

Oral History Interview with

LEE MUSCAVICH

Sunday, Sept. 26, 1999

At Skyland Conference Hall
66th Reunion of the Shenandoah Chapter
of the
Civilian Conservation Corps

Interviewer: Carrie Janey

Transcribed by: Gloria Updyke

Shenandoah National Park
Luray, VA

Original manuscript on deposit at
Shenandoah National Park Archives

INDEX

	<u>page</u>
Big Meadows	6
Crucible, PA	1
Camp life	4
Camp NP-10, Company 375	2
CCC	
Arriving at Camp	1
Finding out about	1
Gained from	6
Pay	3
Dunking co-worker in water barrel	6
Educational programs	
Blueprint reading	5
Woodworking	5
Photography	5
Free time	4
Girlfriend milking cow	4
Girls	4
Saturday nights in town	4
Front Royal	4
Great Depression	1
Barefoot	1
Headquarters work	2
Water lines	2
Telephone lines	2
Water reservoir	2
Luray	2, 4, 5
Mountain families gone	3
North/South friction	5
Pennsylvania	5
Reunion, finding out about	6
Riding the trucks	2
Serving cats to PA boys	5
Supervision, army vs. park service	5
Waynesboro, PA	2
Work	
Ditches, digging	2
Kitchen	3
Work after CCC	
Army	6
Coal mines	3

Transcription

CJ: Ok, today is Sunday, September 26, 1999. We're at Skyland Conference Hall. And it's the CCC Reunion. I'm Carrie Janey and I'm interviewing Lee Muscavich.

LM: Right.

CJ: Ok, and Mr. Muscavich, you've read the deed of gift and signed that?

LM: Right.

CJ: Ok, Why don't you tell me uh, when and where you were born.

LM: I was born in Crucible, Pennsylvania, January the 12th, 1919.

CJ: 1919. And what did your parents do?

LM: Dad was a coal miner.

CJ: A coal miner. And do you remember what happened, do you remember the effects of the Great Depression on your family.

LM: I went barefooted all the time, you know. February 'til November.

CJ: And how did you first hear about the CCC?

LM: Well, they first come around recruitin'.

CJ: Mm hmm.

LM: I don't know what it means to tell you, if I, they talked to my brother, but he turned it down. He had signed up, but then he didn't go.

CJ: Was he older than you?

LM: Yeah. And then later on, I had nothin' else to do, so I joined the CC's.

CJ: And what year was that?

LM: 1939.

CJ: '39. So you would have been 20?

LM: 20 years old.

CJ: 20?

LM: Mm hmm.

CJ: And where did you go to sign up?

LM: I imagine Waynesboro, Pennsylvania.

CJ: And after you signed up, did you go for any physical conditioning anywhere, did they send you?

LM: No.

CJ: They sent you straight to Camp, and you came here to Shenandoah?

LM: Right.

CJ: And which Camp was that?

LM: NP-10, Company 375.

CJ: And what month did you come in?

LM: January.

CJ: So was it pretty cold and nasty when you got here?

LM: Well, not too bad. No worse than it was at home.

CJ: Do you remember the first thing you did when you got into Camp here?

LM: Yes. The first thing we did, we, was doing ditches along Route 211, down towards Luray, there's a cable laid in the, er something, underneath, underground, and we was covering it up. And that's the first day.

CJ: Now you worked down at the headquarters in Luray?

LM: Well around that part, there wasn't no headquarters there at that time.

CJ: Right.

LM: We put the water lines in, the telephone lines underground, and those water reservoir.

CJ: So you rode the trucks down every day?

LM: Now, everyday up and down the mountain there.

CJ: And do you remember any of the families that lived right in that area where headquarters is now?

LM: No, I don't.

CJ: You never met any of those people?

LM: No. They were all gone, they'd already been moved out, see. Just empty houses.

CJ: And what other work assignments did you have? Did you do anything other than the ditches?

LM: Well I did work in the kitchen for one month. See, you got a quarter off each, off everybody else. If you worked in the kitchen you got a quarter extra off everybody. That made a little more money. I got tired of that in a hurry.

CJ: So you got \$5 a month.

LM: No, we got \$8.

CJ: You got \$8 dollars a month. And the rest was sent home to your family?

LM: \$22 home.

CJ: \$22 home.

LM: Later on I got a raise. I was assistant leader. I think they give us \$4 dollars a month more, or something like that.

CJ: So how long were you in?

LM: 9 months.

CJ: 9 months? And after you left where did you go?

LM: Went back home and worked the coal mines.

CJ: Now Camp life, what was that like?

LM: What's that?

CJ: Camp life?

LM: It was nice. There was nothing wrong with it. They had good food and plenty of warm clothes, so.

CJ: Did you do any of the extra activities, like play football or baseball or anything.

LM: Well we'd get a little game up you know.

CJ: But you weren't on a team?

LM: No, we didn't have no kind of field to play on there.

Mrs. Muscavich: The basketball game.

LM: Well, we went to, played basketball once in awhile. Go to some of the high schools around.

CJ: Did you go down to Front Royal or Luray very often?

LM: Saturday nights.

CJ: And what'd you do down there?

LM: Probably just walked up and down the street, buy a hamburger if we had any money left.

CJ: And would you stay down there the whole weekend, or?

LM: Oh no, we had to be back, it was 11:00 that the truck left back to Camp.

CJ: So you had to be there?

LM: We had about 4 or 5 hours in town. Maybe we'd go to the movie. There wasn't enough girls around for 200 men, you know.

CJ: Not by that point, you guys had been here since '33. Taken all the women. So what were some of your stories you wanted to tell me about?

LM: Well, I'll tell you about, I had a girlfriend, that lived out of town and I went to see her one evening, and she was down at the barn milking the cow. And her mother hollered at her, she says, "If that's a soldier," she says, "Come on home." She says, "If that's a CC boy bring the cow with you."

Mrs. Muscavich: Tell her the other one. Of the cats.

LM: Oh, the uh, the camp I was at, there was nothing but boys from Pennsylvania and Maryland, but that was about it. Prior to that, there's been you know, guys from the South and all, and they's still fighting the Civil War I guess, the way I understand. The boys that was doing the cooking and they thought they'd get even, so they killed 2 or 3 cats and cooked them, and fed them to these boys from the North. So they had to separate them. So they shipped all the Southerners out and put all the Northern boys in there. Now that was a story, and whether that was the truth, I don't know. That was before I got there.

CJ: Oh, before you got there?

LM: Yeah. I didn't get to eat none of the cat.

CJ: I had another guy tell me that uh, he was from Pennsylvania also. And he was told when he went down to Luray, not to mention the War at all. Did anyone tell you that?

LM: No.

CJ: They didn't tell you that? Do you remember any problems between the army running the Camp and the park service running the work?

LM: No.

CJ: Everybody got along?

LM: It had little to do with the army, outside of they's pretty darn strict you know. Everything had to be just so. You didn't eat supper unless you was in full dress. It, it was a lot stricter than the army was, I know that. The army wasn't near as strict as the CC Camp. That was where I was at anyway. I'd probably depend on who was uh, you know, the commander.

CJ: What about any of the educational programs.

LM: Well, they'd have such things as blueprint reading, woodworking, photography, things like that.

CJ: Did you do any of them?

LM: No I didn't do any of, oh, I did blueprint reading, yeah.

CJ: And do you think that was a valuable part of?

LM: They would probably get something out of it, you know.

CJ: And so after your 9 months, you left and went back to Pennsylvania.

LM: Yeah.

CJ: Were you in the service?

LM: Oh, I worked about a year in the coal mine. Got in the army for almost 4 years.

CJ: Do you think your CCC years made a difference?

LM: Oh yeah, I knew how to get around. I knew how to dodge things already by then, see.

CJ: What do you think was the most valuable part of being in the CCC?

LM: In the CC Camp?

CJ: Mm hmm.

LM: Oh I guess you learned a lot you know. Learned how to get along with people a little bit.

CJ: And have you kept in touch with any of the guys that you were in Camp with.

LM: No, most of them I was in with from around home are dead now.

CJ: So is this your first year here at the Reunion?

LM: Well, we happened to be down in Luray about 5 years around when, I uh somehow found out about it. We come up to Big Meadows and went to the meeting one time.

CJ: Well is there anything else that you can think, that, any experiences, any funny stories that happened that?

LM: Well, I could tell you 2 little stories, but they don't mean nothing.

CJ: Well sure they do.

LM: I was, can't think what I was doing anyhow, but I was working down below and the guy was carrying some buckets of cement up to guys working about me and every time he'd go past he'd kick some dirt down me you know. He come down one time I caught him, caught him by his shirt. And he wasn't very big, and I was pretty strong at that time. There's a 50 gallon barrel of water sitting there, and I picked him up like this and slipped off my hands. Down.

CJ: I guess they didn't mess with you anymore.

LM: It was all in fun, there was nobody mad at anybody, but.

CJ: Well thank you. We appreciate your time to tell us.

LM: Well I expect I'll hear that on the news tomorrow night, the national news we get.

Female (wife): You never know.