don't know if that's true, but I do know you can stick your, hold your hand in the creek and frozen drink out of the creek, and hold your--. You wouldn't dare put your hand in one of the hot pools, because it'll get burnt. So much for that.

Well, let's get back on the subject here on this interview. Have you ever been back to Yellowstone? Yes. All right, today I am retired from driving a truck in the Teamsters' Union for about thirty-five years. Seem to be getting along pretty good now, I never thought I'd be asked to explain the time I was in the 3Cs. I don't know if there is enough time left on this tape, when we went out of Old Faithful, while I was up around Old Faithful, we went up and around Gallatin National Forest. And also, I had a little piece of petrified wood out of the Petrified Forest and a little piece of gold, that stuff I sent home. But after over sixty years that stuff disappeared; I don't know where it went.

Now, we were transferred to Cub River Camp, Company 1506, Cub River Camp, Preston, Idaho. That's where I spent the about rest of the time in the 3Cs. Now there, there was work. We worked on the roads through the mountains, blasted out the side of a mountain, worked in snow slides. There was a lots more work we did around Cub River and there was a lot more barracks, a lot more people, possible 200 men. Oh about, I don't know how many barracks, I guess there must have been four and I don't know how many men to a barrack, but big stoves in the barracks. You had foot lockers to keep your miscellaneous volume you owned in a big foot locker, and they had inspections, oh maybe, you'd never know, maybe one or twice a month. They'd come through there and if your bed wasn't made right, your lockers wasn't right, you would get KP, or like I said clean out grease pits or some kind of dirty jobs around the camp. There was plenty of discipline there. And you were called, woke up with a bugle. You called to mess with a bugle, you stood out to retreat, you went to bed with Taps. Just about everything you did in the Army, except carry the weapons. I didn't mind all that work there either. I wasn't there too long. I was, after I left Yellowstone. In February the 14th, I believe was Valentine's Day, is when I injured my left eye while up on a mountain cleaning the way for a load to go through, chopping branches off of downed trees, and a chip of wood went in my eye. And that just about made the rest of my life and the 3Cs there a lot easier. It took a while for my eye to get back in shape, still couldn't see out of it very good, but I still worked around camp. That's when, I believe, I ran a laundry for a while with an old Army washing machine. I mixed up guys' socks and all that for a while. And they did have ball diamonds in Preston, Idaho. Rodeos. In fact, we had ball teams and leagues and everything in the town of Preston, Idaho. In fact, I believe we had baseball under lights before they had it in Cincinnati, Ohio. Because we go back to Cincinnati, they was going to turn on the lights, and I said, what this is now, we had them out there when we was at the rodeo, playing baseball under the lights.

And, might be running out of tape here. But, that is about what we did in the 3Cs. I learned a lot more in Cub River Campm Preston, Idaho. Study mechanics; they gave you books and you could learn how to run a bulldozer and which, sometimes camped out there. I remember two weeks of being out there; we were snowed in about eight foot of snow up to the windows. You couldn't get out, only around the camp couldn't get to town until the bulldozers clean the roads. Which I think we were about twenty mile from Preston, Idaho, back up in the mountains. There were snow slides all the time, and wild animals. Cub River was a little bit more stronger a creek than Nez Perce. But, it was more like a rapids and you could catch all kinds of fish in there. Like I say, it was another place I enjoyed. I had a girlfriend in Preston, Idaho. Me and my friend Charlie Simpson, he had a girlfriend and I went with her sister. But, Charlie Simpson left before I did. And I signed up in December of 1938 to stay again, but my commander officer Lieutenant Newsome sent me back with the ones that didn't want to stay back to Fort Knox. I told him I wanted to stay there. He said, "Nope, he had to send me back because I had an eye injury that had to be processed through Ft. Knox, Kentucky." Which, I did. I left a girlfriend out there and that was too bad, but I had to go back there. I haven't seen her since. They processed. I stayed in Fort Knox, oh, for 6 months, until June of 1939, while they were sticking needles in my eye and telling me I had scar tissue over my eye. But, I left. They gave me a leave in June of 1939 to go home. But, they had told me they'd see me. That's why I figured I was still in; they said they'd see me in September; they'd give me a three months leave. But, I never had no tickets or anything to get back to Fort Knox. Didn't go back and I guess that was the wrong thing to do. But, I carried the bad eye for, oh, quite a while. Here a couple of years ago a guy scratched all the tissue off of it, put a band in it. Now, I got two good eyes. So, that's the way it was. And I hope that, I don't know that the people that I'm filling this interview out for, I don't know whether this sounds likes more of a story of my life, my whole life. But, maybe you can do some, listen to the part that happened when I was in the 3Cs.

And it also says here about....Oh yeah, it says tell me about anything unique, anything that needs to be recorded for history, feel free to answer any questions I forgot to ask you. Well, Franklin Delano Roosevelt should always--everything he did should go down in history, as far as I'm concerned. He was the greatest and, I believe, they should start the 3Cs up again. There is nothing like getting teenagers off the streets, out of drugs, making them work, making them learn something. It sure helped me. Course, I never dealt in drugs; not much of a cigarette smoker. But that's what this country needs. It does need for all the teenagers that's not working, laying around, doing nothing, running the streets. A place for them to get out, meet each other, work, you can still have sports and everything in these camps.

Well, before I finish this tape, I got this letter from a Mary Bolhois of Montana. And I'm in Kentucky and I can't hardly see how this interview would do any good. Maybe it will, but between two people that are that far away. I just wish we were sitting face to face, probably would've been a much better interview and more of what I did and what a lot of boys did in the

3Cs. A lot of them that were in the 3Cs took pictures. I knew that, because I belong to th--I'm a lifelong member of the National Chapter of 3Cs in St Louis, Missouri. I had no pictures to send them, but I do get this book once a month that does have a lot of pictures and it. Of what the 3Cs looked like, what all the camps looks like. And if you want one Mary, maybe I can send you, send one out there, so you can look at it. Or maybe you've already had some of them, I don't know. But anyway if get one, if you don't mind I will send it to you.

Now, this is just a practice tape I'm on here now, I haven't put anything on the tape you sent me yet. But I will. Maybe I'll call you. Maybe I'll send this tape to you and keep your tape. Call you or you send me another letter if this isn't good enough. Maybe I can do it again. So, Happy Easter for a while, Mary. I hope this tape helps you. It helped me.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **IRA C. MCROBERTS YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

**SELF-INTERVIEWED**

**MARCH 10, 2001  
AT THE MCROBERTS HOME  
IN ARLINGTON, KENTUCKY**

**Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168**

**Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H12B**

**NARRATOR:**

Ira Clay McRoberts was born on October 19, 1919, in Cincinnati, Ohio, to Thomas and Sarah Susan (Smith) McRoberts. One of eight children, he attended school to the eighth grade and then three years of trade school, before dropping out to deliver newspapers.

Ira enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1937, following an older brother and earning money to assist at home. He was assigned to Company #2512, which was located at the Nez Perce Creek Camp (YNP-5) in Yellowstone National Park. His duties included maintaining roads and trails. He reenrolled in December 1938, and was assigned to Company #1506, located at Cub River Camp in Preston, Idaho. There, he sustained an injury to his eye and was sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky. He left the CCCs in June 1939 and was prevented from reenrolling due to the injury.

During World War II, McRoberts worked in a plant making war materials. Later, he worked as a Gateway Transportation truck driver for more than forty-four years. He married about 1940 and had three children: Larry, Terry, and Joyce Ann. He remarried about 1951 to Delores Kidwell and the couple had five sons: Alan Dale, Jeffrey Wayne, Timothy, Stephen Douglas, and Patrick Neal. Ira died on December 13, 2005, and was buried in the Beechwood Masonic Cemetery in Owen County, Kentucky. Delores passed away on May 7, 2015, and is buried at the Watson Cemetery in Owen County, Kentucky.

**Summary:**

The collection contains two oral interview on two cassettes; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. The two interviews are similar, but not identical.

McRoberts recalls his time in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as part of Company #2512, located at the Nez Perce Creek Camp (YNP-5) and various spike camps in Yellowstone National Park. He mentions his work fighting fires and cleaning roads and trails, including the Howard Eaton Trail. He recalls the camp layout and recreational activities such as visiting the Old Faithful area and the town of West Yellowstone, Montana. He recounts incidents with bears and moose, a visit from President Roosevelt, and the deaths of several CCC members from West Thumb in a forest fire. McRoberts also talks about his time as part of Company #1506, located at Cub River Camp in Preston, Idaho, and Fort Knox, Kentucky.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** None.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 90-minute and one 110-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 8 pages.

Ira C. McRoberts self-interview  
in Arlington, Kentucky, on March 10, 2001

Narrator: Ira McRoberts

2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10. Well let's go and see if it works.

Today is March the 10th and my name is Ira McRoberts and I live at 2865 Arlington-Georgetown Road in Arlington, Kentucky. I was born on the 10th--the 19th--of 1919, and I was 17 years old when I entered the 3Cs in June of 1937. I served in Yellowstone National Park in Company 2512 at Nez Perce Creek Camp. Our camp was located in-between West Yellowstone, Montana, town and Old Faithful Geysers, which is in Wyoming. I'm from a large family: there was eight in our family, five boys and three girls. And my education: I went to the 8th grade, then took three years in a trade school. I dropped out about the third year because I had a paper route and delivered papers. My parents were all born American, and their parents and their parents. I guess we were considered Scotch Irish. My ancestors were probably from Ireland somewhere.

I heard about the 3Cs while I was in school, I have an older brother that served a couple years before I did. And when I dropped out of school, we needed the money. He sent home money; we needed the money to help to get along. We were a poor family. So me and some friends went to Cincinnati and signed up for the 3C's. I didn't make the weight the first time. Went back home ate some bananas, and made it the second time. I never knew none of us knew where we were going when we signed up for the 3Cs. We all got on a train and left Union Terminal, Cincinnati, Ohio, and went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, where they processed us out. At Fort Knox, Kentucky, we took shots. I don't know how many shots. It was hot down there in June. Then, we were separated; put on trains. Some of my friends went one way, some went the other. One friend, I believe, went with me to Yellowstone National Park. We didn't know we were going there, we found out while on the train three or four days on the way out.

I didn't mind being assigned anywhere in the 3Cs. When I arrived in Yellowstone National Park at Camp Nez Perce, I was all eyes like the rest of us. The place was full of wild animals, which you had to leave them alone. We all slept in tents. I think there were about, maybe, five or six tents. There weren't too many of us that went in this camp, because I believe really this camp like all the rest of them in Yellowstone were probably to be ready to fight forest fires whenever they happened, which they did happen. In the four months we were there, I don't remember going on any, only to go out and dig ditches and wide places to stop crown fire or something. But, there were other 3C boys in Yellowstone who went to fight fires. Some of them burnt, some of them pinned in and burnt to death over around West Thumb. We heard about that while we were in the 3Cs in Yellowstone.

The work we did around there, that's why I said I believe we were only there to fight fires, of course. We worked on the trails around Old Faithful: the horse trails, Howard Eaton Trail, up and down the highways cleaning up litter that the visitors would throw out on their way into Old Faithful Geysers and all around there.

Some of the memories I have in Yellowstone: yeah, me and my friend, they would take us out in trucks and let us off two at a time about every couple of miles and let us pick up

litter along the road. We had a big stick with a nail on the end of it, and me, and my friend, and whatever bears and animals that would come down in front of you, or come in back of you, would go along the road and clean up the litter.

The layout of the camp is hard to describe--that was over sixty years ago. I know we had a--we slept in tents. Our mess hall was in a barracks. I think the officer's quarters were in barracks. And wherever we stored things were in barracks. Latrine was in barracks. This was not a very big camp.

Not long after we were in this camp, Nez Perce Creek, there was a visitor that came through that I remember pretty well. That was the first time I was that close to a president in my life. His name was Franklin Delano Roosevelt, with his wife, came through in a car. We lined up alongside the road, all saluted. We were no more than maybe fifteen feet from him. He stood up in the car, and saluted us all back, and then sat back down. I don't know how long he stayed in the camp. He might have stayed while up with the officers' quarters, I don't know. But, he had a lot of people with him. That is just one of the incidents that happened to me while we were in Yellowstone, Camp Nez Perce Creek.

Course there were a lot of incidents that happened like bears would come into your tent at night, and if you had any candy in your pockets, they would root through until they got them out. And we get out and let them do it. Then, we went back in and cleaned up whatever mess they made, turning over bunks and stuff like that. We also had a lot of problem with bear. It wasn't too much a problem. Now, the grizzlies never came in camp, they would circle camp and stare at you and look at you. The little black bears and mountain lions, they would go over to the mess hall, but they'd be there real early and clean out the trash cans. Make a lot of noise and wake us up. Course we were woke by bugle, just like the Army. We had a bugle for wake up, mess call, retreat, and Taps. Did everything like the Army, except carry a weapon.

Course we had recreation in the Camp. Course no baseball diamond or garden or anything like that. We didn't need a garden to feed the wild animals that come through camp. Sometimes, we'd go to town like West Yellowstone or go up to Old Faithful. I believe Old Faithful at that time, when it went off, it went off. I mean it went way high in the air, shook the ground, then steam, shook the ground, a lot of hot pools around it. It was more dangerous then than it is now, because I have been back out there.

And go along the road, these bears, these people would stop feed the bears. Signs all around, "Do not feed animals." I watched a couple of incidents where the guy would get out of the car. Try to make the bear stand on his hind legs while holding a cracker in the air, while his wife would try to get a picture of the bear eating cracker out of his hand. Well, every once in a while, you'd keep teasing a bear, putting a cracker up in the air and down, up and down. Finally, the bear would get the cracker and part of his fingers. Then he'd jump back in the car and they'd all leave. I seen several incidents like that happened up around Yellowstone.

We never bothered the bears. We were told to leave them alone. Do not have candy in your pockets when you are sleeping or anything like that. And also, did we have any incidents involving large animals such

as bear, elk, bison, or moose in the Park? Oh yeah, people would ride these horses and get a little bit too close to the moose, and they--the horses--would decide how close you could get to the moose. Because the moose would start towards the horses and the horses would take the people the other way. Which, me and my friend were one of them at one time, while riding on one of the trails. That was some of the funny stories. And sad story is when we heard about other 3C boys over around West Thumb pinned in on a forest fire and lost their lives. All incidents like that would happen lots of times. We were only there about from June to about October. I think we went up into Gallatin Forest, which I believe is a petrified forest. I sent home a piece of wood that was stone. I also sent home a piece of gold, but that was a long time ago. I don't even know what happened to that stuff.

We'd get letters from home. My mother, I got a letter from home couple months after I was there telling me the truant officer was there for me because I was still only seventeen and was supposed to go back to school.

Men is special category? Yes, we had men who drove the trucks, went in after the mail, food, took us wherever, on our work details, wherever we had to go. And that's where I learned to drive a truck, while I was in the 3Cs.

Did we have any bad times? Did I have any bad times? Not while I was in Yellowstone National Park. That was a beautiful place, I will never forget it. I had no injuries. I did sustain an injury when we were transferring to Company 1506, Cub River Camp, Preston, Idaho.

During the time in the CCC's did I earn any awards or citations? Nope. I don't believe I was good enough for any of that.

As soon as the war started, what did I do? Was I still in the 3Cs? No, I got out of the 3Cs in 1939. I could not re-enlist while I was in Cub River Camp. Yes, I did enlist when I was in Company 1506, Cub River Camp. I re-enlisted in December in 1938, but our commanding officer, due to an injury I sustained, had to send me back to Fort Knox to get my injury processed. And I stayed another 6 months around Fort Knox, Kentucky, while they were working on my injured eye. I injured that eye chopping limbs off of downed trees while making roads, clearings for roads, in Preston, Idaho--in and around Preston, Idaho. Now, there was a lot of work in that camp. We blasted the sides of a mountain out, chopped trees, run bulldozers, cleared roads. I learned how to use jack hammers while there, run an air compressor, all manners of things in construction, building highways and stuff.

What resource and tools? Well, I just told you--learned how to use a jack hammer, truck driving. And yes, these did help me in my, after I got out of the 3Cs, because I am a truck driver been for over forty years. We learned how to mechanics, all kinds of things you could learn while you were in the 3Cs.

Have you ever been back to Yellowstone and the scene of your old camp? I went back in Yellowstone National Park in 1983 and just about everything it looked like was gone maybe except Nez Perce Creek. And Old Faithful Geyser was nothing like it was in them days. As far as, we never added anything, every bridge and trail, as far as I know, were still there all we did was work on them. Maybe some 3C boys after

we left probably **did add** new trails, bridges, and roads to that park. There was a lot the 3C **did**, after I left. I was only in there two years.

Let's go back. After the United States was in the war, what **did I do**? Well, I got married when I was twenty years old, had a wife and three kids, and worked at a plant that made board material. Plus my injured eye, that is the reason, I guess, they **did not** take me in the Army.

Like I said I left 3Cs in June of 1939. I was sent home to Fort Knox, Kentucky. I was supposed to report back in September, probably would've stayed in there longer but, once you're home, you've been gone for two years, you meet your old friends and it's hard to get back. I **didn't** have no way of getting back anyway. So, I went on through. I had no problems. I started getting jobs in factories, working, and I haven't done too bad. The 3Cs is something that should be happening right now. I knew of no drugs or cigarettes when I was growing up. I had no taste for cigarettes anyway and drugs, no way would I use drugs. Drugs are for people who were sick, I guess.

Let me go back over these questions. I was only in Company 2512, Yellowstone National Park. Then went to spike camps throughout the time. Then went into Cub River, Preston, Idaho. Company 1506, which was a real 3C camp that made roads and done a lot of building. We had a bigger camp. Everybody slept in barracks. Everything was in barracks. There must have been maybe six to eight buildings there, this was a big camp. I guess there was 200 of us in that camp. These camps also had discipline. If you **did** anything wrong, overslept, your bed wasn't made right, your locker wasn't kept in good shape, you would do extra duty. Like kitchen police-KP--clean out grease pits and do some pretty bad jobs around the camp, which I guess they considered punishment. I liked it all, it **didn't** matter what. Course I never tried to stay out of it, trouble.

While I was stationed in Company 1506, Cub River Camp, Preston, Idaho, we would do the same thing: go to town for recreation about every weekend, nice little town. Go to the theater. Go to the ballpark. Now, they **did** have big ball diamonds, we had a team leagues, in Preston, Idaho. We had a softball team, fast pitch softball. One little incident: we had a pitcher; I guess he was six foot six, pitching one night. The ball hit right back to him broke his thumb right in two. First time I ever seen how white a bone was. There were a lot of little incidents like that. We watched the rodeos. Watched the guys get gored from bulls and all that kind of stuff. I also met, had a girlfriend. Me and my friend had a girlfriend. I had to leave her in 1938, around December, just before Christmas; that was sad. I never **did** go back. Sorry I **didn't**, but that's the way life is, I guess.

Well let's see. It's so far back, there are a lot of incidents that happened while I was in the 3Cs. Probably could take quite a while to tell all about this. All I can say is I'm glad I went in and I think every teenager now a days should have something like that to go to. I don't know why they ever cut it out. They should start it back up. It's a great experience. You can learn how to do just about everything; it really helps. You also stay off the drugs; you stay off bad things to do. You don't just run around street corners like you are all doing right now. It was the greatest thing that ever happened to me in my life. And I was glad to be sent. People--when I went to West Yellowstone--there was people from all over that went in Yellowstone and paid probably to get in there, and we were in there for free. To see all those hot pools and crystal lakes and all those awes in America that you **didn't** believe was there and is still there. Maybe

not as, like Old Faithful, maybe doesn't go as high or anything like that, but it is still there and is a place to go see. Course a lot more people go there now. You got Rangers at every gate and you have Rangers in the Park. You don't have no--there also was a big logbook in Old Faithful Tavern, I believe they call that a tavern, a lot of those 3Cs boys signed that book. That would be between June of 1937 and October of 1937. There were a lot of 3C men, I guess, that signed that log. I don't know if my name is still there or not. I couldn't even get close to it to check it last time I was out there. Maybe if I go out again sometime, I'll check it.

Right now, like I said, this is March the 10th. It's a Saturday afternoon on Arlington, Kentucky. I did live in Cincinnati, Ohio, where we left to go to the 3C. When I came back to Cincinnati, Ohio, after seeing all the wide open spaces out in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and when I came back to Cincinnati, I didn't like it. It just looked like a narrow slum city with a bunch of narrow streets and the air was not as clear. I mean, that's my opinion, when I come back to Cincinnati. Cincinnati now is probably getting a lot better and wising up, I guess. But, like I say, I hated to come back to Cincinnati after I'd seen all that great wild country out in Yellowstone, Wyoming, and Idaho. It's all, all of it out there, is a lot better.

Well, I can't hardly think of any more to say Mary. Guess I'll have to end this. Maybe some later time, if I can think of more to say, I can maybe make another tape, and send more of what I learned in the 3C. But, right now I can't think of anything else to say, except thanks for asking me to do this. I had nothing else to do around here anyway. When you get to my age, it's kind of dull. Nothing much going on. So, Miss Bolhois, I think I'll end this tape. There's probably a lot left on it that I could probably maybe fill out with a bunch of junk, but I think I better end it now. I think you've been waiting too long to have this tape and I hope this can be of help to you. This is a tape you sent me. There is also a tape I'm sending you that was a practice tape, maybe there was a little bit different on that, play them both and see what happens and let me know. So, Happy Easter to you and so long for now. And I also hope that I didn't bend too many people's ears while listening to this tape. Thank you.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **MICHAEL RYDOSZ YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

**SELF-INTERVIEWED**

**MARCH 9, 2001  
AT THE RYDOSZ HOME IN  
POWHATAN POINT, OHIO**

**Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168**

**Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H13**

**NARRATOR:**

Michael George “Blackeye” Rydosz was born October 31, 1917, in Clarion, Pennsylvania. The son of Stephen and Helen (Hoskovich) Rydosz, Michael was one of twelve children. He completed three years of high school and attended classes at Ohio State and LaSalle Universities.

In 1935, at the age of 17, Rydosz enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Assigned to company #544, he first served in Hamilton, Ohio. The company moved in 1937, initially destined for Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, the troop was reassigned enroute to the Canyon Camp (YNP-2) in Yellowstone National Park. By 1938, the Canyon Camp was condemned and the company reassigned to a new, second camp in Mammoth (YNP-7), later named Glen Creek Camp. Michael worked as a truck driver, carpenter, ambulance driver, and baker.

After leaving the CCCs, Rydosz was involved in an industrial accident, which landed him in the hospital at the start of World War II and prevented his enlistment. He worked as a coal miner, eventually serving as superintendent for the North American Coal Corporation Number 5 Mine.

Rydosz married Virginia Blackwood in Marshall, West Virginia, in 1939. “Ginny” passed away on June 23, 1963. Michael later married Jean Hammond. He had six children: Michael N., Judy, Steve, Deb, Jamie, and Bob. Michael died on August 5, 2005. He is buried in Powhatan Cemetery, Powhatan Point, Ohio.

**Summary:**

The collection contains an oral interview on one cassette; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. Michael Rydosz served with Company #544 of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), stationed at the Canyon Camp (YNP-2) and the Mammoth/Glen Creek Camp (YNP-7). In his interview, Rydosz his arrival in Yellowstone, his various jobs, including driving and baking; Saturday night dances in Gardiner, Montana; and an encounter with a bear. The folder also contains thirty-nine original, black and white photographs depicting fellow enrollees, the camp, a fire fighting crew, and a black bear.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** Michael Rydosz photographs, CCC in Yellowstone Documentation Project, Yellowstone National Park Archives. Thirty-nine photographs showing fellow enrollees, the camp, a fire fighting crew, and a black bear.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 110-minute tape (only one side recorded)

**Transcript:** Original transcriber and date unknown. Audited for accuracy and edited for clarity by Anne Foster, Archivist, Yellowstone National Park, August 29, 2017. Transcript 5 pages.

**Michael Rydosz, self-interviewed  
in Powhatan Point, Ohio, March 9, 2001**

Narrator: Michael Rydosz

Let's see I have to work from this paper. Today is the 9<sup>th</sup> day of March 2001. My name is Michael Rydosz. I am at 106 Noble Street, Powhatan Point, Ohio 43094-1022. I was born on 10/31/[19]17. I was seventeen years old when I entered the 3Cs in the month of July the year 1935. I served in YNP-7 camp number. Incidentally that wasn't a YNP-7, that was SCS-3533. My camp was in Hamilton, Ohio. My service at Yellowstone was in 1937 and part of '38. The camp at Yellowstone was at Canyon Station, Yellowstone.

Oh, boy. My family background? I was a native of America and my parents came from the Ukraine. How many brothers and sisters did you have? Five brothers, six sisters. My level of education was: I completed three years of high school and I completed some courses with Ohio State University. And I completed a course in business administration with LaSalle. I would up with an A-plus average.

Question number four: when did you hear that you were going to Yellowstone Park? Can you recall how you felt about this, being assigned there? It was up in the air kinda, because as we traveled across the United States, we were scheduled to go to Coeur d'Alene in Idaho, but somewhere along the way at Kemmerer, Wyoming, our train was switched to Yellowstone. My first impression was: where are we going from here? We loaded up in trucks and we went to way out in the boondocks. And we were --we went to a tent camp. In the tents, I had four companions. I can't give you the layout of the camp because I don't remember it. We didn't stay there that long; we moved to a military barracks in Mammoth, Wyoming.

Well, we had no baseball diamond, no garden because it was approaching winter and we couldn't do much good there. I can't outline any diagram of the camp because we weren't there that long. My first official job at Canyon Station was: I was a truck driver. I drove a truck from Canyon Station to Gardiner, Montana, to the railroad station there and picked up supplies for the camp. I never had anything specific to the camp because, like I said, I was a truck driver. And when I finished my routine there, I was the company carpenter and helped redo the barracks, the mess hall, the company, the kitchen, the officers' quarters, and the recreation hall.

I never contacted any LEM's [local experienced men].

Oh, I liked everything about what I did there. I loved the truck driving. I loved the carpenter work. I also liked what I did after I did the carpenter work: I was company baker and I really, really loved that job.

All my friends were enrollees. Some of them came from Middletown [Ohio], some from Cleveland, Fairport Harbor, and –I can't recall the rest of them. They were all good friends.

In off hours? I went to school. I was taking a course in photography. I never played in any sports outside of boxing. I can't tell you any stories about those events. What did men think about the food? Well, there was no commotion; it was usually pretty good. I can't remember any of the menus, because I was never involved in the menu, but I was involved in baking. As far as making trips to a nearby town, we did that practically every Saturday. It wasn't much of a town in size. It was only just a few girls there to dance with—only six, I think. So, some of them danced and I didn't. Do you remember any menus? No, I do not remember. Were there any special meals prepared because of the holidays? Yes, I was involved in preparation of Christmas dinner and all the accoutrements. Most of my addition was cakes and pies and whatnot. Very nice. No one had any complaints about the food. The only one incident was over baked salmon and our cooks never were involved in it. So, the salmon got demolished; it wasn't very appetizing.

I recollect stories about large animals, bear, elk, bison and moose—there was no moose. I saw quite a few of the animals in the wild. I saw migrating out of the mountains into the lower part of Yellowstone. There were supposedly about 3000 elk in that group, and there was quite a few of them died in transit. When I was driving truck, it was my job to pick up the moose—or elk—and take them to disposal. And the coyotes had a real, real, real good time over that, because you could hear them howl all night long.

During my time in the 3-Cs, I didn't get any awards. As the war started for the United States, what did you do? Were you still in the 3-Cs? No, I wasn't in the 3-Cs. I was in the hospital. I was involved in an industrial accident, which prohibited me from entering the armed services. Well, I learned to drive a truck real well. And I learned how to bake. None of them involved my professional life afterwards. But, when I came back, I became a miner—coal miner—and I really enjoyed that.

I've never been back to Yellowstone. And what's the scene of your old camp? How has it changed? Well, it's disappeared. I was talking to a friend of mine that was also in camp '44, and he told me there was nothing left there of the old campsite; it was all gone.

One of the nice factors of being in Yellowstone was an opportunity to see all of the beautiful things there: Cleopatra's Terrace, Devil's Den, the Buffalo Ranch, the Chocolate Pots. I really appreciated that, being able to see them. I sure would like to go back and see them again.

As I told you over the phone, one of my encounters with a wild animal was my first day at Canyon Station. I was recruited to KP there. My friend and I, Raymond Riley, we were called out of line and said, "Riley and Rydosz, get in the kitchen and clean up!" The cadre had been there for a number of days and they weren't washing any pots and pans and they were not washing any dishes. So, I got the detail of washing dishes, which I did. And, in the progress of washing dishes, I had to go out to get a smoke. As I went out the door, it was twilight outside. And just as I stepped on the porch, here's a big black bear standing there. Well, I was already in motion, so I had to go—and I jumped over the top of the bear. And the bear got frightened and ran down through the company street. And I guess he frightened a lot of people on his way. But, he frightened me more than anything else. And one of the funny things about bears in Yellowstone, they were very agreeable to people and we had to put our garbage cans in a concrete block enclosure. If we didn't, the bears would tear them up hunting for scraps. So, one night, one of the fellas that was in charge of the kitchen garbage disposal forgot to close the gate. And the bears made an invasion. Oh, man, they really had a time. And, one of the bears got in a garbage can and he got to rolling around and rolled down the steps and down the Canyon. Oh, man, he was a bellerpin' and raising a fuss. After that, they made sure the garbage cans were locked up.

I can't add anything more. I saw quite a few animals there in my time there. I saw quite a few mountain goats or sheep—whatever they were. You had to watch while you were driving because the elk, they liked pavement, too. If you ran over them, it was tough. So, I had to be careful. I drove several liberty parties to Gardiner, Montana. And during my tenure as a truck driver, I was also an assistant ambulance driver. I made a couple trips across country to Fort Missoula, Montana, and it was winter time and the roads were rather icy. It was quite a time. I also had a detail to drive to Dillon, Montana, to take two dogs to my company commander's home. I did that and when I crossed the Continental Divide, me and the dogs had quite a session.

Well, I can't say too much about that, but I enjoyed every day of my time in Yellowstone, YNP-7, Company 544. Thank you!

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **PAUL SAMAY YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

**SELF-INTERVIEWED**

**APRIL 5, 2001  
AT THE SAMAY HOME  
IN ROCHESTER, NEW YORK**

**Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168**

**Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H14**

**NARRATOR:**

Paul William Samay was born on March 30, 1924, in Tarentum, Pennsylvania, to Caspar and Vera Samay. Originally, he completed three years of high school, but following service in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and World War II, he completed his high school degree as well as two years of college.

Paul enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps in May 1940, and was assigned to Company #544, which was located at the mammoth Camp (YNP-1) in Yellowstone National Park. He was assigned to work as a messenger and letter carrier, assisting the park superintendent, and also sometimes assisting the rangers during interpretive programs.

World War II started as Paul was heading home from the CCCs. He was drafted into the Navy and served on a Special Forces team on the USS Murray that saw 13 invasion actions as well as the bombing of Japan.

Samay worked as a policeman and then worked for the Eastman Kodak company for thirty years. He married Mary E. and the couple had three children: Kathleen, Judy, and Paul. Samay died on November 27, 2007, and Mary died on September 26, 2011. Both are buried in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Rochester, New York.

**Summary:**

The collection contains one oral interview on cassette; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. Samay recalls his time in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as part of Company #544, located at the Mammoth Camp (YNP-1) in Yellowstone National Park. He mentions his work as a messenger and mail carrier and recalls recreational activities such as reading, playing pool and basketball, and visits to Gardiner, Montana, and Livingston, Montana. He recounts incidents with bears and moose and the death of a fellow CCC member in a forest fire. The collection also contains a hand-drawn map of the Mammoth Camp, drawn by Samay in 2001.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** None.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 110-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 5 pages.

**Paul Samay, self-interview  
in Rochester, New York, on April 5, 2001**

Narrator: Paul Samay

Testing, one-two-three-four. OK, here we go. Today is April 5, [19]01. My name is Paul Samay. I live at 943 Stillwell Drive, Rochester, New York. I was born on March 30th, 1924. I was seventeen years old when I entered the CCC, in May of 1940. I served in the YNP Camp number 544, Mammoth Hot Springs.

Ok, now we go to question 1. My parents were native of Austria. I was born here. I had three sisters. I had three years of high school, but later, after everything went well, why, I finished high school and went to college for two years. Even became a police officer. Worked for Eastman Kodak for thirty years. I had a rather busy life. And I heard about CCC from friends, and I volunteered. I didn't hear where I was going until after boot camp. But, I was rather delighted. I went right from boot camp to Yellowstone National Park. When I got there though, I didn't realize why they issued long johns and winter uniforms. We wore Army uniforms, by the way. And, even though it was the third week of May it was ten degrees below zero and nine feet of new snow. That was a shocker, that's what we saw when we got to Gardiner, Montana. Ours was all barracks, just like the Army. Sleeping barracks, mess hall, recreation building, and I got a layout of the camp on a sheet of paper.

Now question number 8: What was my job? Since I was such a frail character and only weighed 117 pounds they decided I'd be best put to use as a messenger and mail carrier in the town of Mammoth, which of course, was Ranger headquarters at the time. I had a small office behind the Park President's [Superintendent's] office and he could summon me any time he wished. There were no fax machines or any of that stuff. Yes, we did all kinds of things: repaired roads, built roads, bridges, reforestation, planting new trees, and also fighting forest fires. A friend of mine was killed in a forest fire. I saw and talked to him before he left, but he never came back. A burning tree fell on him and before they, anybody could do anything, he was gone.

What did I like best about the work? Oh, it was interesting. I met a lot of people. I carried mail to all the buildings in Mammoth, talked to many people, learned a lot.

Question 12: Who were my friends? Well, I had many friends and some played guitars and we sang in the barracks. They were all very friendly and willing to help. Lot of times we'd pair off, square off. We'd go into Gardiner for an evening. We'd walk all the way and back, which was foolish, but we did it. Sometimes we'd get together and hitchhike into Livingston, Montana, which was a little more lively and more to see and do. I was pretty much of a loner in the job I

was on, so I didn't get too acquainted with everybody, like some did that worked on the roads and reforestation and forest fires; they all got to know each other better.

Well, what we did in our off hours? We did a lot of reading. We had a little library. Played pool at the rec hall. They had a basketball court for those who wanted to do that. I already mentioned we made trips to Gardiner and Livingston. We were awful scared though, coming back, especially at night because of all the animals. But we did it.

What did the men think about the food? Well, I thought it was great myself, most of them did also. But, I did get stuck doing a lot of KP [kitchen patrol] at the mess hall.

OK, question 15: Large animals? Yes, we used to watch the moose [elk?] come into the flag area, stand by the flag pole. And bears, of course, did come in to.

I also got used as a helper to guide the Rangers. Help the Rangers guide the tourists through the [Mammoth] Hot Springs. We would tell them, "Don't put your hand in any of these pools," for instance, "because it could burn you." But, some didn't believe it; they had to try it. Oh well.

I was not involved in any forest fires, this is question 17.

We had people who were locally employed. I worked with one as a messenger; he was a very nice person, very easy to get along with. He didn't try to make me do more than I should.

What were my worst times? This is question 19. I don't know. I never really got homesick; I was enjoying the park too much.

Did I earn any awards? This is question 20. Not that I know of. I never did anything real special.

Question 21: When the war started. Well, I was drafted, of course. I was on my way home; time up in the CCC, and because of my frail built again, the doctor decided I should be in the Navy. I argued with him that I got sea sick easy and car sick, but he said, "You'll get over it." Well, I never did. I ended up on this special force. We ended up in thirteen invasions all together, and we saw the bomb hit Japan. And that was the end. And we made the Believe It or Not Ripley column once. The only ship in Navy history to have a torpedo go through both sides before it exploded and we lost sixty men that way.

Well, I didn't learn any--this is question 22--I didn't learn any special skills. I was a messenger, that's all I did.

23: Have I ever been back to Yellowstone? Well, I often wanted to, but one thing or another happened, and I never made it.

●Question 24: Well, I don't know anything special that needs to be recorded. I think the CCC did a great job in the Park. I clearly enjoyed being there; so did everyone else there that I was with.

Well, I guess this will conclude my little talk, as near as I can remember things we did and what not. I hope I've been of some help. If there is anything else, why just call on me and I'll try and explain it. Thank you again for being patient, I had to find a recorder to work with. This will conclude my little talk.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **NARVEL SCHERZINGER YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

SELF-INTERVIEWED

AUGUST 2001  
AT THE SCHERZINGER HOME IN  
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H15

**NARRATOR:**

Narvel Joseph Scherzinger was born January 20, 1916, in Louisville, Kentucky, the son of Rudy and Adaline (Schaeffer) Scherzinger.

In 1935, Scherzinger enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and was assigned Company #538, stationed at a second camp near Mammoth Hot Springs (YNP-6). Scherzinger worked in the camp infirmary. After only a few weeks, he volunteered to be part of a small group that formed a new company, #2509, in Grover Park, Wyoming.

While working for the CCCs, he met Lanore Wilkes of Afton, Wyoming, and the couple married on August 20, 1937, in St. Charles, Idaho. Narvel enlisted in the Navy in 1939, and served as a hospital corpsman with a Marine Corps unit that saw action at Guadalcanal.

Following World War II, Scherzinger worked in the printing business serving as superintendent with C.T. Dearing Printing Company, publisher of the Louisville, Kentucky, newspaper as well as working for the Salt Lake Newspaper Agency and the Newspaper Agency Corporation for 49 years as general foreman. He was active in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Boy Scouts of America, and the Salt Lake Mailer Union #21.

Lanore and Narvel had ten children: Narvel Edmond, Mary, Michael, Joseph, Joyce, James, June, Jolene, Nancy, and Bessie. Lanore passed away April 28, 2003. Narvel died on October 9, 2004. Both are buried at Redwood Memorial Estates in Salt Lake City, Utah.

**Summary:**

The collection contains an oral interview on one cassette; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. Narvel Scherzinger served with Company #538, stationed at Mammoth Hot Springs (YNP-6). He worked in the infirmary and recounts his memories of the camp, the infirmary, and incidents with bears. He is especially detailed in describing the arrival procedures and daily routine of the camp.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** None.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 60-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Transcribed by Anne Foster, Archivist, Yellowstone National Park, September 5, 2017. Audited for accuracy and edited by Jackie Jerla, Yellowstone National Park/Yellowstone Forever Librarian. Transcript 5 pages.

**Narvel Scherzinger, self-interviewed  
in Salt Lake City, Utah, August 2001**

Narrator: Narvel Scherzinger (NS)

NS: I was born April the 7<sup>th</sup>, 1918, in Patuxent, Ohio. [tape cuts out]--the CCC in September of 1937. [tape cuts out]--sent me to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for my initiation into the Cs. After two weeks there, we boarded the train and headed west-northwest. We arrived in Yellowstone National Park in—we used to travel by train because they put us in a car and the car would fill up and we were attached to a passenger train that was going northwest. Sometimes, on the siding, several of us got out to stretch our legs. And then another passenger train would hook onto us and take us another distance. And this took several days. We finally arrived in Livingston, Montana. We boarded the trucks and transported us to the camps at Mammoth Springs, Yellowstone National Park. When we arrived at camp, it was rather cold travelling in that truck. I know we almost froze to death. When we arrived, the chow hall was open and so they gave us a good hot meal. And then we were assigned to our barracks and then we had a good night's sleep.

The next morning, they assembled us and then we were given an orientation by our commanding officers. The commanding officer was Kevin [Foltz?], he was a little fellow about five foot—oh, I'd say six—and always wore riding trousers and carried a kind of a whip-like. Anyway, he had an assistant, a master sergeant, who was six foot three and was kind of a big fellow. Nobody wanted to hassle with him. Anyway, after orientation, the doctor came and gave us all shots. And then, we were being assigned to our various jobs. Well, they assigned me to the infirmary, which was the camp--they called it the hospital—it was a clinic. I was the only one that had the Red Cross 1<sup>st</sup> Aid card. So, my assignment was to go to the infirmary to keep it clean and to take care of the scratches and bumps and whatever that occurred during the working hours of the men.

Continuing on: I am a native American. An Ashford graduate. Well, when we arrived, we were assigned to our barracks. Our barracks were quite long. There were between 40 and 60 men to a barracks. There were four barracks in the camp. There were two on one side of the flagpole and two on the other side, which had a space there. And at one end of the parade ground there, we called it; there was the mess hall and all the accessories down there, the dumps and so forth. On the other end, we had the headquarters building and then we had a canteen, which carried small things like, oh, candies, toothbrushes, and shaving material, etc.

One thing about our campsite there, it was in a beautiful location. We were about a mile from Mammoth Springs. We had kind of a forest like on one side of us, then on the other side of the open I could see across to a small bluff. It must have been fifteen miles away; it looked pretty close, sometimes. Anyway, it was a beautiful location.

**[Mrs. Scherzinger?]:** --want to know, what you did.

**NS:** The infirmary was located right across from the canteen, on one corner of the parade ground. And it was a building, not a large building, but big enough that we had a treatment room in front, and then on one side of that we had a dental clinic, and then in the back we had a ward with eight beds in it. And then there was another little room, called the isolation room. That was my room, that's where I slept, because I was on duty 24 hours a day for anyone that might have gotten sick or something. I had to keep it cleaned. Every once in a while, we'd have all the beds full because of, oh, maybe colds or we had some people that got reactions to their shots that they received when they arrived. These people would spend maybe a day or two in bed because they were pretty sick.

My contacts with the animals were sometimes pretty slow. Down by the mess hall there were cans where the garbage was placed. And during the night, the bears would come in and raid these cans. And they'd make one heck of a noise. And some of those bears were pretty big. Brown bears. Once in a while, we had a grizzly come in. They didn't do any bodily harm to anybody, but they sure did wreck up about eight or ten of our big garbage cans. Other than that, out the back door of my infirmary, I fed some deer. I would feed them some bread and stuff like that. We'd have elk come down; came through there. They were just about as tame as if we had dogs and always begging for food.

I would like to say, while speaking of food: our food, we had a very good cook. We had men, of course, assigned to the galley to assist him. And he could really put down a meal. He was a good baker. Evidently they seized—supplied us with plenty of good food because he could really cook it up and make it real palatable. And everybody enjoyed it. Nobody lost weight, I assure you.

Anyway, the men did work hard. Every morning, they were assigned to different trucks. I think we had four or six trucks that the men got on and went to their various jobs. A lot of work was done locally around Mammoth Springs. They had parking lots and, oh, just various jobs that they did. They did some [unintelligible]. When we went to visit there, back in the 1950s, we noticed a lot of the work that they did way back when still existed.

Probably exists today. The men, they were motivated real well by our camp doctor and the leaders there.

Now, my duties there: I was there a year. We did have the men go out to one fire. That was, oh, about in the park there, as I recall along a mountain side. I went over to take care of their burns and stuff like that--and sprained ankles. They did work and they did put out the fire. It wasn't a big fire, but it was large enough that if it had got out of hand, it would have been a major one, like the one that the Park had here a few years back.

The biggest challenge I had, that was part of my work concerns was: I did know my 1<sup>st</sup> aid, but there was a lot more to running an infirmary. We had sick call every morning and several guys would come in for a sick call with various complaints. I would take their temperature, and their pulse, and ask them how they felt and so forth. Sometimes, if they had a temperature I'd put them in bed for a while and give them some liquids and so forth until the doctor got there. See, we had one doctor for three camps in Yellowstone. He would come to our camp two days a week, unless we notified him that we needed him. Other than that, if we had a real emergency, there was a small hospital in Mammoth. And we would call them to assist us with our emergency. Other than that, we were—well, I was pretty much alone for several days a week handling the medical situations. And I learned a lot. I kind of grew up and it kind of made a better man of me.

During the stay at Yellowstone National Park, I did earn a forestry award. I took a forestry course. On Saturdays, we had different kinds of--individual forest rangers would come in and give us a class on forestry. Another gentleman came in. Well, actually he was--those people that hadn't received their high school graduation, he would give them different subjects so they could receive their certificate of graduation before they left the camp.

OK, what's next? I was home for about a year before I joined the Navy. I joined the Navy in 1939, knowing that things in Europe were getting pretty hot and I was the age where I would have been drafted. So, I joined the Navy and went to boot camp in Newport, Rhode Island. After boot camp, they sent me to the medical school in Portsmouth, Virginia. After medical school, they assigned me to Washington, D.C., as a hospital corpsman apprentice. And there I learned a lot and used a lot of the information that I learned in the 3-Cs. Later on, they assigned me to the Marine Corps as a corpsman. And I served with them during Guadalcanal maneuver in Guadalcanal in 1942. To make a long story short, I was discharged in 1945 due to a disability.

I feel that the 3-Cs basically did a lot of good work. For most people--actually, people that were in the Cs were more capable of taking regimentation and they knew how to take orders and so forth. So, this country of ours was very lucky that we had a President that started something like the 3-Cs.

This is about all I can say at this time. So, Mary, I'm sorry that I didn't get this to you before this. I still have my difficulties. Plus, I have macular degeneration. My eyes are failing. So, I don't know. Anyway, if you can use this that's fine. Thank you, [girl?].

Mary, I'm going to add a couple comments here. I'm sorry I didn't use your tape. I started this tape feeling I would be testing it to see how it would work out. But, I had many difficulties in trying to get this tape out to you and ready. I didn't do a very good job. There are a few things that I remember, though, as far as the activities in the camp during the period of time I was there. As far as regimentation, we did have to fall out every morning. I mean, all the troops did. I didn't because I was sleeping in the infirmary. But, anyway, the troops did, in the buildings, had to fall out at reveille. Each barracks had a leader and they'd report all was there. Then we'd stand and salute the flag and the flag went up on the parade ground. Then after that, they all went to the mess hall and ate. And then after they ate their breakfast, they came back to the barracks and got ready to go to work. They would then, all of them, be assigned to one of the trucks that were going out. A few of them would stay in camp and help with the mess. Well, in the mess hall. They'd help clean the mess hall and wash pans and stuff like that. And dishes. And kept everything clean as far as the mess hall went. Each member in the camp got a chance to do this during my stay there. Of course, I was exempted from that. So, I was pretty lucky. I would have liked to.

Well, another thing, too: In the evening, when the men came back in from work, they took a shower and got cleaned up and got ready for the evening meal. But, before the evening meal, we had retreat formation for the flag coming down. All stood and saluted the flag as it was lowered. Another thing, too, Mary: I attempted to play the bugle while I was there. I used to--my lips didn't fit the mouthpiece too well. But, I tried anyway. I tried in the morning to do reveille and also in the evening retreat formation as the flag was coming down I would blow the bugle for that. And then in the evening, at nine o'clock, I would blow taps. And, I did a miserable job doing that. Anyway, I gave it a try.

This is about all I remember now. And, I'm sorry that this is so late. I hope you can get some information from this. And we're sending both this tape and your tape back. Hope that you can use this. Thanks again, Mary. Bye-Bye.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **WARREN W. TEETS YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

SELF-INTERVIEWED

APRIL 5, 2001  
AT THE TEETS HOME  
IN LAKELAND, FLORIDA

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H16

**NARRATOR:**

Warren William Teets was born on April 26, 1924, in Friendsville, Maryland. The son of George Harvey and Arvetta Pearl (Fearer) Teets, Warren was one of ten children.

Teets enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1941, and was assigned to Company #535, which was located at the Mammoth Camp (YNP-1) and Glen Creek Camp (YNP-7) in Yellowstone National Park. He was assigned to work as kitchen cleaner (KP) and later promoted to second cook. He also worked planting trees.

World War II started as Warren was heading home from the CCCs. He was enlisted in the U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers, and served with the 904<sup>th</sup> Engineers A. F. Headquarters Company. He saw action in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. He earned the European-African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with four battle stars, the good Conduct Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. Teets worked for the U.S. Postal Service and served 29 years in the Florida National Guard, retiring with the rank of Command Sergeant Major.

Warren married Nancy Douglas in 1946. The couple had five children: Barbara, Susan, William Christian, Michael, and a daughter who died in infancy. The couple divorced on December 18, 1978. Warren married Roseanne (or Rose Anne) Edwards on August 23, 1980. Warren died on November 22, 2012. He is buried Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida.

**Summary:**

The collection contains one oral interview on cassette; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. Teets recalls his time in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as part of Company #535, located at the Mammoth (YNP-1) and Glen Creek (YNP-7) camps in Yellowstone National Park. He describes the camps, the food, and interactions with wildlife, especially bears. He also details leisure activities including trips to Old Faithful and Gardiner, Montana, and taking educational courses. Teets also describes his service in World War II and the Florida National Guard.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** *That Our Children May Live Free: Memories of 1942 through 1945, The War Years* (a memoir) and *Rufus Steele, 1943* (historical fiction, written with Susan C. Turner)

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 110-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 5 pages.

**Warren W. Teets, self-interview  
in Lakeland, Florida on April 5, 2001**

Narrator: Warren W. Teets

I have been asked by the forestry department. My name is Warren W. Teets and I live at 3424 Southcrest Boulevard in Lakeland, Florida, 33813-4186. Today is April the 5th, 2001. I was born on April 26, 1924, in Friendsville, Maryland, which is in the northwest section, northwest corner of the state of Maryland close to the West Virginia and Pennsylvania borders. In fact, the monument for the state of West Virginia and Maryland sits in my dad's yard.

I was seventeen years old when I entered the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps, in July of 1941. I served in Yellowstone National Park, Company 544, at Camp [Y]NP-7, also at Company 535, Camp [Y]NP-1, at the same location. These camps were in, near Mammoth [Hot] Springs, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. I have been asked by Mary Bulhois--I hope that is how you pronounce it Mary--with the Department of Interior, Yellowstone National Park, if I could relate some of my experiences while I was in the CCC camp. These may not all be accurate because it has been sixty odd years since I was a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps, but I hope I can get most of it straight.

I lived on a small farm in Friendsville, west of Friendsville, Maryland with my mother, father, seven brothers, and two sisters. I was the eighth child born to George Harvey Teets, and Pearl Arvetta Feat Teets. We had on this farm a few cattle, milk cattle. We had some hogs, we had chickens and a lot of different fowls: geese, ducks, and so forth. And we had our own garden. Plus, we planted most of the vegetables; we raised most of the food we ate. I can never remember being hungry and we always had plenty to wear. I went to school in a one room schoolhouse, which was about a mile and half from the house. We walked to school and back every day, rain or shine, and there were seven different levels of elementary education in this one room schoolhouse. I went to high school in Friendsville, Maryland, and of course this was about five miles from our home, so we rode the bus. When I was in my 4th year of high school, I quit high school and went to live with my brother, Arthur Teets, in Hazleton, West Virginia.

I became very good friends with another boy my age named George Evans. And he and I heard about the Civilian Conservation Corps and decided we would investigate to see what it was all about. So we did. And we went to Morgantown, West Virginia, where we were inducted. I think it was Company 3527, Camp F-75, in Morgantown, West Virginia. I believe it was near a CCC camp in Cooper's Rock, West Virginia. Here, we were given physicals, given our shots, and so forth. And I don't recall exactly how many days we stayed at this camp, but eventually we were all--I forget exactly how many people there were--but we were all put on a train and were told that we were going to be sent to Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. Of course, I don't think any of these boys that were in this group, even had ever heard about Yellowstone National Park before, so we really didn't know where we were going. But, we were on the troop train for several days because, being a troop train, it was a slow train. Every time a faster train came along, we had to pull off on the siding and allow these faster trains to go by. We had our own dining room car and, so therefore, we had plenty of eats on the train and so forth. In fact, we ate better than most of the boys had been eating for a long, long time. We finally arrived in Gardner, Montana, at the entrance

to Yellowstone National Park. And from there, there were trucks waiting for us, and we loaded on these trucks and were taken to Camp 544, Mammoth [Hot] Springs, Wyoming.

This camp consisted of four barracks, all rectangular shaped barracks: a mess hall, a reading and recreational building, and a headquarters building. I'm not exactly sure how many people were assigned to each barracks, but if I recall correctly, we had about 200 young men in our company. After we were given our assignments and so forth--as far as barracks numbers, and issued all of our clothing and equipment, and what have you--the company was split up and we were assigned to various duties. I was one of the lucky people that was assigned to kitchen police duty, full-time; otherwise known as "KP" duty. And I worked in this mess hall for the entire time that I was in the CCC camp. After about two months' time, I was promoted to Assistant Leader/Second Cook. And course, that meant a few more dollars a month for me. We had a person in charge of this mess hall that everybody called "Pop." He was probably between forty-five, fifty years of age. And I think, possibly, he came with the camp, because I'm not sure what his last name was; we just knew he was "Pop" and he was a great man to learn from.

The food was terrific, it was just out of this world as far as any food that any of us guys had been privy to in the past. It was just almost anything that you wanted to eat and all that you wanted to eat. And I'm sure that most of the boys that were in this camp, and probably in all CCC camps, probably put on a few pounds while we were there. I know as far as myself was concerned, when I entered the CCC camp I weighed 132 pounds and when I left in December of '41, I weighed 155 pounds. So, in six months' time, I did pretty good.

Yellowstone National Park, course, is a game reserve and it was against the law to kill any type of living creature in the Park. We had just about any kinds of animals out there I guess that's native to that part of the country in the way of deer, elk, bear, black bears, and also moose. The black bears were, of course, all over the place. We had a difficult time keeping them out of our kitchen. We had a freezer, a meat freezer, built on the back steps of our mess hall and at night the bears would come in and raid the freezer. Regardless of what we did, they would tear the doors off the freezer to get to the meats. We finally hit on a solution that we helped us: we lined the steps, which was ten to twelve steps going up to the porch, we lined the steps with metal plates and at night we would connect a very low voltage of electricity through these steps, and that seemed to solve the problem for us. The bears also would come into the barracks at night. And you could see the guys going in all different directions when Mr. Bear came in to the barracks, but I do not recall anybody being hurt by any animal while we were out there.

But it was a beautiful sight to look up against the side of the mountain and see fifteen, twenty deer following a big buck up the side of the mountain. And of course again, there was no hunting in the park and there was—so, they were just free to come and go as they pleased. I recall one incidence in the mess hall. I came out of mess hall one afternoon--one evening--and I heard a noise under the steps. And when I looked under the steps, there was a black bear lying there that had been hit with a meat cleaver, it looked like. He had been hit in the right shoulder and there was a big gash that was bleeding. So, I got some meat and scraps and I threw under the building for him, which he ate. And then we notified the Park Rangers and the Park Rangers came and took the bear away. The Park Rangers would come to our camp almost on a daily basis because of the bears that were bothering us at the camp, and they would set the bear traps and trap bears in the evening. The following day, they would take the bears away after painting their

noses on certain colors. And I understand that most of the bears were taken over to the Jackson Hole area in Wyoming. And the bears apparently knew they had a good thing going for them in Camp 544, because in a few days these same bears were back in our camp.

On weekends and with our free time there were a lot of things we could do: we went camping, we went hiking, we went to the small town of Gardner, Montana, to visit and also on weekends we would load up on trucks and go out visiting different places in the Park. We went to Old Faithful. I was at Old Faithful three different times on weekends. And also it was really great to see the various, we called them paint pots, and hot springs, and so forth that were abounded in the Park itself. A great experience and I don't know of any of the people in our company that did not thoroughly enjoy these trips. We had other things that we did on our off duty hours: we could go to school, which I did. I took a typing class. It was only a five hour class, but I took a typing class. I also took a twenty-one hour First Aid class, and then I had a machine shop class which consisted of 147 hours. I believe that class was taken in Gardner, Montana, because we did not have any machine shops in the camp itself, so we had to go outside the camp to take this. But, I enjoyed the machine shop class, and like I say I have a certificate for 147 hours of this machine shop class.

Most of the other people in my unit were assigned as caretakers more or less, of the Park. They went out every day of the week--usually five days a week, I'm sorry. And they planted trees, they made roads, they built roads, and anything that the Park Service people had to do, these boys did it. They went out in the early morning. We transported lunch to them by truck. And then they were back in the evening for the evening meal.

The food in the mess hall was outstanding, we had--. As I said before, Pop knew how to feed an army. He had all different recipes that he made and he showed the cooks how to make these recipes. And we had special meals on all holidays and it was just, it was just outstanding. There was plenty of food there and it was all good food. And I'm sure the guys all enjoyed it thoroughly. I'm not sure if I mentioned it before or not, but after working in the kitchen for about 2 months' time, I was promoted to Assistant Leader which was a second cook, and this gave me a few more dollars to spend each month.

The weather in Yellowstone National Park during the months of July and August and part of September was beautiful. It was crisp and we were up in the mountains. And in fact, after coming home and being up in the higher mountains, I could run for miles it seemed like when I came home and not even be winded. But the snows came early in Yellowstone, it started snowing, as I recall, sometime around the latter parts of September and by the 1st of October we had twenty-two inches of snow on the ground. Shortly thereafter, the Rangers closed the Park. They locked and bolted the gates at, down at Gardner. So, there was no traffic, no civilian traffic of any kind allowed in the Park at that time, while the during the remainder of the winter months. Of course, we were still in the Park. We were still at Camp and we didn't do much tree planting in the winter months, but there were various other things that kept us busy that the Park Rangers saw that we did not go without something to do.

Our enrollment period was up for most of the fellows that were in this camp around the middle part, around the first or middle part of December. So, I think since this was our first time away from home for most of us. Everybody, I believe, was ready to come back to our home state. We were again loaded on

troop trains to come back home and the same thing happened coming back as it did going out. We had to go off on the sidings to let the faster trains through, and while we were on the sidings in Chicago, Illinois, on December 7th, 1941, we heard about the Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor. We came on home and I came back to a Yellow Springs, Ohio, camp and was discharged from this Yellow Springs, Ohio.

And I got home two days before Christmas on the 23rd of December and I was officially discharged on the 31st of December 1941. Shortly thereafter, in June of 1942, I enlisted in when I became eighteen years of age. I enlisted in the US Army. And I can tell you that I was very, very thankful for the training I had received in the Civilian Conservation Corps when I entered the Army. I was more and better prepared for the basic training than the majority of the people that I was in training with. It just did not bother me at all the fourteen, fifteen hour days was something that I took in stride and a lot of the other people had a real difficult time with it. So, I'm very thankful for the training that I got in the Civilian Conservation Corps. And most of this training, or a lot of this training, was the same type of training that the basic training that we had in the Army. I went on to serve almost 4 years in the Corps of Engineers, US Army, with thirty-three months of this time spent on overseas duty. I went in to Casablanca in North Africa, I went all the way through North Africa, I was in on the invasion of Sicily, when going into Licata, Sicily, on the invasion. And also on the invasion of Salerno in Italy. And after going through the invasion into Italy, we went up as far as the Volturno River, just south of Rome, and at that point my unit was relieved. I came back home and was discharged on the 16th of October, 1945.

I went on to join the National Guard in the state of Florida, I moved to Florida, and I spent a total of twenty-nine years in the Florida National Guard. I have never returned to Yellowstone National Park, although I would like to very much. And it's possible that this summer my wife and I may take a trip and go to Yellowstone. And if we do, I can assure you I am going into Gardner, Montana, and I'm going to see if I can find the remains of any part of Company 544 or Company 535 and see what if anything has happened or how the country itself has changed since I was there.

I thank President Franklin D. Roosevelt for giving me the opportunity to serve in the Civilian Conservation Corps. I only wish that there was an organization such as this today that could help so many of our young people that need some guidance and understanding.

Thank you.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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# **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) IN YELLOWSTONE DOCUMENTATION PROJECT**

## **VOLNEY J. WESTLEY YELLOWSTONE CCC ALUMNUS**

SELF-INTERVIEWED

JANUARY 18, 2001  
AT THE WESTLEY HOME  
IN ELEPHANT BUTTE, NEW MEXICO

Yellowstone National Park Archives  
P ● Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

Catalog Number: YELL 69595-●H17

**NARRATOR:**

Volney Jean Westley was born on March 29, 1912, in Oakland, California to William J. and Grace Melvinia (Gardner) Richards. William died on September 22, 1914. Grace married Roy Olin Westley on May 29, 1916, in Boone, Iowa, and Roy adopted Volney. The family moved to Pullman, Washington, where Roy was an instructor for Washington State College. They later moved to Laramie, Wyoming, where Roy worked as an agricultural agent. Volney attended the University of Wyoming, graduating in 1934.

Following graduation, Volney worked for a few months as a Local Experienced Man for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the Medicine Bow National Forest, working as the Assistant Educational Advisor due to his degree. He later moved to Arizona, where he worked for the Arizona Highway Department as a landscape architect designing roadside parks and overlooks. On March 12, 1938, Volney married Katherine Gray, in Phoenix, Arizona. The couple's daughter, Anne, was born about June of 1939.

In August 1939, the family moved to the Nez Perce Camp (YNP-5) in Yellowstone National Park, where he had accepted the position of Senior Foreman Landscape Architect for the CCCs. There he supervised campground and sewer line construction as well as roadside improvements. When the camp closed for the winter, he moved to Mammoth to work with the Park's landscape architect. He was subsequently reassigned by the CCCs to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Volney had served in the U.S. Army Reserves and was called to duty for World War II in January 1941. He subsequently served in both the Korean and Vietnam wars, retiring with a rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He also spent 32 years working for the National Park Service (NPS) including work at Sequoia-Kings Canyon, Death Valley, Joshua Tree, Channel Islands, Pinnacles, Muir Woods, and Yosemite National Parks. He retired while working at the NPS Southwest Regional Office. Volney died on July 10, 2004. Katherine passed away in 2001. Both are buried in the Santa Fe National Cemetery in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

**Summary:**

The collection contains one oral interview on cassette; the narrator self-interviewed by recording his responses to a list of written questions. Westley recalls his time in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as Senior Foreman Landscape Architect at the Nez Perce camp (YNP-5) and at Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone National Park. He describes the work done, including fighting a forest fire. He also details leisure activities including trips to the Canyon camp (YNP-2), the Fishing Bridge area, and West Yellowstone, Montana. He briefly describes his work at other parks including Rocky Mountain, Death Valley, and Joshua Tree National Parks. Mentions of bears and a car accident that killed two CCC enrollees are also mentioned.

**Restrictions:** None

**Related Materials:** Westley, Volney J. National Park Service Interviews: Transcripts, 1962, Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley.

**Format:** Interview recorded on audio cassette using unknown device. One 110-minute tape (only one side recorded).

**Transcript:** Mary Swier Bolhuis, Yellowstone National Park VIP, fall 2001. Reviewed by Charissa Reid, Yellowstone National Park oral historian. Transcript 6 pages.

**Volney J. Westley, self-interview  
in Elephant Butte, New Mexico on January 18, 2001**

Narrator: Volney Westley

Talking to you today on the 18th of January 2001. We're at Elephant Butte, New Mexico. I'm eighty-eight years old, born on March 29th, 1912. I have served in the National Park Service for thirty-two years and retired on December 1973.

My name is Volney Westley. In August 1939, I left Phoenix, Arizona, with wife and one month old daughter for Yellowstone to accept a position as senior foreman landscape architect with the CCC program. Prior to that, I had made arrangements with Superintendent Ross Hinkley of the Southwest National Monuments that, upon completion of my assignment, I would be considered for a job in the southwest. While in Phoenix, I had been working for the Arizona Highway Department doing landscape architecture work such as roadside parks and overlooks, etc. And I was impressed with the work that the CCCs were doing in Arizona and thought I'd like to try it. So, I had applied for a position in the CCC program. I arrived at Yellowstone and was assigned to the CCC camp at Nez Perce Creek, which is there at Old Faithful. At that time, my family proceeded to northeast Montana, where her folks were. Her father was Superintendent of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. They were kind enough to take care of my family for me while I was at Yellowstone.

The Nez Perce Camp was a summer only tent camp. The project superintendent was Phil Smith, of Twenty-Nine Palms, California, who was an ardent, avid mountain climber. The enrollees at Nez Perce were all from Brooklyn, the Bronx, and New Jersey, and were, as a whole, were very streetwise and tough. Many of them were in the CCC in lieu of being in reform school or other detention. I found that when working with them, you had to be just a bit tougher than they were or you'd get a lot of back talk or refusal to work. Our project work was to be a campground construction near Old Faithful, roadside improvement, and so forth. The campground was being constructed with large boulders to define the parking spaces and the rocks came from a talus upstream from the camp at Nez Perce Creek. It was a little difficult to get the rocks out of the talus slopes since equipment was limited and we had a cherry picker, a chain, and would put the chain around, say, a half ton boulder and try to lift it up into the truck. And of course, being around rock, the chain would often slip and fall out of the sling. It was quite a hazardous operation, but we made it work, and we did a lot of work in the campground. One job we did was construction of a sewer line in the soft soil, sandy, volcanic ash soil between Old Faithful Lodge and it went past the Ranger Station and south of the Old Faithful Inn. One of the tourists asked us what we were doing and we said well, we were putting more water into Old Faithful. Course this was a--this was not true.

Soon after I arrived at Nez Perce, we were called out to combat a forest fire on Pitchstone Plateau, it was called the Astringent Creek Fire. It was northeast of Lake several miles in the backcountry. Floyd Henderson, Forestry Foreman, and I, with about fifty enrollees, traveled most of the night by truck and arrived at the, at Lake and hiked into the fire arriving at about two o'clock in the morning--and reported in to the fire boss who was the Assistant Chief Ranger, Hugh Paton, from the headquarters office. We asked Hugh what to do with these men and he

said, just bed them down and he'd tell us to do in the morning. After Phoenix in 110 degree temperatures, I found it pretty chilly at this high altitude where ice was forming every night. So, after shivering in a skimpy sleeping bag, I drew another one and put it inside the first one and still shivered. In the morning, we were assigned a portion of the fireline. And I dutifully spaced my twenty-five enrollees along the line with the instructions to cut a fireline, firebreak. And after I completed these assignments, I backtracked over the line and I couldn't find a single enrollee, they were all back in the brush asleep. If the fireline had been active we might have lost some men. This fire had a few things that were new at that time. They tried some airdrops with dropping from airplanes: hay and packaged food stuff like sugar, flour, so forth out of a moving airplane. But the problem was that everything that would hit the ground without a parachute broke open and scattered all over the place, and sugar, and flour, and hay, and everything was mixed up and flying all over the place. So, it was obvious that if you were going to have an airdrop, you better have parachutes. The other means of supply to the fireline, fire camp were packhorses, and of course, they were used very satisfactorily.

The Nez Perce Camp had a spike camp. It was north of West Yellowstone, up about twenty, thirty miles north of West Yellowstone. And the, it was manned by about twenty-five, thirty enrollees. They had the tent frames and a building or two. The most notable thing I remember of the spike camp, they had a hydraulic ram in the stream, cast iron affair that the impetus of water going through the thing would force a little bit of water up through a pipe and to an elevated tank. This was the water that served the mess hall, and the showers, and so forth. It was an awfully noisy thing; it was clanking away all night long in the stream, and it made an awful lot of noise. That's about all I remember of the spike camp; it was part of the Nez Perce Camp and administered by the fusing agency, which was the Park Service. And, it was doing some work up there. This was near the area that many years later, that was subjected to the earthquake and flooding that was caused by the slide and the river [1959 Hebgen Lake earthquake]. I don't think that the Bacon Rind campsite was affected by the flood, but I can't be sure. The Army, which administered the camps in Yellowstone, was divided into three different headquarters, and so, it was indeed a favorite area for inspections from each of those headquarters, and so we saw lots of Army brass at the camps. The Army Camp Commander at Nez Perce had completed his tour of duty and was relieved by another officer, I think he was a First Lieutenant, who arrived and took over. That night a recreation trip, a one and half ton, filled with enrollees took off for rest and recreation at West Yellowstone. And on the late night return, the driver either drunk, or asleep, or both, ran off the road and spilled the truckload into the Firehole River. I think two of the boys were killed. The new Camp Commander who had just arrived, was found responsible and was promptly relieved of duty. His tour of duty lasted only about twenty-four hours, poor guy.

In early October, when the camp closed, I moved into the Mammoth headquarters and worked with Sanford Hill, "Red" Hill, the park Landscape Architect. I was working on master plans and concession layout plans and so forth, in the main office. And while there, I received a telegram to report to a camp in Chiricahua National Monument in Arizona, but a copy of the wire had gone to Omaha, which was the Region 3 headquarters, where they countermanded the order and detailed me to Rocky Mountain National Park instead. At Rocky Mountain, I was assigned to a CCC camp over Bear Lake Road. In January 1941, I was ordered to active duty in the Army, with my reserve commission to a camp in Texas.

To backtrack a little bit, when we went to West Yellowstone for an evening of entertainment or whatever, you wanted to be sure to leave your car inside the Park gate, because the Park at that time closed the gates and locked them at, after sundown. And if your car was outside the Park, you were outside the Park for the night. So, what we all did, was leave our vehicles inside the Park, climb over the fence and walk the couple hundred yards into West Yellowstone, if that's where we wanted to go. I remember meeting a couple of young ladies from Kentucky in Yellowstone, who had, who said they had in the back of their car in the trunk some Kentucky hams they were taking to some friends out on the west coast, and they had stopped at Yellowstone on the way. I told them, I said, I thought it was kind of risky leaving the car with the hams in it with the bear problem we had, because bears were known to break into anything that smelled good and Kentucky hams would certainly smell good to a bear. So, I think these poor gals drove around all night long to stay in their car and didn't get much sleep that night because they were worried about their hams. One weekend, I went over to the Canyon area and visited a camp over there that was, I thought, pretty deluxe. They had wooden buildings and they had a nice area. Most of their enrollees were from the Midwest: Indiana, Ohio, Illinois. They were a pretty sharp outfit and I was quite impressed with their camp layout. On the way back from there to Nez Perce, I remember going across that road that goes through the middle of Yellowstone, driving along at night, quite late after my visit to the camp, and all of a sudden the sky lit up like an enormous fireworks display and I was amazed. I thought, "What's going on?" And I looked and it was aurora borealis, the northern lights; the whole sky was full of lights, and flashing things, and so forth, and I was most amazed. I never had witnessed that before. It was the most eerie feeling, just imagine being out there all alone with that tremendous display going on.

After Labor Day, I had an employee picnic at Lake, near the Fishing Bridge area, and I remember that Frank Kowski was pitching for the Ranger team. The Rangers were playing everybody else, I think, in softball. And Frank had done a few beers and was not doing too well with the pitching mound, but it was a nice picnic, and a great party, and everybody enjoyed themselves thoroughly at the end of the season. But, speaking of the Kowskis: Frank and Lois Kowski were married in the spring and they were, had gotten married and Frank was assigned to an outpost ranger station in the backcountry. So, they went down and bought all their groceries, all their canned goods, put them neatly in boxes, so they could put them on packhorses and take them out to the backcountry. And some of Frank's friends, Ranger friends, got into the boxes and took all the labels off the canned goods, so when the Kowskis got out to their station, they didn't know if they were going to open a can of beans, or a can of pineapple, or whatever. They had all the labels stripped off the cans. So, it was a great joke on the Kowskis. And Frank Kowski, I ran across him a number of times later. He came to Yosemite when I was there in the late 50s and Frank was in charge of the training center for incoming rangers, it was called the Albright Training Center. Frank was a stickler for neat uniforms, and proper haircuts, and no beards, and so forth; quite different than most of the ranger force today. But, he was, he ran a good school. Later Frank moved to, moved the whole school to Grand Canyon. They built a new facility there for it. And it's, the Albright Training Center is still at the Canyon. Later on, Frank came to the Southwest Regional Office as a Regional Director in Santa Fe, and I was working for Frank when I retired in 1973.

I had had some experience with the CCC after graduating from the University of Wyoming in 1934. I wanted something else to do during this Depression years. I signed up as a LEM--Local Experienced Man--for the camp near Fox Park on the Medicine Bow National Forest. With my degree they made me the Assistant Educational Director Advisor, but I only stayed for a few months until I found other work, which at that time was another camp operated by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, under a state grant. And it was not far from Fox Park, and I was assigned the duties as a camp counselor and case supervisor for these people. We'd get them off the trains in Cheyenne, they'd be riding the freights, and we get them off the train, get them fed, and get clothes on them, and get them out to a job, a project of thinning lodgepole pine. But, I worked there for about eleven months and then I went back to school at Iowa State and did some more work in landscape architecture.

In the late '30s, when I was fishing around for a job with the Park Service, not having much luck, someone mentioned that for a position with the CCCs you had to be hired from what they called the client list, which turned out to be made up of applicants recommend by a congressman or senator. And I managed to get three senators and one congresswoman from Arizona to recommend me and I was certified for jobs in Yellowstone at the time. The pay for Senior Foreman Landscape Architect was \$166 per month or \$2000 per year. And, as I moved from Yellowstone to Rocky Mountain on the 31st day of October, it was decided that I wasn't to be paid for that day. The Finance Office ruled that pay was based on 30 days per month. As a result, after I arrived in Rocky Mountain I received a telegram from Keith Neilson at Yellowstone asking for a refund of \$5.50 for one day's pay. Apparently, there was no allowance for travel expense for temporary work; this included CCC positions. Incidentally, the pay for CCC foreman was \$2000 a year and was higher than that for permanent Park Rangers, which was \$1800 per year, so, much to the chagrin of the ranger force. I remember when I was in, I finished an assignment, a ROTC summer camp in 1933, and I went down to, this was in Spokane, Washington, I went down to Los Angeles area where my uncle was employed. He was a naval retired Army, naval retired doctor--not retired, but reserve. He had two or three CCC camps up on the Angeles Crest Highway, up in the Angeles Forest: one at the Angeles Crest, one at Red Box, and one over on the other side. He used to drive from Altadena every day, up through the mountain and over the other side, and hold sick call for each one of these camps. The reason I mention this was because at the time I thought only Army personnel were involved with administration of the CCC camps, apparently they got some Navy doctors, as well as some contract positions and so forth for those positions. After the war in 1946, 1945, I returned from the Army overseas, and was in San Francisco waiting for reassignment or dismissal, and I ran into Sanford Hill who was the Regional Landscape Architect for the Western Regional Office, Region 4 Office in San Francisco. And I hit him up for a job and said I'd like to go back to work in the Park Service after I got out of the Army. He eventually came through and I was assigned to a landscape architecture position in the areas including: Sequoia-Kings, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, Death Valley, Joshua Tree, Channel Islands, Pinnacles, Muir Woods areas in southern part of California. In some of those areas, I had rather liked the assignments, like at Death Valley, I was out there for two or three weeks at a time. And while I was on that assignment, on my many trips to Joshua Tree, I tried to look up Phil Smith, who was one of the former camp commander at Nez Perce. I never could find him. He was always off someplace else. I never ran into Phil Smith again. And Keith Neilson, who was Chief at Yellowstone, I later worked with in

Yosemite, as the, he was the Assistant Superintendent and I was the Park Landscape Architect. We worked together quite often.

I remember when I was at Mammoth, after my assignment at Nez Perce, the CCC camp at Mammoth, were building rather modest employee residences in the Mammoth area. And I was quite impressed with the fact that the carpenter foreman were doing most of the detail work, but the enrollees, of course, were doing all the heavy work and they were building some very nice modest little houses. When I went to Rocky Mountain, I found out that we were also building some residences, but they were a little more fancy and they were built specifically for each one of the staff members and, of course, as such they were assigned there were a lot of little extra details that each one of the spouses of the employee wanted improved. So, the end result was, when we found out that we were running over the \$10,000 limit for each house, ten thousand dollars was the absolute maximum you could go, so we caught a little flak from the Finance Office, the fact that we were going over the cost of our houses. And while I was at the CCC camp at Bear Lake, although I lived in Estes Park, I was required to spend at least one night a week, maybe two, at the camp conducting classes or just being there, staying all night. We had a little dormitory for the foreman, technical staff, and one of the rooms was a guest room. And one was the biologist who was assigned to the camp, the biologist's name Fred Packard, used to go out and pick up road killed animals, bring them back to the dormitory, put them in a box, and put them under his bed. Then, he'd study the animal and see what they were eating and so forth, and make an analysis of the crazy critters. Well, one night I was staying at the camp, and I woke up in the middle of the night and felt like I wasn't really alone. I got up, turned on a light, and looked in my bed and I had bedbugs. Well, bedbugs weren't too uncommon in those days because these were the days before DDT, and chlordane, and diazinon, and so forth. So, they were not too uncommon, but it certainly wasn't very pleasant. And I thought, "My God, this guy's got these dead animals underneath his bed and who knows what kind of diseases they carry, like tularemia and other things that rabbits carry, for instance." And I said, "I'm going to have to do something about this." So, I went to the Park Superintendent where I was working down at the headquarters most of the time. So, I mentioned it to the Park Superintendent. Unfortunately, I bypassed the Camp Superintendent. Well, the Camp Superintendent didn't take this very well and so when my efficiency report came in I got a very low efficiency report, primarily because I complained about the bedbugs. So, it went in the Park, in the office.

As the time went on, Park Service has had a lot of changes. And when Sanford Hill left the job as Regional Parks, Regional Landscape Architect to become the Chief of the Western Office of Design and Construction. He was responsible for supervising the technicians in most of the western states and still had an interest in Yellowstone, so when the plans for Old Faithful came up, he was very active in drawing plans for additional visitor facilities there, primarily parking areas around the Old Faithful Geyser. And I think at that time, he pretty well eliminated the campground that we had worked on while at Nez Perce. This is maybe this is just as well, these things happen. Also, I remembered that in, as a teenager in 1926 or '27, the family went to Yellowstone one time and we found a very nice, warm water swimming pool downstream from Old Faithful Geyser and near in the Firehole River. It was in a building and it was quite nice of a swimming pool. When I went back in 1939, the swimming pool was gone. This is what happens when things change in the forest. One other foot note I might add: Lois Kowski, who is Frank's

widow, is still living and she is in Santa Fe and could be reached through the Regional Office, I think.

I was going to mention about the bear feeding. Every day the bears were fed at the garbage dumps, not only Yellowstone, but several other parks. And the Park Service had set up a number of bleachers where people could go and sit in the evening, people would get in the bleachers and watch. The black bears would come in and start eating the stuff out of the garbage dump, and as if by an unseen signal, the black bears would all of a sudden take off and leave, and the grizzlies would come. They would then eat as the black bears had done earlier. This was quite a show and of course people thoroughly enjoyed it. But it wasn't good for the bears and it has long since been discontinued. But, I mention that was one of the things that was very interesting to the Park visitors. So, with this I'll wind it up. Thank you very much.