

Forrest J. Hooten
Zion National Park Oral History Project
CCC Reunion
September 9, 1989

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Jeff Frank: My name is Jeff Frank, and I'm interviewing Forrest J. Hooten. It is September 29, 1989 at the Zion Nature Center, Zion National Park at 8:35 a.m. But coming up then, you were trying to identify some of those older buildings. Well, I wouldn't call them older... the original buildings?

Forrest Hooten: Yes, I have been back, of course, several times since I left the C's. When I'd come through, the cafeteria was always sitting here up until in the 60s or 70s, and from then on we had a park center here! (Laughter) I was wondering if they had torn down the old building, but it looked the same to me. Of course, all the cabins and whatnot they had in a loop around the building here, they were gone. I was just more or less at a loss trying to find somebody that could tell me what had happened. (Laughter)

Jeff Frank: Well, there's so much turn-over in the park staff, too. A lot of them have a dim memory unless it's something they happen to have read in history or seen in a photograph.

Forrest Hooten: We have really enjoyed this reunion because there's so many things that I'm taking the time to go through and see just where things were. People keep referring to the CC camp as being across the river here. True, it was across the river, but it was down here! (Laughter.)

Jeff Frank: You probably will get most of the fellows together, and you'll have fingers pointing... (Laughter)

Forrest Hooten: Yes, that is true.

Jeff Frank: Welcome back to Zion! What year was it that you first enrolled in this?

Forrest Hooten: I came in in '36, and it seems to me that it was in July of '36, but there again I'm not sure. It was the middle of '36 because I reached the age limit in August, and I had to enroll before then in order to get in the C's. Dad really wanted me in the C's because it was a source of income for the family and there wasn't any work available. I could go out and thin sugar beets, which I detested thoroughly. (Laughter)

Jeff Frank: That seems to be a recurrent theme among the Utah recruits. I've heard beets six times from the six people I have spoken with.

Forrest Hooten: I've told my family that if I ever had to raise sugar beets for a living, we'd starve to death. (laughter)

Jeff Frank: That was a pretty big cash crop, or just a crop?

Hooten: It was one of the only cash crops that people of that era had.

Frank: Here in the state of Utah, or generally?

Hooten: I believe it must have been generally, especially in our area which was in the Monroe central area. We'd raise potatoes and potatoes were a dime a dozen. We'd raise oats and wheat; that was good horse and cow feed. Then you'd kill the cow to eat because you couldn't sell it for anything. So primarily the beets were the only cash crop that was available for the farmers.

Frank: So prior to enrolling, then, dinner would consist of potatoes and whatever else you had on your farm?

Hooten: It came from the farm, right. Quite often, especially in the winter months, that would get kind of thin. They didn't have the facilities to deal with things the way they do now. You couldn't buy anything that was trucked in from California. That was out of the question.

Frank: It was just too much.

Hooten: Yes, as I was saying, Dad wanted me to get in the C's and I was certainly willing. So I get enrolled, and as I remember, it was just before I turned eighteen, which at that time was the age limit for those trying to get in for your first time. Once you got in, you could re-enroll for as long as the program lasted.

Frank: Did you walk into an office and say, "Here I am?"

Hooten: No, there was a place in Monroe that was taking potential enrollees and I signed up there. About three days later, they told me where to go and what to do about it, and I ended up on a train out of Richfield to somewhere or other. And this gets me, because I don't remember going to Salt Lake, but I got on a train and came down to Cedar City, I was met there and brought to Zion. Lund was the railroad station. We transferred there and came into Cedar City. They had a spur from Lund into Cedar City. That's where I started out my CC experience. (Laughter)

Frank: Did you stop off at the old Escalante Hotel? Was that there in Cedar City at the time?

Hooten: That was there, yes. If I remember correctly, that was the point where you met when the train unloaded. If anybody wanted to meet you, you went to the hotel to be picked out. We came from there, and that evening was my first acquaintance with Captain Whitney. To my estimation, he was one of the better officers that I have ever run across. I started my life out in the C's by getting a bed and some clothes. And we went and got assigned to a barracks and I started learning about CC life in general, and people in particular. I think my first assignment was up on the switchbacks. I started to get acquainted with what a shovel was like and to shovel. (Laughter)

Frank: You mean, out on the farm you didn't know about shovels?

Hooten: Oh, I was well acquainted with it. The shovels they had here were just a little different. They weren't as big. (Laughter) We didn't have to move as much at a time as we did on the farm.

Frank: Well, that's interesting. Did that surprise you when it came to that sort of thing?

Hooten: No, it really didn't. Quite frankly, I didn't know what to expect. All I knew was that there was work available and that I'd be paid five dollars a month cash here and the rest would go to my folks. That was just beautiful as far as I was concerned. It gave us both a little bit of money to work with.

Frank: So you got up there on the switchbacks, and they handed you this shovel and they said, "Well, here you go."

Hooten: Yes.

Frank: What kind of direction did you get at that time?

Hooten: They told us what they expected, that the slope had to come down from a certain point on the hill and on down to the roadway. We'd work the road down to the slope with a rake and shovels to work it down to the roadway. We'd load the dirt in the truck and they'd haul it off to some unforeseen place that I never did see.

Frank: So this was more or less to maintain the road if there were rocks across the road, or was this like shoring it up?

Hooten: No. There was quite an overhang where the road had been cut into the side of the hill. There was still quite a steep overhang which had a tendency to slough and drain every time it got wet every time it rained and the dirt and rocks began to slough down into the road. It was our job to move that overhang back so that it wouldn't have such a tendency to creep down the roadway. I think we did a pretty good job because it's still about the same as when we left it. (Laughter)

Frank: Did you walk up there where you were?

Hooten: No, we went in trucks.

Frank: No, I mean since you've been here this weekend, did you get a chance..?

Hooten: I haven't done that yet. I haven't had time. There's a lot of people to talk to. But I anticipate that this afternoon when we go on a trip that'll be one of the tours they'll take us will be of that area. I worked on the roadway for... I would guess three months. At that time they had what they called permanent KP's They were paid a little extra and one good thing about it was that if you were a permanent KP you never had to work weekends; weekends and holidays were free. So that was intriguing to me because I liked my weekends free even back then. So I got into permanent KP, and from there I went in as a cook. When Parley Booth left, why I went baker.

Frank: You had to bake?

Hooten: Yes, I was the baker.

Frank: You were the fellow that if you didn't do your job, you'd have a lot of men to deal with.

Hooten: That is right. The baker of course had to have some goodies for them to eat at every meal and I should say every dinner. I didn't have to worry about lunch. That was in a paper sack, and they ate it where they found a place. Of course they had nothing in it for breakfast because if they had something like hotcakes, why that was the cook's job. The baker had pies and cakes and cookies and doughnuts.

Frank: And bread?

Hooten: (affirmatively) Bread.

Frank: Did you make bread for breakfast, lunch and supper?

Hooten: For all the meals.

Frank: Did you?

Hooten: Yes. That's why I liked hotcakes for breakfast.

Frank: (Laughter) 'Cause that was the cook's job.

Hooten: Yes.

Frank: Well, three months of labor up there on the switchbacks and you were eyeing that kitchen. So did you apprentice beneath another cook, or did you have a pretty good knack of it?

Hooten: No, I think I had a pretty good experience in teaching from my mother. I did a lot of cooking while I was at home. In fact, for a family of eight, I did most of the cooking.

I had to have pastries of some sort or other for every meal. They generally had a good idea of how many people was going to be here over a weekend, so I could prepare for that. And I could prepare or bake things in advance, too, what was wanted or needed for the weekend and if I got everything done and they had everything ready to go why Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, whenever I got done, why I was free. I didn't have to be back until Monday again. (Laughter)

Frank: You could head up the canyon or trail.

Hooten: Yeah, I could do what I wanted and go pretty much as I pleased.

Frank: Well, that's the summer of '36, and then how long were you the cook? When did you terminate here at Zion? When did you finish?

Hooten: I was here for '36, '37, '38, and I got me a job in the Utah Woolen Mills in Salt Lake in February of '39.

Frank: In the Woolen Mills up north?

Hooten: Yes.

Frank: Nice. So you baked here for almost two years?

Hooten: Yes.

Frank: Two years straight?

Hooten: Yes.

Frank: I'll be darned.

Hooten: I don't remember how many of the kids I was acquainted with went through the line, but there was a lot of them.

Frank: They knew you were there.

Hooten: They knew I was here.

Frank: So when you first would go in the morning, I mean this was the kitchen now and you were working over there in the winter, which probably was a good idea. I mean, those were cold winters. What was the cook shack like, or the cafeteria? What did you call it, first of all, or the dining hall?

Hooten: The mess hall.

Frank: The mess hall?

Hooten: Yes. The kitchen was attached to, or was built more or less in a "T" shape, and the kitchen was the "T" sticking out back there with stoves and whatnot available and there was a table set up in the front there for men to file past to get their food, or to be served their food.

Frank: So there was like a counter people would file by and you would serve it up?

Hooten: Yes.

Frank: From behind the counter?

Hooten: Yes.

Frank: In the kitchen, were these wooden stoves or gas – propane or gasoline?

Hooten: If I remember right, they were coal.

Frank: Coal stoves?

Hooten: Yes, coal. I was trying to remember if gas or oil was involved at that time, but I don't remember. I believe they were coal. The only thing I really remember was if my guard did not have my stove hot by the time I came in by three then I had a word with him. But that's one thing with the cooks involved, I had to check the menu and find out if they had to use the ovens and what stoves they needed and then they would have priority just

before the meal with enough time before the meal that they could get their work done. I had to work my shift at a time in-between because you can bake a pie or bake a cake or cook doughnuts any old time and put them in the cooler to keep them until they got ready to be served.

Frank: So you'd give the cooks the first crack at all the stoves and the ovens and that sort of thing?

Hooten: Right. Right. They had first choice. That was the one thing I never had to worry about time standing retreat or doing calisthenics or anything like that. That was for the rest of the crew. I was too busy inside cooking. (Laughter)

Frank: You were punching dough.

Hooten: Yes.

Frank: The kitchen itself. What I see in my mind is like some stainless steel sinks, ranges and some ovens, almost like a little pizza outfit, there. I envision these kinds of ovens with big drawers and bins. Do you remember at all a description of the kitchen?

Hooten: The stoves were a flat-topped stove with the ovens underneath. The pans you had, I guess they would be at least twenty-four inches, twenty-four by eighteen. Some of them would be from two inches deep to four or five inches deep. They were of some kind of iron. They were out of iron or steel, yes. They had stainless steel pots for about eighteen inches in diameter and twenty to twenty-four inches tall. That's what they'd do their cooking of potatoes or peas or beans or whatever they had to cook. Why that's what they'd cook in. Their K.P.'s would peel the potatoes. If they had fresh carrots, they'd peel the carrots, and they'd be put in there and covered with water. That'd be the last job for the KP for the day, to get the vegetables ready.

Frank: They had to get all that for the next meal.

Hooten: For the next day. Consequently, they were stored in pots and they were about yea tall and so big around.

Frank: Yea tall, so about two feet tall?

Hooten: Twenty-four inches tall and about eighteen inches in diameter. The cooks could take their vegetables from there; they were ready to be taken care of. They could either boil them or slice them or what-have-you to cook them. If they wanted to slice them, or... very seldomly we'd have fried potatoes, but quite often they'd have hash browns. They'd throw the potatoes in the pots, boil them up and then they'd cut them up or make them into hash browns. It was mostly mashed potatoes, though, very seldom boiled; and as I remember it, never ever baked. (Laughter)

Frank: No? Did you have plenty of butter around here?

Hooten: Butter was plentiful. Yes. We had plenty of butter. One reason was they didn't have the space in the oven. If I remember right, there were four stoves in there and when you're

cooking for a hundred and fifty or more people, why you have to be quite conservative of stove space and be concerned about how you're going to get it done.

Frank: Now there were two camps. By the time you arrived in 1936, there would have been two camps, one on this side of the river, and one on the other side of the river, Bridge Mountain Camp.

Hooten: Right. The one I was in was, um... On the photographs that I have is written, and on the letters I tried to find, but couldn't, the address was NP3, but everything I see around here is NP4.

Frank: NP4 would've been Bridge Mountain Camp.

Hooten: Yes, that was the one across the river.

Frank: Well, I interviewed three people, well six all together yesterday. Half of them were from this side and half of them were from the other side. (Laughter)

Hooten: Now at the time that I was here, as far as the people from Utah were concerned, they had closed the camp on this side down, and it was being used by Eastern fellows. There was a group from New York, and if I remember correctly, a group from Kentucky.

Frank: Did you cook for those fellows?

Hooten: No, they were completely different. They had their own military setup. They had their own captain, lieutenant and so on. Well, the river was a dividing line and don't get caught in the other area. (Laughter)

Frank: So it sounds like you were at Bridge Mountain, then.

Hooten: Yes. I was at Bridge Mountain Camp.

Frank: Now these were two companies, and that's about 200 men in a company, so that's about how many meals that you had to look forward to supplying your baked goods for.

Hooten: Yes.

Frank: That would be about five hundred people up here; four or five hundred people. That's a lot of food; that's a lot of daily meals. From the kitchens, where would you expect your supplies to come from?

Hooten: It was brought into the kitchen. If I remember correctly, the food or the groceries, potatoes and stuff that would keep, were trucked in weekly directly here. A lot of the fresh vegetables and things and were taken up to the lodge. They had the facilities to keep it there. They'd go up daily and bring it down.

Frank: Oh, they had refrigeration and that sort of thing up there.

Hooten: Yes. So they would make trips and most of the time it didn't concern me about where it came from. The only thing that concerned me was that it better be here.

Frank: Did you ever visit with your counterpart across the river for the other camp?

Hooten: No, I didn't. Never. There were very few incidents, but I was never involved with them at all. Once in awhile down in Springdale, we would see some of them and talk to them. That's why I say that some were from Kentucky and some were from New York, because some of the kids I talked to were from Kentucky and some of them I talked to were from New York. So frankly, I don't know where the originating point was for the whole group.

Frank: Well, I've heard quite a few stories about the camp over there from that time. I'm not going to mention anything more.

Hooten: Well, we had our differences. There's a few incidents that we had down in Springdale that we had to kind of thresh things out and get things on even keel again, but for the most part, why we stayed strictly by ourselves. We weren't involved with them.

Frank: Well, now your weekends would come up. You know, there you are and you've finished with your week's baking and you've got a couple of days on your hands. What was the way you would spend your weekends as far as entertainment or...

Hooten: I was taking some classes at that time from Von Robertson, the head shrink, I guess. But he had quite the educational program going and I took some classes through him and I was also involved in some correspondence classes. That would take up just about all the spare time that I wanted to give it here. I should say that I was willing to give it here.

Frank: Sounds like you were pretty busy.

Hooten: I never lacked for things to do, no. If I wanted to, I'd pack myself a lunch and wander up the Narrows or wherever the call of the wild was calling me. (Laughter) For the most part, though, I spent most of the time in camp reading and studying. I had a mother and grandmother that really instilled me with the desire for education. It's a good thing because I had time involved, and I gave it to what I could at the time I was here then. The program was here. It was a wonderful program, and if the kids were interested in it, why Von was a good man to take care of it.

Frank: He took an interest in his people, then.

Hooten: He was very interested in the people. I don't know what his educational background was. He had graduated; he had a degree, but what it was in, I'm not sure. But I think it was in education. He was good.

Frank: Being from Midvale or that area, you'd seen or had access to a lot of the Salt Lake City papers and that sort of thing while you were growing up. You knew you were coming down to Zion. This was a national park.

Hooten: No I didn't. (Laughs)

Frank: You didn't know you were coming down to Zion.

Hooten: We better retract a little bit. I lived in Central which is just five miles south of Richfield.

Frank: I'd put you up north, past Salt Lake.

Hooten: Well, I lived there until I was about twelve years old. Then the family moved to Salt Lake, and then the big boom hit. Dad had access to a saw mill on Cove Mountain which is east of Richfield; east of Annabella. The road that we had that was up there went up through a gully wash and it was nothing but rocks and boulders. It was carved right out of the bottom of the canyon there. We used the teaming wagon to get up to the saw mill and haul our goods up. Well, the saw mill didn't turn out. There was just barely enough cash flow involved to keep food on the table for the family and without any goodies to go buy. In the course of the time between the time that we first moved to Salt Lake and then coming down to the sawmill in the summertime, why I finished my one year of grade school, the sixth grade. Then into Junior High School, Irving Jr. High; I graduated from South High at sixteen. Well, at sixteen years old, with the job market completely flooded, there are not going to be many people willing to hire a sixteen-year-old.

Frank: It's amazing. Its like, didn't I just turn that age?

Hooten: I was seventeen at that time, looking at eighteen, and that's when dad worked with me to get me into the C's. He had to, of course, sign the papers and those other goodies.

Frank: When you came down here, did you know it was a national park?

Hooten: Yes, I knew it was a national park. Yes.

Frank: What did you know about national parks at that time? Anything in particular? Did you know visitors from the country were coming in?

Hooten: No, I knew that national parks were an interesting place to go to, to see. Yellowstone Park, we had been through there when I was fifteen. Very interesting. I was very interested in laying in the tent and hearing the bears patter around outside. (Laughter) The wildlife was the one thing that I remember strictly about Yellowstone. But there again, it didn't concern me as much as a person from the city, with my experience up at the sawmills where we'd have deer running around on the sawmill flat each morning, and they'd come down to browse in the evenings, and all kinds of wild birds, coyotes, cougars, mountain lions. I was more or less familiar with the wildlife, so that wasn't too much of a concern to me or too much of a big thrill. What did thrill me, though, was the topography, the scenery that we'd had here at Zion and also at Bryce. Incidentally, you'll no doubt know that come spring as soon as the snow left at Bryce Canyon, we packed up and went up there.

Frank: Oh! So you spent a couple months up at Bryce, then.

Hooten: Yes, we'd move in, if I remember correctly, in April and spend the summer there, and come down along in September, just before the snow flew.

Frank: You continued baking at Bryce and Zion.

Hooten: Yes. Wherever the group went, why, that's where I was. Now one summer I spent at a spike camp up at Cedar Breaks.

Frank: Then you did your baking up there?

Hooten: Yes.

Frank: Well, here you are at a spike camp now. You went from real nice stoves and a mess hall. Now what did you have to face?

Hooten: We still had the same type of stove.

Frank: Oh, is that right? Did they have a cabin?

Hooten: Yes. It was the only wood building there. It was the mess hall/mess tent. But there again, like I said, it was the only wood building there at the spike camp. But they had gone up and built it prior to moving the bunch in. They sent a work force up there to take care of whatever building was necessary to take care of us.

Frank: Well, in your free time and maybe your studying and reading, but when you did go up to the Narrows or go out to an overlook or go visit in the park areas, what do you remember about the visitors at that time to these parks? Did you speak with them? Did they speak with you about what you did?

Hooten: Yes. They were. There were some of them. Primarily, the ones that I talked to most were from the California area, from Los Angeles and they'd come up here for a trip through the parks. They would come up I guess to get away from the hustle down there, because even then, there were more people in the area. I would spend some time talking to them, and they were very impressed with the scenery, very impressed with what was going on and we'd tell them how I was involved and what they were doing and why, as much as I knew why. (Laughter)

Frank: As far as the projects that the three C's were undertaking at the time?

Hooten: Yes. Now they would show quite some interest in it, but it was the older folks that were interested in the manpower. The younger ones were just interested in... same as today... making a quick trip up the Narrows and then back out, and they'd say they'd seen the Canyon. (Laughter)

Frank: You ought to repeat that for posterity. Is that right? In some regards, you don't really notice. It's all a matter of degree, I guess. But you don't really notice that much of a difference, eh?

Hooten: No, no, no... really, the younger the people... I should qualify that. Now, the very young, by that I mean, the late teens and early twenties, they're quite interested in the scenery. Then when they get into later twenties and early thirties, then they make the quick trip up and back. They're too involved in everything else. They don't have the time to spend and enjoy things. They're more interested in being able to say when they get back home: "Oh, I was there," than they were in what they saw. So, it's really amazing, the difference in people after they reach their early fifties and sixties. They're not as involved in their lifestyle, and so they're willing to take a little more time to see what's going on around them, and want to understand and know what's going on around them.

That middle life, there's so much hustle and bustle that they don't have time to stop and look.

Frank: No one's smelling the roses, so to speak.

Hooten: That's right. That is right.

Frank: I don't know if it's pertinent to anything, but did you ever notice these visitors from California, what kind of vehicle would they be in? Is there any particular vehicle that was very popular at the time, or was predominant on the road? Is that an observation you made?

Hooten: I think that primarily the ones that I really noticed were the Buick and the Dodge. From the little bit of talking that I had the chance and questions that I had to ask, they were more likely to hold up under the trip they were taking. There were the Fords and the Chevs and whatnot. The ones that were driving in Dodges just about invariably would say, "I got this car because I wanted something that would hold up." Same way with the Buick. What specific kind of Buick or kind of Dodge, why I don't recall that and I don't think I paid very much attention as to what kind it was.

Frank: Well, It was just an interest I had. Aside from some of your hikes and doing some education projects yourself, you know studying and that sort of thing, how about any sort of sports? Did you enjoy baseball or any activities such as that?

Hooten: We had a baseball team that we had in Bryce. One time, we took a trip down into Henrieville or someplace down in there for playing a game, and we would reciprocate with the team from here or a team from there, and we'd play them. We had a lot of fun that way, but we did have a team that we kept going, the CC team, I guess. Henrieville had a team, and I guess Rockville was a little rivalry going on, but for the most part, why it was just something to get the guys out together and do some playing. We didn't have any facility, well, we did have a basketball standard, but we didn't have a basketball court. There was one pole in the ground with a hoop attached to it. We'd play 21 and a few things like that, but as far as getting a basketball team, no. But we had the baseball team and I was quite proud of it.

Frank: All right. Did you play other CCC camps in the area? There were camps at Fredonia, Pipe Spring, south of Pipe Spring.

Hooten: I don't remember having played them. I think primarily because I'd say over half the time that they were going out to make a trip to play, I was tied down in the kitchen.

Frank: Ah!

Hooten: (Laughs)

Frank: You had your work cut out for you, except for a couple of days.

Hooten: Yeah, if I knew far enough in advance to make preparations, then I could cook up ahead, like if they were going down to Fredonia to play a game, then I would have had a

chance to cook in advance to take care of it, but without those goodies sitting on the shelf, why I stayed home.

Frank: They weren't going to let you go.

Hooten: I remember one time in particular, I think it was in 1938, I wanted to go to Salt Lake for the holidays, so I had to have pies, doughnuts and some cakes to last for the holidays. I think I cooked about a hundred doughnuts. I would judge if I remembered correctly about a hundred dozen doughnuts.

Frank: A hundred dozen?! A thousand doughnuts!

Hooten: I had sheet-cakes, and I used up all the sheet-tins that I had which was two or three dozen. I filled them and left cake for them.

Frank: And some of the KP fellows aside from yourself, they got the chore of doing the dishes. You know, the washing. You didn't have to wash your own pans.

Hooten: No, I'd dirty a pan and throw it over and let them have at it. (Chuckles)

Frank: Well, that sounds like the way to go.

Hooten: Yes. I think that's one reason I enjoyed it so much. (Laughter) I could do the work and make the mess and leave it for them to clean up.

Frank: Well, that way, you start working in the kitchen, you know, the next thing you know it, I don't know, what is the work, you know? Is it the making or the cleaning? Everyone I imagine in a family, or wherever you're at, everyone's got their favorite and their un-favorite thing to eat. Did you ever find anything that seemed to go fast in the CCC camp? Or one thing that the fellows wouldn't eat if it was the last thing in the camp, you know? Or did most of your food, whatever you baked, just go?

Hooten: Most of it went, and as far as cooking is concerned, I guess SOS is one of the things that was least desirable.

Frank: I've heard it named two other things than S.O.S. I haven't heard that yet.

Hooten: But for the most part, you put a kid up on a slope and have him spend eight hours up there, and the lunch that he has is a sack lunch with a couple of sandwiches in it and an apple or pear, or whatever happens to be in season. When he comes back, he's ready to eat, and it doesn't make too much difference what's set in front of him.

Frank: But S.O.S., or chipped beef on toast, wasn't one of the more popular dishes.

Hooten: No, it really wasn't. It wasn't as popular as, well, you have oh steaks and liver wasn't too popular, but they got it every so often and hamburger, such as that. They were the more popular. Of course, you make up a bunch of steaks and throw them in the oven to keep them warm, why sometimes they aren't too desirable. But, you take those same steaks and cover them with sauce and put them out as chicken-fried steaks, why they really went then.

Frank: Getting back to something we lightly touched on earlier: Here we are, Dad says, “Well, I’m really supporting you going into the three Cs, and you go in, and you’ve been here now for a while and that money is going back to the family. You had how many brothers and sisters again?”

Hooten: I had three brothers and four sisters.

Frank: And that money went back home?

Hooten: Yes.

Frank: Did they ever write to you, and did you ever understand what that was doing up there for them? How did that all come into play? What was that money doing for them? And how did you feel about that?

Hooten: I felt very good about it. Mom, bless her heart, was determined that she was going to put the money aside for me so that when I got out, I could use that to go to college. Well, she developed cancer, and naturally, they needed the money. I was thankful it was available for them to make life a little easier. No, as far as what they did with the money was concerned, when we were home, all the money that was made went into a pool to keep the family going, and the same way here. I was very happy to support and give a little extra to them. Like I say, Mom was dead set that she was going to put that money aside and save up for me for my further education, but I was extremely happy that it was available.

I expressed interest in getting an accordion, and she sent me enough for that, and one time when I was at home, why she asked me something about the thin clothes I had, and I said, “Well, I said, well a suit would be kind of nice to have.” I got that. But those are the two primary things that I remember getting personally, that the money didn’t go for family use. As far as feeling put out that I should have a little more or have some coming in out of the money I was earning, I never seen it. I didn’t know anything about it! I had five dollars in my wallet and that was all I needed.

Frank: Did you get that accordion?

Hooten: Yes, I got the accordion.

Frank: Did you have it down here for a while with the three Cs while you were here?

Hooten: I played it a little bit, not much, but there wasn’t anybody around here that could give me lessons, and I had to pick up as much as I could. I had some lessons after I got out and then the darn thing got wet and ruined and I didn’t get a chance to get it refinished. So we had a wonderful time, though.

Frank: So, that accordion. That’s too bad. There were some fellows who were talking about one fellow that had a clarinet, and he would play it at dances. So I was wondering if you guys had been here around the same time and if it were possible that you might have played together in a band or something along those lines.

Hooten: I think that was Ren Barton that had the clarinet, but I'm not sure. But it was enjoyable. They'd get together for a song-fest ever so often. I believe that for the most part, after retreat was over with and they had their bellies full, they were ready for the most part to go to bed. We'd go back to the barracks and chew the fat and play some cards, but I do not remember very many of them going into Springdale that being the closest town, is naturally where they went. They'd go down to Evan's Pub quite often.

Frank: Evan's Pub? Uh-oh!

Hooten: That was a big joint.

Frank: Where's that at?

Hooten: You know where the old church is in Springdale? That was sitting right to the side of the creek across the street.

Frank: Well, that must have been a bone of contention, huh?

Hooten: No. Not to my knowledge. I spent my share of time down there, so...

Frank: Did you? You tip a few every-so-often, or...?

Hooten: Yes. I'd go down maybe once a week and have a couple of drinks, have a couple of beers. At that time, like the comment that was made last night at the fireside, beer had just come into public use and...

Frank: So beer got back into the public.

Hooten: Yes, when Roosevelt did away with that eighteenth amendment or whatever, they started having beer around here, and at five cents a glass, well, you can't go too far wrong.

Frank: Oh, I guess not.

Hooten: And another thing that attracted me down there was Evan's daughter. I was quite interested with Myrtle for quite some time, and she was a lovely girl. We got along just fine, and he didn't approve of me drinking very much, so consequently, I didn't drink very much. I think that was one of the things that kept me from drinking too much, was the fact that I was going with her. About once a week, they would have dances down at Springdale. We would really enjoy ourselves down there. At that time, I never could see a point in wasting time and drinking a beer when I could be dancing.

Frank: In Myrtle's arms, eh?

Hooten: Not only Myrtle. There were several girls here that I really enjoyed their company.

Frank: What did we forget to talk about? We're touching on a lot of subjects here, but is there something that you want remembered about the three Cs and your particular experience?

Hooten: The things that I really remember best. There were experiences I had coming down the switchbacks with one of the truck drivers. He swore that each time he came from Cedar

Breaks, up around the loop to come down through the tunnel, that each time he wanted to come down five minutes quicker. That got kind of scary a couple of times. But for the most part, I remember the windows they had at areas in the tunnel, and I was quite disappointed when they sealed off some of those. They didn't have them sealed during my time here, but I remember hiking up there and going up to the overlook windows there and looking out. At that time, you didn't have to worry so much about traffic, three or four cars a day is what it seemed like. I remember that and I'm disappointed that in later years they found it necessary to seal those off.

One thing that I remember very much was a snowstorm they had up here in about '37, that dumped about three feet of snow here. Of course, they didn't last long. We had to clear the roads from that, and the spring runoff at that time was terrific. We just about lost our bridge across the river at that time.

I really can't say any one particular thing, or at any one given moment at that time that I do want to remember, except the whole experience. The whole experience of the CCCs is one the outstanding things in my life. I don't know of a program that the government has initiated since then that has been anywhere to compare to it. The Job Corps that they have now is a farce, as far as I'm concerned, and I think that they wanted to pattern it after the Cs, but there's no comparison whatsoever. It gave the men and the young kids at that time a chance to earn a living. They'd come off the street. You give a kid at that age clothing and a place to sleep and food to eat and drink, that's the necessities of life, and if you give him a little bit of pocket money, why that's all he's going to ask for. Then you give him supervision that tells him, "Okay, ten o' clock at night you be here and go to bed." And, "Six o' clock in the morning, you get up and have some breakfast and get ready to go to work. And when you're working you don't just stand there and pull faces, you work!" With supervision like that, you can't beat it. And the kids at the time, I can truly say that I don't really know of one kid that really threw over the traces and got into trouble over it. It just wasn't in the cards. They knew that if they didn't measure up to it, that there was ten kids waiting to come and take his place.

So I think that the CC program as it was set up and administered was the best thing that has ever happened to this country. I can't think of a program that can beat it.

Frank: Did you serve after the Three Cs? After your time, did you serve in the war also?

Hooten: Yes, I didn't volunteer. I was working a Remington Arms when I got my draft notice call, and on June the 9th, I remember very well. It was the day before my wedding anniversary, I was inducted into Fort Douglas, and that was in '44. I went up for my induction at Fort Douglas, spent three days there. Each day they'd line us all up and say, "You, and you, and you, report 'someplace'."

(Ends abruptly)