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(SNP125) Charles Wagner interviewed by Norman Taylor, transcribed by Joy K. Stiles

Charles R. Wagner

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START SIDE A

Norman Taylor: This is an interview with Charles Wagner for the National Park Service by Norman Taylor at the museum [former Park Archives building in the circle at Park Headquarters, Luray] on August 28 at 1:10 pm. Could, could you tell us, just basically, what you wrote down on that paper, where you grew up and when, when you were born, and just, you know--

Charles Wagner: I was born in () Maryland, November the 7th, 1915. And I was there until, resided there, in other words, went to school there. Went to school at Oakland, Maryland, and I come to the CCC January 5th, 1935, which I was 19 years old at that time. We first went to Oakland on January 1st, from there to Cumberland, Maryland and was processed there, from there to Fort Meade, and received our clothing, from the skin out. And we arrived at Camp Number 1, CCC, Skyland, Virginia on January the 5th, 1935. From there, I worked in the woods as a woodsman for two weeks. I thought, well, it was pretty cold out. I thought, well, we got, there's better jobs in here for me than mucking out here in this woods. So I saw this sign on the bulletin board that says, "Dining warranty wanted" so I applied for that and I got it. Plenty to eat, right in the dining room. Had to get up early, though, and got off late, but no K.P. on weekends and I worked in there about two months. And there was a supply truck driver opening, I applied for that and I got it. And I'd go to town and back every day, during the week, on Saturdays and Sundays, every day. Of course, we was under the discipline, under the army. We had discipline and I learned a lot there. We had to go to school, had to take a class or two each week. Go to school. I drove the CC truck, the army truck, for about a year and a half. One morning the company clerk come up and said, "Wagner, I want your keys." "Boy," I said, "What have I done now?" I said to myself. "Report to headquarters." I went down, Captain was sitting there, snapped at attention, he said, "At ease, Wagner. The first sergeant's leaving, and we want you to take his place." That was a big promotion, from \$30 a month to \$45. 'Course, we only got 5 out of the 30, 25 went home. Course that give me 20 more on payday. When I left the CCC, I was, they had, uh, man, next to the captain. that's how I got promoted.

NT: Boy, that's a lot of, a lot of different things you did. When you, how would you describe life in the camps, what, what was it like?

CW: Oh, it was wonderful! In other words, they call it the Civilian Conservation Corps, but a lot of people ask me what's, what does it mean? I said, "Well, Civilian Conservation College!" That's where, where I learned all my good things, that put me on through life. Gave me a good start. And it was, everything was wonderful there, if you want to make it that way. Of course, you could make it miserable, if you wanted to. Just like everything else.

NT: What would you, if you had a, you know, I guess at your different jobs, a typical day, when you were working in the woods, your first two weeks, what was a typical day like, doing that?

CW: It was eight hours, we worked eight hours, with an hour off for lunch, and our lunch was brought to us, in the mountain, on the mountain. We was cleaning up the old dead chestnut that the blight had hit. And we was cleaning up all that. And it was hauled into camp for, to heat the barracks with. And we had a power saw, and we sawed it up in lengths and that was our main source of heat.

NT: And after, after work, how would, what would you do?

CW: Well, we had a, we had a recreation hall, you could go shoot pool. One night a week we had a movie that they transferred around to all the camps and we could go to the movies. (), film ,leisure -- whatever you want to do, after the main day was over.

NT: When you were working in the kitchen, what was the day like there?

CW: Oh, () breakfast, there was quite a bit of work to do. Clean up the--

NT: What time did it start?

CW: Breakfast was 7:00, at 7. And then when they was all fed, I helped clean up all of the tables, scrub the top of them, and get them good and shiny, and

set them up with--now, first, they used mess kits, but finally they come out with dishes. I'd set up the tables for the next meal, which was lunch or we called it dinner then, breakfast, dinner and supper. That's the way it worked. And the ones that ate in the camp, well, it was all set up for them. And the ones that helped pack the lunches for, to go out on the mountain for the ones that ate out on the mountain. And we had good food.

NT: What time, you had to be there pretty early, I guess, to, what time did you have to be there to get breakfast ready?

CW: About 6:00. 5:30 to 6. And then, of an evening, why, it would be 6:30, seven, before we'd get off, but, we had some leisure time during the day, middle of the day, could do whatever we wanted to do.

NT: What kinds of food do you recall them having?

CW: Well, for breakfast we had cereal, coffee, eggs, any way, it was generally over light or whatever you, fried eggs, scrambled eggs, sometimes potatoes with the eggs, and so on. Coffee, I mentioned coffee, didn't I? Course, then on the weekends, we had, oh, we had a pastry cook, he, they made pies, cakes, homemade pies, good. Yeah, it was wonderful.

NT: What about for the other meals?

CW: Oh, we had, generally, the dinner meal was soup or sandwiches, that was a weekday. Sometimes they'd have other vegetables for dinner, but our main meal was evening. We had steak and mashed potatoes, gravy, chicken, and we had, once in a while we'd have liver, onion, () bread, milk, always had milk. Then we, on Sundays, well, we'd have ice cream and, on some of the meals, generally dinner meal, ice cream

NT: Where did the food come from, usually?

CW: It was bought locally.

NT: Now, in your, your third job, as truck driver, what was that like?

CW: That was my second job.

NT: Second--

CW: No, it was third! That's right. I drove the supply truck, which was, was the army truck, wasn't Park Service. Now, Park Service had a bunch of trucks, too, but this was army, we had two of them. They had a canopy over the back of it, with bows and canvas. They was governed, governed to thirty miles an hour, had a governor on it, and I would pick up the mail from the PX, take it to Luray--

NT: Where would that be?

CW: PX, you mean? In camp. And there's where the mail was deposited. I'd pick that up, take it to town with me, and I'd go by the N & W station for, to pick up freight that was shipped in from Fort Meade, which was a lot of canned goods coming in there, on that.

NT: N & W is . . .

CW: Norfolk and Western, railroad. And then I'd go by the bakery, the bakery was the name, Wokes Bakery, he was a frenchman, or dutchman, rather.

NT: That was in Luray?

CW: Luray, go by the bakery. Had a great big, oh, it must have been three feet long, four, about 2½ feet deep and 2½ wide, that would be stacked full of bread. Two of them. Then put that on the truck, go by the drugstore and pick up other stuff for officers and so on, and then I'd head back to camp. Oh, wait a minute, I had to go by the creamery, dairy, pick up milk, it come in half pints, half pint bottle, glass. And we had big, long, () tubs, or whatever you want to call it, it was about 4 feet tall and there was ice all packed in that. I remember the old baker, he'd take that big, old, I don't what you, what did you call that thing you got bread out of the oven with? It was a great big, long paddle. He'd reach way back there in the back and he'd pull out a loaf of rye bread. He'd say, "Here, Vagna!" [Wagner] He couldn't talk english very good. "Eat this going up the mountain!" I'd get me a half a pint of milk, eat that going up the mountain. ()

NT: What were your hours like in that job?

CW: Any time, in the evening, whether it was, a lot of times they called me, maybe, in the evening at 4 or 5:00. Got to go to town or something.

NT: In, in your fourth, when you got promoted, after you drove for a year and a half--

CW: A year, about a year and a half, yeah.

NT: Right, what was that job like?

CW: Well, that, that was () I was next to the officer, the captain.

NT: And so how did the ranks work? And, and you were in camp, what was the name of the camp again?

CW: CCC Camp Number 1, Skyland, Virginia.

NT: Okay.

CW: Company 334.

NT: And how did the command work and how did your rank fit into the command?

CW: My rank was next to the captain, the captain always said, whatever you can't handle, send them to me. But you've got to see them first. I handled all the duties, as KP, and the, seeing that the men were out to work on their different jobs. Took the roll call in the morning, and made the morning report, which anybody absent or whatever might be, that was put on, and that was every day.

NT: How many men were you responsible for?

CW: At capacity, we generally had around 220. 220. And they worked under the Park Service, too, see. National Park.

NT: So, you kind of told me a little bit already what the job was like, but tell me a little bit what your day was like in that job, day to day, how it started out, what time it started out, and how it went through the day . . .

CW: Went through, it started at reveille--

NT: Which was what time?

CW: I believe we generally had it at 6:00, so they'd be ready to eat at 7. I believe that was right, now. Then, we had retreat at 4:40, 5, somewhere along there. And from then on, I was free to do whatever I wanted to do.

NT: How, how was life different as an, an officer, well, I, I suppose you'd call that an officer, wouldn't you?

CW: () I was called a first sergeant.

NT: How was life different, from, besides--

CW: Being an enrollee?

NT: Yeah.

CW: Well, it made me feel pretty good, being in charge of that many men and as young as I was, see? I wasn't but twenty, twenty-one years old. Twenty years, twenty-one, I was twenty-one when I left camp. I was up there two years and nine months.

NT: So you were a sergeant for about a year or so?

CW: Yeah, something like that. We had other leaders, now, they called them, in other words, the first sergeant was senior leader. You know, we had some leaders which were \$45 a month men, too. Then we had assistant leaders, they were \$36 a month man. Then the regular enrollee was a \$30 a month man. Now, most of these were local enrollees, which they got their full pay across the table, on payday. But the enrollees that came through, they only got \$5 a month and twenty-five went home.

NT: Are you saying that most of the men in your camp were local enrollees?

CW: No, most of them were enrollees.

NT: Okay. But which ones, was it the leaders that tended to be local enrollees?

CW: Yes, yeah. Which they would have maybe eight or ten leaders.

NT: Why was that? Do you think that it was--

CW: Well, they had, they had to have supervisors, which they were, to keep the men called to order, keep them ()--

NT: Right, and the, was it the local people knew more about, about some of the skills--

CW: That's right, yeah. Yup. 'Cause some of these boys come in there, they couldn't even write their name, couldn't even read.

NT: What kinds of classes were there?

CW: Oh, they had classes in everything. We had an educational advisor, an assistant educational advisor.

NT: Which ones did you take?

CW: I took mechanics, motor mechanics, and I believe that was all I took, that one course, motor mechanics. When I was working on that truck driver job and I had to take that. So I took that.

NT: Did you have, how, in your experience, how did the people in the camp relate to the surrounding people in the area, and do you remember any of those contacts?

CW: Yeah. Well, we, of course we'd come to town. The other enrollees would come to town every weekend. They had good ones and bad ones. Sometimes, you know, we'd have to get two or three out of jail after a Saturday night.

NT: You would always go to Luray?

CW: Generally, Luray, yeah.

NT: What other places?

CW: Well, that was the nearest and well, they couldn't go too far. In other words, the trucks, we used maybe two Park Service trucks and two army trucks which would haul about forty persons, people to the truck. And two of them and two Park Service trucks. And come to town on Friday night, Saturday night, stay 'till 11, then we'd pick them up, back to camp. And some of them, I don't know, they'd get inebriated, (laughs) get in jail. Some of them did, some of them didn't. Very few. We didn't have many that did. They were pretty obedient. Good bunch of boys.

NT: What, what, what was there to do in town?

CW: Movies, and then dances that they had, and then of course when you found you a girl friend, they didn't, they'd have parties and invite you. Birthday parties, and so on, whatever it might be. That's how I met my first wife, at a birthday party. And, of course, I married here. Just stayed, I liked, liked it here.

NT: So you've, you've been here since the times--

CW: Except during war, World War II. After I left camp, I got a job with a trucking company, and I was driving truck, \$15 a week. Went to work at 7:00 in the morning and got off when we got through, whether it was 8 or 9, or 5 or 6, in the evening. Fifteen bucks a week, seven days a week. Now, I got a promotion then, in six months, to terminal manager. 'Course that was six days a week, and I think I got a raise to 20 then, and then went on up. During that time, I learned to fly, at the local airport in Harrisonburg. And I, let's see it was . . .

NT: Your, your last time, I want to try to get the--your, about the last date, approximately, when you left CCC was about what time?

CW: October 1st, 1937. That's when I left three C's. Civilian Conservation College (laughs). A lot of, I've told a lot of people that, before! Instead of Corps, College.

NT: I want to interrupt you just for a second--

CW: Alright.

NT: On the, when you were working with the CCC, did you, do you ever remember either contact with the people who had lived here, either, you know, taking down their houses, or helping to move them, or, or just talking with them, the people who had lived here in the Park? Do you remember anything?

CW: Oh, yeah. I remember when they moved them out of the Park. Now, we had one family, that lived right beside the CCC camp. They wasn't over, humm, half a mile away. And they were moved out of the Park, down to Ida. And, of course, I had contact with all those fellows and people that were moved from up there. And I still know some of them that are still there. Yeah.

NT: Do you, do you know any of their names?

CW: Yeah, Ed Parks was the one that lived right by the camp. And he had, mmm, I believe five boys and two girls. And there's one or two of the boys still living, and one girl. And then there were some Taylors, Bernie Taylor, Wren Taylor, I remember one little girl who died on the mountain, she was, I think, six years old. I followed the funeral procession about a half a mile with my truck,

just watching them. And they was carrying this little baby in a homemade casket. And I can take you to the spot right today where she's buried up on the mountain.

NT: This was a burial right on the, near the camp?

CW: No, it was about, maybe 5 miles from camp. But I had taken garbage out to this garbage dump, we dumped it in the mountain for these people's hogs, you know, that lived up there. And they was bringing this baby out and turning down the road when I went out there, so I followed the procession and watched them bury her.

NT: Do you, do you remember anything about the burial that day, or, about how it was done?

CW: Well, it was just normal, only it was a homemade casket and so on. Little pine box, you know, there used to be a song about the little rose weed casket?

NT: I may have heard that.

CW: You probably have.

NT: You don't remember what family it was?

CW: It was the Taylor family, yup, Taylor. I forget the little girl's name, it was on a marker, I can, I can take you right to it up, right at the foot of Hawksbill Mountain, there's a little cemetery on the left, in the flat right there. You just, before you go up, there's a trail that goes off to the right and goes up on Hawksbill, and their cemetery is still there. Used to keep it up pretty good, but they don't any more.

NT: Do you remember anything else how, how, what, that day when they moved the family, how they did, you know, was it, how that was done?

CW: Well, the Park Service used their trucks to move them. And some of them went peacefully and some of them didn't want to go. Well, they're taking them right away from their home. But they was going to a better place to live. Which they called it the Ida Valley Homestead. And that's, they built houses down there, had running water, and a bath and everything. More than what they had in their own home, but, that wasn't their style of living.

NT: Did you ever do any work on the homesteads in terms of taking them apart,
or . . .

CW: No, no.

NT: Do you remember any of the things that were left behind, that, do you remember that they left anything behind?

CW: Other than the buildings, that's all. All I know of. Maybe some old machinery that was broken up. Of course, they didn't have much, just maybe a mule team and a plow or something. They didn't have too much to work with. Most of it was done by hand, digging and what, their garden. Of course some of them had mules, some of them had horses, cattle, milk cow, hogs, most all of them had hogs.

NT: Do you remember an area where, one of the other people I interviewed told me about it and I can't remember where exactly it was, but it was a flat, big flat area where there was a lot of wild goats? Do you remember anything about that?

CW: No, sir. There wasn't any up there. In other words, there wasn't any deer up there when I was up there. And now the mountain just is full. And I can't remember seeing a bear, but I do remember the black snakes and the copperheads and rattlesnakes--

END SIDE A
BEGIN SIDE B

NT: Okay, you were saying Old Man Pollock--

CW: Well, I called him Old Man Pollock, I shouldn't have said that. His name was George Freeman Pollock, and he's the one that founded Skyland. Once in a while, we, some of us had cars and we weren't supposed to have them. And we'd park them at Skyland and walk from there over to camp, rather than take them into camp. Because the officers would object to it. Anyway, Mr. Pollock would invite us boys in to have a sandwich or something with him and he had rattlesnake

sandwiches and he had quite a bit of stuff to offer. But I never did, could relish that rattlesnake sandwich, I couldn't try that. But he had some different kinds of cheeses that he was pretty fond of, and he's give us some cheese and so on, treated us like we was his own boys.

NT: What, what was his relationship to you all, though, was there any relationship to, what do you know about him and his operation?

CW: None, none at all. He had the concession at Skyland, and sold souvenirs and I don't know what all. 'Course then, they had other men, too, there, that took care of everything. He, he was a big yodeler, and he put on shows for people, handle these rattlesnakes, and so on.

NT: Did he, did you have to pay to, did the people have to pay to leave their cars there?

CW: No, no, just a place to park. No, we just parked, and . . .

NT: What was the policy, why didn't they want you to have cars?

CW: You were supposed to be in destitute circumstances, and if you had a car, you wasn't. That's the way they termed it. If you could afford a car, you didn't have to be in the CCC camp.

NT: So there was some people, some people, how were the people financially that were in the camp, before they came into the camp?

CW: Well, they was in need! I mean, no jobs, you couldn't get a job anywhere. And that's the reason FDR started the CCC, to get the, the men off the streets, the young people. He called it his "tree army" and that was the reason for it. And you had to be needy before you could go. Well, my daddy smoked a pipe and things got so bad he couldn't even, didn't even have enough money to buy his own tobacco. He had to quit. Which wasn't too bad, but he had to quit smoking, for a while, until the check started coming back in. Oh, we never did go hungry, but we needed other means to make a living. He was out of work, and I think there was, about, seven of us in the family at that time. No money coming in, didn't take long to go broke. 'Course, you owned your own home, but you had to have something to eat.

NT: Did, when you were up in the camp, was there alcohol in the camp, and if not, did you know of any alcohol production in your area?

CW: I do know this, that moonshine was made--they called it moonshine--'bout in every hollow around there. Because we'd have forest fires, during fire season, and we'd have to haul lunches to where the boys would be out fighting fire. Haul lunches to them. And they'd run onto these barrels of mash, and they'd get some of that, and then they'd find some liquor that was already run through. They'd get pretty well soused up sometimes, but . . .(laughs) They could generally find some of it, the ones that wanted it. But there was no, no beer or anything in camp, none, none at all, no alcohol at all. Only what the officers brought in, I guess. They was allowed to have it.

NT: Did you ever taste the moonshine or apple jack, or any of that?

CW: Yeah, I've tasted it, but I never really cared for it. I couldn't, I couldn't get the taste for the stuff. In other words, I was raised up as a Christian, and a Christian don't drink, you know. Or use tobacco.

NT: Was there any, was, what kind of holiday, did you celebrate holidays in the camp?

CW: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

NT: What was that like?

CW: Oh, in other words, it was a day off, generally, if it was a regular holiday.

NT: And, would you have, do something different, what would they do in the camp?

CW: Well, a lot of times, we had athletics, basketball, football, and we would go around to, maybe as far as Staunton, Winchester, and play different football teams. And that generally fell on a holiday or maybe . . .

NT: When you say football, you mean, like, you don't mean soccer, you mean like--

CW: Football.

NT: Like modern football, similar to that.

CW: Yeah, we had our own football team.

NT: And did you play other CC teams--

CW: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah.

NT: --or, or, did you also play towns?

CW: Yeah, we played Luray in basketball, we played football in Luray, we played baseball, different teams, and we played different camps. We'd play, maybe, well there was five camps on the, on the Drive. Five, from Front Royal to Swift Run. Number 10, no, it was Number 12 on the north end, Number 10 was the next one, Number 1, Number 2, and Number 3. That made 5. On the Drive. And they all had, we'd play each other. And then they'd have boxing matches, too.

NT: How often would they do, do, do that? I mean, how often would they have boxing matches?

CW: Oh, maybe, that was generally in winter time. Inside sport. Get some men that liked to box from each camp and come over, see who could best the other man.

NT: Was that just, or did you also do that between towns?

CW: No, no, the boxing was generally between camps.

NT: Was, was there betting on that, or how . . .?

CW: Well, I don't, I can't recall any betting or anything. A matter to see who was going to get knocked out. (laughs)

NT: Let me pause for just a second, alright?

[tape stops, then restarts]

CW: I learned to fly in Harrisonburg. On a J-3 cub, that's the old tandem. Are you familiar with it or not? In nine months time, from when I started flying, I had my commercial license, and instructor's rating. They, one fellow preceded me and learned to fly there, went to Southern Aviation Training School in Decatur, Alabama. And he was instructing cadets down there, and he said as soon as you get your commercial license, he said, give me a ring, I've got a job for you. I did. That was on June 23rd, 1943. I went down and took the flight test and passed it and they took me in the air corps enlisted reserve, and I taught cadets all during World War II, their first phase of flying, primary. And then after the War, I come back and opened up a little airport here in Luray. And I kept that going for five years until I went bankrupt and quit. Of course I flew until 1976, 'til I, I mean, as long as I could pass the physical. Then I had a heart attack and haven't, haven't flown any since.

NT: When you were flying, did you notice, did you fly over the Park, much?

CW: No, I was way down south. Oh, here, yeah, local. Yeah, I took flights, sight-seeing flights up over the Drive all the time.

NT: This would have been in what year?

CW: 1946 through '51. And Mr. Pollock, when he died, he requested that his ashes be strewn over Skyland. I had the airport down here and saw the airplane come up, and circle, and drop his ashes on Skyland.

NT: How did it work, the flights, the, you know, the visitor flights, or whatever you want to call them, tourist flights, or, how did they generally work and how much did they cost?

CW: I generally, I would fly for \$10, up over Skyland, and circle, come on back down to the airport and land. Around ten bucks, I think, is what I was charging then. Just for a local flight, though, I was charging a dollar, dollar and a half, ten, fifteen minute ride.

NT: And that wouldn't have been going all the way up to Skyland?

CW: No, no, just local.

NT: That would have been just around Luray?

CW: Yeah, just over Luray and around. Maybe out around over a man's house, if he wanted to see it from above. I had one fellow, I got him in the plane, he walked over to the edge of the runway, there, and got him a rock. He said, "I want to drop this out on Rileyville." That's just local flight, you might say. I said, "No, no, no, you can't drop that out!" "Why?" I said, "Might go through somebody's roof!" (laughing) 'Cause anything you could drop out then was unconfined, like sugar or sand or something like that, you could throw that out,

but no rocks!

NT: Did you ever have any other dealings with the Park after, after you left the CCC?

CW: No more than just visit.

NT: How much visiting did you do?

CW: Oh, go up there several times a year, just, look around, of course, being in camp up there, it was like being, going back home. Yeah. Have you ever seen a picture of the camp at Number 1?

NT: No, I have not.

CW: Boy, it was a beautiful camp, right on the, right on the Drive. Should have been maintained, or kept up, it would have been ideal for Park Service, and . . .

NT: It's, is any of it left, now?

CW: No, not a thing. Now, I got a picture of it, I could have brought it out and showed it to you.

NT: I imagine somewhere, in this office (laughing), there's probably a picture and maybe I can get a chance to look at it. Do you remember anything else about how the locals made a living, the ones that, you know, not the CCC people, but how the locals made their living in the mountains?

CW: They sold a lot of, the ones that owned land, sold a lot of bark. They had a tannery here and a lot of it was tan bark. They hauled it into Luray to the tanner. A lot of it was made that way, tan bark. Of course, now, the local people sold vegetables and so on to the, to the CCC camps. There's one fellow that's got a, a copy of a contract he had for potatoes for CCC camp. I forget what it was, how much a pound, but it wasn't much.

NT: Do you remember his name?

CW: His name is Lloyd Wakeman. Wakeman, it was his father that had the contract, in other words, Early Wakeman was his name. Wakeman. Used to run this Brookside Restaurant down here. Wakeman.

NT: When, in your, your Camp 1, how much of the area did you cover, I mean, or would you go, would your people go all the way down the Drive, or, or how much of the, of the, how big an area would that camp work on?

CW: Well, we worked generally from, out Hawksbill, the foot of Hawksbill Mountain, back as far north as Hughes River Gap. And took in Skyland, and all that, cleaned all that up.

NT: What did you all do in the winter up there?

CW: Worked the same as same as, whenever the days was fit, cleaning up and . . . Then they built, planted trees, they'd have a, what they call a, a () [flower of the year?] on gooseberries, they would have a, they wanted to get rid of them. They'd have a detail for them, to go out and dig them up or something. Gooseberry.

NT: Why?

CW: Oh, it was some kind of poison or something it was doing to the soil or, I forget what it was. I don't, can't recall the reason for it.

NT: Do you remember the, the leaders who were local, who, who were local people in the CCC, the people who were leaders who got their full pay, did they, did they have different, did you notice them as having different customs or anything different that you noticed?

CW: No, just more, well, they were more adapted to the community and everything. It was, I don't know how to word it. But, in other words, they knew what to do to make things back original like they were. That's what they tried to do, leave everything natural.

NT: So, your job, as you understood it, was to try to make things as natural as possible?

CW: Yes, yeah.

NT: Was there anything else that you can think of that you wanted to touch on, regarding the CCC or the Park, or the people in the Park?

CW: Nothing that I can recall. I think I've covered about everything.

NT: Well, I've, I've enjoyed it very much and I really appreciate you coming out and sharing with me, and hopefully with everybody, with other historians

who are looking to see what the CCC is like. Thank you.

CW: Yes, sir.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Interview
with
CHARLES WAGNER

August 28, 1991

Interviewer: Norman Taylor
Transcribed by: Joy K. Stiles

Shenandoah National Park
Luray, Virginia

Original manuscript on deposit at
Shenandoah National Park Archives

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Side A:

Charles Wagner is a former Civilian Conservation Corps enrollee assigned to Company 334, Camp NP-1 at Skyland, in Shenandoah National Park from January 5, 1935 to October 1, 1937. Wagner was initially assigned to a crew clearing out dead chestnuts but after two weeks he applied for, and received a job in the camp dining room. After two months, Wagner was selected for a supply truck driver position, which required him to work seven days a week, taking mail down to Luray and bringing up supplies for the camp. After a year and a half, Wagner was promoted to first sergeant over approximately 220 men. Wagner goes into some detail about these jobs, describing camp food, daily routines, and where he picked up supplies in Luray. In talking about his duties as sergeant, Wagner explains how there were work leaders under him, most of whom were local enrollees. He feels the local men were put in these positions because of their familiarity with the area and ability to know what a natural area should be like. Wagner talks about going to town on weekends and what the men would do there. He then recalls a few mountain residents that he knew and describes a funeral procession for a mountain child who had died. He also talks about the actual removal of mountain residents being relocated to the Ida Valley Homestead.

Side B:

Wagner discusses visiting with George Freeman Pollock at Skyland and some of his eccentricities. This leads to a discussion of the creation of the CCC and the dire financial straits his family was in when he enrolled. Wagner talks about local residents making moonshine, then discusses camp sports teams. He talks about his career after the CCC, ending up in Luray. After a few more questions that cover mountain residents selling tan bark and produce, eradication of gooseberry bushes, and the purpose of the CCC, the interview ends.

End of interview.

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