

Floyd Fowler
Zion National Park Oral History Project
CCC Reunion
September 27, 1989

Interviewed by:
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Interviewer: A lot of the time we find out just why and the background information as to how you guys with the CC and what you did while you were there, some of the things that you remember fondly, some things that you could wish that you could forget, things like that. The CC program was one that I understand from some people hasn't kept all of its records current and in many cases things have been lost or destroyed or misplaced.

Floyd Fowler: They were making an effort to keep track of it.

Interviewer: Well, one time I think that they had records that were in a warehouse or stored in boxes, and some stories say that the boxes were destroyed or again likely misplaced. So what they're trying to find out is generally what your interests and your activity were in the CCC. Again the idea of this project here is to gather from the people who came back from the CCC an opportunity to give us some information as to what you did so that we could kind of preserve this or present this to the public in years to come because as time goes on there won't be many people around and nothing against the people that are here it's just that age does take its toll from time to time. Now on the activity that we are having, this will give us the chance to kind of preserve a little more tangible evidence that existed about some of the buildings, like the Nature Center building here, the maintenance area, some of the other camps nearby, things that are left. But in time things are actually going to wear away and erode so we need something more tangible like these interviews taken this weekend in September and the fact that we can pick up from a variety of people and fill in some of these gaps that we've got. So generally what we are trying to do is get some background on you.

Floyd Fowler: I belong to the Mormon Church and they have always maintained and begged people to keep a diary, to keep a journal, to keep of history of things that have happened to you all the way through your life, and I kept a real good diary for about two and half, or for about three years. Then for a period of thirty to forty years I didn't. Then about a little over ten years [ago] I retired and I started keeping a journal and over that period of ten years I haven't missed a day of it. I just keep getting into the habit of writing what happens, not a lot of philosophy or anything, just what happens. I have found out that it has been so valuable in looking back and check on when I did something or whatever.

You know check back for something. If everybody did that, you would have all the information that you would ever want.

Interviewer: You would have more information than you would need sometimes.

Fowler: That's true.

Interviewer: Generally where did you come, were you from Utah originally?

Fowler: You know where Silver City is?

Interviewer: Silver City, Nevada?

Fowler: No, that's in Utah.

Interviewer: In Utah? Okay.

Fowler: You know where Tintic is?

Interviewer: Not offhand.

Fowler: Eureka?

Interviewer: Eureka? Yes sir. Up north.

Fowler: Well it's right close to Eureka. It's a ghost town; there are only ghosts there now. In those days in 1916, it was a quite a mining area. They had a smelter there.

Interviewer: Iron or silver smelter?

Fowler: Silver and lead. I moved right after that to Huntington, Spring Canyon, up that way. I was there for a couple of years and then I moved to Levan. Do you know where Levan is?

Interviewer: Is that the town that some people commonly say you can grow backwards and able.

Fowler: I don't know I never heard that. (Laughter) I lived there for nine years and then when I was almost 13 I moved to Salt Lake.

Interviewer: So you were living in Salt Lake when you heard about the CCC program?

Fowler: Yes, I had just got out of high school in 1933 and there just weren't any jobs and I couldn't afford to go to college. So I just took whatever came along and these jobs were offered to us.

Interviewer: In the CCC, did they pick certain people when you first arrived for certain types of jobs, like working or cutting stone?

Fowler: No, I don't ever remember of anybody ever interviewing and trying to find to pick people because of their adeptness to certain jobs. They just said, "You go do this and that."

Interviewer: Once they selected you for a specific type job they then would give you the training you needed for that?

Fowler: We didn't really have training, didn't really require a lot of training. We just followed instructions and they had men that knew what they were doing along with us and they just set the example and we just followed them. There wasn't very much technical knowledge involved. I worked up in Bryce for three to four months then came down here.

Interviewer: So you were involved with two different camps, the Zion's camp and over in Bryce Canyon? Of the two, was there a preference to which you liked or did you enjoy both?

Fowler: I think Bryce was more enjoyable. Down here about all I did that I remember is traveling above the tunnels and we landscaped all those cuts from the east entrance down to the first tunnel. Traveled back and forth, came in for lunch and went back up again in the afternoon. We spent a lot of our time traveling. I guess I've been through that tunnel about 300 miles. Been through there a lot.

Interviewer: When you came to Zion as a member of the camp here, was this the first time that you had been to this part of the country or this park or had you visited here with the family or anything before that?

Fowler: No, I think that was about the first time that I had been there if I remember right. In those days we couldn't afford to travel anyway.

Interviewer: How old were you when you came to the camp?

Fowler: I think I was eighteen.

Interviewer: What was supposed to be the minimal age?

Fowler: I'm not sure about that. I thought that it was about eighteen but I guess that it did go younger than that. Somebody said there was one kid in there that was fifteen.

Interviewer: When you were here working on different projects in the park was there a lot of other people around visiting the park and did they stop and ask questions about what you were doing?

Fowler: No, there wasn't much traveling in the park that I remember.

Interviewer: Very few people around?

Fowler: Very few.

Interviewer: When you came into the park and in fact what year was it when you first came in, and what was the time frame that you were here?

Fowler: I went into Bryce in August '34 and I think that we came down here in September if I remember right. Then I was here until March.

Interviewer: Until March '35?

Fowler: Yes

Interviewer: While you were here as you were looking into the things that you were doing, were there any other construction or other projects that were going on in the park, buildings, or roads or facilities?

Fowler: Yes, there were other jobs. Down in Bryce we mainly built trails. Up here I know there were other groups building trails and probably rock work and stuff with rocks. I wasn't too well acquainted with these other projects.

Interviewer: What specifically did they have you doing with the job that you did?

Fowler: With a shovel and just landscaping the cuts, just cutting, rounding off the edges.

Interviewer: With a hand type shovel or a power shovel?

Fowler: Oh no, we didn't have a power shovel. We couldn't have used them with that kind of work. Everybody had a shovel. We just made them look pretty.

Interviewer: As you got involved with the camp and the projects became completed and you moved on elsewhere, did much of what you did here benefit you as far as later on with work or did you go on into a different field of work?

Fowler: I can't really say that it benefited me much. I know when I went home, I went on the bum down to California trying to find a job and couldn't find one. I came back and I worked for the Rio Grande Railroad. When I was twenty I started driving a bus for them hauling train crews back and forth. Worked for a year doing that at 84 hours a week, \$60 a month, 17 cents an hour.

Interviewer: What were you getting as part of the salary here at the CCC?

Fowler: About \$30 a month. Then I went on a mission for 31 months and then I came home and hired out for the Union Pacific Railroad. I was an engineer for 38 years on the UP Railroad.

Interviewer: And you worked on the different crews here in the park on the projects, were you one of the members of the crew or were you a supervisor?

Fowler: No, I was never a supervisor.

Interviewer: Was that mainly officers?

Fowler: Well, they had some yeah, but they were mainly just fellows that were older and maybe had more experience with the kind of work that we were doing. I remember one fellow whose name was Shumway. He was from, I think down in Tropic or somewhere down there, near Bryce Canyon. Most of the fellows that I remember are not here. I haven't seen hardly a one that I know here today, that I remember from those days.

Interviewer: There may be a few more coming tomorrow. We still have some people registering in.

When you were here in the camp what types of facilities, did you actually have in the camp? We've seen different building in photographs what exactly was there? Was there a first aid set up, like a hospital or clinic?

Fowler: Yeah, there was a hospital. I remember there was. I can't remember the doctor's name. I remember going to the hospital one day. It was a pretty good camp, I thought.

Interviewer: When you were here, were there any really serious type injuries that had to be taken care of?

Fowler: Not that I can remember. We didn't have much problem that way. Everybody seemed to be pretty healthy, glad to be working and having a job.

Interviewer: That would probably be the biggest concern right there. I know that every place you go to you have certain people that stand out and sometimes they are referred to as the camp cut ups, the camp clowns, or the camp characters. Was there anyone that specifically stands out in your mind as being kind of a ringleader for mischief in the area?

Fowler: I remember there was a fellow name of... Oh, I have his name on the tip of my tongue. He played the piano. He wasn't a very good piano player, but he was loud. He got playing in the mess hall one day, in the barracks, where we went in there and everybody was standing around and watching and listening to him play. When they took us on this trip to Las Vegas, we rode in an open dump truck, no it was an open flatbed truck and when we got down to Las Vegas they gave us six bits and turned us loose on the town. Of course a lot of them got drunk. Coming back I remember a guy by the name of Carl Frances. He's dead now, and he laid in the bottom of the truck with his face like this as hard as he could [shows motion of hitting]. He just about pulverized his face. I remember those instances.

He had a friend named Kent Pollock and I haven't seen him; I don't know what happened to him. There's not too many that I really remember. I was on KP duty, I guess maybe I shouldn't say anything about that anyway, but I was on KP duty one day and they were serving stew. Somebody pointed out to me what they were doing at some of these tables that I was waiting on. They were pouring what was left out, take the thick stuff out, pour it in the teapot and then sending it back to get more and they were just doing it right and left there, and when I went back to get it filled I mentioned to somebody back there that that's what was going on. And I didn't realize that it would be the cause of any problems, but the next thing I knew somebody took exception to it and said that I turned them in. Somebody must have got after them. I can't remember this kid's name. He came over to my barracks one night after dark and wanted to fight. He said I turned him in.

Interviewer: Because of the fact that they were using some of the broth of the stew?

Fowler: Yes, they were actually destroying government property. I walked out in the street after dark and he hit me and knocked me down before I realized what had happened. I got up and we scuffled for a while. I had a bruise on my hand and he cut my lip. That's what I

was in the doctor's office for and he was up there to get his hand fixed. That is one instance I remember. We didn't have too much problems like that. As far as I was concerned it wasn't a big deal for me. It was for probably some of them you know, not for me. I just went along with it.

Interviewer: While you were here in the area did you make any lasting friends? I know you that you probably did among the members of the camp, but in town when you wandered around did you establish any rapport or friendships there that lasted across the years.

Fowler: No, not that I can't remember. We went to this church down here. I remember going to that several times.

Interviewer: Was it encouraged among the members of the crew or the camp to go into town and become like part of the community and take part in the activities?

Fowler: I don't even remember that. You know that's what I say; I just don't remember things that happened back then. It's been 55 years. I just can't remember a lot of those details.

Interviewer: Okay. I know in the military today they have platoons, patrols, and units. Each unit, when I was in the service, had a chance to make a flag or skit, some way of identifying themselves as a group among their fellow troops. Did these barracks or these people get together on song or some special of way of identification that was specifically theirs so when they'd go out in a group they knew which group they were, like this is 'A' company or this is 'C' Company, something like that. Did they make up anything that would make you different from the others?

Fowler: I don't remember anything like that.

Interviewer: When you fell out in the morning, I know you call it revelry, as a barracks would you march off to the mess hall or did you just kind of go when you got up?

Fowler: I can't even remember that. I remember going to work every day, but I don't remember. I think they had a revelry or something to wake us up. They must have done. It doesn't mean enough to me to remember about it.

Interviewer: Have you had a chance to wander around the area here in the park and kind of see any of the areas that you might have been?

Fowler: No I haven't. I've been here through here before since then several times, but I wanted to go where the camp was if I can do that this afternoon.

Interviewer: That would be fine. On your own or I think one of the tours tomorrow will take you to part of that area. If you're signed up for that, you might want to check the desk to see if there are any spaces. So in your opinion, what you're looking at right now from here at the Nature Center building which is about maybe a hundred yards from where the camp used to be, has it really changed that much or would you say mainly your memory is the only thing that's changed or has the scenery actually taken a whole different texture?

Fowler: Everything's changed a lot. If I got over there where we were most of the time, I'm sure that I would remember something.

Interviewer: When you were in the camp, they kept you working 12 hours a day? 8 hours a day, 10 hours, how many hours?

Fowler: It wasn't 8 hours. I don't know. I remember we spent about half the time traveling back and forth. Seven? Well I can't remember even that, but we traveled through those tunnels up and back, up and back four times a day. That took a lot of time.

Interviewer: With all the travel time and the fact that you're working seven hours a day, what type of recreational facilities or activities did they have here at the camp? Did they organize any kind of dances or did they have an athletic arena like for basketball or sports? Or did they just, basically like I've seen pictures of people getting together playing cards or little games like that. Were there recreational facilities?

Fowler: I don't remember whether they had much here. I think they had some company dances. Yeah I think they had some company dances. I know they did in Bryce, and they had a recreation hall and they had a pool table. I remember they had stormy weather one day and I went up and played pool all day for eight hours and I won twenty cents playing pool and that was the first time that I had a cue stick in my hand, that day. I read a little magazine with fundamentals of billiards and I learned how to hold the stick and everything and I thought I was doing pretty good for myself to win twenty cents for playing a little sharks up there with people who had played their whole life. I remember they had something here but I don't remember it specifically what it was.

Interviewer: Was a party or a dance that was limited to just the members of the camps here or did they invite other camps or maybe invite Bryce down to the party, or did they invite you up there to Bryce?

Fowler: They just up there and I think maybe they did it down here too, send trucks out and bring the girls in from the surrounding towns.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you were married after you got back to Salt Lake City.

Fowler: No, I wasn't married until my twenty-fifth birthday.

Interviewer: The girl in Salt Lake City you knew from back there or was it somebody you had met going to the CCC program.

Fowler: No. I only knew her three months before I got married.

Interviewer: Did anything unusual happen while you were out on the crews? Some kind of freak accident or something unusual that kind of stands out in your memory that never happened again? Sometimes they call them phenomenas that only happen once in a lifetime.

Fowler: No, I can't remember. I think that somebody told me that somebody started down through that first tunnel down in the east entrance. I don't remember whether it was while I was here in the park or not. But they in got a ways into the tunnel and they run face to face with a mountain lion and scared them so much they backed out of there and turned around and went back to where they came from. Just someone told me that.

Interviewer: That would be definitely something to scare you for sure. So when you were here working in the camp, they gave you days off from work. On those days, did you hike all of the trails and explore the area more thoroughly, get up on the peaks and look around, or did you stay pretty much in camp?

Fowler: I don't remember hiking around much. We stayed and played in the camp most of the time. Up in Bryce I remember we was out on the job one day and it rained so hard that we stood under a tree and waited until it kind of let up and the rain was running down the gullies and washing the trees out and big rocks as big as houses rolling down the hill. It was really big gulley-buster.

Interviewer: Does that affect the canyon with a flash flood or anything like that? Or were you above the canyon and you didn't see what happened down here?

Fowler: Well we were up high enough, it didn't bother us and we were building trails up there. I don't remember anything like that happening down here. I wish that I could give you more, but I just can't remember any details much.

Interviewer: In your opinion after spending the time with the CCC and everything that you've done since then, do you feel that the CCC program was well conceived or a waste of time or beneficial?

Fowler: I think that it was well conceived and I think that it was beneficial. Of course some got more out of it than others and some of them wouldn't get much out of anything. But I think all in all it was a good program.

Interviewer: When you first went into the program, you mentioned it was mainly that fact that you couldn't get a job elsewhere. Was there anything else that enticed you maybe to get involved with the program?

Fowler: Probably. I got encouragement from friends and family. Unless you went through that depression, you can't imagine anything about it. We didn't have a dime in our pocket. We went a long time without. Lots of time I'd miss meals; we never ate regularly. At least when we were down here, we ate regularly.

Interviewer: When they paid you on a basis, was it monthly, weekly, daily? How was that handled?

Fowler: I think they sent most of it home. I think that they would give us a few dollars a month and send the rest home, five dollars a month.

Interviewer: So they already took in account that automatic deduction and they got to where it was needed more. They figured that if they gave it to you that it'd never make it home.

Fowler: I guess so. I think so. Yeah, they sent most of it home.

Interviewer: So are you going to be spending the whole three days here at the activity or you going to have to take off early?

Fowler: I was just wondering if I ought to take off early Saturday. I want to get home by about five o'clock Saturday.

Interviewer: Home is where right now?

Fowler: Salt Lake. It's going to take me about six hours at least to go up there.

Interviewer: It's about that distance. Did you come down 89 or down the interstate?

Fowler: I came down the freeway.

Interviewer: Going back up through 89 and take a look at Bryce and check that area out?

Fowler: No, I'm not going back up that way.

Interviewer: Do you get down to the parks very often to look at what you did? We have a few people that will from time to time come through and say that "I worked here at the camp" and they got friends with them that they're showing around. Have you taken the opportunity to do that?

Fowler: I went through the parks and up through those tunnels on the way to Bryce a couple of times. I remember that I had my dad with me once. That's been years and years ago. I'm sure I told him what I'd done or where I'd worked. Other than that I haven't.

Interviewer: Okay. Well Mr. Fowler what I'll need from you now if I could possibly in order to complete our information here. This is a gift and release agreement and I need basically from you is the fact that your giving information that we can use now as part of our oral history program here in the Park so that we can draw upon information we have gathered to kind of give people an overall picture of what was going on. So if I can get your signature, the date and your current address and phone number, we'd really appreciate it.

End of interview.