

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Civilian Conservation Corps

Personal Experience

O.H. 1318

MARVIN L. WHALEY

Interviewed

by

Bridgett Williams

on

March 10, 1990

MARVIN WHALEY

Marvin Lee Whaley was born in Missouri on August 23, 1921. His jovial personality and sharp recollections of a full life captivated this interviewer. He and his wife, Patty Ann, welcomed questions, and the resulting interview demonstrates the warmth and vitality of the reception.

Mr. Whaley describes himself as an introverted young man, given to reading books and spending time alone. He notes that an exception to his quiet demeanor--appearances on the Leetonia High School stage--gave him an opportunity to lose some of the inhibitive shyness. He credits the Civilian Conservation Corps with helping him mature. He, like so many other men interviewed in the course of this project, strongly feels that the CCC would be a useful addition to the current social structure.

His vivid recollections of the CCC camps are only matched by his descriptions of his life immediately after leaving the Corps. He worked as a truck driver, first hauling coal, then cars. Life before the advent of the standardized height bridge was often a challenge for the truck driver of the 1940s. Whaley recounts an occasion when it was necessary to deflate all the tires of the cars on his truck, as well as his own vehicle, to make it under a low bridge.

Trucking, although a rewarding profession, didn't pay enough to feed the rapidly growing family. He elected to transform his natural handiness into a profession. He joined the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Union Local 573, and

apprenticed himself as a construction electrician. He gradually moved himself through the ranks and retired on January 31, 1984. He has spent his retirement renovating and improving his beautiful Victorian home. Other hobbies include a fascination for music and tape collection and an interest in photography. He is active in Chapter 57 of the National Association for the Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni, and also participates in meetings of the Silver Trowel Masonic Lodge in Warren.

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INTERVIEWEE: MARVIN L. WHALEY

INTERVIEWER: Bridgett Williams

SUBJECT: Civilian Conservation Corps, different jobs available, difference between kids today and kids in the service back then

DATE: March 10, 1990

BW: This is an interview with Marvin Whaley for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Civilian Conservation Corps project, by Bridgett Williams, at 422 Scott Street in Warren, Ohio, on March 10, 1990.

Could you tell me something about your childhood? Where did you grow up? What was it like? How many people were in your family? What are some of your memories?

MW: You don't like to remember that far back. It wasn't [that far back]. I was born in 1921. My dad had a pretty good job with the telephone company for part of that time, but times got really tough about the time I got big enough to remember. Things were so tough; there was no work. Dad built a trailer. [He] cashed some of his Ohio Bell stock--I was the oldest of five children--and took us to Missouri. That's our home grounds in Missouri. We took a summer vacation. We had trouble with the trailer in Cincinnati, I can remember that. I thought he was going to throw away all the furniture and groceries we had in it. We got back [and there were] no jobs. Things were tough. We weren't disgraced to be poor, but it sure is inconvenient. My gosh!

I went to 13 different schools to get 12 years of education. Part of that was because of dad's job with Ohio Bell and AT&T in the lines department. [It] caused him to move where the work was. Part of it, I presume, was because he couldn't pay the rent and had to move, I don't know. There was a lot of moving going on.

BW: At that time you don't really ask.

MW: You survive. As I got old enough to help on farm work, I'd go with them to pick potatoes and do different types of farm work to make a buck. I can remember when I got old enough to get a job on my own. I must have been 16. I got paid 50 cents a day by this farmer to help him with his farming, cropping, or whatever. The next year I told him since I was bigger and stronger and smarter, I deserved a raise. So he gave me a raise. He gave me my lunch. No money because he didn't have any money either. Everybody had money problems it seemed like. This is probably the same time that Frank Lloyd Wright was building that fantastic house over there in Pennsylvania [Falling Waters] for that Pennsylvania magnate. You can't visualize the difference in lifestyle between Falling Waters and where I was.

BW: Somebody was telling me last night about Edward DeBartolo paying \$3 million for his own mausoleum. I thought, "Some people just have too damn much money." [Laughter]

MW: I know a little bit about Ed DeBartolo and how he got it [his money], and I disapprove violently of his business methods, but, hey, they worked for him.

BW: Right! [Laughter]

MW: Then I got older and got into high school and realized how poor we were. Perhaps that magnified it, I don't know. I do know that I was a very backward, shy, self-conscious individual. I had no problems with my studies; my grades were okay. I was in class plays. I think I must have been hiding behind the role because I could get on stage and act out a part in a play, but I was so shy and self-conscious [that] I couldn't get up in study hall and go to the pencil sharpener for fear my shoes would squeak or somebody would laugh at me.

So, I graduated in 1939. There was no work.

BW: Were you still in the Warren area?

MW: No, I graduated from Leetonia, which is down in the Salem, Lisbon, Columbiana triangle. The work available

was chopping weeds for the farmers at 50 cents a day or whatever. It was terrible.

I tried to convince my mom to let me sign up in the Army. This was in 1939. Wouldn't it have been marvelous if I could have gotten in the service in 1939 before the draft hit. Who knows? Anyway, she came all apart like a volcano. She would rather kill me and bury me in the backyard than see me go to the Army. We survived that.

Then I heard about the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) camp. A buddy of mine from school went over to Youngstown to find out about it. I was afraid of the fact that if it was similar to the Army, I wouldn't have a chance because I wasn't old enough to go on my own yet. Anyway, I went home and told my mom about it. The deal was that they would pay me \$30 a month, but I only got \$5. Twenty-five dollars had to be sent home to my family. That was part of the deal. She liked that part of it, it made sense. She could see the advantages there. [Since] I only had to sign up for six months instead of two years or longer, she finally agreed she'd sign the papers for me to find out what the CCC was all about.

Here's a high school graduate, 165 pounds, not a muscle on me anywhere--I was not a sports addict, and I didn't get into weight lifting or any of that stuff. [I] signed up. It's so vague, I can't remember how they got me there. I was on a train headed west. Where I enlisted and where they processed me, I can't remember that.

BW: How far away from home had you ever been on your own?

MW: Thirty miles, at my grandma's house. Here they are, sending me 2,000 miles away. Who ever heard of Wyoming and Utah and places like that? I can remember going through Denver. I got off the train there to get a candy or to just look around, and I got the devil because they ran it like the Army. They had sergeants and guards and so forth. You had to do what the rules said. There wasn't any room for individuality.

They were taking a bunch of people off the street. Some of them like me with no problems, but some of them were juvenile delinquents. Some of them were so bad that the judges said, "We'll suspend your sentence if you sign up in the CCC camp." We got quite a few people that way. What a mish-mash of people.

We finally got to a place in Manila, Utah. Now, as I got better acquainted out there, Manila was a town with about four houses, one store, a gas station/post office

combination. It wasn't even a crossroads, it was a T-intersection. That was seven miles from camp. I got a toothache while I was in camp, and they sent me 57 miles to Green River, Wyoming, which was our nearest civilized community with amenities and so forth. I was homesick, thrown in with a bunch of people that I didn't know. But I was big enough and strong enough that they put me on the jackhammer crew. I ran a jackhammer for four months. Then I graduated to the powder crew and set off explosions. We were blasting a highway through Ashley National Forest. We set off 55 cases of black powder. Now, that's a big truck load of black powder. [We used] electric blasting caps in each hole. We started up this mountain side and we'd drill two foot holes at the bottom and three or four in the middle. [At the top] we were drilling 12 and 16 foot holes. We shot all of that at one time. The bulldozers moved in and shoved the rubble over in the valley. So instead of coming around this hill and back up this gully and out here, now the cars could go straight across. We felt we were really doing something. [Laughter]

Our camp was broken up into at least three segments and perhaps four. They had what they called the spike camp, which I never saw. I think the reason they called it a spike camp was because they go up there and put it together with canvass and nails and logs and stuff. Temporary or side camp, that's what some people called them. They were responsible to our officers and our people, and we were responsible for taking care of them and feeding them and clothing them. But they weren't in our camp everyday. We had a spike camp somewhere [that] I never saw. We had a group that was building fence to corral the animals--sheep on one side, I think, and deer on the other, or whatever. We had the road crew besides our jackhammer/blasting crew. We had another crew that cleaned ditches and fixed signs and stuff like that.

I really think the boys did a lot of good. I was there about five months and then it was time to re-sign or come back home. I didn't want to re-sign; I wanted to come back home. I was homesick. They offered me an assistant leader job, which was a six dollar a month raise and a little prestige. I didn't need the prestige, I needed to come home. So, I didn't re-sign up and came home. I realized when I got home that 165 pound high school kid that went to camp, came back a 191 of massive muscle from that jackhammer and the work that I'd done. [It was] extremely good for me and helpful I'd say. That was the end of it, that was all I was taught, just a job.

Things began to perk up. When I got back in 1940, the war had started overseas and business was beginning to pick up, and jobs were beginning to bloom.

Camp was just kind of a bad memory until last year. My sister, living in Cleveland, met somebody up there that was talking about this CCC alumni group. I told her I didn't think I was interested. It was too far behind me. But she sent in the money and got me a membership. I got letters from people that saw my name in the NACCCA journal as a new member from Arizona. Wow! Then I got another nice surprise last year, I went to two 50th anniversary school reunions. My kids decided they'd do me something. They got together and bought me an airplane ticket to Wyoming. My number two son is in Wyoming. When I got out there he took me and drove down to Manila, Utah where I had been in camp 50 years ago. We found it and had a good time.

BW: What was there when you got back?

MW: Nothing. The camp had moved out probably in 1935 or 1936. The government took everything they wanted and turned [the rest] over to the people. So the people scavenged whatever they wanted out of there. Eventually, either the forest people or the highway department put in a little roadside park there, with picnic benches and stuff like that. In 1965, the most horrendous flood that ever swept Sheep Canyon wiped out everything and killed a bunch of people that were camping farther up the road. Where our camp was, it deposited three to five feet of rock and dirt. Everything was gone, the road was gone, everything except the hill at the back of camp and, of course, Sheep Creek that goes through there. They replaced the road, not where it was when I was there [though]. I found the camp. There's no marker there, but I know where it was.

BW: Maybe you could petition the NACCCA (National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni) to put a marker there. Don't they go around to the camps and. . . .

MW: There's a movement toward that direction, but I don't know whether there's enough people. I haven't found enough yet. [Laughter] But while I was in Manila, I stopped in at the Forestry Service there. Somebody had been there a year ahead of me and left a little photo album type thing with his name and some pictures he had and a place in the back for an address book for anybody that stopped in and asked about the CCC camp to register. That was pretty neat. I found out that this guy was from Campbell, just on the outskirts of Youngstown. There were some other names on there. I put my name on there and then I had the Forestry people Xerox that. I

brought him [the gentleman from Campbell] a copy of his book with these names on there and met Bill Goleta, who was in camp at the same time I was, but we didn't know each other. Neither one of us could remember the other.

BW: But you both had the same kind of memories in general?

MW: In general, yeah. I told him about my son when I was there. When we first found this place along the river, I said, "This is where the camp was, but it doesn't really look big enough." We had a 200 man camp in there with big barracks and educational buildings, [a] mess hall. He [my son] said, "Dad, no you didn't have a 200 man camp, you had a 200 kid camp." Smart alek kid. [Laughter] But he was right. When the road changed is when it made it look different. But this is how I knew Bill Goleta was in my camp at the same time I was. I had this Christmas menu and roster left--the Christmas of 1939--and his name is in there.

BW: I'm looking for [the name of] my uncle. I have a couple of uncles that were in.

MW: When John Bazar saw my name in the national magazine, he wrote to me. He said, "I was in Manila, Utah. Was I in there the same time you were?" Well, he's on the list so I sent him a copy of that and told him, "Yes, we were there at the same time, John." But it's possible that John and/or Bill Goleta was in the spike camp, the side camp. It's possible that they weren't in the regular camp and I haven't had a chance to converse with either one to know yet.

BW: I'm going to read this Christmas Day menu on to the tape because I'm finding it incredible that you had that much food. [Laughter] You start out with tomato cocktail, then you move on to the Waldorf salad and stuffed celery, baked spiced apples, roast Tom turkey, onion dressing, marshmallow sweet potatoes, mixed olives, cranberry sauce, giblet gravy, hot rolls, butter, pumpkin pie, mixed candy, assorted nuts, cigarettes, coffee, and cream for 200 and some people. That's amazing, that's really something.

MW: But this is how the powers were that controlled the group. I mentioned that it was similar to the service. It was run by service type people. They had pictures in there of how your foot locker was going to be. They had strict instructions when you were going to get up and go to bed and everything else.

BW: "Every man has a right to his rest. All barracks will be absolutely quiet after Taps." This is really something. There's 58 different things here that you have

to take care of in a day. This is really something great. If you get a chance to take a Xerox of it, when we give you this tape back, if you could enclose it into the envelope, we can put it in the library so that you can have a. . . .

MW: That would be great.

BW: That would be fantastic. I meant to ask you about the uniforms. You were there from when to when? Which months?

MW: Vaguely September of 1939 until early March of 1940.

BW: So you had the winter uniforms. Anything you remember about those? Anything printable? [Laughter]

MW: They gave us two dress uniforms. These were probably left over from World War I, I don't know where they got them. Anyhow, they were olive drab, wool. [They gave us] shirt, pants, jacket, and tie. I think we had two of everything. Then, of course, we had our work clothes, which is an entirely different matter. This was blue denim and they might even have been used, I don't know. [Laughter] But I was so proud of this fancy uniform, I never had anything like that in my life. I kept one set down in the bottom of my foot locker underneath everything, nice and neat to wear home to get that conquering hero sort of feeling. Well, probably four or four and a half months, I'd been taking very good care of my other shirt and pants for the times we needed them. We didn't have to dress up very much, but on weekends you'd have to kind of clean up, you couldn't wear your dirty old work clothes. I was down at the educational center, movie center--I don't know what you'd call it--where we almost learned to type. Chuck Bevington was in charge down there and he was a heck of a nice fellow as far as library books. He signed me up in a correspondence course in photography and when I got through that diesel engineering, he really tried to inspire everybody. Chuck Bevington was quite a guy. Anyhow, I was down there reading one night and I smelled something. Here I'd walked up too close to the pot belly stove and burned the knee out of my pants. [Laughter] Oh boy. Now they had to go to the laundry and repair it and I had to wear my others. I remember how terribly disappointed I was that I couldn't have a brand new outfit to wear home.

BW: But they did let you keep one of your things to go back home in?

MW: Nobody wanted the work clothes, but the dress outfit you got to keep one shirt, pants, jacket, belt and tie. It was all spelled out in this book here.

BW: Did you have any sleeve chevrons or. . . .

MW: Yes they did have because if I had re-signed up and became an assistant leader, I would have gotten like half a stripe or something. I remember one fellow, he must have been in the service before he got in the CCC camp because he had service hashmarks up his sleeve of his uniform jacket indicating about six years service. Well, I was in 1939, maybe the camp did start in 1933.

BW: What was a typical day for you like? When did it start? When did it end? What did you do in it?

MW: The day started for me, my first week there, with the barracks leader dumping my bed. [Laughter]

BW: Failure to adapt, huh?

MW: I didn't adjust fast enough for those people. The way the alarm worked was the night guard--who went around and patrolled every barracks, checked the fires, checked the fire barrels and break the ice in them--at the prescribed time, and I forget what it was, would start at barracks one. He'd blow the whistle before he went in. He'd go in and make sure the barracks leader and the barracks assistant leader on each end were up. When he came out of the barracks he'd blow this whistle between barracks one and two, he'd go in and make sure those leaders [in barracks two] were up. When he went from three to four, in between he'd blow this whistle again. I didn't hear any of this stuff. He went through our barracks and blew it when he got out of our barracks to go to the next one. All I know is all of a sudden I'm laying on the floor and my bed's on top of me. When I got myself awake and put together the leader said, "You had your chance to get up. Now if you don't get up in the morning, the same thing's going to happen to you." I didn't pay any attention to that. I went and washed up. Later on as my job when I went to wash up in the latrine wash house, I broke the ice in the fire barrel. One morning it was so cold I had to break it going and coming. [It was] 32 below [zero].

Anyway, it took about three days of completely making my bed--you know all the work that goes into the military style of making the bed--before I got to the point where I could hear him coming before he grabbed my bed and I could get out of it before he dumped me. [Laughter] Another day or two and I could hear that whistle outside the barracks. I adapted.

BW: You were probably so tired, it sounds like you weren't in very good shape when you got there and they. . . .

MW: Bad habits, bad habits. Sleeping in in the mornings and staying up all night. As a kid I don't know if you ever took a flashlight under the covers to finish reading a story so mom and dad didn't know you were still awake. Bad habits. But they cured me of that. [Laughter]

BW: Got you out of that quick.

MW: If you can imagine getting your bed dumped on top of you about twice or maybe three times. I learned. I learned a lot of things in the CCC camp.

BW: [You] learned to hate your barracks there for awhile.

MW: He [the barracks leader] was so big you didn't dare. I mean, I was a pretty good size lad, and he was a lot bigger than me. I can't find my picture now, but I had a picture of our barracks leader. . . .

BW: What was his name?

MW: Lorriman. Kind of a hard name. [In the picture he was] standing with his hand out and the smallest rookie in camp standing under his hand. I think the rookie's name was Schaefer, the little guy. I think he played the guitar. There are so many fragments of memories that don't quite fit together.

BW: So, once you get shagged out of bed by a mean guy name Lorriman, what did you do?

MW: We had a set length of time to dash over and wash up, shave, whatever. I don't think I was shaving yet. So, it was easy to run over, wash up, comb your hair, brush your teeth, get back, get dressed, and hit the mess hall at the right time. On the way out of the mess hall you cleaned your gear and put it over here and picked up a boxed lunch or bag lunch. You'd go out and get on the truck to go to the work site. This wasn't true of everybody, but [it was] for us and the jackhammer crew. I don't know what those other jokers did. [Laughter] We'd go out and line up and, in the meantime, the truck drivers must have eaten early because they'd have the trucks started and warmed up and in position. We'd load up on the trucks and ride out to the job. This might take a half hour some mornings. [It might be] cold and snowy. We'd get to the job and we'd wipe the snow off one of the machines. We had big air compressors--not as big as this room, but I mean big air compressors. We'd fight and get one of them running. Then we'd run hoses from that one to the

other and blow the snow off of that one and get them fired up. [We'd] get all the hoses blown out, get the jackhammers out and get them oiled and going and drill holes.

BW: All day long?

MW: All day long. Of course, it wasn't hard like commercial work would be with an employer driving you every minute. It was pretty sensible because we were kids. Of course, we'd have to stop early enough in the evening to put everything away because we didn't know how much it was going to snow that night, and we didn't have. . . .

BW: And of course everybody's wanting to make sure that they had plenty of time to do that.

MW: It was amazing up in Ashley National Forest--not the day it was 32 [below zero], but on a normal day when it's cold--we'd go out there and by lunch time, with our energy and our working, we'd lay out on a tree trunk with our shirts off soaking up some rays. Because of the forest protection you didn't have that wind cutting at you like you do here. It was an entirely different environment there. I lived there five and a half months, came back in the spring of 1940 and caught a real wing-dang of a cold because the temperature and the humidity and the changing. . . . I don't know what it was, germs, too, probably.

BW: So when you got back on the truck, then you had dinner?

MW: No. We had to wash up first. You had other work clothes. You didn't have to wear your same dirty work clothes. We had other clothes we could wear in the evening.

BW: Somebody else did the laundry? Did you have a camp laundry?

MW: No. The laundry went out twice a week, but I'm not sure. I know [it was] at least once a week because when I got my real bad tooth ache and had to go to Green River, they put me on the laundry truck. That was my transportation to the dentist.

Of course, in the evening we had sometimes movies, sometimes you'd just go down to the library to read or learn to type. There was the canteen where you [would] go and listen to the radio or play cards and talk. [There was] plenty to do, but not all day long.

One of the things the guy told me in Manila--he was an employee of the county. He was busy. Even while we

were talking he got a couple of phone calls and he had to sign papers for this other whatever. He was some kind of executive there in the county government. He told me that as a kid he lived in Wyoming and his people would bring him over to camp Manila to watch the movie on Saturday nights. I told him, "There's a possibility if you were there in the fall of 1939 or the spring of 1940 that I was one of the guys helping to run the projector." Somehow I was always into everything, whether I was learning to type or find out how that projector worked and who ran it and whether he needed help or not. I did help run the movie machine. We only had one, so at the end of the reel we'd have to turn up the house lights, change that reel, load up the other one. . . .

BW: And try to keep everybody from throwing popcorn at the screen or whatever.

MW: Blink the lights so everybody would find their seat again, and kill the lights and start the next reel of the movie.

BW: What sort of movies were you showing at the time?

MW: I have no idea. Probably the old time Lou Gibson, Tom Hicks cowboy stuff.

BW: Western stuff. I don't know if you remember Steve Honyos? He's from your chapter and there's a diary where every movie had a who was in it, the plot, and a, "I didn't like this one much," or "Yeah, that was some fine film" column. Sonya Hennie's On Thin Ice, which was the first movie my mother ever went to see, he described and told all about it. That was really interesting to see the different sorts of things they had the guys watching.

MW: One of the advantages I had on the jackhammer crew, I did not have to stand night guard and I did not have to serve KP. So, in a sense, I had earned myself a slot just above the ordinary. Except, I think three different times in my whole time there, they ran short of men or men were sick or something that I did serve night guard duty.

BW: So it wasn't just a four hour shift, it was an entire night?

MW: As far as I can remember, yes, it was all night long. That was your job. You had the day off. You could sleep or do whatever you wanted, but that night you were out on guard. They rotated that around so no one person had to do it all the time. About four times while I was there, this one fellow worked night guard

on Saturday night. I wish I could remember his name. He played a trumpet, I think. He blew reveille on Sunday morning and you could hear it echo off those hills. I tell you it was beautiful. And the beautiful part of it was that you didn't have to get up and go to work. That was real music and entertainment. I wish I could meet that guy today and tell him how much I enjoyed him doing that. He should have done it every morning. I suppose we would have got sick of it if we heard it every morning.

BW: What was the biggest complaint in the camps? I know you didn't like getting up early in the morning.

MW: That was the very first adjustment. I suppose most of the guys talked most about things back home. I mean, the gripes were, "If I were home I could do this," and "My girlfriend misses me, my mom misses me, I'd like to see my grandma," that sort of thing. This was the usual and generally what you would hear going on was the complaints that they didn't want to be where they were.

BW: Were they grouching much about the jobs that they drew?

MW: No. They seemed to take that in stride. It was probably like me and my bed, you adjusted. Once you knew they were going to be tough and you were going to have to do this, you were going to have to do that. And if the man said, "Dig that post hole, tote that log," you just did it.

BW: But if you didn't do it, what happened to you?

MW: I don't remember anyone having that problem.

BW: No discipline [was needed] in the camp?

MW: I don't remember any discipline problems. Surely there must have been, but if there were, they were handled so smoothly that it was not a camp thing. They didn't have stocks where they'd flog somebody at 6 p.m. or something. [Laughter] I can't remember a single incident. I remember the boys talking about when they were going to hike to Manila. They had instructions that if they were going to hike to Manila to this country store type of place. They had to not do this, not do this, not to this, and do this and do this. They were instructed. They didn't just let them go off on a tangent on their own and get in trouble. They told them ahead of time.

BW: There didn't seem to be much in Manila to get in trouble with. [Laughter]

MW: That's true. But, anybody that gets a few beers in them can get in trouble near anywhere. I've read and heard some about the other camps closer to town where the "townies" did not like the "campies" at all. They didn't want them coming in and messing around in their town. So, I don't imagine we had that much problem because there wasn't that many people that wanted to walk seven miles just to see Manila. [Laughter] I'd rather walk seven miles in the other direction to climb up on top of Old Bald Ear or something, as silly as that sounds.

BW: I know in the diary I mentioned, there were a lot of guys who [bragged about], "I climbed there the fastest," or "I'm the first one up to the top." Was there a lot of that?

MW: There's always that competitiveness in a school kid. Even when I was in the third grade I can remember playing King of the Mountain and what it was, was a pile of ashes out behind the school. [Laughter] That was the only mountain we had, but still we had to have a king. To a certain extent, you have that competitiveness in fellas. If you were a truck driver, you'd want to be the best.

BW: What was the best truck driver? I mean, what did you have to be to be the best at your job?

MW: I don't know. But they did offer me a truck driving job when they found out I could drive. In my experience working at the farm I had learned to drive a farm truck around. As I got older, I could use that truck to go to town for the bus and get coal and do errands. So, I was a truck driver before I got to camp. I said [at the camp] I'd think about it. This was before they offered me the jackhammer crew. When I saw the trucks and saw where they had to drive, I said no. The responsibility scared me to death. Now, if I had been hauling coal or bails of straw or logs, I could have handled it, I think. But the thought of having 16 to 26 men in the back of that truck, with the brakes like they were and the roads like they were--twisting switchbacks with no room to pass--I didn't want a truck driving job. I turned that down flat.

BW: How was the safety in the camps?

MW: I don't remember anyone ever getting hurt. Even with all the mountain climbing we did, with the chances of falling down and skinning your elbow or breaking an arm, I don't remember anybody ever getting hurt. So, they must have been extremely strict on their safety program. I think I studied at least six weeks before I was allowed to be a powder monkey and work with

blasting. I studied, other than when I was running the jackhammer, on how to handle powder, dynamite, black powder. [I studied how] to store it, transport it, and so forth. They must have been extremely strict on everybody, including the truck drivers.

BW: You weren't a smoker at the time or if you were, you weren't a smoker around the powder.

MW: I hadn't learned to smoke yet.

BW: But that seemed to be a prevalent thing at the camps, a lot of cigarettes.

MW: Yeah. [They were] free.

BW: They mentioned them on the menu of the Christmas dinner.

MW: They were free for the smokers. Of course, the ones of us that didn't smoke, we had them at our [dinner] place. And if somebody hadn't stolen them before you got there, we'd put them in our pocket and traded them later for pop or candy or favors of one kind or another. That was an edge you had. [Laughter]

BW: You're the first person that's talked about stealing in the camps, that somebody had taken something from you. Was there stealing in your camp.

MW: Yeah. I remember one time I really almost got psychologically destroyed. I had been very careful with my money. My mom had bought me a camera my second month out there. With the proceeds that I sent her, she bought me a camera. I'd been wanting a camera, so this was to be my Christmas present. I had to have money for film and stamps and developing and processing to get my pictures made. So, I was extremely careful with my money. I did not buy candy, I did not buy cigarettes, I did not buy beer, and so forth. I made the mistake one night down at the canteen of opening my wallet. I had five dollars tucked in that back slot back there that I'd saved up. Somebody saw it. I have no idea who saw it and I have no idea how it happened, but somebody got my five dollars. That was heart breaking.

BW: A whole months worth of money gone.

MW: Yep. I didn't have any personal things other than my camera. Nobody bothered my camera, nobody bothered my pictures, and I don't remember locking my foot locker as far as my personal letters and stuff at the end of the bed. But I do remember somebody got my five bucks.

And I do remember if the cooks and the people didn't watch in the mess hall, some places didn't have any cigarettes because somebody would grab them on their way by.

BW: Did they give out cigarettes as rewards for clean barracks competitions or. . . .

MW: No.

BW: Just whoever wanted them?

MW: At a special meal like this, they'd have them at the places in the mess hall. Normally they weren't available, except you could buy them in the PX or the canteen. If you would have asked me before we looked at the [Christmas] menu, I did not remember the cigarettes being there. It was no big deal.

BW: I just find it really. . . . You know from all the hoo-ha they've had in the last couple of years about, "Don't smoke, don't smoke," and the government was giving them out like candy at the Christmas meal.

MW: Well, manufacturers would make it a point to have a campaign on. They'd put people in a town of, say, Denver or Warren and these people would stop you in the street to give you a sample cigarette pack with four cigarettes in it--it wouldn't be a full pack, it'd be a sample pack. They'd make deals, if you got a hold of the right salesman, if you were going to have a meeting with the Jaycees or whatever with 60 people, they'd give you 60 packs to put at each place. This was standard merchandising procedure.

BW: Wow! I'd never known that. I know that once they stopped advertising that was the. . . . I can still remember the Marlboro man riding around on the TV. I was really bummed out when he wasn't on there because I was three or four years old and I thought he was pretty good looking.

MW: Would that have caused you to smoke if you would have watched all of those adds.

BW: No. I don't think so.

MW: I don't think it would. The power of advertising is sometimes, I think, greatly overrated. Nobody advertises this coke [cocaine] and people in Warren are going crazy trying to get their hands on coke. They had a shooting just the other day. A couple of guys from Detroit got into it with some other guys and . . . Dopeys. Nobody advertised that.

BW: Right. It's just something that you hear and you think, "Well, I gotta try that." I don't know. That's a whole different matter entirely--drug use in America. There doesn't seem to be, from what I've heard from people, a lot of problems with discipline or drunkenness in the camps. Either the kids were too young or just didn't have enough money to get into much trouble.

MW: Part of it might have been the upbringing. I think that most of the kids in my peer group, in my time frame, didn't have the arrogance, or courage, or whatever you call it to get in trouble. We just didn't, that's all. Maybe because we had it beat out of us when we were small.

I got a letter from this guy in California, and he enclosed some information. He's trying to find out who built the lookout tower on Ute Mountain.

BW: All right. Do we have all the dates from when the camp was. . . ?

MW: Well, he sent this to me and said they found it somewhere. I don't know what camp it applied to, but this was supposed to be the lookout tower.

BW: [It was built in] 1937. So, it would have to be built before October, probably that summer. Probably the camp closed down in late September, so that would be the time.

MW: I wrote back and sent him some information I had and told him everything I knew, which wasn't much. I sent him some names.

BW: Now, how did he get your name?

MW: I think from this national membership thing. Maybe somebody out there was a member rather than this fellow, and told him that here was a guy that was from Manila, Utah and he wrote to me. But this is the payoff that I wanted you to see. That other was preliminary.

BW: Yeah. You know, that's something that's a very common sentiment by people that have been in the "Cs", that they think that we need it. And as I listen to you people talk, the more I think they're right. I think that there's a lot that the three Cs could do right now.

MW: This fella was never in the "Cs". He's a consultant of some kind that somebody had on a project and now he's picked this lookout tower project as his next job, maybe on his own. But this was his sentiments from

what he's learned so far. He thinks that it was a great thing, and wouldn't be a great thing if they'd do a similar thing today.

BW: Well, from everything that I have talked to people and just from my uncles who were in the "Cs" and later in the Navy, there's something in your generation that's not in mine.

MW: Work ethic.

BW: Yeah. You're not afraid of hard work. It has to be done, no matter if you like it or not. Some things have to be done and you just go on and do it.

MW: But a part of that is our own fault. We have spoiled the younger generation because they have never wanted for anything.

BW: Never hungry, never cold.

MW: Never ashamed of your ragged clothes and your ragged shoes that you had to wear to school. And this might have been the most powerful influence in maintaining discipline in the camps, because if you screwed up, you were out. [There would be] no more money, no more free food, no more free clothes; you were back out. Especially the ones that the judge had suggested they go in, they knew what they were in for if they went back. So there probably were very little or no discipline problems.

BW: Well, that's something I've expressed a couple of times in the interviews. My generation is extremely fortunate. I mean, when you were 16, [you had] no car, no, "Gee let's go get our driver's licence. Mom, can I go to the basketball game?"

MW: I didn't even get to ride in dad's car.

BW: The car was not on the horizon. High school education, you're one of the rare people that I've talked to that got to finish high school.

MW: If it wasn't for my mom I wouldn't have.

BW: For most--80 to 90 percent of the guys I've interviewed from the "Cs"--10th grade, 11th grade [was as far as they got]. "Rent's got to be paid, got younger brothers and sisters to feed, and we've got . . . if they're going to finish school, I can't." So, they went on and got a job and started taking care [of their family]. There's a greater sense on responsibility, both civic responsibility and personal, family responsibility.

MW: Yeah. Even the jobs I had in high school, part of my money went to mom for the family; I didn't get to keep it all. That was understood, that my working was going to help the group, the family unit.

BW: That's why I think there's a lot to be done in America. A lot of things are in decline. We're talking about the super dump, the waste projects, a lot of the community service. . . . We have such a vast body of young people who need a purpose. They need something beyond the shallow. . . . There's only room at the top for a small percentage, but that's what everyone is aiming for--money, money, money, money, money, money, money.

MW: And more of it.

BW: And more of it. Money's fine if you can get it, but what if you don't. Then what do you have? What do you have if you don't get that fantastic job and that wonderful career that you're dreaming of? And what's more, if you don't get through high school. . . ? Are you going to sit on your butt for the rest of your life thinking that you're a failure? You gotta have something to do.

MW: Seems like for the last 20 years, these kids have been given so much and when it's time for them to be a person--set a family, get a job, or whatever--they don't want to get a job; they want to stay with mom and dad.

BW: Well, they don't have any center to them. They don't have any. . . . There's a sense of self that you get from working and from sharing, there's an attachment you have to the rest of the world. If you're constantly inward turned, "What can I get, what can someone give me, what can I do?," then you don't ever have the pleasure of. . . . First of all, you don't ever know how much you can do. So everybody always underestimates themselves. I don't know, it just seems like they don't have a lot. If they have been given everything. . . . Mom and dad put me through college and that was a lot for them to do and when it came time for master's work I said, "No, I can't ask them for that, they've already given me more. . . ."

MW: [You said], "It's time to do something for myself."

BW: So, I work and I go to school. I work out there for my tuition doing these interviews, and doing some research, and doing all sorts of things. It ain't easy but it's mine.

MW: But you don't get it sitting home smoking marijuana and listening to rap records either. [Laughter]

Pat Whaley: With my job I see a lot of it, the young people coming in with no goals. They just say, "Welfare, take care of me."

BW: I think that the need for the "Cs", just to have people. . . .

PW: It would be great. If these young people could even get out and sweep the streets, clean up the yards, clean the parks, and do some of this work that needs to be done.

BW: I think that a lot of especially inner city kids--I live in Cleveland--they don't realize that there's a world beyond their neighborhood, their block. They read about it, they hear about it. They don't know geography, it's all pictures on a map and it's not real because they aren't ever going to be a part of it. We can't afford not to educate, we can't afford not to take care of our environment while we still got one to take care of. There's a lot of things the "Cs" could do and should be doing.

PW: Yeah. Planting more trees that are being killed by the acid rain.

BW: That would be good. Now, what is this?

MW: That's Northern Utah. This is Manila. (Looking at a map.)

BW: That's right on the border.

MW: Yeah. [It's] close to Wyoming. Our camp was right in here. Somewhere our work was up on this road. This road did not exist at that time. This was the only road to get over to Vernal, Utah, which at that time was the county seat. Since then, they have broken off the top half of this county and made it a separate county, and Manila is the county seat.

BW: Well, I imagine it's got at least a courthouse now.

MW: Yep. Not very impressive. . . .

BW: But it's there. So the camp and the town it was connected to now aren't even in the same county.

MW: Right.

BW: Ashley Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area. I see the Death Valley Creek, how close were you to Death Valley?

MW: Not at all.

BW: Yeah, see, I didn't think that was even in the right part of the state.

MW: Nope, not at all. Our camp was on Sheep Creek, which was a part of the Flaming Gorge Reservoir. Now, today this is a nationally known resort area for fishing and camping. It is beautiful, but it wasn't back then.

BW: It's right next to Sweetwater County, Wyoming. What did the camp look like when you got there?

PW: Did you show her the picture?

MW: Nope.

BW: Oh, there we go.

MW: This was our camp and our bulletin board out front.

BW: Were you allowed to post things on this or was this simply a

MW: No. That was the information. Now, here's where the officials posted things. It was a different bulletin board from this one.

BW: And Cleaton Helms, was he a friend of yours?

MW: A very impressive individual. I wish I could find him.

BW: Why don't you put an ad in your CCCA [journal]?

MW: I might have to do that. This lieutenant was our commanding officer. Before I got there he was the next down subordinate or something, and somebody else was the commanding officer. I've got more of that information in here. This is me, and this is camp. This hill I'm standing on is how I know that I found camp the last time that I was there last summer.

BW: When you said hill I thought you meant gradual upgrade, I didn't think [you meant a mountain].

MW: Here's the hill from another angle.

BW: Oh, what a beautiful place. This is really nice.

MW: I told you about the barracks where the night watchmen went around the circle. I don't know, but this must have been the commanding officer's headquarters. This must have been the cook's headquarters. This must have been the recreation area, but I'm not sure.

BW: Well, here's the Thanksgiving dinner. Looks like you had pretty much the same menu.

MW: But I don't have the bulletin from Thanksgiving dinner.

BW: Food and food and more food, going back, say, at least 100 yards. That's a long mess hall. Everybody got to eat at once and it was family style?

MW: Yeah.

BW: Now see, I've been going along thinking all the time that you were eating off of trays and going down the line and somebody was slopping things on your tray. That's really interesting. [I had] a completely wrong vision of how it was. You've got huge bowls, three and four quart casserole bowls heaped up with things.

MW: They did feed good.

BW: Seems like they fed you plenty, too. How many people were in a barracks?

MW: Probably 40.

BW: Okay. You had the stove in the middle. . . ?

MW: Two stoves.

BW: One on each end?

MW: Toward the end and in the middle and divided up so that. . . . It worked.

BW: One for the one barracks commander and the one for the assistant barracks commander to push everybody out of the way and put their feet up.

MW: They [the barracks commanders] were on separate ends to make sure order was controlled. We lived in these tar paper type buildings, these were our barracks.

BW: Did you each get a window or did you have a bunk on each side of the window?

MW: No. They [the bunks] were just run down the length of this long room and nobody got a window.

BW: You guys look so young. (Looking at pictures)

MW: [We were] just kids. This was the lieutenants boy.

BW: Oh, okay. I was thinking he looked even a little young to fool somebody.

MW: He wasn't there all of the time.

BW: There's your buddy Charles Bevington.

MW: Yep. And this is Virgil Frey. He's a another fellow I would like to meet again. [He was] very impressive.

BW: He has a football. Did you have a lot of sports teams?

MW: He was more sports-minded than I was. [Laughter]

BW: You were in to sleeping overtime. [Laughter]

MW: He didn't know it, but I wasn't [in to sports].

BW: Grave of the Bad Man of Manila?

MW: This is all we knew about him. This was on the road to Manila; about a couple of miles from camp probably. This was known as the Bad Man of Manila. Well, later on I've got some pictures explaining what made him such a bad man. He was pretty bad. [Laughter]

BW: And this one, you weren't hiking to town, obviously. You were hanging out?

MW: Yeah, goofing off. Now, I think this Johnny Fleisch might have been from Youngstown, but I haven't been able to find him.

BW: They issued you safety goggles?

MW: Yeah, they were available. They didn't hound you to death to make sure you wore them, but they were available.

BW: Lunch was where ever you found it.

MW: Brownie?

BW: Yeah.

MW: That fellow was one of the greatest joke tellers I've ever run into. He could talk for two hours, tell jokes solid, never repeat. Fantastic individual. Probably a beer drinker. Johnny Openkar I think was from Youngstown, but I haven't been able to find him.

BW: Yeah. John Openkar and Virgil Fry. There's the shadow of you taking the picture.

MW: That was early morning. I'm loading up to go to work.

BW: Did they have--I see your broke down for lunch here--coffee that you cooked on site or did you go whistling for your coffee?

MW: I don't remember. Probably somebody had to build a camp fire and get the coffee ready because all we had was the bag lunch.

BW: Then you had the end of the day here. These guys standing around.

MW: I have no idea who these guys were. You know, you don't write down the names at the time so it gets away from you. But you can see how somebody went in there and flattened this place out and poured some concrete and nailed together some tar paper shacks and built a camp. A minimum of expense.

BW: And there you were.

MW: And that could be done again today.

MW: That 55 cases of black powder went up in one blast.

BW: Look at that. How far did they back you off?

MW: We--the two powder monkeys--were the closest because we were going to set it off. The foreman was next. We had watchmen out on both sides up a mile down the road to make sure there was no cars or nobody that came up that road. We had an elaborate system of calls back and forth to make sure they knew we were getting ready to shoot, and they were giving us permission is what it amounted to. The foreman was where he could hear all of this, and he was the final answer.

BW: Army does the work, Marines take the credit, Navy takes the pay, CCCs get hell if they look like they want any credit or pay either. [Laughter] I was talking to a guy in the Navy a couple of nights ago and he said that the Army and the Navy hated each other and he only recently figured out why, because the Navy, when they came into to port, had all the money. They didn't have the payroll anywhere else so they were the ones with all of the money and they could take the girls out and have a good time. The things that you didn't know then. This is a beautiful country.

MW: Those are just miscellaneous pictures; nothing special.

BW: Now, what are these tents.

MW: That must have been spike camps. Somebody must have gave me that picture because I cannot remember. This might have been my buddy, Don Eddy, that went in the

same time I did. He was in camp in Nevada somewhere so this could be. . . .

BW: His camp with the boardwalk in front of it, keeping you up out of the mud.

MW: That was our work outfit; the blue denim. This must have been Bevington because he's in dressier clothes than these other guys.

BW: His tiny tie that he didn't tuck in yet. Same guy?

MW: No. This was experimenting with my camera. I don't know who this kid was, but I was trying to get close ups to find out what my camera would do. Now we're into the ones I took last summer. Old Baldy, it's in the same place. This is the picture I took 50 years ago. That's Castle Rock right in the middle of the road, and it's in the same place, it's still there.

BW: Yeah, by the rest of it, look how the erosion has gotten the rest of these.

MW: It's made a difference. The Bad Man of Manila.

BW: So you finally got the scoop on him now. Two of his children were buried here. Cleofus J. Dell entered the Dagget County area in 1878 and constructed the dugout in the Sheep Creek Canyon. Let's see what else he did. [In] 1897 [he was] murdered in the harness shop of his ranch.

MW: His best friend killed him because he was so bad and nobody else would do anything about it.

BW: His grave along with those of his two children is located a few roads east. Killed by his associate Charles Reeser in self-defense.

MW: But how can the state spend so much money on the Bad Man of Manila, and we don't have any plaques up at our camp?

BW: Yeah. Some guy who got mowed down in his own harness shop by his best friend.

MW: This is my son's truck and my grandson when we were out exploring. (Still looking at pictures) This is a story about the people that got killed in the flash flood that wiped out the camp. This was the area where they were camping at the time the flood came through and killed them.

BW: There's Castle Rock again.

MW: Yeah.

BW: Beautiful. You don't even think that there's colors like this till you go out there.

MW: But this was the area the camp was in. None of these trees were there in 1965 when that flood went through.

BW: And everything just kind of dumped on top of it.

MW: This is the escarpment in back of camp where I was standing on top of to take the picture of the camp. (looking at photographs)

BW: It's one of those hills that seem like getting up is easier than getting down.

MW: I found this piece of concrete and I said to my son--this is before I knew of the big flood of 1965--"I think I found it where the oil tank was." I don't even know if we had an oil tank. He came and looked and said, "Dad, this was a picnic bench." Those were picnic benches before the flood dumped that debris in there and filled it up.

BW: Then the creek ran around behind it. Was that creek deep enough at that time for swimming?

MW: No. [It was] just a little, little thing. When it would flood, it was wider and more impressive, but when we were in camp there, it was just a little thing trickling around the back of camp.

BW: Enough to get your feet wet.

MW: Pure enough to drink.

BW: Beautiful.

MW: That's the reason they call it the Flaming Gorge.

BW: It's beautiful. It's got the brick red clay. I'm not exactly sure what it is; layers and layers of it, though. Then all the blue of the water, when you figure. . . . Everytime I go out West I think about all of the people that ended up going, "Water, water."

MW: No water.

BW: No water anywhere and then you get something like that and just under the surface there'd be water there.

MW: Now, is the history group going to have copies of any of the [CCCA] journals as far as you know?

BW: No, I don't think so. Let me take a look at them. I've got a couple that one of the guys gave me. I've got this one. I don't think I've got this one. No, I don't have this one because it's the most recent one. That's neat, they're still doing work.

MW: Yeah, the old timers are getting together and cleaning up cemeteries and polishing. . . .

BW: You know, I've been thinking, in 50 years what kind of story am I going to have that will be worth taking down. What are they going to want to interview me about? Maybe I should be having some more worthy experiences.

MW: You never know what your experiences are. Under that plate is something you might be interested in getting a copy of.

BW: A pictorial review from your camp.

MW: This was made available to me from Bill Goleta in Campbell. I sent part of it to that man in California.

BW: Malcolm V. Fortier, he's the district commander. [There's] a lot of brass on these [guys].

MW: These were the brass up in Pocatello, Idaho. They ran most of the Western United States, at least we were in their district way down in Utah. Since these fellows were older, I don't imagine any of them have survived to this point.

BW: I was going to say, you wonder how these guys are now. [You wonder] how they came through the war. Kenneth Havens [from] Cleveland, Ohio. I suppose he didn't want to take a look at your tooth.

MW: He probably wasn't even there. He was probably on call or came once a week or something.

BW: Yeah, it made your parents feel better to think that you had a doctor on duty even if he wasn't there much. The educational advisor, is this the guy you were talking about?

MW: Chuck Bevington? No. Bevington was one of the smaller fries, these were the bigger fries. I think these were all before my time because Havens was the boss when I was there, and when this picture was taken he was the

adjutant or the assistant or something. These trucks were similar to our trucks in the wintertime and had the canvas tops on.

BW: There were hoops at the top. When I heard that they had the canvas I was thinking boxed in like the GIs; like the jeeps.

MW: [They were more] like the old conastoga wagon with the hoops.

BW: Building a cattle guard.

MW: Would you believe that you could put a fence on each side of that cattle guard and that's just as effective at keeping the cattle out as the fence is?

BW: It's hard to believe that they're that scared of walking up to something slatted.

MW: This was my company, my camp before my time. I don't know these people. The first lieutenant was Webster, the commanding officer, Havens was the subaltern--that's the word they used. By the time I got there, Webster was gone and Havens was the boss.

BW: They all look like they're not too impressed with getting lined up in that dress uniform.

MW: I sent copies of this camp stuff to this fellow in California, in case he wanted to pursue, he's got more names and more places to go.

BW: Right. They talk about people who were the best athletes. Who was the best athlete that you remember?

MW: I don't know, I wasn't interested in it [athletics].

BW: Does anybody in the camp stick out as a real character, the people everybody kind of made fun of [and] picked on? Usually in one group of guys there's. . . .

MW: No, I don't remember. Even this little guy I told you about that stood between the barracks leaders, he had his defenders and friends.

BW: Did they allow you to bring your musical instruments or did you get them once you were there?

MW: That fellow I told you about that blew reveille, that was his instrument that he had brought from home. This little guy, I believe his name was Schaefer, he had a guitar. He wasn't real good at it but he had one. [Laughter]

BW: If he know tow chords he knows two more than I do.

MW: When mom bought me camera and sent it to me, I may have been the only one in camp [who had one]. I don't remember seeing anybody else taking pictures.

BW: Were you allowed to keep most of your personal property or did most of that end up going home?

MW: You didn't bring anything; just what you had in pockets. You were told you were going to be furnished all of your clothes. You didn't need clothes, you didn't need shoes. There would be no tennis courts; that sort of thing. I didn't ever see a tennis racket. I didn't have one for sure.

BW: Yeah, you weren't going to bring your tennis whites along.

MW: I didn't need a watch, so personal things like this, to a great extent, didn't exist.

BW: So that may be one reason that no one stole anything because there wasn't anything there to steal.

MW: I can't call it stealing, but when I mustered out in Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana on the way back I must have had a couple of extra bucks again because I bought a CCC ring. [It was] pretty nice, a souvenir. Would you believe, the first time I went to the wash room to wash up I took it off to keep it from going down the drain. I put it over here and got washed up and combed [my hair] and I left it there.

BW: You weren't used to wearing a ring.

MW: When I realized I didn't have it on I ran back. It wasn't stolen, it's just that somebody picked it up.

BW: At the PX that you were talking about, did they have rings there or was that only at the mustering points.

MW: It must have only been at Fort Ben because I didn't have anything like that at camp.

BW: What did they sell at the PX?

MW: Candy bars, popcorn, pop. I don't even remember sandwiches because they fed us so good nobody would buy sandwiches.

BW: Was this staffed by members of the camp or was this outside people that came in?

MW: No, it had to be members of the camp because it was pretty steady. It was open at a certain time after supper. I believe we had a pool table there for people that knew how to shoot pool. I'm not positive of that, but it seems we might have.

BW: There's [some guys] peeling spuds for some 200 people.

MW: I was glad I didn't have to serve KP. [Laughter]

BW: You were telling me the one guy was a joker. Did you guys play a lot of practical jokes on each other?

MW: I don't remember that. I'm one that is quick to resent stupid practical jokes.

BW: So you didn't get short sheeted at least.

MW: Never. Maybe somebody did, but it [must have been] one of the other barracks or something. I don't remember being any part of it. The people must have been--the barracks leaders and night guards and stuff like that--must have been pretty much on the ball because I don't remember anyone having a problem being short a blanket or a pair of pants or anything like that. It just didn't happen.

BW: When you came back from the Cs, what did you do then?

MW: Things were tough. Jobs were not immediately available. A buddy of mine from high school said, "Let's go to Atlantic City." [I said], "What for?" [He said], "Well maybe there's a job there. We can stay with my uncle for free." So, we hitchhiked to Atlantic City. That's where I learned to smoke. No money, no food, but when I'd get a few pennies it'd go for cigarettes. We got out to Atlantic City, got set up in Uncle Dave's garage--it was summertime. They were nice people. I don't think they really appreciated having two bums come and stay, but at least they fed us and gave us a place to sleep.

I got a job, would you believe, as an ice man. [I had to] carry ice up three, four or five floors, whatever, in Atlantic City. Talk about a different lifestyle. I'd go into some of those places lugging my ice, guys wanted to give me drinks, wanted me to do there game--they'd be playing poker all night long, drunker than skunks. I had to chop up that 50 pounds of ice and give them 25 and the next 25 next door or wherever. What a job that was. What an experience.

BW: That was for their ice box not for their drinks, right? [Laughter]

MW: Yeah, but you know they'd go over and chop off a chunk for their drink. Nobody had refrigerators even in Atlantic City. They had ice boxes.

BW: So you were one of the last of the ice men.

MW: It was 1940. [In] the hot summer time you'd put a big pad on your shoulder, throw 100 pounds of ice on and start. Then you run back and get another big hunk.

BW: Did you go around apartment building by apartment building?

MW: Yeah. I guess they were repeat customers because I don't remember having any problems as far as knocking on doors and saying, "Did you order ice," or anything like that. You just knew where to go. The nitty gritty of the details escape me.

BEGINNING OF TAPE NUMBER TWO

BW: Was there a lot of night life going on at the time?

MW: I don't know, I wasn't the night life kind. I'd get up at 3:30 in the morning to go on my ice man's route. By the time I got off my ice man's route it was probably 2:00 in the afternoon. I'd go down and swim, walk the boardwalk. By dark I was ready to go to bed.

BW: In one of the jumping towns in America.

MW: I was walking downtown one day and I heard a fire siren somewhere. All of a sudden there was no car moving anywhere; nothing. As far as I could see, every car had pulled over and stopped right where it was. They must have got some signal from the street light--I wasn't a driver at the time so I didn't know about that. But that was one of the rules in Atlantic City, you get out of the way and stop for emergency vehicles. They enforced it I guess because it was no problem.

BW: That's strange because you would think if they were going as fast as they do they wouldn't be taking down licence numbers, but they must have put the fear of the Lord in them someday. People aren't in the habit of obeying laws.

MW: Back in 1940 it was a different world, different people. The work ethic was alive and well. [There was] very little juvenile delinquency.

BW: I think a lot of that had to do with after the war you had a lot of work and you had people willing to do it.

MW: People relocating, this contributed, too. Back in the 1940s, not many people got to go to Atlantic City like me and live for two weeks or a month or however long we were there. You were pretty much [stuck] in your neighborhood. You didn't get out of your neighborhood. You didn't have a car, you didn't have a motorcycle. The fortunate ones might have had a bicycle, but how far can you go on a bicycle?

BW: Depends on how much time you got. During the war time years--is that when you started as an electrician?

MW: I wanted to be a truck driver. When I came back from Atlantic City I got a job driving a truck. Small stuff, you got to start little I guess. I got into bigger trucks, semis, hauling steel, hauling new cars. I wanted to be a truck driver. In the meantime I got married. Truck drivers don't make a whole lot of money.

BW: And wives get tired of never seeing them, too.

MW: That's when I got into electrical work because it paid better. I made my career in telephone and electric.

BW: Did you have any experience doing anything? How did you get interested in doing it?

MW: It was tougher then, a lot tougher. I guess I've always been curious, or willing to take a chance, or something. I can remember at home dad giving me an old radio--it wasn't any good or he wouldn't have given it to me. I took that sucker all apart. I knew how they put it together. I never got it back together. I was digging, I was learning. One of the things I invented when I was a junior in high school, or maybe even a sophomore, [was] a fly killer. I hooked a cord into the outlet, hooked on side of the cord to the screen, hooked the other side to a carbon rod I took out of a flashlight. When a fly would land I'd get closer and closer and closer and the electricity would zap him. It zap a nickel or quarter size hole in the screen, too. Dad beat me over that one. [Laughter]

BW: But damnit, it got that fly.

MW: I had fun. Even when I was in camp, I was up in the projection booth helping them run movies. So, I guess I'd been interested in that sort of thing. Somehow I developed the attitude, if somebody else can invent and put together something, I can take it apart, figure out what's wrong with it, and fix it. Boy, that's not true today. It might not have been true then, but I thought it was and that was my attitude.

When I had a job at Ravenna Arsenal for the Portage Ordinance Depot, my job was lineman. The lineman's job, especially on shifts at night turn, was to drive all around that arsenal checking the street lights and making sure everything was okay. You'd get calls from the telephone operator saying a street light was out here or a desk lamp doesn't work or whatever. They leave work orders from day turn for night turn. Sometimes you' go up to the administration building with a 22 foot ladder and change bulbs.

BW: Anything they didn't want to do on day turn you got stuck with.

MW: I like that sort of thing and I stayed with it. Made a career of it. It wasn't easy because there was no apprenticeship programs back then. You had to hire out as a helper, and you had to know somebody to get a chance to be a helper. I remember this one electrician, I was very interested in what he was doing and how he was doing it. I was doing my part helping and trying to do what I could. When it got to the secret part of hooking up this particular motor or this particular control switch, he would maneuver so he was between me and his hands and I couldn't see what he was doing. You didn't get any help from the old timers, they were afraid you'd take their job. It was a dog eat dog world.

BW: You were a young man and they were getting older and you could probably hire cheaper and do it quicker.

MW: On one of the night turns they had an IBM time clock that they worked on for three days. I kept asking what was the matter with the thing, it's still here. Nobody knew how to fix it. One night I figured out what was wrong with it and I fixed it. The insulation had gone bad on these two wires and it went through a terminal block type of thing. This terminal block is what we call mycarda. Evidently some dampness got in there or something and, with the insulation going bad, it cooked this mycarda. It had turned brown or blackish. They didn't know that when it turned brown and black that it was carbon and it was shorting those wires out. I put new mycarda blocks in there and that thing worked just fine.

BW: And you didn't even get a thank you or nothing.

MW: No, you got hell for messing with it. That's what saved me I think, the willingness to dig in and go one step farther or try a little bit harder.

It's kind of hard sometimes. You look back and wonder why did you make the decision you did. Sometimes you

have to admit it was kind of laziness or possibly ignorance, not knowing. I think that if I had known then what I know now there was a lot of decisions I'd make differently. But at the time I did the best I could. I had enough of the work ethic behind me that I'd make it work. There's no giving up.

BW: There's something to be said for living on an edge, having a wife and kids and having to make it.

MW: Well, even truck driving, when I left the straight truck and got into a semi, I hired on to this outfit in Ravenna. I took their tractor and went over to a job, picked up the trailer, went down to country near Lisbon down where the mine was. The way this mine was arranged, you couldn't drive in and get under the coal tipple. You had to drive by it and back in. So, I pulled up there and I started to back up, and my truck went the wrong way. I did it three times. I got out and I walked all around that truck, looking at it. When you back up a straight truck it's like backing up your car. When you back up a semi you have to turn it the wrong way to get it to go the right way. So, I'm standing there looking at this stupid truck and there's a guy way up on top of the coal tipple and he hollers down, "Next time you pull up ahead turn the wheels the other way." I said, "Okay, I'll try that." I went in there, backed the thing right back where I wanted it. I come to find out later this was one of the partners that owned the Falls & Hawkins Company. I bet he was wondering, "Who hired that dumbbell?"

But even then it wasn't a good job because they didn't have dump trucks back in those days. When you got your load of coal, you got it from the tipple, which was okay. It would splash some in, you'd move, it'd splash some more and move, and so on. When you got where you were going, you had to shovel that load off. To make it easy, this particular trailer had about five places on each side with trap doors. You'd open the trap door and there'd be a little bit that ran out, and then you'd shovel like crazy. You'd open the next trap door, [and go] all around the trailer like that.

When I left the steel hauling business I went into the car hauling business out of Cleveland. I was hauling [between] Cleveland and Pittsburgh. The roads then were totally different then they are now. The roads were terrible. My full load was four automobiles. I was responsible for them when I took them out of the gate in Cleveland until I got them signed in at Pittsburgh.

BW: What brand were you hauling?

MW: Fords. The company was Walsh. [They] had a subcontract with Dearborn Motors out of Dearborn, Michigan. What a job. You had to load your own cars. You had to unload your own cars. These drivers today don't know how they got it made. I think there's a few experienced, old time drivers out at Lordstown down here that do make split deliveries. They'll unload two cars in Windham and two cars in Kinsman and the rest of them in Warren or whatever. [There are] not very many. The ordinary driver never loads or unloads. That's a tough part of it.

I had a full load for split delivery in Zanesville. I got up to this underpass--it was the only way I knew how to get into Zanesville--and it was lower than my cars were high. I pulled up as close as I could get and I looked and I thought, "If I let the air out of them tires and tighten the chains down, I might make it." So, I did that on the two top cars. I let most of the air out of the tires and tightened them [the chains] down just as tight as I could get them. It wasn't enough. So, I let some air out of the tires on my trailer. Finally I got a kid that was watching me there. I showed him where to stand and what to hang on to. I said, "You talk to me and when I drive through there, if there's any rivets or bolts or anything hanging down that's going to hit that car, you let me know." We got her through there. Of course, it was only a couple of miles then to the dealership where I could get more air in my tires and everything would be okay. But I learned that lesson the hard way.

I was in Dearborn trying to get a job with the parent company. There were, I think, four or five of us there looking for jobs. We heard about this guy they just hired. They gave him a truck and he went out, and on his way out of Dearborn he mashed in the top foot of the two top cars. I said, "There's a job here for somebody." They didn't put up with mistakes, so when I got my job out of Cleveland I was super careful.

BW: How did you get the air back in the top two?

MW: That was the dealer's responsibility. [Laughter]

BW: I mean, getting them back off the thing if they've got totally flat tires.

MW: I left a little bit in there and then mashed them down with the tie down chains. There was enough to drive them off into his lot. I heard about a guy in Cleveland and took it somewhere--not Pittsburgh, that was my territory. He left the front motor running on the front car. Somehow he neglected to turn that motor off

and it ruined itself. It sat up there and ran out of anti-freeze or whatever and ruined itself. He lost his job overnight.

BW: Yeah, remember when people got fired for screwing up? Now we'd make him President.

MW: Yeah, they'd elect him President. They reelected William Hayes after he messed up in Washington as bad as any congressional representative ever messed up. People down in southern Ohio reelected him as county commissioner or something.

BW: Maybe the thought was, "Let's keep him in the county so we can keep our eye on the fool."

MW: The electorate is sometimes stupid when casting their votes and ballots. [It's] scary.

BW: They vote for an image and I sometimes think that if somebody is really, really bad then they think, "There's hope for me, I'm not so stupid." We got Dan Quayle, he doesn't even know that in South America most of them speak Spanish. He thinks they speak Latin. Well, thank you for your time.

MW: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW