Interview with Joe Hebda, Interview 1
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Jacque: Why don't we start back with your father and mother? What did your father do?

Joe: Well, my father he was working in a steel mill, actually he got hurt. He was doing some work on the floor and he got hurt by someone pushing one of them steel wagon against his leg, and then he became a stencil cutter. That's when the depression came that's where he was at, as a stencil cutter.

Jacque: What was your father's name?

Joe: Anthony Hebda.

Jacque: And what was your mother's name?

Joe: Katharine.

Jacque: And did you have any brother's and sisters?

Joe: Yea, I have Helen, and Mary, Mary is dead now and Walther, Louis, Leo, Seally, and Dorothy.

Jacque: Where do you fit in?

Joe: I was the first one.

Jacque: Oh you're the oldest?

Joe: Yea, I'm the oldest.

Jacque: Where did you grow up?

Joe: In Everson, PA.

Jacque: Everson? Where is Everson?

Joe: A little ways out of Pittsburgh, about thirty some miles out of Pittsburgh.

Jacque: Is it a small town?

Joe: Well, what it was, was a big factory in the middle of about fifteen different tows. It was just like a circle, like Indians surrounding the camp, that's the way it looked. Each town had a different nationality of people. My town was mostly Polish, and we only had one colored fellah in there. His name was White, and he had a family. He was a chauffeur for a banker, the president of the bank, which was in Scottsdale. So then Scottsdale was a large place you know and that's where most of the Jewish people were and also the Italians. So the Italians had the grocery store and stuff like that. The Jewish people, they had the clothing stores. Most of them just had one main street in it, like Everson. ^R

Everson just had one street, and the street car would travel from Union Town to Greensburg, just about every half hour or hour. When it was working it would be at least every half hour. Then we changed in out town on the bridge. The bridge had two tracks, one going north and south. But anyway that's where they would change. One would stop and let the other one through, and they would go about as far as Carnesville, which was about seven miles. And it would change again in that town. That's where they stored the streetcars, in Carnesville. So each town, like Bottom, they used to get flooded out ever time the big storm come. That was mostly Russian people, Russian and Slavic. And Sweetown was the same way, it was Russian and Slavic. And actually Evaston was Polish and Slavish people. And they just kept going all around different nationalities. Colored people and Italians they lived on a hill that was a rough place to go through, in that area there. That's the way the town was circulate. Then there was farms and coal mines. That was around the town of Everson.

Jacque: Were you born there?

Joe: Uh hum (yes). I don't know why but just like it is now. When a young couple gets married they have one child, but nine times out of ten they have one bedroom, kitchen and a living room. Well, when I look at it that's the way it happened to me. I was born in a basement, because people lived in a basement. So I lived in the basement where there was only one room. Then one or two years we moved to another basement which had two bedrooms. Then as the family progressed we just kept living like that until we finally went into a row house, where it had big rooms and everything. We lived in that row house and there were three families living in one building. We lived right next to a big hotel, and they had a big beer garden there in this hotel. There's a lot of stories I could tell about when these fellahs would come out of the steel mill, well that's where they would go. They would get a beer or two before they would go on home to eat. It seemed like every time the family would get bigger we keep on moving. I think we must of gone through three or four houses. Finally when the war broke out, my mother finally bought a house. All four of us was in the service. We all sent money home and she finally bought a house. Then when we came back we had a house, but I didn't go back, because I came back here to this area again.

Jacque: When were you born:?

Joe: July fifth 1914

Jacque: How far did you go to school?

Joe: That's one thing that I'm left standing out. I went to night school, but I go in to problems there with the teacher so I'm not even going to bring that up. It seemed every time I wanted to get educated better I always run in to some kind of problem. So I never got very far in education, in school.

Jacque: Did you get through grade school?

Joe: Just about, because I took off. Me and a fellah named Bill we took off when we were teenagers, and we traveled.

Jacque: Where did you go?

Joe: Every place there was that you can think of. We just went on the train and traveled. We finally ended up in 1933 in the Chicago World's Fair, where we run into his sisters, his step-sister. They lived there. They was supposed to be married, uh they were married and divorced. We didn't know actually where they lived at. He said that he thinks he'll find in the telephone book or something. At that time we were smoking and I asked him for a book of matches. He gave me matches and I looked on them and it said Chicago. I said 'Your sisters live in Chicago?' He said 'Yea, how did you know?' I said, 'Well, it's right on these matches, this hotel, Hotel Sherm, Sherm Hotel in Chicago.' He said 'Yea, that's where they working now.' We had a nickel between us.

Jacque: Well, how old were you?

Joe: I guess about eighteen, seventeen eighteen years old.

Jacque: Then you were in the army for a while?

Joe: No, that's when I come back from Chicago and we got throwed in jail for five days in Pittsburgh. Then I come home and my father told me that they're picking up young boys and putting them in some kind of military. He said 'CC's' he didn't know what Civilian Conservation was. So he took me to this office and they signed me up. When I went there I met two of my other boys I went to school with. I asked them where they were going they said 'Well, we're down here to go somewhere, but we don't know where we're going either.' I said 'Well my father brought me over here but I don't know where I'm going.' He said, 'They'll be somebody here to pick us up.' They put us on the train that evening or that afternoon. We rode all day. It's a good thing mama made me a sandwich cause if she didn't I would have been starved to death riding that train. Finally we got into Harrisburg, then from Harrisburg we went to Shippensburg. When we got there the trucks were waiting for us. I seen all these men getting off. I said, 'At least we're not the only ones going to get that job. Must have been over a hundred men there, that were going to be spread around in that area. So they took us on a truck, and that was thirty miles. I know it took us an hour and a half maybe more to get down over the mountain, with them trucks. Those trucks only went about 25 miles an hour 20 miles an

hour. That's about as fast as them things could go. They took us into the mountain, I mean up in the mountain. That's where I started out in the CC camp there.

Jacque: So during the depression, that was when you were traveling around.

Joe: Yea

Jacque: So how did the depression affect you or didn't you know there was a depression.

Joe: Oh yea did I know, I guess I did know there was a depression. You know there's a lot of Polish people, they used to take an order a whole big box car or grapes from California and make wine. Everybody would come down there and get boxes of grapes and make jelly and wine. That was an every year thing going on. When depression hit, that was really rough. I seen people when they said they wasn't going to get there money out of the banks, they took bricks right out of the street with their hands and throw them through the big plate glass windows. There was nothing they could do about it cause there was only one policeman, maybe two policemen at the most in each town. They wasn't going to touch them just let people do anything they want to do.

Jacque: How did your family handle the depression?

Joe: We had stuff to eat on the table. Everybody lost their money. That's why I didn't get no education, or part of it. I worked all the time. I wouldn't even come home from school. I'd go somewhere, the next town or somewhere, unloading boxcars and stuff like that. They'd give me a quarter, or a dime, or 50 cents or something like that at most. That's why I didn't get so much education, I worked all the time. Any time I had a chance I'd go and get things in boxcars. They used to have these great big doors, they didn't have no sacks or boxes to put grain in. They'd just take and open the box car and they'd put these doors about eight foot long and about two inches thick. Every time the corn or wheat would be put in these boxcars they'd slide these big doors in there till they got clear to the top. They'd fill the boxcars clear to the top with corn or wheat oats or whatever. A lot of times I'd would run home from school and they would be changing cars or something. We had a big freight yard in Everson. So I would run down there, and if I seen a hole up on top where something punched it or something like that. I would always look on the bottom and see if there was a hole there. Sometimes there was a piece of tin or something across there, so I would pull that piece of tin and all this grain would come out. There would be sacks of them. So I'd fill the sacks up and throw them in the bushes. Then I'd get my father that evening, he'd go down there and help me pick it up. So I used to sell it to people, because in the town they raised hogs, and cows. Maybe one out of ten people would have cows, in there. They'd take them in the morning, they'd take them out in the fields, then in the evening they'd bring them back into the town. That's what I was doing all the time, making money. I wasn't thinking about education. My father, he know how to read in Polish, my mother too. They didn't know too much English. Dad he learned most of his English in the factory, in the steel mill, talking to one another. My mother she didn't learn till after we started growing up and we started talking English among ourselves. Then she said, 'What did he say, what did he say?'

She was always asking. Then we'd tell her, 'He said that.' and 'She said that.' That's the way that was.

Jacque: So your family handled the depression by just getting jobs for your brothers and sisters?

Joe: No, they didn't have no jobs. Surplus food is what we got, from the state. We'd go every Saturday we'd go and get butter and lard. We used to call it lard. And old soap, old GI soap. They'd cut big hunks up and that was for washing your clothes and stuff. Then they'd give you flour and sugar and stuff like that. But my father, he raised rabbits, above the garage where we lived at, he raised about maybe 150 rabbits. That was our meat. Every Sunday, or somewhere between, we'd have rabbit. A lot of people would come from the church, and they'd come right on by this house, and he'd give them big rabbit. He said, 'You want to kill it or take it home alive?' They'd say, 'Okay, I'll take it home alive.' They'd give him a quarter for maybe about a ten pound rabbit, or eight pound rabbit, they'd give him a quarter for it. A lot of people would come by they know on Sunday morning, they wanted meat for Sunday. Chickens was the same way. Most of your people they'd raise stuff. They had little gardens, and they canned a lot, a lot of canning. Then the town went and plowed up a big place for them. Each one of them had a little twenty by twenty foot land, piece of the ground. They would take and plant their own stuff in that little area. Then you'd get that tomatoes and stuff and put it in jars, everything in jars to keep us going for the winter.

Jacque: So how old were you when the depression hit?

Joe: Well, it hit in the thirties, early thirties. I was probably about 17, 18 years old.

Jacque: That's when your father told you about the CCC's?

Joe: Yes.

Jacque: So you went when you were 17?

Joe: Well maybe more than that, maybe about 19, 20 something like that.

Jacque: Were there any other choices for jobs, or anything else for you to do?

Joe: Everything was dead. The only thing was going on was we had dirt streets. Except the main street was cobblestone, that was brick-like. The reason that was, was because that was the main road going through 119, going through Everson. That's the streetcar, the same streetcar route.

Jacque: Once you joined the CCC's they brought you on a train, than you got on trucks and they brought you down here.

Joe: No, we was in Pine Grove Furnace.

Jacque: Where was Pine Grove Furnace?

Joe: That's in Pennsylvania.

Jacque: Oh, so that's the first place you went?

Joe: That's the first place. That's when we left Shippensburg, or Carlysle.

Jacque: How long were you there for?

Joe: I guess about two years, something like that.

Jacque: And that was CCC work?

Joe: Yea, they seemed to have a lot of fires, forest fires up in there. So we were building the back roads and stuff like that.

Jacque: When did you come to Chopawamsic?

Joe: Actually, Chopawamsic was probably already here, because it was run by the WPA. I came down here October ninth 1934 till September 13, 1938, that's when I went back out. From November the first 1938 till May fourth 1939 I worked for the Paul and Russell Construction in Quantico. I was a carpenters helper and a cement finisher.

Jacque: So you were here from 1934 till 1938, you came here right after you were in Pennsylvania?

Joe: Well, I think we stayed up there about two years, maybe a year and a half in Pennsylvania, then they shipped us down here on the train.

Jacque: Was everyone who was there, did they come down here?

Joe: No, see what happened during those days when the CC's were getting transferred from one place to another, say for instance new men were coming in, say 50 or 100 new men were coming in. Then they'd take just about the best or the best of the men who were in the old camp, the cooks, supply sergeant, like I was and sergeant. Then the people that was left there, they would become sergeant and cooks and stuff like that. We were replacing each camp, every time there was a new camp, they would take and bust up an old camp, and put it into the new camp. We got in the train at Pine Grove in the morning, and some time in the evening we came here in Quantico. They already had tents and everything all stacked in piles. When we come in we all know what to do, we started building the tent camp, the CC camp. It was right at the entrance going into camp two and five. Mostly the tents were right on the right hand side going into camp five. My supply tent was on the left hand side. They put me in the wrong place. They put me in a kind of hollow, which we didn't know. A big storm came up and I had all my

supplies on the ground, just laying in boxes and stuff. Then this big rain storm came, and that was the ditch or something. That water just came down through there, through that tent, I think it was fifty foot long. Everything that was on the ground was soaking wet. We had to take everything out and we had to send it to Fredericksburg. They had to run all the blankets and clothes and stuff all through the dryers and bring it all back. They had to move the tent on a level spot where it was dry. That was a mess. From there we started building cabins, they came in from California. That was camp 25, that's where they started setting up. There was a farm house that's were it was in that field there. The area there where the area is now the baseball diamond supposed to be there, I don't know what in there now.

Jacque: When you first got here was it very heavily forested, or did you see a lot of farm houses?

Joe: It was all farms, lot of farm houses, a lot of homes all along Joplin road. There was a store and post office all that stuff along Joplin. There was a lot of houses, school, church, just about as far as the bridge on 619 going to Manassas. There were a few houses up through there. There was quite a bit of houses in the area. You can tell just by that cemetery, that big cemetery up there.

Jacque: What about where the tent camp was, where there any houses very close to that?

Joe: Yea, it was right on the road there. You know where them two big oak trees are on the right hand side, just before you into the gate? There was a great big two story house, in there. That lady, she worked and her husband worked. They were colored people, but they had two girls. Before we found out about any laundries or anything, they used to wash clothes down there and they'd was the clothes and iron them. That went on till I went to Quantico and found out where the laundry was. A man gave me a kind of a deal. He gave me a certain percent of the laundry money, then I used to take, when I had old pants and stuff I'd give it to him. Because all the guys, their shoes were so big, they couldn't get their pants on. They had to take their shoe off to get their pants off, because their pants were so tight. We used to take and cut a V out of old pants and try to match their pants leg. That way they could slip their shoe through their pants leg without taking their shoes off. He used to charge me 50 cents for that, so he'd give me about 15 cents out of that. He probably fix ten pairs of pants, out of old pair. He could make out a who lot better just charging 15 cents out of them. Then I was making 45 dollars a month, because I was a sergeant. I used to lend my money out, they'd pay me back with a certain percent.

Jacque: When you first came here did a lot of young 17 or 18 year old boys, were they just coming in then, into the tent camp area.

Joe: Oh yea. Every six months there would be a change. We maybe brought only 100 men in so then we had to make 200, so first thing we know there would be 200 men because the clothes would be coming in. We was getting our clothes from Fort Belvoir cause that was the army. So when the clothes started coming in I knew there was going

to be new men coming in. So then I would take and issue them two uniforms and bedding and mess kit and stuff like that, soap, toothbrush, comb, and razor blade and all that stuff, they would all get that.

Jacque: Where did most of them come from? Where they from this area?

Joe: No, we picked up a few men, that came in. I guess there was ten, fifteen at the most, that lived around here. Most of them come from Scranton, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and then we started getting them in from the south. but they tried to keep the men as far as they could away from their home. Because they didn't want them running back and forth. They kept them away so it would take them a long time to get back, it would take them two days to get home. They would have to be AWOL or something like that so they would take and that's why they would push you so far into the mountains away from your home.

Jacque: Did most of the boys volunteer?

Joe: They done the same thing my father did. Some of the boys they didn't need to come around. The parents turn around, they just wanted to get rid of the boys. They would send them in there just for experience or something. But they didn't need the money because they would get the money back in, the check would come back from their home and they'd give it to them. A few of them didn't have to have the check at home. I used to send twenty-five dollars home and keep the rest. For four years my family lived practically on that twenty five dollars a month, and that was a large family.

Jacque: You were talking a little bit about the families that lived here in the houses, how did the camp, once the camp got started getting set up, how did the camp get along with the farms and the families who lived here.

Joe: To tell you the truth, they didn't mingle much because a lot of them were bootleggers, making whiskey and stuff. So they didn't mingle much with you. The only way we really got close to them was like, we was in the tent camp right across the road, there was two families over there. One family made whiskey and the other one probably helped out, so that's what they live on. Inside the camp, they'd be maybe a mile or so apart, except going to Turkey Run. Now going to Turkey Run, anyplace you see a bunch of pines, that's where the empty fields were. That's were they plowed their fields and planted their corn and stuff. Then anytime when you see two big trees, two big oak trees, that's where the house was. You could just about go through any part of the park, and if that's what you see that's what always stands out is the two big oak trees. Behind the nature center I think there were two houses, two or three houses. As you're going off that dirt road down the hill, there was a house. There's an area open, kind of a field open on the right hand side when you went on that was Taylor's farm. I think that was trail 7.

Joe Hebda Interview

Joe: There was two families living in that area and then on the cross road of that same road there was a store there on the corner. Mr. Liming, I think owned it, didn't he? That's where the schoolhouse was.

Jacque: Did the boys from camp use the stores in Joplin or the little community around there, or did they go all the way to Quantico?

Joe: Well, we went to the post office, and we'd go in that store there. We still had those buckled shoes. It was an old country store. They had a little bit of clothes and stuff. We couldn't wear them because we had all the GI stuff. They had cards and paper and pencil and ink and stuff like that. The guys would go there and get it. Mostly every night the truck would go into Quantico to the movies. But they would go into town and you could get what you wanted in town. They would tell you when the truck's going to pull out nine o'clock or ten o'clock and you got to be there. If not you're going to be hitchhiking.

Jacque: Do you remember anything about the removal of the farms or when they were relocating the farms?

Joe: A lot of people didn't want to get out. They wanted to stay in and try and to buck the government. Some people did and they got a little bit more money. A lot of them had to either more down to Quantico or move down the road a little ways. Most of the colored people all got in that circle down here where they're at now. They had farms there. People had good size farms like Mrs. Williams. She had a good size place there and she probably sold a lot of it to the people down there. That's where the main road used to go through, right there, before they cut 95 and put this new road through.

Jacque: Most of the people didn't want to leave?

Joe: No, they didn't know where to go. Heck, they didn't get much money some of them had only twenty acres, twenty-five acres, and only go thirteen dollars for it, or fifty cents for an acre. Where the heck was they going to go? So they didn't like it went they had to move out. So we started having little get togethers like Thanksgiving. We started dances and stuff so the local people started coming in. Some of the local boys joined the CC camp, but they would bring their mother's or sister's or somebody. Then we started getting closer together. Most of them by that time were all gone, except the ones that were over on the other side, then when war broke out that's when they cleaned that side out. The marine corps cleaned that out when war broke out. They took the church, school, all the people that live on that side of the road.

Jacque: What were your first impressions when you got to the camp here?

Joe: I couldn't tell you. Me and Lieutenant came down here either the week or the week before. We came down here from Pine Grove. We asked some people, 'Where was Joplin road at?' They said, 'That dirt road over there.' I'm telling you, we couldn't see

for the dust behind us. I'm telling you potholes; you had to watch hitting the potholes and the dust. You couldn't follow one another for at least fifteen minutes because the dust was so thick. A lot of places you would hit had logs in the road going clear across. Some of the dirt and stuff done blowed off them logs and the car would be going up and down just like that in certain places. Then all of a sudden you'd hit a pothole and down you went and up again. So the captain says, 'Boy, I don't know what we're getting into Joe.' I said, 'Where the heck is this place?' He said, 'It's up this road somewhere.' He said, 'We'll find it.' I said, 'Okay.' Finally we found that thing and instead of going, you know where you get to camps two now, it went up over that bank where the big sign is. You go back in there behind that sign and you can see an opening going down through there. That's what we did, we hit off the road and we went off of that bank. We cut that out and make it straight through and made it flat. That's where the main road was, right behind that sign there. You had to go up that hill, but it was more tapered off down to the other old dirt road. That's where the first camp started out.

Jacque: Had you heard anything about this place before you got here.

Joe: No, so he told us, he said, 'When we go back don't you tell them where we're going or how far the twon is or this and that or how big the holes or what kind of road.' That road we come from was just as bad but was being taken care of. We probably just come in at a wrong time, hitting all those holes and stuff. Just like now probably raining and stuff. So we finally go in and then I think we went back home that night, I think we went through Manassas and go on route 15 and went in through Harrisburg that way. It was a mess though, but I kept my mouth shut. I think it was that next Monday or it was a week from that we all got loaded up. When them guys started coming down, you could hear them guys. When they got on the trucks in Quantico everybody was happy over in Quantico, because it was a town. Everybody felt good. Boy, when they started hitting that road and traveling and going up there. It looked to me, and it looked to them too that they were going four or five miles up into the jungle. Now and then you would see a house. Then you would hear them hollering with that store there, you'd hear them hollering, 'Gee, a store!' You'd just keep going and going. 'Listen, where are we going?' That's where we landed up there a camp two and five.

Jacque: So a lot of other people felt the same way?

Joe: Really, Thelma and them didn't know what was going on. They probably thought it was some kind of invasion to see all these trucks going up the road and all these tents. I don't even think they were told the CCs were coming in. They didn't know what depression was because most of those people worked in Quantico and they went home an did a little farm work. So they didn't know what depression was a lie it was in the city. It was dead, the whole city went down at one time. It's not like they tell them now where they give them thirty days or sixty days before the fire you. You come to work and they says, 'That's it, no work.' And that was it.

Jacque: Was this area very different from Pine Grove Furnace?

Joe: Well, see somebody already started that camp, and I was the one that came in. So it wasn't too bad. But again, when we was traveling, you'd take thirty miles like I told you, and you wonder where in the heck are you going when you traveling. You was thirsty and hungry because we didn't get nothing to eat. After we got into camp they gave us something to eat. It was already set up. I was the second person, maybe third grop that maybe come in that area. They already had roads and stuff. They were probably in there cleaning out fire trails because they had a lot of fires there. It seemed like every time at two o'clock in the morning, three o'clock in the morning you'd be run out of bed to go fight the fires. That's most of what we did. We cleaned a lot along the side, all the dead trees and stuff along the side of the road so the fire wouldn't jump from one side to the other. And we built roads and stuff like that. But in those days we didn't have equipment like we have now. Those graters we had, they had four wheels on them two wheels that a truck pulled them. We had to load a truck with rock or something you know? The truck would pull it and two of those big wheels would drop your blade and raise your blade. The other two wheels you turned this way, you went this way you turned that way you went that way. You had to follow the truck and that's how they grated the roads with those kind of equipment.

Jacque: I'd like to talk a little bit about the CCC camp that was actually set up and running and everything was going smoothly after everyone started getting here. What was a typical day like?

Joe: For me I didn't have nothing to do during the daytime except keep my supply tent in shape. I didn't know when the inspectors were coming. I had to take and make sure that I had all that was on my list. Say, for instance, that I had twenty blankets folded on that, well somehow a blanket or two was missing. So I said, 'Well, I got to make that blanket up cause they're going to count those blankets and see if I have it on my list.' So what I do is take one blanket and double it twice and set it on top of one another, so then when he'd count, he'd count one blanket twice. Or if I was only missing one it wasn't too bad I'd put it in the middle somewhere. So I'd take it and put the double blanket on the bottom and put something else behind it and lay the other blankets on top and make it twenty. Same thing you had to do with sheets and pillow cases. We'd double them, and he didn't know any better. He'd just go right on up, one, two, three, four, five, and he'd count, and say, 'Oh you got everything, everything's okay.' A lot of times I was missing stuff but then when the new guys would come in and the old guys going out because some of them would go over the hill. When they should go over the hill, say, for instance, they would only be in there two or three days, they'd go over the hill and they'd leave their stuff, so they wouldn't be noticed the whole day that they left. Because you don't know whether they got on the trucks or not. Every morning they'd get loaded up on trucks and they would spread them all over the place, building cabins and roads, building the dam and the rock quarry. So they didn't know if he was actually missing or not. Or maybe he'd get on the truck and when he'd get on the job, he'd just go off the job and go on home. Then I would take his clothes ahead, or shoes or whatever he had left. He had to leave the blankets and sheets and one outfit. He had to leave that when they got discharged. The only thing they took with them was their shaving creams and stuff like that. But they had one uniform, if it was in the winter time they took the winter

clothes if it was in the summer time they took their summer clothes. But they had to turn one uniform in. So a lot of time they would turn {MI} another person's clothes. Like me and him would be together if I was leaving and he was staying and I haed a good pair of pants and he wore the same size pants and he had a bad pair of pants, he'd give me his pants and I'd give him mine…shoes, anything like that we'd trade. They would trade clothes one another.

Jacque: So you just ran the supply?

Joe: Yea, so I just ran the supply. A lot of times they come up in the roll call; they'd call a name and that name wouldn't come up. Well what had happened he'd gone over the hill some time during the night.

Jacque: And escaped? Ran away?

Joe: Yea.

Jacque: Was that common?

Joe: Well, not too bad. But a lot of them were youngsters like seventeen or eighteen years old so they were teenagers, and they would get homesick. A lot of them would just cry like babies. They'd go out into the cabins and you'd hear something and here's some boy eighteen or nineteen years old crying. Then you'd go and talk to them and say 'What's the matter?' and they'd say, 'I miss my mom or I miss this and I miss that.' Well, it was kinda rough. It was just like going in the service, but there you had a little time. You'd go to work and then come back and get cleaned up and then go get something to eat and that was it. If your barracks was ready to go to the movie, then they would have inspection every morning and if you bed was messed up, then you didn't get to go no place. And if your bed was excellent, your locker and everything and your clothes hanging was excellent, then your name was on the sheet that afternoon to go to the movies that night. Every night you would go to the movies. So that's how they did it.

Jacque: So they had roll call in the morning and then they checked the quarters.

Joe: Yea, they had roll call every morning. The flag pole is still down there and that's the only one I think that's still up. And so they'd have roll call and then you'd run back into the barracks and get your mess kit and get in line to get something to eat.

Jacque: You'd go to the mess hall then.

Joe: Yea, we'd go to the mess hall and get something to eat. They'd have maybe half an hour to get straighten out again and get back and have a roll call again. Then the sergeant or who ever it was would say you go on this truck, you go on this truck, you go on this truck so then you'd know where you were suppose to go. So next morning you'd pin your note that you were on that sheet and that you got to get on a certain truck because

you're going to the dam and you're going to work in the dam or you're going to go to camp 4, 5, wherever you're going to work on building so you'd knowd that was what you were going to do.

Jacque: What kind of food did they feed you?

Joe: Well, the food was good and you had plenty of it and they never ran out of food. That was one thing that they really do is provide food, and they had good cooks. Every Monday Joe Edmunds, he was the cook's chief, and he would go to Washington, and he would get a truckload of fresh vegetables. And he pretty near stay there all day and he'd get enough to carry him that all week of vegetables and meat and stuff in the iceboxes we had. Well, I think they're pretty near all gone except for camp 2 is still in there. We used to take and put ice. They used to get hundred pounds of ice, great big cakes – a whole truck load and they would put them up on top and they would put all the vegetables and meat and stuff down in the bottom.

Jacque: So they feed you pretty good?

Joe: Yea, so that is one thing they did do is we really got fed. It was no hash or whatever. It was turkey and chicken and steaks and pork chops and bologna, hot dogs, stuff like that.

Jacque: Was all the clothing brought here? You said you took care of the supply with the blankets and pillow cases. Were they brought here and distributed or were they rationed out to you?

Joe: No, they were all brought into the supply tent. Then when you come by I ha them all setting either on the floor or on the shelves. They were all by sizes. So that when you would come you'd say size 30, 32 shirt, 15, 15 and ½ undershirt, so I had a couple of boys that would help me. I would say shirt size 15, pants size so and so then they would go run down the shelves and bring them and put them down. A lot of times a short boy would come in and say 30 by 24. Well, when you'd give it to him he could make shoes out of his pant legs because they was so long, but then he'd would either try to find somebody that had a shorter pair of pants and trade and if he didn't that's when he had to bring them back into the supply and say these pants is too long. If I had pants that would fit him I'd give it to them, but if I didn't, I'd say "You have to get 'em fixed," which would only cost him about fifteen cents to roll them up and sew them shorter. So that's how they would get their clothes.

Jacque: What about training? Did they train new men when they came in or did they train you in how to do supply?

Joe: The way I got my supply job was in Pine Grove. It was in the fall and everybody seem to get sore throats, and me and the supply sergeant were kind of buddies. We'd go to town and places together all the time like that. What happened we got these sore throats and we went to the hospital which they had to put double beds in the hospital

because there were so many of us that got sick. Well, I didn't get sick, but the supply sergeant got sick and he was in the hospital and he didn't want to go back to the supply because he knew a new bunch was coming in and he had to start issuing. So when he would get pills and stuff, there was a kind of cabinet sitting in the corner and he put his mess kit up in there and when they gave him his pills, he act like he put them in his mouth and when they would leave he would take and shoot them up in that cup. A lot of times they would hit the cup and a lot of times they would just lay on top of the thing up there. He didn't want to get well. He just wanted to be sick so he stay here that long. So one day the doctor came in and gave him the pills and he just went like that and the doctor turned around and seen what the heck happened and here he went up there and found all them pills up there. So then they threw him out but they didn't give him his supply job back. So the next morning the lieutenant come out and asked did anybody know how to run the supply. Well nobody did go out. So one of the boys standing next to me nudged me and said 'Joe, take the job.' He said you know about so and so. I said, 'I don't want the dog gone job. I don't know nothing about it.' He said, 'You know something about the supply.' I said, 'I don't. Shut up.' So the Lieutenant said, 'What's going on over there.' So this guy says that Joe and what's his name are good buddies. He says 'Step forward.' So I stepped forward. He says, 'What's your name?' And I told him my name and he says for me to report down to supply. I says, 'Sir, I don't know nothing about supply.' He says to report down to supply. So that's how I got my job as a supply sergeant.

Jacque: Did you notice it being very military? Did they have you out marching and things like that?

Joe: No. It was all work. It was all building and stuff. Now we had recreation and stuff, you know, baseball and basketball – we didn't have not basketball. Actually the only thing we had was a pool table and the guys took and they set up games running from camp 2 to the store up here and back. They had a little prize for them. Later on Captain Sour's brother had an old car, and he had a rumble seat in the back of it a trunk. He was an electrician by trade. He put a bar in there with dummies on it and you've seen those little whiskey shots. Well, he had all of them in little boxes and then he had fifths of whiskey lined up in boxes so they wouldn't turn over and had little bar with dummies sitting on it and a bartender back there. Then he knew some of the fellahs like the fellahs that worked inside the camp no the ones that worked out of the camp. Then he'd say, 'Come on do you want a drink of something?' He'd open it up and the lights would come on and everything. He started talking and picking up prizes, different kinds of pencils and pens and paper, and stuff like that. We would set up a bingo game. He'd come down there with a bingo game on Saturday and set this up. For a penny we'd got a card, and we'd have bingo. Instead of playing baseball or pool, he'd have a whole bunch of us down there playing bingo and that went on till I left, and I don't know if it was still going on after I left or not. But we didn't have much of any kindo of games or anything. We went swimming after we built the dam. Guys went swimming a lot; most of them did.

Jacque: What about the work that was done in camps? Who ran, organized the work and handed out assignments and stuff?

Joe: Mostly, we were like one organization, and there was another organization that took care of the men and put them on the jobs like building cabins, building roads, building dams and stuff like that. So there was actually two organizations, and WPA was on the other side of the fence. They were who would get us in the trucks and go over there and they would assign them up and get them to do whatever they wanted them to.

Jacque: Did they live in the camp with you – the WPA?

Joe: Yea, some of them did and some of them lived on the outside. Up in the mountains in Pine Grove most of them lived in the camp and had buildings of their own. It was just about the same here. Some of them stayed here and some of them lived on the outside, you know, those that had families.

Jacque: So they would come in with the assignments and say we are going to build a dam.

Joe: Yea, they would have the project of building.

Jacque: And they would organize the work on the work site, too?

Joe: Yea, we didn't' have nothing to do. All we did was to supply the men with the food, bedding, sleeping, quarters and all that and all the rest of it was done on the outside.

Jacque: Did you actually do any of the building of the cabin camps or the dam or the bridge?

Joe: No, I didn't do none of it because I was the supply sergeant and when I came from Pine Grove, I stayed that way. I had to set up. They gave me a building and I had to build shelves and stuff in there. Sometimes there would be a carpenter to come in and help to build shelves like I wanted them. Well, you've seen them in the pictures. Like the one picture you just gave me. Well, that is probably my supply stores. You see how the sheets and the blankets were folded up. Well, that's how I did it.

Jacque: After work, you were talking about how some of the men had the opportunity to go into town for movies if their place was clean enough. Was that very common?

Joe: That was every week. Pretty near every day. You didn't have to stay in camp. You could go to Quantico or any place as long as you got back before roll call in the morning. When we started dating girls, you could just walk on down the road. You had to walk because you weren't going to catch no ride because there was nobody going down there. You might run in to a horse and wagon. The only thing you could run into was maybe a salesman coming up to that store or maybe going through to Manassas. That's about the only thing you would run into.

Jacque: Did you have any contacts with the other camps that were here? The other CCC camps?

Joe: Yea, a lot of times we would take and trade. Then I met Holmes. He is still living down there in Dumfries. The lieutenant would ask me where did I get our clothes and I would ask him what was the matter with our clothes. He said that our clothes looked like officer's clothes on you. Well, at first I told him that when some of those clothes come in for the new men and I take and pick them out and keep them for myself. He said that from now on see if you can get me some. 'Do you know what those thing cost me?' I said, 'No, Sir.' He said well when you find size so and so. I said, 'You give me the size of your shoes, the size of your pants, and shirt and I'll see what I can do for you.' He said, 'Okay.' In maybe a week or two and maybe some of that stuff would come in and I would take this supply sergeant takes a lot of his old stuff and I did the same thing. We had to take and survey and see how much old stuff we had, then we had to take an burn it, we weren't allowed to keep it. Well, we would put it in old garbage bags, shoes and stuff like that and we'd take them to a big hole and set them on fire. Well, a lot of times when I wanted some extra clothes or extra light bulbs or something, instead of taking and charging someone who had a broken light bulb, I had extra light bulbs or spoons or mess kits cause some guys would loose them. They would say, 'Joe, I lost my mess kit.' Well, I'd give it to them, but then I'd be short. Bu some times they would give me extra stuff before they left and I would take and pile blankets, shoes, and all this stuff into this bag. Then the lieutenant , the driver, and the another guy that unloaded this stuff and throwd it in the hole and set it on fire. I would take this bag and put it on the tail gate. I would say when you go over this certain curve you take and roll that down over the hill the whole bag here and what ever you want you can get from the supply. He said alright and I take and put all this stuff – shoes and pants in this bag. So when it came to this certain curve, he would take and throw the bag and it would roll down over the hill. Well, the lieutenant in the car and the truck he didn't know what was going on and he go right on into where we set it on fire. They would pour some oil, or gas or something and set it on fire. So when it got real hot and he'd just get in the car and go. By that time I had a Model a ford and I would throw that thing in the back of my truck. I wasn't suppose to have it but the lieutenant bought it so I could take him out cause he had a new car. When the mud holes go so bad he couldn't get through them but model t ford I'd take him up to Quantico.

Joe Hebda Interview Part II

Jacque**:** Was it the WPA that was checking (your supply)?

JH: No, it was regular army officers that would come in from fort Belvoir and they'd be the one to check them. I forgot to tell you we had baseball; we would go from one camp to the other camp and play baseball.

Jacque**:** So you would play matches against the other camps?

JH: Yeah, and sometimes we would go down Quantico and play with the marines down there. We'd get beat sometimes cause they had more people. But that's what would happen

Jacque**:** Did the other camps come in much later than the one you were at?

JH: Actually we were supposed to be the first one. Now someone tells me that somebody came in two weeks before us in Camp 22, but I don't' recall them being there. Maybe they did but I thought we was the first one. So far I haven't seen any papers saying that they came in before we did. One of the guys that come down here Kakalak and he always says he was down here two weeks before we was, but I don't know about that

Jacque**:** But your CCC camp was the only one that had a tent camp?

JH: No, I think all of them started out that way. Yeah. Because they didn't have so place to sleep but I think that was the other thing that we were doing. We set up camps like camps 26 and 22. I think we set that up. Our men got in there and built it. So I don't think they had tent camps. I don't recall them having it, they already came in, the camps were already set up.

Jacque**:** While you were here did you have much contact with your family?

JH: No. maybe once a year or something like that. They let you go. The only way I got to go is the Doctor he lived in Keysport? Outside of Pittsburgh, his wife came down to see him and she got nervous or sick in the car and he asked me where I'm from and I told him I was from around Pittsburgh. And he said Well Keysport ain't too far. And I said yeah but I live clear on the other side of Pittsburgh. So he says, my wife in a hotel down Quantico somewhere if I get you time off will you take my wife to McKeysport or McKeys rock and I say if you get me time off to go him. He said yeah. I said OK. And he got me a week off. And I took his wife, I didn't know where McKeysport was or where she was going but she already know how she came down, follow this map. So it took us all day, we started out in the morning, but it took us all day. To get to MKeysport and it was already getting kind of dusk cause you didn't go very fast in those days. And so, I took her home and then I had to hitchhike from Pittsburgh to home and that was the only time I got a vacation, in the 4 years that I was in the CC camp. Now I might've took off around Christmas two or three days or something like that, but the captain, he was like my father, anything I needed or wanted, like he would lend me his car, or anything, I would take and load up a bunch of men like Mecca and all the sergeant, first sergeant, and all them and we would go to Mxx(?) and Washington and we would spend Saturday night in Washington and we would go down and wash the car and park it in front of his office. He was good to me.

Jacque**:** Did you hear from your family by letters? Did you get to write to them?

JH: Actually I got a letter like once a month from my sister or something like that. But they didn't know what I was doing or anything.

Jacque**:** That must've been pretty hard not to hear from them?

JH: That's right, because I was the oldest one. That's the reason I had to leave. That's the reason I had to do everything for my family cause my father he was still crippled. And he wasn't really working; he wasn't walking like he was supposed to so I had to do most of the work. There's a lot of things in between what I'm telling you and things that happened to him and that's why I had to take over for him. You'd be written 3 or 4 books.

Jacque**:** Did your brothers join the CCC too?

JH: No, not a damn one. We were all in the war, but they weren't in the CCC. Actually I took care of them and then just about time the war broke out and then they all joined the service. Except my brother Walter and he was the last one because my mother had the four girls still in the house and he was kind of the provider. But they finally got him too and put him in.

Jacque**:** In the camps, did they have electricity?

JH: Well when we first started we had these generators and every morning the night guards before they went to bed they would start the generators on for the cooks. So the cooks could see. At first we didn't have them, for maybe a month or so, we got these big generators and they would hook up the lights in the barracks. We had lights in the barracks and soon as curfew came the lights were out.

JH: Did you have running water?

JH: Yeah, we had pumps and wells. They'd dug wells. We had running water and we had hot water which was heated by coal. In winter time in PA we had woodstoves, where the night guards would come in every so often and put logs in the stove. Here we had coal stoves and they even cooked by coal here.

Jacque**:** Did they burn the uniforms when the CCC closed down?

JH: If they were wore out, they would trade in the barracks if your socks are better than my socks. Sometimes the fellas would try to save the new socks for when they went home. So what came into me was tore out, or shoes wore out. The only thing that would come in good would be the black ties. Shirts, workshirts, overhalls, that was wore out a lot of it. Now if it was too bad they could bring it into me I would take their old shirt and give them a new shirt. A lot of guys if a guy went over the hill those guys would go over there and grab the shirts and pants and stuff and that would be extra for them. So they would come over and say hey Joe I need a new pair of shoes. I wouldn't argue. I'd give

him a new pair of shoes. I'd look at them and say "10s? Heck you do even where a 7!" How'd they get 10s here? He'd say I need a new pair of shoes Joe. So, OK. So first thing I know, he was carrying a box under his hand, all wrapped up, probably sending it home to his father in the coal mine. But it didn't bother me because as long as I had what I needed to have it didn't bother me what they did with it.

Jacque**:** Were they allowed to keep the uniforms when they were discharged?

JH: Just one uniform. Either in the summer time they'd have the summer uniform so they'd get to keep that and turn in the winter uniform. And also the one summer uniform. All they had was what they had on their body. Now the socks and underwear they could keep that. They didn't have to turn that in, but just the shirt pants and shoes.

Jacque**:** How come they had to turn that in?

JH: Well 9 times out of 10 they didn't have a way to take it home with them, except carrying it. They figured that I could take that and turn in and get new uniforms. What I could turn in I got new. When those guys would come around and check on me and I had stuff to throw away, I would get new stuff for it. If I needed 10 pairs of pants, they would send me 10 pairs of new pants.

Jacque**:** Where did most people go when most camps started closing down?

JH: Well, actually, I wasn't around then, that's when the war broke out. Now if you wanted to enlist in the service they would put you in the service wherever you wanted to go, and you could do what you wanted to do with your clothes and everything. Or if you wanted to go home, they'd send you home. They'd give you a ticket to your town and you could do whatever you wanted to do. You could join the navy or the marines or whatever you wanted to do. And that's how the camps broke up.

Jacque**:** Did many people go in the service?

JH: Well I don't know too much about that I was working in the Navy yard as a crane-man when the war first broke out. But that's when they started closing them down. That's when the Army came in, the OSS, after the CCs went out. That's when I found out what happened to all our tools and all our trucks and supplies. They took all of that stuff into Quantico and they put all that stuff it the building. Where the good stuff they kept and the old stuff they through over the hill, clothes, tools, and everything. That's why I couldn't find any of the tools when I came back. When the army came in, they came in with all of the new stuff. Trucks, supplies, everything. For the OSS. That's when they took over the camp. But then they turned around, you see we had battens in the cabins, but they put in windows in the ca bins. And they had a little pot bellied stove in each little cabin, and they had coal and that's what they kept warm by.

Jacque**:** Did the Army remove the CCC buildings or did they alter them?

JH: Well I think what happened. Camp 22 and 25 disappeared. And somebody told me they took them apart and carried them down to Quantico and set them up in Quantico for the marines. And actually the only camp that was really still here was Camp 26. And when I came here the whole camp was still set up like it was when I left. When me and her got married I took one of the CC cabins and I converted it into a house. It was officer's quarters. I took one of the partitions out and made it a big room. Say 10 by 20 and her living room was 24 foot square and that's where the officers were during the war. They had it as a smoke room during the war. They had a potbellied stove. There was a furnace on the outside when I rebuilt it. We set one up for Mr. Smith when he came down. He was the park superintendent. And he had a 25 x 25 building and he lived in there and that's how we got together. And that's how we got to go up on top of the hill lived in the big house.

Jacque**:** When did you join the service?

JH: No I went over to Quantico and worked for a contractor. Doyle and Russell and then I went and worked for one of the foreman, Mr. Adier, that was up there, his wife still lives up on 234, he was a foreman up here a surveyor so me and Mecca, we were going out in 38 and we went to Quantico and they finished the buildings so we had to find another job. So we got another job with the government through Mr. Adier, he knew us from the CC camp. We put in water mains and man holes and stuff at the main hospital up in Quantico, where it's at now. And them from there he told us they weren't going to have any more work for us in the winter. So he says, you all better go on and sign up and go onto Washington. They're hiring up there. That was in 41, we didn't know the war was going to break out. But he said I'll give you time off and you go and get your application to get a job in Washington and that's what we did. We went and asked for an application. But this girl wouldn't give us no application, but we told her our foreman sent us over here and she argued with us. So finally a man says what was the problem, and I says Mr. Adair sent us over here to get a job in Washington. But she won't give us an application. And he looked down at her and says Why not, you go the applications. And she opened the drawer and pulled out two applications and threw them across the desk and said, "When you fill them out, bring'em back." So I told Mecca, well she doesn't like us, we fill them out and give them to her, that trashcan isn't too far from her and that's where they're going to land. So I said we better take these on home and fill them out and send them into Washington ourselves. And he said, I think you're onto something there. So we walked out and she said 'where you all going' and I said "we'll bring them back tomorrow." And we never did take 'em, but in two weeks we had a job in Washington because the war was getting so close to breaking out. But then the Japanese hit Pearl Harbor that's when that place really went wild.

Jacque**:** How long did you work in Washington?

JH: Nov 6 1939 to Dec 1942, Naval Gun Factory, I was classified labor and then I got the crane job and I was in there operating the crane. Then from Dec 1942 to Dec 1945, that's when I was in the service in the construction battalion.

Jacque**:** Was it after that that you worked in the park?

JH: In June 21, 1945 that's when I came back into the gun factory. Then we came down here and I stayed there from 45 to 49. 7/25/49 and that's when I came down to the park. And that's when I retired 8/29/78.

Jacque**:** 1949 was when you started working back in the park. You were up in Washington when the army was here, so you don't remember much?

JH: Yeah.

Jacque: I'd like to learn a bit about the park when it first started. Where you here when they first started to opening up the park or when they set it up?

JH: No, the war was over in 1945. So, somewhere in between 46 and 47 was when they stared working on the park and I came here when I was dating her. She lived here and I was in Washington. I didn't go back into the area because they said that the army had taken over and they said there were guards and equipment around. But when I came here I started going around different areas and I seen a lot of this, well there's a gun, I think it's still mounted, near the water tank in camp two. Behind that water tank. That used to be nothing but a big field, and they had guns and stuff, up on top of 619 up on the road. And they had all this old junk trucks and cars and machine guns down in the bottom by the water tank (water tank wasn't there then). They were practicing and they were blowing up stuff down there. And so, I was going through the woods checking on things, and I ran into this gun, like a machine gun, it was still mounted on a great big hunk of concrete. I don't think anyone could get that thing out of that concrete unless it took a lot of work, breaking that concrete up to get that gun out of there.

The road below the mine area, down in the bottom where the new bridge is, near the office, there's a cemetery on the right hand side. And that was a big field at one time and you go in there and you see all kinds of railroad tracks and switches, and that's where they were practicing… to blow stuff up. So that's what they were training these men for, to drop them off in parachutes during the war and they would blow these bridges and rail road tracks switches up. They had to learn what was going to do the most damage – with certain powders and dynamite and TNT that they had. So a lot of that stuff was laying all over the woods.

Jacque**:** Has the area changed much since you were here with the CCC?

JH: it was more open. The fields were still open. They started growing in. The pine took over. The first trees to come up were the pines.

Jacque**:** What about the farm houses that was here?

JH: Well you see they blow'd them up. They blowed a lot of them up. I think there was only one house that they ever found. It was on that circle. Like you're going into camp 2,

there's a parking area there, it's kinda in that wedge there, down in the woods, there was a great big two story house. One time I went up in the helicopter, and I seen that house it was still standing. ; It's not standing there now. It's probably down to the ground. But the other houses, they blow'd them up.

Jacque**:** Were park buildings built on old CCC buildings?

JH: when I came we couldn't get stuff, like new trucks and whatever you wanted. I'd go to Quantico, and Mr. Johnson, the colored fella down there, he would say 'look Joe, I got a lotta pipes down here, a lotta mats down here, a lotta lumbar down here that they used during the war that they made fields, soft fields and they put these mats down. Well I'd get all that stuff and bring it back to the park and we would use it. And I'd go to Fort Belvoir and we'd pick up a lot of that stuff. I'd get barrels and we'd cut the tops off them and use them for trash. I'd get truck loads of barrels. That's how we got along. I got pictures of pipeline, waterline or something. They left it drop down into the well. I had to figure out how to get that stuff outta there cause I didn't have no crane. I didn't have this. I didn't have that. To get that stuff out. And then when we did get a bulldozer, and go up to Washington, they said anytime you want something you get it. But if I wanted something right then. I needed water, and they get the pump fall down into the well, by the time they got finished with the job I had to think of something else. So I'd figure out an A frame or something and I'd tie it onto a wench. And see if I could get my pipe out and that's how I got it out. I got pictures of the way I had to do things to get things out. A lotta times the fellas didn't want to do it. But I said, well, we gotta get water we gotta do something.

Jacque**:** Were you directed as to what needed to get done?

JH: No, that was the whole trouble. That man would sit on his tail over at the office. He didn't know what was going on. And I didn't want to tell him that I just dropped a $250 pump down in there because somebody made a mistake and didn't tighten it up tight enough. So I was trying to figure out the best way I could figure out.