

J. Brose Webster
Zion National Park Oral History
CCC Reunion
September 29, 1989

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Beth Martin: Beth Martin, interviewer, interviewing James Brose Webster, the 29th of September, 1989, CCC oral history. Brose where did you live when you entered the CCC's?

Brose Webster: I lived in Loa, Utah.

Beth Martin: Loa, Utah. Where do you live now?

Brose Webster: I live in Salt Lake City.

Beth Martin: Okay. What did you do before you joined the CC?

Brose Webster: I just herded a few sheep when I was a young teenage and worked on the farm. My folks had a farm and my stepdad, he had a couple of farms and so we worked there on the farm all the time.

Beth Martin: Why did you join the CCC?

Brose Webster: Well, I couldn't find a job anywhere and it sounded good to me, a dollar a day and my board sounded really good.

Beth Martin: Sounded real good in that day then, didn't it?

Brose Webster: You bet. I never made that kind of money before, work one day or two days and that's all the money you'd have, a dollar or two. I was lucky to get into the CC camp.

Beth Martin: What date did you enter, do you remember?

Brose Webster: I don't remember the date, but it was in September.

Beth Martin: Of what year?

Brose Webster: Nineteen thirty-four.

Beth Martin: In 1934. How long were you in?

Brose Webster: I was in one year, two enlistments, two six months enlistments.

Beth Martin: So then you only were enlisted to...

Webster: '34 and I got out in September '35.

Martin: Why did you leave the CCC?

Webster: Well, I had promise of a job up in Salt Lake. The job didn't turn out, but I did quit the CC and went back to Loa, and stuck around there for a few years, then I went to Los Angeles.

Martin: Had you ever been in Zion before?

Webster: Never had been here.

Martin: What were your impressions of this Park?

Webster: Well, it was really nice and it was warm and a beautiful place.

Martin: Little different than Loa?

Webster: Little different than Loa.

Martin: Was there much tourism when you first arrived in '34?

Webster: No, there wasn't too much tourism here in the winter time. See we didn't get down here until, I guess, in October some time. There were quite a few tourists but not like it is today.

Martin: How the roads? Were the roads dirt?

Webster: The roads were good.

Martin: Were they graveled, or surfaced?

Webster: No, they were all surfaced. All the main roads were surfaced.

Martin: Were they this beautiful red?

Webster: No, it wasn't red. It was just a surfaced road.

Martin: What types of things were here for the tourists in '35 and '36?

Webster: They had an information center right there where you cross the bridge. That's where the head office was, where this information center is up here, they had it up there right where you cross the bridge and made the turn up right there.

Martin: Was the south and east entrance all well-established?

Webster: Yes. It was well established. They had a guard on each side at times.

Martin: How did you feel about the camp? What was the routine? What was your day like?

Webster: Well, we had five day work days and we had two days off. Saturday and Sunday we got off and we could go where we wanted to. Go to town, or St. George, Hurricane, where we wanted to go on the weekend if we had the money.

Martin: If you had the money.

Webster: If you had the money, if you had a couple of dollars, which it only takes a couple of dollars to go to town overnight.

Martin: Did you do that very often?

Webster: I went quite a bit. I left camp quite a lot on weekends.

Martin: Did you return home to visit your family very often?

Webster: About twice. I think Thanksgiving time was the only time I was home all the time. And then in the summer time when I was in Bryce, I went home seemed like for the Fourth of July. And that's about all I ever went home.

Martin: Other than Zion Park, you did go to the spike camp in Bryce?

Webster: Well it wasn't a spike camp. That was the main camp in the summer. This camp moved from here right up to Bryce Canyon.

Martin: I see. And how many months did you work?

Webster: It seemed like to me, maybe around the middle of June, somewhere around June until September.

Martin: Okay, now while you were in Zion Park right here, tell me in detail what kind of work that you did.

Webster: Most of my work was right there was on this trail behind the barracks. What did you say the name was?

Martin: Parunuweap Trail

Webster: Parunuweap. Anyway, that's the trail that I worked on. I did all kinds of work on it. I and Ernie and Barney from Richfield, we were the guys that done the drilling and the blasting on the trail on that crew. They had two different crews working on that trail. They had a crew above us. After that, I worked there for a couple of three months and then I took over the horses.

Martin: And why did you take over the horses?

Webster: Well, I like horses. They had a mule, a pack mule to pack cement and the gravel or the sand up to the trail.

Martin: What did you use to haul that sand in?

Webster: We just put it in fifty-pound salt bags and loaded them on the horses in pack saddles and took them up the trail and unload them.

Martin: Tell me about where you kept those horses and the mule.

Webster: They were right up here by the bridge. The truck would take me from here up to the bridge every morning. It was going up to do the slopes and the banks. I'd get off and go about a block over to those stables, right above the office, right where this bridge was right up here where it crosses, right back up in that canyon was the horse stables. I go up there and feed the horses and water them and take care of them. If they needed shoes, I'd put shoes on them or whatever there was to do. A lot of times I wouldn't have anything to do all day, but feed them horses.

Martin: Then you didn't use the horses all the time in making this trail?

Webster: No, we didn't use them all the time. I'd ride one horse down for dinner. I'd just get on a horse and come down on this side of the river and come down to camp for dinner and ride back. I had a real good job there for about three months.

Martin: That was just three months? What months of what year?

Webster: That was in '35, 1935. About a month and half was hauling sand up on the trail to make the rock walls, put the cement in the rock walls.

Martin: You said that you mainly worked on this trail here.

Webster: That's about all I did.

Martin: And then the horses and then you went to Bryce. What did you do in the winter time?

Webster: Well, that's what we did, worked on the trail in the winter time, and then take care of the horses.

Martin: Can you describe the weather during those times?

Webster: Well, we'd get a little bit of snow, little skiff of snow here. Once in a while maybe half an inch or something, an inch and then it'd be gone, though. Two or three hours as soon as the sun hit, it'd be gone. It wasn't too cold here in the wintertime. It was quite nice that winter I was here.

Martin: Let's go back to what a day was like. What time in the morning did you get up?

Webster: I can't remember. We'd get up about 6:30 I'd imagine. We'd do our chores.

Martin: When you say chores, tell me what the chores were.

Webster: Oh, fix your bed, mop the floor, or sweep the floor and go get your breakfast and be ready to go at 8 o'clock to go up to the trail and work on the trail.

Martin: What kind of breakfast did they serve?

Webster: Oh, good breakfast. They always had sausage and eggs, sometimes scrambled eggs sometimes, just eggs any way you wanted them, potatoes, and hash browns. Mush, usually had mush in the morning; always had plenty to eat.

Martin: Was there a bugle call in the morning?

Webster: Seems like to me, that Pop Clements, he was the first sergeant, he'd come through and blow the whistle to get up in the morning.

Martin: He'd come in the tents?

Webster: He'd come through the barracks and then up in Bryce Canyon he'd come through the tents and blow his whistle, and holler, "First call." We'd usually get up then.

Martin: Did you have roll calls in the morning?

Webster: No, no roll calls. Not like the army.

Martin: All right. What about discipline? Do remember anything about discipline actions or anybody that needed discipline?

Webster: Oh, a lot of guys kind of get out of hand, but we had a good captain. Captain Whitney was really a nice man and Lieutenant Brothers was a nice guy. We didn't have too much discipline in our camp. It seemed like everything went real nice. Very few guys had to be disciplined.

Martin: What kind of discipline? Do you know what kind discipline was used?

Webster: They'd tell them that if they didn't straighten up they'd just discharge them and send them home.

Martin: What would it take to get discharged?

Webster: I don't remember just exactly what it was. I know a few guys got discharged because they wouldn't do what they were told. They wouldn't go to work and they wouldn't go to bed when they were supposed to and just things like that.

Martin: Did they issue warnings?

Webster: Oh yeah. They'd give them warning after warning. Some of them got four or five warnings before they ever would send them home.

Martin: How much pay did you receive?

Webster: I got five dollars a month.

Martin: Did money go to your home?

Webster: Twenty-five dollars went to my mother at home. She put in the bank for me. She wasn't that poor, so they just put my money in the bank so I had it when I got out.

Martin: I see.

Webster: We could draw two or three dollars for PX. You'd get a little book of stamps five cents, ten cents, twenty-five cents stamps that you could spend them to the PX for candy, gum, or anything wanted. Cigarettes or anything you wanted to buy down there in PX.

Martin: Were you ever a leader or assistant leader?

Webster: No. I was always a worker, worked on the trail.

Martin: What about entertainment after you got off work?

Webster: Seemed like to me we would play cards and they had a pool table or two over there and we'd play a little pool in the PX. You could do anything you wanted to. You could go to town, to the show. About twice a week they'd have shows down in Springdale.

Martin: What kind of shows did they have in Springdale?

Webster: Oh just movies, black and white movies.

Martin: Sound? Did they have sound? Or were they silent movie?

Webster: Seems like to me they were silent. I can't remember whether there was sound or not, really. I know a few years after I got out of the service why they got sound in them, but I can't remember there being sound in the movies while I was in '34 and '35.

Martin: Did the colleges bring entertainment in to entertain the boys? From Dixie, from Cedar?

Webster: Seems like to me that the one from Dixie, we had one program that I remember they got some college girls and the guys had some songs and dances and at one time. I'd usually go down to Dixie down to their dances down there, college dances.

Martin: The college dances, did they ever have dances here in the Park?

Webster: They had dances here about once a month they'd have a dance here in the mess hall. We'd take all the tables out and they'd sent trucks for Hurricane and all these little towns around here, Rockville. Bring the girls here and we'd have a good time.

Martin: How were you received by the townspeople?

Webster: Seems like to me they liked us fine; didn't have any troubles in town.

Martin: No trouble? Did you ever attend church or services?

Webster: Yes, I went to church down here a few times, down to Springdale.

Martin: LDS Church?

Webster: LDS Church. We had a Chaplain.

Martin: The other boys, if there were of another religion, they could attend services in the camp, they held services on Sundays?

Webster: They usually had service of some kind. Chaplain would hold service.

Martin: I'm going to back to your evening meals a little bit. Let's go back to the type of food that was served in the evening meals?

Webster: They always had good meals. I though the meals were really excellent.

Martin: Well prepared?

Webster: Well prepared. We had good cooks in my outfit, real good cooks and the food was usually always good.

Martin: Was there a library when you were here?

Webster: I can't remember whether there was a library or not. There was more than likely books and magazines in the recreation hall. I think there was books and magazines, especially magazines.

Martin: But you don't recall at this time if there was an actual library available?

Webster: I don't think there was a library available.

Martin: Let's go back. Did you take advantage of any of the schooling that was offered?

Webster: There wasn't any schooling offered to me.

Martin: During the year of 1935 and '36, the summers?

Webster: '34 and '35.

Martin: '34 and '35.

Webster: I didn't go to my last year of high school because I came into the CC camp.

Martin: Was there a character involved in your camp? Was there always one that stood out in your mind?

Webster: Yes. Benny Poulson. He was the one that was always kept things a-going. He was from Salt Lake and he was always joshing with everybody, always had something going, always ribbing somebody about anything he could think about.

Martin: Was there tricks and jokes played on the men?

Webster: Oh yes. They'd short-change you. Fix your sheets so you could get in or your blankets so you couldn't get in bed. Put things in your bed, when you'd crawl in there would be a hairbrush or an old broom or something down there.

Martin: Nothing very serious at all? Do you remember any other incidents that may be happened in camp?

Webster: Not right at the present, I don't. I remember the young guys that came in, they'd initiate them. The boys that would come in, they'd initiate them and play jokes on them. Tell them to go get a left hand monkey wrench, and to go to the wire house and they were always playing tricks on them for quite a few days until they'd pulled all their tricks on them, you know, so they would do all these tricks.

Martin: What about injuries? Were you ever injured while you were in the CCs?

Webster: I was never injured, no.

Martin: You never had to have use of the medical people. There was medical assistance?

Webster: Oh yeah, we had a doctor.

Martin: And what was his name?

Webster: Dr. Schrank.

Martin: Dr. Schrank.

Webster: Dr. Schrank was our doctor, and it was never more than a cold or something like that, you know.

Martin: What about the others. Was there much illness at all while you were here?

Webster: Didn't seem like to me that there was hardly any illness. Some of the guys had appendicitis once in a while, or hernia. I remember a kid named Chief, an Indian boy, had

to go get a double hernia done in Salt Lake or Richfield or somewhere I can't remember exactly. He was gone for a couple of weeks before he came back. He didn't do any work for about a month or two, any lifting or any heavy work like that. That's about all I can remember. Some of the guys, they got a few broken legs, you know, on the trail, rocks rolling on them, break their foot or leg or something like that, but I don't recall the guys names now.

Martin: Was there a lot of this that happened?

Webster: Oh, no. Not a lot of it. Just once in a great while somebody would get a rock rolled on their foot or their leg or something.

Martin: Did you develop any lasting friendships with any of the men?

Webster: Yes, there's a fellow here today right now, Orril Sorensen. He was the office manager over here in the camp in Bryce and Zion with Captain Whitney and Lieutenant Brothers. He was the head office man. He took care of the office and all the clerks. He was an office clerk. And after I got out of the CC camp, I ran onto him in the Los Angeles area. We used to go to the beach, and a couple of other fellows from over here to Kanosh, Rob Lee (?) was his name and Blaine Penny. We ran on to them in Los Angeles. We had a good time for two or three years after that. We'd go to the beach and we'd go to dances after we'd go to the beach.

Martin: How has things changed in the park since you were here?

Webster: Oh, a lot of things have changed. This building wasn't here when I was here. All this campground down through here. We used to walk out of the camp right here on the swinging bridge and right down through those trees. There wasn't any campground or anything down through there.

Martin: How does the park look now to you?

Webster: It looks beautiful. It looks really nice.

Martin: The trees, is there a difference in the trees?

Webster: No, the trees are about the same. Same old cottonwood trees, most all of them was just cottonwood. I remember these big rocks sticking up down along through here where we went down through here. There was lots of deer, just loaded with deer when you come down in here and these trees and this grass. But as far the scenery, it's the same scenery, same cottonwood trees. But they put in a lot of new stuff, like the park and all these trailer parks, they didn't have them.

Martin: What have you done since you left the CCC's?

Webster: For the first few years after I got out of the CC camp, I went to Los Angeles and stayed until about '41, and then they drafted me in the army in the first of March and I was in there four and a half years. I went to Ireland and England, made the invasion of Normandy. I was with the 3rd Army, old Patton, "Blood-and-Guts" Patton. We went clear across Germany and Belgium and the Belgium _____, clear down into Austria. When the war ended, why we was down on the Danube River in Austria. That's where we met the Russians. Right shortly after that they sent me right straight home because I'd been in four and a half years.

Martin: Did the CC experience help you in your work or life after?

Webster: Yes, I think it did. I think being out with other people and getting along. Try to get along with other people.

Martin: Helped you in the service?

Webster: Helped me in the service to get along with other fellows, you know. It seemed like to me the CC's helped me a lot learning how especially to get along with people.

Martin: You think the CCs benefitted the nation when they were here?

Webster: I sure do because there were lots of people that couldn't find a job anywhere for a dollar and couldn't get a hold of a dollar and that was a good chance for the boys to get out and learn something. A lot of them learned trades, mechanic work and rock work and all that stuff. I think they done it later in life.

Martin: What did you say did in Bryce?

Webster: I did do some trail work after I went back from here. We did trail work up there too. Another fellow and I were doing blasting on the trail. We done the drilling of the rocks and the powder work.

Martin: So you didn't actually do any of that after you got of the CCCs?

Webster: No, I never did do any of that after I got out of the CC's. First I did a lot of rif-raffing putting logs across the channels where they had washes. We did that the first year, the first September and October that I was there. We did a lot of that rif-raffing on these washes, to fill them up, so they wouldn't get deep, you know, so the washes wouldn't go deep.

Martin: Do you have any other interesting stories or any memories that you can think of that would be outstanding while you were here in Zion?

Webster: When I had the horses, why two or three of us get on those horses and go way up on top of these white cliffs clear up back here by the end. There was a trail that would go

clear back up on top. It was right on solid rock. You'd just have to go back and forth, riding that solid rock up there. We'd go clear back on top.

Martin: Did you do this on the weekend?

Webster: Just on weekends, yes, Saturday or Sunday.

Martin: You were allowed to take these?

Webster: I was allowed to. If I wanted to let a couple of guys go with me, as long as I kept the horses shod and everything, why they'd let me do just about whatever I wanted to with the horses. Once in a great while, there would be a Park official that would want to go for a ride, a couple of them. They'd tell me when they wanted to go and I'd have them ready.

Martin: Were your horses the only ones that were in the park at that time, just those three?

Webster: Three horses and a mule. That's all the pack horses they had.

Martin: Well thank you, Brose.

Webster: You're sure welcome.

Martin: It's been a pleasure to visit with you.

Webster: It's nice to talk to you.

Additional interview.

Martin: Brose, you were telling me about this other camp across the creek that was from New York, is that correct?

Webster: Well a lot of them were from New York and Boston.

Martin: Did you know the boys, or was the camp still here when you first came in '34?

Webster: Yes, it was here when I come in the fall of '34.

Martin: And was it still here when you left in '35?

Webster: I think it was. It must have still been there. I'm sure that it was there all winter.

Martin: What was the attitude between the boys in each camp?

Webster: Well, I know that we didn't have much to do with them because they were just a different class of people all together. Most all the guys in my camp were all Utah boys and the boys across the river were from back east, seemed like a rougher bunch of guys.

Martin: Did you feel threatened by these boys?

Webster: Oh, no. We didn't feel threatened. They never threatened us or anything, but they were just a different lot of people.

Martin: Was your work separate from them? Did you work with these boys?

Webster: No, we didn't work with that camp. It was just a separate camp and they had their projects, more than likely sloping banks and different other things. We didn't have anything to do with them. We had different projects.

Martin: Did you have anything to do with them when you participated in sports?

Webster: We had boxing events. Their camp would have boxing events with our camp, and once in a while we'd have a big boxing event. All the guys in our camp would holler for the guys, you know, to win on our camp, and all other guys were hollering for their guys to win.

Martin: Do you remember the year that camp was removed?

Webster: No, I don't remember. It must have been after I left here, the spring of '35, after, it was torn down.

Martin: All right. Well thank you again. I'm glad that we added that little bit.

Webster: You bet.

End of interview.
