

**Richard Ramero**  
**Zion National Park Oral History Project**  
**CCC Reunion**  
**September 29, 1989**

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October 28, 2010

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Don Graff: This is Don Graff and now I'm interviewing Richard Ramero and its 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon on September 29, 1989, and we're at the Nature Center. Well just start out Richard by you telling us where you're from and how it was you got interested in the Three C's.

Richard Ramero: Well, my name is Richard Ramero and I was born and raised in Fairview, Utah. I was going to high school right along about sixteen years old. Wasn't doing too good in school, so when I turned about sixteen and eleven months, a guy come along and asked me if I'd like to join the CCCs. I was kind of slow in school, so I thought well, I didn't like it anyways so "what the heck" might as well try this. But I wasn't quite old enough. But he told me "Don't worry about it; we'll get you in anyways."

Don Graff: Was this another student or was this a guy that was recruiting.

Richard Ramero: This was the welfare officer of the county. I forget his name but he handled all Sanpete County. They took me and shipped me out to Jericho, [Utah] out west of Eureka about 15 miles, west of Eureka, south west.

Don Graff: Eureka, Nevada?

Richard Ramero: Eureka, Utah.

Don Graff: Eureka, Utah.

Richard Ramero: I was out there for six months, October of '37 until March of '38. I got tired of that one, so I quit for the summer and went back to Fairview. Come along in October of '38 I went and told them I wanted to go back in. Then they shipped me off to Camp Bridgerland, that's ten miles east of Duchesne, [Utah] or ten miles west of Myton, [Utah], just a little farming valley there, nice country, beautiful place, cold in the winter.

Don Graff: Lots of snow.

Richard Ramero: I lasted there from October till March of '39. Then in the end of October of '39 I went and joined again. They said "Okay" and there they shipped me down to Zion National Park. I thought, "Man this is the place for me." I really thought this was beautiful.

Don Graff: It is beautiful isn't it?

Ramero: After I got all decked out here and outfitted and situated, they put me to work. They put me up on those switchbacks going towards the tunnel. They had a group up there that would get these big boulders and they get them rolled down and then with this here foreman who had the expertise, he taught us how to blast these rocks apart. The foreman his name was Marion I think, but we called him *Poppymoose*.

I always thought that if you put a stick of dynamite in anything, you had to bury it under there and then it would blow up, it would blow up everything. “No, no,” he says, “No, that isn’t the way you do it. You cut that stick of dynamite in half, get it charged and put it on top of your rock and then you put some little mud over it to hold it” he says. “That blast blows down.” I couldn’t hardly believe that, but it worked. For six months I was in Zion at that time that’s where I ended up, blasting those rocks coming off them switchbacks.

Graff: Only six months you were there blasting rocks.

Ramero: Yeah, blasting rocks, the third time I was in, then I got out.

Graff: This is your third six-month stint you’ve made. Then you came back again.

Ramero: Then I came back in ‘40. I got out in March of ‘40 and then in October of ‘40 I come back. Then they sent me there to Lucin. That’s the northwest end of the Great Salt Lake. I got there for, I don’t remember, but I’d say about two months. Then they decided they needed some expertise help I guess down in Zion, so they shipped me back down here. We got us on the train there in Lucin. They shipped us down to Cedar City. I was waiting for a truck from Cedar City in the railroad depot to haul us over to Zion.

Graff: It was a little late in the fall, leaves off the trees and you’re wearing woolen coats.

Ramero: Kind of nippy after that, I can’t remember his name, but he didn’t think it was cold. After I got over here in Zion the second time, I went in with the mess sergeants, the one that got the mail to the depot in Springdale and run the errands, I got to be his sidekick. Then I rode around in his truck with him helping him doing these odd jobs that he was supposed to be doing. It was all right for me; I thought I had it made. I worked a little bit up there around these buildings, not enough to recognize them. Putting some of these little walls around when you walk around the buildings and for the driveways and things like that, what driveways we had in those days and things like that.

Then the commanding officer, Captain Wall, he kind of took a shining to me I guess, kind of liked me and he asked me if I wanted to ... Well, the war was coming on; they knew it but we didn’t. He asked me “How would you like to go into officer’s training?” I said “Fine, what do I go, what do I do?” He says, “First we ship you and about four other guys up to Fort Douglas in Salt Lake City.” Away we went. We went up to Fort Douglas and sat there for three days and they never done nothing for us. We just sit there and messed around. After about two weeks of that, why I said “Well, it don’t look like they’re going to do anything for us; let’s go back to Zion.” We told them we wanted to go back,

and they sent us back. I got back in with the mess sergeant, Clayton Edwards, is who he was. I rode around with him until my enlistment was up. That put me two years in the service and then I had to go.

Graff: What did you do after you left the Three Cs?

Ramero: Oh, I went back to Fairview and messed around. Pretty soon the war was on and my buddy was going in the service and I didn't want to sign up and volunteer yet, so I tried to find a job. This is going to be funny I'm going to tell you a little joke, make a little joke out of this. Couldn't find a job or anything and I thought well, I've got to get into something so I thought I'd get into politics. Never had no education and got out of high school after my 10<sup>th</sup> year. Ran into a girl from Moroni and I kind of shined up to her pretty well. I thought I'm going to marry that gal. Her dad was the state senator; that's as far as politics I got into.

Graff: That's as far as you got.

Ramero: Eventually we got married and then I went off to Tooele Army Depot. Well it was there, but I didn't work there. I got a job working for the smelter and I worked there for about a year in the smelter.

Voice: You were a neat story teller I enjoyed every minute of it.

Ramero: Well good thank you. I worked there for about a year in the smelter and thought man this is getting me down. I got lead in my lungs. I had to lay off two weeks and I had to take medicine to get that the lead out of me. Well, I didn't want to go back to there.

I quit there and I went to California and worked in a ship yard for a while. Then Uncle Sam called me and I come back to Utah, couldn't get another job, 1A in the draft. Couldn't do nothing. I went and volunteered and went in the Navy. I spent about two years in the Navy and the war was over with. Got in in '44 and got out in '45, eighteen months of it.

Then I came back and went out to Tooele Army Depot and I worked there in the Civil Service for about 24 years. and then I retired from there. Now I'm just semi-retired. I mess around for the school district out there in Tooele for about four hours day while the kids were in school, something to do. I 'm retired now and enjoying life.

Graff: That's what keeps you young, doing something. After you got out of the three Cs with your experience, you was getting around finding jobs, getting along with people that and that kind of thing.

Ramero: I guess I was kind of anti-social guy anyway, hard to get acquainted with. A lot of people took a dislike to me 'cause they figured I was anti-social and didn't want nothing to do with me. That wasn't the case. I loved everybody.

Graff: Anyway, you found the three Cs to be a good experience.

Ramero: Yeah, I had a little bit of cement work here in the CCCs, a little bit here in the park. A foreman by the name of Johnny Excell, he was a good guy; he was showing me how to do a little cement mixing one night. Then when I was out in Camp Bridgerland we built a cement dam, made a reservoir out there. That's what they did out there in Bridgerland they was building reservoirs, a little bit north and east of Bridgerland, [Utah].

Graff: I'll be darned.

Ramero: We was cement finishers. I learned that trade. These foremen that I worked for in the CCs, they taught me how to have patience. They give me the idea to work myself in with the public and do things like that. When I went to California to work, I worked in the steel mill down there, that was the second time I went to California, I used my experience that I had and knowledge on how to get along with people with the foreman's down there. I got a good job down there doing anglesmith. I run a 500 ton hydraulic press and it only took me about two weeks to learn it. When I was a kid I was kind of bull-headed. I did things the way I thought they ought to be.

Graff: When you got to the Three Cs, you were too young, did your parents have to sign for you or something or how did that happen?

Ramero: I don't think my parents had to sign for me, maybe they did. I don't know what this here case worker said to them. For all I know he just asked me if I wanted to join and I said, "Yeah", and he just picked it up and just handed it in.

Graff: That kind of situation with your family was it a big help to them to get \$25.00 a month.

Ramero: That's another thing. I only got five dollars and twenty-five went home. If I wanted five dollar, I'd write home to mom and she'd send it to me.

Graff: Send it back to you. Where they were in a situation where they could really use it. It was a big help to them or did they just saved it for you.

Ramero: They could, they could. My dad he had twelve children. He had a family to feed and after the depression man it was tough. He was a coal miner. He worked in the mines in Eureka. He worked in the coal mines. He could use that money easy.

Graff: Did they have a savings account for you?

Ramero: Yes, my mother she saved it for me. When I'd get out, every time I'd get out, she didn't want to give it to me she knew I'd go blow it.

Graff: Go spend it.

Ramero: But if I says I got to have it, she'd give it to me. I'd go home spend maybe ten or fifteen dollars on different things.

Graff: Did you find very often that you needed more than the five dollars?

Ramero: Oh, I'd go through a lot of money. I just blew it.

Graff: What was there specially right here say in this camp in Springdale, what was there to spend money on?

Ramero: You take a seventeen, eighteen year old kid, he can find a lot of places to spend money on, just messing around with the girls. I guess I can say this, anytime I wanted a drink of beer I'd go right down here to the Canyon Inn and buy all the beer I wanted.

Graff: It seems like five dollars was quite a little bit.

Ramero: In them days you could get beer for ten cents a glass, something like that. We'd buy it by the case.

Graff: You couldn't bring it back into the camp now, could you?

Ramero: No. Well yes, we could bring it back in still inside us. We could have done if we wanted. I take it back. We got alcohol into the camp easy enough. We wouldn't go to that place. When we'd get liberty and leave to go, why nobody checked us in or out. Guy lived over here in the barracks. I remember I got three gallons of wine in one time, got the whole barracks drunk. This was the old Canyon Inn down in Springdale. I can't remember where it was at.

Graff: That's where you went to buy your beer.

Ramero: We used to go right in there and sit right inside and drink it.

Graff: What was things like? Course most of you were seventeen, eighteen years you really weren't old enough, they didn't care I guess.

Ramero: I guess not. We didn't have no trouble.

Graff: Here in camp they didn't care as long as ....

Ramero: I remember coming back pretty well loaded and I was in, I don't what the number of the barracks is now, I went in there and I started on one end and I kicked every bunk over. Went up one end, every one of them and down the other side, there must have been about 25 bunks on a side, all them moaning and groaning.

Graff: They were in bed when you.....what did they do to you? They didn't drag you out and....

Ramero: Funny they didn't kill me. Good guys I guess.

Graff: They just saw the humor in it and let it go at that.

Ramero: That was a lot of fun. We used to go down to Hurricane on recreation trips on the weekends if you had any money; if you didn't have any money you stayed home.

Graff: What'd you do in camp? Play cards? Shoot pool? I understand they had a pool table.

Ramero: We had a commissary there. Spend it on the candy bars and played pool. Pool was pretty regular thing. You'd always find something to do like climbing these mountains. I went up there on Watchman Mountain on the bridge. I got up there and liked to have killed myself, but I got up there.

Graff: That's a tough old climb.

Ramero: The way we went up there, I can't remember now, but there's a big flat place there, with nothing down you know. Trail ends with a crack in it the rock. We shimmied across that crack about a hundred, two hundred fifty feet to get around where that bridge is supposed to be. We got there.

Graff: Took you all day did it?

Ramero: It took us all day, you bet. We had to go around some way and come back in there. I don't even remember it's been so long. Things like that. Played a little baseball, softball, something; we wasn't hurting for entertainment. Couldn't find our own entertainment we'd go to town. I guess the best night though was Tuesday nights.

Graff: What was Tuesday?

Ramero: Down in Springdale. That's when they held Mutual and the girls got to go out. We'd do down and tease the girls.

Graff: Got together so you'd go down there and chase girls.

Ramero: Had a lot of fun talking to the girls.

Graff: Let me ask you one question before we finish up here. You talked about when you were working on the switchbacks up there. I can see these guys rolling these rocks out and you guys dynamiting them and everything. Nobody ever got hurt?

Ramero: Nobody ever got hurt, not while I was there.

Graff: They must have kept pretty good control of guys working in a line rolling rocks.

Ramero: They'd all roll at the same time. They'd get them big ones; it was pretty safe. Those foreman's there they took good care of us. When we went to work though, we worked; we didn't mess around, we didn't take 15 – 20 minute, 30 minute breaks, we worked. I wore out a lot of pair of gloves. The guy that worked there in the office in the supply room, he thought I was stealing them gloves.

Graff: Well, I can't think of anything else. We pretty well got your story down I think unless there's something specific.

[End of interview.]