

Don Horn
Zion National Park Oral History Project
CCC Reunion
September 28, 1989

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Al Warneke: My name is Al Warneke and I'm the interviewer here on this interview. The interviewee is Don Horn. The date is September 28, 1989, and the interview is being conducted at the Nature Center in Zion National Park in Utah. Okay, Mr. Horn, if you could give me some idea of when you came into the CCC.

Don Horn: I came in in the spring of 1933, one of the first people into this camp when it was organized here in Zion Park. I came from St. George. That's where I lived at that time.

Al Warneke: What were you doing in St. George before you joined the CCC?

Don Horn: Well, that was during the depression, and I wasn't doing very much of anything. I'd been digging irrigation ditches temporarily for the farmers there. That's all there was to do at that time, but I needed a job real bad. (Chuckles)

Al Warneke: Do you remember the exact date, your enrollment date?

Don Horn: No, I don't remember that date; it was in the spring of 1933.

Al Warneke: Did you spend any time up at the Blue Spring Camp before you came down to Zion?

Don Horn: No, we came here first and spent the summer. We got organized here and then they loaded us up to Blue Springs to the camp up there in a tent camp.

Al Warneke: Did you help with the construction of the first camp here in Zion?

Don Horn: No, I didn't.

Al Warneke: What was your job with the CCC?

Don Horn: Well, to begin with, I was kind of a carpenter/maintenance man here in the camp. Then later I drove truck and various things. I never did get into pick and shovel work. I usually had a pretty good job now and then.

Al Warneke: You were lucky then you didn't get any pick and shovel work.

Don Horn: (laughs) I guess.

Warneke: You did some maintenance on the camp. When you were driving the truck, what were you doing then? Were you hauling people around or were you hauling materials or what?

Horn: Well, I was hauling materials. We worked some up on the switchbacks going up to the tunnel, repairing the road and various things such as that. That was the main job that I had mostly that and driving a truck and carpentry work.

Warneke: How long were you in the CCCs?

Horn: I was in for a year; that was minimum time you could stay at that time. At the end of that year I left and went down to Hoover Dam and had a job there.

Warneke: So you did work on the Hoover Dam?

Horn: Yes, I spent a year and a half there on the Hoover Dam, part of 1934 and 1935.

Warneke: Now you say you helped with the work on the switchbacks. Is that when they were grading switchbacks and grading the slopes?

Horn: No, just maintenance work on the switchbacks. They had been graded before that time. I don't know the exact date it was put in, but it was prior to that.

Warneke: Did you have anything to do with the construction of the warehouse up in the maintenance area, the stonecutting and that sort of thing?

Horn: No.

Warneke: Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like in camp here, that is to say what were the conditions like and what did you all do for entertainment and how were the boys?

Horn: Well it was a good, fun time. They were good boys most of them. A lot of [them were] young at that time. I was 24 years old when I came in, but there was a lot of younger men than me and quite a few older ones too. It was a fun time. We had a good time here. We had entertainment on weekends and in the evenings at times. They gave us time off to go into Hurricane every weekend if we wanted to go. We'd go to dances or a movie or whatever. It was a fun time. We enjoyed it very much.

Warneke: Who were your supervisors? Do you remember their names?

Horn: I don't know. No, I don't remember that.

Warneke: Okay. What was it like living in the camp with the guys; did everybody get along pretty well?

Horn: Mostly everybody did. Yeah, we were so close together that we always had to get along. We had bunks one above the other in rows for I don't know how long [the rows were]. I don't know how big the buildings there were, but there were a lot of men in each building. It got quite cold there in the wintertime, too, because they had stoves every so often in the buildings to keep us warm in the winter, coal stoves. We had a good time. I think everybody enjoyed it.

Warneke: How do you feel about your CCC experience?

Horn: Well, I'm glad I had it. I've always thought a lot about it over the years, but I'm glad that I went into it. I enjoyed it.

Warneke: Do you feel proud of having been part of that time?

Horn: Yes, I do.

Warneke: I can understand that. I had an uncle that was in the CCCs in Arkansas. He's still alive now and I enjoy talking to him about the projects that they conducted there.

Horn: We had good times here. Everybody did their share I think. We did a lot of good work, I believe, while we were here.

Warneke: What have you done subsequently? Did you move back to St. George?

Horn: Well, I went from here down to Hoover Dam and spent a year and a half there working on the power house down at the bottom of the canyon. That was spring in 1934. They were just starting work on the base of the power house at that time. That's where I worked for a year and a half. I started out on the graveyard shift. It was hot day and night down there at that time of year.

Warneke: Right. I'll bet it was.

Horn: The elevation's something over 6,000 [sic] feet there in the bottom of the canyon. The dam was pretty well finished when I left. We had a little celebration there on top of the dam when it was completed, the dam itself. This was lots of work after that being done, but it was completed to the top where the road went across while I was there. We also had a visit from President Roosevelt while we were there. He came out and visited us at the dam. I started there as a carpenter. I grew up with a father who was a carpenter and I learned a little something about this. So that's how I started out at Hoover Dam as a carpenter. We were making a good wage at the time, 75cents an hour.

Warneke: Uh-huh (Chuckles) Well, you know that's really not too bad. I remember making 75 cents back in the 1950's when I was working at a drugstore.

Horn: Well.

Warneke: Beats not having anything at all doesn't it?

Horn: It was a job, yes, a good job.

Warneke: While you were here, I understand you made \$30 a month and sent \$25 home.

Horn: That's right. It went home to my family.

Warneke: I'll bet they were appreciative of that.

Horn: Yes, that was hard times at that time during the depression. Everybody had a hard time, I think. But then, my mother saved it for me and when I got through she sent me money to go down to Las Vegas to go to work at Hoover Dam.

Warneke: And you live in Utah now? Where do you live now?

Horn: St. George.

Warneke: You live in St. George?

Horn: We lived mostly in northern Utah for a number of years and then down here.

Warneke: What do you do now?

Horn: I'm retired now, but I've been a contractor for a number of years, a building contractor. Now I'm retired; I don't do anything.

Warneke: What do you do for pleasure?

Horn: Well, that's hard to find anything to do for pleasure. I'm not a golfer; I don't enjoy sports, but I just do whatever I like to do.

Warneke: You said they organized some activities for you all, and you had weekend passes to Hurricane.

Horn: Yes, we had activities here every week. I'd leave on the weekend; I'd leave and go to other places.

Warneke: What did you usually do at night in the week after work?

Horn: Oh, we'd get together as a group and some of the boys would play poker and others would watch and we did such things like that, visiting each other.

Warneke: You had approximately 200 people in the camp?

Horn: I'd say something like that, yes.

Warneke: Do you remember anything about your supervisors, about the military men that ran the camp?

Horn: Well, I remember we were under military rule. We had a bugle to get us up in the morning and we had lights out at night at a certain time. So it was kind of under the army. We had, of course, a civilian supervisor on the work.

Warneke: Did they employ a lot of boys for supervisors from the local area?

Horn: No, they had one superintendent, then he had assistants, but yes, some of those were from local areas, yes.

Warneke: Do you remember the Park Service employees, then, did you have any contact with them?

Horn: No, I didn't remember any of those. I don't remember very many names of the people I associated with either. I remember the men, but I don't remember the names.

Warneke: It's been a long time ago.

Horn: A long time.

Warneke: Mrs. Horn's here with us also, and I'd like to give her an opportunity to make any comments that she'd like to make. Is there anything in particular that you wanted to add to what Mr. Horn's given us?

Mrs. Horn: No, I don't believe I do. It's all new to me. I've never heard him tell about his experiences with the CCC, so this is all new to me same way as with you.

Warneke: When did you get married?

Mrs. Horn: June 1, 1940.

Warneke: 1940.

Mrs. Horn: Yes, we've got our fifty year coming up.

Warneke: You sure do, don't you. You've got 49 in.

Mrs. Horn: Yes, 50 years the first of June.

Warneke: Next summer. Are you a resident of St. George?

Mrs. Horn: Yes. I was born in Willard, Utah, just a little town just north of Brigham City. Not north, south.

Warneke: Yes

Mrs. Horn: That's where I was born. I met Don in Willard when he came up there on a construction job. That's where I met him.

Warneke: Well, thank you very much.

Mrs. Horn: You're welcome. It's been a fun time down here today.

Warneke: Are you all going to stay for both days.

Horn: Yes, I may come back down tomorrow.

Warneke: Are you signed up for the bus ride around the camp?

Horn: No, I've seen everything here, many times.

Warneke: Have you visited up here a lot?

Horn: Oh, yes.

Warneke: What did you think about having a camp right here in Zion? It's kind of a pretty place, isn't it?

Horn: Oh yes, the ideal place to be. We enjoyed on the mountain too, at Blue Springs were we camped in the summer. It was a fun time up there.

Warneke: So you all came down here and got organized and spent the spring here, and then your first summer you all moved back up to Blue Springs?

Horn: Back up to Blue Springs, yes.

Warneke: You remember when they moved?

Horn: No, I don't remember the dates, but it was after the snow left up there and it got a little warm, so they could work and they moved up there.

Warneke: What was the camp like up there as opposed to down here?

Horn: Well, it was a tent camp, a hundred percent, but it was a good camp. They enjoyed it there. Had a cook tent and everything like that, so we got to have our meals. It was an enjoyable time. We had a lot of fun up there.

Warneke: Speaking of meals, what was the food like in camp?

Horn: It's too long ago; I don't remember.

Warneke: Okay. It wasn't bad, though?

Horn: No, it wasn't bad. It was good. I remember while we were camped up there we hiked down the Narrows, a bunch of us boys one day and came to here and went back in the trucks. It was quite an experience for us.

Warneke: That's the most popular thing to do when people come here. They all invariably come up. I worked in the visitor's center, and they come up and want to hike down the Narrows.

Horn: Sometimes it's a pretty rough trip.

Warneke: Yes.

[End of interview.]