

**Vernon W. Lemmon & Norman Hull**  
**Zion National Park Oral History Project**  
**CCC Reunion**  
**September 28, 1989**

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Carolyn Hinton: Okay, we're in Zion National Park at the CC Reunion, September 28, 1989, at Zion Nature Center. I'm Carolyn Hinton, and we're here interviewing Vernon Lemmon. Where are you from?

Vernon Lemmon: Originally or now? Where I grew up?

Carolyn Hinton: Yes. Where did you grow up?

Vernon Lemmon: Silver City, Utah; that's five miles from Eureka.

Carolyn Hinton: From Eureka?

Vernon Lemmon: Yes.

Carolyn Hinton: And what did you do before joining?

Vernon Lemmon: I was in school.

Carolyn Hinton: You were in school.

Vernon Lemmon: And I got out of school in 1934.

Carolyn Hinton: And why did you join the CCC's?

Vernon Lemmon: There wasn't anything else to do, living in a mining town, and I came from a large family. There are six boys and four girls in our family, and I was the eldest. So this was a chance to get a job and help the folks out some because twenty-five [dollars] went home, and I kept five [dollars] for myself. I was filthy rich.

Carolyn Hinton: I'll bet. Had you ever been down here, had you ever been to Zion before?

Vernon Lemmon: No, never before.

Carolyn Hinton: What was your impression of Zion?

Vernon Lemmon: It was hot. There was two of us from Silver City, one from Mammoth, and about ten from Eureka. We went to Nephi, and they picked up about ten more guys, loaded us into a '29 Chevy truck, and brought us down to Zion National Park. The truck driver just about got lost over there, this side of LaVerkin, coming up that hill. Finally, he got us over here, and it was hot. The captain, when we got here, he said, "You see that pile of straw up there fellows?" He threw us a tick, and he said, "That's going to be your mattress." We had bunk beds and I always had to have the top one it seemed like. All

they were was boards about eight inches wide and about an inch crack in between them. At that time we didn't even have pillows. We'd roll our shoes up under our head and put them under us and go ahead and sleep that way. Then about once every six weeks or so, your straw would get all matted and hard, and so you'd have to throw it away, and go up and get a new batch of straw. It was fun. Do you want me to go on a little bit more?

We worked up the Temple of Sinawava for quite a little while there. Then they weren't getting rocks up fast enough, so they transferred some of us up to Johnny Whipple's crew to help break rocks. I worked there then with a fellow by the name of Carl Stokes for quite a while. After that, I went into the kitchen, worked in the K.P., was a K.P. boy. Most people didn't like K.P. duty. I liked it very well. Because they didn't like it, why, we worked it five days a week and they had to take their turns on Saturdays, and Sundays, and holidays, and we had those days off. Captain Kennedy extracted twenty-five cents from everybody in camp, and they gave us that amount of money, so we had an extra ten dollars. So that gave us fifteen dollars and we were really in high clover with fifteen dollars a month.

Then after that, I got out in the spring and went up to Eureka, back home where I lived, worked on the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad putting in ties and rails for two dollars and twenty-eight cents a day. Then in the fall of the year, they decided that they didn't need all of us, so we were being laid off, and since I'd been out six months, and was eligible for re-enlistment, I re-enlisted again.

This time they sent us to Escalante. I stayed in Escalante until the next spring. They sent us over to Panguitch, Utah, to build some forestry buildings. As you're going west into Panguitch, before you make the turn to go north, if you look straight ahead two blocks, you'll see those forestry buildings in Panguitch that the CC Camp boys helped build. Then the camp broke up. They brought a bunch of easterners in from Kentucky or someplace like that, and they gave us older fellows a chance to go somewhere else. I had a little girlfriend then, so I went to Bryce Canyon, and then they brought us back down here [Zion] for the next winter again. I was on the other side of the camp this time, the first time on the west side, and the last time on the east side. And I've always liked Zion National Park. When we lived in California, sometimes even though it was night, I'd detour up through Zion National Park.

I didn't know it at that time, but my grandmother was born in Springdale. One of my great-great-grandmothers on my father's side lived in Springdale, and her grave is there. So I've been back a few times for little get-togethers in that regard.

Hinton: Who were some fellows that you met that kind of lasting friendships?

Lemmon: Well, Carl Stokes, and some of those fellows are still around. There was Merlin Baner (?) and Clarence Cow (?), and a lot of those fellows from Nephi. There were about ten or

twelve of us from the Eureka area that I knew real well because I'd gone to high school there, graduated from what they called Tintic High School.

This stayed with me. I worked during the war helped building ships. Then after that, I worked for Lee Manufacturing Company for a while. Then I was a pipefitter for Union Oil Company. But I always wanted to get a hamburger stand or something like that. So 26 years ago, we went over to Mesa, Arizona and bought us an A & W Root Beer Restaurant. So we're still in it. We're selling root beer, and the K.P. experience has helped me do all these things, being able to deal with the public and mingle with the public.

Hinton: That's really good. That's one of the questions that they ask you. What did you feel like the CCC had done for you, and you told us what they did.

Lemmon: Learned how to mingle with people and be friendly with them, and so forth. We didn't have any problems in those days. Another thing that happened in February of 1935, they took us down to Boulder Dam. It wasn't finished. It was just finished, but the water hadn't been turned into it yet. They took us down to the bottom of the dam and we viewed the dam looking west. Looked up at that gracious thing there, and the guide showed us flags on the hill where the water would be, and we thought, "That isn't possible. That's way up on the mountain." They said, "The lake will be up to where those flags are eventually." Then we stayed at a VFW hall overnight, just slept on the floor, and then the next week, they took the other half of the camp down. They couldn't take the full camp at once. They had to leave at least half of the people here in case of a fire or anything like that, an emergency.

Hinton: About how many were in the camp?

Lemmon: About 200. Sometimes when you're serving tables, it seemed like, or washing dishes, it seemed like more than that.

Hinton: How many would you serve on a shift? Did they break the shifts up?

Lemmon: No. They all came in at once.

Hinton: Two-hundred.

Lemmon: Just like a bunch of sheep. You open the gate, and here they came all in at once, and it didn't take us too long to take care of it.

Hinton: What were the facilities like?

Lemmon: Well, they had good cooking facilities and everything. The darn cooks would dirty too many pots and pans though. It kept us busy. We thought they were pouring them from one into the other, cleaning up after them. But it was a good experience, and it's too bad

they don't have something like that today. I had four of my brothers join the CC camps later on, as they became old enough.

Hinton: What were their names?

Lemmon: Well, there was John, Elmont, Nelda, and Ralph. Then four of them went into the war when the war started. Four of them went into the war, and in Germany and New Hebrides Islands, and different places, one in the navy, three in the army. Of course by then I had two children and was working in the shipyards and so that was a government related job. They would keep you out of going into the service because of that. Somebody had to build the transportation to get them over there, and so that's what we did. I think it helped me all through my life.

Hinton: After you left the shipyards, where did you go?

Lemmon: I went to work for Lee Manufacturing Company building hot water heaters, furnaces and barrels and things like that. I was a punch-press operator. Then I left there and went to Union Oil Company as a pipefitter, and I worked there thirteen years.

Hinton: I think you told me a moment ago how many children you had.

Lemmon: Four. two boys and two girls. One girl lives in Denver, Colorado; a son lives in Salt Lake City; a daughter in Mesa, Arizona; and a son in Sunnyvale, California.

Hinton: So what do you think that the CC did for you?

Lemmon: Well, it helped me grow from boyhood into manhood, I think. You had responsibility. They checked on you. You had to have a pass to leave. They had bed check each night. If you wasn't in there, you had extra duty and things like that to give you something extra to do on Saturday during your off-time. And so you had discipline. We had the calisthenics in the morning and the whole thing. That was one beautiful thing about getting in the kitchen. We got out of the calisthenics in the morning.

Hinton: What time did they start calisthenics?

Lemmon: Oh, they'd start just before breakfast. They'd get out there. We'd be in there with breakfast and be all ready, and just waiting for them to get through with that, and we'd watch them through the windows. (Carolyn laughs). And then they'd come charging in there and sit down at the tables and wait 'til somebody served them their breakfast.

Hinton: You don't remember what time?

Lemmon: It was early in the morning. We'd have to get up about an hour and a half ahead of them in order to get everything ready. We got to the point where we could peel a hundred pound sack of potatoes in an hour, each one of us could. We'd hurry up in the kitchen,

get our work done, and the first one done would dash down to the cellar and start peeling potatoes. Because every day we'd have a hundred pound sack of potatoes we'd have to peel. And the meals were good. A lot of people complained about it, but most of us weren't doing that well at home because this was right in the middle of the depression. Especially with me and coming from that large family being the oldest one. When I got out of twelfth grade, my youngest sister was going into the first grade. So they didn't remember too much of me at that particular time because I was gone most of the time. I liked the CC's. I liked it well enough that after I'd been in it six months, working on the railroad for \$2.28 a day, I got back in the CC camps again.

Hinton: What are some real special memories that you have?

Lemmon: Well, we'd go down to Springdale to the dances. In those days, a lot of my friends that I know now didn't dance, but they're good dancers now. But we went to a dance every week down there at Springdale, sometimes at Hurricane. Sometimes they'd have little shows. Trucks would go to Cedar City and different places like that. They always loaded us in the back of a big old truck, about 35 or 40 of us, and away we'd go, just sitting in the back of this truck. Being able to mingle with guys and they were all good guys. They'd get drunk once in a while, some of them and carry on a little bit, but you didn't have the dope and you didn't have the temptations that they have in this day and age. In a way, it might have been easier for us even though we'd gone through the depression. It might have been easier for us than it was. The temptations weren't quite as great there related to drugs and things like that as they are now.

Hinton: So you think it would be a good idea if they had something like this for the youth today?

Lemmon: I think so. They'd probably have to pay them a little more money.

Hinton: You think they'd let them send some of it home to their parents like you guys did?

Lemmon: Well, I don't know what they would. It doesn't seem like kids now days are as disciplined as we were. They couldn't take orders as well as we did. If you were going to school and the principal thought you deserved a little whack on the seat, he gave it to you. You paid attention to your elders. You paid respect to the older people and now days they don't do that. It's too bad. There are a lot of things that are lost now days that we enjoyed in those days.

Hinton: Has Zion changed a lot?

Lemmon: I've been back here a few years ago for the Lemmon family reunion. Some of it seems like it changes a little bit over fifty-some-odd years, fifty-four years. It's bound to change a little bit. I remember a lot of it, the Temple of Sinawava, Angel's Landing, the Great

White Throne, Weeping Rock, and the Patriarchs, and Steamboat Mountain, and Bridge Mountain, and all of that has stayed with me.

Hinton: Were you able to see much of it when you were here, or did you just work?

Lemmon: Oh yes, we could go around, but as young people, you don't appreciate the beauty of it too much. You don't appreciate it too much. I remember listening to one of our church leaders one time who came to California, George Albert Smith. He said some of the people he knew used to herd sheep or herd cattle here in Springdale, and he said they took them up through the canyons, and they didn't appreciate the beauty. They didn't look at it much. Finally, somebody came from Chicago, or one of those towns back East, and pointed out the beauty of the canyons to these people who'd resided here all of their lives. They didn't appreciate it because they were born and raised here. But sometimes, someone else has to come in to really awaken your soul or something and make you realize these things that are all around you. That's the way for the whole United States, you know. It's beautiful. It's wonderful.

Hinton: It is. It probably wasn't too much tourism.

Lemmon: Not too much.

Hinton: Just a very few people. Do you remember people coming?

Lemmon: A few. I had cousins and different ones like that that came through there once in a while, but there wasn't too many because remember the depression was on. There weren't too many dollars rolling down the street. But it helped an awful lot, I think. Everybody gained weight. They'd complain about the food, but all of them gained weight while they were here.

Hinton: What was some of the food that you fixed?

Lemmon: Oh, it was just the regular.

Hinton: Meat and potatoes?

Lemmon: Meat and potatoes, yes. We'd have hash browns and little sausages with French toast. The mess sergeant would have to make out a menu for the week. And it had to be Okayed by the lieutenant, who was the controlling officer in charge of the kitchen. He had to okay that for the week, and that was it. It was up on the wall and that's what you went by for the full week. Some of my most trying times were when I'd go back home for a little furlough. I'd go to Cedar City, ride that truck over to Cedar City to get supplies. I'd go over there, and they'd get there about 8:00 in the morning. I had to wait in Cedar City until ten at night to catch a bus [to] go to Lund, and catch a train to go up to Eureka where I lived. They didn't like CC boys in Cedar City. They'd had some bad experiences

there. They didn't like them too well. You didn't know anybody and here you were in your CC uniform, your khaki uniforms. And they didn't like you too well. They'd just walk around there from about nine o'clock in the morning I guess would be the time we got there, until ten o'clock at night in those days.

Hinton: And then how long would you get to stay up in Eureka?

Lemmon: Oh, sometimes a week, ten days, something like that. Quite often, we'd hitchhike back. Ride a train to Cedar City or to Lund, and get a bus over to Cedar City. It would be too late for the trucks, so then you'd hitchhike back. Hitchhiking in those days was quite a popular thing.

Hinton: (unclear question)

Lemmon: Oh, you'd get picked up. California people wouldn't pick you up much, but about any other state would recognize you and pick you up. California people were a little leery of hitchhikers all the way through.

It's your turn to talk!

Hinton: No, I'm interviewing you today. Were there any like camp characters that you can remember?

Lemmon: Oh, yes! You always had somebody that didn't want to get up in the morning especially over in Escalante. We'd make the fire in the old stove. There were some that would lay in bed and not make the fire [when it was] their turn and so a couple times we just extracted them from the barracks! We just opened the door and threw them out in the snow a couple times. Then they had to go somewhere else to a different place.

Hinton: Now tell me again, what years were you here?

Lemmon: I came in here in July of '34, and it was hot, and I stayed until spring of '35. And then I came back here in the fall again in the early winter of '36. We went to Bryce Canyon again for the spring of '37. Then I was discharged from '37 because I had what they called a recreation leader job in Silver City, Utah. I erected some volleyball poles, and we had horseshoes, and we had softball games, and ping-pong tables, and things like that. So I [was] recreation leader, I got for \$45 a month for that. I didn't do much at all. Come back in. After that we were under the army or navy or whoever was our captain. We were under their supervision after the work shift was over with. We'd be farmed out to the Park people during the day for that period of time. They'd bring us in quite often at lunchtime, and eat here. And at other times they would bring it out. I wasn't out too long about, oh, a third of the time I was out, and the rest of the time I spent in the kitchen because I knew where the food was.

Hinton: You said you worked up at Sinawava?

Lemmon: Yes. Just a little bit.

Hinton: What did you do up there?

Lemmon: Well, we were mostly doing pick and shovel work preparing for these basket bands and protection that they put the rocks in with the grating over it, and so forth, to protect the land. It would be just a wave and the water would come down, rushing through the canyon. Then they'd have floods, and terrific rains, and everything like that. The farmer's land was being washed away a little bit at a time. We were preserving that. And when we went up here to the rock quarry we were just breaking rocks and loading them in a truck. They were shipping up to those guys and building a lot of the stuff up close to the tunnel, and that rockwork there, and the entrances to the parking lot, all that kind of stuff.

Hinton: Anything else that you can remember?

Lemmon: I'll remember a lot of things after I go, I bet. It will be too late for them. It's been a long time. I think that I'm fortunate to remember as much as I did after all these years.

I married a Panguitch girl. I did a little work the second time I came back up here up at the campground up here a little ways, a little bit. I was in a group for a little while up in the campground

(Wind blows over tape and you can't hear what Vernon is saying.)

**Someone else enters.**

Lemmon: Remember when we went to Boulder Dam? That was a lot of fun, wasn't it?

Other man replies

Hinton: My father worked up there.

(More wind)

Lemmon: They had us fellows in here doing the work and then they had fellows that were sort of straw-foremen or bosses, you might say. They called them LEM Men, Local Experienced Men, and some of them got \$36 a month and when they got a little more experience, why they got \$45 a month. They were making just a little bit more than us CCC boys in the kitchen that were getting that extra ten from guys like Norman here and everybody that didn't like the K.P.

Norman Hull: I remember I only worked K.P. a couple of times.

Lemmon: They didn't like it, see, and so they rotated around just on holidays and weekends. We volunteered because each one of them would give us an extra quarter a month.

Norman Hull: Well, I didn't know that.

Lemmon: Yes. You only got \$4.75 a month instead of \$5.00. You got \$4.75. But Kennedy just took it right out. They didn't just give it to us; he took it right out of their pay. They got \$4.75. Then we got the rest of the pay.

But it was a lot of fun, and I enjoyed it, and we were feed well, I thought. It was a good, balanced diet, the things that were best for you, not what you want.

Norman Hull: I weighed 138 pounds. I come from the farm, and we had all we could eat. But I weighed 175 when I went out in eight months, but I wasn't fat.

Hinton: This is Mr. Norman Hull H-U-L-L. He came to talk with Mr. Lemmon.

Norman Hull: I remember Vern there was a good hard worker.

Lemmon: Well, on my discharge, I couldn't find it, but when I was looking for it a while back, I thought I'll put that right where I'll know where it is and since we've gone home, we did a lot of cleaning and everything's in a disarray and I couldn't find that thing. But on it, it said, "Excellent habits, excellent conduct, and excellent worker." Captain Kennedy put that on so I was pretty happy about that.

Norman Hull: Wouldn't it be great if we had all those that was in the camp? I'll bet you there's seventy percent of them who've died.

Lemmon: Yes.

Norman Hull: I was one of the young ones. I was only eighteen.

Lemmon: I was just eighteen too. I'll be 74 in October.

Norman Hull: Now Jack Lucas, he was twenty-one.

Lemmon: Yes, he was. Then we had a few big, old, farm boys like Carl Stokes that said they were eighteen, but they weren't.

Norman Hull: He never done as much farming as I did because I'd come from a big farm. We're farming with horses. My dad had as high as 32 head. He raised forty acres of sugar beets, seventy-five acres of hay, and we had to do it all by hand, twenty acres of potatoes.

Lemmon: Now Carl, his dad was a railroad man, so after he left here, then he got into that kind of business too.

Norman Hull: We'd get up and milk four or five cows a piece. [We] had eighteen cows. We'd hoe all day, come in, and when we was getting them peas, the first part of July, and we'd work 'til after dark, getting them harvested. Then we'd have to go in and milk the cows again. Boy, it was hairy.

Lemmon: Do that while you was resting?

Hinton: Sounds like you guys were well prepared.

Norman Hull: But do you know this CC done me a lot of good just being away from home.

Lemmon: Get away from mother's apron strings. You see we had this big family. My dad said, "I'm going to teach you boys how to work." There were six of us. He said, "If it's no more than digging post holes and covering them up again." So we had to watch fifty head of sheep. We'd let them out in the mountainside then bring them back in. So we knew how to work. But a lot of the kids just went through high school; they didn't know how to work. And it was tough for them but we knew how to work.

Norman Hull: I think it was one of the best programs

Lemmon: Bring it back.

Norman Hull: You can't give people too much, but it was really a good program. It's like, probably not WPA or PWA, like you say your dad was in. Now I lived when we first got married in 1940, on just a dirt road. So we went finally went over to the County and said, "How about fixing this road?" You know they got wagons and we got six or eight dump-board wagons and guys. There's a sand hill not far from me, and they loaded them up and widened that road and fixed that road up. It took them months, but it didn't cost nothing, about two dollars an hour or a dollar an hour for those.

Lemmon: Yes. They got forty or forty-five dollars a month, and they had to work. There wasn't any food stamps and no 'give-me' at all. You had to work. If you didn't show up, you didn't get your WPA allotment. That's all there was to it. You had to do it.

Hinton: I'm going to stop this right here because I'm about to run out of tape, but I'll start another one for Mr. Hull in a minute.

Norman Hull: We're at Zion's National Park and this is the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1989. I'm Norman Hull from upper Utah and I came here in the CCC's on the 28<sup>th</sup> 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 were in it, I don't know but they partially cleaned it up but we had to finish cleaning it up and there was rattlesnakes here and a lot of weeds but it was (?) just a day or two. There was 250 of us so even if we teared this stick of 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.

Interviewer: Where are you from Mr. Hull?

Norman Hull: Upper Utah. We started up at the Temple of Sinawava. They built a wall that was a hole on both sides. There were six on a crew if I remember right. They had six crews, thirty-six of us went up there and the only gravel 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

End of interview.