

Mads Gibson
Zion National Park Oral History Project
CCC Reunion
29 September 1989

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Don Garrett: This is Don Garrett and I'm interviewing Mads Gibson; that's spelled M-A-D-S Gibson. We're at the [Zion] Nature Center. What time is it? Do you have a watch there?

Mads Gibson: 5:55

Don Garrett: It's 5:55 on September 29, 1989. Why don't we just start out and you tell us where you are from and how it was you got in to the three Cs.

Mads Gibson: Well, one reason why I got into the three Cs is because I needed the job.

Don Garrett: Yeah

Mads Gibson: Just like the rest of them.

Don Garrett: Were you out of school?

Mads Gibson: Well, I was a drop out. I was one of those high school drop outs. But anyway, I got in July 15, 1937.

Don Garrett: And you were living in Hurricane at the time?

Mads Gibson: I was living in Hurricane, Utah. That's where I was born and raised. They picked us up and took us to St. George and drove us to Bryce Canyon where we were inducted at Bryce. When we went through Red Canyon, we thought that was Bryce. You never did know that you went up on top and looked down. We were use to Zion where we would look up at it.

The first job I had out there was stringing fence, building fence out there on Point _____ . And then the next job I had out there was digging an underpass. The builders had to push it through up underneath the road and we would load it on trucks by hand. We would compete to see who could load the truck the fastest.

Both: (Laugh)

Mads Gibson: Now we use front end loaders.

Don Garrett: Right, like you were saying.

Mads Gibson: And then I got the chance to come to Zion to spend the rest of my time down here in Zion and I worked under Walt Ruesch in the Weeping Rock bridge area. The bridge I was building was a lot bigger than it was before. I spent the summer there.

Don Garrett: Which camp were you in?

Mads Gibson: No 962

Don Garrett: So that was on the east side of the river

Gibson: It was on the east side of the river.

Garrett: Was the other one still here at the time?

Gibson: Yeah it was still there; there were still some men in it.

Garrett: Yeah

Gibson: But it was here on the west side; there were still a few men in it.

Garrett: But you were assigned to Walt Ruesch.

Gibson: Yeah, I was assigned to Walt Ruesch.

Garrett: How many men were there in the group?

Gibson: Oh, we must have had about 20 men working there, stacking rocks and tying wire on the cribs and I don't know how many trucks they had hauling rock in, but we would spread them out and face them up on there and for all I know those rock cribs are still up in the river.

Garrett: Now these were just rocks, so you weren't placing them as far as masonry.

Gibson: Oh no, the only place we put on the rocks was just to make them flat on the face of the grid; stack them up in the middle and face them out so they looked more attractive.

Garrett: So were the trucks bringing them down here from the quarry?

Gibson: Down from the quarry.

Garrett: Yeah

Gibson: I don't know who they were; I was too scared to know. There was a little wall to sit on up on the bank, they would throw rocks at you.

Garrett: Yeah so you had to tow the mark?

Gibson: Well, no if Walt was flipping rocks at you while he was firing at you, you were doing all right. But if he shut up, you better go to work.

Both: (Laugh)

Garrett: I heard say he had quite a vocabulary.

Gibson: Oh, there's no man alive who swears more than he does.

Garrett: Oh I'll be darned.

Gibson: But he was a good guy.

Garrett: A good man

Gibson: Yeah I liked Walt because he was from Springdale.

Garrett: Yeah yep, he was local.

Gibson: In fact I see the old Ruesch home still standing down there, cause I knew his brother Bill.

Garrett: So how long were you in? Were you just in the one six month's stint?

Gibson: No, I was in two years.

Garrett: Two full years?

Gibson: Two full years

Garrett: Was that mostly spent here in Zion?

Gibson: Well, most of it yes, and then after that job, that winter they put me in as janitor up in the old office up there at the Y and we spent about three months up there, well it was about four months I spent up there as janitor.

Garrett: But you lived down here at the camp?

Gibson: I lived in the camp

Garrett: And then walked up there?

Gibson: We had to walk up there, and clean and dust it and hike back in the morning. In the winter time we had to go back and build a fire, so it was warm when the office opened. We had to have a fire built.

Garrett: Yeah

Gibson: And we walked up. We didn't get a ride; we had to walk up.

Garrett: Sure. You say "we" was there more than one of you that went up?

Gibson: Well, no, everybody. If you didn't work out on one of these other projects, you walked. Some of the fellas working there in the museum.

Garrett: Oh, so they would walk up.

Gibson: They would have to walk up.

Garrett: So they worked in the museum then? But you just cleaned around the premises.

Gibson: No, the inside.

Garrett: Oh it was strictly inside?

Gibson: Yeah, I was the janitor on the inside.

Garrett: Now did that take you the whole day?

Gibson: Oh no, it was only about two hours.

Garrett: And then what would you do?

Gibson: Well, then that's all I would have to do. Then I would come back to camp. Of course that was after they had closed up at night.

Garrett: Oh I see.

Gibson: Close up at night, then go up and clean up and then come back to camp and I didn't have to do anything until the next morning. During the week, you would have to go up when it was cold. You would go up at about 6:00 and build a fire.

Garrett: So you were working early in the morning and late at night.

Gibson: Yeah, they would call it the split shift. So you put in about four or five hours a day.

Garrett: What did you do for the rest of your day?

Gibson: Oh, go around and bum around the kitchen and find something to eat, lay around and read. You didn't have to do anything if you didn't want to. Then let's see, what was the next job I had? Then I got a job driving truck, and I worked up on the old....

Garrett: Did they pay you any extra for that?

Gibson: No, it was all the same.

Garrett: All the same pay?

Gibson: No matter what you do it was all the same pay.

Garrett: Thirty dollars a month.

Gibson: Thirty dollars a month and board and room.

Garrett: And you kept five of it?

Gibson: Eight. It was eight we kept; it wasn't five.

Garrett: I heard the other guys say five.

Gibson: You sent twenty-two home and kept eight.

Garrett: Did your folks, did they use the twenty-two or did they save it for you?

Gibson: No, they saved it for me.

Garrett: Yeah

Gibson: But the first job I had when I was just a kid at seventeen years old and I had never drove very far before, but anyway we got on the old truck trail up there.

Garrett: Uh-huh. On the east side?

Gibson: Have you been on that one?

Garrett: Yeah I have.

Gibson: Well anyway that first day I got up there they had this ___ there and the outside dew was on it and I shut my eyes when we went across that for the first time.

Both: (Chuckle)

Garrett: Pretty narrow?

Gibson: It was narrow. Up there where _____ is up there.

Garrett: Yeah

Gibson: But anyway that was a good job working up there.

Garrett: Now, were you driving a dump truck?

Gibson: No it was a stake, hauling men.

Garrett: Just hauling men up there.

Gibson: Hauling men up there and then we would come back down and pick up their lunches and take them back, and build a fire and put a coffee pot on.

Garrett: What were the lunches entail? Were they sandwiches or did you take hot lunches up to them?

Gibson: No, they were cheese sandwiches and apple butter. You had your choice; you could have one of each.

Garrett: All right

Gibson: Most of them threw the apple butter away and heat up the shovel and cooked their cheese sandwiches.

Garrett: (Laughing) Have a toasted cheese sandwich on their shovel.

Gibson: I won't give you the details, but those apple butter sandwiches. . . I can't look at apple butter today.

Garrett: Is that right? So it was kind of better to be down closer to camp, you got a hot meal.

Gibson: Well, yes you could in the camp with the men.

Garrett: But yeah I mean, down here didn't they serve you a hot meal?

Gibson: Yeah. Those who worked like on the switchbacks, on the Nevada switchbacks, they would bring them down here to work. I never did work up on the switchbacks down that side; that's where most of them worked in the winters on the side.

Garrett: Right.

Gibson: And then in spring the year why we'd go down to the campground and we would have to go rake all the leaves up and haul them away and we would come down here and clean up the grounds. They kept everything pretty clean cause they had a lot of help to do it.

Garrett: Right.

Gibson: Then we got to work at the lower bridge again and that was with a truck, a dump truck, and we would clean the roads. We would go clean them up every morning and drive up the road and push all the rocks off the road, and then come back. So when we got them, then we would go back and start cleaning the gutters out and hauling them away (laughs). I did that for about, oh, six months.

Garrett: Is that right?

Gibson: And then the one summer of 1939, I guess it was the spring of 39' I just stayed here. I didn't go to Bryce except hauling men up and then I would come back and spent the summer here. I was a truck driver. We would haul down to Cedar, or if we needed something we would head down to Cedar to pick it up, or if we needed something from Bryce we would go to Bryce and back.

Garrett: That was a good job then.

Gibson: That was a good job. I liked that.

Garrett: You got to travel around a little bit.

Gibson: We got to travel around. We got to go to Cedar maybe once or twice a month, to Bryce about once a week.

Garrett: Now your home was in Hurricane. Did you ever go home on weekends or anything?

Gibson: Oh yes, almost every weekend. We would get a weekend pass unless you were on KP. I never did pull KP at any time. But if you were on KP you would have to stay, but if you weren't, you could get a pass from Scipio, Clayton Edwards, he would give you a pass.

Garrett: That was Scipio's name, Clayton Edwards?

Gibson: Yes his name was Clayton Edwards.

Garrett: Everybody remembers him as Scipio but nobody remembers Clayton Edwards.

Gibson: Well, his name was Clayton Edwards and he married a Gifford from down here in Rockville.

Garrett: I'll be darned.

Gibson: Lula Gifford, I think was her name. [Actually it was Cassie Lorraine Gifford]

Garrett: Uh-huh. So you would go home then every once in awhile on a weekend.

Gibson: Yeah, it was almost every weekend.

Garrett: How would you get home than, I mean, without a ride?

Gibson: Hitchhike.

Garrett: Well, I guess there were still a lot of tourists.

Gibson: Well, there wasn't many, but in those days, they would pick you up.

Garrett: Anybody would pick you up.

Gibson: They would pick you up. They wanted to try to get you hit in the head a few times.

Garrett: They tried.

Gibson: Now they are afraid of getting hit in the head every time and I don't blame them. I don't pick them up.

Garrett: (Coughs) No, me either.

Gibson: And when we was out to Bryce we would ride in with . . . do you know Mack Bean?

Garrett: Well, yeah.

Gibson: Well, usually Mack and Red Irwin, they would let three or four of us ride in with them as far as Springdale and then we would have to hitchhike the rest of the way home.

Garrett: Uh- huh. What did Mack Bean do? Now, Red Irwin I knew was over the trucks.

Gibson: Well, Mack was our mechanic.

Garrett: He was the mechanic.

Gibson: He was the mechanic. Mack Bean and Frank Eager, Frank Eager was the mechanic that had up there.

Garrett: Oh yeah.

Gibson: I don't know how long Frank worked there, but I know he worked up at the garage up here at Birch creek.

Garrett: Yeah.

Gibson: For awhile.

Garrett: How about Red Erwin? Did he have a name?

Gibson: I think his name was Richard, but R.T. were his initials.

Garrett: All right, R.T. Erwin.

Gibson: R.T. Erwin.

Garrett: And he had red hair I assume?

Gibson: Yes and his wife, I think she was Jones from Rockville. He came in here and worked on the tunnel.

Garrett: Oh yeah.

Gibson: And he died, oh it's probably been about 20-25 years ago. He was over in the San Francisco area was when he died.

Garrett: Uh-huh.

Gibson: You didn't know Neil Mitchell?

Garrett: No

Gibson: Well, anyways Neil Mitchell was a fellow from Escalante, and he worked up in the museum.

Garrett: Oh yeah.

Gibson: Eventually he worked for the park service and when he was down to Boulder he was district ranger down there at Lake Mead National Recreation Area two or three years and then he went from there to Glacier Bay, Alaska. He was superintendent there at Glacier Bay and then he left Glacier Bay and came back to Whiskeytown Recreation Area there at Redding, California; and that's where he died about 15, 16 years ago.

Garrett: Yes

Gibson: His wife was an Olsen from down in Springdale.

Garrett: Yeah?

Gibson: Valgene Olsen from Springdale. Her dad a bar down there.

Garrett: Yeah.

Gibson: That's where you could always find the boys hanging out down at Olsen Beer Bar.

Garrett: Yeah, there's quite a few of them mentioned.

Gibson: Well, I think then beer was ten cents a glass.

Garrett: Yeah.

Gibson: So they could make their eight dollars and buy two or three beers on a weekend.

Garrett: Now I forgotten, how long did you say you were in?

Gibson: Two years.

Garrett: Two years. So you went to full time Then you had to get out. What did you do when you left the three C's?

Gibson: Oh, I went to work for, let's see, well I went back to school that winter and then the next spring I went to work for.....

Garrett: Did you finish up your high school than?

Gibson: No, I didn't; I still dropped out again. I got a job and quit [school] because I found a job working on the saw mill up on Cedar mountain.

Garrett: Yeah

Gibson: And worked there until that fall. Let's see what did I do after that? I went back to school again to learn aircraft, sheet metal work.

Garrett: Uh-huh.

Gibson: Well I went to LA to go to work. I went to work for Lockheed Aircraft. One night and they had a flood there and I decided that wasn't any place for a kid raised in the desert to be down there where they had all that rain.

Garrett: (Laughs)

Gibson: So I moved. I went back to Vegas and went out to work out at Nellis Air Force Base, putting up the second barracks up at Nellis Air Force base.

Garrett: Uh-huh.

Gibson: Then I worked just construction for about ten years; then I got in the service station business for about fifteen. Than I spent about 20-25 years in the grocery business where I retired from.

Garrett: How about the war?

Gibson: No they wouldn't take me.

Garrett: Did you get called up?

Gibson: They wouldn't take me.

Garrett: They didn't take you.

Gibson: My brother just younger than me, they wouldn't take him in the CC's because he had a hearing problem and they wouldn't take me in the army because I had a hearing problem.

Garrett: Is that right?

Gibson: But he still had an ear problem when he went in, but when he went in and if you could get in under your own power than you were in.

Garrett: Yeah. Did you find in later life the things that you did, that the CCC experience that you did was helpful to you?

Gibson: Oh yeah.

Garrett: Anything that was helpful to you; learned certain skills that helped you?

Gibson: Oh yeah. Well, learning to drive a truck helped.

Garrett: Sure.

Gibson: I drove, well I drove for about five years I was working as an operator, an equipment operator.

Garrett: Sure.

Gibson: Well, I drove a cherry picker. I was on a cherry picker. I had one there that was a one hundred ton crane. I was the driver on it.

Garrett: Yeah. So you got your start at the three Cs.

Gibson: Yes, right here. And then I was later on the big electric shovel for about six or eight months down on the river, down there below the dam, we were doing some dragging.

Garrett: Uh-huh.

Gibson: It was a big one. It was an eight yard with a one hundred and seventy-five foot sink in it, drag line, pulling sand down the river. And then I worked on as a cableman.

Garrett: Oh yeah. So if you had to do it all over again, would you spend your two years in the Cs?

Gibson: I would do it over again. I mean I enjoyed the two years, and it was a good experience.

Garrett: Well, that's great. A lot of the guys mentioned that it had helped them learn to live with and get along with other people too.

Gibson: Well, it did. They did, and

Garrett: And it was a good experience.

Gibson: It was interesting.

Garrett: Other than the sandwiches, I think food was probably pretty good most of the time was it?

Gibson: The food I look back on it now and it wasn't as bad, but we all complained about it.

Garrett: Oh sure you did.

Gibson: And at Christmas and Thanksgiving, they all really put a spread on.

Garrett: Yeah.

Gibson: They really put on a good dinner for us for Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Years.

Garrett: Sure.

Gibson: And everybody looked forward to those three, those three big ones.

Garrett: Yeah.

Gibson: See they had the turkey and they had the ham and they had the whole works for those three. Of course it wasn't any fun to do KP.

Garrett: No, I'm sure.

Gibson: I think there at the last, we put in 25 cents a month or 50 cents and paid...

Garrett: Somebody else to do it.

Gibson: Well, then they had some regular KP's, that's all they did. They paid them extra to take holiday KP.

Garrett: Is that right?

Gibson: Yeah, which worked out good.

Garrett: As long as they were happy with it.

Gibson: They were happy with it. They wanted the extra pay and I know they got another five, ten dollars.

Garrett: Well and they work inside in the winter when it's cold.

Gibson: They worked about three or four hours in the morning; they had to be there at lunch so they got the dishes done at lunch time,

Garrett: To clean up.

Gibson: They go have a nap, go back at nights and they have to clean up for the next morning. So they actually worked as many hours as we worked. They got all the food they wanted.

Garrett: Sure, they got first choice too.

Gibson: Well in the summer time we would haul ice up to the old lodge. It was what we used for a cooler; it came from Union Pacific lodge up there.

Garrett: They had an ice machine?

Gibson: They got an ice plant up there, and we would go up there about every other day and get I think a hundred pounds of ice and put it in the cooler. That's how we kept the food cool because we had no refrigeration.

Garrett: Right, right.

Gibson: And then I was here when they had the big flood down here and the bridge washed out, the truck bridge to get across the river. We found one light-beam the next day. It was down the river about a quarter of a mile and the flood had wrapped it, it looked like a horseshoe, it was wrapped around a rock down there.

Garrett: Wow. So how did you get back and forth from camp?

Gibson: Well, we walked. Where the sewer crossed the river, they had a foot bridge right down here someplace.

Garrett: Weren't the trucks over there? (points)

Gibson: No, the trucks were over there. The trucks were all across the river. So when we got them out again, seemed like we went up the end there and forted across.

Garrett: Drove across

Gibson: The water came off the canyon. It seems like we got across up there.

Garrett: Yeah

Gibson: I know in two or three days, they got the bridge back in.

Garrett: So did they put all of you to work putting the bridge back in?

Gibson: No, they had their regular crew that did that. We would just walk across and pick up a truck up here at the garage, and then worked on the roads.

Garrett: Yeah.

Gibson: It didn't seem like it took them very long to put that back in. I know Quince Alvey was working the warehouse then. L later he was our mess cook. He was the head of the cooks there. But anyways it was an interesting experience.

Garrett: Yeah, seems like of all these programs that the New Deal started you know, but the three C's seemed like it was really successful and everybody really appreciates it.

Gibson: And most of them were all young and most of them had never been away from home.

Garrett: No but it was a great opportunity for a young man, I'm sure.

Gibson: Well, of course when somebody would yell at you, you would jump and go to work.

Garrett: Right

Gibson: Instead of turning around and swearing at them you would just go to work.

Garrett: Right

Gibson: Well today I met some of them and we would stop and start reminiscing and we would remember where we were at the time cause after fifty years it's different

Garrett: Hey it's been a little while you bet (laughs) I'm amazed at everybody.

Gibson: Our kids are growing and our grandkids are growing.

Garrett: Well, I better let you go so you can get headed on back but I sure want to thank you sir for taking the time to talk to me and like I said I hope you see a publication come out of this.

Gibson: Well, you'll never know until it happens.

Garrett: Right, you can't get everybody's story because it would be thousands of volumes long.

Gibson: Well, a lot of it would be read.

Garrett: Right, but you sure brought a lot of good pictures, and I think we could put together a bunch of memories for everybody to keep, you know?

Gibson: I liked the little digest, and I had a whole set of them and my wife cleaned out my foot locker one time and she didn't think I wanted them so she just threw them away. And I had two left.

Garrett: Well, you had two. That's two we wouldn't have had if you hadn't have showed up with them.

Gibson: But anyways I was glad that I had them.

Garrett: Yes, you bet.

End of Interview.