

## CCC INTERVIEW WITH FRED STILES

**Interviewer: Fred Schaeffer**

**Date: March 13, 2002**

DNR: Where was your hometown?

**Fred: Mandarin. I was born in Missouri. That's where I went to school there.**

DNR: How old were you when you joined the CCC?

**Fred: 18.**

DNR: What did you do before you joined the CCC?

**Fred: I worked on farms and in stores in town.**

DNR: Why did you join the CCC?

**Fred: I had a lot of friends in there and there wasn't much else going on.**

DNR: What camp were you assigned too?

**Fred: I was assigned to camp 1709 in Ames.**

DNR: Were you ever transferred to another camp?

**Fred: A few days at Sheraton and a few days at Drakesville. We were forestry. We gathered seeds, like walnuts and acorns.**

DNR: What years did you work?

**Fred: '37 to '39. I was discharged in September of 1939.**

DNR: What was your first day in the camp like?

**Fred: Well your just getting acquainted. Your learning the rules.**

DNR: What did you bring to the camp?

**Fred: Just the clothes in a bag.**

DNR: You didn't have any personal items?

**Fred: No.**

DNR: Were there any items that you couldn't bring into camp?

**Fred: You couldn't own a car. You couldn't bring in guns.**

DNR: How were you assigned lodging?

**Fred: We were assigned to specific bunks. There were twenty something in the barracks. You could eat off those floors and the stoves had to be polished.**

DNR: Were the outside of the barracks painted?

**Fred: Not at first. But later they painted the barracks.**

DNR: Do you remember any of your buddies?

**Fred: Most of them are gone. Dale MacFarlane. Joe Thomas. Red Walsh. Joe is dead.**

DNR: How did you guys get along?

**Fred: Surprisingly well. You had to keep your footlocker locked up. Except for inspection, then you had to have it unlocked.**

DNR: How was the food?

**Fred: The food was real good. Our daily lunch was peanut butter and jelly or a meat sandwich with coffee.**

DNR: Who did the cooking?

**Fred: The boys did the cooking. We cleaned the pots and dishes. We had KP duty. You always had it on the weekend.**

DNR: Did they have special meals for the holidays?

**Fred: Ham for Christmas. Turkey for Thanksgiving.**

DNR: When was payday?

**Fred: Payday was at the end of the month. Right after the first we were paid \$30. \$7.50 you kept and the rest went home. Plus you got your room and board.**

DNR: How did you spend your \$7.50?

**Fred: We would go swimming or go to the movies. Of course we would have a \$2 or \$3 tab to pay off at the canteen on the camp.**

DNR: What were your days off?

**Fred: Saturdays and Sundays.**

DNR: What would you do on your days off?

**Fred: Go home. I lived 25 miles away.**

DNR: How was the Sabbath observed?

**Fred: They had service in the camp.**

DNR: Did you attend?

**Fred: Not that often.**

DNR: Did you go into town for church?

**Fred: You could go into town, it was a short distance.**

DNR: Did they have sports?

**Fred: Yes. We had baseball and baseball games. I would load them up in the truck and drive them to the games.**

DNR: Who did you play?

**Fred: Boxholm, Ogden. These were softball teams in different town. Our team beat most of them. We had a lot of good ball players.**

DNR: Any personal conflicts in the camp with staff or enrollees?

**Fred: I had one conflict. I was on KP and several items were missing from the kitchen. I was questioned by the Lieutenant. He confined me to camp for a couple weeks.**

DNR: If there were problems among the men how were they resolved?

**Fred: The lieutenant would get the boxing gloves out.**

DNR: What kind of punishment was issued for rule breaking?

**Fred: KP and confinement to camp.**

DNR: Were there any educational or vocational training in the camp?

**Fred: Yes, I finished my eighth grade, there in the camp. Back in them days, during the Depression, if you had a job, you stayed with it. You didn't go back to school.**

DNR: Did you have formal classes in different subjects?

**Fred: They had teachers from the school, town and college.**

DNR: Do you remember any of the teachers?

**Fred: No. It's been so long.**

DNR: Where were classes held?

**Fred: In the camp.**

DNR: What time were the classes?

**Fred: In the evening.**

DNR: What did you benefit from the classes?

**Fred: I was able to finish high school. I enjoyed my time at camp. You know I've been married 61 years.**

DNR: What were the main projects that were involved with at the camp?

**Fred: One of the main ones was the park. I was involved in the nursery. I was involved in moving all that peat out of the lake. Just different things. We traveled everywhere. We built the entrance way. We gathered Allen seeds, acorns. We would haul them back to the nursery. We gathered a lot of Acorn seeds.**

DNR: How long did it take to drive to Backbone from Ames?

**Fred: We could go only 35 m.p.h. So it took all the day.**

DNR: What type of skills did you acquire in the CCC camp?

**Fred: Truck driving and the CAT driving.**

DNR: Who trained you?

**Fred: I don't recall. LEM's trained me. His name was Douglas. Another one's name was Ferguson.**

DNR: What were their duties?

**Fred: To hire and train us. Ferguson was an engineer. He had done all the leveling when we worked on the ledges at the dam. He made notes of the tree planting. The state still has a nursery at Ames. We were at the north end of an Arboritum at Iowa State.**

DNR: You remembered some of the army people?

**Fred: Captain Luchuck. I remember him. He was the camp officer. 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Peterson. Captain Trotter, the camp doctor.**

DNR: How did you get along with your superiors?

**Fred: Fine.**

DNR: How did you get your assignments?

**Fred: We always got our assignments the night before. We always knew where we were going. We didn't always go the same place. Sometimes Ames and Boone. But the next project would be east. They had us clear out dead trees without chain saws.**

DNR: What kind of equipment did you use?

**Fred: I had a truck, Caterpillar tractor and a Scoot. We had a motorized rigger but we had to keep it with the tractor. When I first was in we used shovels, rakes, Maddox, picks. It was connected with the foresters. We did work for the college. We did street clean up. We hauled the peat down to the college.**

DNR: Do you remember any of your fellow CCC guys?

**Fred: Mr. MacFarlane, Joe Thomas, Red Walsh, and Red LeMay from Beacon, Iowa.**

DNR: Have you had any contact with any of your fellow CCC campers?

**Fred: Just Joe Thomas. That was a few years ago. Dale is gone and Joe is gone. I'm 84 now. There's probably a few left who are older than me.**

DNR: How did the city kids and the country kids get along in camp?

**Fred: City boys thought they were smarter than the country boys.**

DNR: Were there any minorities in the camp?

**Fred: The only minorities were the native Indians from Tama. One was named Roberts. I don't remember the name of the other one. Both were treated well. They were treated as the same as everybody. There was no racial problem.**

DNR: Were there any injuries in camp?

**Fred: No. But we had one person who was sick for one week and died. The doctor was treating him in the camp. He died unexpectedly in the night.**

DNR: If there were injuries the doctor took care of it?

**Fred: Yes.**

DNR: How was first aid handled in the field?

**Fred: We had first aid kits in the trucks. We had Red Cross training.**

DNR: Were you ever injured in camp?

**Fred: No.**

DNR: Were there any diseases that broke out in camp?

**Fred: No.**

DNR: Was there a special quarters for sick?

**Fred: Infirmary.**

DNR: Were there any insect or rodent problems?

**Fred: No.**

DNR: How were the barracks heated in the winter?

**Fred: We had old army coal stoves. We stayed nice and warm.**

DNR: Were the buildings insulated?

**Fred: No.**

DNR: What kind of contacts did you have with the local community?

**Fred: None. We would go to the swimming pool and the skating rink, churches. There were conflicts between the boys and the camp boys over girls which resulted in fisticuffs. But we got along pretty good with the locals.**

DNR: Did you have dances to meet girls?

**Fred: Swimming pool and skating rink. I had a lot of good times up there.**

DNR: How did you think the local community felt about the camp?

**Fred: I talked to people in town. They liked us.**

DNR: When you went into town, did you have to wear a uniform?

**Fred: We could wear civilian clothes. In town at night we wore uniforms.**

DNR: Did you have haircuts in the camp?

**Fred: Yes. Tom Anderson was the barber. He was from Kansas. Our camp had a bunch of Kansas boys. Our youngest daughter lives in Idaho.**

DNR: What was your most memorable experience in the CCC's?

**Fred: That's hard to say.**

DNR: What would be the oddest experience?

**Fred: We caught a badger once out at the ledges at the dam. We got him in the gunny sack. Then he stopped struggling.**

DNR: What was your biggest accomplishment in the CCC's?

**Fred: Education. Seeing some of my work today still standing.**

DNR: How do you think your life was changed in the CCC's?

**Fred: Well, it gave me a better education of life and how to meet life. It didn't do me any harm.**

DNR: What did you do after you left the CCC's?

**Fred: I started to work on a couple of farms. Then I quit and started driving a truck. I drove a truck for several years. It started to bother my back. Then I stopped. I hauled potatoes, dynamite.**

DNR: When did you retire?

**Fred: '82.**

DNR: Anything else you want to talk about in the CCC's?

**Fred: No.**

**END OF TRANSCRIPT – SAM J. HAIM - SCRIBE**