

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Hillyard, Edmund
PHONE NUMBER: none listed

Interviewer: Jim Scheffler

Date: February 28, 2002

BOLD PRINT is CCC enrollee Edwin Hillyard

Enrollee date of service: 1936-1939

DNR: What was your hometown?

Breckenridge, MO, that is where my folk were.

DNR: What part of MO is that in?

Do you know where Chillicothe is?

DNR: Yes, I got a flat tire a few years ago.

It is seventeen miles on west of that.

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

I got out of high school when I was sixteen and I went up and joined them. I tried the Army and Navy and everything else and they wouldn't take me.

DNR: So you were sixteen?

Seventeen.

DNR: What did you do before the CCC?

I went to high school.

DNR: Why did you join the CCC?

I kind of wanted to be in some kind of service. I tried everything else and they wouldn't take me.

DNR: Why was that, because you were too young?

No, I have a heart murmur, they didn't think I would last that long.

DNR: You fooled them. What camps were you assigned to?

Only one, that was at Chariton.

DNR: Ok, so you were never transferred then?

No. Four years right there, if the camp was still there I would be there.

DNR: Wow.

I liked it there very much.

DNR: Could you have transferred if you wanted to or did you just chose to stay?

I never asked.

DNR: Ok. What years were you there?

1936, 37, 38 and 1939, I believe it was. Lieutenant Hunt got him a new Chevy and that was a 1939, had the little deal up on the dash where you turn your horn to country horn to city horn.

DNR: Really? That is an interesting option. Yeah.

Of course we went out and played with it as soon as he got it you know. As long as we didn't touch anything we were all right.

DNR: Tell me about your first days at the camp when you arrived, did they issue you supplies and clothing?

Oh yah. Gunderson was the supply sergeant if I remember right and they would give you your blanket and clothing and assigned you to a barracks, which there was, only two or three of. But either one or the other you were assigned too.

DNR: What personal things did you bring with you.

From where?

DNR: From home, did you bring other clothes or personal items with you?

No, just the clothes I had on.

DNR: And they gave you everything else?

Yah, uh huh.

DNR: Was there anything you weren't allowed to keep?

Not that I know of.

DNR: Ok

I never tried to keep anything. We had a trunk to put our belongings in at the foot of the bed, just like in the Army.

DNR: You were assigned a bed, was it a cot or a bed or two-tiered bunk?

No no, it was just one. It wasn't a fold up kind. It was a regular, had springs on it.

DNR: Really comfortable?

Yah, at that time I thought it was. It would kill me know.

DNR: What was the barracks like, what was it made out of?

It was wood and they were clean. Lieutenant Hunt made the inspections ever so often. Got to be cleaned.

DNR: Were they painted?

I don't remember if they were or not.

DNR: It was my impression that they weren't painted. They just kind of built them and they didn't know they were going to be there real long.

I know they weren't painted on the inside.

DNR: Ok. Do you remember any of your bunkmates?

I remember Floyd Boyer was the boss down at the garage and Camel was over him, but he sat in his office all of the time. And ah Gunderson Singleton was the clerk, Captain Peterson and Lieutenant Hunt.

DNR: You remember all of the important people.

Yah.

DNR: How did the guys get along?

Good. I don't remember even remember a fight. Maybe a disagreement or something but no fights.

DNR. How did they handle disagreements, I mean, did the supervisors have to step in.

I don't think they had any that amounted to anything you know. If something was wrong they asked and told you what was right and what was wrong and that was it.

DNR: How was the food.

It was good. I can't remember their names but the food was good. The officer had a little place up front here and ours was back behind on tables and so on, but we had the same food as they did. No difference at all.

DNR: Did they change the menu now and then?

Yes, quite frequently.

DNR: Did you get seconds?

I don't remember.

DNR: But you had plenty to eat?

Oh yah.

DNR: Who did the cooking? Did they hire people?

No, they had two cooks and then if someone got into a little bit of Dutch or something they would go down and peel potatoes or wash dishes or something.

DNR: Did you ever have to peel potatoes?

No, I never did. They had a machine that would roll them out.

DNR: Did they have special meals for holidays and Xmas?

Yes, they had turkey and so on.

DNR: Pretty good?

Real good.

DNR: That was probably before the era of powdered food or milk and so on.

Yah. For 4 or 5 months the job came open to drive the army truck, it was a couple years later. I applied for that and got it. And you didn't have to do too much there, come to Des Moines, Fort Des Moines and pick up supplies and take them back. But outside of that I drove a dump truck. They worked on a rock quarry right east of town there. Sailor Young was a cat skinner. He made a road down there to it and at that time I was hauling gas for his cat. But was a good place to be.

DNR: Sounds like you really liked it.

I did.

DNR: That's great. When was payday, do you remember?

It was once a month. Not sure what day it was.

DNR: Ok. How much did you get paid?

\$30.00 a month. \$36.00 a month after I started driving the Army truck.

DNR: Oh ok. Now you had to send part of that home didn't you?

No, I kept it right there. I sent some of it home and they put it in the bank for me. But we used what we wanted.

DNR: How did you spend your money?

We would go up to Chariton. Maybe once a week we would go up to the tavern and have a beer, come back to camp and that was about the end of it.

DNR: How far was the camp from town?

6 or 7 blocks.

DNR: So it was an easy walk.

Oh yah, now it wouldn't be, but then it was.

DNR: What days or days of the week were you off that you didn't have to work?

That would be Sunday. Not sure if we did too much on Saturday but I know we had Sundays off.

DNR: What did you do on your days off?

Sit around the barracks and played cards or whatever, I don't remember that we did too much of anything.

DNR: Ok. What did they do for church services? Did they have them at camp or did they have them in town?

They had a Chaplin that came in on Sunday for a little service. Short but nice.

DNR: But you could go to town if you wanted to church.

There were no restrictions on you.

DNR: Ok, ok. One of the questions is about sports activities; did they have baseball or softball?

No as far as I know they didn't because I am not into sports at all. But I can't remember anything like that.

DNR: We talked a little bit about the conflicts between the guys. Did you have any conflicts or arguments with the guys?

Not that I know of. Once in a while maybe I would get teed off at the Lieutenant once in a while, but I would get over that right real quick.

DNR: You probably didn't argue with him too much. If anyone did get into trouble as much as punishment you mentioned having to peel potatoes. Is there any other kind of punishment that you recall?

It seems to me that you had to clean the latrine up once in a while, work in the kitchen, peeling potatoes or washing dishes or something that was about all.

DNR: Ok, nobody there got into any really serious trouble while you were there?

No, not that I know of. I am sure I would have heard about it.

DNR: I imagine. Did they have any opportunities to take any classes or take up a trade?

No.

DNR: Just wondered.

I know they do now.

DNR: What were some of the projects that your camp was involved with?

We had that rock quarry east of town there and Red Haw we built that and the entryway there, the rock in that centerpiece there. Me and another fellow hauled the stone from west of Osceola, that is what they built it out of. I had no part in building it.

North of the highway down there we had a fish hatchery with a bunch of little ponds. In fact it was almost right straight north of the lake, but it was on the other mile up.

DNR: A lot of the parks back then had fish rearing ponds in them.

Yeah, but the only thing I remember about that was cat skinner got his cat stuck and I went and pulled him out. Like I say the whole thing was just enjoyable. I enjoyed every minute there.

DNR: You were in it for a long time. Most people weren't in that long.

4 years, they wouldn't let me stay any longer or I would have still been there.

DNR: You would have been the world's oldest CCC boy. We talked about how you drove the truck and got extra pay for that. As far as skills that you learned, driving the truck, operating equipment. What other skills did you learn?

Not really anything, I drove the cat when he was eating his lunch, I would go gas it up. And of course I had to get on it and make some roads and they were going like this and he had to straighten them up.

DNR: You probably got better after a while.

No, not a whole lot, there is a trick to that.

DNR: As far as training not a much yourself but the other people as they had to learn skills as part of the job, who provided the training? What kind of staff did they have that did that?

I don't know of anyone. Once in a while one of the guys would go down to the garage and help them with that if a fleet or cat would throw a track or something. Other than that I don't know.

DNR: But who supervised you when you were doing your work projects? Say in the parks?

Ok, there was one fellow on each truck that went out and we took the food out in a truck, sandwiches and so on. I can't remember anyone, which might have been a sergeant of something; they had probably another name for them. I don't know what it was.

DNR: So as much as building something they had some kind of supervisor.

Oh yah, sure.

DNR: You mentioned some of the Army staff, the captain was in charge, and he was the commander.

Yes, then the Lieutenant and from there on, I don't know. Gunderson I remember him. But every time you wanted clothes or something you had to argue with him to get it.

DNR: Was there a Doctor in the camp?

No.

DNR: Ok. How did you get along with the Army men?

Good.

DNR: They were pretty fair to everybody?

Oh yah. I come up to Des Moines here to get supplies or anything like that they were real good. Of course they had it all ready ordered all I had to do was pick it up.

DNR: How long did it take to drive to Des Moines back then?

Oh one day you could come up and get your supplies and drive back. One day they couldn't get it ready or something and I had to stay overnight.

DNR: The roads probably weren't pretty good then.

Oh they were pretty good that old 69 highway went across that, fairly good roads. I had a 36 Chevy, had to drive that Army truck. I believe it was a 36.

DNR: How fast did you normally drive that?

Thirty-five, if you could get it going just right you might be able to get it up to thirty-eight.

DNR: That was about it?

There was a governor on all of them.

DNR: Oh ok. How did you get your work assignments every day? What did you do you got up in the morning you went to the mess hall and then from their how did things go?

I guess you just went on from the day before. I don't know. Some of that stuff I just can't remember at all.

DNR: That's ok it has been a few days. Sounds like you were on some on going projects your were working for the quarry. You just probably, this week you would be doing that and if there was any change they would tell you in the morning or?

Oh yah, they you would stay in and take the sandwiches out that's all there was to it. You just stayed in and did it.

DNR: You mentioned you drove the truck and cat everything. What other type of equipment did you use?

Not much at all. I can't remember anything else at all.

DNR: I asked you before if you remembered any of your fellow co-workers.

I tried and I can't. You haven't ran across any of them have yah?

DNR: The people I have talked to work at different camps. I tell you what if we find somebody that was down there we would let you know.

It is bothering me that I can't remember the number of the camp.

DNR: We can find that out for you.

I think it was 1012 or something like that. I use to have it downstairs.

DNR: I will give you the number and give you a call.

Ok.

DNR: So you haven't had any contact with the guys since.

Floyd Boyer, which was the head mechanic down at the garage. I seen him once years back he was working at the Desoto place down at Locust Street downtown here. He had one foot that was short and he had an iron thing that stood up about that high and he walked on that.

DNR: How did the city and the country kids get along in the camp? Was it kind of a mixture?

I guess we didn't know any difference. We were all in the 3 C camp.

DNR: That is the answer I have been getting? Were there any minority people? Hispanics or Native Americans or Blacks?

No.

DNR: We talked a little about the skills you learned at the camp.

I could drive a cat now but I can't do any grading, drive a truck like I always could, you know.

DNR: The things you learned and the skills, how did that benefit you afterwards? Did you have an opportunity to use them in later life?

Never did.

DNR: Was anybody ever hurt on the job?

Nope. Had a first aide place there and had a cut finger or something once in a while.

DNR: I suppose if someone did get hurt and there was no Dr. at the camp I presume they took them to town?

I suppose but I don't think any of them did.

DNR: Was there any disease's in the camp, measles or anything else?

Colds and you could go up to the first aid place and get yourself a couple of aspirins and that would be about it.

DNR: Ok, so nothing serious.

You didn't have trouble like they do now days.

DNR: They hadn't invented some of these diseases yet.

With people or anything else.

DNR: Was there any insects or rodents or anything?

None.

DNR: You said they kept the barracks nice and clean, I presume the kitchen and everything.

Oh yah, the floors were all waxed with paraffin you would put that on and you would take a scrub brush and scrubbed it until it shined and then you would take a piece of old wool blanket on it and go over it would really put a shine on it.

DNR: I bet. Did the camp do any work in the local community? Any special projects?

No, the fish aquarium, the rock quarry and over at Red Haw, I don't remember of anything else that they did you know.

DNR: What kind of contact did you have in the local community? You said you went to town sometimes to have a beer.

None really, we new the guys and went as a group.

DNR: Did anyone join any clubs or organizations in town?

No.

DNR: They pretty much were in the camp and went to town.

DNR: Did you meet any ladies when you were down there or go to any dances?

No, I can't say as if I did.

DNR: I didn't know if they had any, Chariton is a fairly large town.

Well it is now. I got out of there and went up to the Chevrolet place and got a job in Chariton, after camp there. Do you remember in 41?

DNR: I wasn't quite.

They had a 41 Chevy, it was black with white letters painted all over advertising Chevrolet, and I got to drive that for a while.

DNR: That was pretty neat.

Yah.

DNR: Was there any other problems with local men in town?

No, there would be today wouldn't there.

DNR: How do you think the local community regarded the CCC people?

They seemed to accept all of them pretty good. As far as I could tell the people in town were real nice, the farmers around that we came into contact were real nice to us.

DNR: Good. What do you think was your most memorable experience at the camp?

I just got through telling you, hauling rock, driving the Army truck, taking the sandwiches out to the field.

DNR: You really like that, ok. What was the oddest thing that happened at camp? Anything comes to mind.

No, first time I had an inspection on my Army truck after I got it. He took white gloves he felt underneath where the oil pan connects on.

DNR: Wow with white gloves? Did you pass?

Yah, once he got a little bit of stain on it and he said get that cleaned up. I said I would and I did and that was all that was to it. You betcha, he had a white glove.

DNR: What was your biggest accomplishment for being there, personal?

4 years I guess you would call it. Ah I don't know I enjoyed it immensely as you can tell.

DNR: Yes. How do you think your life changed by being in the CCC for 4 years?

I suppose I learned more politeness I think as far as the Army goes and it didn't hurt me to say yes sir and no sir and stuff like that. But besides that not a whole lot.

DNR: Did it help you to get along with all types of people?

Oh yah, I came to Des Moines here and I came to Iowa Aircraft School and I wanted to go into building airplanes and they said that was the only way to do it. They taught you how to rivet. That is all I learned there.

DNR: Then what did you do after that?

Sold aircraft for 21 years, school board 20 years and that was about all other than a part time service station at Sears.

DNR: When did you retire?

I was 62. Must have been 21 years ago.

DNR: That must have been in 81.

Yah. Time passes you buy.

DNR: I just wanted to finish our regular questions here. Tell me about what the CCC did within the park? Did they build all the roads?

They built all the roads around the lake and they built the lake.

DNR: And they built the dam.

Yah. And at the time when we were there, they hadn't built any cabins yet, like there are now.

DNR: There is a nice picnic shelter overlooking the lake.

Yah and the entry way are there. The fish hatchery never really turned into anything, I didn't know of it doing it.

DNR: Have you been to Red Haw since?

Yah, just to drive down there, I never did any fishing there.

DNR: In the past there was some pretty good fishing there, some good bluegill fishing.

There was one fellow that had his boat in there for a day and a half and had a big old blue cat and finally did get him.

DNR: That was in the lake?

It wasn't on dry land. (Laughter)

DNR: It wasn't a walking catfish. (Laughter)

Sorry about that.

DNR: The CCC worked in 43 state parks and between the WPA and the CCC there was over 1000 structures and about 700 are remaining.

The WPA at that time was helping on the road about northeast of Chariton. They were out there making shoulders and ditches and so on. Mostly by hand.

DNR: It was interesting that sometimes the WPA and the CCC worked in the same park.

Not that I know of down there.

DNR: Sometimes they did, not necessarily at the same time.

Oh I see, they might have been there I don't know.

DNR: I think we have gone through our list of questions. Is there anything else you want to say that might have touched your memory?

Not that I can say, I just wish I had a better memory.

DNR: That is all for now, thank you Ed. (**End of interview.**)