

**Frank Callahan**  
**Zion National Park Oral History Project**  
**CCC Reunion**  
**September 28, 1989**

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Wayne Hinton: We are here September 28, 1989, in connection with the Zion CCC program.  
Frank, you came into the CCC's in '39?

Frank Callahan: '39, yes.

Wayne Hinton: Where did you enroll?

Frank Callahan: I enrolled right here in the camp. I came up with John Imlay and Don Gibson.

Wayne Hinton: From Hurricane?

Frank Callahan: From Hurricane. They had talked me into coming up. (laughter)

Wayne Hinton: That probably wasn't hard to do, was it?

Frank Callahan: No. Well, there wasn't any work around at that time. It was pretty tough going.

Wayne Hinton: Had you just gotten out of high school?

Frank Callahan: Well, I didn't even graduate. I just kind of dropped out looking for work.

Wayne Hinton: So this was about the time you were eighteen years old, then?

Frank Callahan: Yes. I was eighteen in May. I went in about in November, I think, of '39.

Wayne Hinton: November of '39. Okay and you were in until when?

Frank Callahan: Well, I was in here in the fall and then we went with the group that the captain sent up to Duck Creek and opened up that spike camp up there between all the snow [that was] up there.

Wayne Hinton: In the winter-time at Duck Creek?

Frank Callahan: Well, we went up in March. We lived here [Zion] all the time during the wintertime. I worked in the engine shop over in the... I don't remember if they called it the mechanic, over where they kept all the trucks running and cleaned them up and whatever.

Wayne Hinton: You worked there from November until March. Then you went to Duck Creek?

Frank Callahan: I went up to Duck Creek in March as soon as the weather broke and the snow had caved in the roof of the chow hall and then we fixed that up and set up tents. Had wall tents [with] about three feet walls. The old captain made a canopy. He was kind of a tough old fellow, a real hairy guy. He'd go over to Duck Creek across the road from the camp and break the ice in the creek and wash up in the morning. (laughter) He said if you

didn't have enough energy to get over there and get washed up while you might as well stay in bed.

Hinton: You were at Duck Creek then from March till when?

Callahan: Well, I think it was in the last part of May. I'd done not quite two six-month hitches.

Hinton: So you served one six-month and then you enrolled for another one?

Callahan: Well, I enrolled for four is what it was. It changed after. Actually, I think you could of went in for three. I'm not sure.

Hinton: Why did you leave then?

Callahan: Well, I thought I was going to go to work down in Logandale, [Nevada] in fruit and vegetable stuff down by Moapa Valley. Went down there and they weren't paying anything. They had enough, I guess they were illegal aliens or whatever. We called them "wetbacks" at the time.

Hinton: You were making thirty dollars a month in the CCC's?

Callahan: Yes, and down there it was unit work, and I couldn't work hard enough to max a dollar a day! (laughter)

Hinton: You got five of it, and twenty-five went to your parents?

Callahan: Yes, that's the way it did for the thirty. Of course, at that time, mother passed away and all of us kids were living with Old Uncle Henry. I don't know if you remember him or not, Henry Callahan.

Hinton: No, I don't. I ought to.

Callahan: Everybody in Hurricane that's old enough does. But anyway, we contributed all we could. I went in again that fall, me and Lane Jeppson went and I think John Imlay went with us. Yes, John Imlay and Franz Spendlove. We went up to Veyo for a long time. We spent the winter up in Veyo. In the spring we was doing fence work on a road up there above Central and out in Hamblin Valley, doing a lot of fence work up in there. There were a lot of days when it was wintertime you'd leave the camp in Veyo and go towards the work, and at noon they'd stop and make a fire and make coffee and have lunch, then turn around and come back to camp. But you had to go. If it was too bad, you never stayed in camp you had to get up and go. There were a lot of days we never did make it to the job.

Me and Lane Jeppson got a chance to transfer up to Emigration Canyon. They wanted somebody to help [with] maintenance in the camp. Most of the people there worked down in the post office building in Salt Lake [with the] Forestry Service making maps and whatever. So we maintained camp for a while. I was there until, oh it must have been April whenever my tour was [over]. I think it was April. Anyhow, I went out and worked at the old arsenal. It's part of Hill Field now. I worked out there awhile. That's where I

met my wife and we got married. I went into the Navy that fall and everything went downhill since. (laughter)

Hinton: Did you learn some skills from the CCCs?

Callahan: Oh, I think so. Mainly, I learned how to work, what work was and what it meant.

Hinton: On your registration you indicated that you worked probably cutting some timber that had pine beetle in it?

Callahan: Yes. That was from the Duck Creek Camp. That was our project up there.

Hinton: Well, why would a CCC group from Zion go on a Forest Service project to Duck Creek?

Callahan: I have no idea. (laughter) Like they said in the talk this morning, if they told you to do something, you said, "Yes, sir!" And that was the only choice you had. Anyway, it was pretty good up there. I liked Duck Creek. On Saturday morning why everybody'd get in the truck. We'd go to Panguitch for the day and the evening. It was just about every Saturday.

Hinton: You'd take a CCC truck to Panguitch?

Callahan: Yes. There'd be a driver, and there might have been fifteen or twenty of them. I got acquainted with the Sawyers in Hatch. I'd always get off there and go to Leon Sawyer's place. Of course, if it wasn't the fact that they had a good-looking girl about my age, you know. (laughter) She actually finally met my older brother Dee and you remember they got married later.

Hinton: So, you weren't actually inside this camp right here at Zion for very long.

Callahan: No, I wasn't here for very long, and I never did "get to" . . . at that time I thought I was lucky. I didn't go out building trails and whatnot. I was working in the gas shop, I guess you'd call it, helping the mechanics.

Hinton: Servicing vehicles and doing repairs.

Callahan: Yes, and washing them. I thought I knew everything like a kid does at about seventeen (laughter) or eighteen. I generally was just cleaning up and helped change tires, you know, and whatever was necessary.

Hinton: How many vehicles did they have?

Callahan: It seems to me that at that time there was about twenty-five. They had some pickups and some trucks.

Hinton: Did you have any tractors, any front-end loaders?

Callahan: Well, they had some graders that could be horse-drawn or tractor-drawn. We had a couple of tractors that they used. They used them where they could on the trails and that.

I was in the one, what did they call it, NP-4 on the east side of the river. On the west side there was another camp. I hardly ever got acquainted with the guys.

Hinton: They weren't Utahns, were they?

Callahan: No, I think they were back east. Some of the guys were from Brooklyn that I know of. I had a cousin Jessie that was in there. They used to have some battles. (laughter)

Hinton: In that camp?

Callahan: Yes, in that camp. Especially since cowboys, western guys go through the camp to go to town. There were always some remarks made, whatever. Just about every night you could figure on who'd fight over there.

Hinton: A little bit of cultural difference, maybe?

Callahan: (laughs) I think that was the main thing.

Hinton: You probably knew most of the guys in your camp, since most of them were Utahns.

Callahan: Yes, I've been trying to place names as we go in there and look at that bulletin board with all the pictures of guys up there, and I see people, but the names don't fit who I thought they were. Then that's who they are. I lost track of a Davenport. There were Davenport boys from up Escalante way, and I haven't seen his picture up anywhere. But I associated mainly with the boys out of Hurricane.

Hinton: Kids you knew before you ever came into this scene.

Callahan: Yes, like John Imlay and George Campbell, Don Gibson. Homer Gibson's up there. Gosh, I can't remember all of them. There were about eight or nine of us.

Hinton: In the months that you were here in this camp, you weren't out on any of the field projects at all?

Callahan: No, I never did go on the field projects. I helped carpenters for a couple of months, putting up and repairing windows and whatever got torn up. That's where I thought I had all the experience to go to Emigration Canyon Camp. They allowed me and that Lane Jeppson. He's a pretty sharp kid. I was in contact with him quite a bit, but I haven't seen him lately. I don't know if he still lives in Hurricane.

Hinton: I think Lane Jeppson got cancer and died didn't he?

Callahan: Now, I don't know.

Hinton: I think he did.

Callahan: Well, that's why I haven't seen him. I ran into him one time out in Nevada a few years ago. I was working for the railroad and he was there at Fallon. He was driving a truck for...I don't know who. I helped him get his payroll check cashed.

Hinton: Did you used to have some recreational kinds of activities?

Callahan: Well, we generally could get to Hurricane or St. George from here pretty handy. Being from Hurricane, why us guys went home just about every weekend. Somebody would come after us, or it seems to me like John and some of the older guys had a car, or got a hold of a car. Alvin Durfey's kids. Judson, him, and his sisters. Rita still lives in Hurricane with Jack Jukes wife. They used to come up and follow Alvin all the way and come and get us.

Hinton: They'd come on a Friday and pick you up after work?

Callahan: Yes. One time we'd come up and they blew three tires right outside between here and Rockville, between Springdale and Rockville.

Hinton: Was the road oiled then?

Callahan: Yes, but the good tire was on the rear on the pavement. The two front tires and the right-rear blew out, so we went all the way to Hurricane just keeping everything as far off the pavement as he could, and when he had to, he'd sneak up on the pavement. It took about... I don't know, four or five hours. (chuckles)

Hinton: Did you enjoy your time in the CCC's?

Callahan: Yes, looking back at it, it was pretty good.

Hinton: You worked doing some repairs over there in the barracks and that sort of thing; did you work with Willard Pectol?

Callahan: Yes, it seems like he was there.

Hinton: Yes, he was kind of supervising there repairs in the barracks.

Callahan: Yes, it's been quite a while, you know, and at that time, a young guy doesn't pay too much attention. Who cares after you get out of there, [you tend to] forget the whole business. My memory is not as good as it could be.

Hinton: Now, Lane was a pretty good boxer, wasn't he?

Callahan: Yes, he was, he and Winston Gibson.

Hinton: Did you have boxing over here?

Callahan: Yes. They had it, but you know those boys in the camp, they'd rather pummel a guy here locally, three or four of them. I've seen old Jess, and I can't remember who his friends were, but two or three of them would get back to back, and boy, they'd take down that whole west camp, (laughter) tore apart 25 or 30 of them.

Hinton: Were there 200 boys in the West Camp?

Callahan: I don't think there were quite that many. Well, maybe pretty close because it seems like there was more there than there was in ours, but I don't know that either. I think that's pretty well.

Hinton: Well, ordinarily your camp would have had about 200 men, I suppose.

Callahan: Yes, and it was full most of the time it seemed like. When we went to Veyo, [Utah] why that was a smaller camp up there. There were maybe a hundred guys a hundred fifty at the most.

Hinton: Was that a year-round camp?

Callahan: Yes. Veyo, was.

Hinton: How was the weather here in Zion during the winter?

Callahan: Well, it got kind of cold. I was just trying to remember. That was the year that it seemed like we got a little snow here down in the valley and right down in the camp itself.

Hinton: Not so that you couldn't work, though?

Callahan: Oh, no. I don't think they ever stopped the work. We were doing trails and bridges and stuff. The tunnel was just newly.....considering it hadn't been completed too long. It must have been in '33 or '34.

Hinton: Were some of the men sent up there to roll rocks and such?

Callahan: Yes, they were up there at the slope, especially on this side down the switchbacks.

Hinton: Had a lot of trouble with rolling rocks and stuff?

Callahan: Yes. I think especially in the winter time it would get wet and really unstable.

Hinton: They don't seem to have that problem nowadays.

Callahan: No, I think it's pretty well settled, I don't know. That's when they'd just built it. And then when they built those retaining walls, I guess maybe they would loosen some of ground right there in front of them

Hinton: Were those CCC's projects, the retaining walls?

Callahan: Yes, along the switchbacks and all the trails, I think, all the trails. Well maybe not all the trails because the rangers had their work, right? Looking back it seems to me like they kind of supervised.

Hinton: Yes, they did.

Callahan: What was supposed to be done. The CC boys did the actual heavy work. Of course the rangers at that time had done their share.

Hinton: Since this was a park, the Park Service had to propose and get approval for all projects. They didn't want to do anything that would be too ecologically detrimental, and so they'd have to get approval of projects. I guess the Park Service employees probably supervised a lot of that work.

Callahan: I'm sure they did. It seemed like there were times that a crew would go out on a trail or something when they were building the trail up to Watchman. I've never been up there, actually, but it seemed to me like they had to put posts and chains in some places, and they were quite concerned that they weren't going to stay in, the posts and that. I guess they did the right kind of job.

Hinton: You heard the guy that was here, what was his name, Brothers? He was here to set up the camp in 1933. He talked about the military furnishing the medical care and so forth. Did you ever have occasion to..?

Callahan: No. I guess I was lucky, or too dumb to get hurt. There were some of the guys that got their foot mashed or something with the rock, you know. I understood that the medical staff was pretty efficient. At least it was good first aid to get them to a hospital or wherever.

Hinton: They could take care of them until they could find somebody. Well, that's good. Well, how about the food?

Callahan: Well, it seems to me that the food was pretty good at that time. I've been in the Navy since then, and...

Hinton: So you know what good food is and what bad food is. (laughter)

Callahan: It seems like over here at this camp, it was pretty good. Some of the boys from back east didn't like it. It was different entirely. They had lots of good meat and potatoes. That's about all we were ever raised on anyways. Veyo was a good camp. I think they were run about the same.

Hinton: Do you remember any people in your camp that could be regarded as camp characters?

Callahan: I can't remember their names offhand, but there was one guy, and I don't even know where he was from. He was kind of an entertainer so-to-speak. He played the harmonica. Just about every night he'd have something going, singing and getting other people to sing. One time up there at Duck Creek, when it got really cold and there wasn't anything to do, during the week we had a boy and I think he was from New Mexico, I'm not sure. He tried to get everybody interested in learning Spanish. He spoke it fluently. In fact, as he said, that was his mother tongue and English was a second language. There were some of the guys that actually learned. I was too dumb to take advantage of it.

Hinton: Did you sign up for any of the educational opportunities?

Callahan: I did over at Veyo. I didn't here probably because I was able to go home on a weekend. I didn't want to get tied down. Up in Veyo, it was a little hard to get back to St. George.

Hinton: Were the vocational classes and school classes and so forth pretty good?

Callahan: Yes, they had two or three different vocational classes. I'm sure they did here. I know they had a photography class here that was almost as good as you could find anywhere. I brought some pictures of here and of Bryce Canyon. My wife's step brother was here,

Francis Welch. He was in the group picture. He was helping the photographer. I don't know what the department would call it. It would be like the adjutant office in the Army, like PR, public relations officer. How we got ahold of these pictures, I don't know. But he had one big one of the camp, and then of all the people in 1936. The one of Bryce Canyon is about the same. I've seen just about a duplicate, only the one we got off from Francis was taken up on the hill, looking down from there towards the river, and this other fellow's was down in front of the parade ground looking the other way at just about ground level. He was taking copies of them and so they had two. I think they were both taken at the same time.

Hinton: Parade ground? What did you use a parade ground for?

Callahan: Oh, Captain Kennedy he wanted everyone to get out there and raise the flag and have kind of a military... He didn't always get it, but if he wanted it, it was done.

Hinton: So in the mornings and at night you'd retire the flag?

Callahan: Yes, they'd generally have a crew go, two or three guys. . . . He wanted everybody to do calisthenics and stuff, but I think that was a little too military for most of them.

Hinton: Well, Leon Miller and some of those guys talk like they'd play the bugle in the morning, and the guys would go out and they called it a callisthenic platform, didn't they? The guys would get out there and do calisthenics?

Callahan: I always managed most of the time not to do it. I had something I had to go to the shop for. I got out of a lot of that. I probably spent more time getting out of work than I would if I'd have just got to work.

Hinton: It was possible to get out of it, then?

Callahan: Yeah, you could generally get around it if you tried hard, you know, like any other place, I guess. There's always loopholes.

Hinton: You'd have had a supervisor at the garage, wouldn't you?

Callahan: Yes, but he didn't care for calisthenics, either.

Hinton: So he'd...

Callahan: Between me and him we'd...

Hinton: ... cut out and get to the garage...

Callahan: It seems to me like his name was Wilson, but I can't remember.

Hinton: Was he a local fellow?

Callahan: No, he was up from... I'm thinking of Junction, [Utah] but I don't think that's where.

Hinton: Piute County, right?

Callahan: Yes, in Marysvale, or somewhere in there. I've seen some Wilsons here, but they didn't ring a bell. Two of them, and they didn't recognize me in the names, so maybe...

Hinton: Have you seen some people here that you were in the camp with?

Callahan: Oh, yeah, I've seen some.

Hinton: This is quite a turnout for a reunion.

Callahan: Oh, I was really surprised. I told my wife, I said, "Well, we'll go up." And we sent our check up and got tickets for the dinner. I said, "All right, we'll just go up and have a day in the Park and eat and call it good." I think we're going to come up and go on a tour tomorrow. I was hoping they were going to Duck Creek and the lady ranger in there said that they couldn't get enough bus interested in going up there, so they had to cancel it. I would like to go up there, but that is quite a trip up to Duck Creek.

Hinton: Yes. It's quite a ways from here to there.

Callahan: I'll enjoy this. I'll get to see things maybe I that I don't normally see going back and forth through the Park.

Hinton: Yes, if you were in the warehouse most of the time or in the shop, you'll see what the other guys were doing when they were out working.

Callahan: When I was sitting there in the shade, they were out sweating!

Hinton: One thing about it, in the summer it was cooler in there, and in the wintertime it was warmer.

Callahan: Yes. It was a better place to work, really.

Hinton: Were the barracks adequately heated for the winter?

Callahan: Yes. They had those big...

Hinton: Pot-bellied stoves?

Callahan: Pot-bellied army [stoves]. I don't know what they called them, but they had this great big stove.

Hinton: And you just had a bunk to sleep on and a footlocker, just military-style?

Callahan: Yes, kind of like a cot. They weren't really a cot. They weren't full cots. I guess it was just a single bed.

Hinton: They didn't have bunks, then?

Callahan: No, they didn't have bunks. It was all just one level.

Hinton: How many bunkhouses were there?

Callahan: Oh, let's see. There was about ten to twelve guys to the thing, and there must have been eight or ten of them. So it was right at 200 men, I guess. If you're figuring it out it was about ten or twelve to the.... It seems like the last guy in always had to make sure the door was shut good and tight and stoked the stove so you didn't freeze out.

Hinton: Did you have a lights-out time?

Callahan: Yes. Ten o'clock was lights-out. Most of the time they were up and on the road ready to go to work by daylight.

Hinton: Well, if they played revelry at six a.m. probably most of the time they were ready to go to bed by ten.

Callahan: Yes, most of the time they were.. When they weren't, the next day they wished they had. (laughter) There was a quite a bit of chasing around. Especially on a Monday morning or Tuesday, Monday generally was a bad day for most of them.

Hinton: They were kind of grumpy from the weekend?

Callahan: (laughing) Yes, they were a little hung over, maybe some of them.

Hinton: There was a lot of drinking, then, that took place.

Callahan: Well, it seemed like it was to me, but then I don't know if there really was or not.

Hinton: Well, compared to your Navy experience.

Callahan: Well.... No, not really.

Hinton: Wasn't as much as the Navy?

Callahan: Of course, the Navy, I think was a little more strict than they were here.

Hinton: Well, of course. They were in a military situation. They didn't dare militarize the CCC's.

Callahan: They got about as close as Captain Kennedy could do it without getting in trouble. (laughs)

Hinton: Yes, I'm sure the military would've liked to.

Callahan: Oh yes, I think they would have had more... well, I don't know if they needed any more control because as you looked around to see the work that was done, I don't know how you could have done much better without mistreatment. I've never seen or heard of any mistreatment or anything like that.

Hinton: What did they do to discipline guys?

Callahan: It seems to me like they wouldn't let them go to town. They'd cut their liberty out or whatever you call it. The Navy called it liberty. And I don't really think there was too much they could do, because you could leave any time you wanted, if you wanted.

Hinton: If you had a car.

Callahan: Yes, as far as finishing your hitch, you could get out at any time.

Hinton: You could get a discharge.

Callahan: I had all of mine. We lived up in Ogden several years ago. There was a big fire and we lost all our family genealogy and history and all that. The only thing I regret now. When I got out of the Navy, I took my discharge and I registered at the county, you know, because there were still gasoline rations and stuff so I had to register there to get a slip to get stuff on, but I didn't with the CC. If I'd had any sense, I could have registered all my papers there. There was no fee to register it, but I didn't. So now that's all lost. I don't suppose there's any record. Well, there might be somewhere.

Hinton: So basically, you enjoyed the CCC's, and you felt it was beneficial.

Callahan: Yes, I really did, and I think, just my own personal opinion, if they had something going now. Of course, you couldn't get young people to come in for a dollar a day. The government couldn't afford to run it like that, but it was a good thing. When it first started, it was generally all married people. Allen Durfey was old, well he wasn't old, but to us kids he was. He had a big family and he went in in '33.

Hinton: One of the Lambs...

Callahan: Yes, one of the very first ones, and it was a godsend to his family.

Hinton: Well, Frank I appreciate your taking time out and talking to me a little about your experiences in the CCC. We hope we don't lose the history of what did take place here in Zion and with the help of you people who are willing to be interviewed, maybe we can keep it.

Callahan: Well, I hope so. I wonder if they're going to compose a book or something.

Hinton: I imagine that in the future they will. It costs quite a bit to transcribe interviews and they'll have to get them all transcribed and then using the records and the interviews put together a history.

Callahan: It'll be kind of time-consuming and expensive, too.

Hinton: Yes, but it's worth it to preserve that heritage.

Callahan: It would be nice, I'm sure. I'd go for a copy of that.

Hinton: Well, thanks again, Frank.

Callahan: You bet. Thank you.

[End of interview]