

**Denzil W. Pollock**  
**Zion National Park Oral History Project**  
**CCC Reunion**  
**September 28, 1989**

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February 8, 2010

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Carolyn Hinton: It's September 28, 1989 and my name is Carolyn Hinton and I'm interviewing Denzil Pollock here at the Zion Nature Center. Denzil, how come you joined the CCC?

Denzil Pollock: Well there's ten children in the family and all in school and we couldn't afford to even buy shoes to go to school in, so I had to get out and help the rest of the family.

Carolyn Hinton: Where's this family at?

Denzil Pollock: Tropic, Utah

Carolyn Hinton: And what was the year?

Denzil Pollock: Nineteen thirty-three. When I joined, it was when the CC's just first started. The first job I was on in camp at Zion here, I starting road sloping, I got pictures showing where the first job we started on the East entrance of the Park. Barry Lewis was the crew leader. We'd slope all the banks down to the curb and then we would shovel them in to these dump trucks and take them off and dump them on the side of the road. That was the first job I worked on right here in Zion. We had quite a crew on the trucks that would go out every morning just the crew. In the pictures that's me right up there in the corner. I had a big cowboy hat on.

I worked there for a while and they wasn't feeding me very good so I decided to work in the kitchen. So I joined the kitchen crew as a KP at first. I was steady on KP, so I worked steady on KP until they took me on as a cook. I took a cooking school here in camp; we had an educational advisor and a little school going on all the time too. So I took advantage of that and went to school.

Carolyn Hinton: Where did you go to this school?

Denzil Pollock: Well I was sent up there to Fort Douglas for three weeks and I was washing dishes all the time I was in Fort Douglas and they didn't teach me a thing in school, but I learned more in camp than at that little school. We had an educational advisor in camp. He taught me more than anybody did, cookbooks and everything. I learned how to follow the cookbooks. So that's where I spent most of the seven years is in the kitchen working.

Carolyn Hinton: Three meals a day?

Denzil Pollock: We'd have two shifts on the crew. We'd work from noon one day to noon till noon the next and then the other shift would come in and work noon to noon.

Hinton: Mr. Pollock, I'm going to stop this just a minute and check and see how we are doing. Were you here at the Zion camp for the entire seven years or over to Bryce some of the time?

Pollock: We'd move back and forth. Summertime we'd be out to Bryce and winter we would come back here. When I first started cooking they sent me out to Bryce at a spike camp. They used to call them a spike camp out there and the crew would go out of about twenty men to cook for. I started cooking at a spike camp cooking first.

Hinton: And this was a regular camp that they had?

Pollock: This is the main camp, 962.

Hinton: What was your impression of Zion when you first came?

Pollock: Oh it's quite a thrill to go through the tunnel. The first time we went through it anyway. It was just the time they was working on the tunnel; they was plastering, cementing, and coating the rocks all through the tunnel. We had a crew of us that went up and swept the tunnel out once. I was on the crew to help sweep the tunnel out after they got some plastering.

Hinton: And then they finished. They built the switch backs after that didn't they?

Pollock: They was working on the switchbacks then. I was working on the Nevada switchbacks.

Hinton: When you came over from Tropic, how did you come? What was the route that you took? Did you come down through Hurricane?

Pollock: Well, we came down through Mt. Caramel summit on 89.

Hinton: And then how did you get down?

Pollock: We could get through the tunnel then. It wasn't finished. They'd close it off certain times of the day when they was working and they'd let the traffic go through. You'd just have to wait on the other side of the tunnel until they would get it cleared out.

Hinton: And what was the road like then, through the switchbacks?

Pollock: Not very good.

Hinton: Where did it go?

Pollock: They just had bulldozer trails there then, a truck and car could go over them.

Hinton: Was it straight down?

Pollock: They had the switchbacks on the trails, but it's like the switchbacks.

Hinton: But this is your very first time to come to Zion? You'd never been down here before?  
Never been away from home?

Pollock: Very seldom; we didn't get out much. We didn't own a car or anything and we didn't go anyplace you couldn't go on horseback.

Hinton: Did you make some lasting friendships here? Who were some other people that you met?

Pollock: There's a good many of them; several of them are here today we met. Gale Wilcox, he worked with me in the kitchen for years too and he married a girl down this way and so did I. We lived in Springdale for several years before we got out of camp after we got married.

Hinton: What do you think the CCC's did for you?

Pollock: Oh, I think they gave me a good start in life. The army training we got of making our own beds and pressing our own clothes and everything. I was only getting thirty dollars a month and twenty-five of that would go to our parents at home. We would get five dollars for essentials that we needed to get for ourselves and that's all the money we ever got. So I pressed shirts and pants and that to make extra money in camp.

Hinton: Now they provided room and board, but you still had to buy your own clothing?

Pollock: No, they furnished the clothes.

Hinton: And the shoes too? They were army clothes? (Laughter)

Pollock: Army clothes, leftover from World War I.

Hinton: And what did you do for entertainment?

Pollock: Oh, they'd usually have a dance here about every Saturday night.

Hinton: Here in Zion?

Pollock: Right in camp there.

Hinton: Well, who did you dance with?

Pollock: They'd send trucks down to towns below and bring a truck load of girls up to camp. They'd go clear as far as Hurricane to gather up girls and bring a truck load up. They had covered trucks.

Hinton: Did you go down to Hurricane and Springdale?

Pollock: That's where I met my wife; she was from LaVerkin, at a dance was where we met in the camp.

Hinton: How did you feel like you were accepted down in Springdale?

Pollock: Oh, not too good in church. We'd go to church, but they didn't accept us much, the CC boys. They figured we was invading the town too much I think. We got acquainted after I got married. It was a lot different. People accepted us a lot more after we were married.

Hinton: What are you doing now? What did you do after you left the CCCs?

Pollock: Well, as soon as I got out of camp, I couldn't find a job here in Utah anyplace, so we headed for Nevada and I got a job at Hawthorne, Nevada Naval Ammunitions Depot. We stayed there 33 years at that one job.

Hinton: Where are you settled now?

Pollock: We're retired and we own home up in Utah just out of Clearfield. We come south for the winter down to Beaver Dam, [Arizona] and spend the winter. We own our own place down there at Beaver Dam.

Hinton: How many children?

Pollock: We have three daughters. They done pretty good for us; we've got 19 grandkids and 10 great-grandkids.

Hinton: Was there any other experience's that we should talk about?

Pollock: Well, somewhere I've missed a few jobs. I worked for Johnny Excel up in the rock quarry some. Right at first I helped with the campground, the first campground they built down here; we built rock fireplaces and planted trees. And I've got pictures of them in here someplace. We built that campground and put the young trees in there. I helped plant those trees.

Hinton: Were there many trees?

Pollock: I helped with this up here and helped them put the sign on.

Hinton: Now this is at the entrance of Zion, the monument that held the Zion National Park sign?

Pollock: I helped build that monument. I quarried some of the rocks.

Hinton: And were all the rocks sandstone that you worked with?

Pollock: Yes, from the rock quarry right up here in Zion. Johnny Excell was the crew leader. These are pictures of camp and some CC boys here. This guy is from Circleville and Scipio. (Something here about Scipio, their sergeant) He married a Springdale girl, a Gifford girl, Cassie Gifford.

Hinton: Is he someone that you met through the CCCs?

Pollock: Yes, he was born and raised in Scipio but they called him Scipio all the time and then his folks moved to Meadow just this side of Fillmore.

Hinton: Now, what was your nickname?

Pollock: "Ma."

Hinton: Now why did they call you "Ma"?

Pollock: Well, Forest Hooten was the second cook and when I'd instruct him to do something all the time, I'd tell him to do it a certain way and he would say, "Okay, Ma." Then everybody in the kitchen heard him say that and pretty soon every one of them were saying, "Okay, Ma."

Hinton: How did you like that?

Pollock: Well it didn't bother me. So it stuck with me all the time I was in the kitchen; everybody called me 'Ma.'

Hinton: You had your brother with you, too, didn't you?

Pollock: Yes, he worked on the crew as KP with me a good many times.

Hinton: What was his name?

Pollock: Woody, Woodruff. We call him Woody.

Hinton: How long did you have your brother with you?

Pollock: He wasn't in only a short time, six months is all he was in camp I think, or a year. The two of us signed up for six months at the time and I think he might have been in a year in camp with me. We had a lot of boys, local boys, from around southern Utah that was in camp, mostly southern Utah boys.

Hinton: How old were you?

Pollock: I was seventeen when I went to camp.

Hinton: Seventeen.

Pollock: In '33. I was six foot two and they figured I was older than seventeen.

(Other voices)/

Hinton: Nineteen thirty-three, is that when you say you came?

Pollock: From 33 to 41, when I got out.

Hinton: That is a long time. And you lived right here in this camp most of the time?

Pollock: Well I'm from Tropic my hometown down there and my wife lived here in Springdale. She lived where the old post office was in Springdale. It was Crofts' building there and they had the Post Office in the front of it and they lived in the back of the post office. That's where our first daughter was born there in Springdale.

Hinton: So you were here when you were married and then you still worked for the CCC?

Pollock: I worked several years after we were married. I have a lot of pictures in the CC uniform there when we first got married. These are all CC pictures here. I was kidding about who wore the pants here. I was cooking here when we first me.

Hinton: Did you cook for your wife after you were married?

Pollock: Oh, when we first got married, I had to teach her how to cook. She didn't know anything about cooking.

Hinton: What were some of the things that you would cook for your wife?

Pollock: Well, I can remember one Thanksgiving dinner we cooked here at Zions. All the park rangers and their wives, they'd come to camp and eat with us too and all the foremen and their wives come to Thanksgiving dinner.

Hinton: Regular turkey dinner?

Pollock: Turkey dinner. And they sent all their wives back to talk to me after dinner and wanted to know how I cooked that turkey. They said it was the best turkey they'd ever tasted.

Hinton: Did you make pumpkin pie too?

Pollock: Oh yes, I baked it, everything.

Hinton: It sounds like they were really good years here.

Pollock: Yes, I spent some good years in camp here.

Hinton: Made some good friends?

Pollock: Yup, I sure did.

Hinton: Now is there anything else Mr. Pollock that you would like to share with us?

Pollock: Not that I can recall right now. I worked for Johnny Excel a while up in the rock quarry. We was building some houses for the park rangers and their wives. The rock houses are still standing back in here. We built about six houses then when I was first working and they were the first ones they built. And we quarried all the rock and put in them. That was before I was cooking.

But I can remember several camps I went out on. They sent me on the survey crew; here's a picture here of a surveyor. The survey crew that was here is Zion. They sent me out to Lehman Caves in Nevada to survey the cave and the trail down into the cave. They hadn't surveyed there or anything so we went out there and surveyed it. They sent me out there as a cook for them surveyors.

Hinton: Any other camps?

Pollock: A lot of spike camps out to Bryce, we worked out in the timber at Bryce Canyon, and we worked out there, at several spike camps, they were called. I went on spike camp up here above Zions back in Kolob. They had a spike camp back in there fighting forest fires and it lasted all summer long. I stayed there in camp all summer to cook for the fire fighters one summer.

Hinton: There was fire all summer long?

Pollock: Yes, a fire in Kolob that burned all summer long. It was back in 1935.

Hinton: You said you worked on the campgrounds, the south campground and laid the . . . ?

Pollock: Just fireplaces.

Hinton: Why don't you describe to us kind of what you did?

Pollock: Well, we made a ring. They got them right out of the rock quarry. I can't find that picture now. I must have gone over it here someplace. It's this one right here. We built these fireplaces out of rock like the rock all around the tunnel and everything and around the edge of the road. We used these quarried rocks to make fireplaces and around the trees. That's the south campground now with the big trees. This has all been changed.

Hinton: You laid the rock up?

Pollock: We cemented the rock.

Hinton: How many rocks did you put in each fireplace?

Pollock: Oh about sixteen good sized rocks around each fireplace and I think we made 200 fireplaces in the first campground.

Hinton: Were there any trees at all?

Pollock: No, all the trees were planted in the ground. It used to be farming ground up in here. In Springdale the farmers owned some of this ground before the park took over. And this was some of the ground that had been plowed up. It had an orchard in it at one time. The orchard in there all died up. I guess they didn't water it enough.

Hinton: What about the tourists? Were there many when you first came and how many when you left?

Pollock: Very few then.

Hinton: Were they many coming by the time you left?

Pollock: There wasn't many cars then. They didn't have cars like they do now days.

Hinton: So very few tourists?

Pollock: Very few. I guess it was '36 when they had a snow storm down here in Zion and it snowed three foot on the level right here in Zion.

Hinton: Nineteen thirty-six?

Pollock: Nineteen thirty six; '36 and '37. It was a bad winter.

Hinton: They had barracks down here though; you weren't living in tents?

Pollock: No. Barracks in this camp.

Hinton: Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Pollock: Not that I can think of right now.

Hinton: Well we certainly appreciate you very much. Maybe someone that hears this tape and recognizes your name could find you down at Beaver Dam.

[End of interview.]

