

Frank Stockham
Zion National Park Oral History Project
CCC Reunion
September 28, 1989

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Al Warnakie: My name is Al Warnakie and I'm doing interviews here for the CCC Reunion. The person that I'm interviewing at this time is Frank Stockham. The date is September the 28th, 1989. The location is the Zion Nature Center in Zion National Park. The interview is taking place at 2:30 P.M. Let me get some background information from Frank.

Frank Stockham: I joined from Salt Lake City. I was born and raised there.

Al Warnakie: At what time did you join the CCC?

Frank Stockham: It was approximately the first of July 1933.

Al Warnakie: So you were one of the first ones that were in this camp in Zion?

Frank Stockham: Yes, as a matter of fact, I was taken to Cedar Mountain, Camp Blue Springs, and from there they would send work contingents down and we helped to build the first barracks buildings here.

Al Warnakie: That's the ones that are located over in the Watchman Residential Area now, across the river as we were discussing earlier, is that correct?

Frank Stockham: Oh, well I suppose so.

Al Warnakie: That was the first camp.

Frank Stockham: That was the first camp, yes. I'm sure it was on the other side, or the west side of the river, right?

Al Warnakie: Right. What were you doing before you came in the CCC?

Frank Stockham: I was selling vegetables and produce house-to-house in Salt Lake City, Utah. I had been doing that since I was about twelve. I went to Granite High School and I would even work during the summers for the farmers there. One in particular had this truck and I went house-to-house.

Al Warnakie: What did you do when you first came in to help construct the camp?

Frank Stockham: Well, I don't think we boys, the boys they brought down from the mountain at Blue Springs, did any actual pounding of nails. We were probably just clean up and

things of that nature as I remember. That's what I mean when I said we helped build the camp because we did do that type of work.

Warnakie: Then you stayed in this camp in Zion? Did you move down here?

Stockham: Oh, yes. Before the winter set in, as soon as the camp was finished, we moved down here. I don't remember whether I have a picture of me and my friend in front of a tent that I turned in here. I don't remember if that was up on Blue Springs, or whether we had some tents down here at first that we were staying in while the buildings were under construction. I do not remember that for sure.

Warnakie: And after you got the buildings constructed and moved down here for the winter, what was your job then, what did you do personally?

Stockham: At first, I remember I was under a foreman, a local man from Springdale named Cy Gifford and I was on weed detail at one time. It must have been the following spring or summer that I worked in the rock quarry. We built a stone warehouse that still stands here in the Park up in the maintenance area, I understand. I helped work on that. I worked in the stone quarry for a couple of weeks and they moved me down to the building site.

Cy Gifford was my foreman and each one of us boys that were chiseling these rocks that came down from the quarry, we worked with a chisel and a four-pound single-jack and each stone in that building was built by order. In other words, Cy would come and say, "I want a rock now; let's use this piece here. Let's have a rock, say, three feet wide and so many inches long and high." Every one was made to order like that. We were taught how and we would just chisel and we could leave all the marks we wanted to on the flat surface on everything we wanted to but the face. We were taught how to do the face and make it look kind of rough and so there wouldn't be any chisel marks. So we would chisel a piece off and get that to where we wanted and then the next chisel would take that mark off. So the only marks should be maybe one or two on the very end of a rock.

Warnakie: So you were actually involved in the forming of the stone that came out of the quarry?

Stockham: Oh, yes! I worked there and developed my muscle in my right arm. I worked that way for about ninety days I'm sure, chiseling there at the building site. Then, from there, I was made company clerk. There was a vacancy, Ned Baldwin, who was company clerk originally up on the mountain left and Captain Chester Frank asked me to be company clerk because I knew how to typewrite.

Warnakie: Chester Frank, now what position did he hold?

Stockham: He was the first lieutenant. Captain Whitney was the captain and second lieutenant Brothers was in there too. He'd come in with that camp and was the lowest officer at that time.

Warnakie: So they found out you could do a little typing, and they decided they wanted to...

Stockham: That's right. I was a pretty good friend of Ned's. He'd let me come in the office there because I wanted to make an impression on some girls I was writing to in Salt Lake City and have it typewritten rather than scribbled. Lieutenant Frank saw me typing, and he said, "Stockham, you can type? Well, how would you like to be company clerk?" So that's how it happened.

Warnakie: Tell me, do you remember the location of the rock quarry that you took the stone from?

Stockham: No, I'm sorry I don't. In fact, just now I've been coming to Zion for the last three years, ten times a year, and I've never been able to find that building until today. What's your name?

Warnakie: Al Warnakie.

Stockham: Al Warnakie told me how to get to it. I'm going to go there before I leave the Park today; I'm going to go and see if I can recognize some of the stones I formed.

Warnakie: So, the gentleman, Cy Gifford?

Stockham: Yes.

Warnakie: He was a local?

Stockham: A local man who was a foreman. Whether he belonged to the CC or not, I don't know. I don't remember what the political set up was.

Warnakie: But he's the one that taught you all how to chisel the stones?

Stockham: Oh yes. He'd call us boys and give us an order and as soon as our rock was done, whether it took half a day, or maybe two days, then we'd get another order for a certain size. He was there with his tape and a man named Excell was in charge of all the stonework, I think, who was the big superintendent. This man Gifford was just a local man who was a foreman, but he was a very nice fellow.

Warnakie: How hard was it to learn how to do the chiseling in particular on the face? You mentioned that you tried to chisel in a way that you couldn't see the chisel marks; you'd always obliterate the chisel marks.

Stockham: I can't say. It wasn't difficult for me, but it might have been difficult for some people. I was always handy with my hands; I'd always done carpentry work in school and things. It wasn't very difficult for me, though I grant you may be the first one I did had a few more marks than Cy liked. Maybe they didn't even use the rock. I don't know. We had plenty of time and plenty of rocks.

Warnakie: Well, everybody ought to get at least one to practice on. What did your duties involve as company clerk? Company Clerk means that you were the one that did the typing and whatnot for the whole camp.

Stockham: Yes, for a while whatever. I don't really remember because it's been so long ago. But I was only company clerk for about six months, I think, and then I was recruited in Salt Lake City for a man that I had worked for in the produce business. He wanted me to go to work. In order to get out after you'd signed up for a new six-month enrollment, at that time, anyway, you needed a letter from some employer that was going to guarantee you employment. He wanted me. I wouldn't have left if it hadn't been for him. I knew him from the past and I was always a pretty good salesman, and I was a reliable worker. He wanted me to go to work for him. I was out of high school by that time and I had been working for him off and on there since I was twelve years old.

Now I don't remember quite, it's so vague, exactly how much typing I did. I did a lot of typing, I know. Lieutenant Frank would say, "Here, I want this letter typed" and I would type it. Whether I was involved in doing any actual accounting, or figuring, I doubt that very much. I don't remember doing anything but typing things that Lieutenant Frank wanted me to type.

Warnakie: So you did one six-month hitch and signed up for a second one?

Stockham: Yes, I did a second one. See, because I joined in about July, so the first six months would be the end of the year and then I remember I must have signed up for another one and then another one yet, because I left sometime in the fall of '34. So I must have left in the middle of the second time I re-enrolled, which would be my third six-month period, which I probably only did maybe three or four months on.

Warnakie: So you did two full six-month hitches, and then left to go to Salt Lake City to take employment in the produce business.

Stockham: Yes, I had gainful employment for a produce manager who at that time had a truck and we started trucking potatoes from Idaho to Arizona and carrots back from Arizona to make it shorter.

Warnakie: Tell me a little bit about camp life. In other words, what were the conditions you were living under? What kind of space did you have? And what did you all do for activities?

Stockham: Of course, I remember mostly our lifestyle after we moved into the barracks. There was fifty men to a barracks. There was an upper bunk and a lower. I had an upper bunk and we all became very friendly you can be assured by the time you lived with fifty men for a period of six months. I really enjoyed it. I would never have left, if it hadn't been for the fact that I was sort of recruited from the work market outside. I don't remember of ever having any fights in our barracks. I don't know what it was ten years later, but in the time I was in it, it was magnificent. In fact, it was one of the highlights of my life.

I'm sure it had a lot to do with molding my character and teaching me some values and things of that nature, although I didn't learn to trade as Lieutenant Brothers was talking about. Or, I mean, Mr. Hepworth. He learned a trade. I didn't learn a trade, but I know my character was really developed. I mean, I learned values here: to be honest, and how to get along with people and things of that nature.

Warnakie: How old were you when you signed up the first time?

Stockham: Eighteen years old. You had to be eighteen. I would have joined a little sooner. I think I would have joined in April when they first started, but I wasn't eighteen yet.

Warnakie: What did you all do for recreation? Now, as a general rule, unless the weather interceded, you worked five days a week, eight hours a day, that's forty hours a week. What did you do in your off time?

Stockham: All I can do is tell you what I did. I happened to be a member of the LDS church and there was an active LDS ward in Springdale. They sent a bulletin up one time that they wanted some males for the play they put on every year that the church puts on for young people. I happened to be chosen for the leading part. I got acquainted and they used to have dances, but I'm only speaking. I'm sure that all the men in the camp of two-hundred were not members of the church nor were they... I've always been in a sort of religious inclined anyhow.

I can remember a dance we had up on Camp Blue Springs where the army took all the trucks they had and scoured the whole countryside, Hurricane, Rockville, Springdale before we ever moved to Zion. We had a big barbeque and they brought lots of girls around and we had a dance. They provided entertainment that way, and I'm pretty sure we must have done that in Zion. I learned to play chess. There was a man by the name of Karchner who taught me how to play chess. We would play chess in the evenings in our barracks.

I don't remember that there was any really organized activities that was headed by the army and whoever was in charge of that phase of our lives. I don't remember many things, except we would go on some trips, and I know several times we went over to dances in the neighboring towns. I remember a dance they took us to in Hurricane. Anybody that was interested could go in this army truck, so about twelve of us would go over and I remember doing that two or three times.

Warnakie: You've mentioned Camp Blue Springs. Where is that located in Utah?

Stockham: That's up on Cedar Mountain. You go five miles south out of Cedar City, towards St. George. Make a right turn, go up on the mountain. It takes about two hours to go wherever Blue Springs is. It's beautiful. I've been along that road once since and I couldn't find the exact spot where Camp Blue Springs was, but I'm sure it must be in the records some place where that camp is located, but that's the general area.

Warnakie: Now, you mentioned that at first you were at Cedar Camp. Is that what it was called?

Stockham: It was still the same camp, Company 962, Camp NP-2. I'm sure that was only temporary because we started work details originally to come down here and work in this permanent camp in Zion's Park.

Warnakie: You've mentioned that you feel like this experience molded your character and was of benefit to you. Could you elaborate a little bit on that? In other words, maybe a little bit about what you were like personally before you came here. You know, what your dreams were or what you were looking forward to and how this experience with these other men your age working here in this camp in Zion Park, how that affected your life later.

Stockham: Well, you might think when I first mentioned that that I was sort of introverted. I'm really not. I'm sort of an outgoing person. I've never had trouble getting along with people or talking. I used to be in the school plays and things like that. So, I guess what I mean is that I was from a very poverty-stricken family and I never thought I'd be able to go to college, so I always thought I'd be a salesman, which I did. You know, that produce job was selling house to house and things of that nature. So what I really got out of the camp was nothing really specific because I didn't have trouble. I'm not an introvert, I didn't have any hang-up and I wasn't paranoid about anything. People always liked me. In fact, I was kind of a peacemaker. I always seemed like I would have friends. I'd always have a lot of friends and they would be opposing forces as I was making up peace between them and things of that nature, if you can get what I mean.

The life of a teenager is so much different from the way we look at things now. But that's the way that it helped me. It gave me an opportunity to realize that even though I was from a poverty-stricken family, as you know, twenty-five dollars out of the thirty we earned went home. We boys got five dollars. When I became company clerk I got an assistant leaders bonus, which was six, which was a lot of money in those days. It got me out in the world and what I think I really learned was how to get along with a lot of people. We had to get along with 200 people, and like you say, I don't remember in the year and a half I was there, I don't remember one altercation, one bad fight or anything like that in our camp.

Warnakie: I do understand what you mean and I think I do understand also what you're saying about how it helped mold your experience, because I think I've had those kinds of experiences in my life, too. One thing I'm curious about is that you were talking about your family. Can you describe to me a little bit about what the conditions were like in your family before you went in to the CCC?

Stockham: Well, it was about as low as you could get on the poverty scale. My father was always ill. He was twenty years older than my mother, so there wasn't really too much harmony in our home, which I really regret as I look back on it. I can figure now a few character traits I have now that I'm sure stems from the environment in our home because there wasn't all that love and type of organization there that are in so many homes that

I've been able to watch as I've grown up to be the age I am now. So I came from just a poverty-stricken home, and the CCCs was a big thing in that nature, it really was. It gave me an opportunity to make some money. Although, like I say, I was working part-time in the produce business and I wouldn't have been that... I didn't need the work really as bad maybe as most of the fellows that went in.

The main reason I went in, I guess, as I look back now, was for the twenty-five dollars to help my mother, because I wasn't giving her 25 dollars a month, which I started doing when I joined the camp. She needed it very badly. My mother and father were nice people; they were good active members of the LDS church. It just happened to be one of those things where they were mis-matched and there wasn't that much harmony in our home.

Warnakie: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Stockham: I have one sister and two brothers.

Warnakie: What did you do? You went to the produce business and then to sales after you left the CCCs and then what did you do for a career for the rest of your life?

Stockham: Well, I've done a lot of things, and the time wouldn't permit me to go into detail here, but I was a photographer for about ten years. I was very good at taking pictures of children, babies and that that would come in and fuss up. I could stop them from crying and make them laugh when some photographers would lose their patience and couldn't. So I was successful in that business. The last thing I did I became was a machinist. I retired as a journeyman machinist in 1980 from Lake Havasu City, Arizona, for the McCollough Chainsaw Company. For five years, I went in business with some people in Yucca Valley, California. It was a hydroponic tomato growing business. We promoted about a third of a million dollars. I've always been in a few things like that, but never really worked out. We went bankrupt because it cost too much to make the tomatoes. But it was a good experience and things of that nature. So I've done many things. I sold insurance for a while and things of that nature.

Warnakie: And what do you do now?

Stockham: Now I'm retired. We have a mentally ill son. One of our children has schizophrenia and he happens to be very high-functioning. My wife and I were living in Las Vegas at the time. Three years ago we formed a group home with five other LDS families. We decided to form a home for the mentally ill. So we bought a piece of ten acres and a big house in Leeds, Utah. We run a group home for the mentally ill. We have a license for eight clients. We're full most of the time, but we're a little short-handed, so we're working too hard for my age.

Warnakie: Especially for being retired. You're supposed to be resting now. Did you have a chance to explore around Zion very much in the Park? Did you do any hiking or any things like that that you recall while you were here?

Stockham: Yes, I had plenty of opportunity which I turned down. I remember a kid named Leif Ellis who really was a bug on a leaf. He was really the reverse of me. I've never been too interested in that type of thing, although I did go on some trips. I've done more hiking and things of that nature after I got away from here than I ever did here. The opportunity was here. There were groups of boys going all the time looking for arrowheads and things of that nature.

Warnakie: Did those boys that got stranded up on the West Temple, did that happen while you were here?

Stockham: It seems like I remember something about it, but I don't know any details. When I saw the picture in the room there today on the bulletin board, I'm pretty sure I was here at that time.

Warnakie: One other thing I'm curious about. In reading the background on the CCC, I read some of the monthly bulletins that they published in the camp, little newsletters. It was kind of like a report, I guess, from the captain about what was going on. They would talk about how much work had been done, how many man hours had been going on and things like that. In one of those it mentioned that the work in the warehouse stopped for a period of time. It seems to me like a month or two. Do you remember that?

Stockham: No. No sir, I don't. You mean the warehouse I worked on?

Warnakie: Yes.

Stockham: No, that might have happened after I left. See, I became company clerk and then I didn't follow that the construction of the building after that. At least, I don't remember any problem.

Warnakie: Okay. When you were cutting stones for it and they were placing stones down there, were you all above the ground at that time or were you doing foundation work?

Stockham: Yes, we hadn't got the walls up very far yet. No, I bet you we were doing foundation work. I remember one side of a wall being up a little bit, yes.

Warnakie: You have any idea about how many stones you cut?

Stockham: Me, myself? Well, if I knew, I don't know if I remember for sure, but let's say I worked there for three months, and I think I did. Let's say I did a stone a day, so what there's fifteen working days. So I cut fifty of them, probably.

Warnakie: I bet that did toughen up your hands and your arms, didn't it?

Stockham: Yeah, that muscle in my right arm! I'll tell you.

Warnakie: What were the people that you worked for the camp commander and what-not? What were they like? Now, your camp commander was a military man, is that correct?

Stockham: Yes, Captain Whitney. I don't remember him being around very much. All the active commanding, if you will pardon the expression, was Lieutenant Frank, Chester Frank; very nice fellow. Lieutenant Brothers I remember. I understand, since I've been here at the reunion, that they built another camp, which I don't remember about. He became in charge of that. I guess he wasn't around our camp too long. Chester Frank is the man I remember and he was a fine individual.

Warnakie: What branch of the service was he in?

Stockham: Oh, he was in the military. He was a first lieutenant in the Army.

Warnakie: Let me just let you talk about anything that you can remember or people that you can remember or anything significant that you want to get on the record. If there's anything like that that you want to add at this time or anything that comes to memory that you wanted to get in here on the record, then I want to let you have the opportunity to do that.

Stockham: Even days before we came here, I've been trying to think of something that if I was asked anything significant like that and I think this interview up to this point has been so complete. This Ranger here, are you still called Rangers?

Warnakie: Yes.

Stockham: He's a very well adept interviewer, but I might just mention this, I do remember, after fifty-five years how friendly, how outgoing and how interested the rangers were in our welfare at that time. I never forgot that. I never forget Pappy Roselle. I don't know if he was a ranger or not, but I know he worked for the Park Service. I don't remember what position he was exactly. He was always interested in the boys and I remember one time a group of rangers took a group of us boys and showed us a fight between a king snake and a rattlesnake and a two-tailed lizard being swallowed. The Rangers were just fine people and I want to just give them credit. I'm sure that the CCC camp in this area in Zion Park would never have been as good as it was and accomplished what it did without the National Park Service. I remember that more that I remember... well... I remember all the people I worked with and stuff like that, but as far as the officials were concerned, it was the Rangers that I remember, how courteous they were and how interested they were in our welfare.

Warnakie: Thank you very much. Mr. Stockham, I wanted to make a record point here. Mr. Stockham has given me a list of names that he compiled over the period of time prior to coming here and it will be turned over to Tim Manns for inclusion in the Archives. One other thing I'd heard you express, Mr. Stockham, your feelings about the CCC experience for you. Could you give me some idea of your opinion being a resident of Utah and knowing what it was like during the depression here in Utah, what do you feel like the

impact of the CCC program was on the young men and the families here in your home state? In other words, was it a benefit, do you think, and if so, how?

Stockham: Definitely it was a benefit, and after you consider the way things were going now, fifty-six or sixty years later, the amount of problems young people are having growing up today. There was nothing like it, I don't ever remember ever any dope or any kind of excess drinking or anything like that that took place in the camp in the time I was in it, which was close to two years. But there were problems, as long as he's asked me... I don't remember your name.

Warnakie: Al.

Stockham: Al, you know at my age, my memory...

Warnakie: It's okay sometimes I don't remember my own name.

Stockham: But, you know things happened at that time. Like there was a young fellow named John Shell, and there was a girl in Rockville who became pregnant and they had to get married. I'm sure that there was an impact on every family that had daughters in any area where there was a CC camp. But then, wouldn't that be normal any place? And it wasn't any big deal, but there was that one marriage I remember that had to be. I understand that they're still together because I checked into it today and asked a few people around here. They made a go of it, so you know. People have to meet somehow. But I'm sure that there were a lot of parents who were nervous. I live in Leeds, Utah now, and there was a camp in Leeds and I've talked to some of the people there in the three years I've lived there and some of the girls that are still there that were daughters at that time. There was a... how do you express it? A nervousness, and yet when the trucks come around... our camp would send out trucks to round up girls to come to a dance. all the girls came, so their parents must've not been too worried. But that was an impact, yes.

Generally speaking, our country wouldn't be what it is today without the CC. I'm sure it was a wonderful thing, one of the best things that ever happened.

Warnakie: Okay. Well thank you very much. Once again, is there anything else that you can think of? I'll give you a moment here to think about it. In fact, we'll just stop this for a minute.

Stops tape.

Stockham: We built and did so many other things. I remember doing erosion work even when we were up on Cedar Mountain and things. But I enjoyed the stonework part of it, I really did. I really enjoyed that. I feel like I benefited from my skill. I've always been handy with my hands anyway and I'm sure I'm handier now than I was before I cut those stones. Yes, you can build your own garage every once in a while.

Warnakie: Well, I want to thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to talk to you. I personally appreciate the opportunity. I had an uncle that was in the CCCs in Arkansas and I've been up in northern Arkansas and some of the places that were built by the CCC. I know just from talking to my relatives that the impact that they had in Arkansas was great because there were many towns for example that didn't have school buildings and those were built. And it's a really, really neat experience for me to go through those areas because any time you see a stone building that's been built out of native stone, you can almost bet that it was a CCC project.

Stockham: Is that right? I didn't realize that, and to think that we built the first one here in Zion.

Warnakie: You built the first one. I didn't know that.

Stockham: Well, I started on the first one.

Warnakie: In northern Arkansas, there are innumerable schools in very, very, very poor areas, and bridges, and recreation areas that were built.

Stockham: Do you want to know a bit about how we quarried that rock from a mountainside, you know? I don't know how they would choose the quarry, but there'd be a jutting of some rock or stones out where we could get on top of them and sandstone has seams. They're all full of seams. So every morning, we'd pick up from the blacksmith before we'd go little wedges that were made of probably three-quarter inch steel, maybe inch steel, hexagonal shaped. They'd have this rod and they'd cut it at about two or three inches and he'd shape them so they're wedged. Then you'd go along and I went and took some sharp picks every morning. Every night, the blacksmith would have to work a nightshift to sharpen all the picks, and we'd load these picks up because they'd all come off the handles real easy.

Then we'd have sledgehammers. Now, these were eight-pound sledgehammers. So you'd take your sharp pick, and you'd find a seam that looks pretty straight, and a rock that weighs twenty ton and first you'd split it down this way and then you'd split it up that way into smaller pieces, same method. They'd have a cherry-picker there to load it onto the truck eventually when we'd get this stuff quarried down to a size where we could at least pick one up. So it was amazing, how you'd pick some holes along this seam, maybe about six of them, and then you'd take your sledgehammer real easy and start the wedge in one, and then you get a row of about six wedges, and then you go along with the sledgehammer and hit 'em and if you don't hit them straight, then zing, they'd fly! Pretty soon, that stone split, just right down the seam, real pretty. And then you'd split those pieces up into two each and then you'd have four pieces, you see. And then they'd load it on the truck and haul them down to the building site.

Warnakie: And then at the building site, you'd do the finish work.

Stockham: Right. I only worked in the quarry about a week and I don't know why. Maybe they saw I was going to be better... more of an artist than quarrying stones. No, I don't know. I'm just kidding. But for some reason I ended up down there after only a week, and I worked about three months there, forming those stones.

Warnakie: Well, thank you very much once again.

End of interview.