

**Earl Francis**  
**Zion National Park Oral History Project**  
**CCC Reunion**  
**September 1989**

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Earl Francis: I'm Earl Francis and I was down here in 1939 and '40 in the CCs and I'm from Brigham City.

Carolyn Hinton: I'm Carolyn Hinton interviewing Mr. Francis at the Zion CCC Reunion and you were in 1939?

Earl Francis: And '40.

Carolyn Hinton: And '40.

Earl Francis: Right!

Carolyn Hinton: How long were you here?

Earl Francis: One year

Carolyn Hinton: What were some of the assignments that you had?

Earl Francis: Well, I worked for the park service but I was in the CCC camp.

Carolyn Hinton: The one that was right here across the river?

Earl Francis: But, but I worked for the park service. I was on what they called park maintenance. We had to do all the little jobs, get the rocks off the road, dead deer, the porcupines and what have ya, [and] bury 'em. About anything that went wrong, they called us and we worked on it and fixed it or whatever.

Carolyn Hinton: How old were you?

Earl Francis: 17

Carolyn Hinton: Where did you live prior to coming here?

Earl Francis: Perry

Carolyn Hinton: Perry. Perry, Utah. So you spent most all of your life in Perry then?

Francis: Yes. I did.

Hinton: You just kind of cleaned up, is that right?

Francis: Yes, well if there was chuck holes in the road, we fixed them, and if there was a broken water line or something like that, we would fix that. We would have dirt slide down in a storm or something we'd clean all that off, generally maintain. We seen that the water was on the trees here; we had to do that every Sunday morning.

Hinton: They planted all the trees in here?

Francis: Yes, they planted a lot, but they irrigated them and I had to put the water on every Sunday morning. That was my job.

Hinton: Do the irrigating?

Francis: Yes. Turn it in here.

Hinton: Had you ever been to Zion before you came down here?

Francis: No, that was the first time.

Hinton: What was your impression of Zion?

Francis: I couldn't believe it. I really couldn't. I guess I had been to Salt Lake probably four times in my life. That was about as far away and then we came down here and I just couldn't believe it. I'd seen pictures. The fact is in the railroad station where we came down, it showed a picture of Zion in there, in a big picture and I just couldn't believe it could be like this. We had a lot of fun and learned an awful lot.

Hinton: Did you make any lasting friendships of fellows that you met here?

Francis: Well there was some from just right around there. This Paul \_\_\_\_, he was in with me, he is from Perry too. We've been mailing back and forth ever since. Most of 'em were from down here, in Washington and around there like that. Well we've come back here ever since we've been married every year on our vacation. This is where all the kids wanted to go; this is where we wanted to go, and we always come back. We really enjoy it.

Hinton: Does it mean more to you now than when you were a boy here or you've just always been impressed?

Francis: Well I don't know; it gets in your blood I think. It's funny you know because my kids you can ask them when school got out, well where do you want to go? Zions Park, and so we come down here. The oldest kid and his cousin came down here, his cousin came with once, and of course I'd talked about the West Rim trails and all these other ones, so they were going to climb it, see. So they went over there and started up there, and their mother said, "Experienced climbers carry water and all that." Well they left so we sat out there waiting. It was about 45 minutes and we could see 'em and in less than an hour they were standing up on top waving. So they come back down. They climbed Angel's Landing and

they climbed the East Rim and Lady Mountain. They climbed them all and it's just been in their blood. That's where they always want to come and like we'll come down here and we go to St. George four or five times in the winter and we always have to come up here. It's just, it's in your blood, I can't help it. It's like this guy told me. He says, if you ever like the desert once, it will call you back. If you ever like mountains, you can never get rid of it. I guess that's the way this is.

Hinton: Is that what you did for entertainment when you were down here at 17 years old, did you take a lot of the hikes?

Francis: Took a lot of hikes. On that job that I had, every morning, you know, the deer would walk around and then there would be wind and steady erosion and there would be rocks down all over the road. So we'd go out there and one day it would be my turn and we'd walk from where the museum was to the Temple of Sinawava, clean all the rocks off and then turn around and come back.

Hinton: That's a walk!

Francis: Then the other crew would go up through the tunnel, clean all of them off up there and go through the tunnel to the east entrance. They'd come back and you would be about back to the bridge when they'd get there. Then we would go and do whatever else they had for us to do during the day. That was every morning, and you know in the winter time its quiet, no traffic, it's really a peaceful thing. Then at Sinawava up there, when we worked up there on that, they was fixing them little rock things and the bathrooms and the fountains and that. We cut a lot of rock, you know, and got a lot of rocks for them. In fact the one up there used to have a sign on the front of it. We put the sign on. We splintered two cuts off of it and then the third cut we started. We had all the gads in there and it started cracking and Rosell come up there and he'd come right to pieces. They didn't want to touch that rock, so we pulled all the gads out and you could still see the holes in it.

Hinton: But that's up there by Sinawava?

Francis: Yes. That big one that's up there and they have that little thing set out there that tells about it. But that big rock, you just look around the back of it and you can see that line of little square holes and that's where we split two pieces off of it and used it for rock, but they didn't want to take that away.

Hinton: Describe to me how you do that, the procedure of splitting rock.

Francis: Well these little gads are about two inches long and they're shaped like a chisel, and so you'd find a seam and you'd take that and pound it in with a hammer. You'd put a whole line of them and you'd just keep tapping 'em in and then they would go further down and then they would fall off and you would split it in pieces, you know, how you wanted.

Then you'd have to spalt (?) it off with a hammer so all them edges was right. Then that was your building rock.

Up there to that Weeping Rock, we worked on that for a long time, all fall and into the winter and we was putting them rocks down there for the bridge and all that. We put that in there. We had [unintelligible] and we did that. The first summer that I came here in April, I went up to Bryce for two weeks and then they brought me back down here. Then I went to work for Park maintenance. They had this thing up there below the Lodge that wrapped this water pipe, and they put tar, a layer of tar, then a layer of paper then a layer of tar and a layer of paper. They put three layers of paper and tar on it and then it would just spin it on where we laid the pipe off of the pile. That there was the pipeline they put in here through the park. They had pipeline for a lot of the WPA jobs. They wrapped it here and they took it to them. I took three loads up to Short\_Creek. That was an experience I tell you. Nobody would talk to you up there, even the ones who was laying the pipe. I just dumped it in the same place every time and left.

Then in that winter, we was in here and they was trapping the deer. They trapped about fifteen-hundred head of deer.

Hinton: How did you trap them?

Francis: Got traps and they would put hay and apples in there and they'd have a door open. Then somebody would sit up in a tree then when they got in there, pull up, they'd drop down and they was in this corral. We'd put them in these individual boxes, then load them in a truck and we hauled them up to that Mineral Wash where the park kind of ends. We did that all winter and we got hauling deer off. We had a lot of experience in that.

Your know this Frank Eager /Heber (?) was a mechanic, and he never had no kids and he just kind of took me like his kid. [Unintelligible] up on the slopes. We had to put a new center pin in that, then take it apart and I helped to do that. The one guy that was helping got his finger cut off while we was putting this center pin down. So after he got his finger cut off, this guy Heber? told me, he said, "Now you go get back to the Lodge as fast as you can go and get 50 pounds of dry ice and get back here." So I went and got the dry ice, come back and we packed it in it and that thing just sang. He said "Okay, drop it in there. So I put it up there and {unintelligible} that hole and you couldn't drive it anymore. Then he said, "Now go throw a bucket of water on it," so I did and there it was in there.

You know, you just learned things like that and I guess it will live with you forever because that's the first time I had ever been away from home and as far as, I don't know what you could ever have done any better. You know it had taught you something. It taught you to work and it taught you discipline and I think it taught you to appreciate, really that there was somebody else besides you. Like in the morning early, you know, eight 'o' clock I'd be walking up to that canyon and me and Wood Hardy and we'd just walk through there. You couldn't believe the peaceful of it, ya know. [Unintelligible] Then I got up there one morning to that Temple of Sinawava and I was walking in and it

started raining. I stood in one of those things while it rained, and it really rained for about a half an hour and the old river it came up and I was watching it rise and I was hoping and thinking it would quit. Finally it would start slacking off and the sun was trying to come through and I walked out from under there and there was **never ever** anything so beautiful in all your life. Can you imagine that?

I mean, any direction you looked there was a million waterfalls and there would be solid rainbows that arched. You'd look through the rain down there and you could hardly see through that for just one big rainbow. I have never seen anything like it. We was down there once when it started raining. I grabbed her and we jumped in that truck and went a hundred miles an hour to get up there so they could see it. It is unbelievable. After the rains over, it's all quiet.

But it was so pretty down here and it was different. I guess I made a couple dollars that I didn't have before; we just got out of the depression.

Hinton: Were they still sending part of your money home to your family then?

Francis: Yes, they sent \$22 dollars and you kept eight. You got that once a month. By the time you got your laundry and your hair cut paid for, you'd have about three bucks.

Hinton: Some of the boys would go down to Hurricane to the dances.

Francis: Oh yes.

Hinton: How did you feel like you were received by the people at the dance?

Francis: Well I had a ball down there.

Hinton: (Laughter)

Francis: I was just happy and I thought we was received good and I had a lot of fun down there. We'd go down to St. George; we just had a lot of fun.

Just like this one girl down there in Hurricane told me, she said, "You know you don't ever need to worry about getting hit with a rock down here," and I said, "How come?" She said, "Nobody dares throw it; they might hit their own cousin."

Earl and Hinton: (Laughter)

Hinton: That's cute. So you felt like the CCCs for you was a real good experience?

Francis: If there's ever a time in God's world they need the CCC camp, it's right now. And they need it with the discipline, the army running it, like they did us and you tell them why. Right now, ain't any one of them kids that could ever hack it. We put that pipe line in.

They'd mark you out twenty feet, and say there you are and you'd dig that twenty feet. When you got that twenty done, they'd mark you another twenty. There was no ten minutes break in the morning and ten in the afternoon. You worked, you went home and had your dinner, you went back and you started digging again and you dug 'til 4:30. [unintelligible] they moved like that but they still dug the trench and they dug it the full length of that park.

We built that 250,000 gallon reservoir up there, packed the cement up like horses, packed all the pipe up there, packed the lumber for the forms, poured it and they poured it steady without a stop round the clock. And no way could they do something like that now. That's a big reservoir, 250,000 gallons. We poured that by hand, every bit of it, packed that pipe up there to cement. They'd give you a sack like the kids pack papers in, put half a sack of cement in it and send you up there. When you got to the top you dumped it out and you came back and they'd give you another one. You would pack the pipe up there.

Hinton: How much cement do you think was in one of those packs?

Francis: Well it was 50 pounds. It was a 100 pound sack and cut in half, so you had 50 pounds. It's the old joke that we should be eating oats out of those bags because we looked like jackasses.

Hinton: (Laughter)

Francis: Put two guys on a pipe. [Unintelligible]. You could see that trail through them trees and up there and everybody up the trail doing that. You know it was quite a thing to dig that water line through here. Some places it was solid rock and you'd have to blast and then other places it was just so sandy it just caved in; you would just kept on shoveling. You'd go through it and they all laughed, had a blast. When you got done eating supper, three or four of us went to town. We had a lot of fun.

Hinton: Did many of them have cars?

Francis: Not too many. I had a motorcycle toward the last of it there. It was so funny, there'd be eight or ten cars out of the about 300 of us that was here.

Hinton: 300?

Francis: I think there was 300, yes.

Hinton: Did they feed you pretty good?

Francis: Yes, you bet. Had good meals. We all bitched, but like they used to say in the army, the one that bitches a lot is the next cooker.

Hinton: (Laughter). What's a lasting memory that you have?

Francis: It's just, I'd like to come back to it, the whole thing. We was going home; all getting out and we was all ready to go and they had a fire up at the lodge. So they loaded us all in them stake trucks. We was all standing there, going to put the fire out. On the way up, and as many times as I walked that park, as many times as I would go, we was going up and I looked across the river and there was an absolute perfect deer head in the rocks. I couldn't believe it and I looked and looked and looked at that you know for the longest time. Then we could see it once when we came down, couldn't we. We found it; it was just perfect. Now it has fallen off or something, because we can't see it no more.

But to me, I love the desert. I ain't got no love whatever for the damn stinking ocean, nothing like that. I love the desert and I don't know why. I put three and a half years in on the Mexican Border in the army. I love that hot, burning, lousy desert the same way.

Hinton: So, where did you go after you left the CCs?

Francis: Well let's see, I went home and that was in the fall of 1940. They was getting all panicky, you know in this war effort. So then I went to school, over to college, over in Logan. I went that winter and then the next spring I was on the draft list and that. So then I went to work and they was crying for men down at the arsenal. So, I went down there, well I went down there and I worked what is [Unintelligible] for three months 'til they got the hanger down, then I went to work for the arsenal and I hauled TNT for the arsenal. Then I enlisted and went in the army. I did my four years in the army and then come home.

Hinton: And three of those years were down in Mexico?

Francis: Yes, on the Mexican border.

Hinton: When you got home what did you do?

Francis: I worked construction; I was a heavy equipment operator for WW Clyde Company for eleven years. Then I worked for the government for nine years. I was heavy equipment operator for them. They had that big shop up to Utah General Depot in Ogden, the engineer shop and I was the test inspector. I operated all their equipment, cranes, dozers, everything. I did that for nine years and then I hurt my back. They operated on it twice then they medicaled me out of there.

Then I started selling trucks, if you can believe it. I sold them, I guess, for twenty years and I sold these horse feed trucks. I was the second largest dealer in the United States for horse companies for twelve years. I had all of Utah, three-fourths of Idaho and then wherever I could sell to on the side. So I sold an awful lot of them in Oregon, sold a lot of them all through Idaho, all through Utah. But I sold, in that twenty years over 4,000 new ones and I don't know how many used ones. Then we bought a farm in Idaho, had 850 acres irrigated up there. Then we found out we was only working for the bond company,

nobody else. They bonded, had 82 MRA's bonded to put them three atomic fire plants in up there and you know they've scrapped them out now. They doubled the power in one year. Then they turned around that same year and we got a twenty-five and two twelve percent raises. That fall they gave them another twelve percent, so then we sold it. We left up there and I went back and sold trucks and then retired. We got thirty acres up there that my grandkids raise purebred sheep on and then I've got a wagon shop there in my back yard. We build these truck beds and these goose neck cow trailers and all that stuff. In fact we just did, the day we left, the last truck that was sitting there out of twenty-six that was in this bin. There them eighteen foot flat beds with hoists on them. Me and Ken, my kid.

Hinton: How many children did you have?

Francis: Three. Then I think we have, what fifty grandkids.

Earl and Hinton: (Laughter)

Francis: We've been here all summer with them, taking them out to these here shows. We took them to Vernal, with eight. We took 'em to Ferron with six. Took 'em to Delta, with eight, down to Tooele and out to Tremonton. They averaged about two dollars a pound for their lambs. They do that in shows. We got the one that's ten years old. They had this FFA and 4H junior judging. There was 250 in there out to the Tremonton judging.

Hinton: For five counties?

Francis: Five counties. That kids ten years old and he got 192 out of 200 and won a big high trophy. Then the fair come, so he goes out there again and he got 198 out of 200, won another trophy. So I said, "Well how do you do it?" He says, "Grandpa, that's a secret!"

Hinton: (Laughter)

Francis: So I told him he ain't going to college because as soon as he's out of high school he's going to run my cows. You get a dollar a head for buying them. He's got 'er made.

Hinton: Is there any experiences that stand out in your mind about the CCC's? Anything funny or anything...?

Francis: Yes, there was one kind of funny.

Hinton: Okay.

Francis: It was right up here.

Hinton: We're here at the south campground.

Francis: Right up here on the highway, these tourists come down through there early in the morning and drove through a herd of deer, fifteen of them. They was laying down there, you know, and their legs broke and that, so we was supposed to send them on their way. We was going to hit them in the head with a sledge hammer.

Hinton: The deer?

Francis: Oh yeah, we couldn't do that to the tourists, we couldn't do that. Then they come down there with this big pistol, we was supposed to come down and humanely shoot 'em. Anyway, this Walt Ruesch, he brought the pistol down. They used to call him "Satan." (Laughter). One kid standing there with him, and old Walt came down and he looked at that big pistol, and he said, "Well here's old Satan here, he can send them across one bare hill."

Earl and Hinton: (Laughter).

Hinton: So he's the one that shot them?

Francis: No, he wouldn't shoot 'em.

Hinton: Who shot them then?

Francis: I shot about half of 'em.

Hinton: Were there many tourists during that time?

Francis: There was a lot.

Hinton: A lot. This would be about 1940, by then there were quite a few coming through?

Francis: Well there was a lot even in 1939. I was amazed how many there was, you know. See we was supposed to get out there and get our rocks of the road before they started in. But there would be a lot of tourists. There was nothing you know like it is now, but there was a lot of tourists. But you know then there wasn't no money.

Another one that was really funny, I laughed about that a hundred times. These two old sheep herders had this old Buick, and they just cut it off. It was a car you know. They built this sheep cabin in the back of it, had them bows, you know, an old coal stove with a chimney sticking out of it. Anyway, they was coming down, so they got down there by the tunnel and the lights went out on it. So they had a big debate and neither one of them could talk very plain. They decided that one would sit on the hood with a flashlight in each hand like this and the other one would drive. See, then if he was getting too close he was supposed to go over. Anyway they got about half way through that tunnel and they crashed into the side of the tunnel. They caved the fender down and all. They was panicky, one of them running one way and they was trying to get the fender up so they

could go. The other one was cussing the other one that was on the hood cause he give 'em the wrong signal. The other one saying I was going like this and you went like that.

Hinton: (Laughter)

Francis: So anyway that morning, they was sitting up there by that tunnel, so they sent us to go up there and get them. We goes up there and you'd never believe that decrepit looking bunch. One talked kind of like through his nose, "Well I told him to go this way and he went that way and then we crashed and you can see what happened."

Hinton: (Laughter)

Francis: So he says, "Well what are you gonna do?" I said, "Well we're gonna take it down and then you'll have to see what they're gonna do down there." So he said, "Well I don't think the brakes is good enough to tow us down there." I said, "Well we ain't gonna tow it like that." So we backed the truck out in front of it and raised the bed up on it. Put a log chain down around there around the bed and then let the bed back down and it lifted that car up off the ground. So we headed down off the hill with it and them two sheep herders was riding in the back of the truck. We got it down to the park garage and dumped it. I don't know what they did after that, but I mean they was really shook up. Lot of fun though.

Hinton: A lot of fun. You were here just that one year.

Francis: Yes. I really enjoyed it. I met some of the nicest people I guess you'd ever meet in your life and, you know, people that wasn't in the CCC's, just regular people that I met. I had a good time with 'em. I liked it all the time down here. This one friend of mine, he was from Hurricane. He wasn't in the CCC camp, but me and him worked on, I dunno, two or three jobs for WW Clyde Company. His name was Martin Sanders, and it was his kid who cooked last night. Did you know him?

Hinton: I'm from Hurricane. (Laughter). Yes I know him. He married my aunt.

Francis: His wife now?

Hinton: Yes, Martin's wife now is my aunt.

Francis: Well every time we went down, we went and seen him. (tape ends abruptly).

End of Interview.