

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

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Don Graff: Today, I'm interviewing Don Laub. This is taking place at ten o'clock in the morning at the Nature Center. It is September 28, 1989. Why don't we just start off by asking you where you are from?

Don Laub: Well I was born and raised in Fielding, Utah, in the northern part of Utah.

Don Graff: Fealday, you say?

Don Laub: Fielding.

Don Graff: Fielding? Oh, okay.

Don Laub: In Box Elder County.

Don Graff: You're from up there now too, sounds like it.

Don Laub: Yes, I was there until I was about 18, and then joined the Navy, and spent some time there. I came back and went to college and become a geologist, worked for Phillip's Petroleum, retired from Phillips, and moved back in the same general area.

Don Graff: Same area though? So you're a geologist then as well?

Don Laub: Yes.

Don Graff: Well Zion out to be interesting then as a geologist. I never had much interest in geology until I moved out here, and you can't hardly be here without getting interested in it for sure.

Don Laub: I've got a professional paper I wrote that's on Zion.

Don Graff: Is that right?

Don Laub: I don't think there's many of them left either, but I was just looking at one this morning.

Don Graff: Well, what got you involved in the three C's? How did you end up down here with the three C's?

Laub: Well, it was sort of a fluke. I had two friends from Fielding, that were joining up and I was staying in Brigham [City] at the time and they said, "Why don't you join?" So I signed up and came down on the *Galloping Goose* to Cedar City, [Utah].

[wind blows over tape]

Graff: Now you say *Galloping Goose*, I assume that was the train.

Laub: That was the train.

Graff: So you hadn't thought about joining them and you hadn't other, just your friends said, "Let's do it?"

Laub: So I tell them yes.

Graff: So you just kind of did it on a spare of the moment thing, and then signed up for six months I assume?

Laub: Six months.

Graff: Is that how long you went, was just the six months?

Laub: Correct.

Graff: Didn't go any further then?

Laub: No.

Graff: Did you have all of it you wanted, or just had something better that you wanted to do?

Laub: Oh I guess I had all of it I wanted. I enjoyed it, but I wanted to get on with something else.

Graff: Where did you go to join the three C's? Did you do it up there, or did you come all the way down here?

Laub: I did it in Brigham City.

Graff: So you didn't know where you'd be going then?

Laub: No, I don't, well I guess I did know because they knew, Steve and Burl, Steve Richards and Burl _____ [maybe Standberg] were with me; and they knew apparently that we were going to Zion's.

Graff: Could you choose where you were going? Like when you went in to sign-up did you tell them that I would like to go with my friends down to Zion?

Laub: I guess I don't remember, I suppose so. I wouldn't have signed up if I couldn't have gone with them.

Graff: I see, so the three of you then came together?

Laub: Right.

Graff: How about the times? That was during the depression. Did it sound like a pretty good deal or sounded like something [you wanted]?

Laub: Sounded like a good deal. I think we got \$30 a month and we kept \$8 dollars of it and they sent \$22 home to your parents. If they needed it, they kept it; if not they sent it back to you.

Graff: They can send it back to you. How about your folks, did you, they send it back?

Laub: They sent it back.

Graff: Oh, so you had, you were making pretty good, for the time, pretty fair money I guess.

Laub: Thirty dollars a month.

Graff: Above average.

Laub: Yeah.

Graff: So you rode the train down here. When you got down here, did they assign the three of you bunks together or anything like that, or did they kind of split you up when you got there?

Laub: We were all in the same barracks, but we were sort of split up soon as we got here. It was no big problem. Steven went to be with the truck driver and Burl, I think he worked on some of the trails, and they assigned me on the survey crew. I was a chain man on the survey gang.

Graff: Is that right?

Laub: I didn't spend a lot of time here in Zion. Part of the time we was here doing cross-sections up this here trail. I guess, on the Angel's Point Trail.

Graff: Angels Landing Trail.

Laub: Angels Landing Trail. And then I was in Bryce for maybe a week or two, running utility lines, surveying, and then went to Wayne Wonderland, Capital Reef for two or three weeks doing cross-sections, working down roads, and things like that. Then we went up to Timpanogos and did some work there.

Graff: All this in the six months.

Laub: This is all in six months.

Graff: They kind of shipped you all over the country, then huh?

Laub: We were scheduled for Cedar Breaks and I didn't make that. So I didn't spend a lot of time here in Zion myself, but this was the base camp. I was kind of out. There was four of us on the survey.

Graff: Did you have any choice in what they assigned you to do, or did just say, "Well, you look like you would be a good chain man."

Laub: I don't really know. Owen Johnson was from my home town; he was a foreman here. I think maybe he put me and Steven and Burl where he thought we'd fit in. I think that may have happened.

Graff: How old did you say you were?

Laub: Well, I kind of lied a little, I was sixteen.

Graff: You were actually younger than eighteen, I guess, was the limit.

Laub: Seventeen was the limit.

Graff: So you hadn't been to college or anything like that; hadn't even finished high school. At different times they offered courses in the CCC camps, did you take any schooling at all while you were in?

Laub: No I didn't.

Graff: Course I guess if you were surveying you were out most of the time, out away from camp. That's fascinating. When you got here, I assume they assigned you bunks and things like that. Did they provide you clothing and all of that or how was that worked?

Laub: Yes. They provided clothing for you and bunks, sort of like the Army. There was a lieutenant over you and top sergeants and all. The sergeant we had we called him "Scipio." It was kind of an introduction to Army life. They played taps and reveille, and they had good food.

Graff: Three meals a day.

Laub: Three meals a day. If we were out in the camp, like in Capital Reef, every so often they'd send a truck with provisions for us, so they took care of us.

Graff: So when you first got here, you started immediately on the survey crew, did you?

Laub: No, it was about a week. I think I moved from one place to another, typical Army type things. Then, I think, they assigned me to one of the windows in the tunnel to keep the traffic moving. They let them park in there. I notice now they're all closed.

Graff: Yeah, now traffic's gotten too much and the cars are too big.

Laub: So it was probably about a week after I got here before I was assigned.

Graff: What time of the year was this?

Laub: I think this was about the first of April.

Graff: In the spring then? Were they still having the Easter Pageant at that time?

Laub: They were having the Easter Pageant.

Graff: But they assigned you to work up in the tunnel, so you didn't get to see it?

Laub: No, I didn't get to see it. There were so many cars coming through there, they wanted us to keep them moving.

Graff: So what did you do, just stay there all day?

Laub: Stayed there all day and kept cars out of the window. Are there seven windows?

Graff: No just six, just six then. I think one of them is plugged off now. They just put one of you to a window; there wasn't anybody there to visit with.

Laub: That's right.

Graff: Do you remember which window you were in?

Laub: I think it was window one, the first one as you as go in, the big one.

Graff: The big one is number one. You got a big one.

Laub: It had a fine view out of it.

Graff: That's a nice view out of there. That's interesting. Was that before you were on the survey crew?

Laub: That was before.

Graff: Anything else you did before you went to surveying?

Laub: I think that was it as I recall.

Graff: When they started you surveying, where did you first go.

Laub: I think the first was here in the Narrows. That was a week or two there. Then the spike camp at Bryce had just opened. It was still cold up there. We'd gone up there and we were running a survey line for some utilities into the park and we spent a couple of weeks there.

Graff: What was the size of your crew?

Laub: Four people. There was the transit guy, Chadburn, and his assistant who was Homer Gibson, and then two of us, the rod man and chain man, me and ____Smith from St. George. So there was only four.

Graff: You say rod man and chain man, so the rod man held the rod, I assume, just so I can understand what you're talking about, so they could shoot it with the transit, and you the chain man ran the chain so you could measure it.

Laub: I was the head chain man and the other fellow, the rod man, took the other end of the chain and we always handled the rod and chain and never switched off.

Graff: Were they skilled? Were they paid more than you were, or were they working for the three C's? You were all four with the CCCs.

Laub: I suspect that they got a little more money, but I'm not even sure of that. I don't know how they worked that.

Graff: You say were doing typography work. That's a little rough country to be doing that in, isn't it?

Laub: I think mainly what we were doing was shooting trees and things, so that could set up a plain table map showing where the trees are and the conifers [unintelligible]

Graff: So you were down in the canyon when you were doing it and didn't have to get up on the hills and do any rock climbing?

Laub: It was right off the highway.

Graff: Now that was somewhere up by the Temple of Sinawava, you say?

Laub: Yes, and down this way, down this side of Weeping Rock, somewhere in that area we did some more of it, and we did some surveying there, I think, for rip-rap on the Virgin.

Graff: On the river? Had the CCCs done a lot of flood control on the river prior to that time?

Laub: Yes, I think this was just some extra work.

Graff: How long do you suppose that lasted that you were here?

Laub: I guess two or three weeks at that time?

Graff: Then did you ever come back to Zion after that?

Laub: Yes, I did, several times. This was the base.

Graff: So you'd go off and do some surveying and then come back. When you were here in Zion, did you do more surveying or did they have you doing other things when you were here?

Laub: We did more surveying.

Graff: So first you did this up the canyon and then you went to Bryce. How long were you at Bryce?

Laub: I guess maybe a couple of weeks.

Graff: What were you doing up there?

Laub: That was running lines for utilities.

Graff: Oh, that's right you told me that, I'm sorry. Then when you got that all surveyed, you came back to Zion.

Laub: After we were here for a period of time and did a little more work up here, up the canyon. Then we went to Capital Reef and surveyed the road into Capitol Reef. [Unintelligible]

We were staying in kind of a cabin there on the Dirty Devil River. It was quite nice. When we got done there, we came back and stayed a couple of weeks. Then we went to Timpanogos. [Unintelligible due to wind] . . . surveying along the highway and trails going up to the cave.

Graff: So what would they do? Just take the four of you up in a truck with all your provisions and then dump you off and say we'll be back to pick you up in a couple of weeks.

Laub: There was one fellow that was in charge who was an engineer. I can't think of his name, maybe somebody can, but he was an engineer. I'm not sure he was in the Cs itself or whether he was kind of a foreman. He was in charge of us and he only showed up occasionally.

Graff: So he didn't camp out with you?

Laub: No, he didn't camp out.

Graff: Now like up at Bryce, did you stay in tents or what did you do?

Laub: No, in Bryce they had that spike camp there. We stayed with the spike camp.

Graff: So there were actually wood buildings there. At Capitol Reef, you said there was kind of a cabin.

Laub: At Capitol Reef, there was a cabin and the same at Cedar Breaks. So we always had housing at least.

Graff: So they'd provide all the food, and everything. Would you take that with you?

Laub: We'd take that with us and if we were running out, they made a periodic run with a truck and brought us in whatever we needed.

Graff: Who took care of cooking and dishwashing, and all that? Did you just divide it up among yourselves?

Laub: We did it ourselves.

Graff: What would they send out in those days? Now in those days, if you were in a cabin on the Dirty Devil River, did you have refrigeration and all that?

Laub: No.

Graff: So it pretty much had to be canned or dried food then? Was it that way in all the spike camps?

Laub: Yes, I think so. We were used to that.

Graff: I understand. I'm just trying to get a picture of what facilities you had. If there was no refrigeration, it pretty well had to be canned and dried foods. So they sent a lot of beans, and bacon, and that kind of thing along, I guess.

Laub: Apple butter and stuff like that, typical army chow.

Graff: What about bread? Did they send some kind of bread with you? Did you make your own biscuits?

Laub: They sent the bread and I don't remember how we kept the bread fresh for two weeks. They had to have somebody bring it in occasionally.

Graff: Like you say, you were used to it. Now days, you might grumble if it weren't fresh, but in those days you had to do with what you had. Now did you work an eight-hour day, say, and then knock off?

Laub: We worked an eight-hour day. If it took a little longer, it was okay. But it was about an eight-hour day.

Graff: Here in camp, of course, you talked about revile and all that, but when you were out in a spike camp and all that, you just got up and did what needed to be done? But you were off away from everybody. What did you do in the evenings?

Laub: Just sat and looked out the window or up there sat outside and enjoy the scenery. That's about all there was to do. There was no place to go.

Graff: You'd had all the hiking around you needed just doing surveying. Did you play cards or was there any kind of thing you did to pass the time away?

Laub: We did play cards.

Graff: Reading and or anything like that?

Laub: Some reading.

Graff: Did they provide the newspaper or anything? Just whatever you had with you?

Laub: Yes.

Graff: That's pretty fascinating. Now you came back here. Was all the work you remember doing up in the canyon, or did you survey like on the truck trails or anything like that?

Laub: I think the last month here I was off that survey gang and I think I helped repair the trail up there to what was it, Angel's Point.

Graff: Angel's Landing.

Laub: Angel's Landing. I think I helped repair that and spent one or two days working on that. If that's the place I'm thinking of, you could throw a rock off there and almost get it back in your face with the wind coming off that cliff. It was on the west side of the canyon.

Graff: Yes, the West Rim Trail goes up and then you come back out on Angel's Landing. It's about as wide as this table top and straight off on each side of you.

Laub: That's where it was. It was a black-top trail, it was.

Graff: Yes, going up to it. What were you doing on that? Were you repairing the black top?

Laub: We were repairing the black top.

Graff: Re-oiling were you?

Laub: Taking oil up there, I guess, where there was a spot there that had kind of sloughed off.

Graff: Do you remember anything about how they oiled?

Laub: I don't remember anything more than that

Graff: Just that you were up there.

Laub: I remember somebody throwing a shovel after he broke the handle. That's about all I remember.

Graff: It's a long ways down. (Laughing) What about life in the camp here? What time did they get you up for revile?

Laub: It seems like six o'clock, but I'm not positive. I just don't remember. We had taps at ten just like in the Army.

Graff: So you had to be in bed at ten, lights out. After revile in the morning, what did you do? Did you go right to eat or did you have exercises?

Laub: We had exercises and we also had roll call, exercises and roll call, and then we went to breakfast.

Graff: What did breakfast usually consist of, pretty good food?

Laub: It was good food. Yes. We had biscuits and ham, bacon. We had coffee, almost anything you wanted. It was good food.

Graff: As much as you wanted?

Laub: As much as you wanted.

Graff: You could eat until you were full, then. Course all of you were working hard, so you needed a good square meal. Now did you eat a little better than say when you were in camp? You could have more variety, I assume, when you were here in camp.

Laub: We ate a little better as far as variety. We had plenty of good food when we were out, but access sometimes getting fresh food to us. Other than that, there was no problem. We didn't grumble; we liked being out. It was all right.

Graff: Yes, I'll bet that was nice camping out. You must have had to keep quite a supply run just keeping the camps supplied here with food. After you ate breakfast, then did you go immediately in to whatever it was you were doing?

Laub: About eight o'clock, you started your day's work.

Graff: What about lunch? Did they provide you with a sack lunch or bring you back here to eat?

Laub: I don't remember.

Graff: How about when you were out in the camps, did you take a sack lunch with you?

Laub: We took a sack lunch with us.

Graff: Sandwiches or something for lunch. Quitting time, I suppose, must have been five or so, probably. What kind of facilities did they have when you came in? Did you shower? Did they have those kinds of facilities for you?

Laub: Not out in camps.

Graff: No, not out in the camps, but say here?

Laub: Oh, yes, here. Then they had a PX. You had chits. You could get something with your eight dollars that you had. You could spend that in camp.

Graff: I guess eight dollars back in '39 went a long ways.

Laub: It went a long ways. [unintelligible] Candy bars were only a nickel. Eight dollars lasted a long time.

Graff: As far as the PX, what did the PX have that you didn't have? Sold tobacco and candy bars, anything else?

Laub: Writing paper and such as that. It had some various things.

Graff: So were you off on Saturday and Sunday? Were those days off for you?

Laub: Saturdays and Sundays were days off.

Graff: What did you do on those days?

Laub: Oh, go into Springdale and stand around, or go down to Hurricane and stand around, that's about all. We'd drive around. One guy had a Model A Ford and we'd head out in that. That was pretty nice. One fellow from up in Perry [Utah] had a motorcycle and he and I went home on that one time for four days. [wind covers talking] . . . '29, '30, or '31 Fords or cars like that.

Graff: Sure they didn't go real fast, but beats walking, I'll bet. Stand around Springdale that was interesting. Could go down and look at the girls, I guess, but there probably weren't too many girls.

Laub: 'Bout all you do.

Graff: You talked about going home on a four-day weekend, could you get time off to go home if you wanted to?

Laub: Sure, yes.

Graff: Was it as strict as the Army?

Laub: It wasn't quite as strict. I mean they expected you to be back when you're supposed to be. If you wasn't back, they didn't throw you in the brig or anything. You were supposed to be back and at work and I think most people did.

Graff: Well, they were happy to have the work. Was there discipline of some kind if you got out of line? I assume there were rules you had to keep and what not.

Laub: There certainly were rules, but I don't know of any discipline. I don't know what they would do. Tell you to go home I guess. I'm not sure.

Graff: They could send you home if you got too out of line.

Laub: I'm sure some of these other fellows will know these.

Graff: We'll ask everybody the same questions because everybody remembers things a little differently, you know. We don't want to miss anything. That's the whole idea of it. What you remember, somebody else might not, and what you don't, somebody else will.

So at the end of your six months, just automatically you could re-sign up or you could go whichever you wanted, is that the way it worked?

Laub: That's my understanding.

Graff: So you were ready to head back for home? Is that what you did, you went back home?

Laub: Well, I went to Idaho and started working for my brother-in-law.

Graff: Then, did you go into the Navy soon after that or did you wait until the war started and everybody else had to go?

Laub: I went when I was 20. I would have had to have gone in the Army if I hadn't joined the Navy.

Graff: The war had started had it, so you joined the Navy to avoid the Army. What did you do? Did it have anything to do with the CCs?

Laub: In '42. I went to diesel school at Champaign-Urbana, [Illinois] and made second class and I spent almost all my time in the South Pacific on a base for PT boats in the Solomon Islands.

Graff: Do you feel you experience in the three Cs helped you with anything to do with the navy, or prepared you for the military in any way?

Laub: It helped me.

Graff: Was it a good education for experience?

Laub: I think so and I think the things they did were good. Everybody I talk to they see some of this work around here and they're very impressed with it.

Graff: Sure. Some of the rock work around here is marvelous and the flood work along the rivers amazes me. You know that's about as good as the day you put it in.

Laub: That's what amazes me. I mean, it's been 50-53 years, and it's still good, but a lot of things that happened 20 years ago are not.

Graff: A lot of the things that happened five years ago are falling apart.

Laub: What they did was good, I think.

Graff: So you have pretty much good memories of the three Cs? When you were here, were there two camps or was it just one camp?

Laub: There's one is all I remember, the one across the river, somewhere not very far from here, but across the river where the things are now.

Graff: Yes, tomorrow when they take you on these field trips, we've got it lined up so you can go to all the different places where things were. Hopefully, you know, when you get everybody together in groups like that what one guy don't remember the other one will. There were actually two camps, one on each side of the river, but what I'm gathering already from my interviews this morning, because both of you I've talked to had come late and they literally had torn the other one down by those later years.

Laub: Well, I was talking to a fellow who was here in '36 and he said that's about when that camp across the river was built and there used to be one on this side.

Graff: No, the one on the other side was the first one.

Laub: I don't know. [wind in microphone].

Graff: There again, people remember things different. That's why it's so important to talk to as many of you as we can, then maybe we can get a concise history.

Laub: So they're saying there's a camp built after '39 over on this side of the river.

Graff: I don't know when it was built. No, I think they both was built early. I know the one was built clear back in '34 or actually I think it was in the fall of '33 when they built it. In fact, we've got the Army officer that was in charge of building it is coming. In fact he's going to be one of your speakers this weekend when they have the opening ceremonies here.

Laub: That will be interesting to find out because that's the only one I recall is the one on the far side of the river.

Graff: It was the one on the far side of the river and that definitely was the first one built. They called it the Bridge Mountain Camp. Is that you remember? Do you remember the number of your camp?

Laub: I don't know. It wasn't 962, was it?

Graff: I don't either. I've seen it written. It's not really crucial. Was there any way that they kept track of you like that, I mean were you numbered or anything like that? Did you have a number or a name tag or something like that?

Laub: I don't recall anything. I don't remember.

Graff: Obviously they issued you clothing, as most of you were all dressed the same.

Laub: Yes, we had clothing and we had an emblem with Zion Park on it here and it had the Great White Throne on it.

Graff: Is that right?

Laub: It was a beautiful emblem, Great White Throne

Graff: Wow, it'd be neat to find one of those. Hopefully one of you brings one of them, that'd be neat. I assume it had something about the CCCs on it, did it?

Laub: Yes, written around it, I'm not sure what it said, Zion National Park and CCC and the Great White Throne in the center. It was a nice looking patch.

Graff: Now did they issue a set of work clothes and a set of dress clothes? When you went down and stood around in Springdale, were you in your CCC clothes were you?

Laub: You could or you could wear your own street clothes if you wanted.

Graff: It wasn't required that you wear the uniform all the time. How about hats? I've seen hats in different pictures I've seen; did they issue you a hat?

Laub: I don't know whether they issued you a hat or if you had to buy the hats. I don't remember me wearing a hat.

Graff: Yes, talking about buying things, did they issue you some stuff and other things you could buy, this is a question I asked...like a foot locker?

Laub: I think you could buy a foot locker. I think you needed one, but I think you had to buy it for about three or four dollars.

Graff: Did you have to buy it or could you just turn it in if you didn't keep it or want to buy it you could. You could do it which ever way, if you wanted to buy it you could. Now what would they do on things like that, would they just take it out of your wage or did you have to save up money and pay out?

Laub: I can't remember.

Graff: You ended up with it anyway.

Laub: You had to have it. [wind in mic] They'd fine you if your inspection didn't pass. At various times, they inspected.

Graff: Scipio, was he the one?

Laub: Yes, right. They inspected your foot locker and your clothes, and how neat the barracks was and the whole bit.

Graff: So you had to stay in line a little bit then. There's always some discipline. If you don't get out of line, then you don't remember that.

Laub: I don't remember any brig. I don't know what happens. Maybe someone will remember more than I.

Graff: Like you say, everybody smoked. How about drinking, did they allow you to drink?

Laub: Not up here.

Graff: Not here.

Laub: In Hurricane you could go in you could get a quart of wine for \$.40 cents down there. That's about all anybody could afford.

Graff: In wine.

Laub: A quart of wine. That was a big deal.

Graff: Guys come in drunk once in a while, did they?

Laub: Well I suspect so but I can't remember. They must of.

Graff: You don't remember them doing anything as far as discipline there.

Laub: No, I don't.

Graff: They probably really didn't care as long as you got back on time. You say you had to be in bed by 10:00 was it required that you be there at 10:00 so if you went down to Hurricane you had to be back by 10:00.

Laub: I think you probably had to be back. I think so.

Graff: Did they ever load any of you up and take you of on trips like say down to St. George or anything like that?

Laub: Not that I recall.

Graff: You just pretty well went in private vehicles when you went. My understanding is that they didn't allow private vehicles in the camp, did they?

Laub: No, I don't think so. They had to park them in Springdale.

Graff: Had to park them downtown somewhere. How about hitch-hiking, do you ever do that or did you just pretty well everybody in camp had somebody.....

Laub: Hitch-hike. I didn't but a lot of people did.

Graff: Were you in here the whole six months? No, you said you went home once. Was that some kind of a four day holiday or was it something that you went special?

Laub: I think it was. It wasn't too long.

Graff: You were here Easter. Was there any kind of a special feed say on Easter or did you just have the same camp chow?

Laub: I don't remember. I don't remember. I probably had camp chow up in the room back there. I think I was there all day.

Graff: On Easter Sunday. What was the day like?

Laub: Pretty nice day.

Graff: That was in '39 you had a nice day.

[End of interview]