YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

CCC in Parsons, West Virginia Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 855

JOHN F. KING

Interviewed

by

Rebecca Rogers

on

August 5, 1989

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INTERVIEWEE: JOHN F. KING

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SUBJECT: CCC in Parsons, West Virginia, personal experience

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R: This is an interview with John King of Berea, Kentucky. It is taken at the New York State Ranger's School in Wanakena, New York, on Saturday August 5, 1989.

Tell me about the side camp at Canaan.

K: The side camp at Canaan represented sixty of the enrollees at Camp Parsons. We moved up to the high country on Canaan Mountain. Our job there was to release the spruce and pine that had been planted from 1926 up until 1934. That is cutting the competing hardwoods and releasing the spruce from any interfering trees. Also we built a road near Davis-Canaan Mountain lookout out to the side camp about five miles. All of this road was built with hand knapped native rock. The enrollees cracked every one of these rocks with a knapping hammer. It was very rough road, but you didn't sink into the swamp land. Eventually we completed the loop from Canaan Mountain lookout around to the bridge at Davis. A part of that now is in the Blackwater State Park.

R: Did you build any of those trails at Canaan Mountain that are now part of the. . .

K: We maintained the trails. Out near the camp was what we called a water hole. We built a little dam to collect water. We could put our fire pump, if we ever got a fire, in there. Some of those are still there. The Canaan lookout tower, of course, is gone now. During World War II they moved it from Canaan over to Bell Knob, across the road about half a mile. They

called it Bell Tower, but it's gone too. So the lookout towers are a thing of the past. It's now mostly aerial detection.

R: What time of year did you go up there?

K: Let's see. Went in there after the snow had gone, probably about April or May. We stayed there all summer and then, of course, we had to get out of there. I think it was around the first of November. Because it is high country, 4,000 feet plus and the snows were terrific.

R: You lived in sort of tent camps?

K: We were in tents. There was one wooden building, we used it for a mess hall. The rest were all tents; officers, foremen, and enrollees.

R: When did that side camp start, do you know? At the beginning of the CCC?

K: No, it . . . The camp at Parsons had been established, I would say, one year anyway. I am dating this just by memory, about 1934. Because I had been in Camp Parsons December of 1933 as what they called a silvicultural foreman. I handled crews from ten to thirty CCC enrollees out at Camp Parsons. We accomplished what we called timber stand improvement; girdling trees, releasing trees, and just general forestry work.

R: Did you plant trees?

K: We planted trees, yes. Spring and fall. Probably Camp Parsons in its history, we planted probably six to eight million trees. Backbone Mountain, out of Thomas at Blackwater Manor, up on Canaan Mountain. Then a lot of times we took twenty or thirty of our CCC enrollees from Parsons and sent them over to Laurel Fort Camp. We planted all of Little River with three or four crews from each of the CCC camps.

R: Now tell about what it was like for those fellows when they were away from Camp Parsons. What sort of a habitat did they have.

K: Well, they were on detached service, you might call, and they moved into another CCC camp. They had a regular barrack and they were fed by the Army. It wasn't much different except maybe they lost a few of their girlfriends in Parsons when they had to leave Camp 518. But it was only about a two month tour of duty.

R: But they didn't take pup tents and hike through the woods?

K: No, no. See, the Army handled the discipline and housing, and they were pretty strict. Most of the Army officers didn't like to get their boots dirty. This was good for the enrollees too. A lot of them were boys from mountain homes, probably low income homes, and they weren't used to fancy facilities, but they make good men. The draft period in the 1940's, the end of the CCC program, the Army recruiting office could tell right off. When they went into service they could tell that they had had CCC experience, because they knew discipline and they respected officers and they were good workers. And that is one of the great benefits of the old CCC program, as far as I am concerned.

R: Tell about the actual day to day activity, tree planting, whatever you and the CCC guys did.

K: Well, it was a pretty well disciplined training program. the Army of course took care of the housing, the feeding, and the in camp discipline. They had probably a first lieutenant, a couple second lieutenants, and then they had a sergeant, and maybe a corporal. This was the Army side. Then the technical service in Camp Parsons it was the U.S. Forest Service. They had a camp superintendent, the first one there was Harold Hebb and there are four others I can name. The CCC boys were handled in crews. You can't handle too many. On a tree planting crew, about fifteen would be the maximum. They would get the trees from the Parsons nursery and we would take them up to the planting site.

R: How did you carry them or whatever? How did they come?

K: The trees came in bundles of probably 1,000 red spruce in a burlap bundle. Then they were secured so that the air couldn't get to the roots. Before we started the actual planting we hauled trees up to say Backbone Mountain, just above Camp Parsons on the Blackwater Canyon, and we would heel these trees in. We took them out of the bundle and made a trench and put the trees in the trenches and then covered the roots back over with dirt. This was to keep the aeration from killing the tree roots.

Then when the crews came in in the morning. . . The Army got them up at 6:00, they had breakfast, and they met at muster probably at 7:30, and they were turned over to the technical service, the Forest Service. We loaded them on trucks, thirty men to a truck, and up the mountain we would go to Backbone Mountain.

We would come to the planting site, each foreman had ten or fifteen tree planters, and they had an Erhart planting tray and a mattock. We used what we called a center

hole method of planting trees. We had trained all of these CCC enrollees the proper method of planting. The foreman had these ten to fifteen men all day, and he was responsible for the quality of the tree planting; that they didn't stuff a bunch of them in a hole, didn't plant them too deep or too shallow, also that the roots were kept moist with sphagnum moss.

The CCC crew averaged, per man, 300 to 400 trees a day. This was almost a tree a minute. It was in rough terrain, blackberry, green briars and bracken fern. But these plantations are dedicated really to the CCC program. Of course, after two or three years go by, we sent some of the lads back in to release the young seedlings. That was plantation release, we called it. The crews, when they were sent to other camps, some of them weren't too happy and we had a little unrest with one crew in another camp. But it worked out all right. There weren't any big problems.

R: Tell about release, that is a new word for me. Tell me how it works.

K: Well, releasing a tree gives the crown complete light. We would take either a brush hook or an axe and completely release any competing hardwoods especially from around this newly planted tree. The hardwoods would grow faster than the pine and spruce anyway. So we were releasing it from say choke cherry, greenbrier, blackberry briars, and so forth. It is a forestry term.

R: In Parsons now there are only two buildings surviving from the nursery. Have you been there since the flood?

K: Yes.

R: What are the two buildings, do you know? Someone told me one of them was your office.

K: The CCC camp has completely been removed.

R: It has?

K: Yes. I was in there in. . . Let's see, we had our 50th reunion. It was 1983 and we had four of the cultural foremen who had been in the camp. We came back and we had our reunion there. The only building up at that time was the old blacksmith's shop. It lay kind of in that little slough there. It had the green stain, but the flood they had in. . . What was it? 1986?

R: 1985.

K: 1985, took it. So that removes all of the camp. Now, over against the river there were two buildings built

prior to CCC. One was used as the CCC garage workshop, and behind it was kind of a same type of building and it was a warehouse. The warehouse was a building in which these eighteen cultural foremen were housed when the CCC camp was established there at Parsons. There are about five or six of these cultural foremen still living. We lost one two weeks ago, Ralph Smoot. We bunked in the second floor of this warehouse and we just had the horse blankets for covers. We ate over at the CCC camp.

We received two weeks of forestry training and then we were assigned to the camps. The camp assignment at Parsons was Harold Hebb. He was superintendent, he was a forester. Arthur Sanford, who taught here at this ranger school, was a cultural foreman. Tom Gill was a cultural foreman, Bernard Campbell was a cultural foreman, and Vernon Hicks was assigned to the camp but he worked for the Elklick Research Center there. He did his research work, but he was called a cultural foreman. Those were the original foreman assigned to Camp Parsons. I had the luck to go over to Gladyfork CCC camp, close to your Sully. Bill Eyeman and I were cultural foreman at Gladyfork in 1933. Then in December of 1933 I was transferred from Gladyfork Camp over to Parsons.

R: What was Parsons like when you first came there? Had the buildings been finished?

K: No, no. They started out with tents too. But they were pretty close to lumber mills there. There was a lumber mill right in the town of Parsons and two or three right around. You could buy black cherry for $12 a thousand. A lot of those barracks were built with black cherry lumber. Now you would pay probably $1,000 a thousand. But they gradually eliminated the tents. As soon as they got a mess hall started, then they started the barracks. The Forest Service had what they called the technical office. It was a little kind of a precut building. It was the first one that was built that was halfway decent. Then the officers, they built their own quarters. Then they had what they called an Army office and a technical service in the same barracks. Then they ended up at Parsons with five barracks, a nice mess hall, and the end of the mess hall was their sick bay, and then a big rec hall, and a garage for the Forest Service equipment. They put in a big water tank there to pump the water out of the ground. See, there wasn't any commercial waterlines. The water tank is gone too.

We crossed the western Maryland railway track to get into camp. The present road wasn't even thought of at that time. I remember every time we took a truckload of boys across that track, the foreman who rode in the front seat had to get out, walk across the tracks to see if there were any trains coming down the track. This

was quite time consuming for the work project, but that was a safety requirement. It was a blind railroad crossing. It's a wonder we didn't lose some people. After you crossed the railroad track, coming off 219, you made a left-hand turn and went down the slough about 150 to 200 feet, made a right-hand turn and on the right was the Forest Service garages. On the left was this little Forest Service office. Then the road went around the flagpole to where they had muster every morning, except Saturdays and Sundays. Then later they put in the rec hall and the officers' quarters.

R: So they weren't built until after 1934?

K: Most of them were in there by 1934.

R: By the summer of 1934 the permanent buildings were framed in?

K: Yes. But now the rec hall and the water tank and one of the mess kit laundries, they came a little later. But the barracks were up. They were in barracks that summer, 1933, yes. They went up fast. The same way at Gladyfork. They lived in tents. Of course, the motor equipment was both the Army and the technical services were probably mostly post office trucks that the post office department had condemned, so they turned them over to the CCC camps. They were Model T Fords, and you pushed three pedals. Boy, oh boy, getting food into say Gladyfork CCC Camp was a job. It was twenty-five miles from Gladyfork to Elkins and there would be trucks all over those mountains day and night. They would break down, they had the food supplies to feed the men. But these were pioneering days.

R: The buildings that are there, that are surviving, you said one of them you thought was where you lived, but they don't have second floors. Did they have ladders and sort of like an attic?

K: These had stairs.

R: Here is a picture of one of them and it had double doors on this side.

K: Yes.

R: And double doors here.

K: And the river was over here?

R: No, the slough was now down back here. This had a door, and over the door in very faint stencil it said, "Shop". And there was a window between this space and here, between the shop and the main room. Then there were

regular windows across the back of it that had once apparently had sash in them. The other building is much smaller. It is only sixteen feet long.

K: Well, let me get a little further along with you on that.

R: It has almost no windows.

K: Did it have a pretty steep roof?

R: They both had, I think, about the same pitch. They both were one story and neither of them had stair or ladder access. Both of them were fairly damaged. That is one of the things I looked for, so I didn't really see it.

K: Well, as you came in from across the railroad tracks, and you came up this nursery road instead of turning into the CCC camp, on your left the first house was D.A. Oliver's residence. Is it still there?

R: Yes.

K: Okay. Across the road from the house was a little, oh, one and a half room. This was D.A. Oliver's office.

R: It's still there.

K: It's still there, okay. Then on the same side as D.A. Oliver's office, going towards the river, the Dry Fork, was the Forest Service ranger station.

R: That is still there too.

K: It is?

R: Yes.

K: I thought it was gone.

R: The ranger office is there. And the wash house is next to it, between it and Sandy Oliver's office. Then beyond the ranger's station there were two maintenance buildings, and they are gone.

K: Those are the two I am thinking of, those two maintenance buildings.

R: There is a little stone retaining wall. . .

K: Right.

R: Was there, but the buildings are gone.

(In tape there was a buzz that lasted approx. 7 1/2 min.)

K: They called me in from Camp Loring.

R: Oh, you became superintendent at Parsons camp?

K: Yes, I was camp superintendent. I was camp superintendent from late 1936, say until about 1938. Let's get into some politics here. There was a man championed by President Roosevelt, and was called Mr. Friant. You had to be on Mr. Friant's list to have a CCC job. I was on the opposite side of the political fence. So, Mr. Wood the Forest Supervisor of Monongahela National Forest called one Sunday and said, "John, I have bad news for you. I have got to retire you from the camp superintendents job." I said, "Gee whiz." "You are not on Mr. Friant's list," he said, "I can't do anything about it." I said, "What difference does it make?" He said, "There is no reduction in pay." I said, "Okay, it is all right with me." And they got this political hack in there. He didn't run the camp the way I thought it should it be run, but I stayed with it because it was a job.

When they retired the Gladyfork CCC Camp, they konked it out and they told me to make a side camp. So I took thirty enrollees, and I handled the whole camp over Gladyfork. Mess and the whole works, including work projects. We finished up. . . What is the park there?

R: Stuart's Recreation Area?

K: Stuart's Park, and we completely built Bear Heaven Recreation Area up on the mountain.

R: I don't know Bear Heaven. Is it on Route 33?

K: No, it is on Stuart Memorial Drive.

R: Okay, that is a little out of my world.

K: We handled the whole camp; firefighting and I was in my glory really. I wasn't bothered with the main camp or this political hack at all. That was the first time, and probably the only time, that politics entered the Forest Service in my career. Mr. Wood, the forest supervisor, I know he has heard about it, but he couldn't do anything. But I just mention that as one of the ways. Then Camp Parsons went out. They sent the Camp Parsons boys, and of course my side camp, up to Whitmer, Camp White.

R: Now, when was this?

K: Oh, this was probably 1939. Yes, 1939. That's right.

R: Oh, I had understood Parsons lasted until 1942.

K: No, no. Mr. Burell was the camp superintendent at Parsons and he was sent up to Whitmer, Camp White. It is called Camp Scott White. Billy Vanardsdale there in Elkins would be able to give you all of that dope. It was handled out of Camp Northfork, the feeding and so forth. Then Camp White was dismantled and so was Northfork. Well, I was sent down to Camp Northfork to run another side camp. I was in that camp, Pearl Harbor day, December 7th, 1941. I ran that side camp for about six months. Then Mr. Wood decided to transfer me back to the Parsons ranger district as a general district assistant.

R: So you were working for Monongahela National Forest all of this time?

K: The whole time. I had worked on the Monongahela before the CCC program.

R: Okay. So that is how you know more about the nursery bottom area from the CCC camp standpoint.

K: Oh, yes. I went on the Monongahela twenty-two years of my forestry career.

R: We have to go eat or we are going to die here.

K: Well, I spent some time in Idaho after I graduated from this school. In 1929 I graduated. I worked in Idaho in 1930. I came back to Pennsylvania in 1931, and I received an offer of a job down at Thornwood on the Greenbrier ranger district. Don Gardinier, a graduate of this school, was a ranger.

R: Oh, okay.

K: And I have written a book.

R: I haven't read it. Yes, I know that.

K: Well, you ought to read it.

R: I should. I should look it up.

K: It is homespun, but I think it gives you a lot of background. I made a trip to Parsons with a load of red spruce cones, a whole truckload of them. That is where I met Don Beck the ranger, and Mr. Wood Forest Supervisor. That was my first real contact with Parsons. And then in 1933, of course, we got the offer of this job as cultural foremen. Report to Camp Parsons May 20th, 1933. And eighteen of us reported there. That is how I was initiated into Camp Parsons. I took part in the community affairs. They had a River City Club and

festivities. It was just a little, small town, you know, but nice.

R: It is a nice town.

K: They were beautiful people.

R: Real nice people. Yes, lovely people.

K: And the mountain people were just great, boy. The Judys up there on Green Mountain.

R: You mean Judy Gap, the store?

K: No, this was up on Green Mountain. Isam Judy.

R: Okay, I don't know those Judys.

K: Charlie and Minnie Day, they owned a tract up timber, and close to the Judys. Right on top of the mountain there, beautiful bluegrass land and the national forest right by it. Charlie and Minnie Day passed away, so they wanted to sell it. They wanted $6 an acre. Of course I wasn't allowed to buy it because I was working for the forest service. That had sugar maple trees, six straight logs, sixteen foot logs . . . And you know what maple lumber is used for. And black cherry that the logging company never got into, six, seven logs. If I had had enough money to buy that at $6 an acre, I would be a millionaire today. Just before I went in the military, I was at this Gladyfork side camp, I was marking timber for the ranger, Ralph Rowland. He sold it by contract. They sold it to Republic Lumber Company. They took that sugar maple and shipped it down to the Panama Canal zone, the Army did, and made piling, a lot of birds eye maple in it. Boy, oh boy. What a way to win the war.

R: I know what you mean by yellowwood, there is some that grow near me.

K: Well, there is a song old Burl Ives sang about the yellowwood. That is what they claim the Ark was made of.

R: I have never heard that. It is rather rare, according to a friend of mine.

K: It is.

R: He is very interested in getting them to grow.

K: We have four or five on the Berea College campus, and the darn stuff dies back after it gets about twenty, twenty-five year. But this tree has a beautiful yellow

wood.

R: Was this out at the Berea College campus?

K: Yes. It's still growing.

R: It has pinnacle flowers, right? Are we thinking of the same thing? Big drippy limbs.

K: Well, let's see, there is the Chinese chain tree.

R: No, raintree is what you are thinking of.

K: Well, this is the chain tree. There is a golden rain-tree and a golden chain tree. We have all three of those on campus.

R: No, this has a white flower. I think that is the thing I am thinking of.

K: Sourwood, of course, it has a raceme of small flowers. They call it the Lilly of the Valley tree. It has a panicle and makes beautiful honey.

R: Yes, I have seen that.

K: Sourwood honey. Well, do you want to get this show on the road?

R: Let's get the show on the road. Okay, I want you to tell me more about the nursery site, I guess.

K: Yes, okay.

R: When you came there, when you first started working for the forest service, do you remember what it was like? What it looked like? Do you remember anything about Sandy Oliver or any of that crowd?

K: Oh, yes, I remember Sandy Oliver well.

R: Aim at what it looked like before you launch in to Sandy Oliver.

K: Yes. Well, my first experience with Sandy. . . I met him in 1931. I brought in this load of red spruce cones we had picked off of Spruce Mountain, and turned them over to Sandy, and he gave me kind of a rough tour of the operations there. He lived right across the road from the main part of the nursery where they put the seeds in the seed bed, and raised them. Then they moved them across on his side where he lived, where they out planted them or transplanted them. Usually on the red spruce they like to have two years in the seed bed and two years in the transplant bed. This gave them a firm

root system and a good top.

I remember seeing the women at the nursery using what they called the Yale transplant board. They would dig up these little seedlings with kind of a trenching machine, and then they would put them in kind of a covered canopy. These girls were very dexterous with their hands. They would take these little seedlings and put them in the transplant board--it was probably about eight or ten feet long--and take them to a trench. Just lift the lever on the transplant board and it would leave the seedlings in contact with the ground. They compacted the soil around the roots. The girls did this eight hours a day. I think at the time they were getting about $.25 an hour. This was the going wage then. Sandy Oliver, he liked to use the women because as I said, they seemed to have more patience and were more meticulous than men were. They kind of nurtured these little seedlings.

Sandy was not very keen about the CCC boys. They were boys, young boys, and they didn't have the ability to stick to the precision that he wanted. That is the type of man he was, and that is why he had a good nursery. But he finally came around when I was superintendent there at Parsons, of using a lot of the CCC boys as, well we called them scarecrows. He put them in the fields, in the seed beds to scare the birds away, because the birds would peck at the seedlings and take the tops out, and especially some of the hardwoods that they liked to eat. But that was the biggest use that Sandy made of the CCC. Most of his buildings were contracted outside of the CCC program.

R: They weren't built by the CCC?

K: No. There might have been one, the wash house. Yes, the wash house I think. It was one of the last buildings. But the house he lived in, no.

R: Okay. A lot of these buildings were built before the CCC actually, I am finding out from these drawings that I found.

K: Now the ranger station there. . .

R: Was the ranger station. . . You think that was built by the CCC?

K: That was built by the CCC, oh yes. Yes, I was there when that was built.

R: Was the pump house there when you first went there, when he gave you the tour in 1931? Do you remember?

K: Yes, yes.

R: And the oil house?

K: The oil house was there too, and the two warehouses.

R: Was there a warehouse where the wash house is now?

K: I don't remember.

R: Okay, because I have a plan that looks like a schematic that shows a building there.

K: Now they had what they called a sun shade. Well, they used it to transplant. It had a little roof on it. It wasn't a completely enclosed building though. That is where they got in out of the sun and transplanted in the transplant boards. But that was there only temporarily.

R: That was out in the fields, wasn't it?

K: Yes, that's right. Then up at the bottom, right close to the river, beyond the research center, was another open building and that is where Mr. Wood had Sandy Oliver keep the forest service pack stock. He had two horses, and they foisted that job on to Sandy. He wasn't too keen about taking over because they charged it against his nursery expense of keeping those two nags.

R: What did they do with the horses?

K: Well, they would use them in 1930 and 1931 to pack food into the firefighters, but after you got the CCC boys in there, they were the pack horses. Gee whiz, you would send 100 boys out to a fire, and they would practically stamp it out with their feet. They would have a fire out and go home, and they would have their food at the camps. The two horses were used on the Little River planting by the CCC tree planters to carry trees and food up to the hollow head.

Mr. Wood, the forest supervisor, didn't want to get rid of those horses. He was from over in the eastern panhandle and he like horses. So that was just one of the phobias that haunted D.A. Oliver.

Then D.A. had three children, and the boy went on to Michigan State and took a degree in forestry. I have lost where he is. But his oldest daughter married an Elkins boy. He was with the West Virginia game commission, wildlife department, Larry Ward. The last I heard of them, they and their family are living in Milwaukee, Oregon. It is right close to Portland. I think he is in either with the Forest Service or some type of wild-

life work. The youngest Oliver girl, I can't even remember her name.

Sandy Oliver, after he left Parsons went to region 4. They closed down the Parsons nursery after World War II. The Forest Service decided they could contract or buy trees cheaper than they could pay this whitewashing overhead and so forth. So Sandy was transferred out to Nebraska. There is a huge nursery out there at Halsey, Nebraska. But the whole forest is planted trees, so the start of the Nebraska National Forest. When I was out there visiting Sandy it had about 40,000 acres. It was all planted trees in those sand hills of Nebraska. I stopped at the nursery, Hazel and I, and it just happened he was down in the hospital at Grand Island. He had had a hemorrhoid operation, and we stopped in the hospital, and that is the last I saw of Sandy. In the meantime, this 40,000 acres has been burned over twice. So all that tree planting effort is kind of in vain, but it is a monument to Sandy. Then I think he retired, and went into either New Mexico or Arizona and that is where he passed away. That is about the end of Sandy Oliver.

R: Mr. Oliver.

K: A close association. Of course, I liked the man. He was very brusque in his approach to you, but when he said something, you could believe it. One other sidelight on Oliver, he went up this Canaan lookout tower before the CCC camps. He and Larry Gross, who was in the regional office. Larry Gross was nonloquacious. They would work all day, and they would go out to lookout tower and cook their supper, and Sandy told me Larry wouldn't speak one word the whole day. But Larry ended up in the regional office, and then he went to the Washington office of Forest Service. He developed the center hole method of planting trees. That is kind of a methodical system of tree planting. I have a picture of Larry down there. Sandy was a Michigan State product and he was very professional in his nursery work, whether he was the happiest man, I don't know.

R: Was he innovative?

K: Yes, he would be. He could take a piece of pipe and make a complete plumbing system if he needed to. You had to be, because those nurseries weren't budgeted enough to pay outside help. They looked down your collar if you charged $10 a thousand for trees. "Oh my goodness! I can get those cheaper at a commercial nursery." But in government work you have to keep all the whitewash on the fences and feed the horses and so forth. Then, of course, the nursery was closed down. They sold all of the stock, very low price and then it was turned over to the state of West Virginia. That is

where Allison came in and several other nursery people.

R: Did you know much about or were you involved in seed separating or any of that kind of work when you worked for CCC?

K: The only thing I had with that was that I had a side camp over at Spruce Knob--that is the highest point in the state--it was at Gatewood Switch. I had twenty-five CCC boys. We lived in an old boxcar and tents. For two falls we covered that whole country around Spruce Knob and collected red spruce cones. If you ever picked a red spruce cone, they are just gummy and you get your hands full of tar. Just a little incidence there; we had a crew from Bartow and Thornwood. . . Luther Mollenax was the planting boss and I was his assistant. We went up after the red spruce cones on Spruce Mountain, and we gave each lad a bottle of kerosene to get the stuff off his hands. This one boy, Rexroad, Merle Rexroad's brother, he had about a half pint whiskey bottle in his hip pocket full of kerosene. He fell out of one of the trees and landed right on his hip and broke the bottle. I had to put a couple of butterfly bandages on his rear end, but he went right back to work, no lost time accident. That is just one of the funny things. Then we put these pick combs in a galvanized bucket with ten or twelve quarts, and the picker lowered them to the ground bucket and we emptied it from the buckets into burlap sacks.

R: So the kids had to actually climb the trees?

K: Oh yes, yes. They had to go right to the top and work down. The only way you could pick them was by hand. You couldn't shake them loose. Then they were taken to Sandy Oliver's nursery where he ran them through the dryer, and then the dewinger, and blowing out all the grit and so forth. Then another time we picked the black cherry seeds. Now this was a little different practice. We waited until they got ripe and put a tarp or canvas underneath the black cherry tree, and shake it.

R: Didn't the squirrels and the birds and everything under the sun come and eat all that stuff once it fell down?

K: Not the black cherries. There are just millions of seeds. They would work on them, but they can't do the seed any harm because they sit on a fence line, you know, maybe ten years later you have a row of black cherry along the fence line. But what we did with those, we would pick the seed and the pulp around it, and we would take it to Parsons and Sandy Oliver put them through a cement mixer. That got rid of the pulp, washed the pulp away, and you had the little, stony

seed. Then that is the way we planted the black cherry.

R: Now, you guys didn't ever plant the seed either. The ladies planted the seed as well?

K: In the nursery the ladies planted the seed. But the forest crews, when they did this TSI . . .

R: Translate that.

K: That is timber stand improvement. We would go where they had a timber sale, and they made maybe quarter acre openings, and here was sunlight and a black cherry site. So we carry a Prince Albert can of black cherry seed in our hip pocket. Coming to a quarter acre opening, throw about ten, fifteen seeds in this opening. West Virginia around Durbin and Gladyfork, the finest black cherry in the world was logged there. Raine Andrew's company in Gladyfork, they took millions of feet of black cherry and left the sugar maple. That is all they wanted. Up by Willdell and the Greenbrier all they cut there was black cherry. I cut some black cherry for my own use. My father-in-law bought the stumpage from the Forest Service, and we went in there and cut it. It was second growth black cherry, about twenty inches in diameter and had three good logs in it. This was in 1947. Let's see, just a little after World War II when I got back.

R: But that was already second growth?

K: That was second growth though. You know, forestry, it is a long range thing, but nature is so remarkable in making a recovery from catastrophe, you might say. See, those loggers originally they just raped the timber, and then let it burn. Boy, some of that stuff that came back in is really nice. We deviated a little from Sandy Oliver there.

R: That was pretty useful.

K: Yes. Well, now. . .

R: Can you think of any other interesting items? Oh, were you there when the--I don't think you were, but you might have been--Fernow and the experimental forest started up?

K: Oh yes, yes. This Vernon Hicks I told you about, he came in as one of these eighteen origin' cultural foremen. But Charles Abel who ran the experiment station down near Asheville, he had sent Vern up there. Vern was a University of Michigan graduate and had been in there the year before the CCC started. They assigned him to the Fernow Experiment Station. His work location

was up Elklick. There were no roads in there, and he would take ten to twenty enrollees up there and they would cut the right of way. The yellow poplar, it had been logged, but the yellow poplar had grown about twenty-six years, the first year the CCC cut in there. We had fourteen to sixteen inches diameter on those yellow poplar in twenty-six years, see.

R: Yes.

K: This was tremendous for the research people. Here is a good rich soil, well watered--gets about fifty inches of rain a year. So they decided to make an experimental forest. Then the city of Parsons ran out of water. So they put in a dam in Elklick, but it didn't prove out. There was too much erosion, and it filled up the dam too quick. So I don't know what Parsons does now for their water. Then Vern built a couple sheds up there, and you have the pictures of Webb Myers there. He helped build the sheds. They were log, oh maybe tool houses. But they put in a good network of roads in there.

R: Now that was all the CCC who built the sheds and put in the network of roads?

K: The CCC helped with the sheds, helped Webb Myers, and also the CCC built practically all the roads. Carl Barr was one of the CCC foremen, and he, after the CCC camps went out, came back from Maryland and was retained by the Forest Service. Well, he was superintendent of that Elklick project, Carl Barr. His wife still lives there. He was an old time logger and worked well with the boys. He was quite a provocator, but he really handled boys nicely. A lot of the work done there was instrumental in putting forest and water management in good order.

There was another boy that lives up there, Hambelton or Hendricks, Fridley. I got him on when I was at Parsons Ranger District. He worked with Carl.

R: What is Fidley's first name, do you remember? I haven't ever heard of him.

K: He is retired now. He lived right there where Otter Creek comes into Dry Fork. What was his first name? Good boy, just a hard worker and a homespun, mountain boy.

R: I will ask Dick.

K: Yes, Dick would know. Dick Fansler had a brother by the name of Ode. Ode was in the CCC camps right almost at the onset. He was called an LEM, local enrolled member, and they made $45 a month. They were local people, and this helped the local economy. They were a little

older. They served as good work leaders. Ode, finally after the CCC stopped went into the Forest Service as road foreman. He lived out just below Backbone Mountain Lookout Tower. Dick Fansler, of course, you have his record. He was in the CCC camps, but he went up above Elkwater in the CCC camp there. I don't think he was in any of the National Forest camps. After the camps, World War II ended, he came back from the service and we went to work on reconstructing a telephone line from Elkins to Petersberg. Dick was a very good linesman.

R: Now that is what he had done on the CCC.

K: Yes. We worked to the top of the Allegheny Mountains in the dead of winter changing crossarms. Dick would never ask for mercy. Boy, he stayed with us.

R: Awful job. (laughter)

K: Yes. But we stayed at a little house there at Evenwood, Grace Smith's boarding house. They allowed the employees $4 a day per diem. He and Webb Myers and two or three other boys spent the winter there at Grace Smith's place, right there at Evenwood. That is close to your country there.

R: Right.

K: At Evenwood there was the remains of an old tree nursery. There was one at Gladwin and there was one at Evenwood. Well, you could probably see a few trees around Grace's house. See it was Raine Andrews Lumber Company, I believe, was in there. It was a big house and I think Grace's husband obtained it some way when they logged out. They retained the remains of the nursery. Then somehow the Forest Service wanted it and I think they bought it out. Now whether they returned it back to the Smith family or not. . . But Grace is gone. And I stopped in there two years ago and asked a little kid in the yard, and I said, "Is your grandma there?" I was thinking of Grace. "Oh yes! Yes, she is in there." But that boy was only about that high. It was Grace's daughter, boy, now the grandma. She didn't come out to see me. Well, that shows some of the part that women played in the Forest Service, and they were a big help to the forest service. Even in the days of a male chauvinist, I guess you would call us. But the feeling in the Forest Service then, "This is not women's work. They just can't do that."

R: But the nursery really was sort of women's work in the CCC. When I first started this, I thought the CCC were kind of the reason why the nursery was there. It turns out they really had nothing in common with each other.

K: No, no.

R: Do you think the Fernow was very strongly a part of the CCC project?

K: Well, yes the construction part.

R: The construction part?

K: Yes, the construction, but the organization though, they were all researchers, PhDs.

R: Once it was built it was all the PhDs? There really weren't very many research people connected with the CCC program.

K: No, after it was built then they hired their own staff, like Carl Barr and Fridley and these boys. They had their own work force. They tended to keep away from administrators. Because in a CCC camp, you got a forest fire, everything stopped. The researchers don't like that. They want their work to go on divorced of forest fires. That was one of the beauties of the CCC camps. You had 150 men, they have been trained in firefighting, you had tools, trucks, you could rush them out to fires. Give them good supervision and they would whip any darn fire that came along. Now, they were young lads and if you worked them over, say, eighteen, twenty hours on a fire, look out! They would fall asleep right in the fire line.

We were down to Three Forks at Williams River and I had 200 CCC boys, we were on there thirty-six hours before we got relieved. One of the bosses from Philadelphia came up and he said, "What are those boys sleeping for?" I said, "I can't keep them awake." I couldn't keep myself awake really. They were laying right in the fire line, they were exhausted. And he said, "Well, you are not on the fire line." I said, "You are not on the fire line," Mr. so and so. He just turned his back and left the mountain, but it was a rough one. It wasn't any really top organization.

R: I have something I have to go back to. We looked at these pictures, my little sketches, and we never figured out . . . You think this was a maintenance building, right? This one over here.

K: Let me get myself straightened out again. Here is the one I am thinking about.

R: That you are thinking of.

K: Yes, I am thinking about, yes.

R: Okay. But do you know anything about these buildings that were over here by the slough? They are green. See they are CCC. They have all the construction marks of a CCC building. None of them is little. See, the one you have here is 16' x 16' and the sky was bigger with the top on one end of it.

K: Now I will tell you what the picture was here. This is the camp here, isn't it?

R: The camp was somewhere over in here. You came in here.

K: Oh, all right, yes. Oh, these buildings were all here.

R: No. No, two of them are plywood, so they weren't there. They are modern plywood. Those two. . . These are literally hanging over the edge.

K: Well, here come the railroad tracks. You go up to. . .

R: No, the railroad track was running along here.

K: Yes, that's right.

R: Okay.

K: Now you cross the railroad track, and you turn to the. . .

R: Left.

K: Left, or you would keep straight ahead to Oliver's. Oliver's house was here.

R: Oliver was here. So maybe you came acrosss over here.

K: If that is Oliver's house, then the railroad crossing is here, and the CCC camp was right here. Now what these were up here, I don't know. There used to be a family that lived in the slough there.

R: Yes, there is a fallen down house in the slough. That is right in here.

K: These were built after CCC. Because the end house was a blacksmith's shop, and that was right about the slough. The barracks ended about there.

R: At the blacksmith's shop?

K: These were bound to have been built or moved after the CCC.

R: Well, these two there, I am pretty sure are CCC buildings. They might have just gotten moved there from

somewhere else, but you don't remember them anyway. I was hoping you could tell me . . .

K: Well, I went through there in 1983 and the only building that was left there was that old blacksmith's shop. Ed Close ran the blacksmith shop.

R: Now did the blacksmith shop have a wooden floor, or was it a dirt floor?

K: Dirt floor. I will tell you what I think has happened, after the CCC camps we had a--right in here--the technical service had an office right on the corner there, the slough. The road into the camp, that set about there. Then right next to the technical office was a tool room. It was a big, long kind of a prefab job. It was green. Then next to it was another one. I don't know what they did. Then the next one was Ed Close's blacksmith shop with a dirt floor. So I would say those buildings, Sandy Oliver must have moved them this location over there.

R: Over there, okay.

K: Either that or Allison. If they are still there.

R: Then the barracks were all on the other side of the street.

K: The barracks were all right in here. See, one, two, three, four, and then the officers' quarters, and then the forest service technical quarters, and the Army office is right in there. The mess hall lay right in there, and the flag pole was in there, and the rec hall was fairly close to the road here. But see this area here was all in the nursery. It came about this way and then it was just a little plot between the road and the entrance road into camp that was in nursery too. Well, Sandy's backyard was almost in the nursery you might say.

R: But that is here. This is Sandy's backyard. And then there was lots of nursery in here because there is a picture of. . . This is the packing house.

K: Oh boy, I am confused now.

R: This is the packing house. Do you remember the packing house? Where they tied up the trees to ship them out. There is a photograph of the ladies weeding, is looking west at the packing house.

K: See, we cross the railroad tracks and we come up straight and this road wasn't in there and this road wasn't there.

R: Okay.

K: Then the first house on this road, and the only one I remember. . .

R: It is. It was the only house, was Sandy Oliver's.

K: Was Sandy's. Okay, and right across the road was his office. Then you came on down past Sandy's and this was the ranger station, and a big parking lot, and these two buildings. Okay. Now these buildings here, I would assume they were these three buildings here and they just moved them down.

R: Moved them down, okay. So you think one might be the blacksmith shop and the other might be a tool room or something like that?

K: Yes, I would say one was the old tool room. There is a boy there in Elkins by the name of Edgar Skoonover. He's retired. He used to sell hardware for the Valley Supply, Edgar Skoonover. If you could get a hold of him, he is in the directory. He would be able to help you because he was my tool room man.

R: Oh, okay.

K: He was a CCC boy and he might have some knowledge of the tool room.

R: He would recognize the room.

K: There is another lad in there, Steve Osbourne, he was kind of my first sergeant right hand man in the camps. He runs kind of a welding shop in Elkins. He married a Moss from over around Elamore. But those three people, they are still living I think, could probably give you some of the CCC insight.

R: As to which building was which.

K: Yes.

R: The reason I ask is that several people have said that they thought one of them was your office.

K: Well, the technical office. . .

R: Was on one side of the tool room?

K: Just at the entrance. See this road came in across the tracks you turned left off of this main road and you came down here maybe 200 yards, and there was a road going into the camp. On the right was our forest serv-

ice equipment garage where we stored the trucks. On the left, just as you go in on that road, was a technical service office. Right in about here. Then next to it going up the dry fork was the tool room and then the blacksmith shop. Then you go straight ahead on the camp road, you go up to the gas pump in front of the rec building, and it took a circle around the flag pole and came back into the road. They just had walks up to the barracks, there were no roads up to the barracks.

R: Well, Allison told me that they tried to plant over there, but they had limestone walkways. . .

K: Yes.

R: And it made the soil so alkaline that it was not good for using after they had moved the building.

K: Yes, that's right. They disposed of all their trees.

R: So he put, I can't remember, sand pits or seed stratification. He put some other technical use over in that area because you couldn't use it for beds.

K: Yes, alkaline loving plants probably. Yes. I could probably show you little more of the camp. On the ground, but after forty, fifty years memories become a little dim.

R: I know. Absolutely.

K: But I think, just as a guess, that translocation of those buildings must have been done by the state people. Because Sandy, when he gave up the nursery, cleaned up. I know my father-in-law went over and got a couple of blue spruce. They were maybe ten feet high. We took the whole ball of earth and moved them into Elkins. Sandy was wanting to get rid of the whole CCC camp because it was in his way. Then the Forest Service decided to do away with it. I think they left the state in here, what they really didn't want.

R: Well, Allison told me also that they had been planting for the state since 1948.

K: Yes, that's right.

R: So I think there probably was a lot of stuff in the beds that was meant to be inherited.

K: I know when I got back from the service, Sandy was selling out his stock at a very good rate. In fact, about giving it away. I said, "What is going on, Sandy?" He said, "Well, the Forest Service, their policy is to give up these tree nurseries."

R: Did you know anything about the Gladwin nursery?

K: Yes, I knew somewhat. See, I was over at the Gladyfork CCC camp, that side camp. Oh, I was in there darn near four years. We built that bridge up from Jenningston on up to Dry Fork.

R: You built the road?

K: Built the road and the bridge.

R: Oh, on the old railroad grade.

K: No. You crossed the bridge there at Jenningston, and you went down the Dry Fork just a little bit, and then you turned right. The road came up there. . . Oh, gee whiz. Canaan Valley, this guy made Canaan Valley red-eye. What was his name? Clay Bennett. He passed away and his wife moved down to this house right where this new road we built goes into the Dry Fork Road, from Hendricks up to Red Creek. It is just below Red Creek. It was a good built road. We had to put one bridge in there, and the reason I remember it so well, I had charge of using the dynamite. Apparently I broke the sticks in two and I got that stuff in my bloodstream. The next morning I came out to work I started to vomit. Mr. Burrell, the engineer, came along and he saw me. He said, "Ha! You have been on another liquid kick." But boy that made me sick. It was a good bridge and a good road. That gave those people of Gladwin and Jenningston a route out, because the railroad had been abandoned--the Dry Fork Railroad. Before that they would use a railroad to get either to Parsons or up to Whitmer. The Gladwin nursery. . . Well, in the bottom there. Ranger Smith, I think I had a picture of Ranger Smith working in the nursery there at Gladwin.

R: Okay. It wasn't Long? It wasn't a guy named Long?

K: Long might have been in the picture.

R: Because I don't remember hearing about Smith, but there may have been a guy named Smith.

K: There was another guy, Mike Melius, he worked in the nursery down there. Well, they gave that up with the one along with Grace Smith at Evenwood.

R: They sold it or something, didn't they? Because somebody continued to run that nursery, apparently.

K: Yes. What happened there? The American Legion came in there, and Mr. Wood gave them perpetual use. They put in a memorial cemetary there, the American Legion Ceme-

tary.

R: Mr. Johnson ran the nursery for awhile, but I don't know whether he leased it. . . Or he owned it. Didn't he go into the florist business in Elkins?

K: Mr. Johnson.

R: Did you know Johnson at all?

K: Oh yes, yes.

R: Now he was the guy who started up the Parsons nursery, supposedly, I think.

K: Well, he was forest supervisor. He was a political appointee though.

R: He was unpopular was about all I heard about him.

K: Well, his use of the language. . . Boy, he would cuss, every other word. But he was retired as forest supervisor. He just wasn't equipped to do it, and he went into the floral business. His wife did most of the work. You are right, he did have some interests down there. That's why through the American Legion and Mr. Wood they developed that cemetary. When he passed away, I don't know how the property was disposed of. I think it was sold at auction. That is how someone else has acquired it but the Forest Service. I think the old logging grade went up through about the middle of the nursery. Janet should have shown you those pictures.

R: Well, I saw the pictures, but she doesn't know anything . . . I mean without a guide, that is a little tricky.

K: One was a ranger and I think there was a Long and then there was a Teter. He lived right there where Gladyfork comes into Dry Fork. Cliff Teter. He might still be living there. Cliff would know pretty well.

R: Cliff Teter lives there now. You done? You sound like you are getting tired.

K: No.

R: Do you have more to say?

K: I am just trying to think. Burlin Eye. Yes, now he worked on the road crew along with Angus Chisolm.

R: Angus was from up near Sully.

K: Sully. He ran a little store and he married a girl

from down there at Frank, at the tannery. What was her name?

R: I know Angus's mother used to read for my father. She sort of called herself a witch.

K: Angus ran the road grader for the Forest Service over the two districts. Then the CCC camps came in and he and his wife started this little store just below Sully. That is where all the CCC boys went, up there.

I had a telephone line crew of the CCC boys and we let our truck driver come in at noon to pick up lunches. Maybe I have told you this story. . . To pick up the chow. Well, we were up on top of Shaver's Mountain, 1:00 p.m. came and no chow. The boys were getting a little uneasy. Well, 2:00 p.m. came and no chow. So I hitchiked a ride, I left the boys up on the mountain and got back into camp. Here my darn truck driver had been renting out the truck to the cook and his helpers to practice driving. The head cook got up near Sully and went over the darn mountain in the truck--clobbered the truck. The boy that was renting it out was a Showalter, he lived right down there at Gladwin. Squack Showalter. Squack is dead now. But this is just some of the problems you got into with these boys. I never dreamt that. . . Then they tried to get on me for letting them. . . I said, "Well darn it, I am out here working a crew! I can't be in that camp watching what those boys do in the truck." They weren't allowed to have cars at the camps.

R: Sure.

K: A lot of them were getting $8, $10 a month and sending $22 home to the family. The family probably gave it back to him. They would go out and buy an old junker, and then hide it up in the woods, and figure I wouldn't find out about it. Well, one time we had some prohibition confiscated trucks stored at Glady Fork. My first sergeant, Waybright, lived there at Gladwin too. He needed some tires for his bummed up car. So he went down to this building and a car had four brand new Goodyear tires on it, lifted the tires and rims. They had it up in an old storage garage. I never even had charge of the property. Pretty soon the supervisor's office came out and went into that building and found the tires gone. Bill Hertig came up the Alpena Gap. I was up a telephone pole hanging some wire. He said, "You are going to have to pay for it, King." I came right down from that pole and I said, "I don't." He said, "It was in your camp." I said, "Yes sir, but I never signed any property transfer." I had him right there. Because they had brought it in Glady Camp and they didn't even tell me they were bringing it in.

Well, I went back to camp and I questioned all the boys. I asked the first sergeant Waybright, I said, "Do you know anything about it?" "No, I don't know anything about it."

R: He was the one that had done it?

K: Yes. What had happened, the only way we found out, he went to town that Saturday night--he didn't go in the car, he went in the CCC truck--and he got tooted up. They found him with a darn .38 revolver. They slammed him in the jail. They called me up Sunday morning and said, "Can you bail this guy out?" I said, "Hell no! I don't have any money to bail him out." "Well, will you sign for him?" "I will sign for him." I brought him back to camp and I said, "What the devil happened?" "Well," he said, "you know, I took those tires. I needed some tires. I was going to replace them." But he said it just got too hot and he couldn't do it. Well, they hauled him back in the court there in Elkins and they gave him six months in the jail.

R: Good.

K: They discharged him from the CCC. He went into the jail and they made him cook. He was chief cook for the jailhouse for six months. But those little things you see are now fond memories. Good boys.

R: Well, did you think that some of them had a different sense of lawfulness?

K: Well yes. Their sense of right and wrong--it is like I went into a fire situation. . . Well, it was Cooks up there between Sully and Wymer. There was a family by the name of Woods in there, maybe you know them. This Cook boy came out, we talked about fire and he said, "Well, if you would make this line run where you are surveying it, I am going to burn you out." I said, "Cook, I don't like to fight fires. I detest fighting fire. That is my job. If you burn it up, you're not hurting me, I will draw my wages. You're hurting your farm and yourself." He married a cousin of Hazel King, my wife. That was just the feeling they had, you see. If you don't do it my way, I will get even with you. I will burn you out. That is true in Kentucky even today. A lot of people have that feeling.

R: West Virginia does too.

K: That's right, but they are good people. When I lived there in Durbin I was single and away from home, and those families just took me in like I was one of their own. John Hiner, they had a big family of ten kids. Any holiday, Thanksgiving, they would have you in. They

had five or six good looking girls and they all married well. Mrs. Hiner was the old southern belle, talked like a Georgia cracker. Some of my best days were spent in Durbin.

R: Well, it is a nice part of the country.

K: Yes, it's nice.

R: But I know just what you mean. I interviewed Harry Mahoney and them I saw him when I was down there.

END OF INTERVIEW