

Norman Hull and Paul Lemon
Zion National Park Oral History Project
CCC Reunion
28 September 1989

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Norman Hull: We're at Zion's National Park and this is the 28th of September, 1989. I'm Norman Hull from Hooper, Utah, and I came here in the CCC's on the 28th of July 1934. And it's warm today, but it was hot that day. When we came, there was one camp here, and there was a lot of weeds and rattlesnakes. They did have a crew in there—maybe you was there; I don't know—that partially cleaned it up, but we had to finish cleaning it up. And there was rattlesnakes here and a lot of weeds, but it wasn't only just a day or two—there was two hundred and fifty of us, so even if we'd cleared just a stick a piece away, it didn't take long. And so we settled in, and the first job I was on—and the foreman was named Bill Miller, and he's from Washington, and I was here eight months, and he was my foreman the whole time.

Carolyn Hinton: Where are you from, Mr. Hull?

Norman Hull: Hooper, Utah. We started up at the Temple of Sinewava. They'd built a wall, but it was a hole on both sides. There was six on a crew if I remember right. They had six crews—thirty-six of us—went up there and the only gravel—fill—we could get was across the river, so we put planks up near that table there across the water and there's bars on the river, see, and we shoveled it in the wheelbarrows and wheeled them up there. Because I was a farmer and used to work in them, I had several from Salt Lake, why, they made me lead of one of the crews; they had a lead for every one. Jake Lucas was a straw boss on all of them, and Bill Miller was over him.

Carolyn Hinton: How many in a lead?

Norman Hull: There was six crews, see, and they had a lead man on each one, and I was on this crew. And then we started a contest to see how many could run the most wheelbarrows in a day, and I'd run with that wheelbarrow. Can you imagine? And I think we was up there three weeks—or something like that—to a month. We filled that whole area up with wheelbarrows and all that bar till it was all level. And we wasn't allowed—if tourists or anybody come—we wasn't allowed to go and bother the tourists. I know that.

Carolyn Hinton: Were there very many tourists there?

Norman Hull: Yeah, there was quite a few people that would come there and go up to the Narrows, but it was 118. It got as high as a hundred and eighteen degrees right in that box canyon, and I didn't wear a shirt. Every once in a while, my skin would peel off like a snake, I guess. I'd shed, it was that hot. That isn't good for you, though, but [it's] a wonder I don't have more skin cancer than I got. But we finished that, and then we started—I think they tried several crews—on making these crib piers down, like he said, on the river turns because they was a road, and they'd come into the highway, even, and they picked Bill's crew, and we made cribs all the way down this river, and they was sixteen feet wide at the bottom, and I think they was about ten feet tall and three feet at

the top, and we'd make it all level, and these guys or somebody'd haul them from the rock quarry and we'd nail them right up. We'd even shape them just like a building. We'd try to see who could do the prettiest ones. So we wanted to get on from it one time, so they said the only way maybe we could do it is to do a sloppy-class job—you know, we'd build one in half the time almost. And, boy, they came and pat us on the back, and we didn't do that anymore. I remember that, just happened to think of it now. And so we stayed on until it was done. Then in the winter, the park—I don't know, a hundred miles or so around us, around Zion's—they needed to replace a lot of posts, so they took Bill's crew, and I don't remember whether they had another crew—and we had to go clear up through the tunnel every day, clear out the East entrance. And we'd get up there about nine thirty—took that long to travel—and then we'd have to go all over them hills looking for posts, and they had to be ten feet long and four inches at the top, so it was big, just like corner posts—all of them. And we'd run around them hills. And there was a fellow named Paul Hardy. Him and I used to have contests, and he'd beat me. He cut forty-two one day, and the most I ever cut was thirty-eight. The average was five! But I'll tell you the secret of it. They'd bring the axes in every night, and they'd take it to the machine shop, and he'd put a feather edge on it, and it'd be dull in a few licks, see. Paul and I would go there and grind ours way back, and we had a lot sharper ax a lot longer. That's how we could do it. And I remember one day, I was way out there—I don't know, you just keep going over one hill after another—and I got lost. I got away from the rest of them, and I couldn't tell how to get out of there—and I was supposed to go down at 3:30, you know—and I got to running, and I just run around the hill and I swear to this day I run around like that, and I came back and there was cat tracks like that right in my tracks.

Hinton: Mountain lion?

Hull: But I never did see him. I know they was mountain lions here. "But I have an ax," I thought. "Boy, he's got him trouble." Finally I come over the hill, and I could see the trucks, and, boy, I was happy. I thought maybe I'd be out there all night, you know. If you get lost . . . I never had any directions, just had to go on what I was thinking.

But I'll tell you one thing they had. The captain was named Captain Kennedy, and he had a problem with partying—he was single. We called him the Little Banty Rooster, and he drank quite a bit, and he'd party—if any big shots would come, he'd party with them. I don't know him personally. But anyway, I think they gave him the mess fund. The government, he'd say it'd take so many hundreds or thousands of dollars to feed us, and they give him the fund, and he went and bought it. I know distinctly he got on a party and wrecked his car—tipped it over—'cause the dog robber, you know, the—

Paul Lemon: Yeah.

Hull: What do they call them??

Hinton: What's a dog robber?

Hull: He's not a valet—the guy that [helped the officers].

Paul Lemon: They had certain—they had two fellas in the kitchen that were to help the captain and the lieutenants, and they ate away from everybody else. And they had the best celery and the best carrots and a little bit of . . .

Hull: Yeah. That's right.

Lemon: And they had silverware that they used for them. And this Stouffer, he was one of those. We called them dog robbers; they was just . . .

Hull: Yeah, Bill Stouffer was there for a while, but they'd take care of them at night—took care of his quarters, see, and everything. He'd put him to bed. He'd come back. If he were drunk, why, he'd put them to bed—he said he'd done it a lot of times—and, boy, sometimes he was awful ornery in the morning, that captain. He'd line us all up—we'd all line at attention like we was in the military. Now, before I got off, they was going to start giving us guns of some kind—wooden guns—and train us, see. But we wasn't in the service, so that's why it was called Civilian Conservation Corps. And they didn't make us military. They never did, did they?

Lemon: When you had to line up, you had to take your calisthenics every morning—all of that.

Hull: We didn't.

Lemon: You didn't?

Hull: No. They lined us up, and we had roll to take, and like that, but we didn't have to go through anything else.

Lemon: We had the calisthenics, and we had the regular monthly inspections.

Hull: But we went up there for two weeks—and that was the hardest winter we had in January, and there was two feet of snow—cutting posts . . .

Hinton: What year? Was that '36 and '37?

Hull: No this is the winter of '34 and '35—January of '35—and most of the guys got sick. I didn't happen to until he wouldn't give us any boots or nothing, see? And so finally they were eighty at the sick call. I went even if I wasn't sick. And, you know, in two hours we all had boots, and we'd just as well have had them the whole time. But that's just the way some men are—you can't blame the CCCs for that it was just this military man. Now, I understand—I talked to some men after—that they finally had to get rid of that captain later on, but he got up higher. But I think he just went overdone till they finally had to—[coughs] Excuse me. And then when it'd get better weather, we'd build a big campground right here and rock fireplaces.

Hinton: Over here at the canyon . . . visitor center.

Hull: Right here just south of . . . And we spent several months there. We'd run clear down almost, well, it was all in *here*. I might say for entertainment, I played baseball, and the

reason I quit is because one of the foremans [sic] had me a job, he said, pitching baseball for baseball at Provo, and I was looking for a job. So I got out in eight months, and then they wouldn't give me a job. But I played a lot of horseshoes, and I hiked on every one of these mountains. I wasn't on Steamboat Mountain or the Great White Throne. The Great White Throne—no one had been on it. I climbed Mount Zion, or Lady Mountain, they used to call it, and it's got two thousand feet of cable on it— you know, steps—and Jack Lucas about—I think there was four of us started up there—and Jack was a straw boss, and he wasn't in as good a shape because he didn't work much, see. And so I got ahead of them, and I just couldn't go their speed. So I'd go up ahead, and every once in a while, I'd stop, and here they'd come a-puffing up there, and as soon as they'd get there, I'd get up and go. And he'd—he got after me! When I got up on top the first time, I got up there in thirty-five minutes, and the record was thirty, and I wasn't even trying for the record. It was just some of the entertainment. I went on—started with eight guys—and we went way over to this—not Mukuntuweap—but up in Rockville. It was a thirteen-mile hike, and we done it in nine to five. And there was one guy, Paul Hardy, stayed with me, and I was so tired I couldn't eat when I got back. All I ate was two halves of peaches. I never took any water, see. You know that places now like Job Corps, if they went anywhere, they had all the facilities and everything. We didn't have that.

Hinton: Didn't have a canteen with you?

Hull: I drank out of horse tracks along the side of the river. We'd had shots for TB, and so [Chuckles] But I had a lot of fun and really enjoyed it. But we didn't—that's when you can have fun without any money.

Hinton: What do you think that the CCCs did for you?

Hull: It helped to build me to associate with other kids, see—to see all different kinds of kids. I think it's good to meet a lot of different—from all different areas. I think it's great. And it taught me how to enjoy life and do things without a lot of money, and so I never was too much for education. I come from a family of twelve—six brothers older than me, I'm the youngest boy—but I always liked to work. But even at that, I don't think I've been too much of a failure. I got married, I got eleven kids and forty grandkids and three great-grandkids, and I've never been on welfare. I still farm in Hooper about fifty-seven acres.

Hinton: Where did you go when you left the CC camp?

Hull: Went back to Hooper. Just to show you how short money was, I got married in 1940, and I worked on a NYA for eighteen dollars a month, and I had to work—let's see—eight days a month. That was really a poverty thing. In 1941, the third of June, I started at (?) by loading bombs, and I worked through a lot of the World War II. I wasn't drafted. I got in 1A, and I had two children, and I went over to the draft board, and when I got home, I was in 1A. They wanted me to buy a bunch of cows, and I said, "No, I won't do it." I told them, I said, "If I should be in the service, put me in the service. If I'm not" Why, in two weeks, I got a 2C, and I never heard from them again. Anyway, then I farmed and worked for forty-five years. I didn't make enough farming. And then I wound up at Hill Air Base and retired from there as an aircraft mechanic. That was a good job.

Hinton: Where are you, now?

Hull: I'm still at Hooper. I still farm, and I love farming. I've had the best crops that I ever had this year.

Hinton: So when you came down to Zion, this was probably your first experience?

Hull: Never been away from home before.

Hinton: What was your impression?

Hull: Well, I thought it was the end of the world! [Laughs] Really, you know, it was like kids going in the service—you know, you don't know what to expect. But it was all Utah kids and good kids. We had a good time. Now, maybe some of the camps where they come out of rough New York or something had a little problem, but I belong to the Ogden chapter now, and the ones that come to that are Easterners that came to Willard and built Ogden Bay down there below Hooper and all the flood controls in Willard, and everything. And they're all good guys, and they come from the East, so there was good kids everywhere. But I really enjoyed it, but if you've got to have money to enjoy life, then you don't go in there.

Carolyn Hinton: I'm Carolyn Hinton interviewing with Mr. Hull, and Mr. Lemon is still here also with us. Mr. Lemon, do you have any more experiences that you've thought about that you'd like to share?

Lemon: You were not supposed to have any cars in the park here as a CC camp boy, and still some of them would get a car and hide it out in the trees, and so forth. And so one time, one of the fellows took us back—this was the second time around—took us to Panguitch every other week with this extra ten dollars a month I was getting from these other guys for them not wanting KP. He gave us a ride back to Panguitch with some Richfield guys: a Platt from Richfield—he had a brother, Roland, and George—they were from Richfield; there was a Darrel Settle (?), Lloyd Hansen—those were all kids from Richfield they were in the second time I was in. So we'd ride up there, and I'd get off at Panguitch and visit my girlfriend at that time, stay in a hotel for a dollar a night, and eat for twenty-five cents at a buffet, and I think Forrest Hooten or some of those guys along with me, and we'd share that dollar a night, you see. This one time, this guy by the name of Parsons married a girl from just out of Richfield there, and he later became a—owned a bakery there in Richfield. He married a girl, and he never came back, so we were left up there AWOL. So we had to get back the best way we could, and we weren't penalized too much because of it. We didn't get back until Monday afternoon, when we should have been back Sunday. . Another time in Bryce Canyon, a bunch of us—we weren't supposed to leave camp this particular day, but the girls down in Panguitch had planned a little party, and so, gosh—we went AWOL: we sneaked out of camp and went down there. And a fellow by the name of Frank Ott had a little Model A with a rumble seat in it—we'd call them "mother-in-law seats." And so we all went down to this little old car of his, and on the way back, as we were coming into the park, a big old deer came down the middle of the road and charged us. So he hit the deer, and he fell off alongside the road,

and we went limping on back into camp, and he hid his car out in the trees someplace. The next day, one of the rangers come around, looking around, and said, “Hey! You know who hit a deer up here?” And the captain said, “Wasn’t any of my boys—they were all restricted. Nobody could leave camp. It wasn’t any of my boys.” So we were listening because it was in the kitchen where we were. We were listening, but we never did own up to it. This deer saw those headlights and came right down the middle of the road, and he just hit him with left fender, and he fell off in the middle of the road.

Hull: [Laughs] I had a lot of experiences with different things that didn’t hardly . . . I remember . . . I’ll tell you one on me. When we’d come in on the trucks, we had a big shower house, but it was 250 of us, and we used to start taking our shoes off while we was still in the trucks, see. We’d head into the barracks as hard as we could run and take our clothes off, put a towel around, and head for the showers, see. This one day, I came down the steps, and they had this pea gravel there, and there was a whole load of girls from Toquerville there at the crossing. And I looked at them and missed a step and fell right on that gravel, and, boy, I took out of there.

There’s nothing—anything more scenic than to be here in Zion with a big rainstorm. You ever been here in a big rainstorm?

Hinton: Yes, I have.

Hull: The waterfalls is something else, isn’t it?

Lemon: And if you go up through the canyon, through the tunnel—Checkerboard Mountain—the water really runs off natural.

Hull: I’ve walked through that tunnel several times up there and back.

Lemon: One time when I lived in California, I related in my interview that we went through here, and I’d go through Zions, even if it was night. One time, we just got out of the first tunnel—it was a mile long, the first tunnel was—and right at the end of it here was a deer right in the middle of the road. And my kids and my wife were all young, and so I kicked around and woke them up. And they viewed that deer, and he just stood in the road and shivered a little bit right in front of the car, and then, finally, he took off the other way. I remember them talking about a deer coming down into the tunnel one time, got frightened, and jumped out one of the windows. Since then, they’ve boarded those windows up so you can’t look out there.

Hull: I know I’ve seen deer down below there where they’d get shot. I’ll tell you one other thing. Bill Miller said he was going to bet a hundred dollars that he was going to put me against any man in the camp to work, and we was going to have a contest on a Saturday. And I talked to him and talked to him, and I finally talked him out of it just because I didn’t want to do it. But he said, “I’ll put you against any man, and I’ll bet a hundred dollars on a contest.” I don’t know how he’d have swung it, but . . .

Lemon: I’ve worked for Bill Miller a little while, and then I worked for Johnny Excel down here in the rock quarry the rest of the time, and then I went in the kitchen and finished it out

there that first time. And then Miller—the second time, one of Miller’s sons came in when we were on the East side of the river. He had a son in there. And, boy, that guy could play the piano. He could really play the piano, just real good. We enjoyed things like that.

Hull: I’ll tell you, I’d had a tooth broke off when I was eight years old, and they said they couldn’t fix it then. When I was here and I was eighteen, there was a dentist come in here. He said he’d had a nervous breakdown or something—not too old a guy—he put gold in that tooth, capped it, you know, fixed all my teeth, and I think it was four and a half he charged me. And I took two months for me to pay it up. You couldn’t even talk to a dentist now for I don’t know.

Hinton: So both of you’d say CCC camps were good experience for boys and would recommend something like that today?

Hull: I don’t think that it’d hurt any kid of any walk of life, boy. I think it’d be good for anyone.

Lemon: Like I say, I haven’t seen Norman since he left here, and that’s been—1945.

Hull: It’s been 54 or 5 years ago.

Lemon: Yeah. I’ve seen Carl Stokes and Russell Taylor, some of those guys, quite regularly. Every two or three years, I see some of them. But I haven’t seen Norman in that length of time.

Hull: Yeah, Carl lived right by me, on the same road, for years, but he lives here up by Virgin or somewhere.

Lemon: Yeah, he’s got a little place down there in Virgin.

Hull: Stays here some weeks.

Lemon: He likes it well enough that he came down here and built a little winter home. So he comes down here for part of the winter. Other times, he comes down to Yuma, Arizona, so I’ve seen him once or twice down in Arizona.

Hull: I’ve talked to several men up there [who] said they thought the CCCs done more than any organization they ever had for the youth. They really did. Of course, you can’t measure by money, but I mean they really done something.

Hinton: Building character.

Lemon: You bet.

Hull: They built things too. They—all over the United States, there’s every place where the CCCs have been ’cause I talked to a lot of men, you know, from Arkansas, all over, the things they done. I know they built that bird refuge and dikes, and they saved Willard, Utah. It used to flood all the time, and they went up in the mountains and built flood

controls so the water could come down, and they built it so the water would come down one area. It used to flood. I went up to Willard when there was mud all over the highway, and they fixed it so it doesn't now.

Lemon: You still got a little more?

Hinton: Well, we really appreciate talking to both of you today. And you're back in Hooper, and you're back in Mesa, Arizona.

Lemon: Mesa, Arizona, before we moved.

Hinton: And we look forward to more reunions. Will you come to more reunions?

Hull: I'd like to.

Hinton: Do both of you come back and visit the park quite regularly?

Hull: Well, I was here two years ago, I think, with one of my grandsons. We'd been to Las Vegas. He was in a soccer tournament and we came out through here. And I showed him where we worked and what not. It was really interesting. I couldn't show him the things we'd done because they was gone now.

Hinton: A lot of them.

Hull: Even those cribs. I didn't see how they could ever wash them away.

Lemon: No. Maybe they're covered over with dirt by now.

Hull: They must be. I just can't believe how they could disappear.

Lemon: Probably not.

Hull: Maybe they was all filled in with it now.

Lemon: The process of erosion takes . . .

Hull: But that fill there at Sinewava is still there.

Lemon: Yeah. Still there.

Hull: They can't get away from that. I walked up them Narrows. You been up them Narrows?

Lemon: Yeah.

Hull: And you walked right around, you know, that big wall up there. That river is . . . that isn't over several hundred feet wide there, is it? The river's right on the other side there—goes right around like that. But quicksand, we had to watch for quicksand. But this is a beautiful place to be, but it's—I don't know—but it seems like now people has got to have bars and what not. We got by on the scenery and made our own entertainment. That

was the only trouble about having kids now is the entertainment and is trying to take care of them. We didn't have to have that.

Hinton: You made your own entertainment.

Hull: We made our own entertainment. Oh, they had horseshoes and a few things like that; we could play softball or baseball, but they didn't take me anywhere other than to Las Vegas to play in a CC tournament. We won that thing, too, but that was the only time they took us in the truck or anything. We'd have to walk to it or don't go.

Lemon: We'd go to dances down in Hurricane, and a lot of you guys would dance.

Hull: I didn't do it. I didn't dance, no.

Lemon: Scared of the women, I guess?

Hull: Yeah. I was scared to death of girls.

Hinton: [Laughs]

Lemon: Now all those folks and Russell Taylor there, they dance all the time. They belonged to groups, and then you couldn't get them out on the dance floor. They were frightened to death.

[End of recording]