

Ray Condor
Zion National Park Oral History Interview
CCC Reunion
September 28, 1989

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Beth Martin: This is Beth Martin interviewing Ray Condor, 28 September 1988 [sic 1989], Zion CCC Oral History. Ray, where are you from?

Ray Condor: Richfield, Utah.

Beth Martin: And what did you do before you joined the CCs?

Ray Condor: I worked on a farm, and I done mostly farm work.

Beth Martin: What date did you enter the CCCs?

Ray Condor: The first time I entered the CCs was in 1936, which I stayed until 1937.

Beth Martin: Is that the only place you were in the CCs right here in Zion?

Ray Condor: No, I joined the CCs in Salina, Utah, and when I was released from there I later on joined it in Bryce Canyon, then Zions.

Beth Martin: So then how many years? Did you serve two full years?

Ray Condor: No, I served about a total of about two and a half years in the two camps.

Beth Martin: Was the one in Salina, was that strictly for Bryce?

Ray Condor: No, the Salina camp was for Salina, Utah. We worked in Soldier Canyon, up Salina Canyon. It was an eastern camp and I was an LEM, and I was the only one from the State of Utah in that camp as a CC boy.

Beth Martin: Was the first time you came to Zion, was that the first time you'd been in this area?

Ray Condor: Yes, the first time I'd been in Zion is when I come here and I joined this camp in 1938, early '38.

Beth Martin: What was your impression of Zion National Park?

Condor: I really thought it was a beautiful park, and I enjoyed all the time working here.

Martin: Was there much tourism when you came?

Condor: Yes, I came in the spring and first I was located at the spike camp in Bryce Canyon, camped in Bryce and then for the winter I'd come down to Zion.

Martin: Was that one of their usual things that they were just in Bryce during the summer months?

Condor: Yes, there was too much snow and you couldn't get much done in Bryce Canyon during the winter.

Martin: What type of work did you do?

Condor: Well, I started running a Cat and building roads in Soldier Canyon and Salina, and then I come back down here and started in as a carpenter. I helped build two homes in Bryce and we built the lookout point at Rainbow Point.

Martin: One of the overlooks?

Condor: Yes, one of the overlooks. Down here, when I come to Zion, I run cat down in Rockville and we crushed gravel for the water tank that was built.

Martin: Was that what they considered the "gravel pit" that was out south here?

Condor: Down at Rockville, yes.

Martin: Down at Rockville; that was probably the same one where you met this Grant?

Condor: Grant Dalton? No, I met Grant Dalton in Monroe. He went to school in Monroe where I did.

Martin: What is the "stub camp" or the "spike camp"? Are they one in the same or are they different?

Condor: Well the "spike camp" is the sub-camp to the main camp; it's a small camp down near 25 men and we had a cook and there was a camp more or less to do work at. We got

asked to check for “bug timber” and they had to do that early in the spring to do the “bug timber”.

Martin: But is a “stud camp” the same as a “spike camp”?

Condor: Well, I never heard it called that.

Martin: Okay, because I have found different places where one was “stud” and one was “spike camp” and they were one in the same. So, you were just mainly a carpenter?

Condor: No, I worked as a carpenter; and a CAT operator; and I done welding up here in the shop; I run the drag line to haul the cement to this tank here in Zion. I helped slope; we had to shovel and load the rocks up on the switchbacks and dynamited rocks. That was most of the work. Oh, I transported deer from Zions to Bryce Canyon and from Bryce Canyon back to Zion.

Martin: Why would they move the deer?

Condor: Well, when the deer was little they got different stock in for breeding purposes.

Martin: That’s one of the things that I have not read in some of the histories about that part of it. That was interesting. So you didn’t have anything to do then with the reforestation; yours was basically heavy in the construction then?

Condor: Mostly.

Martin: On the tank, that you say, is that up Oak Creek?

Condor: Yes, that’s the tank that’s up there. Oren Johnson built a tramway up to it, and I had a stationary drag line that run the cement up to it and I ran that.

Both: Now, how does this dragline operate?

Condor: It had a gas motor; it was a stationary drag line with two big cable drums on it that pulled it up and let it back down. We worked shift work; we worked about two weeks day and night to pour that cement for that tank.

Martin: Now, when you were on the Nevada switchbacks you did help with the sloping then?

Condor: Well, they had about 24 boys and they'd roll rocks down; and the rocks that was too big and I couldn't load, I'd have to drill. We had a compressor, and I'd drill and put dynamite in them and break them up so we could load them.

Martin: Was that kind of dangerous?

Condor: Well, it was but I'd done it before.

Martin: How old were you when you joined?

Condor: Oh, I was about 17-18 right along in there.

Martin: And of course you joined because why? Why did you join?

Condor: Well because of employment; and I never had a chance to go to school, or get an education, or to prepare myself for life. In the CC camp I done everything that I could to do that. I took classes under Oren Johnson as a carpenter. Mack Dean was a mechanic, I took courses under him and I welded up here.

Martin: So that was part of the schooling, then they offered that you took advantage of?

Condor: Yes, I took advantage of that schooling. What I learnt in the CC is what I've done all my life: I was a CAT operator; I was a welder, truck driver, carpenter, and I used those trades throughout my life.

Martin: Let's go back just a second, what pay did you receive?

Condor: Well, mostly I was on leader or assistant leader. Mostly I was a leader. Assistant leader was paid 36 dollars a month and leader was 40 dollars a month, or 45. I can't remember for sure on that.

Martin: Did any of that money go back home?

Condor: Yes. We got so much here in camp and the rest went home to the folks.

Martin: And that was a standard procedure?

Condor: That was a standard procedure.

Martin: Do you know anything about a blue box that you got when you first entered the CCCs?

Condor: No I don't.

Martin: Someone mentioned about a blue box that probably contained a toothbrush and hairbrush.

Condor: Oh yes!

Martin: Is that what I'm talking about?

Condor: Yes that's right. They issued us a toothbrush and I know we got a tube of cream with it and a razor. Then from then on, we had to buy our own.

Martin: You had to go from there. How much money were you allowed to keep then?

Condor: I believe it was six dollars a month if I'm not mistaken. But I could be wrong on that. We had a canteen and we'd go in there and buy things we needed, you know, at the canteen.

Martin: They had materials there for sale?

Condor: Yes, you could buy them.

Martin: What else was for sale besides the necessities?

Condor: That was all.

Martin: Where was the camp located that you were in here?

Condor: On the other side of the river here.

Martin: On the other side. What about the clothes?

Condor: They issued us all clothes. We was issued two uniforms including, shoes. When they wore out we could take them back and change them for new ones when they wore out.

Martin: Was it army-type clothing?

Condor: It was all army-type, yes.

Martin: But, were they adequate?

Condor: They was well adequate for what needed; they served the purpose real well. There was, they gave us fatigues.

Martin: Fatigues like the army uses today?

Condor: Yes.

Martin: What about the meals?

Condor: Well, we had good meals. I'd consider them that they was really good meals.

Martin: They were well-prepared?

Condor: Yes, they were well-prepared.

Martin: What about roll call? What time was that in the morning?

Condor: I don't remember exactly, I imagine it was around 7:30 and then we fell out right after that and went to work.

Martin: Was it really run like a military...

Condor: It was just exactly like the military.

Martin: When were lights out?

Condor: I don't remember, I think it was ten o'clock though. We had lights out and then we'd go to bed.

Martin: So were the lights all shut off?

Condor: All of them were shut off.

Martin: And at the same time the men all had to quiet down?

Condor: Yes.

Martin: What about the discipline? Did they have to have much discipline in the camps?

Condor: Well they did. We had discipline just like they did in the army. Of course that did help me when I was in the army I was kind of prepared for it anyway (laughs).

Martin: So what kind of discipline was then?

Condor: Well, it wasn't really as bad as the army. The army is really more strict than the CCs was, but it had discipline according to army rules.

Martin: Can you tell me if you remember any incident or anything about the discipline situation?

Condor: Well, I don't know. I got along pretty good so it must have been not been too bad (both laugh).

Martin: What did you do for entertainment?

Condor: Well, I had a car here and I met my wife in Panguitch. At that time I'd go to Panguitch on weekends to see her and we'd go down to St. George and do things like that. But, I mostly worked at kind of, you know, study and they would run us around camp and do other things.

Martin: Do you remember or do you recall what types of entertainments was held here?

Condor: No.

Martin: Did you participate in any sports then?

Condor: Well, I did a little boxing.

Martin: Oh you did some boxing? What other type of sports was offered?

Condor: Well, we didn't have too many sports right here that I recall. We would read at night and talk.

Martin: What about the dances?

Condor: Well, the CC boys would, once in a while, the camp would invite girls. This camp I don't know. They had a camp at Duck Creek and they'd have dances and they'd take a car ride and go down to Hatch Town and get girls and bring them here; but I don't remember girls much in this camp.

Martin: Why did they call it a “pie wagon”?

Condor: Well, the “pie wagon” was, they’d use it to go to Cedar to the depot and get supplies for the camp; and they’d use it for army personnel and stuff like that. It was a truck that was assigned to the camp, and it was used just to haul the laundry and everything down to Cedar, and they called it the “pie truck.” Grant Dalton drove that truck.

Martin: Now, what was interesting... but why a “pie truck”? Did you ever hear why it was called a “pie truck”?

Condor: No, I never knew that; I never knew why called it, but that’s what it’s called.

Martin: Was it an open truck?

Condor: No, it had a canvas over the top and the back wasn’t closed in.

Martin: Maybe that was why it was called a “pie truck”. Of course, you being a local person were you accepted very well by the communities close by?

Condor: Yes, Mack Beam, he was a shop foreman and I’d visit with him; and the park service men up here too. They really treated the CC Boys good.

Martin: The army personnel and the local supervisors treated you well.

Condor: I knew Patten Rosell; he was the superintendent of the park then.

Martin: What was his name?

Condor: We called him “Packie”. What was it... Rosell? I think it was Rosell.

Martin: Rosell. I see. That’s it that was kind of interesting. Then, you mentioned before about how you took advantage of the education classes. How did they hold those? Did they hold them in a specific building or did they hold them right in the area where you were?

Condor: We had a room down here that we had classes in, and we’d go in there at night and get that education. In my opinion, today if they were going to start something like the CC Boys up or the CC camps up and get the boys off of the street, there’d be a lot of work for that. I think it’d be one of the best things they could ever do. I think it was a wonderful

thing, and I think it was one of the best things that ever did happen in the United States was that CC camp.

Martin: I agree on that after my studying some of this history. What about the library? You mentioned the boys reading at night, did you take advantage of these?

Condor: Yes, well, quite a few of the boys did and then there's some of them didn't. I think there were maybe 30 percent maybe that took advantage of it. There were some that weren't interested in doing it. If you wanted to in the CCs and make something of yourself you had an opportunity of doing it, which I had realized that and I tried to take advantage of all that that I could.

Martin: What type of books and things were in this library?

Condor: Well, there was mostly history books, and the park they donated a lot of literature like that to us.

Martin: Do you recall the types of lectures that they gave, and how often, and where, and when?

Condor: No, I recall they had them, but the most important thing that happened was they confined us to camps on Easter, the weekend of Easter, and they had a pageant here. We had to direct the traffic to that pageant. It was an Easter Pageant; and Christ had to carry the cross up on the hill, and it was a real nice deal. It was like east of the camp, and I don't remember where the men sat.

Martin: What about the medical care?

Condor: Well, Dr. Clark was the doctor, and I got lead poisoning and he doctored me and he did a good job. We had a fairly good medical deal, and the army doctors from Ft. Douglas come down to Cedar to operate and stuff like that.

Martin: How did you get lead poisoning?

Condor: I took leave and went home and got a deer and had a cut and got poisoning as I was cleaning the deer.

Martin: So your injury wasn't derived right here from the CC camp; it was another. Did you need medical care very often?

Condor: No, there wasn't nothing serious.

Martin: Was there every anything very serious that happened in the camp do you recall?

Condor: No I don't. I know one guy got appendicitis; before they could get him to the hospital he died. I can't remember who it was, but that's all I know of that was serious.

Martin: Do you remember much about any camp traditions? Was there any horseplay or any fun that went on or jokes played on other fellows? Do you remember any of those kinds of things?

Condor: Well, we went home for the weekend and we'd come back and there was about six of us and somebody had cut up a toothbrush and shaving brush and couple of things and put them in our beds. (Laughing)

Martin: Those kinds of things.

Condor: I don't know if that's funny or not. Well, I found out who it was and went out to work and find John Dooley smoking up in Zion Canyon. I told him I'd had an awful headache and could I take his truck down and let me get some pills for it. So he let me take his truck down and I went in the mess hall and they gave me a bottle of mustard. I opened his bed up and put some mustard in it. That night when he got in bed I made sure I was there. He got in and come out a 'cussing and everybody asked him if he couldn't wake up to go to the bathroom. He was quite embarrassed. [unintelligible]

Martin: Did you develop any lasting friendships while you were in the camp?

Condor: Yes, I did.

Martin: Who?

Condor: Well, we called him Boss Howes; and Johnson. They've been friends all my life.

Martin: What was his name in the camp other than the nicknames?

Condor: Loren Howes, and Bain (?) Johnson (hard to understand names)

Martin: And you say they were from where?

Condor: Junction and Central.

Martin: From Junction. Do you think the area had changed a lot since you were here, the Zion Park?

Condor: It certainly has. I rode up the canyon last night to see the monument that Oren and Johnny Hansen put up

Martin: Now where's this monument you're talking about?

Condor: It was right in the very mouth at the end of the road, where the two roads come together is where we put that monument. And I couldn't find that, but the two signs, the signs for Bryce Canyon and Zion Canyon, we built them at Bryce Canyon, "Entering Bryce" and "Entering Zion" and "Leaving Zion." There was no doubt a four by, if I remember, four by eighteen planks and we bolted them together with long bolts and we carved them out in a shed down in Bryce and they was put up in Zion and Bryce. To my knowledge, they was removed maybe four or five years ago. They're removed now, but they was here for an awful long time. We built them in Bryce Canyon.

Martin: So for both of the parks; you built the signs for both of the entrance signs. Do you think it's better now, or worse?

Condor: Oh, it's much better. There's been a lot of improvements made which is only natural. It's for the best. The CCs, I think, done a lot of things for Bryce that's still here, but the work that I done in Bryce or Zion is something that was in gravel and building roads and it don't show up too much, you know?

Martin: To come back and look at?

Condor: To come back and look at. That monument was the only thing I can think of; I knew they moved the signs. We done a lot of work here.

Martin: You did the basics then that the people don't really notice; that you can't really, I guess, see now. What have you done then? You mentioned a just a little bit to me prior to our interview, what you did after the CCs?

Condor: Yes, I worked for the Department of Transportation for 33 years, and what I learned in the CCs is what I've done. It's been my income all my life.

Martin: Did you ever go into the military?

Condor: Yes, I served in the military; and that also the experience I got, you know, and the training I got here pertaining to the army it helped me out a lot in my life.

Martin: So the benefits from your CC experience really did help you, then?

Condor: Yes, it did help me. I'm really thankful for it. I didn't have a chance at an education, and I got my education in the CCs.

Martin: How much education did you get before you went into the CCCs?

Condor: Two years high school.

Martin: Two years of high school. You know, that's probably about average though for a lot of the people in that period of time.

Condor: Well, at that period of time an education wasn't as important as it is now, but nevertheless it was still important.

Martin: So, you think, then, that the CCs benefitted the park then?

Condor: I think it benefitted the park, but more so I think it benefitted the boys a lot too that was in it.

Martin: Well thank you Ray. I don't have any more questions we can talk about unless you can think of some other things that you'd like to...

Condor: Well, I can think of some.

Martin: Well then tell it!

Condor: They're not part of the conversation (Laugh)

[End of interview]