

Interview: Clifton Hanshaw 1/23/02

DNR: What CCC camps were you assigned to?

Cliff: I went into the CCC in the fall of 1935. I was inducted into Ft. Des Moines. From there I was transferred to Ames at the college. We were building a golf course for the college at that time. We were housed in tents till it got so cold it broke the camp up. I was lucky enough I was transferred down here to 1757. We were working on the Lake of Three Fires, soil conservation and forestry work. We cleared the entire basin for the lake that winter and laid a lot of sod. All the waterways, we stripped a lot of sod from pastures around the area and took it out and laid it on all the terraces and waterways in the area. Besides tying down a lot of brush and making fishing nests for a lot of the lakes. As winter went on, in January of 36 we go into terrible weather. Snow, cold blowing: Of course we had no equipment at that time. We continued pouring the spillway and making the damn for the place. They tarped the whole place and made stoves from 50 gallon drums. Poured concrete when it was 20 below zero. A lot of days we drove out and did no work and drove back. Of course we had no snow equipment back then. We run out of fuel one time. We went out of camp at daybreak and headed for New Market where the coalmines were at 12 miles west of here. We took five trucks, three trucks to haul men and two to fill with coal. After we filled with coal we turned around and scooped the same snow drifts and we had on the way out there. We arrived in town at noon and returned to the camp at about 7:30 at night. It only took a few minutes to unload the truck and they were all iced up and out of fuel. The barracks in this camp were built anywhere from 6 feet to 2 feet off the ground. They were built on the side of the hill. We would put our clothes under the mattress so they would be warm the next morning. For three days the temperature never got up to zero. We also had a fellow murder his wife outside of town and we had to go scoop him out and that took all day to scoop him out. We got a hold of an old Ford once and used it for a snowplow; we made a fairly good snow plow. We took off to the lake, usually we had to scoop our way out to the lake and scoop our way back. That was a tough winter in the CCC.

DNR: When you were transferred from Ames to Bedford. Did the whole camp transfer?

Cliff: The camp was split up. Some went to a camp in Council Bluffs and some were went along the river east.

DNR: Did you have a choice where you would be transferred?

Cliff: No I did not. There was about five or six of us that transferred to Bedford.

DNR: Do you remember the dates you worked at the camp?

Cliff: I was in for six months. It ended in April. I got thirty bucks a month and twenty-five of that went home.

DNR: What year was that?

Cliff: 1935-36.

DNR: Where was your hometown?

Cliff: Bedford

DNR: What did you do before entering the CCC camp?

Cliff: I was still in school at that point. Spent the summer on a dude ranch.

DNR: Why did you enroll in the CCC program?

Cliff: Because I needed a job.

DNR: Tell me about your first days at the camp, i.e., clothing, equipment, toiletries issued, etc.

Cliff: 2-inch haircut. They laid out the rules and mealtime. It was like a soft military setup.

DNR: What kind of clothes was issued to you?

Cliff: Military clothes.

DNR: Do you remember how many issues you had? How many shirts, how many pants?

Cliff: I think two. Another thing issued to us was blue denim.

DNR: Was their equipment issued to you?

Cliff: NO

DNR: What toiletries did you receive?

Cliff: Toiletries came out of you five bucks that you had. It seemed you got five dollars of coupons to use on such items until you would get paid.

DNR: Were you allowed to bring in personal items to camp when you first started?

Cliff: You couldn't bring a car with you. One guy had a model T Ford pickup that we took out every once in a while. Top speed on it was about thirty mi/hour.

DNR: Were you able to go "out" on the weekends?

Cliff: You could, but you had to be released by military.

DNR: What were you not allowed to keep?

Cliff: The clothes you were issued are about the best clothes you could have.

DNR: How were the sleeping quarters?

Cliff: Tent, military type tent. Four people to a tent, bunkbeds. The sleeping quarters must be inspected.

DNR: Was the shower water heated?

Cliff: Yes, it was heated.

DNR: How was it heated?

Cliff: hot water heaters.

DNR: In Bedford, were the accommodations the same? Did you stay in a tent?

Cliff: No, we stayed in a building located in the side of the hill. All the works was done outside, we didn't have workshops.

DNR: Who were your bunkmates?

Cliff: I remember one person, Glen, another name Daddy.

DNR: When you were at the building in Bedford, how many bunks did it have?

Cliff: I would say close to 40.

DNR: How did you get along?

Cliff: Very well. A few guys would get out of line. Some tricks were played on others.

DNR: Were most of the guys in the camp from around here?

Cliff: They were from all over, quite a few from Council Bluffs. Later on we had a group of guys from Arkansas. That was in the late 30's and early forties. We had guys from Fort. Dodge, Des Moines, Waterloo, Mt. Ayre. Some guys who were in trouble with the law had a choice to go to jail or join the CCC. The tavern downtown would cause a few problems.

DNR: Tell me about the food in the mess hall?

Cliff: We had good food. Except when we had nothing but pork and beans.

DNR: Who did the cooking?

Cliff: A CCC person.

DNR: How were your holiday meals?

Cliff: I went home sometimes. Thanksgiving was turkey. Usually something special.

DNR: Any particular meal you enjoyed?

Cliff: Pancakes were good. Eggs and toast were usually cold.

DNR: When was payday?

Cliff: End of the month. We were paid \$30/month and twenty-five was sent home.

DNR: What were your days off?

Cliff: Sat and Sun.

DNR: How did you spend your pay?

Cliff: Toiletries, candy etc.

DNR: How did you spend your days off?

Cliff: Usually went home.

DNR: How did you get home?

Cliff: I walked.

DNR: How was the Sabbath observed.

Cliff: We had a chapel in town.

DNR: Tell me about the sports activities in the camp?

Cliff: They did have some basketball. They never played baseball.

DNR: Any dances?

Cliff: NO

DNR: Tell me about any personal conflicts you had, and how you dealt with them?

Cliff: I never had any conflicts. If you were in trouble you would have KP duty.

DNR: What did you do for KP duty?

Cliff: I served for a week. Peeling potatoes, mopping the floor, cleaning the floors.

DNR: What other major problems occurred in the camp?

Cliff: Some guys would get drunk and thrown in jail.

DNR: If you went A wahl, would they come and get you?

Cliff: I assume they would.

DNR: I understand there were some educational/trade opportunities available. Did you take advantage of any of these?

Cliff: In later years there were. I never got involved in them.

DNR: The schooling was offered in the camp?

Cliff: I believe it was held in local schools.

DNR: Were the classes held at night?

Cliff: I think they were.

DNR: Were you considered (LEMS)?

Cliff: I'm not sure.

DNR: What part did the military play in the CCC camp?

Cliff: They maintained order in the camp. Making sure everything was ready for the next day. They did have medical orderlies that took care of the men in a hospital setting.

DNR: How would you rate your overall experience with the other workers in the camp?

Cliff: Never had many problems at all.

DNR: What were the main projects your camp was involved with?

Cliff: Build a shelter house down by the lake with timber from around the area. Laid sod around the lake, cleaning the brush out and taking that around. Scooped snow and cut wood during the winter. Poured concrete that we mixed by hand. The big thing during the spring was building the spillway.

DNR: Was your camp a forestry camp or a soils camp?

Cliff: Forestry camp. Later I worked for soils.

DNR: Who were your leaders out there?

Cliff: Cooper “?”. He was the only leader I had. There was a guy by the name of smites that did a lot of the stabilizing in the camp.

DNR: Did you get along with your leaders ok?

Cliff: Yes, I did.

DNR: How did you get your daily work assignments?

Cliff: From the leader. We would check in before we went to the field.

DNR: Would you be waked up by bugle horn?

Cliff: Yep

DNR: Would you go to breakfast then?

Cliff: Lined up before breakfast. Then went to mess hall. The routine was the same in the afternoon. After dinner you would have your free time then.

DNR: Did they have things like Ping-Pong tables and pool tables any recreation activities.

Cliff: I can’t recall. Maybe pool.

DNR: What type of equipment did you use? Did you use cutting saw?

Cliff: Cutting saw is about the only thing I used. I did drive a truck some.

DNR: Were tools something that was issued to you every morning?

Cliff: If you had tools you would have to check them out when you needed them.

DNR: Was the tool room manned by a CCC guy?

Cliff: Yes it was.

DNR: Who were some of your fellow workers, and how did you get along with them?

Cliff: We got along fine.

DNR: Were there any minority groups?

Cliff: No, I can’t think of any.

DNR: Tell me about the specific skills you learned in camp?

Cliff: I did help build that snowplow.

DNR: What were some of the injuries that happened at work?

Cliff: Nobody ever had any serious injuries. I can't even recall a broken bone.

DNR: Did you guys work in any weather conditions?

Cliff: We would atleast try. We had military type coats for the winter, and gloves. I don't recall having a cap or earcovers.

DNR: How many people were in the camps? Did officers stay in separate barracks?

Cliff: over one hundred I believe. The officers stayed in separate barracks.

DNR: did the CCC build the barracks?

Cliff: No, contractors built them.

DNR: Any insect or vermin problems?

Cliff: No, I don't think so.

DNR: Did you have boots for wintertime?

Cliff: I believe we had some kind of boot issued.

DNR: What work did you do outside the camp or community?

Cliff: None. We did shovel some snow.

DNR: What contact did you have with the outside community?

Cliff: Just like a normal citizen.

DNR: Did you have any contacts with females during you stay at the camp?

Cliff: I did talk with a girl I met for a couple of years.

DNR: Did you have any problems with young men in the community?

Cliff: I don't think so, I few small problems I'm sure.

DNR: How do you think the members of the CCC camp were perceived by the local community?

Cliff: They were considered by most as members of the community.

DNR: What is your most memorable experience at the CCC camp?

Cliff: Everyday during the winter when we were shoveling most of the time.

DNR: What do you think was your biggest accomplishment at the camp?

Cliff: The fact I worked on something that would be remembered and part of the history of the area.

DNR: How do you think your life changed, by enrolling in the CCC camp?

Cliff: Having a job that would provide income.

DNR: What did you do after leaving the CCC camp?

Cliff: I got a job driving a truck from 1936-1939 hauling grain to the north. Then I worked in a garage.

DNR: Anything you would like to add?

Cliff: Everything was day in and day out work.

DNR: What kind of trucks did you have?

Cliff: Mostly GMC. I think we had three trucks. I pulled the front wheels off one of the trucks.

DNR: Did the trucks have hydraulic pumps?

Cliff: some of them might have.

DNR: What year were those trucks?

Cliff: 33-34

DNR: Color?

Cliff: Forrest green for all of them. Government plates, not military plates.

DNR: Did they have any discharge papers when you left?

Cliff: I believe so. You signed up for a six-year time period, but some worked for a year or so. Some individual did wear coveralls.

DNR: How did they deal with laziness?

Cliff: I think they just would get on their case.

End of Interview