

George Platt
Zion National Park Oral History Project
CCC Reunion
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George Platt: Well, I'm from Richfield, Utah, and I went into the CCCs in the spring of 1935 with my brother Roland. He had been in the summer before and then came home for graduation from high school, and I joined up with him because we had a widowed mother that needed our assistance, and we didn't have any employment.

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Don Graff: Okay, so were you still in school when you—?

George Platt: I was still in school when I joined the CCCs...

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Platt: I worked here in Zion with John Excel on a rock crew. We broke a few rocks and were laying a bridge up the canyon here towards—what is this canyon?

Graff: Pine Creek Canyon.

Platt: I only worked there for a short time, and then I went to work in the kitchen.

Graff: Oh, yeah?

Platt: We had an opportunity—well, we took turns doing KP (kitchen police/kitchen patrol) duty, and so we were assigned, there were five of us assigned to do KP duty. And we got talking to the cooks and first sergeant and finally the commanding officer, and we decided that, if they'd let us, we would stay on and do steady KP work, but the man in the outfit would have to give us two bits a month.

Graff: So you were the group that started that.

Platt: We were the group that started that.

Graff: So what was the total bill, then?

Platt: The commanding officer took two bits out of their paycheck every month and divided that among the five of us.

Graff: Is that right?

Platt: I think there were five of us. Whatever it amounted to, we got it.

Graff: About what was that?

Platt: Well, I think the first month it come out to be around eight dollars each. But it got down to six, and then the company's strength went down, and we were practically working for nothing, but that was in the bargain.

Graff: Right.

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Platt: I remember trying to get somebody to do KP work for me because I didn't want to have to change KPs every day; I wanted somebody to get in and help me with my work and do the work without having to be told everything. Finally got one kid persuaded that if I'd let him go when somebody come that wanted the job, he'd come in and work for me. So he did, and that was the agreement. Well, after a time, they sent some more men over, and he found a man who wanted to do it, and so he brought him in, and I said, "Well, that's what we agreed to, so just go on and get ready, and go to work." And he left the young feller there, and I don't even remember who the kid was ... I got busy, and it come time for Marian to take his men to work, and he found out that I had changed KPs on him without consulting. Oh, he was mad! He came in there, "My good golly sakes alive! Blue blazes and purple flowers! What do you think this is, anyhow? Who's a-running this place, you or me?" And he really laid it on me. And I got a little tired of that, and so when he got through, I said, "Well, Marian, I guess there's something we better get straight. You're not running this place. I am! And if I want to keep that whole damn crew in here, I'll do it! And there ain't a thing you can do about it!"

Graff: Just so I understand this, wasn't the army over feeding the men, so they were actually running the kitchens, and it wasn't the . . .

Platt: The army was running the whole thing. But if they wanted to assign the men to do something besides go out and do work on the projects, they did. They run the thing. They were in command. But that's what we were here for was to do service for our country and conservation and one thing and another.

I'd like to say this. I think that the CCC program was a great conservative effort on the part of our federal government. A lot of our natural resources were conserved through the efforts of the CCC. But more important than that, I think, was the conservation of the young manpower of America. I think that we did more for the young manpower of America in the operation of the CCC than any other thing that had ever happened because some of those boys we got out here from back east couldn't read or write. They had never been to school. And if they had, they hadn't gone very far in it. And the educational system that was set up for us in CCC was a marvelous thing. I don't want to pass this up—I graduated from high school with projects, work, studies that I took in CCC under my educational advisor while I was at Mayfield. I got credit—high school credit—for those studies, and I graduated from high school, and they allowed me to go home and graduate with my own high school class. So I graduated with my own class out of Richfield High School when I should have done, and I've always been kind of proud of the fact that I was one of the first two men in the state of Utah to get high school graduation credit, to graduate from high school from credit I got in CCC.

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Platt: And then they put the flush toilets in and plumbed them and so forth. And then he started fixing up the kitchen, and when he come to the kitchen, he says, “Platt,” he says, “We’ve got to have a plumber, and we can’t take the one we got out on the park service for the park service; we’ve got to furnish our own.” So he says, “You’re our plumber.” And I says, “I don’t know anything about plumbing.” He says, “Didn’t you hook up this hot water when you come down here?” I said, “Yeah,” and told him what I’d done. He said, “You’re our plumber.” He says, “You can have any man you want except men that are assigned to the park service to help you.”

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Platt: I went home and was called on a mission. I left for a mission to the Western states. I entered the mission field on the 24th of February, 1939.

Graff: Had you been able to save enough money in the Cs to finance it?

Platt: No, I hadn’t because Mother had . . .

Graff: Had needed the money.

Platt: Mother had used all of my money that I had sent home during that time.

Graff: How many other kids were there in your family?

Platt: We had five brothers and sisters home when my brother and I went into the CCC.

Graff: They were younger than you?

Platt: And only one of them was a teenager.

Graff: So she needed the money that you were sending home.

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Graff: Sure. Let me ask you this. Did your experience in the three C’s—did it help you on your mission? Did it help you in later life and in your career? Did you feel like you gained something?

Platt: I have never had any experience in my life since I left the CCC that I can’t put a direct trace of some kind or another back to an experience I had in the CCC.

Graff: Yeah.

Platt: In the mission field, my mission president’s wife frequently said to me, “I never worry about your companion getting the right food. I know that you’ll feed him properly. I never worry.” And I had a companion that she worried about a lot.

Graff: He wouldn’t eat very good.

Platt: He was skinny as a rail, and, though he ate good, he never put on any weight. She was

worried about him.

Graff: Sure.

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[now discussing Platts time in the army]

Graff: So did you cook overseas, then?

Platt: Oh, yes. I went overseas and cooked for them over there. When the war was over, the group commander sent for me to come and cook for him; they was going to make an officer's club, and they wanted to have their own mess hall, and they wanted me to come cook for them. I didn't want to do it, so I told the Lieutenant so, and I said, "If you can find any other man in the group that'll do it, why, take him 'cause I don't want to. And if you can't find anybody, come back, and I'll go and do it." So he came back the next day and he says, "The old man wants you to go on and do that." So I had him get the baker out of the headquarter squadron and [we] cooked a few meals for the old man. ...

Graff: But wouldn't you say this, I mean, yeah, you learned your cooking here, provided, you know, you got to be a cook; that probably was better than ...

Platt: Well, the most important part, I think, is learning to be a leader.

Graff: Yeah ... I think the most important thing that I learned out at the CCC was to be a leader, to stand up, to stand up and be heard, to say my piece, to learn the ropes and then how to take them.