

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

CCC in Parsons, West Virginia

Personal Experience

O. H. 853

LONDA M. BENNETT

Interviewed

by

Hugh Earnhart and Rebecca Rogers

on

June 11, 1989

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INTERVIEWEE: LONDA M. BENNETT
INTERVIEWER: Hugh Earnhart and Rebecca Rogers
SUBJECT: Personal Experience, Parsons Nursery, tannery
DATE: June 11, 1989

E: This is an Oral History interview with Londa Bennett for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program in conjunction with the National Forest Service, on CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps, and other related matters in Parsons, West Virginia, by Hugh Earnhart and Rebecca Rogers, at Davis, West Virginia, on June 11, 1989.

Mrs. Bennett, why don't you start off by telling us a little bit about your family, where you grew up, where you went to school, that type of thing?

B: I grew up in Randolph County. It was up in Job. Then we moved to Parsons in 1920. I was married in 1918. We lived in Parsons until the flood.

E: What did your husband do? What type of work was he in?

B: He worked at the tannery.

E: Did he work there all his life?

B: Yes, after he came out of the Navy he did.

E: What can you tell us about going to school, types of games you played, things that occupied you as a child?

B: Generally ring-around-the-rosy was one, and tag and things like that.

E: What school did you go to?

B: I went school in Job.

R: What did your dad do in Job?

B: He worked part time, he had a store, and the rest of the time he worked carpenter work.

E: So that is a general store type thing, groceries?

B: Yes, general store.

R: Did you ever ride the Dryfork Railroad?

B: Oh gosh yes, lots of times.

R: All the way to Parsons?

B: To Hendricks, and then we had to change at Hendricks, and get another one that went into Elkins.

R: Did you come from Job as a little girl? Did you come up to Hendricks to buy things or what brought you to Hendricks?

B: When we wanted to get out of there that is the way we had to come. We generally had stores up around there that we could go to Harman or somewhere that was close by. Back then you didn't get out very much. We had a good time anyway.

E: Can you describe the train to us?

B: Well, I really don't know whether I could describe it or not. It was just a regular passenger train, had about three coaches.

R: Were they enclosed? They weren't summer coaches?

B: No, they were enclosed.

E: Did they stop all along the way if anyone was standing ...?

B: All along the way. If anybody was standing along the road they would stop and pick you up.

R: For lots of people that was the only way they got in and out. Wasn't it?

B: Yes, it was because there weren't any cars until later on.

E: What was the cost of riding the train?

B: I could ride twenty miles for \$.05.

E: That was what year, round about?

B: Round about 1910. The Fourth of July we always rode the train when we went to Whitmer, which was about five miles away. That is only when they brought the circuses and everything in on the Fourth of July. We would get on the train and ride up and then ride back for \$.05. Both ways just \$.05.

R: Would you ride it if you wanted to go visit friends, or berry picking, or any of those sorts of things too?

B: No we walked. We walked on Sunday. We had a church very close, a Methodist church where we lived right there in town. But in for the afternoon church we went to a Mennonite church, which was two miles away. All the girls and boys would walk down there.

R: You went twice a day on Sunday?

B: Twice a day on Sunday.

E: What type of congregation did they have? Was it a large congregation, small?

B: In the church?

E: Yes.

B: Well, for the size of the community it was a large congregation.

R: Did just about everybody go to church?

B: Yes they did, nobody stayed home.

E: Did they have separate services for children?

B: All the same.

E: Children were expected to sit there and be quiet.

B: The children had their corner where they had their Sunday School lesson, but it was just in an open church.

R: Why did you move to Parsons? Was that after you married?

B: Yes, we moved down there to get work.

R: How old were you when you got married.

B: You would ask. Sixteen.

R: It was pretty common for women to marry pretty young, wasn't it?

B: Yes, it was then. My husband was six years older than I was.

R: Was it common for people ... Somebody we met yesterday had a wife who was lots younger, Mr. Little. Was it common for fellows to marry people somewhat younger than them.

B: Yes, it was. I got a fine husband. Never one like him.

R: That is nice.

B: He has been passed away about twenty-five years.

E: Has he? When you moved to Parsons did you move into a house, or an apartment?

B: No, when we moved to Parsons we moved to Hollow Meadows. That is down about a mile and a half from Parsons on the St. George way. We lived down there for two years and then we moved to town.

E: Then you moved into a house?

B: Yes.

E: Can you describe that house for us if you were to stand at the front door and look in?

B: The first time we moved to town it was small. It only had three rooms; a bedroom, a living room, and a kitchen. It was right along the river. When the water got high you could hear the water hit the bottom of the floor. We lived there six months and then we got a house in what they call a "tannery row." We lived there until the flood.

E: Are those houses specifically for people who worked at the tannery?

B: Yes.

E: And you paid the rent to the tannery, right?

B: Yes, \$8 a month.

R: Those houses had been built by the tannery?

B: Yes, they were.

E: Was there any requirement other than being an employee? That is did you have to be an employee for a certain length of time?

B: Oh, no.

E: Whenever one became available you could move in?

B: Whenever one became available you moved in.

R: Did they all look alike?

B: They did, they were double houses.

E: How many rooms did they have?

B: They had six.

R: Up and down?

B: Yes.

R: Three up, three down?

B: Three up and three down. There were three bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs, and three rooms down; a living room, a dining room, a kitchen.

R: Were they fairly new when you moved in?

B: Well, I think that they were about fifty years old they said when we moved there.

R: I didn't know the tannery had been there that long, my word.

E: I don't know. They had been there a good bit because Mr. Angelo, who worked at the tannery, told us that he had helped build them. That was along in the 1800s, I forget just what year.

R: But that he had helped build them?

B: Yes.

E: Were they wood frame houses?

B: Yes.

E: Did the tannery maintain them?

B: Yes.

E: In other words, if you had something go wrong you simply told the tannery?

B: Yes, that was right.

E: Did they come do it right away?

B: When we first moved there they did. Later on when other people came into the tannery they raised their rent just a little bit, I think up to \$12. Then in the later years Lambert and Harner bought the houses and from that the rent went to \$110.

R: So, you rented your whole life?

B: Yes.

R: Was there a superintendent's house or any other houses that were part of that tannery row?

B: The superintendent's house wasn't where the tannery row was. It was clear away up at the end of Pennsylvania Avenue; they had one at the other one on Quality Hill.

R: Did the guy who owned the tannery ... His name was Mojex, wasn't it. Was his name Mojex?

B: No, Mosser. The tannery was owned by J. K. Mosser Leather Company and was bought by Armour Leather Company in the 1920's.

R: Did he have a house there too?

B: No.

R: He lived in Pennsylvania?

B: Yes.

R: His daughter ... My family has a house down on the Dryfork and his daughter built that house.

B: They did?

R: Yes.

E: How long did you stay there in tannery row?

B: I stayed in tannery row until the flood took us in 1985.

E: The flood took all those houses out of there?

B: They took them. Well they had to tear them down. I think there was one left. They had to tear them down. They weren't fit to move back in.

E: They let you stay there even though your husband didn't

work at the tannery any longer?

B: Yes, they let me stay there.

E: Was that common or did they make an exception?

B: Yes. They didn't move me out. If the husband died the wife and the children could live there.

R: How many kids do you have?

B: Six.

R: They all live?

B: No, one. . . My oldest one passed away about six years ago.

R: But they all lived in their childhood?

B: Yes.

R: Were your kids all born by the time you went to work for the nursery?

B: No, one of them was born after I went to work for the nursery in 1939.

R: That is a lot of years of having kids. They were pretty far apart?

B: Some of them were, some were not.

E: What can you tell us about working at the nursery? How did you get the job to start with?

B: I'll tell you how I got the job. I got sick. I had spots on my lungs and my doctor told me to get out in the sun and stay out in it as much as I could. So a neighbor of mine worked there and she said, "Why don't you get on and work at the nursery? I'll work with you and help you with the work." So, Mr. Oliver, he was our neighbor out there, we talked to him. He said, "Come on out." That is the way I got started.

R: Mr. Oliver first lived near the nursery bottom, I mean near the tannery.

B: He lived on Spruce Street, I forget what year he moved away. That is when I went to work there and I liked it, even when we waded or had to crawl in mud and sand to weed. The sun was so hot but we didn't mind it, I liked it. We had a good crew to work with. Mr. Oliver was a nice man to work for.

R: He moved away in 1934; he moved to the nursery in 1934.

B: Yes, he moved away from there.

E: What can you tell us about Mr. Oliver?

B: Well, he was just a nice neighbor and a nice man. He was very considerate about the people who worked for him. I have a little funny tale I might tell you about him. The sun had been so hot for a whole week, way up in the eighties and nineties. We were out in the field. We wanted to talk about seeing if we could get him to let us have part of our noon hour in the afternoon a little bit. So we could get in the shade. One of us said, "Why don't one of us faint and then he'll let us in a little bit?" Of course they drew straws and I was the one that got the straw. When we came out that afternoon it was eighty-five and I started to get water. They kept the water way down at the end of the line. I went down to get some water. I was supposed to let on the faint but I didn't let on, I really fainted. But the crew didn't know that I had fainted and they were just so excited. Mrs. Oliver was a nurse. They saw me fall on the field and they both came running. Then they took me home. So the next day then when it was so hot he would give us twenty, twenty-five minutes in the afternoon at 3:00 in out of the sun. I made them treat me too. He was a nice man.

E: Was he a tall man, short man?

B: About the average. He wasn't tall.

E: How much did he weigh?

B: I couldn't tell you about that. I expect about 180, or something like that.

E: Did you meet with him everyday, in the morning or afternoon, for instructions on what fieldwork you were to do?

B: No, no. They had a ... Paul Parsons, he is one of the supervisors who helped. He was the one who would tell us where to go. Mr. Oliver always came out and went through the field during the day to see what was going on.

E: Did he know everybody by name?

B: Oh yes!

R: About how big was the crew?

B: Anywhere from twenty-five to thirty women at a time.

R: It was always women, pretty much?

B: That did the weeding. The men made the seed beds and planted seeds. The women helped lift them and sort them in a packing house.

R: Can you tell us exactly what happened, what you did, how big the tree was?

B: They didn't pull them until they were about two years. They expected maybe four inches from that on up the first two years. They had to be at least five to six inches before they planted them out in the fields, that is to pack them and ship them. We would weed them. Then whenever they got to be about four years then they packed them and brought them to the packing house and we counted them. I had to put them in bunches of eighty.

R: They grew in these little beds?

B: Yes.

R: They dug those up and then they put them out in a bigger sort of field, right?

B: Yes.

R: Then they dug them up from there again?

B: Yes, whenever they sold them to ship them away.

R: Did you ever work in the packing house?

B: Oh, yes.

R: Describe how they came through the packing house.

B: We had just like a counter along where they laid them on. The men would bring them in and then we would sort them and count them.

R: Did you sort them one by one with the little roots hanging down?

B: One by one.

R: Did you wrap them in paper or get them wet?

B: No, they had like a little rope or string to put around them.

R: You put them in a box?

B: No, the men did that after we did all the counting.

R: Was it a wooden box or a paper box?

B: It had to have been a wooden box I guess. We planted them in the field when they were ... They would take them up sometimes when they were two years old and plant them in the field. They had a little board where you put the trees in between each one. It held twenty-five. There are twenty-five notches on it. You had to put one in each one. We had tents, just like a little house, each one had his its own tent. We would put them in the boards and the men would plant them.

R: The boards were four feet long?

B: Yes. We had had a regular place that they took them in at the shelves there on them. Then board turned over and just held them in there. They took them then and planted them in rows.

R: Did you have a stack of these boards that you filled as you went along?

B: The men would bring them back to you one at a time. They would take one and leave one. We got so we could plant them in one board in about eight minutes, if we were working fast.

R: While he was planting it were you filling another board?

B: Filling another one.

R: So you had two men who worked for you?

B: Two men?

R: When you set up the boards did one man go plant while another man was having his filled?

B: No, no.

R: One man for each woman.

B: He planted it and you filled it and had it ready until he came back.

R: Where were the little trees that you were putting in the board? Were they in a sack?

B: We had it right beside us. The were right beside us.

R: In a sack?

B: No, no. They were laid out where you could reach and get them.

R: So somebody brought those to you?

B: Yes, the men brought them in.

R: I have pictures of those canvas. They are like a little canvas ... They look like a soda stand.

B: We planted thousands of them a day. I forget how many thousands each day.

E: Was this done at a particular time of the year?

B: Yes. Sometimes they would start in March if the weather was nice. Then we would plant up until September. After September they didn't do very good. We tried it out one year planting each month from January on up until December. The ones that were put out after the last of September didn't do as good.

E: Of all these trees that you had laid out on this board which they planted, how many would survive?

B: About all of them. Very seldom would we loose one.

E: Once they were in the ground then what kind of care was given to them?

B: They were cultivated and watered.

R: Did you guys do that or was that men's work?

B: That was men's work.

R: They watered them, they had sprinkler systems?

B: They had sprinkler systems. I liked it. We had a good crowd to work with, that was nice, and we had the helpers and all. If you needed to ask anything that you didn't understand, the boss, or the supervisor were always ready to tell you.

R: Did you help plant seeds?

B: No, the men did the seeding.

R: That was in these beds?

B: Yes, the beds.

R: The beds have little screens on top of them, right?

B: They were built up when they first started. Then they would take them out later on. They were built up and sort of covered over for a while. Keep the birds and things like that out of them, chipmunks.

R: When you did your weeding what time of year was that?

B: Well, sometimes we started the last of March if the weather was nice. So many days or something; we get a week, we get a month, maybe sometimes three weeks a month, \$1 a day.

R: When you weeded did you weed in the seed beds not in the row beds?

B: Later on we did the row beds, after they took the boards off of them.

R: I don't understand where the boards came from on the row bed. Did they also shade the row beds?

B: No. They were just like you would make a bed. Take two boards and put down each side like that clear down for a while. I guess to keep the ground from the rain from washing them out.

E: And to keep moisture around the roots?

B: Yes.

E: Then they would pull those boards out?

R: So you weeded both the little beds and the field beds?

B: Yes.

R: How did you do it? Did you all start at one end and work across?

B: Yes.

R: You were talking about the water bucket. How many of you worked at one time where?

B: We had as many as thirty at one time, especially if the weeds got a little bigger ahead of you a little bit. Sometimes there would be only maybe eight or ten working.

E: You were one of the regular crew?

B: Yes.

E: These other people they brought in, say to make up this thirty to get ahead of the weeds and stuff?

B: Yes. They didn't have full time like we did or something. Just they came in to help until we got done. If there were some special beds that they just let a few of us weed in, the others that were just learning

they would put them out together.

- R: You said this one woman was the best, what made somebody the best and what was her name?
- B: Minnie Day. She was just nice to everybody and helped. She started there when the nursery first started and she knew all about it.
- R: And she taught you how?
- B: She would tell you ... She was good at it anyway from running her own garden how you pull the weeds. They would come along and see if we had any pines in the row. They didn't want you to pull a pine up. We had just a certain way that we had to put our fingers down and pull that weed up so it didn't uproot the pine, the little pine trees.
- R: How tall were the weeds usually, like two inches?
- B: Sometimes they were. The grass would get pretty bad sometimes. That was worse.
- E: The what?
- B: Grass.
- E: Grass is harder to weed anytime.
- B: I know it is.
- R: How often would a bed get weeded?
- B: About every month you had to go through them if it was good growing weather. Of course if it was dry you couldn't weed them that much.
- E: Where did the soil come from?
- B: That I do not know where they brought it from.
- R: Did you see them bringing in soil?
- B: Yes, they used to bring it in but I really don't know where they went and got it.
- E: They were probably were bringing in weed seeds by the truckload on a regular basis with that soil.
- R: Well, also they didn't have roundup and those sort of things in those days. Did the weeds ever get less like when the first year you started there were more weeds? By 1939 had you gotten rid of a lot of the weed seeds?

B: Well, no. You had weeds all the time. I don't know where they came from but we did have weeds all the time, a lot of them.

E: Was there one weed that was more prevalent than others?

B: Yes, but I forget what they called it. It was one you really had to hang on to because it took the roots out of those pine trees.

E: Was it a broad leaf type weed?

B: Well, if you let it, it went up pretty high; it would have been. I really don't know what they name of it was, I forget.

R: So, tell us about when you got there in the morning, sort of how your day, when you showed up, how long you worked, when you got breaks, did you bring your lunch, all that.

B: We had our lunch. We always brought lunch. The women had their room, their little building, where they went and had their dinners, and their bathrooms. The men had their own. Each one was separate. We always brought our dinner.

R: What did you bring, what kind of things?

B: Well, I'll tell you what I liked was cabbage sandwich. They laughed at it because I loved them. You could bring any kind of sandwich.

R: When did you get to work in the morning?

B: We had to be there at 8:00 and work until 5:00.

R: Dinner was the only break?

B: Yes.

R: What did you wear?

B: We had overalls, and we had to wear a long sleeved blouse or something, or you would get burned.

R: Wear a hat?

B: Yes.

R: Straw?

B: Most of the time straw hat.

R: What kind of shoes?

B: Just anything you picked up, I guess. You didn't dare to wear good ones because they didn't last very long in the mud.

E: Did anybody go barefooted?

B: No, they didn't.

R: They didn't give you your overalls?

B: No.

R: You had to buy your own?

B: You had to buy your own.

E: When you were slogging around in the mud on your hands and knees did you make up pads for your knees?

B: Some of them did, but I never did. Lots of times I wished I had. You get the skin off of your knees. I have seen some of them where their knees were just raw.

E: Why did they insist you had to be on your knees to do it?

B: You couldn't hardly weed them without you on your knees because you had to reach. Between the beds was I expect two or three feet apart. You had to reach over and you were in the middle of bed. One was on one side and you were on the other, two women to a bed.

R: The beds were in rows and you had the water bucket at the end of the row?

B: Yes.

E: How long were these rows?

B: I couldn't tell you about that but, they were long. Sometimes it would take you ... You would be half a day getting from one end to the other if the weeds were very bad.

R: Were the little beds always in one part of the nursery?

B: The smaller ones, beds?

R: Yes. Was it near a certain building or one corner?

B: No, it was just that one place for them. There weren't any building close.

R: What building was it near?

B: I couldn't hardly tell you now what it was near up there because it was close to where we first came in off of the highway down at the end across the railroad tracks. That would be the first one.

R: Okay, I know where that is. There was a house, a little building, out in the middle of all of those fields, wasn't there? That was away, far away from where you changed your clothes and where Mr. Oliver's office was.

B: There were several of them out there a little bit. The CCC camp used to be right in front of it. I worked there when they had that CCC camp there.

R: You worked at the CCC camp?

B: No, right behind them. The beds were as long as some of the barracks they had. They were long.

E: You came to work at 8:00. What time did you have dinner?

B: From 12:00 to 1:00.

E: You had a full hour?

B: Yes.

E: Then you went back 1:00 until 5:00. Did you get a break in between?

B: Just to go get water or to the bathroom is all.

R: Where did you go to the bathroom, at that washhouse?

B: I had to go back to the house where the women changed clothes.

R: Now when you came to work you changed your clothes?

B: Yes.

R: You wore a dress to work?

B: Some of them did, and some didn't.

R: You wore pants in 1935?

B: Yes.

R: Was it common to see women in pants in Parsons?

B: No, not unless she was working up there. If they saw you with pants on they knew where you were working.

R: Was it hard to find pants for women in 1930?

B: No. Well, we never tried for women pants. Most of them had men's on.

R: You order from Sears or someplace like that?

B: I don't know what they did. We always went to Elkins and Montgomery Ward and got mine. I don't know where they got theirs.

E: What else did you take in your lunch besides this cabbage sandwich?

B: Oh, we had coffee and apples or fruit of some kind. A bar of candy.

E: I want to go back to the cabbage sandwich again. Was this something you did everyday?

B: No, I would change it. They laughed and made fun of me when I first came out with the cabbage sandwich. It wasn't a week until all of them were bringing one of them out to eat. It seemed like it stayed moist.

R: Good for you.

B: Yes.

E: Was there any swapping of lunch food with your other female employees?

B: No, everybody had his own.

E: You never said, "Hey, I'll trade you this orange for an apple," or something?

B: No, I don't think so. I never did anyway.

R: When people left did you have parties? Was there much social life among the women who worked there?

B: Not too much, just once in awhile they had a party at somebody's house.

R: Were most of them married like you?

B: No, a lot of single girls worked there.

R: Was there much go between with the CCC camp?

B: No, we weren't allowed to talk to them out there. You had to stay your distance.

R: So the men who worked in the nursery weren't from the

CCC?

B: No.

R: They worked for Mr. Oliver and they were from town?

B: Some of them were from up here at Davis, some of the women from Davis worked down there. Then they had some men from up here that worked there.

R: How did they get back and forth?

B: They had cars.

R: They car pooled?

B: Yes.

E: They drove back and forth everyday?

B: Yes.

R: Gosh! You couldn't take a train down here and go down?

B: No.

R: That black water you couldn't go down through it?

B: You wouldn't make connections that you could out of work like that to go on a train because the train generally would leave down at Parsons but still you couldn't have gone over to Davis; you would have went to Thomas and then you would have had to go around then and we went from down here.

E: When you went to work in the morning how did you go? Did you walk?

B: Most the time. Sometimes somebody would pick us up. We walked back too.

R: You work in the winter?

B: No.

R: From when to when did you work, from March to fall?

B: Now some of the men worked in the winter but we went to work along about March if the weather was good. Then we worked up until about October.

E: This \$1 a day you got, was that clear? In other words was that before taxes or after?

B: They didn't take any taxes or anything out.

E: Did they pay you weekly, or every two weeks?

B: Month.

E: Paid you once a month?

B: Yes. It was a government check. The first year we got \$1 and the next year they raised it to \$1.80 a day.

R: That is a big increase.

E: Yes, that was a big jump.

B: Yes, it was.

R: What did your kids do while you were working?

B: I had a babysitter. Most of the time my mother-in-law in the summertime was there a lot, she watched them.

R: She lived with you?

B: Yes, then I would get a baby-sitter somewhere to come in.

E: What did you have to pay a day for that?

B: I paid her a \$1.50 a week, that is what she asked. She would come at 8:00, stay, and watch the kids. Of course the kids were pretty well grown. The girls were, I mean that they could do the work, lot of it.

E: Did she do some cooking for them, say for their dinner?

B: Oh yes.

E: But she didn't do any other housework?

B: Not very much. I did the washing when I went home at night, over a tub, a washboard.

R: Oh, you did?

B: Yes.

R: And she had supper ready for you when you got home?

B: No, I did that after I got home.

R: After 5:00?

B: Yes.

E: What can you tell me about the CCC camp? You passed it everyday when you came into work.

B: You just see them coming and going, and on weekends they would come to town. Lots of times they would come up; we would keep three or four of them up there after you got acquainted with them. The neighbors would keep them instead of going back up there because they had the weekend off.

E: What do you mean you would "keep" them?

B: They would just come and stay with us.

R: In your house too?

B: Yes.

R: Were they from West Virginia these fellows that you kept?

B: About one of them was. The rest of them were away from the state. My daughter married one of them. In fact my two oldest daughters they married two of them from the CCC camp.

R: You were picking the right man for you daughters?

B: Thought I had anyway.

R: Did it turn out alright?

B: No.

R: That is too bad.

E: Were you given strict orders by Mr. Oliver not to have anything to do with the CCC camp there? When you described it a minute ago I got the impression someone gave an order.

B: Yes, we got orders that we weren't to stand around out there where they were. I guess they had their orders to stay away because they didn't bother very much.

E: They didn't say anything to you, or the single girls that were working there at the nursery. They walked right by them on the road and went right on back up to ...

B: Walked right on by, they didn't bother them.

R: Did Parsons like the CCC camp pretty well?

B: I think the biggest part of the people did. They did a lot of work around, lot of nice work.

R: Now when you were there sometimes the CCC were building

some of those buildings while you were there?

B: Yes.

R: All of the buildings that you saw being built were CCC stuff, right?

B: Yes, they did a lot of building of roads too and things like that.

R: Roads at the nursery?

B: No, out in the forest service.

R: Were they the people who brought the dirt in for the nursery bottom?

B: Well, no. The people who brought the one in for the nursery bottom were local.

E: Was that hauled in by trucks?

B: Yes.

R: How did they spread that dirt? They didn't have earth movers and stuff, what did they do?

B: A lot of it was hauled in a wheelbarrow. Then they made the beds and dug it up. Later on they got a truck. Well, it was a truck or something on some kind of machine that hauled it up and around and would drop it down so that you didn't have such a load to carry.

R: You didn't do any of it?

B: No, the men did all that heavy work.

E: Can you describe what buildings were built by the CCC? Do you remember which ones?

B: No, I really don't know. I know the packing house. I know they didn't build Mr. Oliver's house. The packing house and what was the garage later on they built that one where they kept their equipment, the tools and stuff.

R: Did you ever go near the seed separator or the cone dryer or any of those things? Was that stuff there when you started working?

B: No, they didn't have the cone dryers right then. No, we never bothered around that. They didn't tell us it was off limits but we didn't have any business down there where they were seeding.

R: But that stuff wasn't there when you started working?

B: No.

R: It was just the nursery office, the building behind the nursery office that was some kind of a cooler, and the packing plant. Then there is a maintenance building that is next to that. Was that about all that was there? Mr. Oliver's house wasn't there when you started work?

B: Yes, it was. Not when I started to work, it was built while I was there.

R: Where did you change before the washhouse was built?

B: Well, you came home dirty. That was about the way of it.

R: Went clean, came home dirty?

B: Yes.

R: Were you pretty dirty?

B: Very, mud would fall off of you if you walked if it was muddy or wet.

R: Did you work in the rain?

B: If it wasn't raining too hard we did sometimes.

R: Do you have arthritis pretty bad in your knees?

B: I do now.

R: In your knees?

B: Yes.

R: From kneeling so long?

B: I imagine. I had a doctor tell me when I was young, he said, "You'll be sorry in your old age because you'll have arthritis." And he was right.

E: You said something earlier about developing a sickness when you were there. Can you describe that, how you got it, how you treated it?

B: We were weeding Japanese Pine and there were bugs in it. They had a little red on their back and they would bite you and they would hang on. That, the doctor said, was some kind of poison they put in the blood stream. There were several of them who got that dis-

ease. Mr. Oliver had it too, but he had it just on his arm. There is one woman who lives up in Porterwood, she had it for a couple of years. At the end she had a heart attack. They said that was what caused it. But mine you can see the scar there. I could look in and see the bone and it was that way for almost two years. I went down to a Washington hospital, went to Elkins, and went into the veterans hospital in Pittsburgh. That is where they first got started for healing it up. The others, some of them went to Elkins. One man got it in his lungs and he died.

R: It was a fungus, wasn't it?

B: Yes, sort of a fungus.

E: Was this common in all these trees or was it just one period of time?

B: Just one period of time. It was in the spring; it was when we were fooling with trees. That is all that ever happened. Nobody ever got it after that or before.

E: Did they call in some help to diagnose what this was?

B: Well, they sent us to different doctors.

E: I mean as far as the nursery, did they make any.

B: No, I don't know. I don't know about that. They paid our doctor bills and all of our trips, the government did. Some of them got a pension from work but I never applied. I should have.

R: You had it all the way up your arm?

B: I had it clear up here and down here. The doctor said that it would go clear on down eventually. It was like a burrow but the top would come off. It was round like burrow. The top would just come off all of them and they would follow the blood stream. There are some of them clear up there.

E: How much was this pension? Would it be like a disability pension?

B: Oh yes, it had to be. When I had mine, it would be night after night, you laid with your arm on a pillow. You couldn't move it around or lay on it.

E: What year was this?

B: I think that was the last year I worked. In 1942 I got it. That was the last year I worked.

E: Did that have some bearing on you quitting out at the nursery?

B: Yes, I never went back no more because when I was getting over mine, then I had a heart attack. The doctor said that that was part of the cause of it. And I had a bad heart attack so I never went back. None of them who got it ever went back anymore.

E: This was in?

B: 1942.

R: She recovered from the heart attack.

B: Yes.

R: Did you ever have anything to do with the Fernow Forest or any of the other sites?

B: No.

R: You just saw the people over there?

B: Yes.

R: They didn't talk to you much and you didn't talk to them? Either the ranger district or ...

B: No, we never bothered. They would wait until they came to town.

E: Tell me something about the town of Parsons at this time. There is a tannery there, what other things were there?

B: They had the woolen mill, pulp mill, and I forget what else was there. The tannery and the woolen mill employed a lot of people.

R: The nursery wasn't a big part of the business of the town?

B: Well, I wouldn't say how many. Now it did help, it helped a lot because some of the men were employed all the time.

E: But most of the employment was at the pulp mill, the tannery, and the woolen mill.

B: Yes.

E: When you came home from work in the evening, with or without the mud, what did you do the rest of the day?

B: Do your housework. Then we found time to go out somewhere for an evening.

E: Did you go dancing?

B: No.

E: Did you go to the movie?

B: Oh yes! When they had a movie there.

E: They didn't have one on a regular basis?

B: In later years they stopped the movies there. It is torn down now.

E: Did you go out for Sunday dinner or did you usually have that at home?

B: We used to have Sunday dinner at home but on weekends whenever he wasn't working we went camping a lot, just take the whole family, a tent, and head for the mountains.

E: Good! Did you have a favorite spot you liked to go to?

B: Yes. We used to like to go up to Laurel. There used to be a CCC camp there too. We used to go up there in later years and camp. It was a nice place.

E: Did you have a front porch on your house?

B: Yes.

E: Was it common practice, in the evening, to go out and sit on the front porch and watch the world go by?

B: It sure was.

R: Did you tell stories?

B: See, they were double houses and you could talk to your neighbor. We had nice neighbors. We did a lot of camping with the kids, we always did. My husband loved to hunt and fish, so he would take the boys and go.

R: Did you have a garden?

B: Oh yes!

R: Out in back of this house you had a garden?

B: Oh yes, I had a big garden out back.

R: Flowers, vegetables?

B: Yes.

E: And some more weeding.

B: Well I didn't mind that. I got on to how to do it, and it wasn't so bad. I kept after it. Well I had a big garden. I would put up anywhere from 500 to 600 quarts of stuff a year out of it.

E: You were a good gardener!

B: Oh yes. Wish I had one now.

R: Did you raise all you stuff? Did you buy seeds there in Parsons?

B: I bought all the seeds and stuff.

R: In Parsons?

B: Yes.

R: You didn't order from Burpee or one of those guys?

B: Not very much.

R: Mostly vegetables?

B: Yes.

R: You didn't have those great big dahlias that everybody around here grows?

B: Oh yes, dahlias and cannas.

R: She's the one who can tell you how to grow petunias. You have chickens?

B: One or two times I had chickens in the summer. Can't think of the name, came in one night and killed some of them. We just gathered up the next day and killed all the rest of them before he got them.

E: Raccoon?

R: Fox or a raccoon? Coyote?

B: He looks like a little rat. I forget what his name is.

R: Oh weasel!

B: Weasel, and there were plenty of them there in the row out along the slough in the back. So we just killed all of ours then. We used to have hogs when we lived over there.

R: It sounds like a big yard. I think of this thing as being a little lane with houses pretty close together.

B: No.

R: How big of a lot did you have with your double house? Like an acre, a couple of acres?

B: No, had a very small yard in the back and around the house, between the houses. Our garden was over across the railroad track where the track come from the tannery. From there out to the slough was where the gardens were.

R: That is where you kept the hogs?

B: Yes, it was clear back next to where the water was. A lot of people along then kept them. Then later years they didn't.

R: So you did slaughtering and all that stuff?

B: We took them somewhere and had them done.

E: Was this kind of a community garden? In other words did a lot of people have gardens there?

B: Yes, each one had a garden. I think it was thirty-some feet one way but it went clear out to the slough.

R: A couple hundred feet?

B: Oh yes, they were big, in fact I would say about 300 feet and back.

R: You gardened the whole thing? Did you have berries and that sort of stuff in it too?

B: No, just vegetables.

E: Did other people have gardens around there too?

B: Yes, every house had a garden. They had the same size.

E: Did they come in and plow it up for you?

B: Yes.

R: Oh, the tannery plowed it for you in the spring?

B: No, the tannery didn't do it. You hired somebody. They plowed that whole thing.

R: Did you compete with your neighbors for the quality of your vegetables?

B: No, they were good to have. One lady who lived next to me liked to go by the signs. She had a garden next to me and she said, "Now you wait until tomorrow or the next day to plant this and that." I had a good garden that year I want to tell you. She was eighty some years old and she had that big garden next to mine.

R: You mean the signs of the moon?

B: Yes. She would tell me when to plant.

R: Then did you keep doing that? You kept planting by the signs after she taught you how?

B: Well, sometimes I didn't because the way the weather was you had to put them out when you could.

E: Was there a favorite vegetable you liked out of the garden besides cabbage?

B: I liked it all.

R: That is what kept you so healthy. Did you grow salads, things that were green in the spring like dandelion? Did you collect any of that stuff or grow any of those things?

B: No, the dandelion you didn't put out. It would just grow wild and you would go hunt it. We would put out onions in the fall and things like that to have in the early spring.

R: What else besides onions?

B: Some of them put out kale and things that way.

R: Would kale keep here all winter?

B: It did down there, it wouldn't on this mountain. It did down there but not up here because of ten to fifteen degrees, or more than that, in the weather.

R: Do you think that is why the nursery was at Parsons? It was high but it also had a really good climate.

B: I think so.

R: Did you ever go to Gladwin?

B: Oh yes.

R: There was a nursery at Gladwin do you know anything about it?

B: I was only up there twice that I remember. We went up

there one time maybe just to look it over, I don't know. Then we camped there one night. The nursery up there at Gladwin was about ready to move out whenever I was up there.

R: In the late 1940's then?

B: Yes.

R: So you didn't go up there when you worked at the other nursery and you never stopped when you took the train?

B: No.

E: Do you remember them tearing down the CCC camp?

B: Yes.

E: What did they do with all that stuff? When did they do it and how did they do it?

B: I couldn't tell you when they did it, I forget. I know that we got some of it. Somebody brought us down just enough to build a little out building. What they did with the rest of it ... I don't know whether they sold or not.

E: In other words they just tore the buildings down?

B: Yes.

R: It was during the war?

B: Yes, right after then.

R: It was there until after the war.

B: Yes, some of them they left. The man that bought part of the land that was out that way he had them there for awhile and then he tore them down. Other besides the government owned that other little piece, the man did, and they left some of the buildings for him. They tore them down.

R: Part of the nursery bottom was still owned by somebody else?

B: Yes.

R: Way down there at the upstream end, is that right?

B: Yes. There used to be a house there, a cottage.

R: Did he farm and stuff?

B: Yes, I thought he did. I can't think of his name right now.

R: Minor?

B: No.

R: Mr. Fansler was telling us yesterday about somebody along one of those. He said there were two farms where the nursery bottom was.

B: Yes, but this one man stayed there for a long time before he sold his part.

R: So he would have to drive by the CCC camp in order to go home everyday?

B: Yes.

R: Did you go back there much after you left the nursery?

B: Sometimes we would go up there and run around the whole thing to exercise.

R: You mean run, jog?

B: Oh yes! Go up there and jog. But now since the flood took it away they don't have the roads around like they did then. Then they had a nice road you could run and didn't stump your toe on a rock or something. I don't think they do anymore, they might.

R: So you and yours kids would go over there. Did you picnic over there?

B: No. Some of the neighbors, sometimes there would be maybe twelve or fifteen all in a race going around. One would go this way and the other one this way to see which could get up at the middle before the others did.

R: Did kids go over there and ride their bikes or any of those things?

B: Yes.

R: How was the relation of the nursery to the town?

B: Just fine.

R: They all liked each other pretty well.

B: They all liked each other.

R: Do you think the same is true with the forest service in general?

B: Yes, I think it is.

E: Were there ever any problems of people being fired for any reason when you worked there at the nursery?

B: A lady was telling me the other day that she was fired one time. I don't remember when it was. I knew she quit but I never knew she was fired.

E: She didn't tell you why?

B: No, she didn't tell me why. She said she was fired and she never worked back there anymore after that.

R: Was this when you were working there that she was fired?

B: Yes.

R: So there are still other people who worked there then at the same time you worked then?

B: Yes.

E: When you were out weeding was there a supervisor?

B: Yes, you had a supervisor.

R: Was he there all the time or did he just cruise by?

B: Just about all the time. He would go through, around and watch over you.

E: Did he ever yell and say, "Weed that faster!", or "Quit dogging it!", or things of that sort?

B: No, because we had good workers, they weren't the kind that were lazy, they worked.

E: Except when you fainted for water?

B: Yes, I was a guinea pig.

E: But you really didn't fake it. (Laughter)

B: I didn't fake it, no! They thought I was faking it. They were just having a big laugh. When they took me home, and Mrs. Oliver came along because she was a nurse, and came back, some of them went down and asked what was wrong. She told her. And she said, "Did she really faint?" She said, "She really did. She was out." It was not.

E: I bet they were angry with you the next day.

B: I got the rest of the day off and got paid for it too. People said I was crazy when I said that I worked in mud but I really did. I liked it.

R: There was a nice feeling among the people who worked there.

B: They were with all of them. We threw one man in the river one time. Every time anyone had a new baby men were supposed to treat the women. Well this man, well, they had twins. He didn't bring us any candy or anything. "I'll bring it pay-day," he said, "Now you wait until payday." Well payday came and we never got any candy. So we fixed it that next day, we were going to get him at the noon hour. We waited until dinner was over and some of them got a hold of him. He got away and he ran into the men's place. We knew we couldn't go in there. So the supervisor went in and brought him out for us. We took him by his arms and his feet and we took him out and threw him in that big hole in the river. We didn't know whether he could swim or not. I guess he could. The next day he came with the candy.

R: You said you had a child when you were there. Did you work when you were pregnant?

B: Yes, I did parttime.

R: How far into your pregnancy?

B: About four months.

R: This is while you were crawling around in the mud weeding.

B: Yes.

R: Did they ask you to leave or did they have a rule about it?

B: No, I just asked for the time off.

R: When did you come back after the baby was born?

B: Next year.

R: You got a whole year off?

B: He was born in June. No, I went back that fall that time and worked for about three weeks.

R: In September?

B: Yes.

E: Did you bring some candy?

B: He brought us our candy, that man did.

R: No, when you had your baby did you have to bring candy too?

B: No. We didn't have to treat, the men were the ones who had to.

R: Did other women have babies while they were working there?

B: Yes, several of them did. One of them worked up there about three weeks before her baby was born.

R: That must have been hard crawling around.

B: She didn't mind it. She was back to work I think about a month afterwards.

R: Needed the money.

B: She needed the money, yes, that was right.

E: How much did your husband make before 1940? You moved to Parsons in what year?

B: 1920.

E: You went to work in 1930?

B: In the 1930's, yes.

E: How much money did he make at the time at the tannery?

B: I think that he was making \$3 a day.

R: So when you started working you were getting?

B: \$1.00 a day.

R: Gosh you were rich compared to some of the people we have talked to. One of the women was saying that she lived on \$11 a week that her husband got at the CCC that he didn't send home.

B: Some of them did welloff. Later on after I quit the nursery then I worked in the store, Lambert Store. I worked there I imagine fifteen, sixteen years.

E: What kind of store was this?

B: It was a clothing store. They had Five and Ten stuff and like that in clothing, shoes.

E: When you were working in the store did you miss the nursery?

B: Yes, I would have liked to have been back there. I was afraid to go back after getting all that stuff. I was afraid to go back because I went through too much misery from that.

E: It was a really great place to work right?

B: Yes, it was.

E: Good bosses?

B: Yes.

E: Liked to have had more pay but ...

B: Yes, I liked it. They treated me nice, all of them.

E: Was there a lot of talking and joking and playing tricks on each other? When you were going down through the rows pulling weeds you had to do something to take your mind off of that crazy weed.

B: You didn't do very much playing jokes. You might in the morning before you went to work or during the noon hour, something like that, but not while you were working.

R: Did you sing, or tell stories, or gossip?

B: Oh yes. Oh, yes a lot of gossip; you might know of that.

E: Did you sing?

B: Yes.

E: Was there anybody who was a better singer than someone else?

B: Oh sure.

E: Was that you?

B: Not me.

E: Did you tell a better story than anybody else?

B: Well, I could come up with the rest of them I wouldn't say I had any better ones. I could come up with the rest of them.

E: When you had your hour for lunch, or dinner, obviously

it didn't take you a whole hour to eat that cabbage sandwich. Then did you play cards or do anything?

B: No, generally just sat there and rested and talked, went out under the shade trees or something where it was cooler because it was rather hot in the building. During the noon hour you generally rested.

E: Did you ever see any snakes come up in there?

B: No, sir, never did.

R: Did they have any trouble with animals except for the birds digging up the seeds?

B: No, the birds were the worst that they had. No animals or anything like that.

R: Did you have to do much with insecticides or spray or any of that sort of stuff?

B: No, men did that.

R: But they sprayed the little trees?

B: Oh yes, they were sprayed often.

E: We thank you very kindly.

B: You are welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW