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Interview with  
Mr. M. L. Daman  
February 1, 1974

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas  
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello  
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Oral History Collection

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Dr. Marcello:        This is Ron Marcello interviewing M. L. Daman for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on February 1, 1974, in Dallas, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Daman in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930's.

Colonel Daman, you went through this once before with us, but just very, very briefly, in case somebody doesn't read your other volume concerning your prisoner-of-war experiences, why don't you tell me a little bit about yourself. In other words, tell me where you were born, when you were born, things of that nature.

Mr. Daman:        I was born October 5, 1915, in Caney, Kansas. That's on the southern border of the state of Kansas about a mile from the Oklahoma line and about twenty miles west of Coffeyville, Kansas, which is pretty much

near the Missouri border there. That's right down in the southeast corner of the state.

Marcello: How old were you at the time the depression struck?

Daman: At that time, I was eighteen years old.

Marcello: How did the depression affect your family?

Daman: It was very hard on us. See, my father was a carpenter, and he couldn't get any work. My father was a carpenter, and it was very difficult for him to get any work to make a livelihood for my family. My mother was working at the time for a lady that she had worked for for a number of years. Right shortly before these experiences in the CCC, she had moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, with this lady, and they were staying down there. My father and I were baching at our home in Caney, Kansas, where I went to high school and graduated from Caney High School.

Marcello: Did you go directly from high school into the CCC, or did you try to find some sort of employment some place?

Daman: I went to Tulsa for about four and a half to five months and tried to find a job down there, but I never could find anything that was worthwhile except working in a large grocery chain. I went from there back to Caney. From there, Caney, I departed for the CCC's.

Marcello: Can you describe the process or the procedures by which you got into the CCC?

Daman: Right. It was necessary for the family to be on relief before they would consider taking you in the CCC's. This was not difficult to establish, for as I say, it was difficult for my father to get any work in that little town. So when the papers were all signed, and they were properly turned into the right agency, why, eventually they came through, and they notified me that I had been selected and that I would be going to the CCC's and gave me a departure, a reporting date, to the train station in Caney, Kansas.

Marcello: Were there a great many forms and things of this nature that you had to fill out in order to qualify?

Daman: There were quite a number in the original application, yes, that I had to fill out to put in, plus the establishment, as I say, of the need. You see, the idea of the CCC was that they were going to pay you a certain amount of money which they would send home to your home, and they would pay you a small amount of money while you were in camp for your necessities.

Marcello: Where did they send you from Caney, Kansas?

Daman: From Caney, Kansas we were sent to Minnesota.

Marcello: By that time, had you already had some contact with the Army?

Daman: Negative, except that I had gone to CMTC camp, which is Citizens Military Training Camp, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, a couple of summers before that.

Marcello: But this in no way was connected with the CCC?

Daman: In no way was it connected with the CCC. That's correct, sir.

Marcello: Where specifically did you go when you got to Minnesota?

Daman: They took us to a place up there called Itasca. It was in Itasca State Park in Minnesota, the northern part, just a few miles from the Canadian border.

Marcello: Did you undergo any sort of special training at that point? By this time you would have been in a camp, which, of course, was administered by the Army.

Daman: At the time we were put in this camp, we were given physical examinations. Then we were classified according to the kind of jobs that we felt that we would be capable of performing with little or no training. Our camp was on the edge of this Itasca State Park, where we were going to assist the Forestry Service in doing a number of odd jobs in preserving this forest, national forest.

Marcello: This was going to be my next question: what civilian agency were you working for, and it was the United States Forest Service.

Daman: That is correct, yes.

Marcello: What were your impressions when all of a sudden you were thrust from civilian life into semimilitary life anyhow.

Daman: Well, it was very interesting for me because I had never . . . well, except for the two times I'd gone to CMTIC Civilian Military Training Camp, I had never been away from home,

to speak of. This was a great lark for me. Of course, there were all young men my own age, and it wasn't long before you began to meet up with fellows that you sort of like better than the others, and began to pal around with them. You began to get a better perspective of what was going on.

Marcello: From where did most of these young men come?

Daman: Most of them came from the eastern part of the United States.

Marcello: What sort of adjustments did they have to make? I'm assuming that they probably had come from some urban area.

Daman: That is correct. I think it was a lot harder on them to adjust than it was on we from the midwest. But we had daily classes on using saws and axes and the like. Many of us knew how to use an ax. Not proficiently, but at least we knew generally how to use them better than those boys from the East did. So we sort of stood out as compared to them when we got into these kind of classes. We did this training in the camp. It was very cold, and there was a lot of snow on the ground at that time.

Marcello: I assume that this training took place before you actually were sent out on any projects.

Daman: This is true.

Marcello: About how long did this training last?

Daman: It lasted about three weeks. Then they had rules and regulations that they would not let us go out and work if

it was thirty degrees below zero. They said that a man's efficiency drops so rapidly after that that it wasn't worthwhile to go out there. There were many, many days during that winter that we didn't go out because of the temperature. I might say to you that during that winter one time it got down to fifty-one below zero. The thermometer got down inside of the ball, and it would not rise out of the ball again. It was very, very cold. Our buildings were made out of palisade material, quartered logs with bark on the outside of them. Then they were put up like a log cabin, except with modern nails and so on to hold them together. They were very nice buildings, very warm buildings.

Marcello: How many men were there to one of these buildings?

Daman: There were about forty men to a building. We had between 200 and 300 in our camp.

Marcello: What were some of the other buildings in the camp besides the barracks?

Daman: We had a hospital. We had a mess hall. We had an administrative building, and we had a day room or entertainment center. Those were the type buildings that we had.

Marcello: What were the medical facilities like at this camp?

Daman: We had a hospital there. I would say that they were very good under the conditions. However, the fellows from the

camp were chosen as orderlies for this hospital. We had a regular Army doctor there and Army corpsmen, medical corpsmen. But to assist these men, why, they pulled in certain fellows from the camp to work in the hospital as orderlies.

Marcello: What particular assignment or job did you have at this CCC camp?

Daman: Well, for a while, I was assigned over in the hospital as an orderly. Then later on, because I had taken a commercial course in high school, I was selected to go over to Chippewa headquarters. We were in the Chippewa District up there, and the Army headquarters was over in the town of Bemidji, Minnesota. That was the Chippewa headquarters. So I was to go over there and report and become a stenographer there.

Marcello: Is that what you did basically during your entire tenure in the CCC camp?

Daman: That's what I did basically for the remainder of the time, yes. I worked there in the headquarters in Bemidji.

Marcello: What sort of specific duties did you have as a stenographer?

Daman: Well, I'd say a clerk-stenographer more than a stenographer because I did a lot of typing, general typing. I took a lot of dictation and transcribed the notes and did a lot of typing on military letters and the like. So I got some good training that was to stand me in good stead when later I joined the Army.



Marcello: I would gather that as a clerk-typist or a clerk-stenographer, you were in very, very close contact with the Army, since it administered the camps.

Daman: That is correct because they had a colonel that commanded the whole district, and I worked directly for him in this headquarters.

Marcello: What were some of the major administrative problems that you came across?

Daman: The same problems that bother them today bothered us back there: the lack of supplies, and the inability to get the necessary supplies to run a headquarters of that kind--such simple things as typewriter ribbons, pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners and what not.

Marcello: Why was there so much difficulty in getting supplies? Was it because of the distances involved or the heavy snows or what?

Daman: I think it was because of the lack of transportation up into the town of Bemidji from St. Paul. We were taken first into St. Paul where there was a big Army training camp up there. Then from there we were to be shunted out to these various camps, and we had to go back through the Army chain to St. Paul, the Army in St. Paul, in order to get our supplies. They just didn't have enough of them on hand to handle this tremendous influx of administrative load that was put into that area. I think somebody failed

to do the proper planning. That was my idea of the lack of supplies.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you were working actually in Bemidji. How far was this from the actual CCC camp?

Daman: Well, it was about forty-two miles from the first camp that I was taken to. Later on, I was barracked and quartered just about five miles outside of the town of Bemidji. They would take us to and from the camp at night and bring us in in the morning to work at the headquarters. Of course, we were able to get our meals on the civilian economy in town for the time that we were away from the camp. But that's the way they worked it.

Marcello: When your camp was forty-two miles from Bemidji, did you stay in Bemidji or did you commute then, too?

Daman: I commuted at that time. They took us immediately out to this camp and assigned us a bunk and messing facilities out there at this camp, which was only five miles away from the headquarters. Along with the rest of the headquarters personnel, I was kept out there at this camp until I got worked into the position I was later to take.

Marcello: Did you have very much trouble adjusting to the military regimen of the camp?

Daman: No, I would say not. As a matter of fact, that was the easiest part of it all.

Marcello: What sort of a relationship existed between the military and the civilians in the camp? By civilians, I'm referring to the personnel of the United States Forestry Service.

Daman: Oh, I'd say that the relationship was very good. The military were in command of the discipline part of the camp, whereas the Forestry personnel were in complete charge of the technical aspect of what the men in the camp did.

Marcello: In other words, as soon as you left the camp, you were under civilian control. When you were in camp, you were under military control.

Daman: That is correct, sir, That is correct.

Marcello: What was a typical day in the CCC's like? Can you describe what a typical day was like from the time you got up in the morning until you retired?

Daman: We'd get up in the morning before six o'clock and go to breakfast. Then we had about an hour in which to get washed up and shaved and ready for the day's activities. At that time, why, if you had any time left over, why, that was the time you had to yourself. You might spend a few minutes writing a note home or something like that. Then you were either sent out on a work detail to the work areas there from that camp, or we were picked up in trucks and taken to the headquarters, where we immediately assumed our jobs in there, whatever jobs we had, as clerk-stenographers or clerk-typists or whatever you have that way. Then about 4:30 in

the afternoon, they would knock it off and take us to camp. From then on till the rest of the day, you had that . . . the time was all your own. Many of us loved to fish, and we were right on the edge of a big lake there. So we got to go down and spend a little time going fishing. It was too cold to go swimming at that time, but later on, as it began to warm up, why, then lots of them went down at that time for a swim.

Marcello: What sort of recreation facilities were provided in this camp? You mentioned that you yourself went fishing.

Daman: Well, they had sports of different kinds. Baseball teams, and they had some basketball courts put up in the camp there, and then they had quoits and horseshoes and that sort of . . . that was just about the extent of it.

Marcello: I also gather that in a great many of these CCC camps, there were educational facilities established.

Daman: If there were, I didn't come in contact with any of them because I certainly would have taken advantage of them had there been any where I was. But I didn't know of any, if there were.

Marcello: I was wondering if there were any educational facilities in this particular camp. In the evenings when you were finished with the day's work, were you free until a certain time? Could you go into town if you wished or something of that nature?

Daman: Yes, I did. I met some of the fellows in town there and got to playing...at that time I played a clarinet. We organized a little band, dance band. We practiced about three nights a week. I could go in and meet with these fellows, and we'd go to one of the fellow's houses, and we would practice for two or three hours a night. Of course, in order to get back to camp, I had to hoof it. There was no transportation back at that time of night for us.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what sort of a reception did the CCC boys get from the local townspeople?

Damon: It was very good. The townspeople were very cooperative and very anxious to help us in every way that they could. They realized that what we were doing was for their benefit, in effect, that we were up there in that area because eventually they would gain from the camps being there. These camps cleaned up these national forests, and under the supervision of the National Forestry Service, as I say, they prolonged the lives of the National Forest. This, of course, meant a lot to the civilians in that area.

Marcello: Now like you mentioned awhile ago, you actually did not work on any of these projects with the Forest Service, is that correct?

Daman: Yes, I did. There was a time when we were over on Lake Itasca that I was out on the park details where we'd go out to the parks and we would dig fire lanes, or with a

bucksaw we'd saw down big pine trees. Then they would have us cut them up in hand lengths that could be handled, and they generally taught us logging.

Marcello: What was the attitude of most of the boys who were working on these projects? Did they think they were doing something worthwhile, or how exactly did they view these CCC projects?

Daman: Well, they were anxious to get whatever job they had assigned done because they were hoping that we could get out of there for some reason or another and go back home. But that was just wishful thinking.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that there was a certain percentage of fellows from urban areas in these camps, or in this particular camp. Was there ever any friction between the boys from the East and, let's say, the boys from the Midwest?

Daman: None. None at all. They got along very well because they realized that they had to live and eat and practically sleep together and so on for they don't know how long. So they figured they might as well make it as pleasant as they could. Everybody cooperated in that manner.

Marcello: What were the most frequent kinds of disciplinary problems that arose in these CCC camps?

Daman: I think probably it would be AWOL, absent without leave. Somebody'd go to town and they'd get mixed up with some

of the civilians in the community. They'd take off for some place, and they wouldn't be back to work on time and so on. So they had constant problems of that nature.

Marcello: What sort of disciplinary action would be taken against somebody who went AWOL?

Daman: They couldn't do anything to them except fine them, and this came out of their paycheck that went back to their families. Of course, this worked a hardship on their families, and they straightened out right quick then because of that.

Marcello: Suppose somebody actually deserted. Was somebody sent after him?

Daman: No, not to my knowledge, they were not. They were turned over to the local sheriff and the police departments of the town probably where this individual might be going to look and pick him up. They had a complete military record on him, photographs and fingerprints and everything, which they could send along to the police departments. I don't know of any of them that actually deserted and stayed away from these places.

Marcello: In some cases, if the wrongdoing was serious enough, a person could get a dishonorable discharge from the CCC's could he not?

Daman: Yes, he could. But if he got that, of course, that meant that he was depriving his family of some income that they

might otherwise have at a time when they needed every dollar they could get because this was right in the heart of the depression, and these dollars were hard to come by at that time.

Marcello: I would assume that a dishonorable discharge from the Civilian Conservation Corps was almost as serious as a dishonorable discharge from the military, was it not?

Daman: This I don't know. I don't know how far they took this with respect to how it affected the individual in his after life. I don't think that it would be quite the same because it didn't have quite the same connotation, as we were told. But I think that it would carry a certain stigma that it'd have a difficult time living down.

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

Daman: The food was very good. They brought bulk food out, and we had our own cooks and our own mess halls and prepared it. They were excellent cooks, and they turned out a very good meal. The food was very stable.

Marcello: Something we didn't talk about--and I should have mentioned this at the beginning of the interview--what were your feelings toward Franklin Roosevelt at that particular time?

Daman: Oh, my feelings were very good. I thought he had done a good job by setting these things up. I could see what good they were doing all over the country, insofar as if the other camps were accomplishing what our camp was accomplishing. I felt like that this was a fine thing because this took



a large number of these young men off the streets and gave them gainful employment, which was something that they needed very badly. I looked on him with the highest praise.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that the bulk of the money earned in the CCC camp by the enrollee was returned to his family. I assume that he never saw that money. In other words, that was automatically deducted from his check?

Daman: This is correct. He got \$1.00 a day while he was in the CCC. All of this went to his family, except he was given \$5.00. That \$5.00 he could keep. He was given it to buy necessities with, like toothpaste and razor blades and the like. We had a small canteen store in our camp in the rec hall where these things were for sale--candy bars and the like. There was no beer or anything like that around the camp, so we weren't a problem with that.

Marcello: I would assume that \$5.00 went a long way at that particular time, since you were getting your room, board, and clothing free.

Daman: Yes, it did. Yes \$5.00 was very good. As I say, I supplemented mine with playing in this dance band. We got a lot of good contracts that summer. We played at a lot of openings of these lodges up there on these lakes in Minnesota. They were quite numerous. We had a good little band, and we had no trouble getting bookings at all.

Marcello: Now this job would be done in the evenings, is that correct?

Daman: That is correct, so it wouldn't interfere with the CCC duties.

Marcello: I gather that the CCC also had a certain type of uniform. Can you describe what the uniform was like?

Daman: Yes. It was just a plain woolen shirt and a pair of plain woolen O.D. slacks. Up there when the snow was on the ground, we were issued those packs that had rubber bottoms with the leather uppers and so on, which were very good for traveling in the snow. The snow was quite deep up there in Minnesota at that time. That is one of the coldest areas of the United States anyway.

Marcello: How long were you in this camp altogether?

Daman: When I went up there, I was there from September until I went to Bemidji into the Army headquarters in December. I stayed over there from December until the following July 1, when I got my discharge. I got my discharge to go back to school.

Marcello: You'd been in a total of six months?

Daman: Over six months at a time. Actually, a total of almost a year. Not quite a year when I got out. As soon as I had definite proof that I was going back to school, why, I was able to get my discharge from the CCC.

Marcello: I've read that a lot of the CCC personnel gained a certain amount of weight from the good food and the regular diet in these CCC camps. Was this your experience?

Daman: Many of them did. Yes, many of them did, but I didn't. I was so active that I kept the same weight pretty much right on through the whole affair.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that you did a great deal of fishing. What'd you do with all the fish you caught?

Daman: We'd take them up to the mess hall and make a deal with the cooks. Then they'd cook them up for us, and we'd have our friends, and we'd have a fish fry. Of course, we'd have to split off a certain amount of it for the cooks, but that was all right because fish was plentiful up there in those lakes. They were not difficult to catch.

Marcello: What did having a job actually mean to you so far as self-respect was concerned and things of that nature?

Daman: It meant a lot to me at that time because you could see the depression in these towns all around you, and men and young fellows my age were roving the streets and had no jobs and so on. I felt very, very fortunate to have this job because my mother was saving a lot of this money that was coming home, and I was going to be able to go back to school some day with that money.

Marcello: This was the case in a lot of instances. I have heard several other former CCC enrollees mention that in a great many cases the families would actually save this money and it became very, very useful later on in going to college and things of this nature.

Daman: In my case, I went to business college after I got out. I went from Minnesota back to Kansas, from Kansas to Lynchburg, Virginia. There I went to business college.

Marcello: Did you ever see very many instances of homesickness in these camps on the part of the boys?

Daman: Oh, yes, there was plenty of them. But they got over it pretty rapidly. The counselors in the camp, those that stayed right there as a permanent party with the camps, used to tell these fellows to get active and doing something, and you'll forget about going home.

Marcello: Now were these Army officers Regular Army, or were they Reserve officers?

Daman: Yes, they were . . . well, many of them were Regular Army, but many of them were Reserves called in to handle this military function.

Marcello: What sort of library facilities did the camp have? I knew some of the camps did have a very, very small library.

Daman: We had a small library. It had a lot of fiction and very little nonfiction. You could draw out books. I did a lot of reading while I was in these camps, and I enjoyed it very much.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that these barracks were quite warm and well-constructed to hold out the winter cold, I suppose.

Daman: Yes, they were.

Marcello: What were the barracks like on the inside? What'd they look like?

Daman: They were rough or hewn logs. There was no finish of any kind on them. The fireplaces, they had them with rough stone put together with concrete and these smooth stone. Of course, we had no problem getting wood of all types.

Marcello: But the heat was provided through wood-burning fireplaces?

Daman: That's correct, yes. They were quite toasty and warm inside.

Marcello: What sort of bunk area did you have?

Daman: Well, bunks were double-decker on which they had...they were made out of wood. They'd be double-deck, and they you drew whether you got the top bunk or the bottom bunk. Of course, you were issued a mattress, an Army mattress, and Army blankets and the like. There were no spring beds that I know of except over in the hospital. When I worked over in that hospital, I was able to sleep over there, also. We would administer to the patients.

We had a couple of cases of sleeping sickness break out in the camp where I was. These cases required a lot of extra care. We would go down and get their food and bring it up from the mess hall for these people. We would also take care of them during all the other time.

Marcello: You mentioned that you had several cases of sleeping sickness while you were there? What was the cause of this, or how did this come about?

Daman: I don't know how this came about, but it just cropped out. Of course, people living close together, if they ever do get sleeping sickness . . . I remember some cases here not too long ago back here in the States, they broke out in some Army camps or Marine Camps, Camp Roberts, I think it was, out in California. That was because they had a lot of men together. Of course, one carrier gets into this group, and it doesn't take long for this to run rampant.

Marcello: Did you lose very many men through this?

Daman: No, we didn't. We didn't have any deaths at all.

Marcello: While we're on this subject, what was the accident rate like in this camp? You mentioned that you were taking people from the city and putting them in these rustic jobs.

Daman: Very, very low. We had no major accidents of any kind. But we had ambulances there, in which case, if we needed the ambulance, they could take these people from our camp right into the hospital in Bemidji.

Marcello: To what would you attribute this low accident rate? Do you think it would be the short orientation and training program that you had before you got started?

Daman: I would say the fine supervision that was given by the Forestry Service.

Marcello: In other words, the people who were supervising these projects from the Forestry Service were highly competent.

Daman: The Forestry Service had hired local woodsmen there to come in. These local woodsmen worked right in with teams of these CCC boys. When you had a good, accomplished local woodsman that knew what he was doing, he made very sure that his people followed the safety rules and regulations and that we didn't have any accidents. This is what I attribute our safety record to.

Marcello: I would assume that these local woodsmen who became supervisors were probably paid more than the normal CCC individual.

Daman: Oh, yes. They were paid much more. They were hired . . . they were civilian employees of the United States government. They were paid a pretty fair rate. Of course, they liked this because this gave them gainful employment at a time when jobs were not available in the logging camps. I didn't see any logging operations to speak of, like regular logging camps, in any of these places. They couldn't because these were United States government parks. The government wasn't letting people go in there and cut these fine stands of pine trees. The trees that we cut were all always marked by the Forestry Service and cut for a specific reason and then taken out of there for a specific reason and later utilized. But we sure cut some mighty fine timber fire lanes and roads and that sort of thing and cleaned up all the underbrush and undercover in these national forests.

It probably prolonged the lives of these national forests by twenty-five years, at least.

Marcello: What was done with this lumber that was cut?

Daman: Well, in our camp, they had a sawmill. They would take this lumber in certain amounts of it in there, and they would cut it into palisades. They'd use these palisades in other camps to repair buildings and that sort of thing. We had a standing order of so many ... we had to cut so much timber for a certain amount of palisades this week, or we had to cut a certain amount for a certain number of bridges that we were wanting to put up. They were cut to specifications. Then the local woodsmen would take over from there with other locally hired people and haul this lumber out to these sites and either build the buildings or build the bridges, whatever the Forestry Service wanted done.

Marcello: Getting back to the military regimen once again, did you have to stand inspection and things of that nature in the camp?

Daman: Oh, yes, you did. Every Saturday morning there was an inspection. We got very, very accustomed to that. It wasn't hard after the first two or three times. You get use to those things, and they become a matter of course to you.

Marcello: Was it the usual military type of inspection?



Daman: Yes, but I would say it wasn't quite as stringent as the military inspection. It was good training vehicle for these young Reserve officers that they had up there, too.

Marcello: What sort of bathing and toilet facilities were there in this camp?

Daman: We had bathhouses, and we had common outdoor toilets, but the bathhouses had big drums outside where they hauled our water with a tank truck and pumped the water up into these barrels. We could go in, and we were permitted to take two showers a day if we wanted it.

Marcello: Why was it that you were sent all the way from Kansas to Minnesota for this CCC project?

Daman: That is something I never will know in my life. But we had some people that were in the camp outside of Bemidji that came from Oklahoma. So evidently that was in the planning that they did, that they were going to take the Kansas boys and put them out there in the Itasca Region. Our first camp was on a lake called Lake Itasca...I mean, near Lake Itasca and Lake Marion.

Marcello: Now, is this the one that was about forty miles from Bemidji?

Daman: Bemidji, yes. Now near this was the headwaters of the Mississippi River. Now, these two lakes froze over very thickly during the wintertime, and we were able to go down there and play ice hockey on them and skate on them and that sort of thing. They provided fine recreation.

Marcello: Now I gather you weren't at this first camp for too long.

Daman: No, I was there from September until December.

Marcello: Of what year?

Daman: This was 1933.

Marcello: In December of '33, you went to the camp that was five miles from Bemidji.

Daman: From Bemidji, that is correct, sir. That is correct. I stayed there until July of '34, at which time I got my discharge.

Marcello: Was there ever any voluntary effort made on the part of the enrollees to spruce up the camps in any way, perhaps add things extra?

Daman: No, the camps were laid out, and they were very carefully laid out. These buildings were all of the same design. Other than to get out and police around the barracks when we had police duty on Saturdays, there was no effort made to brighten up in any way like some of the camps that I read about later.

Marcello: What sort of leave provisions did this particular camp have?

Daman: None. They had none whatsoever.

Marcello: In other words, the only time you really got out of camp for free time was in the evenings when the day's work was done.

Daman: That is correct, sir. That is correct.

Marcello: During the whole time that you were at this camp, you did not have an opportunity to go home.

Daman: That is right. I didn't.

Marcello: Do you think this is perhaps one of the reasons why they usually sent the enrollees so far away from home? Do you think it was to discourage them from going home all the time?

Daman: It might be a reason for it, but I can't know for sure.

Marcello: In other words, they sent you that far so that perhaps it may have been too far for weekly visits. But if you ever did get a leave, it still would be maybe close enough that you could go home if the situation arose.

Daman: Well, we did have this provision. If somebody in your family at home got ill, they would give emergency leave for you to go home for a certain amount of time. But they never had any cases where the boys didn't come back as they were supposed to do. They didn't desert while they were out there.

Marcello: Did the CCC camps usually observe the standard holidays?

Daman: Yes, the same holidays as the Army had. Of course, these holidays meant provision for us to go participate in winter sports of some sort. I mean, we could go skiing or play hockey or skating or something like that. We always looked forward to doing this on the so-called holidays.

Marcello: I know that some of the camps published their own little newspapers. Was there ever anything like this in your camp?

Daman: No, there was not. It was not that well organized, the first camp I was in, nor the second one either.

Marcello: How about hazing? Sometimes when new enrollees would come into the camp, they would have to undergo some sort of hazing?

Daman: This was not practiced where I was. We didn't have any new people reporting in. The same group stayed right there that went in there originally until eventually they were through, and they got out of there and got back home again. We didn't have new recruits in our camp at all that I know of. I saw no instance of any hazing in either of the camps, so I can't attest to that.

Marcello: There were occasions when veterans from World War I were sent to some of these CCC camps because they couldn't find work. Did you have many World War I veterans in your camp?

Daman: No, we did not.

Marcello: I know a lot of times they were sent to CCC camps. Usually they were segregated from the other enrollees. How about politics? From time to time, there were charges that certain politicians tried to use these CCC camps to political advantage through getting jobs for people and things of this nature.

Daman: Well, if there was any of that that went on around the camps that I was in, I was not aware of it. I mean, there may have been. But I certainly was not interested in the politics of Minnesota at that time, and I didn't try to keep up on it. It would just have been rumor if I had heard anything about it at all, and I never heard of anything like that.

Marcello: Incidentally, did you have the opportunity to vote absentee or anything like that while you were in these camps?

Daman: No. At that time, I wasn't eligible to vote.

Marcello: You weren't old enough, that's right. I assume that this was probably true for most of the other boys in the camp.

Daman: A great many of them. A great many of the boys, yes, correct.

Marcello: I really hadn't thought about that. But the voting age at that time, of course, was still twenty-one years of age.

Daman: That is correct.

Marcello: As you look back on your stay in the CCC camp, how do you think this helped you later on when you entered the Army, and then later on when you became a prisoner-of-war?

Daman: Well, I'd say when I entered the Army, it stood me in very good stead because I got a lot of good military training up there at the headquarters on military correspondence, which I was able to use when I became enlisted. When I took up a

job of clerk-typist in the Army, why, I had a lot of basic training out of the way. I didn't have to go through that again.

Marcello: Was this generally the case? In other words, do you think that usually those that had experience in the CCC usually made the transition to the Regular Army much easier?

Daman: I think that is true because I think the orientation period would be much less for them than somebody who just came in off the street into the Army at that time. Certainly the regimentation was there. We had the regimentation, but it was not the severe discipline like you'd have in the Army. But they were at least accustomed to a taste of it, and it wasn't too unpleasant for them. So they were able to adjust fairly rapidly.

Marcello: Let me ask you one last question. Suppose we were to have some sort of an economic catastrophe like that again, that is, like the one that we had in the 1930's. Do you think it would be a good idea to bring back something like the CCC once more?

Daman: Very definitely I do. But I think there's a lot of planning would have to go in on it as to how to get the most out of the efforts of all those young men--not just put them in these camps today, as they did then, without a lot of preplanning as to what they're going to accomplish and so on. But I do think that there's a lot could be accomplished

if it were done properly. I think it would be a fine thing to get a bunch of them off the streets.

Marcello: In other words, are you saying that this was perhaps one of the weaknesses of the CCC during the '30's, that there really wasn't as much planning for these projects as there could have been or should have been?

Daman: I would think that that would have been my overall summary of what I saw in the thing, yes.

Marcello: In other words, how efficient do you think the CCC was?

Daman: I think there was a good deal of wasted motion, frankly.

Marcello: In other words, a lot of the enrollees were simply time servers and very little else?

Daman: Well, yes, I think it was tremendously expensive for the government, perhaps, for what they actually got out of it in the long haul.