

CCC 7
Carroll Burnette
February 8, 1999
16 pages – Open

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Mr. Burnette reminisces on the food, uniforms, religious life, and recreational possibilities in the CCC camp on page 4-5, as well as his portrayal of his fellow campers, their occasional homesickness, and his leaders. Page 6 relates an anecdote regarding his opting to go to California ("for the adventure") and the surprise reunion with his brother, who also made the same choice.

In California, Mr. Burnette detrained at El Portal (6), and transferred from Camp Middle Fork to Camp Boulder Creek and again to Camp Crane Flat (6-7; 9). He recalls the composition of the California camps, as well as the opportunities for sightseeing (8). His duties included clerical work as the company clerk and controlling the blister rust disease on pine trees, as well as being occasionally drafted to fight fires (8). On page 9-10, he recalls his camp commander, who didn't mind that he was there with his brother. Page 9-10 also contains his thoughts on the effect of World War II on the CCC.

Subsequently, his company disbanded and Mr. Burnette went to Camp Wawona, at the same time that his brother went into the Army (10-11). He relates how this created a problem, in that he had thwarted the CCC bureaucracy in order to stay in longer. This problem was alleviated when his friend Lt. Pickett had him transferred to Camp North Fork to be his assistant (11). After becoming restless, in part because he wasn't around southerners any more, he used Pickett's departure as an excuse to get a job in the Sierra National Forest (11).

On page 12, Mr. Burnette shares his memories of hearing about Pearl Harbor, and how his camp later came to house Conscientious Objectors during the War. Having been rejected from military service, he entered the University of Florida. The balance of the interview contains his thoughts on the skills he gained from his CCC work, his typical

day at camp (14), camp discipline (15), the significance of the CCC to American history (14), and his involvement with the national organization (15-16), as well as his memoir on the CCC (16).

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CCC 7

Interviewee: Carroll F. Burnette

Interviewer: Jay Langdale

Date: February 8, 1999

L: This is Jay Langdale. It is February 8, 1999. I am at the home of Mr. C. F. Burnette, and we are going to be talking this afternoon about his experiences in the Civilian Conservation Corps. I will start by asking Mr. Burnette, when and where were you born?

B: In north Columbia County, Florida, on October 31, 1919.

L: Did you spend your entire childhood there?

B: Yes, except for about three years during the Depression years in north Georgia in Rabun County. Then my family moved back to our farm in north Columbia County, and I lived there until I left home in 1939.

L: Has your family been in north Florida for a long time?

B: Yes. My mother and father were married in 1912 in South Georgia. They moved the next year to Florida to the farm where I was born.

L: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

B: They are all dead. There were five children in the family, three boys, two girls.

L: What did your father do for a living?

B: He was a general farmer and raised hogs and cattle. He sold timber products occasionally.

L: Did you have extended family members living in your house, grandparents, cousins?

B: No.

L: Where did you go to school, and how far did you go in school?

B: I finished Columbia High School in Lake City in 1938.

L: What did you do after graduation?

B: I wanted to go to college and study accounting but financially that was not possible. I worked for a short while in Lake City, but I was not making enough

money to pay living expenses, so I had to go back home. I remained a year on the farm. I was desperate to do something to help me and my family. I thought about the CCCs. I discussed it with my parents, and they approved my wanting to enlist. So in October, 1939, I joined the Civilian Conservation Corps.

L: You were in school during the heart of the Depression. How was your family affected by the Great Depression? What do you remember about those times?

B: All I knew was things were tough. I was just a very young boy. In 1929, I would have been ten years old. I knew my family was having financial difficulties, but I did not know there was a Depression. I just figured that maybe we were the only poor people, but that reflects the limitations of a child's mind. As I grew older, into the mid-1930s, then I began to realize just how tough a time my parents and other people were having.

L: How did they feel about Franklin Roosevelt?

B: They loved him.

L: Did any of your other family members participate in New Deal programs?

B: My older brother also enrolled in the three Cs in about 1934, or thereabouts, while we were living in north Georgia. He served his time in the CCC camp at Chipley, Georgia.

L: Do you remember how you first heard about the CCC?

B: Yes. We knew it was one of the new programs. I did not know the background or how it was created, but I did know that it was a measure to help young men out. While we lived in north Georgia, there was a CCC camp established within three or four miles of where we lived. I never did get to visit it, and I did not know anything about it, but we knew they were there. Some of the enrollees visited the area where I lived, a little community called Flat Creek.

L: You mentioned that your brother joined. Did you have friends, in or around Lake City or in Columbia County, that joined as well?

B: No.

L: Tell about when you signed up. When and where was that?

B: I signed up in Lake City, Florida. On the appointed day, I went back to Lake City to meet the CCC army truck that took the new recruits to Cross City. We were given our physical examinations in the recreation hall at the CCC located about

one mile south of Cross City on U. S. [Route] 19.

L: Did they give you a choice of camps, or did they simply assign you to Cross City?

B: They assigned me to the Cross City Camp, Company 1410. I do not think I was given a choice. I would not have known where to go, and I was just happy to pass the physical.

L: What happened when you first arrived at Cross City? Was it like a boot camp? Was it what you expected?

B: I really do not know what I expected. All we knew was that we would be assigned to some company if we passed the physical examination.

L: Was there an orientation period?

B: A very brief one to introduce us to camp life. There were several of us. I do not recall how many men, probably seventy-five or more recruits examined that day. Those assigned to Company 1410 were assigned to barracks, each barrack accommodated about fifty men. They were the army-type barracks: long buildings, cots on either side, a walkway in-between. The latrine and bath house building was near the barracks.

L: What was the examination? What did that consist of?

B: [Laughs.] I am laughing because we had to remove all of our clothing at the beginning of the examination, and we stayed that way until all the doctors got through with us. It was somewhat embarrassing, but you learn, early in life, not to not be too modest sometimes.

L: Talk about your duties at Cross City. What did they consist of?

B: My first assignment was to work on a road crew out in the backwoods of Dixie County, clearing brush from the right-of-way. It was pretty tough work. I was there for about two or three weeks when I was offered the job as assistant to the camp educational advisor. He needed a typist, a camp librarian, and a general office clerk. I was happy to get an inside job. Oh, I did not tell you this; maybe you planned to ask it. On the examination day, I learned that I would earn twenty-nine dollars a month, of which twenty-two would go directly home from the federal disbursing office, and I would receive seven dollars to spend for personal items. We were furnished clothing (the GI issue or governmental issue), our board and lodging, and medical care. So, it was not a bad bargain at all. The job as assistant to the educational advisor included a seven-dollar-a-month raise. I then had fourteen dollars a month to splurge on personal items. I remained there

until about June of 1940 when I was offered the opportunity to transfer to a new CCC company being formed in Cross City to go to California.

L: I want to talk about California, but let us stay in Cross City for just one more moment. What did you eat at camp?

B: It was plentiful. It was good. I do not recall hearing any complaints about the food. My weight increased from about 120 to around 140 after a few months there.

L: What type of uniforms did you have and did you wear them all the time?

B: Yes, except when we went on civilian activities. On weekends, we were allowed to go to town for recreation and could attend a local church. We could wear regular civilian clothes. We had army-type clothes, dungarees, for work clothes. We worked out on the road in the blue denim outfit with the blue denim cap. For official functions, we usually wore the tan uniform, a cap, a black tie, and black shoes.

L: What type of recreational activities were there to do?

B: The recreation hall was the center of camp recreation. There was at least one pool table in there. We had the canteen that sold cigarettes, candy bars, personal needs, razors, shaving cream, and so forth. Occasionally, traveling shows would come by to entertain us. For other recreation, we could walk to Cross City. There was a roller skating rink and a movie theater. Once, we had a recreation trip to Fanning Springs a few miles south of Cross City, where it cost us nothing if we would help clean up the area a little bit and police it, which we were glad to do.

L: You said you assisted the education director. What types of classes were offered in the camps?

B: There were night classes for those who wanted to continue their education, their elementary school education. There was a woodworking shop where a lot of enrollees who loved woodworking made tables, cedar chests, and things like that. Also, there were athletics engaged in like quickly thrown together tag football games and things like that. So, you never went without something to do.

L: Did you attend religious services?

B: Occasionally, yes.

L: What were your fellow campers like at Cross City?

- B: Most of them were boys like me, from rural areas. Our top kick (first sergeant) was a city boy from Tampa but most of them were like me.
- L: Were there a lot of homesick campers?
- B: I do not recall. I had a little touch of it. I enrolled in October, 1939, and I did not get to go home until Christmas time. I was looking forward to it. After I was home a couple of days, I was ready to get back to camp life. I knew then that I had severed my adolescent home ties. I got along fine thereafter.
- L: What were your leaders like at Cross City? What do you remember about them?
- B: As far as I know, they did the best job they could do. Some, you thought, were just a little overbearing or maybe trying to make an impression, but they were doing the best job they could do. I had no complaints.
- L: In the summer of 1940, I understand you accepted an invitation to be transferred to a new camp in California.
- B: Yes.
- L: Why did you decide to do that?
- B: I wanted the excitement of adventure. Several of us did, and we signed up. I think all that signed up got to go.
- L: Did a lot of your fellow Florida campmates decide to do this?
- B: I do not know how many did because, when this company was being formed, there were a lot of recruits that were being processed at the Cross City camp. I do not think they were too many that transferred from 1410 to the new company.
- L: When and how did you travel to California?
- B: An army troop train.
- L: What route did you take?
- B: It was a long route from Gainesville to Chicago, a general southwesterly direction to Yuma, Arizona into Southern California and up the San Joaquin Valley to Fresno.
- L: Was this the first time that you had left the state of Georgia or Florida?
- B: Yes.

- L: I understand that your brother served with you in California, and there is an interesting story about how you met up on the train with him and about how you both agreed to conceal the fact that you were brothers. Tell me about this and, especially, why you decided that you needed to conceal this fact.
- B: [Laughs.] Well, I had no idea that my brother had enrolled again. His first tour was in 1934 with the CCC, and he stayed about a couple of years. I knew he had gotten out and got work in Chipley. I thought that was where he was. After I had settled in my Pullman seat, I walked two or three cars ahead and ran into my brother. I was surprised as anyone could have been in a similar situation. He told me that things were pretty tough in the private sector, and he enrolled again. It was just coincidence that we met on the same train and in the same company. We had a little talk. We were not sure of the regulations, if it were permissible for more than one member of a family to be in one CCC company. So we decided to withhold that information and then see what happened. We practiced a little deception there that we did not particularly like, but we thought it was the best under the circumstances. We became "first cousins" when asked if we were related.
- L: What was your final destination in California?
- B: Our final destination was El Portal on the southwestern edge of Yosemite National Park. As I said a while ago, the train went up through the San Joaquin Valley north through Fresno. El Portal was, perhaps, seventy or eighty miles northeast of Fresno beyond. So, that is where we detrained, at El Portal.
- L: You served at several locations in California. Were most of these in the general vicinity of El Portal?
- B: Not really. Our campsite in Yosemite was at a place called Camp Middle Fork close to the post office village of Mather. We arrived there in late July, 1940. We learned it was just a summer camp and that, before the snows came in the winter, we would move to another location where we had permanent buildings. I should add that our campsite at Camp Middle Fork was a tent city. All of the facilities were army-type pyramid tents, except for the mess hall, kitchen and food storage, which was a permanent building. We had to leave Yosemite in October, 1940 before the snows came.
- L: In the fall of 1940, when you left, where did you go?
- B: We went to a permanent campsite called Camp Old Lodge, which was about forty-five miles south of San Francisco and about twenty miles north of Santa Cruz. It was in the Santa Cruz mountain range on the coast. Our post office

town was Boulder Creek.

L: And you remained there for how long?

B: Until the next spring. We were not sure where we would be going. There was some talk, we might go to southern California, but word from our district headquarters in Sacramento told us we would go back to Yosemite but in a different location called Camp Crane Flat, which was another tent city similar to Camp Middle Fork, which was about thirty miles closer to the floor of the valley than Middle Fork.

L: Were these tent cities usually the summer encampments?

B: Yes.

L: What was the composition of the camps in California like? Were there a lot of native Californians?

B: No. Usually, the CCC grouped the men according to geographic corps [based on] areas of origin. The southern boys were from the fourth corps. The California boys were assigned to the ninth corps companies. There was no mixing of corps area membership within a CCC company.

L: This must have been a strange world for native southerners to be on the West Coast, but you say there was not a lot of opportunities for interaction with young men from other parts of the country.

B: No, it was not, as far as that. We got our main new experiences from sight-seeing, visiting the nearby cities and points of interest. I thoroughly enjoyed being in Yosemite National Park because of the wonderful scenery. It was just fabulous.

L: You say that sight-seeing was among the most exciting opportunities. Do you recall any special trips or excursions that you took that stand out in your mind?

B: The one that is outstanding to me was—in addition to touring Yosemite National Park, enjoying the park and its scenery—after we got to Camp Old Lodge at Boulder Creek, I had the opportunity to go to San Francisco twice for the weekend. That was a really eye-opening experience for this country boy. Four of us toured the downtown area, rode cable cars, visited Fisherman's Wharf, the Golden Gate Bridge, and other points of interest. I saw my first striptease show with all the bumps and grinds

L: Were the facilities at the California camps similar to those at Cross City, with the

exception of the temporary encampments during the summer?

B: Yes, basically, it was the same. Usually, the campus was not smooth and flat. Camp facilities could not be laid out in a strictly rectangular form as we had at Cross City. The camp layout had to fit the terrain to accommodate camp life and the conservation program being carried out.

L: What were your duties while you were in California? Were they the same?

B: When I signed up to go west, I applied for the company clerk job, which was a little different from the duties as assistant to the company education advisor. I had no idea whether I would like it or not. I knew that the company clerk in Cross City made up the monthly payrolls for enrollees, and he kept the individual service records of enrollees posted up to date, showing their status. He typed letters for the company commander. Essentially, this is what I did as a company clerk in California.

L: So, you had mostly clerical duties during the time you were in California?

B: Yes.

L: What was the primary work that the other campers were performing in the Yosemite National Forest?

B: In Yosemite, the main conservation program was called blister rust control, a disease that affects pine trees and is transmitted to the pine trees from the gooseberry plant. The disease, as I understood, did not go from gooseberry to gooseberry but from the gooseberry to the pine, so it was a host plant that the enrollees were assigned in crews to dig up and destroy. The other main work of the enrollees was fire protection and control in the event of forest fires. Enrollees were subject to be called out to fight forest fires but, when there was no emergency, blister rust control. At Camp Old Lodge at Boulder Creek, I do not recall what the conservation work was.

L: Were there classes offered at the California camps?

B: Yes. They had educational advisors in all the camps, and they had programs, classes that enrollees could sign up for to further their education, woodworking shops and things of that nature.

L: Did you continue to attend religious services while in California?

B: I may have when a CCC chaplain came to camp. They had the chaplains all over the country who visited the various camps, but we were not always close

enough to visit local churches.

L: What were the commanders in California like? Did you develop relationships with them?

B: Yes. My first company commander and his subaltern were very fine. They were commissioned army officers on reserve status. I enjoyed working with them very much. They stayed with us until the war clouds began to concern the United States, and we began to lose some of the officers. That is how we lost the first company commander and his subaltern not too long after we were in California, because of the war effort.

L: Was your brother in camp with you for most of the years you were in California?

B: Yes, until he was inducted in September of 1941. He was ordered to report to Fort Benning [Georgia]. We really enjoyed being with each other. When he and I met on the train on our way to California, we decided we would just be first cousins until such time that we could divulge our true relationship. That happened after we settled at Camp Old Lodge in late 1940. We decided it was safe then to 'fess up and tell our company commander and his subaltern. There was no reprimand, just smiles of understanding. In fact, they laughed about it.

L: You were in the CCC during the time when the United States was moving towards entry in World War II. What was this like?

B: Reduced enrollments caused companies to have to be disbanded and their enrollees being transferred to surviving companies. That began to happen to me after we left Boulder Creek and were transferred back to Yosemite in Camp Crane Flat, the tent city, [that] I referred to a while ago. One interesting thing happened when we went back to Crane Flat: I had the opportunity to volunteer for troop train service to take discharging enrollees back east. I applied for the job of train clerk in charge of personnel service records of the enrollees who were discharging and returning east. My application was approved. So, sometime in June of 1941, I was on troop training duty from Fresno, California to East Point, Georgia, where we detrained. The discharged enrollees were given commercial transportation from East Point to their home towns. Those of us on train duty were to return to California with a train-load of new recruits. We waited over a week. Official word was given there would be no troop train. Young men were not signing up for the CCC; they were entering military service. We were sent back to California by commercial train and without enrollees. The CCC camps were suffering greatly because of substantial reductions in enrollment. When I returned to Camp Crane Flat, I learned that my Company 5490 was being disbanded and its enrollees transferred to other fourth corps companies in the area. It was sad. My brother and I were transferred to Camp Wawona in

Yosemite Park about the middle of August 1941. The company commander wanted us because he needed a cook and a company clerk. My brother and I were very happy we were not separated.

L: So, you went to Camp Wawona, which was Company 487, for a period of time?

B: That is correct. It was a fourth corps company. I was quite surprised and pleased to go to Wawona. My brother got notice from his draft board to report for induction in the army at Ft. Benning, Georgia. So, he left Camp Wawona in September. Not long after that, I learned that Camp Wawona was to disband. Shall I go into another little deception? Well, when Camp Wawona, or company 487, received its order to disband, Sacramento headquarters included my name on the transfer order of enrollees to a company near Tulelake in Northern California. I was classified as a first cook. As a matter of fact, I could not boil water, so my transfer up there was a little complicated because of a records deception that came back to haunt me. Company clerks did not have an exemption in the CCC regulation permitting them to stay beyond two years. All my company commanders carried me as a cook. That allowed me to stay more than the two-year limitation and, also, I was able to receive a forty-five-dollar-a-month leader rating. I knew I was in trouble. I did not know how I was going to get out of the mess. Thanks to temporary Commander Lieutenant John Pickett who came from Company 988 at North Fork to help close Company 5490--he kind of liked me and my work and when he left Wawona, he told me if I ever needed help, to call him. Well, when this happened, I decided to call him. He was able to get my transfer order changed from going to Tulelake to his ninth corps Company 988, at North Fork, California. So, all is well that ends well, but I sure was worried there for a while because I did not know how kindly the district headquarters would look upon the falsification of my record.

L: But, as a cook, you could stay on pretty much indefinitely?

B: Right. On paper. Of course, my brother had no problem at all because that was his area, mess sergeant and also a cook, first cook.

L: But he could cook?

B: Right. My plight was interesting. I can laugh at it now, but it did bother me.

L: So, your transferred to Company 988 in North Fork, and you remained there for how long?

B: Yes. I arrived there sometime in late November of 1941. I was at North Fork when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. Lieutenant Pickett did not need a company clerk, so he made me first sergeant, the duties of

which I did not particularly like, but I did not mind doing the job. I was his, well, sidekick. I was responsible for the daily morning report of company personnel and seeing that work crews were turned over each workday to the forest personnel for ongoing conservation projects. Right now, I do not recall what they were, but some of the projects might have been blister rust control. Some might have been fire protection and things like that. After I arrived at Camp North Fork, the company clerk told me what a hard time Lieutenant Pickett had in getting my transfer order changed. Phone calls and a personal trip to Sacramento on my behalf, so I was quite indebted to Lieutenant Pickett.

L: So, were you still at forty-five dollars a month at this point in time?

B: Yes, I still got my forty-five dollars a month. I was beginning to be unhappy with being in the ninth corps company because the enrollees were from a different culture. I really had no problem; I just missed the old southern boys. Then, war was declared, and I was beginning to get a little restless. But, I did not want to leave Lieutenant Pickett, because I felt a very strong loyalty to him. I was going to stay there as long as he was in command. So, it was sometime in March, 1942 when he received his orders to report for active duty. The way was clear for me to make my move.

L: Was your move to decide to let your enrollment come to an end?

B: That is right. The camp superintendent on the technical side knew that I was looking for outside work. He and Lieutenant Pickett and I worked together on a daily basis because it was to him that we turned over the work crew every morning, after roll call, sick call, etc. He told me about a clerical job in the nearby Sierra National Forest headquarters which I applied for and eventually got. It paid 120 dollars a month. My dormitory rent was two dollars a month, by payroll deduction. So that concluded my twenty-nine months in the CCCs.

L: That was from October of 1939 until March of 1942.

B: That is right, March 31.

L: You were, of course, in the North Fork California camp at the time that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

B: That is correct.

L: Can you describe what it was like when that news came forth?

B: Like any other small community, we were concerned as Americans were everywhere. I remember we had little civil defense groups to watch for planes.

We had classes to learn about civil defense. We went through the same training that, I guess, most coastal cities and communities did.

L: Did that event make you more aware that the CCC was probably shortly coming to an end?

B: Oh yes. Not long after I left Company 988, it disbanded on June 30, 1942, when the CCC program came to an end. The vacated buildings became a camp for conscientious objectors from the Midwest. I do not know how many there were, perhaps 150.

L: So, they continued to run the camp at North Fork as a CCC camp of sorts, for conscientious objectors?

B: Yes. I should add that I was rejected for military service because of a perforated ear drum and a chronic ear infection.

L: You remained with the Forest Service. How long did you work there?

B: I worked for about three years. I never did abandoned the idea of going to college. After I was there about two years, I began to remind myself constantly that, somewhere, I would have to make a break or else I would never go back to school. In January of 1945, I told my Forest Service boss that I wanted to go back to school and that I wanted to leave in July. I gave him six months notice, and I stuck to that schedule. I resigned from the Sierra National Forest position as a personnel clerk and returned. I came back to Florida and entered the University of Florida in September, 1945.

L: What do you think were the most important skills you learned in the CCC?

B: Well, one skill, I guess, was that I got to improve on my typing with a lot of practice there. Some of the other skills were office procedures, reading and interpreting forms, rules and regulations.

L: Do you think they helped you later in life?

B: I am sure they did. For instance, my first job with the Forest Service was a mail clerk and telephone operator. The Forest Service headquarters had a small magnetotype telephone switchboard in which you hear a bell or see a light, and you plug in here or plug in there to make the caller's requested connection. Then, you manually rang the callee number that the caller wanted you to ring. I was in that job for just a few months when the voucher payable clerk was drafted. I became the voucher clerk whose job was to assemble bills monthly, pre-audit them, prepare a voucher form, and send them to the federal disbursing office in

San Francisco. I learned how to assemble voucher support for financial disbursements.

L: While you were in the CCC, did you ever read the newspaper *Happy Days*?

B: I may have, but I do not remember.

L: Did you ever come into contact with women who worked for the CCC, either during the interview process or at the camps?

B: No.

L: What about black CCC members? Did you ever come into contact with any of them?

B: No.

L: What about World War I veterans? Were any of them in camps with you?

B: Yes. Only one that I recall. When we lost our first sergeant at the close of Camp Middle Fork and we moved to Boulder Creek, there was one ninth corps World War I veteran who joined our company. He became our first sergeant. He was old enough to be my father. We became very good friends, worked together real good.

L: It is often heard that some individuals were sent to the CCC instead of being sent to jail. Did you ever encounter any individuals?

B: Not to my knowledge. Those I came in contact with, they were desperate like me. They needed work.

L: Looking back, what did you like most about your CCC experience?

B: The one I benefitted most from is that it gave me a chance to mature mentally without financial worry. I think I was better equipped to re-enter school and was more prepared to get the most I could out of my education.

L: What, if anything, did you dislike about your time in the CCC?

B: I cannot say that there was anything that I disliked about it. I did not mind the regular routine. We were up around six, and we had a regular daily routine to go through. I like a certain amount of regimentation. So, offhand, I do not recall anything that I disliked. I hated to see the monthly payroll preparation time come because each name had to be typed and the enrollees' calculated pay balanced

on an old keyboard adding machine.

L: You said that you were taught a regiment of activity. What was a typical day, from dawn to dusk, at one of the camps?

B: Let me go back to Cross City when I worked on a road crew for two or three weeks. We were up at six. We had breakfast at seven. At eight, we had roll call and announcements. Then we were dismissed to go to our various work projects. At about eleven o'clock, they would bring us a hot lunch from camp in the huge pots. We had the heavy aluminum mess kits [where] about everything went together, piled together. Then, around four o'clock, we would head back to camp. We would clean up and have supper around five-thirty. After supper, then we were free to do anything we wanted to, if you wanted to get up a little ballgame or tag football - I do not think we had a basketball court - or go to the library and read. Incidentally, the education building had a small library, but it was very functional, and a daily newspaper. On the weekend, we could go to town. Now the daily activities in Camp Middle Fork, my next company, were somewhat the same.

L: Why do you think the CCC is important to American history?

B: It rescued the jobless young men and the older men in a very depressing time. If it had not been for the CCC, I do not know how they would have survived. It was a humanitarian program. We were rescued.

L: It certainly was a needed program in a difficult time.

B: That is right. One thing I did not mention, although there were some disciplinary problems, I do not recall anything of consequence. In other places and times, there may have been major discipline problems with enrollees. In Camp Middlefork, an enrollee came in drunk one night--that was a strict no-no. One of the things he said in his testimony at a hearing held by his company commander was "I cannot even call you a son of a bitch without saying sir." He was given a dishonorable discharge and sent home.

L: Did you have any deserters?

B: Yes. We had a few enrollees who became AWOL [Absent Without Leave]. They were few and far between. In a camp of about 150 to 200 men, there are bound to be some men who were not stable. But, we had no problems.

L: Were they the undisciplined type, would you say?

B: It may be that those who deserted were not used to discipline. The company

commanders usually were very strict. Some were good commanders, and some were not only good commanders but they were also friends to the enrollees. All the company commanders I worked under were good commanders.

L: Did you keep in contact with any of your fellow CCC campers?

B: That is one of my regrets. There were a few I wish I had kept in touch with but, when you are young and eager to get out into the world, you do not think of these things until it is too late. After I went to the West Coast in 1940, I corresponded with one or two in the Cross City camp, but that soon faded away. In fact, there were some company commanders I wish I had kept in contact with. One was Lieutenant Pickett, because he was like a father to me.

L: Are you a member of the national CCC organization now?

B: Yes, Chapter 143 of the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni (NAACA), Gainesville, Florida.

L: Tell me a little bit about that.

B: I did not know about that organization until January or February of last year. I knew there was an organization, but I was not particularly motivated to join any group. I wanted to write a book about my experiences, so I visited the Millhopper branch of the county library for research material for my preface. One of the librarians told me about the group that met there once a month. I made arrangements to attend the next meeting. The local chapter is about twenty or twenty-five former members and their wives and relatives. I liked the group, so I joined the next meeting. We have a luncheon meeting once a month. It is a covered dish, and we meet at eleven o'clock, carry on our business for about thirty minutes or thereabouts. Then, we have the covered dish luncheon. It is a fine group, and I enjoy their company. So, that is how I found out about them.

L: Are there any native Floridians that served in camps in north Florida or, perhaps, even served at Cross City?

B: No, not at Cross City, but there are several Floridians in the chapter who served in Florida. President Fred White was in Ocala National Forest and Secretary Jake Keene was in the Brooker Swamp. Jake and I have talked at length on several occasions. He is an amazing fellow with endless energy and is the chapter workhorse.

L: Very well. In closing, I want to mention that Mr. Burnette's book, *I Was in Roosevelt's Tree Army*, is going to be included in his interview folder, and it is a very nice supplement to this interview. Thank you for your time, Mr. Burnette. It

has been a pleasure.

B: Well, thank you. I am sorry I could not recall more, but that is what happens to one's memory over a sixty-year span. Thank you for letting me share my CCC experiences with you.