

START SIDE A

[test material audible prior to start of interview: "... so I slid right into it, the one I..." "Keep talking."]

Ken Steeber: This is Ken Steeber and I'm conducting an oral history interview with Lawrence McGlynn, a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps, a program under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration. It's Sunday, September 29, 1996. It's 10:30 a.m. and we're at Byrd Visitor Center in Shenandoah National Park, Virginia. Lawrence, I want to thank you for your participating in our program. As you know, history records the policies, the organization and the purpose of the CCC's, but little has been preserved on the individual human effort that has cemented it all together. With your help, we can fill in the gaps of history and with your personal experiences and observations be able to find out more about what CCC life was about. First of all, Lawrence, I'd like to ask you what is your present address?

Lawrence McGlynn: My present address is Route 2, Box 336, Charlotte Court House, Virginia.

KS: And what is your birth date, Lawrence?

LM: December 20th, 1917.

KS: Now, do you remember where you were living when you signed up for the CCC?

LM: I was living in Derringer, Pennsylvania.

KS: Who were you living with at the time?

LM: My father and mother.

KS: Okay. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

LM: I had two brothers and two sisters.

KS: All righty. How did you find out about the CCC? What made you interested in it?

LM: I found about it while I was working for the WPA.

KS: Oh.

LM: I worked for the WPA to start with. And I found out about that, and I waited until I

was eighteen years old to sign up for it, where I should have gone in a little sooner.

KS: Oh, I see.

LM: Because I think you could have gotten in at seventeen at one time.

KS: Why did you join? What motivated you?

LM: Well, I had to make money to help keep the family. That was during the Depression, and the coal mines was on strike at that time, which was a bad time to go on strike, during the Depression. And so I had to make the money.

KS: Where were you living at this time, with your parents?

LM: I was living in Derringer, Pennsylvania.

KS: Derringer, Pennsylvania. How long, how long did you serve?

LM: Twenty-eight months.

KS: Twenty-eight months. And what year did you go in?

LM: I went in 1936.

KS: And what was the last year of school that you attended?

LM: I attended fifth grade, I went on--I went--I left fifth grade to go to work because of needing money to help the family out.

KS: What was--

LM: So I left school early.

KS: What was your first job when you left school?

LM: When I left school my first job was picking apples and peaches and things like that at an apple orchard.

KS: And then you went to the WPA?

LM: Then I went to the WPA.

KS: Okay, and then into the CCC?

LM: The CC camps.

KS: Okay, excellent. What camp were you assigned to, or were you assigned to several?

LM: Well, I started out in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, which was a supply depot, then I went down to Fort Meade, Maryland where I was signed in. And I spent a few months there and from there, they shipped me over to Edgewood Arsenal, in Maryland. I stayed about a month there, then they shipped me to Aberdeen Proving Grounds, which I spent fourteen months at. All the time I was at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, I drove a truck. I was driving an Army truck. We were-- I was driving a dump truck and we were expanding the airport in the Aberdeen Proving Grounds at the time. Some of our, some of our work was mosquito control work, which they used used motor oil. They spread it on the coast line of the Chesapeake Bay, there. To help keep mosquitos down, that was one of the jobs there. Of course, that job didn't last long, just a few weeks of that and that was over with.

KS: How did you come to arrive here at Shenandoah?

LM: Well, I went out from the CCC's in Aberdeen, Maryland in 1938, and I went back to Pennsylvania. I worked in a coal mine for several months. And I didn't like that. So I left that, and I went to work on a farm. In the fall, and I didn't like that. I stayed there a while, doing, you know, the fall harvesting season, and I got out of there and signed back in the Civilian Conservation Corps and went to Wilkes Barre to their reception center up there, and then come back down to New Cumberland and through the same system again and ended up in Luray.

KS: I see. Now, what camp were you assigned to when you came here?

LM: I was assigned to Company 375 in NP 10.

KS: Okay, that's at Pinnacles?

LM: Up by the Pinnacles.

KS: Okay. Now, in as much detail as you can, can you tell us a little bit about the camp routine that you went through? For example, what your wake-up time was, and your barracks duties and eating times and non-work responsibilities?

LM: Well, our wake-up time was around six o'clock and then we had some calisthenics,

and we had to get out, and line up, salute the flag and all that kind of thing, for reveille. Then we lined up for chow, for breakfast and after breakfast, why, we lined up and went to work.

KS: The camps were run pretty much by the military, the Army, wasn't it?

LM: It was run by the, mostly by the Army, by Army officers. And it was a good system. Everybody got a little bit of training out of it. You know, standing to attention, standing in line and all that kind of thing.

KS: Discipline-type of thing?

LM: Discipline thing, yes. It was good for everybody.

KS: Did you eat mostly in the field for lunches, or were they in the barracks?

LM: For lunches we ate in the field mostly. But we had our breakfast and our dinners at the company kitchens.

KS: What duties did you have in the barracks, as far as maintaining it?

LM: Well, the only duties I had was keeping my own bed made and cleaning around my area where I slept. That was my duties there.

KS: How about your non-work responsibilities around there? Did you have to do any police call or KP, like in the military?

LM: They had that kind of a thing, going where, if you were being disciplined for anything they would give you KP or something like that. But it never happened to me, so I was lucky!

KS: Very good, very good! Okay, were there many disciplinary problems while you were there?

LM: No, just one that I can recall. It was with two young fellows from New York. Two first cousins. They were stealing Army blankets and selling them to the public downtown. They got caught, so we ushered them out.

KS: Well, how was discipline handled? Who took care of that?

LM: Well, it was handled through the company commander himself. It was his decision

of what to do with them. Like dishonorable discharge and things like that. That was his duties. Part of what he was supposed to do to keep a disciplinary camp, something where they kept everybody in line.

KS: But you never really, in the time that you served in the camp, never really had any major problems that you saw?

LM: No major problems at all.

KS: Okay. Let's get back to what you ate there. Who prepared the food, for the most part?

LM: Well, we had regular cooks in our kitchens. I think they drew their cooks and things out of the cooking and baking schools, Army cooking and baking schools, is where I think they got their chefs or whatever you want to call them.

KS: Their cooks. Were they CCC men?

LM: Yeah, the ones we had were.

KS: What were some of the typical meals that you would have?

LM: Well, we had, in the mornings we got chipped beef on toast, you know, some of that kind of thing, same thing we got in the Army. Cereal, little cereal in the boxes, you know, a serving in a box for each guy, and things like that. Good, we got very good food.

KS: Good food. Lunches, even though they were in the field, were they hot lunches or . . .?

LM: Yeah, they were hot lunches because they were brought out by a truck at noontime.

KS: Yeah, just like the military.

LM: Just like the military, same thing. In fact, I think we ate better there than I did in the military when I was in there.

KS: Oh, I see. While we're talking about that, how would you rate the meals? Pretty good?

LM: Oh, yes.

KS: Yes?

LM: Yes, I'd rate the meals good.

KS: How about laundry? How was that handled?

LM: Well, you washed your own clothes.

KS: Oh, you did?

LM: And you dried your own clothes, you ironed your own clothes. I had a friend that slept next to me and he used to kind of help me out a little bit with that; he'd iron my shirts and things, which I couldn't do. But he'd iron my shirts and things and when I'd go on a liberty trip downtown, why, I always had a clean shirt and dressed good.

KS: Well, what facilities did they provide for you to do your washing? Did you have tubs, or--

LM: Well--

KS: --they didn't have automatic washers, then?

LM: No, it was more or less like a scrubbing board and things like that. It was very easy, it wasn't hard to do.

KS: Were you required to keep your uniforms in a certain way?

LM: Oh, yes, yeah.

KS: They had to be ironed?

LM: And you were required to keep your trunk that you had sitting in front of your bunk lined up, and everything lined up, your clothes hanging up neatly in your clothes closet that they had hanging on the wall.

KS: Did you have many inspections?

LM: We had one or two a week, we'd have what we would call general inspections.

KS: Alright, and who conducted those?

LM: Usually lieutenants or the first sergeant.

KS: Excellent. Who was responsible for the maintenance of the camp, like, you know, little things that would break down?

LM: Well, we had a superintendent there. We had a mechanic, as far as the mechanical part of it was concerned, to repair our trucks and things like that. As far as cleaning our own trucks and everything, we had that responsibility ourself.

KS: Okay, but you had a maintenance crew that took care of most of the buildings and around the buildings?

LM: We had a maintenance crew, yeah, that took care of the buildings.

KS: Were they trained CCC men?

LM: Some of them were. Now, like the mechanic on our trucks and things, he was a civilian from downtown. Mr. Huffman, he was our mechanic.

KS: Excellent. How were the barracks heated?

LM: The barracks was heated by two stoves, one at each end. And they were similar to the pot belly stoves that you see around, you know, where they burn wood, or coal.

KS: Were they effective?

LM: Oh, yes, they were effective, yeah they were.

KS: Very warm. Who kept them up?

LM: Well, usually the fellow that slept next to the stove, where the warmest part was, was the fellow that was kind of responsible to keep the fire going.

KS: Now, was there any rivalries between camps? I don't mean anything particularly bad, but just friendly joshing around between the camps. What was the relationship between camps?

LM: Well, none that I know of. We didn't have any of that in our barracks. There's none that I know of.

KS: Okay. How about religious services; were they offered up there?

LM: They offered religious service, but I didn't partake in them at that time, I didn't, you know, go to them at that time. Of course, I, when I got back home, I started going to a Reformed Church back home.

KS: I see. But for the most part, do you know who would have conducted them? Was it a military chaplain, so to speak, or were they civilians?

LM: To the best of my knowledge, I think it was a civilian that came from camp to camp.

KS: I see.

LM: Like you usually see these days down in campgrounds around the nation, you know, the ordinary campgrounds that you see around the nation.

KS: What were some of the hardships that you had in camp, do you remember? Outside of hard work!

LM: Well, the only thing outside of hard work was the hardships of the deep snows that we got up here in the mountains, and the fog, things like that, was really the only thing. Other than that, why, it was a very pleasant experience!

KS: How about the education classes, did you attend any of them?

LM: I attended a diesel class for a while, where they were teaching diesel motors. That was when diesel was first coming out. I attended some of their classes, I think I attended about half of them.

KS: Okay, how about the--was there any other classes that you took beside diesel?

LM: No, none that I attended but they did have other classes. They had radio and carpentry and things like that.

KS: Okay, how did you rate, would you rate the education that you got there?

LM: What I learned in this camp I rated as very good. I think I gained a lot by coming into a camp in the first place.

KS: Okay. How about medical services, were they available?

LM: Medical service was available. Our dentist's name was Captain Wallin (sp?) and he was very good. He helped me. I think he pulled about thirteen of my teeth one time.

KS: Oh, my gracious! Now, what part of camp life did you enjoy the most?

LM: Well, you really, really enjoyed the camaraderie, you know, the advantage of being with a bunch of good fellows and all that. We had quite a few in our camp that played music. We had a little band and we'd go downtown and play here and there. We played for square dances over in New Market and Harrisonburg, and places like that. So that was some of the big enjoyments I got out of being here.

KS: Did you play as a CCC boy or did you play as individuals.

LM: Well, I played as a CC boy. There was three of us in the band, plus we had one player from down in Luray that played the fiddle. So there was four and five of us at a time, different times, playing for these square dances and everything. Then I played, I just played mandolin and guitar, but now I play about seven different string instruments now.

KS: Very interesting, very interesting. Let's talk a little bit about your work experiences. You mentioned a little bit earlier that you were a truck driver by trade in the CCC. What was your first job assignment when you came into camp?

LM: My first job assignment was with a '37 Chevrolet dump truck and I was hauling gravel out of the Shenandoah River, down from Luray up to the Drive. What they were using it for, I don't know. I dumped it on a pile and they get it from there.

KS: Okay. Whereabouts in the River were they taking it from? They just--

LM: From the Shenandoah River on the south part of Luray.

KS: And they just--how did they get it out? Did they steam shovel it out?

LM: They had a shovel and they got it out. We used to drive right down into the water, and they'd go up when we pull out.

KS: Oh, I see. Did you have any other jobs while you were in the CCC, other than being

a truck driver?

LM: No, I just drove truck all the time I was in. My second truck they give me was a '39 Chevrolet stake body, with canvas on. I used to haul men out to work, I used to make trips up to Pennsylvania, to New Cumberland for supplies once in a while. The fellows I took out to work was laying telephone lines. They were like forty inches deep, something like that, across the Drive. They were laying telephone lines. For what, I don't know! (laughs)

KS: Well, when you weren't driving, what were your duties then? Did you just maintain your truck?

LM: Well, yes, when we weren't driving there were periods in between--in the work day, that we didn't have much to do as a driver, so we'd be cleaning our own trucks up and keeping them in check; you know, keep them looking good.

KS: Did your trucks have to go through inspection, too?

LM: Oh, yes. Our company, NP-10 up here, was the honor company of the Skyline Drive in 1939. They had this long picture made with all the company personnel, all the people of the company on it.

KS: Okay, you're describing a picture about two foot long?

LM: About two foot long, and about eight inches high. We had all our company on it: the captain; the lieutenant; Mr. Shroy [sp?], the advisor; and Captain Wong [Dr. S.F. Wong], the dentist and all. I don't know--if--the pic--uh, name of the company and everything right on the front of the picture. So that's down in Ashville, in the National Park Archives down there.

KS: Is this on Skyland, right? That's the camp you were at?

LM: On the Skyline Drive, yeah.

KS: Yeah. I think we might have a copy of that in our Archives.

LM: You think you have it?!

KS: I'll check that.

LM: I hope so!

KS: I'll check that.

LM: 'Cause I was with the understanding that they had the only copy left.

KS: Do you remember a medic by the name of Blevins, they used to call him Doc Blevins?

LM: I kind of remember that name, yeah.

KS: He's in that photo. I'm not too sure what year it is, I think he--

LM: I believe he is in that photo.

KS: Yeah, it might be '36, it might be '37. I'll check that out for you.

LM: Well, this picture was taken in '39, so I don't know whether he's in the picture or not.

But I do kind of recall the name.

KS: Yeah, we'll have to check that out for you. How would you rate the trucks you used?

This is a new area for us as far as interviewing enrollees about their work duties. What do you think about the trucks that you used?

LM: They were very good.

KS: Were they the old chain drives?

LM: What do you mean by chain drives?

KS: You know, the rear wheels were run by a chain, like the old Macks?

LM: Oh, no, no.

KS: No. These were--

LM: No, '37 Chevrolets is run by a drive shaft, a two piece drive shaft. And the '39's were similar, only they were much more powerful than the '37's.

KS: I'm sure you really worked them hard. How did they hold up to the work?

LM: They held up very good. The only thing that ever happened to mine is when I hit that snowplow and put the hole in the fender.

KS: Well, tell us about that.

LM: Well, I was coming back from Pennsylvania. I had a load of movie picture films on [the truck], some blankets, some sheets, things like that. I come around this curve, and there must have been -- inch, inch and a half of snow on the road. Low and behold, here comes two snow plows, riding each side of the road. So they had my side occupied, coming toward me! I tried to get up the bank to get away from them, so I wouldn't hit them and slid back down and slid into the one.

KS: Oh.

LM: And kind of damaged the left front fender pretty bad. But our mechanic did a very fine job of putting it back together and make it look like new again.

KS: What were some of the things you hauled in from Pennsylvania? You said that you made a lot of trips to Pennsylvania.

LM: Well, I made a few trips up there, and we were hauling blankets and things like that, whenever they needed extra blankets or . . . some of the camps were showing pictures, you know, they had a setup where they could show movies.

KS: And you got movie films?

LM: Films, yeah.

KS: Was there a depot up in Pennsylvania? Is that--

LM: Yeah, New Cumberland. New Cumberland was the depot at that time.

KS: Alright, I see.

LM: So it turned into be the depot for the Army, too, when the War started.

KS: Oh, I see. Excellent.

LM: So I hit that place about three times up there.

KS: How would you rate the overall quality of the work performed by the CCC's? Not only your work, but work that you knew that other fellows did?

LM: I think they did an excellent job, all the way through. I seen some of the stone walls that they built along the road, and I seen some of the chestnut trees that they made these shelters and

things, log cabins out of. Some of them, some of them, they had the idea if they broke the handle on the tool, why, they didn't have to work that day! (laughter)

KS: Did that work out?

LM: But that didn't work out! They had to pay for the tool later.

KS: The naturalists in the Park are interested, of course, in the plant life, and what it was like. Do you recall any of the plant life when you moved in?

LM: Well, the only plant life that I recall, that around our camps there was some flowers planted, things like that. I kind of admired the chestnut trees that they had up here on the Parkway. They had lots of chestnut trees at that time.

KS: Of course they were--were they all dead, then, or were there some--

LM: Well, the dead ones is the ones they cut down, made the cabins and things out of. But there was quite a few of them around that, still, you still get chestnuts off of them and things like that. Then there is today, down at Mabry Mills, at Rocky Knob down there, they got, they got chestnut trees all over the place down there. Which is still producing.

KS: Oh, I see. How about the job assignments? Do you think they were well planned?

LM: I think they were well planned, according to what each person could do, what his qualifications were. A lot, a lot of the fellows did know something about a job when they came in here. They didn't learn all their work in here, they, they knew something about different little jobs. Most of them were good. Lot of them come in with the idea that they knew what they wanted to do, so they kind of looked for that kind of a job. Like being a cook or something like that, you know, or a truck driver, or whatever.

KS: Before we move on to another category, could you just remember some of the things that you transported, you know, while you were in the service in the CCC? There was quarries here, large quarries. Did you move any quarry stone or anything like that?

LM: No, no, never moved any quarry stone. In fact, the rocks that I hauled up out of the

Shenandoah River was the only thing that I hauled into, into the Park from out of the Park. I never hauled any quarry stone at all.

KS: Let's move on now to some of your personal experiences here in the Park. First of all, what were your first impressions of the Park when you got here?

LM: Well, I was kind of lost at first! (laughs) But I liked what I saw. And we did have a barracks and everything to come into, we didn't move in where there was tents or anything like that. We had good, warm barracks to move into and everything. And I liked everybody I ever met in here.

KS: Did you come in with a group of men, or were you just assigned a group?

LM: We was in a group. A group of us from Pennsylvania come in here. Well, there was quite a few from New York, too. But we come from New Cumberland, Pennsylvania; we come right down here to Luray.

KS: Can you name any personalities, or, you know, one or two personalities that you knew from that time that stand out in your mind? People that you knew?

LM: Well, there's a guy by the name of Carl . . . let's see, he was from Hazelton, Pennsylvania. Can't think of his last name at the moment. Anyway, there was a boy from West Pittston, Pennsylvania. His name was Henry Armitage. A very nice person, he used to bunk next to me. And there's Ben Silvestri. He bunked right across from me, in the same barracks. KS:

You mean Ben?

LM: Yeah.

KS: Oh! Okay.

LM: He remembered I used to sit on my bed and play the mandolin, and things like that. He remembered that. That was some of his experiences. He liked that. I liked Ben, Ben was a nice boy.

KS: How about your superiors, some of the officers?

LM: I got along with all of them. But I especially got along real good with Eugene A.

Gissey. He was our parks--our superintendent. In that camp. He was a real nice person from Newport News.

KS: Now, he was a civilian, right?

LM: He was civilian. He was the park--he was the superintendent. And him and I used to travel around together down to Luray.

KS: How did most of the boys--they get along pretty well with the superiors that they worked for?

LM: I believe they did. I never seen, I never seen an argument between any of them.

KS: What were your first impressions of the mountain families? Were they still pretty much in the Park, then?

LM: I believe so.

KS: Okay. What were your impressions of them?

LM: Well, I thought, I thought camping out like that in the mountains was, is a nice thing. Of course, we had these good barracks to be in, but other than that, I enjoyed the work, the work and all that. I enjoyed all that.

KS: How about the people who lived in the mountains at that time, the cabins and things throughout the hollows? Did you meet any of those?

LM: I didn't get to see any of those, but we worked with the () [LEMs?], and they come out of places like that. And they were all good people, all nice people. The fellow that I drove for, I believe his name was Pops Johnson, we called him Pops. I believe he was the oldest one in the group, that's the reason we called him that. I drove for him, and he was a very nice person to get along with, too.

KS: Now, by your camp there were two homes. One was occupied by June Weakley. Was that house still there when you moved in Camp?

LM: I never, I never seen a house.

KS: Okay, well, I think I'm off. I think I'm talking about Big Meadows. You worked at the Pinnacles Camp.

LM: I was up at the Pinnacles, there were no houses up there.

KS: All righty, what do you remember about animal life in the Park?

LM: Animal life, with the truck we used to run over a few rattlesnakes along the road. We always saw deer. But I never seen any bear up here. I know they're here, but I never seen any. But I see a lot of deer. In fact, I saw twenty of them today.

KS: Okay, but back then, it's 1939 we're talking about, there were a lot of deer here?

LM: There was lots of deer then. I saw a family of raccoons one time. I saw a family of skunks one time in the middle of the road and she was taking them off, to get them off of the road and dropping them in a ditch. By the time she went back to get another one, the other one was back out and back out on the road. She was having lots of fun with them! (laughter) So we set and watched them for a while. That's when we were visiting the Park, that wasn't when we was in the CCC, that was when my wife and I was visiting the Park one time.

KS: I see. How about pets, did they have many pets in the camp?

LM: I think our captain had one, I believe he had a dog, I'm not sure.

KS: Okay. We have a photo in the Archives of a dog named Nelly, and I don't know if that's the . . .

LM: That might have been the one.

KS: That might have been the one, yes. Okay, now how about the plant life? We touched a little bit about the plant life that you saw when you arrived; for example, you mentioned the trees, the chestnut tree. But how about wildflowers and berries and things like that?

LM: I don't . . . I remember some fruit trees that was in the Park areas, that was left when the Park took over a lot of the lower parts down in the Valley where the farmers had fruit trees planted. I remember getting apples off of trees and things down in there. That I remember.

KS: Well, okay, how about the trees? Were there . . . there's a lot of comment that goes about . . . let me see if I can form this question correctly . . . how denuded of trees was the Park? Was there a lot of open land, were there just very few trees, or how did you see it when you came to the Park?

LM: I would say there was very few open lands. Very few parts of open lands. It was mostly trees.

KS: Mostly trees in the area where you were at?

LM: Mostly trees, yeah, in the area. 'Cause a lot of the, lot of the, the old chestnut trees and things like that weren't harvested out there yet. They were just being harvested out when they was making these log cabins and things with them.

KS: I see. Now, does this apply to just the area you worked in, or does that apply to what we consider the entire Park today, in other words, the southern district and the northern districts. Were there differences between them? As far as trees might--

LM: I think it was over all.

KS: Over all.

LM: I think it was over all of the areas that they had already finished. See, this parkway wasn't finished when I was up here. There was a lower part going down into Tennessee that wasn't finished.

KS: That's the Blue Ridge Park.

LM: That's the Blue Ridge Parkway.

KS: Right. Okay, what was the weather like when you were here?

END SIDE A

START SIDE B

KS: Okay, that side of the tape cut off on us, so, Lawrence, if I can, let me rephrase that question or repeat that question: what was the weather like when you got to the Park?

LM: Well, when I got to the Park, it was fairly well, because that was in July, yet. But that winter, the winter of '39, was a hard winter. In fact, one of the overlooks had about, like, ten feet of snow in it. And I do remember the big snow plows they had; they used to blow the snow down over the, into the woods, off the roads.

KS: Did you operate any snow removal equipment?

LM: No. I have shoveled snow, in around our camp area, to clear it, and keep things going there.

KS: What were some of the duties or some of the things that occupied your time when you were snowed in?

LM: Well, that's when we used to play the mandolin and things like that, we played some music and sat around on our bunk and played music. And there was three or four fellows that wanted to learn how to play the guitar. So I was giving them about fifteen minutes, music lesson, or thirty minutes for fifteen cents. So I made a little extra money to go to town with on the weekends, by charging fifteen cents for thirty minutes of practice.

KS: Excellent. Now, you visited the Park recently. Now, how does it compare to your first visit?

LM: Oh, it's in much better shape now, and looks better, and they have better facilities. Everything's better now.

KS: What I'd like to do now is talk to you a little bit about your recreation activities when you were in the CCC's. What was available to you when you were in camp, as far as recreation went?

LM: Well, we had ping-pong tables and things like that. They had boxing rings where you could box a little and things like that. In fact, when I was over at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, CC camp over there, I was on the boxing tour--I was on the boxing tournaments over there. I was a

boxer, too, and at nighttimes, on Friday nights, and so altogether I was in that boxing for about two years, around two years.

KS: Now, did you play on any other sport teams, other than the boxing?

LM: Well, see again, over at Aberdeen Proving Grounds I played on the basketball team over there. It was an outdoor basketball team, with the seams on the basketballs sewed on the outside of the basketball. So it was kind of hard on the fingernails. And we used to play the, the, in town, we used to play against the teams in town.

KS: How about over here in Shenandoah, did you play on any teams here?

LM: No, I didn't play on any teams over here. We played down at the Shenandoah High School, the Luray High School one time, for one of their assembly programs. Our little band that we had, we played down there one time.

KS: I see. Did you attend any of these sports? I know they had baseball, they had football, and I think they played inter-camp and then they played some of the teams in the Valley. How good were the teams?

LM: That I don't remember. I didn't play on any of the baseball teams or anything. I was, on my weekends I was usually downtown. With friends down there.

KS: Is that most of the time when the activities took place? Like the football and baseball was mostly on--

LM: Yeah. Yeah, things like that. I was very seldom in camp on the weekend. 'Cause the superintendent and I used to go downtown. He had a car, he had a '37 Plymouth and we used to ride downtown, spend most of our time down there.

KS: While we're on that subject, some of the fellows used to have cars. I know they weren't allowed in camp, but they used to hide them out in the woods. Are you familiar with this kind of activity?

LM: Oh, yes. In fact, the fellows that were stealing the blankets are the ones that had their

cars stashed out in the woods. And they'd take them over to their car and then they'd go downtown and sell them. I don't what they, uh--they needed money, too, I guess.

KS: What other games did you take part in, like for example, board games, like, you know, like--

LM: None.

KS: None?

LM: None.

KS: Were there many in the barracks, did the fellows play board games?

LM: Well, they'd play checkers, things like that. Checkers and dominoes, and that was mostly at the recreation building.

KS: Was there much gambling?

LM: Well, there may have been some, but I, I--

KS: Was it quiet? Generally?

LM: It was more likely quiet, because I never heard of it.

KS: You already mentioned the fact that you did get into some the communities, like Luray. How were you treated when you went in there?

LM: Well, we were treated very well down in Luray. We were treated very well over in New Market. We got into a little fray over south of New Market when we played for a dance one night, but that was the only thing there, and it wasn't, uh, nothing major.

KS: Did you date any local girls?

LM: Yes, I did. I dated a girl down in Luray for quite a few months.

KS: What was a typical date like?

LM: Well, there was the movies, and things like that. Movies, or place to get a hot dog, or things like that. That's about it.

KS: Okay.

LM: Got a little bit of moonshine once in a while. Which we took to the movies with us in our pocket with a straw in it.

KS: Were you ever invited to her home, meet her parents or anything like that?

LM: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I used to go out to my girlfriend's house quite often.

KS: How often were you allowed to go home, on leave?

LM: I don't remember exactly, but in this camp here, I didn't go home any time from here. All the time I was in this camp here I didn't go on any leave. But when I was in Aberdeen Proving Grounds, I spent quite a few weekends at home.

[Break in tape]

LM: --choking.

KS: Okay, Larry, let's, let's move on. What we're interested in now is talking about what you did after you were in the CCC's. What we're interested in -- what did you do after you left the CCC's?

LM: When I left the CCC's on the Skyline Drive, I went back to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland and worked civil service for four years. And from there, I got drafted into the Army. I was in General Patton's First Armored Division, I was help training tank drivers in Fort Knox, Kentucky. I went down there, a month or so after I left the civil service I went to Fort Knox. I made, I guess the first three hours I was there, I was, I got a land sergeant rating. And they give me a platoon to help train and that was it, in the Army. I come back out of the Army and I went to work for Case Cutlery in Pennsylvania, in Bradford, Pennsylvania. I worked for them seven and a half years, making knives, machete, and things like that. Bayonets and things like that for the Army. And I left that job after seven and a half years and went to work for Oldsmobile Division, General Motors, the Oldsmobile Division.

KS: Where was this at?

LM: In Bradford, Pennsylvania, and I worked there five years. From there, I went down to Richmond, Virginia and went to work for Sears Roebuck. I worked 18½ years for Sears Roebuck and retired. I was an automotive technician, electronics technician, in Sears Roebuck. So I retired in 1979, and that was the last day I worked. That was a happy day!

KS: Very nice. How did the CCC affect your life?

LM: Well, the CCC did a lot for me. They helped me learn how to live my life after that, after I left the CCC's. The good wife I got, she kept a budget. And that way, what we got today, I can thank her for, because she saved a lot of money. Not a whole lot of money, but she saved the money and got us the things we got. We're living a good life, we got a nice place to live and everything, and we been retired for 20 years already.

KS: Excellent. What do you think about your CCC experience? How would you rate it as far as the impact it made on your life?

LM: I would rate it as one of the better things that happened. It give me a real good start.

KS: A start on life, that is?

LM: Exactly right.

KS: How did serving in the CCC help you adjust to military life?

LM: It was a big factor in adjusting to military life because the first camp I went into, I was stationed in Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland. So we got all kinds of calisthenics and we had to stand in line, line up, right dress, all that kind of thing, like the Army had. In fact, we had to keep all our trucks just shining, our motors in our trucks had to shine just as well as the outside of the truck. It was a good start toward military life.

KS: In the military, did you serve overseas with General Patton?

LM: No, I served in Fort Knox, Kentucky, just Fort Knox, training tank drivers over there. For General Patton.

KS: Excellent. Very good.

LM: And that's as far as I got in the Army because the War was over with Germany already when they drafted me but Japan was still fighting, so I had to stay until they quite fighting. And then I could back out.

KS: Now, what years are we talking about now?

LM: We're talking about 1945.

KS: '45 , when you went in?

LM: It was all in '45, in and out in '45. It was just a six, seven month deal. We trained a battalion of tank drivers and that was it. And then the war was over with Japan.

KS: Well, at this stage of the game in the interview, I generally, you know, let you have-- I've been asking all the questions. Is there anything you want to add, or you'd like to say about CCC life and how it prepared you or overall what you think of your experiences?

LM: Well, the good, I think the good three meals a day and all that put me in good shape. I remain in good shape, and I'd like to . . . I'd do it all over again.

KS: Very good. Larry, I want to thank you for allowing me to interview you and for your contributions to Shenandoah National Park. Thank you.

LM: Yup.

END OF INTERVIEW

Interview
with
LAWRENCE MCGLYNN

September 29, 1996

Interviewer: Kenneth Steeber

Transcribed by: Joy K. Stiles

Shenandoah National Park
Luray, Virginia

Original manuscript on deposit at
Shenandoah National Park Archives

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The material contained in this oral history may only be used for professional and genealogical research, park interpretive and educational media, and brief quotations in nonprofit commercial publications.

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Side A:

Lawrence McGlynn is a former Civilian Conservation Corps enrollee stationed in Shenandoah National Park from 1939 to 1940. McGlynn served with the CCC a total of 28 months, working in other areas in addition to his time at Shenandoah. The interview begins with McGlynn giving a brief account of his family background, schooling and describing his start with the CCC. McGlynn was assigned to Camp NP-10, Company 375 at Pinnacles. He recalls the military-like life of camp, and the discipline it taught. He recalls few problems in camp, with the exception of two enrollees from New York caught stealing Army blankets to sell to the public in Luray. These men were put out of the Corps. McGlynn gives a brief description of some of the food, which he liked, then talks about having to do his own laundry. After talking more about life in the barracks, McGlynn recalls the only hardship of camp life was the winter weather and the deep snow. McGlynn took a class in diesel motors offered to enrollees through the educational program. He mentions his experience with the dental care provided.

McGlynn then relates how he was part of a small band, made up of three CCC boys and a local boy from Luray who played fiddle. They traveled to various places in the Valley, playing for square dances and related events, and played for a school assembly at the Luray High School. McGlynn played mandolin and guitar at that time.

McGlynn worked driving a truck, initially hauling gravel out of the Shenandoah River near Luray up to the Skyline Drive. After that assignment, he usually hauled men out to work, occasionally making trips to New Cumberland, Pennsylvania for supplies. He remembers an accident he had with a snow plow as he returned from Pennsylvania one time. Among the items he brought from Pennsylvania were blankets and movie films that were then shown to the enrollees. He recalls the CCC boys doing excellent work, overall. He describes how a few boys thought if they broke their assigned tool, they wouldn't have to work any more that day, but that it didn't work out the way they thought. When asked about wildlife present in the Park in 1939, McGlynn recalls many deer. He recalls the area as being mostly forested, with few open areas.

Side B:

McGlynn recalls the severe weather in the winter time and how he passed the time in the barracks on days they couldn't work by teaching guitar lessons to others for fifteen cents for a thirty minute lesson. He was not involved in CCC sports in Shenandoah, spending most of his free time in Luray with friends or with the band. He was rarely in camp on weekends, riding with the Camp Superintendent, Eugene A. Gisse, down to Luray. Enrollees were not permitted to have cars, but McGlynn remembers that the two boys caught stealing blankets had cars hidden in the woods nearby. McGlynn got along with the local residents and dated a Luray girl for several months.

McGlynn describes his life after leaving the CCC, including his employment history and his time in the Army training tank drivers. He concludes with a positive reflection of his time in the CCC, saying he would do it all over again.

End of interview.

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