

Fred Brueck
Zion National Park Oral History Project
CCC Reunion
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Interviewed by:
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Fred Brueck
Tabernacle Oral History Project

Interviewer (female voice): Interviewing Fred Brueck, the 18th of September 1989, Zion CCC Oral History. Fred, where are you from originally?

Fred Brueck: I'm from New York, originally.

Interviewer: When did you join the CCCs?

Fred Brueck: Well, I was invited to this reunion because I was a senior ranger here in 1934 and knew some of the work the CCC was doing then, and then I worked for the CCC as a project clerk in the year 1941 when we built the Ranger Dormitory that year.

Interviewer: Where is this located at?

Fred Brueck: It's located just past the Visitor's Center in Oak Creek Canyon.

Interviewer: Oh, up in Oak Creek Canyon; I know where that is.

Fred Brueck: It was built to resemble an old Mormon building. It was cut rock.

Interviewer: What brought you out to Utah from New York then?

Brueck: I got the position as a seasonal park ranger from the east and came out here to Zion National Park.

Interviewer: What was your first impression of the park?

Brueck: Beautiful.

Interviewer: Had you ever seen anything like this before?

Brueck: No, not rock like this, no.

Interviewer: So for what period of time are we talking about that you were in Zion?

Brueck: Well, I came here in June of '34 and was assigned up at the East Entrance Station. We lived in a couple of tents up there. I believe it was the CCs that started work on that truck trail that went from the entrance station to Cable Mountain, that area there. It's still intact today but it's not good for vehicles. It's been washed out a lot. But they did work on that, on that East Rim truck trail. I stayed mostly in the Entrance Station up there and then was sent to Bryce.

Interviewer: Was that those brick or those stone houses that are there by the East Entrance?

Brueck: Well, when I was there there were just two tents, but they were building the house. Let's see, I think they had started on that house that summer of 1934.

Interviewer: Did CCCs built that?

Brueck: I think some of the CC and they had some rock masons too, local rock masons that were doing most of the rock work.

Interviewer: Do you know if that was anything to do with the man from Kanab by the name of McCallister? Boyd McCallister? Did you know him?

Brueck: I knew him later. I don't think he was involved. No, I don't think he was involved in that.

Interviewer: All right. So then you were aware of the camp here.

Brueck: There was a camp here and across the river. But I never did get acquainted with the camp on this side of the river, on the west side of the river. I don't remember that camp, but I remember the camp...

Interviewer: Those were men from New York.

Brueck: Yes, there was a New York or Pennsylvania groups in one of those camps, that's right.

Interviewer: In talking with one of the men this morning, it was interesting that the local men were across the river and they were intimidated by those boys from New York because they always carried knives.

Brueck: They claimed they were a tough bunch, I remember that.

Interviewer: They claimed they were a tough bunch and they all carried knives. That was interesting.

Brueck: I don't remember that, but I know they were a tough bunch there. Then I was sent to Bryce the fall of '34 and only came back to Zion again for the Easter Services when they used to have Easter Services, then mostly stayed at Bryce in the summers and then came back here to Zion as the Project Clerk for the CCC in 1941. I remember we built the Ranger Dormitory that year because I remember ordering all the supplies for it.

Interviewer: So you were office help?

Brueck: I was office help. I made up the payrolls of the foreman and things like that and ordering some of the supplies. [I was] Not really connected to the boys or the army part of it.

Interviewer: Mainly the foreman and the assistant, the assistant man. What kind of pay did you get then?

Brueck: I was trying to think. See when I was a seasonal ranger, I think it was a hundred and twenty a month. I think it was fourteen-forty a year. It was about the same for that job, I think then.

Interviewer: It was probably a large pay for that period of time, compared to what the CCs...

Brueck: They probably got thirty dollars.

Interviewer: Thirty dollars a month when they first came in, and twenty-two or twenty five of that went home.

Brueck: Home, that's right.

Interviewer: All right, are there any instances that you remember watching the boys, the jobs that they were on, or what were they doing at that period of time that you were here?

Brueck: Well, I know they did some of this rock work up the river. The river cribbing, you know, a lot of it is still standing today. If it wasn't for that, probably the road would be gone up there, and a lot of trail work and road maintenance. At Bryce, I was more acquainted with the spike camp that came up there in the summer because they did a lot of that erosion control on those washes as you drive out towards Bryce Point and that's still intact today that saved all those big flats. They were made out of logs and erosion control. And then they worked on the bug project up there, this Black Hills beetle project in the pines. They did a lot of work on that and trail work.

Interviewer: What do you mean with the black beetle?

Brueck: They had to cut down the trees that were infected. They had an etymologist group that came in and spotted the trees and then those trees were cut down and the bark was burned on them to kill the beetle and prevent it from spreading to other trees. And they did that all the way from about, all out on the white man's bench area. The CC camp at Bryce used to be located just passed the junction to Inspiration and Bryce Point on the west side of the road, a little about a mile past there. It's obliterated and you can't even tell where it was, unless you knew it now.

Interviewer: You can't even here at Zion.

Brueck: No, you can't.

Interviewer: They've done such a good job.

Brueck: See, here at Zion, they tore the camp down. I'm trying to think when that was.

Interviewer: Yes, because that would have been about the time that you were here?

Brueck: Well, some of the buildings were still here. I came back here in 1953 after going to Grand Canyon and some of the buildings were still there then. We used them as storage and one of the old foreman's quarters was used as a residence, and then the buildings got gradually torn down. But that old foreman's quarters was there until the end of the fifties, I think. Anyway, the one building, right at the end of the bridge, and they made a garbage dump over there where the old barracks were. We had a garbage dump and open pit. But that old CC foreman's building stayed there, I'm sure it was at the end of the fifties.

Interviewer: What about the camp on this other side of the river?

Brueck: I can't remember that. That's weird, too, because I was here then and we were building the south camp ground, I think the CC boys helped in that too, in building the south campground.

Interviewer: Well, I know that [they] built one that's closest to the history building here. They built that early.

Brueck: That was kind of the first loop, right in there.

Interviewer: Yes.

Brueck: Just south of parking area to the amphitheater there. That was the first part. Of course the Grotto Camp ground was the first camp ground of the canyon.

Interviewer: Yes, yes. Now it's nothing but a picnic area.

Brueck: A picnic area, yes.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything at all about anything else that they did?

Brueck: I remember the educational program, like Hepworth was talking about. The one I knew was the instructor Don Wadsworth from Logan. I know I used to go to some; he had a welding class and he had a very good educational program for the boys, evening programs.

Interviewer: Was this done on their time, or was it done on CC time?

Brueck: No, I think it was done on their time after work really.

Interviewer: What do you remember? Can you tell me anything about their camp life, but you did not live in their camp.

Brueck: No.

Interviewer: Where did you live while you were here?

Brueck: I lived up at the East Entrance. A few times I came down here on a special assignment, so we had some tents just east of the Visitor's Center now down near the river, there were a couple of tents and a tennis court down in there unless you knew where it was, it's all gone, a long time ago.

Interviewer: Is that at the junction? Is that the ones at the junction, what they call the "Y"?

Brueck: Well, it's right off, you know the present visitor's center?

Interviewer: Yes.

Brueck: If you just go straight from the visitor's center to the river, right there, down in there in that flat towards the river, there were a few tents where some of us lived, in there.

Interviewer: Were any of the buildings there from the first visitors or?

Brueck: No, where the present visitor's center is, is where Lucy and Arden Shafer lived. They had their own private residence. That was still a house there before a visitor's center was ever built. And the old office building was right at the junction where you crossed the river bridge and went up the canyon. That was the old office building and administrative building for years and that didn't get changed until the late fifties either. When I came back for the third time, that was still there.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about the tourists in that period? Were there a lot?

Brueck: It was very slow. Real slow. I remember going up the switchback, about the center of the way up there, there was a little spring where the water had been piped down to a little trickle. Cars heated up going through so they used to stop and get water there. There is still a little trickle in there now, in the same place in some big cottonwoods. When I worked at the east entrance, if you had, oh, fifty cars a day would probably be a lot of cars at that time.

Interviewer: But there were at least fifty cars a day?

Brueck: Yeah, I think that there were that many.

Interviewer: What was your impression of the drivers and what kind of cars?

Brueck: Well, people were used to not anything fancy because the first accommodations were simple. Let's see, I know mostly at Bryce we had even tent accommodations, with a tent platform and a tent top, you know on a platform and people didn't seem to mind that. No restrooms or anything; there was just a central restroom, no individual restrooms. The cabins at the Lodge had no restrooms in them either. They were just centrally located showers and just plain old cabins, you know. But nobody seemed to mind. They had the buses that came around and had the tours every day. And they even used some of the CC boys, I remember they used some on road patrol, some of the ones with a little more

personality and they used them up on the road and they patrolled the road. Anybody in trouble, they would help them out and things like that. They would use them that way at Zion and Bryce.

Interviewer: That's interesting.

Brueck: We used to have our meals. I didn't eat a lot at this camp; I ate a lot at the Bryce camp before I got married.

Interviewer: Was the meals here adequate?

Brueck: They were, yeah.

Interviewer: What kind of food?

Brueck: I know that they used to make big bologna sandwiches, I remember that.

Interviewer: Big bologna sandwiches? One of the men talked about on the weekends having a lunch made for him so he could go hiking.

Brueck: I don't remember that but I can remember the bologna sandwiches; we had a lot of bologna sandwiches.

Interviewer: You remember the bologna sandwiches. Was it good food, though?

Brueck: Good food, yeah, it was good food.

Interviewer: What about medical? Did you ever have any need?

Brueck: I never had any need for it, but it seemed to me that they had a camp doctor, I think. I think they did, I'm not sure. And I don't think they had a need. You know that age group and everything, they were pretty healthy kids and I don't think they had a lot of trouble medically. I don't think there were a lot of injuries either as far as job related that I can think of. We had, as far as a park, we had very few accidents of any kind or had anything like that.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you ever make any friendships with any of the men from the CCs?

Brueck: Yes, I was trying to think. John Williams, who was one of the truck drivers for the CC and we kept track of him until about, I guess about 15 years ago. I was trying to look in the registrations see if he was here. He went on and became permanent, I believe, with the Bureau of Reclamation in Idaho, and he used to come by and see us every now and then. I got well acquainted with him.

Interviewer: That's good. It's nice.

Brueck: I can't think of the other. Yeah that was a long time ago, that was fifty years or so ago.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's review, Fred, some of the exact times and what you did when you came. 1934?

Brueck: I came here as a seasonal ranger and was assigned to the East Entrance Station up above the tunnel for fee collection. We lived in a couple of tents up there. A man by the name of Don McCallister, and I, and I'm pretty sure that they were working on that truck trail at that time, the East Entrance Truck Trail, the CCC. And the house was being built that was up there about then too, 1934.

Interviewer: And what was charged per car when you...?

Brueck: It was a charge of a dollar.

Interviewer: Per car?

Brueck: Per car, which included Zion and Bryce. There wasn't any fee at Bryce. Well it really included both. If you went to Bryce you didn't have to pay anything. If you came here, you paid a dollar. You paid for the fee at Zion.

Interviewer: You said you only stayed here, how long that year?

Brueck: I left here in September that year and went to Bryce and then about October of that year went back to New York, and then I came back to Zion for the Easter Services in April, which was a sunset service. The CC boys helped park all the cars. That was a really busy time here, for the Easter service. We were busy for one day, even as they have today, and they used to have the CC boys help with the parking and traffic control and things like that. And then I spent most of my time at Bryce, so I went back to Bryce.

Interviewer: For just summers?

Brueck: During the summers until about October, then back to New York. Then I stayed out here after 1938. I met my wife at Bryce and got married, and then we stayed up at Bryce until about 1941, the winter of 1941. Then I got the project clerk job at Zion down here for the CCC camp, here at Zion at the office. We built the Ranger's Dormitory where I remember ordering the supplies for that and keeping the payrolls and track of the work orders and things like that, the administrative payrolls, not the army side.

Interviewer: And how long were you doing that?

Brueck: I did that for a year and then went to Grand Canyon the winter of '42 as a permanent clerk.

Interviewer: Okay.

Brueck: And then in '43 I received a permanent park ranger appointment. The CCC, at that time, we used them for fire fighting out there on the North Rim a lot, and then they were starting to disband then, you know about '43, I think it was in there.

Interviewer: Yes, it was in '42.

Brueck: Then I stayed and went in the Navy the fall of '43 from Grand Canyon and came back the fall of late '45 as a park ranger. Stayed there until '51 and went to Apache National Monument in Arizona until '53, and then came back to Zion here in '53 and retired from here as Chief Ranger in 1973.

Interviewer: Very interesting Fred. Now thank you very much. Can you remember or recall anything else that you would like to tell us about Zion, other than what you mentioned?

Brueck: We had similar things then as we do now only on a very small scale. The travel was slow. The Highway 89 wasn't even paved then and going down to Hurricane, we went down the old grade. It was paved through the park and at Mount Carmel, but it was all gravel from here to Hurricane, down the little twist into LaVerkin. The Utah Park buses had tours everyday that came through but it was fairly quiet because there wasn't many people. There were very few accidents. We had fires that the CC boys helped. In about anything they needed as extra man power, they always relied on the CCC.

Interviewer: That was earlier though, that was not when you were permanent, not when you were Chief Ranger.

Brueck: No because they quit then in '43, see?

Interviewer: Yes.

Brueck: I know that when I was on the North Rim in '42, the camp was still there, and I spent a good deal of time fire fighting with the CCC boys. It was just quiet, we didn't have any accidents.

Interviewer: As a park ranger, did you appreciate what the CCCs had done here in the park.

Brueck: Oh, I think so, especially today. I mean, you can just see the results. I don't think they would have a lot of things today if they hadn't had the CCC working on these, you know a lot of this rock cribbing and river work and the trail work and just things like that.

Interviewer: It makes the park.

Brueck: They got a lot done. It makes the park, yeah. I'll say.

Interviewer: Anything else, Fred?

Brueck: I can't think of anything really. I hope that I've added a little something.

Interviewer: I hope so too. Thanks a lot Fred.

[End of Interview]