

Cloyd Garth Barton
Zion National Park Oral History Project
CCC Reunion
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Nancy Harms: This is Cloyd Garth Barton. Today is September 28, 1989. He was a member of the CCC at Zion National Park. I am Nancy Harms and I am interviewing him.

Cloyd Barton: Also Bryce Canyon.

Nancy Harms: And also Bryce Canyon, okay. If you would please tell me about your time at the CCC here.

Cloyd Barton: Okay I have it written down in my history here (unfolding a piece of paper) I think maybe it would be better if I make some comments from this, if it's all right?

Nancy Harms: That's fine.

Cloyd Barton: As a junior in high school I heard about the CC camp and I was just turning seventeen and so I quit high school, enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corp, then called the CCC camp. I worked for the government for a total of thirteen months, sharing duties in Bryce Canyon, cutting and burning bug-infested trees, making trails, erosion controls, trails and bridges and this was in the summer months. We moved in the winter months to Zion's National Park where we worked on the slopes and switchbacks of the canyon so that the rocks would not roll to the roads and make it dangerous for travelers. We also built trails, bridges, erosion control while in Zion. In the middle of my service there, I took the job of officers orderly which I made five dollars a month more than the other men made which made me feel pretty good.

Nancy Harms: So that means that you made thirty-five dollars.

Cloyd Barton: I made thirty five dollars. No outside work. No duties. I had to take care of the officers. I shined their shoes; I got their meals and made their beds and made them comfy and cozy. Thereby they called me the "dog robber" in front of all the boys and I was always called the "dog robber" at that time. Now I had some great times in the CC camp. [I] played pool in my off hours. I hiked the canyon trails and I didn't have to go on KP anymore or latrine duty.

I remember one weekend at Bryce Canyon, the keys of the camp were handed over to me and I was told to take care of everything for I would be the only one that would be sober over the weekend. This came to pass. Everyone was drunk and what a waste. I was grateful for that trust that they had in me. While there we organized an orchestra. We played for several dances in the area. I especially remember going to Kingston, Utah, to play at the Purple Haze Resort and Dance Pavilion where we earned a little extra money.

As I remember it, William Warner was our first CO and our first sergeant was a big fella named "Scipio." I don't know his first name; I don't really remember it. He came from the little town of Scipio, Utah. I got out of the CCC's and returned to high school. Spent the next two years going to school, then graduated in 1940. That extra year I went just to play basketball. I think I gained more in education in that year than all four of the others. Perhaps it was because I grew up while at the CCC camp. Those are just a few of the notes that I had from the CCC's. (folding paper)

Harms: Where did you live before you came to Zion, to the CCC's?

Barton: I lived in Tropic, Utah.

Harms: And where do you live now?

Barton: I now live in St. George, Utah.

Harms: When you returned to Tropic because that wasn't far from the Bryce Canyon area, did it seem different to you, the town?

Barton: No it hasn't changed too much over the years. The little town of Tropic is about the same today as it was fifty so years ago. It had about 420 some odd people. Now they have about the same.

Harms: As far as people go, had you gotten a chance to visit Zion prior to coming here in the CCC?

Barton: Yes, I had been to Zion before. But it was my first trip to St. George, and I remember when I went to St. George I swear that I was going into St. George Utah north and south. When we travel into St. George I know east and west now, but it was one of the experiences that I was turned clear around when we went in to St. George.

Harms: When you came to Zion, did you think that there were a lot of visitors at the time?

Barton: I thought there was. They were always around as we were when I worked out on the switchbacks.

Harms: So you had worked out on the switchbacks at that time?

Barton: At first when I came in to Zion we worked up on the Switchbacks up in the rocks. I especially remember I used to work by the windows in the tunnel up there the last turn. We used to spend lots of time up there.

Harms: Did you by just breaking up the rocks is that what you did?

Barton: No. It was like we rolled them off of the hill down and took them out of the way so they wouldn't be rolling down onto the highway.

Harms: Trying to get rid of the slope?

Barton: It was just something that was there, kept it sloped all the time, so there would be no danger of the rocks rolling onto the road.

Harms: How did you find the visitor's reactions to the CCC's? Were they favorable?

Barton: They were favorable. As far as I know they were very favorable about the CCC because they were building up and impressing the people by the different things that they had made, and erosion and other things you know that they took care of. I think that they appreciated that.

Harms: What about the people in Springdale? Did you find them very welcoming?

Barton: Well they were nice and we found them very nice.

Harms: I was hearing from a few of the other people who I have interviewed before about helping during the winter months with getting cars out of the snow, etc. You came here in which month again?

Barton: Oh, I don't remember for sure whether it was September or October. I spent from April until October; it was probably October. That's something back far and I don't know if I would put that down exactly when we did come down here.

Harms: And when you were here, do you remember the winters being extremely harsh?

Barton: No, no.

Harms: Because it was cold up north?

Barton: It was nice here. I do remember the other barracks that was just right up here. Also every night it seemed like there was a herd of deer right in our backyard there that we enjoyed throughout this winter. Those things are just very vivid in my mind after fifty some odd years.

Harms: Do you remember the visitor's center being in a different location?

Barton: Yes I do. I think about that, it was, it was in a different location. Wasn't it back in the canyon there? I don't remember exactly where, but it wasn't there.

Harms: How did you find the CCC? I remember you saying before that it helped you and shaped you, but did you find the CCC to be a very important experience for Zion itself?

Barton: I think it was. Not only the improvements that were made, but also I think the men we had here were good people that impressed the tourists, I think. I don't think they had any discouraging thoughts concerning the mixture of the tourists and the CCC boys.

Harms: How do feel the nation gained a lot by the CCC people?

Barton: Oh yes! I think that it took a lot of young people away that needed to work, that needed the experience and gave them opportunities that they otherwise would not have had in connection with the WPA there, right? It was a really nice program for the younger kids.

Harms: Do you remember meeting a number of people from other states, from the South, from the east, etc. from other portions of the United States?

Barton: You mean in CCC camps?

Harms: Yes.

Barton: Yes ma'am. We had some from back in Kentucky and Tennessee and that. We had in the CCC camp out in Henrieville, Utah, that's just a few miles from Bryce. Also the one down here at near Hurricane or LaVerkin, they had quite a few people here from the back east.

Harms: Are the boys in the east and the people that came in were they very surprised or were you surprised of their astonishment of the west or were they astonished of the terrain?

Barton: Oh yes they were astonished; they were different. It's quite impressive. I'm not sure how much different they were in their lifestyle than we were here in the west. I thought that was very impressive.

Harms: Were you surprised by any of the things they said about what this area looked like and that you had grown up in?

Barton: Oh yes. In fact I suppose I talked to some of them who had hardly seen the mountains really. They did see the some, but it impressed them especially when they would come into the areas like Bryce Canyon and Zion. I will always remember those expressions that they made.

Harms: (Laughs)

Barton: More concerns.

Harms: All right, any camp traditions as officers?

Barton: No. I wasn't an officer then.

Harms: As a dog robber?

Barton: I was the dog robber.

Harms: As the Officer's orderly, you got a chance maybe to observe quite a few more people.

Barton: I did. I had more time on my hands so I could do that.

Harms: Were there interesting characters that you were noticing, little things going on between people?

Barton: Well, yes. I've always noticed those tourists that come in to our National Park. I could sit on the bench and watch them for hours. There are so many different types and people are enjoying different things and I don't know the impression as you very fortunate you would sit and watch people, different personalities, different ways of doing things, liking things.

Harms: Any stories or capers between people or strong remembrances?

Barton: Well no, not off the top of my head. I don't have any memories or strong memories. I expect when I was a little younger than that I had an experience or two. We rode horses all the time and acted like cowboys up there in Tropic. We would go up to Bryce Canyon to impress the tourists and they thought we were real cowboys. How they could see so much beauty in that canyon that we had seen all our lives. We enjoyed those experiences of those kinds.

Harms: Why was it given the nickname "dog robber"?

Barton: Well I don't know. It's because you're taking care and coming up with the officers. The officers and the enlisted men never mingled. And so you were going up there and you were enlisted and impressing these officers by doing this and doing that and doing other things for them. This is the reason why they called you the dog robber because it is taking care of all of their needs that they had to have. I don't know about where the expression came from.

Harms: Of your things you learned in the CCC, do you feel you used them later on in your life after leaving high school, because I realize you returned to high school you said, and you thought you were a better student, but do you feel also that you used any of the experiences as far as work goes?

Barton: As far as the workforce I did not follow any of the things that we did in the CCC camp. I spent thirty-five years in the US Post Office, so I went to another vocation rather than follow some of the things that we did.

Harms: Some of the things you were doing in Bryce, particularly I remember you mentioning that you were doing things for erosion control and things like that. Do you find yourself remembering the importance of those now as an adult?

Barton: Oh yes. You will always have to remember. Oh yeah we remember those as we cut down those trees. We went out to mark them; we cut them down; we burned those trees so we

could get rid of all those trees that wasn't doing us any good, and give the opportunity for other things to grow.

Harms: What sort of medical care was in the area?

Barton: Well, we had medical care there in the place that we went, but I don't think there was that much sickness that I remember there in the fourteen months that we needed too much medical work done. We had people there to take care of it. We had the dentist. We had the things come in when it was needed.

Harms: Now was that extra money out of you or did the CCC pay for it?

Barton: No, no that's one thing. They went through and paid for all of that sort of stuff and then the lasting part was getting the program to work and supervised that way.

Harms: When you came here and were receiving initially your thirty dollars a month and it went to thirty five dollars a month and hearing from the other people that they had anywhere from twenty five to twenty-two dollars sent home and then eight dollars or the five dollars was what they had, how much was that changed for you?

Barton: That was what all of us sent home twenty dollars that they took out of my allowance.

Harms: So that means you had ten dollars.

Barton: That's right I had ten dollars instead of five.

Harms: Oh my goodness.

Barton: To take care of.

Harms: That's great.

Barton: That was the extra five dollars that was added too for doing that extra duty.

Harms: Any songs? Do you remember any people writing songs about there? Did you write any songs?

Barton: No I didn't write any songs. We would have little orchestras I mentioned here in there and we used that. I mean we played for several dances around the area, but as far as CCC songs I don't recall.

Harms: Any strong friends from then? Are you still seeing them now?

Barton: Oh yes, I have several. Of course most of them were local. Some came from the little town of Hatch, some from Panguitch, some from Tropic, and those areas. We have always been friends all of our lives.

Harms: So you had known them before?

Barton: Oh yes. I've met a lot of them here today that I have known throughout the years. I haven't seen them for some time, but their faces are still familiar.

Harms: Do you remember on going on some of the trails in Zion?

Barton: Oh yes.

Harms: Did you get the chance to go?

Barton: I traveled most of the trails.

Harms: Do you remember your impressions?

Barton: I was quite impressed. Later in life we went up there too, but I think back then my biggest impression is taking pictures of Zion. I remember the big rock right out here that I stood on and I took a picture. I still have that picture, so I know it's this area here in the background. But other than that I think the West Trail impressed me more than anything.

Harms: Do you remember motorized vehicles in that area?

Barton: Let's see, when I get thinking about these things, I have to separate versus Bryce up here and down here. I worked at Bryce as night watchmen so I have to be careful not to confuse the two. It seems like they had an area that took care of our trucks and everything back up in here in the west side of the canyon here somewhere. It's been a long time I can't remember. It seems like it was right up in here though.

Harms: Sounds like what our maintenance area now. Did you end up going to college?

Barton: No, I went into the mission field as soon as I got out of high school. I spent two years there and then went right into service within three months. I went into service and then I went right into the post office and so I never did have the opportunity of going to college. I graduated from high school and that was it as far as my education is concerned.

Harms: Do you remember any of the educational programs that the CCCs provided?

Barton: Well they had some good programs and night classes and other things. I think they had quite a few different things that were there if we wanted to take them.

Harms: Did you find a lot of people taking advantage of them?

Barton: There was quite a few of them that took advantage of those.

Harms: Did you take a few of them?

Barton: No, I didn't take too many of them. I was still concerned about my high school and everything and I just never did get into that very far. So I didn't really

Harms: Do you remember any particular officers? I have heard some people say that they have been able to visit with a number of officers. Would you say that you have been able to?

Barton: Not since we have been in camp. This was our supply sergeant here [on photo].

Harms: And his name was?

Barton: I can't think of his name. I have tried and tried. It starts with a Y and then Scipio of course. I have pictures too. These are some of the officers; a number of these people were in charge of camp. [looking at photos] This is the difference of myself between then and now. There I am, one of the little fellows there.

Harms: Have you shown these to Margaret inside so she can get snaps.

Barton: they had one like this. It was like the complete thing, but I lost the other half and I don't know where I put it. It's down there somewhere. I just need to locate it. This is me here on the end, right here. What a difference!

Harms: A few years?

Barton: Yeah what a few years has made. They put out weekly this little service guide, like this one. I didn't find the others. I just picked this one up.

Harms: While you were in it or after you left?

Barton: No, this was while I was in it. They had rosters when each time that new recruits would come in. It was quite interesting and they had all the activities and everything that went on that was available in this little digest which was a good program.

Harms: Yeah. Were these printed up in each area?

Barton: In Zion here.

Harms: In Zion. I wonder if we have a copy of this?

Barton: I know one or two others had them so I would imagine they do. I've got some more down there. This was in '39' so I had left soon after this one.

Harms: April of '39. Is there anything else at all you would like to say about your time here?

Barton: I can't remember too much more of it.

Harms: Okay.

Barton: I did have a good time you know. I condensed it there, but we did enjoy it down here and Bryce too. The fourteen months was a real growing experience for me.

Harms: That's a comment I have heard from every man and every wife that . . .

Barton: Probably about responsibility. When you are a seventeen year old, you're not concerned that much about some of those things.

Harms: Some people came at the age nineteen; some people older.

Barton: Yes.

Harms: Well I think that is all my questions unless I can think of something else. I know you came here after the time, but do you remember any of the stories people were talked about when they were building the Watchmen area?

Barton: I'm sorry I don't remember.

Harms: It's okay.

Barton: I just don't remember those things.

Harms: Thank you very much. I appreciate it, Cloyd.

Barton: Glad to do it.

Harms: Yes.

Barton: Thank you.

[End of interview]