

George Kinsey Interview

DNR: Its January 16th 2002 I'm Bob. Today I'm interviewing George Kinsey; George is veteren of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Welcome George.

George: Thank You.

DNR: We are at the Chariton Library and we are conducting this interview.

DNR: What CCC camps were you assigned to?

George: Chariton and Knoxville.

DNR: Were you transferred from the Chariton camp to Knoxville, or how did that work out?

George: They took the whole camp up there.

DNR: The whole camp moved up.

George: Brought in an Arkansas camp in the Chariton location.

DNR: What year would that of been?

George: 1936

DNR: When did you work at the camp here and the camp in Knoxville. DO you know when you started?

George: A year and a half prior to that. One time I came in for the winter only. Then back to the farm and then back to the camp for a year and a half only.

DNR: So you would have started in 1935?

George: Yes, 1935

DNR: Do you know what time of the year you started?

George: In the fall.

DNR: Did you go directly to the Chariton camp at that time?

George: Yes

DNR: Was that when you only worked in the fall?

George: And all winter.

DNR: The fall and winter of 1935-36?

George: Yes

DNR: Did you work that spring then?

George: Summertime I quit and went back to the farm, then when the farmwork was done I went back to the camp.

DNR: They allowed you to do that?

George: Yes, they always had a job they would let you go into. It wasn't binding, I don't think. Still everyone appreciated the job and the pay.

DNR: Then in 1936 the camp moved to Knoxville?

George: I'd say 1937.

DNR: How long did you work up there? Discharge in spring of 1938?

George: Yes

DNR: Where is your hometown?

George: Norwood.

DNR: What did you do before going to the CCC camp?

George: I help dad a little bit on the farm. Wherever I could get a dollar or 50 cent job I took it, from the neighbor farms.

DNR: Your dad had a farm in Norwood then?

George: He was a farmhand.

DNR: Why did you enroll in the CCC?

George: I felt my dad needed some help. He had five kids and no mother, our mother died when I was ten years old. He needed help buying clothes and food, so I joined.

DNR: Had you graduated from high school at that time?

George: No.

DNR: How far did you go in school?

George: I finished tenth grade and had started eleventh what I started that.

DNR: How old would you have been?

George: I had to been eighteen.

DNR: Did you have to be eighteen to join the CCC?

George: I don't think so. I seen a lot of young kids out there.

DNR: Can you tell me about your first day of camp, what you had to go through. Was in kind of like the military where you did the haircut, assigned you clothes and that sort of thing?

George: They issued clothes, but I don't think they gave us haircuts. But I don't think they would allow the haircuts of today. Showed us how to make the beds like in the army. The captain in Knoxville said "not a damn one of you who would make a soldier", and I thought of that for the next five years in WWII.

DNR: Was there a physical or anything like that?

George: Oh yes. If there was something wrong with you they wanted to know.

DNR: Did they issue shot or anything like that?

George: I don't recall. I do recall getting tonsillitis, and they put me in what they call a hospital for three days.

DNR: Tell me about the food. What do you remember about the food?

George: You would always like to have more milk. But it was good. Wasn't a picky eater.

DNR: Was the food home cooked?

George: yes

DNR: The individuals who cooked were CCC?

George: Yes

DNR: Did they provide any training for the cooks?

George: I assume they did.

DNR: Did they allow you to go home on the holidays?

George: They allowed you to go home. I recalled going home on Friday nights.

DNR: Did they have telephones at that time? Did they allow you to call to inform them you would not be able to return on time?

George: We didn't have a phone out in the country.

DNR: When was payday?

George: Once a month. You could get credit if you wanted.

DNR: How much were you paid.

George: Five dollars and twenty-five to my dad. Got a little raise when I became assistant leader.

DNR: How did you spend the money that you had?

George: Theatre, I guess.

DNR: Did you have weekends off? Is that how it worked?

George: No

DNR: Did they have church services?

George: I bet they did, but I can't remember.

DNR: Were their sport activities at camp?

George: Must have been. But can't recall any.

DNR: Do you remember any personal conflicts you would have had with anyone else?

George: I chased someone who owed me some money.

DNR: Did you play cards or anything like that.

George: No, I never did.

DNR: Education was available.

George: Yes

DNR: Do you recall who was the teachers?

George: No

DNR: When problems took place in the CCC camp amongst the men, how were they resolved?

George: I didn't get involved in any problems myself.

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

George: No

DNR: Did you pick up any trades/skills?

George: Sharpening saws/axes.

DNR: Who taught you?

George: CCC Men/specialists

DNR: Did you utilize the trades you learned after the CCC?

George: Yes, I used them on the farm.

DNR: Did you have electricity back then?

George: Very few did. 32 volt. I worked for a farmer before I went to the service for two years. And he had a 32 volt belt then.

DNR: Are you still in contact with any CCC members today?

George: NO

DNR: How would you describe your overall experience at camp with your other workers?

George: It was a great experience all around. You had to get along with the other workers.

DNR: How many people did you have on a truck when you were going to a worksite?

George: fifth-teen maybe.

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

George: One project that I remember was looking for dead oak trees. Cut brush down to six inches high. We were in the rock quarry one winter. Along with

planting trees in the gullies, praying they would take root. Building ponds using slips hooking to trucks.

DNR: Did you do different things at Knoxville?

George: Can't recall. But we worked everyday.

DNR: Was that a forestry camp, or a soils camp?

George: A soils camp, I believe.

DNR: Were their specific projects that you did on a regular occasion?

George: Looking for fence posts. Loafers cut wood and workers cut rock.

DNR: Who were your leaders?

George: Don't know

DNR: Were they military people?

George: No, the only military people were officers.

DNR: Did the officers go and work with you?

George: No, they stayed at camp.

DNR: Did you get along with your leaders?

George: Yes

DNR: Did your work assignments vary from day to day?

George: No, you stayed till the project was done. I made seats out of trees out at red haw.

DNR: What kind of equipment did you get to use?

George: Handsaw, shovels, axes, and spades.

DNR: Any machinery?

George: They had a tractor, but I never got to use it.

DNR: How was equipment issued to you?

George: The leader would make sure we had the equipment for that day.

DNR: Were there any minority groups at the camp?

George: Italian boys, I'm sure.

DNR: Were the guys in the camp from around the area?

George: yes, some lived right across from the camp.

DNR: Can you name any specific skills you learned at camp?

George: Behave myself.

DNR: Did you ever have to pull KP duty?

George: I'm sure some did.

DNR: Did guys smoke?

George: yes

DNR: Was that done quite often?

George: seemed common

DNR: How about alcohol?

George: I'm sure they did.

DNR: Do you remember anyone getting injured at work? How about yourself?

George: Nope

DNR: Were there any diseases at camp?

George: Not too much. No.

DNR: Were there any insect or vermin problems?

George: Nothing I recall.

DNR: Was suntan oil available, head protection.

George: Floppy hats, with rims all around the hat.

DNR: What work, if any, did you do outside the camp, or in the community?

George: Shovel snow to get the coal trucks through.

DNR: Did the community pay for that, or was it volunteer?

George: Volunteer.

DNR: Did you work on anything else beside farms while you were at the camp?

George: We built ponds and trying to stop some of the gullies by filling with rocks. I worked at Northwood and at Otter Creek.

DNR: Did you have many contacts with the outside community?

George: yes, boys were chasing girls. We watched movies.

DNR: Were there any problems with the young men in the community?

George: I'm not sure.

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

George: Good,

DNR: Did you have any trouble with anyone not working?

George: No, they might not get much done, but they would be there.

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

George: Nothing stands out.

DNR: What was your biggest accomplishment?

George: I was proud to be an assistant leader. I'm proud of that.

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

George: I sure it did. Gets you out in the world. Do things you would never do on the farm.

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

George: Worked on the farm.

DNR: When did you go into the service?

George: 1941, April. One of the first drafts.

DNR: Where did you serve?

George: Louisiana

DNR: Did you go overseas?

George: Yes, after a while.

DNR: What did you do after the service?

George: Got married.

DNR: Then what did you do.

George: I became a mechanic for Chrysler. The service helped me with that training. I had a scully station for many years.

DNR: Any final thoughts about the CCC?

George: Being able to look at the things I have done and wish I had done in education.

End of Interview