

George Herb Macy
Zion National Park Oral History
CCC Reunion
September 28, 1989

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Beth Martin: Beth Martin interviewing Herb Macy. His name is, give me your other full name.

George Herb Macy: Well it's George H.

Beth Martin: George H. and you go by Herb?

George Herb Macy: That's correct.

Beth Martin: Okay. 28th of September 1989. It's the CC Oral History Program. Well Herb, where are you from?

George Herb Macy: I'm from Orem, Utah now.

Beth Martin: And where did you first enlist from?

George Herb Macy: Logan, Utah.

Beth Martin: Okay, and what did you do before you joined the CCC's?

George Herb Macy: It's a long story. As you know, and everybody has told you, the depression was on. We had a large family living [in] Logan, [Utah]. Times were tough. You couldn't get any work. I was just out of high school. My father was then out of work. And so I decided I didn't want to stay in Logan. I wanted to see the world. So I went over to a nearby town, and freight train came through, and I caught the train. And so I became known in my family as the hobo, which I was. I toured all over on freight trains during those years with thousands of others that were searching for work. In a little farm community like Logan there was no work except probably on a farm for a dollar a day, pitching hay, and milking cows at 5:00 in the morning and that kind of stuff.

I remember I did get one job. It was twenty-five cents an hour, breaking cement for a man that built driveways. I had a sledge hammer and I would break the cement. I only got twenty-five cents an hour. I was a long, skinny kid 6'2" and I weighted going on a hundred probably a hundred-thirty-eight or a hundred-forty pounds. So I decided that wasn't my life. So then I became a hobo.

Beth Martin: What year did you join the CCCs?

George Herb Macy: I got a job working in a café from California, and the man said, "I'll give you twenty-five cents an hour, 'found.'" I said, "What's found?" Well, it's an old expression. Found means board and room. And so I took it. I wrote home to my folks,

told them I was in Oakland, [California]. I was working, not making much. My dad wrote me back a letter and said, "Oh my boy, come home, come home. We don't know where you are. We're so worried, and I've got a job for you in the Forest Service." And I thought, *Oh, boy. That's what I want to be, a Forest Ranger.* So I hooked another freight train and I came home to Logan. And my dad took me down to the post office, and it was the CCCs. That was in the spring of 1933.

Martin: Okay.

Macy: So we then went up Logan Canyon and started cutting down trees and making fences, pole fences all up and down Logan Canyon. Many of those fences are still in existence today as I drive up the canyon.

Martin: Okay. Then that wasn't the only camp then. You have to come here.

Macy: No. In the fall of 1933, as I recall it was early October. We all came down here to Washington County. We built the camp at LaVerkin which is not too many miles here from Zion Park. One of the early jobs that we had as young men was to put in a water system in the park here, Zion Park.

Martin: Zion, so this is when you came to Zion.

Macy: Yes.

Martin: Do you remember the time of the year that you came in 1933?

Macy: No, I do no. I do not. We built that camp, and we were quite a while on that I think. I just don't remember the time. It seemed to me it was cold. It was quite cold then, so I assume it was in the early winter months when I come calling on.

Martin: But you came and built the waterline.

Macy: Well, I worked on the waterline for a time. We packed the pipe I remember well up into the Park. I understood at the time that it was the first culinary water system for the Park.

Martin: Do you remember the name of the canyon? Was it Pine, was it the Lund?

Macy: No, it was the main canyon. It was the main canyon that goes up near Weeping Rock somewhere up in that area. But the years have dulled my memory.

Martin: It wasn't below the switchbacks? It wasn't the canyon below the switchbacks?

Macy: No. I don't think so. No. Not that I know of. We then did some work on the tunnel. Then tunnel had been completed, but there wasn't any road preparation down and we did haul gravel into the tunnel and spread it throughout the tunnel and that was the first road in the tunnel.

Martin: Where did the gravel come from?

Macy: I don't know that.

Martin: You don't remember where the gravel [came from]?

Macy: No. I didn't work on that end of the thing. When that was completed they reassigned me to the erosion control. That means like going to 'Hades', because we were gathering rocks off the mountains and among the rattlesnakes, and scorpions, and Gila monsters, and everything else. And we would put these rocks along the Virgin River and along the creek up through Toquerville to stop the erosion of the land. Most of those rock walls that we put in are still in today throughout the entire county. Well, after we had finished the work, as I said, we did erosion control throughout the streams of Washington County because they're a soft soil and wash away. We saved many a farm in those early days of the depression. Then they put me on a road building crew. And I worked on the road. We built the road, the initial road. As I remember from New Harmony over the mountains to Pinto, little town of Pinto. Have you ever been up there?

Martin: [no response heard]

Macy: Well, we built that road. I was learning a trade. I guess I was a rock man and I kept thinking, *Oh Gees, I want to be a caterpillar driver*, and I never got to that, but they taught me how to dynamite rocks. And so I became a dynamite man. And I'd blow the rocks up and the cliffs up that were in our path. I got to be, I think they called it a leader, or a leader man on these dynamite crews. So I blew my way from over the Dixie National Forest to the little town of Pinto. That occupied a good part of the rest of the time that I was in Washington County.

Martin: When did you leave the CCCs?

Macy: I was in three years.

Martin: Three?

Macy: Three years is a long time.

Martin: Because in two years is a normal time to be in the CCCs.

Macy: Yes. That was approaching three years. I think Lowell Brown [was] also that long too. No I thought mine was three. Let's see. I'm pretty sure it was pretty close to three years. Now, one other thing, and I imagine each person has told you. Because we had a large family, my father had lost his work. Then a dollar meant an awful lot. So twenty-four dollars was the allotment that went home and I received six dollars and I never worked harder in my life. I've worked hard all my life, never harder than that for that six dollars. So that's a dollar-and-a-half a week, and you really had to stretch it out.

One other instance I remember when we were in the camp here, the area. I got a toothache in one of my molars, a horrible toothache. There were no dentists in this part of the valley. There was an old-time dentist in Washington, and some of the Washington people still remember his name. I don't remember it, but it would have been during the thirties. So I went in to him; he said, "That tooth's got to come out, boy. You can't save it." He said, "I'll give you a shot to numb it." So he looked around for his syringe, where they put the needle in and the fluid, to numb your jaw. Well, he couldn't find it! And pretty soon, his kid came running in, chasing another kid, and he had this syringe, and he was shooting water out of it. It shot the water out twelve, fifteen feet. Well, the father got after the boy, and I'm looking on all this time. He said, "You know I've told you not to use that!" And he jerked it out of his kid's hand, and then he put the Novocain or whatever it was in the thing, shoved it in my mouth, and run it in my jaw. And I thought *I'm going to die for sure!* His kid was running around the yard with that thing. I've never forgotten that little instance over there.

One other little thing that sticks in my mind, I got on K.P. I had the duty. And the cook said to me while I was there it was before the evening meal. He said, "Now I want you to mash some potatoes." We'd boiled a big boiler full of potatoes and I suppose it was fifteen, twenty-gallon potato thing. He gave me a big wooden mallet thing to bang these potatoes with and beat them up. So I got them all beat up. "Now," he said, "put a couple of pounds of butter in it. Dice the butter." And I did that. He said, "On the shelf, is a pitcher of cream. You pour that cream in there and then mix it all up. Pound it in good." As I poured the cream, I heard something go plop. Well, I thought, *Plop! What in the world was that?* It sounded like something in the cream, but I couldn't see anything. So I continued to pound the potatoes until I got them all creamy and all mashed up. About that time, he said, "Let's get it on the table." So myself and others, I dipped up the potatoes in the bowls, and we put it on all these tables to feed these two-hundred-and-some-odd men. When I dug down to the end of the boiler, the Dixie, I don't know whether they call them Dixie, I don't know a big boiler! As I got down to the end of it all the potatoes were on the table, and the bell was ringing for the guys to come and have their dinner! Then I found part of a rat. I found the skin of a rat and the tail of a rat and other little particles, but most of the rat was gone. I called the cook's attention to it. He said, "How did that get in there!" I said, "I don't know except I heard that plop when you told me to put the cream in." He said, "Well, a rat must have fallen in the cream," which it had. Now it was all out on the tables. All my buddies were coming in to eat, and of course, they eat that rat. So he said, "I'll tell you what we do, boy. Quick! I'm going to mix up some gravy." So he mixed up some gravy. He said, "Hold the bell! Tell them they can't come in yet!" And we mixed up this all kinds of gravy, put it out on the table and it was just a minute or two's time and then they all came in. Then he got on the P.A. system, and he said, "We've got some special gravy today, beef gravy." Which it wasn't. "Beef gravy," he said, "Boy is it good." Well, of course, all the friends, and I'm looking at my buddy out

there, all of them, including Lowell Brown, who was just here, and they're pouring this gravy over these potatoes. That was to hide the rest of the rat. And they ate every stick of potatoes.

Martin: Did they get sick?

Macy: And I have never forgotten. No, no. I guess rats are good to eat. I don't know. (laughs)
But the tail was still there and some skin. I never forgot that.

Martin: That would be awful, wouldn't it?

Macy: But that was an important time of life. It's a time when we learned to work hard. And I think most of the fellows that are here at this convention learned to work. They learned to a work ethic. They learned how to work hard. Most of them, as you know, you've interviewed them, are hard working men, who have made their living, and raised their families by the sweat of their brow and the toil of their hands.

Martin: Then you feel that your experience in the CCCs has benefited you for later life?

Macy: It taught me how to work. It taught me. For a kid who was a....

Martin: Was a hobo?

Macy: Was a hobo, yeah. I learned a lot of values. I then got a little book learning, education and that.

Martin: Did you take advantage of any of the education programs there for you?

Macy: Yes. At that time I did. Yes.

Martin: What did you take? What classes did you take and who taught them?

Macy: I remember I was never the greatest at math. I took math and I loved history. I had history or geography and some of that. I can't remember them all. But it did prove to me, because from then on....I of course after that time I got married. Went in the service, came out of the service and started working for an advertising company. Then, because I knew how to work and I wasn't afraid of hours, I then worked my way through that company. I became the Executive Vice President of the second largest advertising company in America at that time. I later became president of that company and that formed a good part of my life's work. I credit it all to the fact that I learned how to work.

Martin: Learning how to dynamite boulders.

Macy: Learning how to dynamite. (laughs)

Martin: Well, I tell you, it can be important, can't it. So that's what you've done since you were in the CCC.

Macy: Yes, largely.

Martin: Did you make any lasting friendships other than the boys in Cache. Did you have any outside of the Cache Valley?

Macy: Yes. We still keep in touch with them. Most of us graduated from high school at the same time. So we go back to Logan for our high school reunions and many of these same fellows are still there.

Martin: In CC?

Macy: When I learned about this program here, it was then too late. It was just a couple of days ago. It was too late then to alert them. These fellows are all scattered all over the country now. But of course, from this program many of our friends, dozens of them. We've got a picture of that group of about two-hundred men. We've put it on display out here. And my memory is not that great, but my friend that was just here, Lowell Brown, can look at that and he can name probably eighty or ninety percent of those fellows.

Martin: I hope he has identified each one of them.

Macy: Well, he hasn't, but he can. He just put it...it's a big one. It's on display in there. And I think he's going to make it available. It might be interesting if anyone listening or writing this could look up some kind of history of Camp F-1, or group F-1, whatever it is. The captain of that group, the man that headed it, was a man by the name of John F. Gestring G-E-S-T-R-I-N-G. We also had another army man by the name of Captain Sharp. S-H-A-R-P. Don't know his first name. They came out of Fort Douglas in the army command there and headed these first units. And then we had a very loveable guy, you living in Kanab, by the name of Adams. He was the superintendent of the project and he was from Kanab. I think it was Elwood Adams.

Martin: I think I wrote one down here somewhere.

Macy: From Lowell?

Martin: Yes, from Mr. Brown.

Macy: Well, he knew him. He's got a better memory than I have.

Martin: And I'm, pulling it out, oh, it's Eldon.

Macy: Eldon Brown, right.

Martin: Eldon Adams.

Macy: Eldon Adams, pardon.

Martin: There we go. We got it.

Macy: Yes, Adams. But we were going to go over to Kanab and go to the cemetery, and we understand he's buried there and try to find his grave. He was older than we were.

Martin: Go to the city first they'll have the records.

Macy: Yes. We'll go there, and then maybe we can find some of his survivors. If we can, we'll ask for pictures of his CCC days. So I'm happy to see this event take place because from this and all of these men here, it will spread out throughout the rest of the intermountain area.

Martin: I think so.

Macy: And it's a good thing to remember that early history of a rather tragic time in America's history when you couldn't feed families. People lost their homes and their farms, and it was spread throughout America. And it was wise leadership in our country that brought about that program. You said, "Could it happen today?" Well, I kind of doubt it. I'm not knocking down the youth of today, but the work ethic, you know, most of us came from where we had to scrounge for a penny and times were tough. You'd accept any kind of work and you had to work hard and that became important. Our children today would not work that hard. I've got a fine family of girls and boys, but they can go out of college and get a job right off the bat, making thirty, forty-thousand and up, and you couldn't do it then, of course. And so that put a lot of toughness, and muscle, and sinew into the young men of that day. Secondly, they wouldn't work for what we worked, and then send the bulk of it home, and you kept a dollar-and-a-half a week.

Martin: How did you spend that six dollars that you received?

Macy: It had to be very frugal. There was no candy or gum. You just could not afford it. No way. You bought your own necessities. If you needed stockings, or a hanky, or a shirt, you usually saved for it.

Martin: Didn't the army your shirt, or were these shirts that you wore outside of the camp?

Macy: Shirts that you wore outside of the camp. You were given pants, shoes, and shirts. I don't remember what else, underwear, perhaps. I don't remember that. But outside of the camp, we used to like to go to St. George or Cedar City and attend a show. As I remember, it was ten cents and a truck would take us in. A truck would also take us to various sites on a Saturday. I remember going, they took us in a truck along dusty roads to Boulder Dam, to Boulder, Nevada, to watch the building of the Hoover Dam. They were just starting the foundations and so they took us down there. I remember vividly setting all night long on

the hill, looking down into the canyon as they brought the cement over and lowered it and built the dam. That was great excitement in those days. That was your entertainment. I act like a pioneer, but there were no airplanes around. There was no television. And if you were fortunate enough to get to a silent movie... I am sounding like a pioneer. But it was great experience. I cherish my memory of tough, hard work.

Martin: What was your impression coming to down here your first time to see this Canyon when you came to the CCCs up here to work?

Macy: Yes. I'd never been here. Most of us had never been anywhere except my years as I call myself a hobo. I then learned to scrounge for myself because I didn't have any money. So I remember going into one town and they were picking cherries and so I got a job picking cherries and earned a dollar or two and a stomach full of cherries. I went on to another place and I worked on a farm pitching hay. I worked in a bakery I think in Seattle. I wound my way down to Oakland, California and I remember I got a job washing dishes for a large café, and that's where received a dollar a day and found.

Martin: And found. Well, what was your impression here of the canyon? What impressed you the most?

Macy: Well, the grandeur, the beauty, the majestic rocks and mountains in here that are so unusual, so beautiful.

Martin: So different from Cache County, right?

Macy: Much different. Cache County was just a lot of cows. Other than that, agriculture, dairy county, which is beautiful county, but it's a different kind of scenery. It's unusual in the world, very unique, each of these places. Utah, as you probably know, has more National Parks than any state in the nation. It's got five of them. So they're each different. Some you look up on, some you look down. So it was an inspiring time of life in those tender years. I guess you're tender at eighteen or nineteen.

Martin: You are at that. You were not in a spike camp then, here in Zion?

Macy: No. We were brought up here from the LaVerkin camp, which, of course is not too many miles to the west of here. I remember vividly coming up on truck and the roads were dirt and I used to dislike the ride because the clouds of dust rolled into the back of the truck and we were all coated with it. By the time we got up here, our eyes were rimmed with dust, and our nostrils, and our nose, and our mouth had dirt all around them from the dust. So we literally grew up on dust, on dirt. Now today they think you're going to die if you get a little whiff of dirt or smoke or something.

Martin: Dirt and dust. I understand that a man did die in the tunnel from too much, after a blast, too much dirt and dust.

Macy: Could have. Dynamite blast, you know in that day, was very dangerous and very noxious. We used to get quite sick. Now I didn't do any dynamite in the tunnel. As I told you, I did on that road and if you'd smell the fumes from the dynamite. If you got big whiffs of it, you would get terrible headaches and very sick. And we used to experience that. So we'd get so we'd run after the dynamite was set off. You'd set off a fuse in those days and then you'd run where the wind would blow the smoke away. We learned how to do that. Anyway, I pity the poor guy in the tunnel, he couldn't run very far.

Martin: No. Well, did you feel that your experience as a CC helped you in your later life.

Macy: Yes.

Martin: Very definitely.

Macy: I don't think if you said to me, "Would you trade it if you had the opportunity to do it over?" It was tough and it wasn't easy. I used to have blisters and my muscles would ache, and I was sore, but I don't think I'd trade it if I had to do it over again. I think it was a real important time of life and I will cherish it. As a result of this interview, I think I'd better write my diary, and let my kids know, because they don't know. If I said to them, "I was in a CCC camp," they'd say, "Hey, what's that?"

Martin: "What's that?"

Macy: Yes.

Martin: Well, thank you very much.

Macy: All right.

Martin: It's been a pleasure.

End of interview.