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Interview with
Dr. Jack B. Scroggs
September 20, 1973

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ron Marcello

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Approved: *Jack B. Scroggs*
(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Dr. Jack Scroggs

Interviewer: Dr. Ron Marcello

Place of interview: Denton, Texas

date: September 20, 1973

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Dr. Jack Scroggs for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on September 20, 1973, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Dr. Scroggs in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930's. This interview deviates somewhat from the standard interviews conducted by the Oral History Collection in that it is taking place before a class of seven students. This is a class entitled "Techniques of Oral History." The reason the interview is being conducted in such a manner is to familiarize these students with some of the techniques involved in conducting an oral history interview. Hopefully, they will also be able to critique this interview so that I might be able to improve upon my own techniques.

Dr. Scroggs, even though you've been a participant in the Oral History Collection before, other scholars may not see that earlier document, so consequently why don't you just briefly give us a brief biographical sketch of yourself.

In other words, tell me where you were born, when you were born, your occupation. Be very general.

Scroggs: I was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1919 and lived in Little Rock for the greater part of my life until I was about twelve years old. From that time on until I finished high school, we lived in the country. Our move to the country coincided with the coming of the depression, as was true with many people. It was from this rural area that I graduated from high school and ultimately did go into the CCC camp, where I spent two six-month hitches. Subsequently, I went to the University of Arkansas and finished two years at the University of Arkansas, at the same time working part-time at Ford Motor Company in the summer to make enough money to go to school. After two years, I was drafted in World War II and spent five years in service. After five years in the service, I returned to the University of Arkansas, completed my bachelors and masters there, went to the University of North Carolina, where I did my doctoral work under Fletcher Green and from North Carolina came directly to Denton and North Texas. I've been on the history staff here since.

Marcello: Let's pick up this story back sometime around the coming of the depression. First I think I need to ask you some of your impressions of that period. How did the depression affect your family in particular? Now you mentioned awhile ago that you ultimately moved to the rural area from Little Rock. But how did the depression affect your family?

Scroggs: Well, my father was on a job in Little Rock which involved commission work. As a result, the depression, of course, hit people on commission pretty hard and hit him to the point that he was unable to make a living any longer. As a consequence, we moved to the country where he had come from originally, and he went back into farming. At that time, of course, I was about twelve or thirteen years old and was a good field hand at that age. As a result, we didn't feel the depression as a family, as far as starvation or anything of that sort was concerned. The depression hit us mostly from the point of view of anything other than the necessities of life. That is, with clothing, we had to make do. Money was simply non-existent. We eventually did go on rehabilitation relief. The Rehabilitation Administration was set up for this purpose. In fact, we lived on a "Rehab" farm for about two years. Aside from that, that is, the deprivation as far as things other than food, we didn't feel the effects of the depression too badly. Of course, it did disrupt my father's career, and he never recovered financially from it, with the result that for those of us who came along after the depression, any further schooling beyond the public schools, we did on our own.

Marcello: How big a family are we talking about?

Scroggs: About four. I was the third of four children.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago, also, that it was a common practice for people living in urban areas to move to the rural areas during this period. I think the reason is

quite obvious, but nevertheless for our record, would you tell us why they moved from the urban areas to the rural areas?

Scroggs: Well, of course, in the initial phases of the depression when there was no major relief program, it was a matter of eating. On the farm, at least, one could grow enough food to live on. I know that was our case. We simply had no means of relief or anything of that sort in the early stages of the depression until, of course, the New Deal came along.

Marcello: You also mentioned that this farm where your family ultimately moved was a "Rehab" farm.

Scroggs: That was the second farm we lived on.

Marcello: In other words, I gather your father did have enough funds saved, however, to purchase the first farm?

Scroggs: Well, we purchased it. We didn't pay for it. We lost it (chuckle).

Marcello: I see.

Scroggs: Most of the help in making that relocation, however, came from my older sister who did have a job with Bell Telephone Company which she did retain. I was rather proud of her. She helped the family establish themselves on this farm at the same time she was putting herself through Little Rock Junior College on her own. Subsequently, she transferred as a telephone operator to Fayetteville and continued to help the family but also continued her education and finished her B.A. at the university.

Marcello: How did one go about getting one of these farms through the

Rehabilitation Administration?

Scroggs: I don't really know the technical aspects of it which we had to conform to, Ron. I know that there was a considerable amount of paperwork and applications and getting testimonials from people who knew the family as to need and also as to the ability to do farming. The rehabilitation farm that we lived on was a cotton farm. My father had been a cotton farmer earlier. I know he had to demonstrate the fact that he could run a farm because the rehabilitation program, of course, was a loan program. It was not just straight relief but was designed to loan money.

Marcello: Incidentally, along comes Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. How did things change from a personal standpoint with the coming of Roosevelt and eventually the New Deal? How did it change the whole tenor of the depression so far as your family was concerned?

Scroggs: Well, it changed our outlook on it a great deal because we continued to go pretty much downhill until the New Deal program was initiated. With the rehabilitation program, of course, we did begin to see some means of salvation for ourselves without necessarily, of course, just going on a straight relief program. Many of our friends welcomed relief more than they welcomed rehabilitation (chuckle).

Marcello: Would you care to expand upon that point?

Scroggs: Yes, there were some deadbeats (chuckle) in the depression days. Of course, for individuals who didn't really care to work, the direct relief program at the beginning of the New Deal was preferable to a working program. Subsequently, of course, as WPA and other programs of that sort came out and they were forced to either work or give up relief, this changed their attitude somewhat.

Marcello: Now try not to place yourself in the position of being a historian, but what were your impressions of Franklin Roosevelt at that time, and what were the impressions of your father and so on?

Scroggs: Well, to my father, and as I recall--of course, I was rather young for impressions of that sort--but to my father and to the family as a whole, Franklin Roosevelt became the hero of the Arkansas poor class. My father would, well, practically worship the man. As far as political support, Franklin Roosevelt continued to have his full political support as long as he lived. He didn't retain mine quite so much. He did my father's. I split with him over foreign affairs (chuckle).

Marcello: I see. Do you recall your father or your family ever sitting down and listening to the fireside chats or

anything of that nature?

Scroggs: Oh, yes, many times.

Marcello: Was this a ritual that more or less your family went through whenever Roosevelt was going to deliver one of these?

Scroggs: Always. The radio was the center of it, just like listening to Joe Louis fights.

Marcello: What was it like to listen to one of these fireside chats?

Scroggs: Well, you just sat around the radio in the living room and absorbed the boy's oratory. Of course, the fireside chats all came over as rather exuberant expressions of optimism, as they were designed to do, I suppose.

Marcello: A great many people have remarked that it almost seemed as though Roosevelt was talking directly to the person that was listening.

Scroggs: He had that type of oratorical approach, yes.

Marcello: Well, as the depression continued then, of course, eventually you did enroll in the CCC. How'd you find out about the CCC?

Scroggs: Well, of course, I didn't enroll in the CCC until 1937. It had been in existence for four years, I guess, by that time. As a consequence, many of the boys in

my neighborhood had previously joined the CCC camp. It was not my intent when I finished high school to go into the CCC. Indeed, I'd hoped to immediately find some way to go on to college which was my ambition at the time. But after having graduated from high school in the spring of '37, I pounded the streets of Little Rock for week after week looking for jobs. At that time, you didn't have the elaborate employment services that we have at the present time. You went from store to store and business to business simply looking for an opening. Well, after fruitlessly looking for work in Little Rock and having no means of support at all, except for the fact that I was still living at home at the time, I decided there wasn't much alternative, if I were going to be independent at all from the family, to making application to CCC camp. So it was sort of as a last resort, having been unable to find any other work. Financial attractions were not that great, of course.

Marcello: How well did the government publicize the existence of these agencies and the procedures by which one could enroll?

Scroggs: I don't recall any difficulty at all in finding out what the means were for enrollment. Again, of course,

this is some thirty-six years in the past, but I would judge that I probably got my information and knowledge about the program and how to get into the program from people who had already been there. Because by the time I joined the CCC camp, many men had already put in hitches and had come home.

Marcello: What procedures did you follow in getting into the CCC? Can you recall exactly?

Scroggs: Not precisely to whom I had to reply. I know it was some federal office in Little Rock.

Marcello: Probably the United States Employment Service.

Scroggs: Possibly it was.

Marcello: It operated through the Labor Department.

Scroggs: Possibly it was. But we simply had to fill out the usual number of government forms, of course. The fact that my family were recipients of rehabilitation relief, of course, made me eligible. As I recall at the time, you had to have some sort of background of relief in the family, something of that sort, before you were just automatically accepted. As I recall it, my acceptance was virtually automatic.

Marcello: Under normal circumstances, did the CCC have some rather rigorous investigative procedures that you know about?

- Scroggs: Not that I know of. I don't know of any investigation of me, for instance, other than the fact that we did demonstrate, of course, that the family had been on relief.
- Marcello: Essentially then this was it. You had to demonstrate need in order to get into the CCC.
- Scroggs: Yes, this was basic to the whole program, I suppose, in the beginning.
- Marcello: It was true, of course, with most of the other New Deal agencies, also, whether it be the WPA, PWA, or whatever one you're talking about. A lot of times, I know, there was a rather long waiting period while the application was being processed. In fact, I've seen it said on one occasion that the waiting period was around two months. Do you recall if you had a rather long waiting period before you actually got into the C's?
- Scroggs: Not precisely. I don't think I did. Nothing of that sort do I remember.
- Marcello: Well, what happened next? You made application, you were accepted...
- Scroggs: Notified and notified to report to Little Rock. At that time, of course, you recall the C's had developed to the point that there were two fairly

well defined areas of operation--the Soil Conservation Service, which was much of the area east of the Mississippi and immediately west of the Mississippi River, and the Forestry Service, which is concentrated in the great national forests out west. It was much like going in the Army. You didn't know where you were going when you went in. Generally, I think the philosophy of the CCC was to send men a considerable distance away from home, at least 100, a couple of hundred miles, so that they wouldn't be running home every weekend. So most of us who reported to Little Rock were fearful that we were going to be winding up in the wilds of Idaho or something of this sort, which was in the C's considered Siberia. Fortunately, when I was enrolled, I was placed on a truck with...a truckload of fellows and went back out the same highway that I came in on and assigned to a CCC camp which was not more than five miles from my home at Jacksonville, Arkansas--a Soil Conservation camp.

Marcello: Now in a lot of cases, the enrollee had to go through a certain type of orientation process. I know in a lot of cases, the person was sent to an Army camp. Did you have to go through this process also?

Scroggs: No, we went directly from Little Rock by Army trucks out to the camp with no orientation at all, as I recall. In fact, I'm quite sure there wasn't. This did cause a little dislocation at first--the fact that there was no orientation. In fact, one of the earliest incidents that I remember from my CCC days was when we unloaded at the camp and a couple of fellows got in a fight. Before the thing ended, one of them had simply been run off by the other one and never showed up again (chuckle). There was a good deal of incidence, of course, of homesickness and this sort of thing because most of the fellows who were enrolled were seventeen, eighteen, nineteen year-old men. Most of them were never away from home before.

Marcello: What sort of a physical examination or training period did you go through?

Scroggs: The physical examination that we had was somewhat similar to the later one that I took in the Army. It was a complete physical. We were given a physical and then issued clothing and so forth just as one would be issued in the Army. Training, we had none. We were told what we were supposed to do.

The regimen of the camp was essentially...well, it was pretty well established by this time, of course, by Army supervision because the camps themselves were run by Army officers, the commander and his lieutenants. The buildings themselves were very similar, of course, to Army buildings with Army cots lining each side of the wall and foot lockers at the end of the cots.

The training itself though, as far as any training for the duty that you would be performing, there wasn't any. There wasn't any--I suppose for a fairly good reason--because most of the work that we did was simply labor work. We got up about six o'clock in the morning and went through the usual routine of cleaning up, making up the beds, sweeping out the barracks. In fact, we had such a strict camp commander that we had to get out in teams of two and pop our blankets each morning to get all the dust out of them. He inspected each day. He hit each bed with a cue stick as he came down through on inspection. If any dust flew, it was extra duty that afternoon and over the weekend. But after breakfast we were simply lined up. We usually did have physical exercises after breakfast. We were simply lined

up and loaded into trucks and taken out to wherever the work might be going on. Of course, the work that we did for the Soil Conservation Service was quite varied--from planting of seedling locusts and pines to building dams and terracing fields and all things of that sort which would be concerned with soil conservation.

Fortunately, my experience in that particular regard was not of long duration. Because the first day I went out on the job with the regular work gang, about the middle of the day a pickup truck came out and picked me up and brought me back in because they discovered that I could type. I was put to work in the Soil Conservation office of the resident engineer who planned all of the work that was to be done. So my whole tour of duty was spent in the resident engineer's office planning projects.

Marcello: Going back just a minute, we've mentioned both the Army and, of course, the Soil Conservation Service. I think it should be put in the record here that the way things usually worked was that the Army administered the camps.

Scroggs: Right.

Marcello: They were responsible for all personnel, all the administrative work and this sort of thing, all the discipline. Then some other government agency would be responsible for the actual projects themselves, isn't this correct?

Scroggs: Right. Yes, that was true. The way it worked was that any time you were in camp, you were under the supervision of the Army. Then when you finished your breakfast and lined up for the jobs of the day, you were turned over to what they call the "Using Service." In this case it was the Soil Conservation Service, which I believe is part of the Department of the Interior. Then when you came back in--I think the boys broke off of the jobs in the field about four o'clock and were brought back in from wherever they might be working--you went back under the control of the Army.

Marcello: Awhile ago you described the living quarters and so on. What were some of the other types of structures that were usually found in the typical CCC camp? Let's say the one that you were in.

Scroggs: Well, the typical CCC camp was--at least the one I was in, I think it was rather typical--was pretty self-sufficient in many respects. There would be

a considerable number of barracks of the type that I was talking about--each individual, one-story, wood-construction barracks. There was always, of course, an officers' quarters and headquarters were usually in the same building. There'd be a mess hall. This was generally located down at the end of the square which all the buildings enclosed. Everybody took their mess in the same mess hall. There was a rec building for recreation--pool tables, ping-pong, dances. They had dances about once a month, something of that sort where the local girls would be inveigled in. Fortunately, since it was my neighborhood, I knew the local girls (chuckle). We had other buildings for the using services for planning of projects and this sort of thing. Then by the time I went into the CCC camp, they had developed a rather extensive program of vocational education. So there would be buildings usually set aside for educational facilities--classrooms, darkrooms for photographic work, and things of this sort.

Marcello: Did the enrollees ever...

Scroggs: We also had a hospital by the way.

Marcello: I see. Did the enrollees ever make any effort to spruce up the camp any, that is, add anything above and beyond what already existed? I know in some camps, for example, they would build fireplaces or make flower gardens or dig ponds or something of this nature. I was wondering if you noticed any sort of attempts made on the part of the enrollees to improve the environment of the camp.

Scroggs: Well, there was considerable improvement of the environment of the camp. Much of this had been done before I went in because the camp that I went into had been in existence for quite some time. But I would say that from my experience that very little initiative came from the enrollees in improving the camp. It was usually the initiative of the officers who wanted flowerbeds made and fish ponds dug (chuckle).

Marcello: I guess after eight hours on the job most of the enrollees weren't ready to engage in any activities of this nature.

Scroggs: Things of this sort were usually done on extra duty when you had dust in your blanket (chuckle).

Marcello: We've mentioned the Army quite a bit, so let us talk a little bit about the Army administration. Now what was the ranking officer in this camp?

Scroggs: I frankly have tried to remember, Ron, and I believe he was a major. But I'm not certain. I do know that all of the officers whom I knew were Army Reserve officers who were in much the same shape as we were in. They were unemployed. They were used to run these camps as a means of relief for them, too. They were generally strict Army. In fact, I think the discipline in the CCC camp where I was--particularly the insistence on cleanliness and cleanliness in the barracks and the campground and this sort of thing--was fully as strict, if not more strict, than the regular Army which I went into subsequently.

Marcello: My next question was going to also have something to do with the Army, but I think you've answered it in part. I know for a long time the Army was rather reluctant to even get involved in CCC work, especially the regular Army. I was going to ask you if you noticed any evidence of this reluctance at this particular camp. But as you mentioned, most of these people were reserve officers who were in the same situation that you were in. So obviously they would have welcomed CCC.

Scroggs: Yes, I've read of this but I have no personal experience to...of course, there was a good deal of

civilian opposition which one ran across occasionally to the camps being administered by the Army-- comparison with Hitler's camps and this sort of thing. Actually, aside from the fact that there was very strict discipline while one was in camp, I don't think that there was any basis of such criticism. We were almost perfectly free to come and go within certain limits. We did have a time that we had to be in. I think it was ten o'clock that we were supposed to be in regular nights and bed check at eleven. If you were missing, you paid the penalty. But on weekends we were almost completely free. All one had to do was sign out and go to Little Rock over the weekend on your \$5 a month (laughter).

Marcello: You mentioned \$5 a month. You actually got \$30 a month, but \$25 of it went home, Is that the way the procedure worked?

Scroggs: Right, yes. You could opt for \$25 going home and you keeping \$5 or \$22 going home and you keeping \$8. I elected to keep \$5 and send \$25 home, not through any great indulgence over my parents on my part. But my father would never use any of my money, and as a consequence, the \$25 that went home each

month, he simply banked for me. My ultimate objective was still to get up to Fayetteville and the University of Arkansas. So the \$25 a month I was saving worked out quite well. Some of us picked up additional means of income. Although it was against regulations to have an automobile, a friend of mine and I had a Ford that we hid off the camp a couple of miles away. We would take boys to Little Rock on weekends for twenty-five cents a head (chuckle).

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned the fact that your CCC earnings were banked for you, and this was ultimately very, very useful to you in getting you through the University of Arkansas. I think this is something that really needs to be a part of the record. I think that it shows some of the ways in which these New Deal agencies maybe indirectly did have some sort of a positive effect on the participants in them.

Scroggs: I think that what happened to me in this regard was true of several people that I knew whose money was sent home and the parents wouldn't use it. They didn't have to have it so they wouldn't use it, and they'd either save it for them, or in some cases, they'd send it back for a little higher life while he was in camp. But the money that my father

saved for me amounted to twelve months because I put in two six-month hitches. With that money, plus working in a boarding house and working on the NYA and going to Detroit and working in the summer for Ford Motor Company, I was able to make two years (chuckle).

Marcello: Also, I think one must keep in mind that quite obviously you did not need a whole lot of money while you were in the CCC structure because they were providing everything that you needed--clothing, housing, food.

Scroggs: Virtually everything. Now washing was not taken care of. You had to take care of your own clothing as far as washing it was concerned. As a result, little home laundries sprang up in the little farmhouses around the CCC camp. But most of us just did our own. But aside from that, virtually everything else was taken care of except for just basic toiletries which didn't cost very much in those days anyway.

Marcello: Was there a canteen at this particular camp that you were at? I know most of the CCC camps did have a canteen of sorts.

Scroggs: Yes, there was a canteen in the rec hall.

Marcello: What sort of things could be purchased at the canteen?

Scroggs: Oh, basic toiletries and, of course, candy, cold drinks, and things of that sort.

Marcello: How about medical facilities? What sort of facilities were there at this camp.

Scroggs: They had a small hospital at this camp. If I'm not mistaken, there was a doctor on duty at all times. I may be mistaken. They may have depended upon local medical service. But there was a hospital in existence, and medical service was available. Whether we had a resident doctor or not, I don't remember.

Marcello: Speaking of medical service, I know that in the beginning there were quite a few accidents in CCC camps. I gather this was because some of the enrollees were unfamiliar with the equipment or even with working outdoors and this sort of thing. Was there a very high accident rate in this particular camp that you were in?

Scroggs: I really don't know, Ron. I would imagine that probably there was because the type of individuals who came in the CCC camps were, of course, a cross-section, although most of them were urban. As a consequence, they wouldn't have had much experience in using the tools and so forth that we used in

soil conservation work. I didn't run into much danger with a typewriter (chuckle).

Marcello: Were most of the people in this camp natives of Arkansas?

Scroggs: As I recall, all that I knew were. They came from around Arkansas someplace.

Marcello: As you mentioned, there were a good many people who were from urban areas who were in this particular camp.

Scroggs: Yes.

Marcello: I know one of the things that the CCC tried to do was to weed out from the very beginning delinquents or parolees and people of that nature. Did you run into very many bad characters in the C's, or would it be safe to say that probably there were no more than you would have in the regular Army or something of this nature? What sort of an individual...what were the fellow enrollees like?

Scroggs: Well as I recall, there would be no great differentiation between them and the cross section of men that I later knew in the Army. We had our tough boys which any camp is going to come up with and those who tried to stay out of sight which any camp's going to come up with (chuckle). But I don't recall

any problem as far as delinquency or bad characters or anything of that sort. In fact, I came out of the CCC camp and continued to have the same idea-- that the C's represented excellent training for young men, particularly young men who had been economically deprived in any way. Not only did it force a fairly large group of men to live together in some degree of harmony, but it also afforded an opportunity for vocational training and even just plain training to produce literacy.

Marcello: I think we need to talk about the CCC educational program at this point. What sort of an educational program was there set up in this camp that you were in?

Scroggs: Well, in this camp we had...I guess you might divide it pretty much into three different categories. We had classes, actual classes, which were held for those who had not finished high school. They could take regular classes to get credits for a high school diploma. Then we had vocational classes for training of individuals who were interested in trying to get out of the C's and into a particular vocation such as automobile repair or something of that sort. They had typing classes and what not.

Then we also had programs which would be more of a recreational nature, and here I refer to such things as photography, for instance. I mention that because that was the thing that I was most interested in. Although I had started doing a bit of photography and developing on my own prior to going to CCC camp, we had some excellent darkrooms and training there for... additional training. Amateur photography, not professional.

Marcello: What were some of the other types of recreational opportunities that were available, recreational-educational opportunities besides photography?

Scroggs: I don't remember. I know that there were several, but this is the only one that I ever indulged in.

Marcello: When were you allowed to engage in these activities?

Scroggs: At any off-duty hour when, of course, you weren't on duty in something else.

Marcello: This is the point that I wanted to make.

Scroggs: Usually in the evening, of course, or on weekends.

Marcello: But this sort of thing was not done during working hours?

Scroggs: No. The classes and so forth would be held at night.

Marcello: Was it strictly voluntary?

Scroggs: Yes.

Marcello: Would you have any idea as to what percentage of the enrollees participated or took advantage of these programs?

Scroggs: No, I wouldn't. I would hazard a guess that the percentage was reasonably small. Most of the people whom I recall knowing in our particular camp were already high school graduates, so there was no great problem of literacy. Most of them preferred to take their recreation outside the camp area than inside (chuckle). We were only about twelve miles from Little Rock (chuckle).

Marcello: In a lot of instances, I know that the Army looked upon these educational programs with a great deal of suspicion at times. What was the attitude of the Army at this particular camp?

Scroggs: I don't recall any opposition to them. They were available. I think, in going back to your question a moment ago, I think that probably more boys took advantage of vocational-type training. I recall we had a fairly good-sized garage for training auto mechanics.

Marcello: Who did the teaching?

Scroggs: Civilians, I suppose. I'm not too familiar with the technicalities of the educational program. That was

something, of course, that developed pretty slowly. Here I'm talking as a historian and not from my experience at the time. But the program had developed pretty slowly, you recall, and again with considerable opposition. But as I recall, additional money was made available to handle that educational program. So it was probably civilians.

Marcello: I know a lot of times--in reference to a question that I asked earlier--the Army was somewhat reluctant to engage in educational programs that had to do with liberal arts subjects--history, sociology, anthropology, and things of that nature. Apparently there was some sort of a fear of radicalism or something of that nature. I remember seeing written at one time that one Army commander said that for teachers he didn't want any long-haired men nor short-haired women, the implication being that he didn't want any of these enrollees infected by radical ideas.

Scroggs: That was probably true at our camp, although I cannot cite any evidence of it. I didn't participate too much in that type program, so I don't know much about it. I further didn't use the CCC library very much because I still had a pretty good high school library available to me about a mile away. I even

found out after I went into the CCC camp that I lacked a half credit in mathematics, meeting University of Arkansas entrance requirements. So I made arrangements with my old high school math teacher to let me take a course with him down at the high school in geometry, I guess plane geometry. But the CCC camp didn't have anything to do with it. I just made arrangements on the side for this and took my examination and got my half credit.

Marcello: Was this done in the evenings also or on the weekends?

Scroggs: It'd be done in the evenings mostly. Of course, with the type job I had, I could manage to put a little time in on the job, too (chuckle).

Marcello: Yes, I expect so. You mentioned awhile ago that there was a library at this CCC camp. How good a library was it?

Scroggs: As I recall, pretty skimpy. Of course, I think this would normally be the case. This was what I found later in the Army. Men in this sort of a situation are usually not prone to be scholarly and look for a big library. The favorite things, of course, were light novels, journals, weekly magazines, that sort of thing.

Marcello: I know on some occasions, the Army also tried to keep such publications as New Republic and things of this nature out of the camp. Did you notice any literature of this type in the camp or...

Scroggs: I don't remember. Most of us were of an age, at that time, where we had not been exposed much to independent thinking as yet anyway. Most of our "radicalism" developed after we finished and went away to the university (chuckle).

Marcello: We talked about the enrollees awhile ago and a little bit about discipline problems. What were some of the more serious infractions that the enrollees were guilty of in this camp?

Scroggs: The most serious infractions, I suppose, would be drunkenness, and, accompanying that, inability to report for work. Absent when bed check time came, things of that sort. There was very seldom any disciplinary action for disobedience of an officer or anything of that sort.

Marcello: How about the desertion rate? Was it very high in this camp?

Scroggs: I can't recall it being other than that one incident that I was telling you about which sticks rather vividly in my mind, just having arrived. But I can't recall anyone I knew who went over the hill.

Marcello: What sort of disciplinary actions did the Army take whenever an infraction occurred?

Scroggs: Most of the disciplinary action, in fact, all of the disciplinary action that I can recall was extra labor, working on the grounds and this sort of thing, mowing grass. We got all our grass mowed by boys doing extra duty. Sometimes privileges would be taken away--dance privileges, canteen privileges, weekends off.

Marcello: Now how could you ultimately get a dishonorable discharge? Who was responsible for seeing to it that the serious disciplinary problems were drummed out and got a dishonorable discharge?

Scroggs: The only dishonorable discharges that I knew anything about were for desertion. When a fellow just disappeared and didn't come back, he was simply dishonorably discharged. I would judge that serious breeches of behavior would get a fellow discharged, but I didn't know of any.

Marcello: Who determined this? Was this the priority of the camp commander, or did this have to go higher than him?

Scroggs: You're getting in an area of administration to which I was not privy (chuckle).

Marcello: Was it considered to be a pretty serious thing if one did get a dishonorable discharge from the C's? You hear a great deal about the seriousness of a dishonorable discharge from the regular military. Was this also the case with one from the CCC?

Scroggs: I don't think it was taken nearly so seriously. Indeed, I don't even know what the penalties would have been for a dishonorable discharge. I know that it would not have entailed...at least I don't think it would have entailed loss of citizenship rights or anything of that sort as an Army discharge would.

Marcello: I was thinking in terms of obtaining a job on the outside. I was thinking perhaps it might have been a little bit tougher to get a job if one had a dishonorable discharge.

Scroggs: Possibly could have. I don't know. I didn't have one (chuckle).

Marcello: What sort of a reception did this camp have among the local townspeople? In other words, did they welcome the building of a CCC camp close by or did they protest it?

Scroggs: It was much like the subsequent receptions that Army camps received. They were both loved and hated by the local people at the same time. The camp,

of course, did bring in not only a good deal of money to the local area, but our type of camp also brought a lot of benefit to the whole area around through the soil conservation work we did. Farmers received free lakes, free terracing, free reforestation--this sort of thing. But on the other hand, the individual CCC member's relationship to community was not too good unless you happened to be from the community, which I was. But there was no great welcoming into homes and this sort of thing.

Marcello: What sort of leave provisions did the CCC have?

Scroggs: As I recall, we had a six-day leave for each hitch you put in. That was a regular leave time, that is, you could be away from camp for a week. There was an automatic six-day leave if you re-upped for a second hitch. Aside from that, we received all the regular holidays and this sort of thing. We were generally free to go.

Marcello: I know in a lot of CCC camps, if rain or inclement weather prevented the enrollees from working on a job, on many occasions this would have to be made up on Saturdays. Was this true in your camp also?

Scroggs: I don't know. I think that that was the general rules of the CCC's wasn't it?

Marcello: I almost believe it was. I was wondering if this was enforced in your camp.

Scroggs: I think it was. Of course, I wouldn't have been familiar with it because we worked inside.

Marcello: You were inside so you didn't have to worry about the rain.

Scroggs: Yes, right.

Marcello: What was the food like in the CCC camp?

Scroggs: It was very plain but very good. Of course, most of us who went into the CCC's were accustomed to very plain food. The type food that we had in CCC camp was very similar to the type food that the Army served. Plenty of it because those boys worked hard. They fed them well.

Marcello: Apparently, according to statistics anyway, most of the enrollees gained anywhere from seven to fifteen pounds by the time they left the CCC camp. From your observations was this true in your camp?

Scroggs: I think it was probably true. It was true in my own case that I gained weight. I subsequently did in the Army. I never did know whether that was 3.2 beer or what (chuckle).

Marcello: How big was this camp?

Scroggs: It must have been around 100, 125 enrollees.

Marcello: And they came from all walks of life, as you mentioned awhile ago. I know in some of the camps there was also political interference from time to time, that is, congressmen or senators wanted to get friends jobs and this sort of thing. Did you ever notice any sort of political interference of any sort in your camp that you were in?

Scroggs: No, I have no remembrance of anything of that sort. I did think--and many other people thought this--that some of the more influential members of the rural community around the area received pretty special favors in the way their land was treated, dams they got built.

Marcello: This brings up an interesting question, I think. Who determined where a particular project would be? Do you know anything about that?

Scroggs: Yes, the engineer for whom I worked made all the contracts for the farmers in the area. It was his job as a soil conservation man to determine whether a project was worthwhile or not, whether soil conservation was called for or not. We had regular contract forms that we'd work out by the using service agreeing to do so-and-so on each farm.

Marcello: That's all the local farmer had to do. He had to supply nothing whatsoever--no materials, no labor, no nothing.

Scroggs: Just the land. And demonstrate a need.

Marcello: Is there anything about your particular job in the administrative aspect of the CCC's that you think needs to be a part of the record? What sort of work did you personally do within the camp administration?

Scroggs: Well, virtually all of my work was in helping with the clerical aspects of the using service office. This entailed typing, filing, typing up contracts. We did a good deal of the rough work in drawing maps. Of course, there had to be maps drawn for each one of the projects, whether it was a terracing job or whatever type of thing.

Marcello: What sort of a relationship existed between the Army commander and the project supervisor?

Scroggs: I think by and large that it was just sort of a stand-off. Neither one interfered with the other. When the men were brought in, they became the Army's charge. When they went out, they were the charge of the using service. As I recall from my work in the office, there was very little fraternization back and forth. The Army officer

didn't come down into our office. Neither did the engineer go up to theirs.

Marcello: As you look back upon your CCC experiences, what positive benefits do you see having come to you as a result of your service in the CCC's? Now I think we've touched upon those from time to time, but if we could summarize here, what positive benefits do you see coming forward?

Scroggs: Well, of course, the most positive benefit was the one I already touched upon--the fact that it did make it possible for me to go on to the university. As I looked back on it in subsequent years, I received a good many other benefits, however. I think one that I've already mentioned, too, was the necessity of adjusting to living with a fairly large group of people. This required considerable adjustment on the part of all of us. To me, too, there was a good deal of subsequent help from my CCC experience in my Army experience and even in my ROTC experience, which was required at the University of Arkansas. I'd already been subject to Army discipline. Not only did this relieve some of the trauma that Army discipline always inflicts on a person, it also led me to develop techniques of the enlisted

man getting around some of these things which are somewhat traumatic (chuckle).

Student: Did anyone else in your family participate in any of the New Deal agencies?

Scroggs: No, I think that I was the only one that directly participated, other than our "Rehab" program. I participated in not only the CCC camp, but I also worked under a relief program when I was in high school. We still, at the consolidated school I went to, had individual coal stoves in the rooms. On NYA I had the job of getting up every morning at five o'clock and building coal fires in each one of these stoves. I did this for a year prior to my graduation. Then the C's and subsequently when over at the University of Arkansas, I had an NYA job there, too, at thirty-five cents an hour, I think, running a calculator in the Agricultural Economics Department at the university. None of my brothers and sisters were on any program of this sort. My sister was about seven years older than I was. My younger brother was about seven years younger. So I was the one that hit that period.

Student: Do you think that the CCC's, the particular group you were with, made a specific contribution to the area that you were in?

Scroggs: Yes, I think so. If you were putting it merely in dollars and cents figures, I would doubt if they made as big a contribution to the area as the money that was expended. But when you combine this with the fact that it was a relief program and a rehabilitation program and these other things, I think that it was worthwhile. Very definitely. Some of the results of it are still visible when you go back through Jacksonville, Arkansas. In fact, those locusts have grown up into big trees now (chuckle).

Student: Dr. Scroggs, you said you served two terms or two hitches in the C's. Was this true of most people in your camp? Did they serve one hitch and then leave and/or did they stay for two or more?

Scroggs: Probably most stayed for two, I would think. The people I knew, most of them stayed for two hitches.

Student: How long were these?

Scroggs: Six months. You enlisted for six months, and then if you re-enlisted, you re-enlisted for six more months which fitted my needs exactly, of course. Generally speaking, I would judge by the end of the period, roughly when I was in the service, jobs were beginning to pick up about '38. Two hitches probably would have been about all, but I think most people probably did put in two hitches.

Marcello: I have another question, the answer to which I think is obvious, but I'll ask it anyhow. This camp was segregated, was it not?

Scroggs: Oh, yes.

Marcello: It was strictly white?

Scroggs: Yes, strictly white. There were black camps in Arkansas. But all of them were segregated. In fact, the first time I ran into desegregation was long, long years after in the Army. That was Mr. Truman's move.

Marcello: I was going to say, I'm sure you didn't see it during World War II either.

Scroggs: The latter part of the war.

Marcello: Right.

Scroggs: Of course, officers were integrated a lot earlier than enlisted men.

Student: Dr. Scroggs, you mentioned that the resident engineer was the man who usually made the decision as to where the projects were carried out. Was he a local man or did he come from the local area or was he sent in?

Scroggs: No, our resident engineer was not a local man. His assistant was, and it was to his assistant that I owed the job that I got. He was the one that came

out and picked me up because he knew me, and he knew that I could type and do office work and this sort of thing. But the engineer that we had was not local. He was a Civil Service man, and a rather high-ranking Civil Service man.

Student: Did you ever run into any controversy concerning the farmers' resistance to some of these programs?

Scroggs: No, because they didn't have to participate if they didn't want to. There was no pressure put on them at all to draw up contracts. Most of them welcomed it, of course, because they could see some advantages to...when the CCC camp went out of existence there at Jacksonville--and it went out of existence just before World War II, when they took the facilities and converted some of them into an ordnance plant which led Jacksonville to a booming city today--when we left there, though, the countryside around there, which was hilly, rolling country, was thoroughly terraced with bermuda sod where the water had run off and eroded the land before. Locust and pine trees were planted on poorer land to build it back up again. I don't think there was any resistance. Most people welcomed it. But they didn't have to participate if they didn't want to, so this was done on a contractual basis.

Student: As a young man arriving at camp on the first day, can you recall your impressions that you had?

Scroggs: Well, nothing other than the fact that you felt pretty lonely, this being the first time I'd ever been away from home at all, really. I think that this was true of most of the fellows that came in. We didn't exactly know what was in front of us. The whole thing looked pretty austere, with these white buildings and a few shrubs planted around them and an Army officer out there telling you what to do. Most of us hadn't really experienced this at all before, except your father telling you what to do. From things I'd read--and I think that this would be corroborated-- homesickness, loneliness, and so forth, were a problem most always when you went to the C's, just as it subsequently was when people went in the Army.

Student: You mentioned clothing a moment ago. Were your clothes supplied entirely by the camp, or were you required to supply your own?

Scroggs: I was trying to remember that because I knew somebody was going to bring a question up--whether we could wear civilian clothes or not. I think we could off camp. We were supplied a dress uniform which was an

Army dress uniform, not the fancy dress uniform. We were given khakis and chinos. We were supplied fatigues, work uniforms. Fatigues in those days were not like the fatigues today. They were just made the same way as the uniform, roughly, without the big flappy pockets that you see on the fatigues today. They were just work clothes. How many of these were supplied, I don't know. Whether we just had one set of dress clothes...I suspect we did. But I don't remember offhand. We were supplied foot lockers. We were required to keep those in order, just in pure military fashion.

Marcello: Was this issue of clothing to last for the entire six months?

Scroggs: That I don't remember either, Ron. I suspect not. I suspect that it was handled much like the Army because a boy couldn't afford to buy clothes on \$5 a month. So it would stand to reason that when they wore out, they could probably turn them in and get more. I don't recall any difficulty as far as clothing was concerned.

Marcello: As I recall, you did have to wear your dress uniform for the evening meal, did you not?

Scroggs: Yes. You came in and showered after the job and wore a dress uniform to meals. We also had one other chore that we performed every morning. The last thing before breakfast...we'd have exercises and then the last thing before breakfast we'd make one huge line across the whole camp area and go down policing up the camp area and picked up every scrap, anything that was around. The camp was always clean.

Student: Did the camp have a required chapel service that...

Scroggs: No. They did have a service available, but it was not required.

Student: Dr. Scroggs, as far as authority...of course, the Army officers supervised the enrollees, but was there any sort of intermediate authority, or was any sort of an authority system established among the enrollees themselves?

Scroggs: Corresponding to sergeant or something like that?

Student: Yes, something like that.

Scroggs: I believe, if I'm not mistaken, though, that they had work leaders who took charge of the gang that went out. They'd be responsible for getting the guys on the trucks and so forth.

Marcello: These were civilians? In other words, you had your project supervisor, and under him there were a group of foremen for each of the work details?

Scroggs: Yes. Now as far as anybody in the barracks having rank above anybody else, I don't recall there being any rank at all.

Student: Was military discipline expected on the project as it was in the camp?

Scroggs: No, when you were turned over to the using service, you were under their authority. The military never came out. I suppose if they had a discipline problem, they'd bring the guy back in and subject him to discipline by the military. But I don't know of any cases of that sort. I'm sure it might have happened.

Student: Dr. Scroggs, did you have occasion to follow the careers of any of the enrollees who were in with you?

Scroggs: I knew three or four fellows in our barracks that came from our immediate neighborhood. As I recall, all of them wound up as nonprofessional people. At least two of them that I can recall wound up just going back to the farm and becoming farmers. One, I remember, became a truck driver. The other, I think, was an auto mechanic. But I didn't know anyone who went on into a professional career.

Student: Dr. Scroggs, you said you felt like that you profited by this experience in the CCC. Was this generally the case with most of the former enrollees? They'd leave with a sense of optimism--that this six months or a year or whatever had been worthwhile and well-spent and that they could invest this experience in the future as far as a job was concerned?

Scroggs: I think so, Bill. I think probably that the greater percentage of the fellows who left the CCC camps thought they should be made permanent things, which, of course, Roosevelt attempted to do unsuccessfully. But I believe this was a prevalent idea--that a year of this sort of training was good for anybody.

Student: You mentioned at one point that you thought some of the more influential farmers in the area got special favors. Would you care to elaborate on how that worked?

Scroggs: Well, perhaps it was my red neck background (chuckle)--the have-nots looking at the haves. But we had one particular individual who ran the largest general store in this little town of Jacksonville, which was just down the hill. The CCC camp was set up on high ground, and the town was down below. This was

Mr. Lon Henry, whom I remember quite well because we share-cropped for him for a year before I went to CCC camp. He owned not only a large number of farms around the area...acreage that he share-cropped. Mostly blacks share-cropped it. But he had a big place right at the edge of town, too, with a nice big farmhouse and, oh, maybe twenty, twenty-five acres of land around it, which was just his dwelling, town dwelling. Well, for some strange reason, that twenty, twenty-five acres of land turned up with about a ten-acre lake on it (chuckle), which we always felt was rather peculiar. What could be done with that lake except swimming and fishing and that sort of thing (chuckle)?

Marcello: I gather that Mr. Henry was known to have quite a bit of political influence.

Scroggs: It was considerable. Fortunately he was a friend of mine, too, so he always wrote me very good letters of recommendation, and they were influential.

Marcello: I don't think there's any more questions. Dr. Scroggs, I want to thank you for coming in and sharing your thoughts on the CCC with us.

Scroggs: I was very pleased. After thirty-six years, it doesn't come back too well (chuckle).

A P P E N D I X

3787, Company C. C. C.

Jacksonville, Ark.

February 8, 1938

Certificate of Proficiency of

JACK B. SCROGGS

Name

17-332927

Serial Number

subject Agri. Engineering

Completed Course Feb. 8, 1938

Grade Excellent (90%)

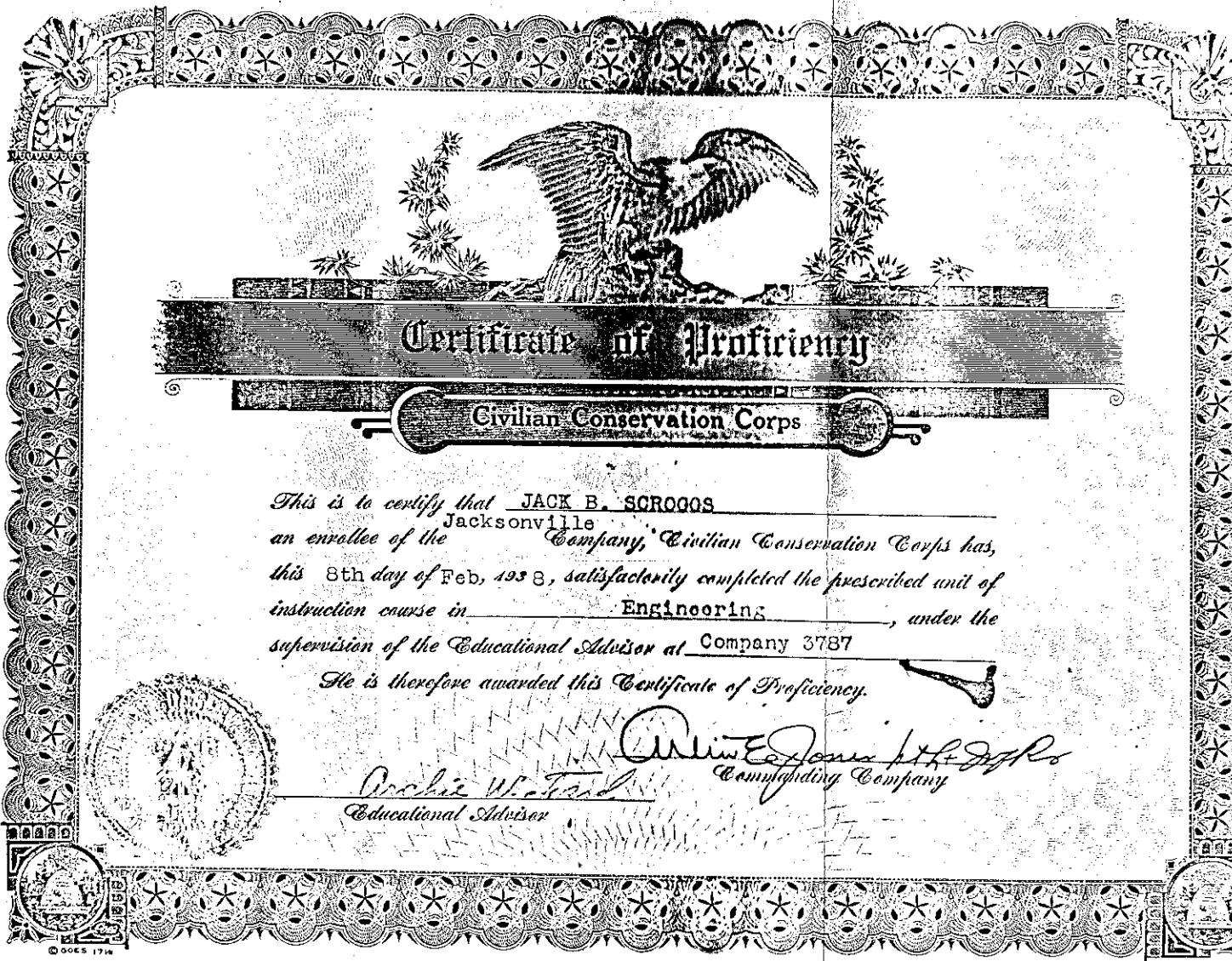
1st Lt. Arlin L. Jones

Commanding Company

Archie W. Ford

Educational Advisor

Remarks



Certificate of Proficiency

Civilian Conservation Corps

This is to certify that JACK B. SCROGGS
 an enrollee of the Jacksonville
Company, Civilian Conservation Corps has,
 this 8th day of Feb, 1938, satisfactorily completed the prescribed unit of
 instruction course in Engineering, under the
 supervision of the Educational Advisor at Company 3787

He is therefore awarded this Certificate of Proficiency.

Archie W. Ford
 Educational Advisor

Arlin L. Jones
 Commanding Company