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Interview with
WELDON O. WESTERN
February 18, 1987

Place of Interview: Saginaw, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Weldon O. Western

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello Date of Interview: February 18, 1987

Place of Interview: Saginaw, Texas

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Weldon Western for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on February 18, 1987, in Saginaw, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Western in order to get his reminiscences and experiences concerning the time that he spent with the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Mr. Western, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. Tell me when you were born, where you were born--things of that nature.

Mr. Western: I was born on March 30, 1914, in Chico, Wise County, Texas.

Dr. Marcello: What is your educational background?

Mr. Western: I finished grade school in a rural school--Lone Star School--in the community. Then I went on to complete high school at Alvord, Texas--Alvord High School.

Dr. Marcello: When did you graduate from high school?

Mr. Western: On May 23, 1934

Dr. Marcello: So you graduated from high school about four or five years into the Depression.

Western: That was one of the worst years. Since you brought it up, I will tell you that the school had already gone broke. They were not paying the teachers anything. It happened about January, and the only reason we had a school for the term was that people in the community and around Alvord came in, and they donated what they could to help pay the teachers for their room and board. The teachers taught for nothing to complete that year of high school.

Marcello: Let me ask you this. What sort of occupation was your father in at that time?

Western: My family was a farmer at that time.

Marcello: So you lived on a farm?

Western: Yes, I lived on a farm.

Marcello: How did the coming of the Great Depression change life on the farm?

Western: It changed it very drastically. It didn't make any difference what you grew, you had no market for it. People just didn't have the money to buy. If you grew sweet potatoes, you might get 25¢ a bushel for them. If you grew cantaloupes, you probably had to feed them to the hogs. Watermelons would bring about, oh, from a cent to 3¢ a pound. You just couldn't get anything for anything you grew.

Marcello: What sort of a farm did your father have? Was it mainly those kinds of things? Vegetables and so on?

Western: It was mostly vegetables and crops like that. We did have a

few cattle, and I imagine they kept our heads above water.

Marcello: I do know that for a lot of farmers, the Great Depression started long before 1929. How was your father's farm operation doing, let's say, in the period before the stock market crashed and the Depression hit the whole country?

Western: We were doing fairly well at that time. However, in 1929, when the Depression hit, my father was the state secretary of the Farm-Labor Union of Texas at that time. He continued to be secretary until about...I think the union went broke about 1931 or 1932 or maybe 1934. Anyway, it went broke pretty soon after the Depression started.

Marcello: This is kind of interesting. Why was it that your father decided to become active in the Farm-Labor Union?

Western: I don't know. They just came and organized it up in Lone Star in--I don't know--about 1928, I suppose. No, it was about 1923. They got organized in there, and he became active in it and finally made it up to state secretary for the Farm-Labor Union.

Marcello: What was the sort of activity that the Farm-Labor Union engaged in? Do you know?

Western: They helped to keep the prices up on the farm products, and they helped raise the price on cotton and such as that. They had a pretty strong union here at that time.

Marcello: How did they do that? How did they help keep the price up?

Western: They were pretty well organized, and they would just keep stuff off the market until the price did go up.

Marcello: Did they have warehouses or grain elevators or anything like that to store produce?

Western: Well, at that time I was pretty young. I didn't know too much about it, but I'm sure they did because they did control things quite good.

Marcello: This is somewhat of a personal question, but I'll ask it, anyhow. Was your father's farm debt free at the time the Depression hit?

Western: We did not own the farm. We were renting the farm. We didn't own it. We just paid money--rent--on the farm. His father owned his farm, and it was debt free.

Marcello: How large was this farm?

Western: The one we had there was about 160 acres, I believe, and there was about 100 acres of it in cultivation.

Marcello: Do you know who owned the farm?

Western: Yes. It was a widow lady by the name of West.

Marcello: What kind of rent were you all paying on that farm?

Western: We paid as high as about \$300 a year. But during the Depression we were paying about \$100 a year, I think. The rent had to go down because everything else had.

Marcello: What do you remember about that woman?

Western: I never met her. She lived out away from there, so I've never seen her.

Marcello: How was the rent paid?

Western: They just paid it by check. That was all. My dad would write out a check and send it to her—wherever she was. I don't even know where she was at that time.

Marcello: Where would your father usually sell the produce? In Fort Worth?

Western: He'd sell some of it around locally; but ordinarily we grew a lot of sweet potatoes, and he would haul these sweet potatoes from Alvord to Wichita Falls. That's where he sold most of it—around Wichita Falls and such places as that. Such as watermelons and that, during that time they didn't have local trucks to come in and pick up the melons like they do now. They shipped those things out by the carload. They shipped them to Wichita, Kansas, and first one place then another. I remember...I might as well finish this story. I believe it was 1935—I don't know—or somewhere along in there. They got a bunch of people interested in planting these cantaloupes. They planted them, and they were going to ship them to Wichita, Kansas. Well, they didn't turn out too good. Everybody planted cantaloupes. They had a big place up in Chico—a packing center. They packed those cantaloupes and shipped them out to Wichita, Kansas, and when the returns came back on them, some of them brought 7¢ a crate, and some of them they had to pay freight on. We happened to have to pay freight on

ours. About 30¢ a crate, I think, we paid freight on. But there were a lot of people that was stung in that deal.

Marcello: Did most of the neighbors around you and so on also rent their farms?

Western: Yes, quite a few of them did. But there were property owners scattered around, you know.

Marcello: How many people were there in your family?

Western: There were eight kids and my dad and mother. There were four boys and four girls.

Marcello: That was pretty typical at that time, wasn't it, that is, to have large families because help was needed on the farm.

Western: That's right. I think that might have had something to do with the large families.

Marcello: How did the Depression affect your father?

Western: Well...

Marcello: In other words, what I'm saying is, we know that a lot of men lost a certain amount of self-esteem because they didn't have a job, and they had no income; and in your case, at least, the income had been drastically reduced.

Western: Well, it was very disgusting, I'm sure, for him because of the fact that he couldn't get the money to support us as he should. But there wasn't anyone else who had it. That's one thing about it. You couldn't have too much of a problem.

Still, we did manage to survive without going on any

form of relief or something like that, except for this CCC deal when I went on in it.

Marcello: I'm assuming that since you were an agricultural family, you at least had enough to eat during the Depression.

Western: Yes, sir, we had enough to eat, such as it was.

Marcello: Describe what the typical meals would consist of.

Western: For breakfast, why, we'd...at that time these tins of salmon didn't cost, you know, \$4 a can then. They were about the cheapest thing you could buy--about 7¢ to 10¢ a can. We would buy these salmon tins and have that for breakfast for our meat, you know. We'd make salmon patties out of that. Then for other meals, why, we'd usually have pinto beans and cornbread. There was a lot of that eaten at that time--a lot more than now. It wasn't just a special deal when you had beans. It was an everyday occasion. Of course, we had canned food and such as that--canned fruits and canned vegetables that we used to splice in with it at times. We grew our own pork and beef, so that helped out some.

Marcello: What'd you do for entertainment during the Depression?

Western: We went to movies and to carnivals. Then there was a few musicals, you know. They'd have these musicals at different places, and they'd have musical contests. We'd go over there on a Saturday night. A lot of times there'd be people from everywhere. If they could win a buck singing a song or

playing some instrument, well, they'd try it. That was pretty interesting.

Marcello: What did the election of Franklin Roosevelt and the coming of the New Deal mean to you and your family? Do you recall?

Western: Well, it wasn't long until things started getting better. After he took office, things started picking up because he put people to work and all that stuff. Up until that time, I don't care what you did--you couldn't find a job. A friend of mine and I went out the following year looking for a job just to pick cotton. We would have done anything. We went all the way across Texas, all the way out close to Lubbock. We only found one day's work. We ran out of money, and we had to come home (chuckle). We couldn't stay out there. We couldn't find but just one day's work. One fellow had some cotton seed he wanted unloaded, and that's what we did. That's the only job we found in all that time. Of course, it wasn't like it is now. You could get out on the road and highway, you know, and just thumb rides and go. But I wouldn't do it now. Then everybody was friendly, and you could trust everybody. But now, you don't know who...you might pick up a ride, and it'd be your last one now. It has happened.

Marcello: Is it not true that there were a lot of people on the road, so to speak, during that time?

Western: There were a lot of people. In fact, you had to get way out

of town to even not have competition and catch you a ride almost from any town. In again talking about this cantaloupe packing shed we had there in Chico, there would be freight trains coming through there that were absolutely loaded down with...you couldn't call them hobos. They were people looking for work.

Marcello: Riding the rails, I think they used to call it, or riding the rods.

Western: Riding the rails. Most of the time the trains wouldn't stop, and we'd throw them cantaloupes out there onto the trains so they'd have something to eat.

Marcello: Did you find a lot of that sort of thing going on, that is, people helping one another? You just described that you threw cantaloupes to these people.

Western: People were a lot more considerate then than they are now.

Marcello: Did you perchance ever listen to any of Roosevelt's Fireside Chats on the radio?

Western: Oh, yes, I listened to them--nearly all of them.

Marcello: Describe what they were like.

Western: He'd always tell you what he was going to do and what needed to be done. It wouldn't be long until you could see that he meant what he was saying. They were very interesting.

Marcello: I understand that when the president gave one of those Fireside Chats, it was almost like a social occasion. Everybody would gather around the radio.

Western: Oh, yes. If you didn't have a radio, you always went some-
place where you could listen.

Marcello: Did your family have a radio?

Western: Yes, sir, we had a radio.

Marcello: Did you have electricity on your farm?

Western: No, sir, there wasn't any electricity. They did have these
wind chargers that you had to use.

Marcello: When was it that the farm finally got electricity?

Western: Well, the farm got electricity while I was overseas in
World War II, because we didn't have it when I left here.

Marcello: Was it the Rural Electrification Administration?

Western: Yes. Oh, yes.

Marcello: Another New Deal agency.

Western: Yes.

Marcello: Did your father ever receive any benefits under the AAA--
the Agricultural Adjustment Administration--or wasn't his
farm big enough for that?

Western: I believe he did. He got a few small checks, you know, from
that. Yes, he got small checks for such like.

Marcello: Okay, you graduate from high school in 1934. I think you
mentioned this a moment ago, but I'll have you repeat it.
What was the job situation for a young man who graduated
from high school?

Western: You couldn't find a job. If you didn't have a job at home,
you would just sort of do without. If you found a job, you

couldn't...people needed you to work, in other words, but they didn't have the money to pay you. You didn't want to work for nothing. You could do that at home.

Marcello: What did you do between the time that you graduated and the time that you finally enrolled in the CCC?

Western: Well, I worked on the farm. I helped my dad there. During the hay baling season and such as that around there, why, I could get a job tieing hay or working around a hay baler and make a little extra money, but that was just seasonal. It didn't last long. It didn't take long to go through a meadow of hay, and then you were out of a job again.

Marcello: What was your attitude or thoughts relative to the fact that you couldn't find a job?

Western: Well, it was disgusting. You'd get bored and everything because there was nothing you could do, you know. I didn't know too dangd much you could do about it. I tried to solve the problem by picking cotton and got in worse shape (chuckle).

Marcello: Did you kind of feel like you may have been a burden on your family a little bit?

Western: Yes, you felt that way.

Marcello: Okay, describe the process by which you got into the Civilian Conservation Corps. First of all, when did that occur?

Western: On September 12, 1937. But you're going to have to tell me the process. I forgot (chuckle).

Marcello: So you were out of high school, then, for about three years just scrounging work wherever you could find it before you went in.

Western: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: What prompted you to join the CCC?

Western: I don't know. I just decided it would be better than doing nothing, so I just tried and gave it a go to see what it was like.

Marcello: Do you know whether or not you had to prove need before you got in?

Western: I believe you did. I believe you did.

Marcello: I'm assuming that your family's income had to be below a certain level or something.

Western: Yes, I'm sure it did. It had to be.

Marcello: We talked about this off the record, but I'll ask one more time. Do you recall where you enlisted in the CCC?

Western: It was at Decatur, I believe.

Marcello: At the county courthouse?

Western: Yes.

Marcello: Do you recall whether or not you had to take any kind of a physical examination or anything of that nature?

Western: It's been so long that I do not remember, but I'm sure I did.

Marcello: Once you got into the CCC, what happened? In other words, where did you go?

Western: We got in a pullman train about 9:00 in the morning, and I

think that would be the twelfth or thirteenth of September. Anyway, we left Decatur on a Pullman train. It had a Pullman coach. We went all the way to Globe, Arizona.

Marcello: Why was it that the CCC would send you so far away when I know, in fact, that there were CCC projects around this area?

Western: I bet what they were doing is that they sent you wherever they needed men, you know. They had a list of where they needed men, and when they had those men formed, they would ship them to that place. They did a lot of people that way.

Marcello: How long was the enlistment?

Western: It was for six months.

Marcello: It was just like an Army enlistment, was it not?

Western: Just about. Same way as an Army enlistment, yes. In fact, this camp that I went to was under the Army. The Navy ran some, and the Army ran some.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you went to Globe, Arizona, and I'm assuming the CCC camp was someplace outside of Globe?

Western: Yes, sir. It was about, I'd say, five or six miles east of Globe, Arizona.

Marcello: Describe what the camp looked like from a physical standpoint. Take me on a walk through this camp.

Western: All right. There was an office building that was the orderly room where the officers stayed and all the business people

stayed. There was a supply building. It was not a large building. Then there was a mess hall that I believe would feed maybe a hundred people. It probably could have been more--I'm not sure--but I believe it would feed about a hundred people. Then there were two barracks and a library. We had a little old building for a library. That's about the size of the buildings.

Marcello: Describe what the barracks were like.

Western: The barracks were pretty nice inside. They were, I guess you'd say, warm because it did get cold every night. The people would live in one part of it, and then you had the latrine. Well, it had two rooms--closed rooms--and the foreman and the barracks chief usually slept there. Then there was the latrine, and the people slept over here on each side (gesture) just like an Army barracks.

Marcello: What kind of bedding did you have?

Western: Oh, I would say it was regular Army beds and Army blankets and everything.

Marcello: Were these bunks?

Western: No, sir. They were just flat on the ground. We didn't have any bunk beds at that time.

Marcello: What did you have to keep your personal belongings and so forth in?

Western: Well, they issued us barracks bags. Most of us bought a footlocker. They had footlockers that they let you buy,

and you could buy a footlocker to keep your stuff in.

Marcello: Of what kind of material were these barracks constructed?

Western: They were wood in composition like this asbestos siding or something like that.

Marcello: How were they heated?

Western: They had a furnace that they heated them by. If days were cold, someone had to stay on fire guard and stand there and keep the fire going. That was part of one of our duties.

Marcello: So it was simply like a large stove, maybe, in the middle of the barracks or something like that?

Western: Yes, sir.

Marcello: What kind of fuel did it use?

Western: Coal.

Marcello: The Army also issued you uniforms, did they not?

Western: Yes, sir, we had Army uniforms.

Marcello: Describe what your clothing consisted of.

Western: Well, for a dress uniform we had O.D. shirts and O.D. pants and one of those field caps, you know, and a tie and shoes. That just about takes care of that. Then for work clothes, you had blue denim shirts and pants, and then you had a jacket that you wore with it. There was a denim hat that you wore, too. You had to wear that denim hat with it.

Marcello: How many issues of clothing did you get, say, of those kinds of outfits that you just described?

Western: I think we only got one suit of O.D.'s, and we got two or

three sets of those work clothes.

Marcello: Did you have to wear your O.D's when you went off the base?

Western: Yes, sir, you did. You had to wear those. We wore them, also, to stand retreat every afternoon. We stood retreat every afternoon just like the Army did.

Marcello: Before you actually got into the CCC work, do you recall any kind of a conditioning program? It seems to me that in some cases they would have a two-week conditioning program.

Western: No, I don't think so. They just divided us up and sent us out with different foremen to work after we got all squared away there. They didn't give us too much time to get straightened out.

Marcello: Where were these guys from that were in your barracks and so on?

Western: They were from all over--different places.

Marcello: Did you have any buddies there with you?

Western: Yes. There was eight of us who went out there at that time. There was some boys from Rhome. I didn't know them before we went out there. I'd never met them before, but, including myself, there were eight.

Marcello: Do you recall what your pay was?

Western: It was \$30 a month.

Marcello: How much of that did you receive personally?

Western: You would receive \$5, I believe, and they sent \$25 home.

Marcello: In your particular case, what was done with the \$25 that was sent home?

Western: It was put up and saved for me, and when I came back, why, I enrolled in a barber school with it. But after I got started, I decided that I didn't have enough money to go to barber school, and I dropped out of barber school. I hadn't spent all my money. I still had some of it left.

Marcello: Just out of curiosity, do you remember how much of that money your parents had saved for you?

Western: I think it was \$150 or something like that. Yes, \$150.

Marcello: Which was a nice sum of money at that time.

Western: Yes. It was a nest egg.

Marcello: Was that the most money that perhaps you'd ever had at one time in your life up to then?

Western: That was the most I'd ever had up to that time, yes (chuckle). It was hard to get a hold of a dollar then.

Marcello: Take me out on one of your work details from the time you got up until you come in at the end of the day.

Western: I was assigned to a check dam. The foreman was Mr. Chaney.

Marcello: Chaney?

Western: Chaney, yes.

Western: They'd go out a way from camp. We went in the truck most of the time. It'd be about three or four miles from camp, and we'd build check dams out of rock in these canyons, you know, around coming off the mountains. We had to slow that water

down. The way they did that, they'd take a big rock and lay it in there and stack them up. Then back down here, you'd break up small rocks to put down here to make kind of a place to slow that water down, you know, and catch the dirt and sediments. I worked there every week day on those for about two or three months, I guess.

One morning, the boy who drove a truck out there started to turn the truck around, and he slipped off of a rock. I didn't know the fellow. The rock had ice on it or had frost on it or what. But, anyway, he slipped off of that. It was a flatbed truck, and he was driving about a ton-and-a-half truck. That thing started turning over broadside like that. Really, I couldn't tell whether it turned over three-and-a-half or four-and-a-half times. It rolled 164 feet. I happened to be standing up right about where it started, but by the time I turned around, it had already hit the ground twice going down there. It was pretty steep. He rolled it right upside down in that canyon. The truck was totally demolished, and the boy that was driving it was very fortunate. He had hit his head on the cab as much as three or as much as five times.

When he got out, why, the foreman didn't seem too much worried about the boy. He said, "Well, it just ruined the truck." I said, "Well, Mr. Chaney, there's one thing about it. The driver's still in pretty good shape." Then

we went on, but that just about killed that day.

When we went into camp, they called me in and interviewed about it, and I told them just about what happened to the best I knew. I told them I didn't know for sure how many times it turned over. It landed on the cab. They asked me how Mr. Chaney reacted. I told them, "Well, I thought he was more worried about the truck than he was about the man." I guess that was the wrong thing because I didn't see him go back out on the working party anymore (chuckle).

Marcello: What did you do from that point on?

Western: Well, the athletic director there--I don't remember his name--took me on a tour of the camp, and he showed me some things that he wanted done and asked me if I could do them. First, he wanted the lateral line that went from the mess hall to the cesspool repaired and cleaned out. Then he wanted me to fix the basketball goals and some other stuff around there. I told him, "Yes, sir, if we have the stuff, the equipment to do it with, I could do it."

So I went up there. This line wasn't a tile line from the mess hall down to the cesspool. It had been three boards that they nailed together--about four-inch boards that they nailed together--and they just buried it down in the dirt and let the water run through. I found out where it was stopped up, and I dug those up. Some of them had rotted out. I built new troughs and put them back down there. I

got that all fixed up in a little while. Then I got up the basketball goals and everything.

After that, the athletic director told me, "Well, I'm going to put you on the carpenter crew." He said, "You go out to Alamo Ranger Station with Mr. Footes." He was the foreman there. Anyway, there was a truck driver and one other boy that went out there besides me, I believe. There wasn't many. We'd run out there everyday.

When we got out there, well, Mr. Footes took me down and showed me a bunch of bridge structures--steel structures for bridges. There must have been...I don't know. I'd be afraid to say, but there was, anyway, four or five miles of it. He told me, "I want you to paint it with red lead." It had deteriorated quite a bit. We had to clean the rusty places and put this paint on it--me and this other boy. I've forgotten the other boy's name. He and I cleaned that stuff and painted it with orange paint. We'd been there for a long time. I guess two or three months it took us to paint it.

I never did know what Mr. Footes and the truck driver did or anything like that. They were always piddling around there. At this ranger station, there was a place, I believe, where he lived. There was a tower. I believe that was all. Then whenever we got through painting this, why, we built a tool shed for them there. That was the sort of carpenter

work that we did while we were out there.

Marcello: So you worked on those check dams, and then you worked for a while in camp, and then you worked out there on that bridge structure. That pretty well took care of your six months.

Western: That just about took care of my six months. I got discharged, and they sent me back to Decatur.

Marcello: About how large was that camp there at Globe? You might have to estimate this.

Western: How many people?

Marcello: Yes.

Western: I would say there were about eighty people there when I was there--something like that. About eighty people.

Marcello: Getting back to the check dams again, what time would you usually get up in the morning?

Western: We'd get up about 6:00 in the morning and get out to work by 8:00.

Marcello: How were you awakened?

Western: I believe they had a bugle that woke us up. They had a bugle that woke us up.

Marcello: What would breakfast usually consist of?

Western: They had sometimes bacon and eggs or sausage and eggs. We'd have some kind of fruit, whether it would be prunes or some other kind of fruit. We had coffee. They fed you good. We took our lunch out on the work party. We didn't

eat lunch in the camp except on Saturdays and Sundays.

Marcello: What kind of lunch would you usually have on the job?

Western: We'd have a couple of meat sandwiches--bologna or ham or some kind of sandwich meat--and maybe a jam and peanut butter sandwich. That'd be about what we'd have.

Marcello: And how about supper? What would it usually consist of?

Western: They had a variety of food for supper. Sometimes we'd have liver, which most people didn't like. Sometimes we'd have chopped beef or something like that. Sometimes we'd have meatloaf. You really couldn't complain about the food. The food was good.

Marcello: I have seen some studies which indicated that most people who entered the CCC gained weight by the time they were discharged. How about you?

Western: I didn't gain a whole lot of weight. I was pretty skinny, and I just stayed that way.

Marcello: What I understand is that some of those people who went into the CCC were eating better than they ever had for a long time.

Western: Yes, I'm sure they did.

Marcello: What time would you usually knock off at the end of the day?

Western: It'd be, I believe, about 4:00. We'd come in and clean up and stand at retreat every afternoon. It'd probably be about 4:00 or something like that.

Marcello: As you look back at the work on those check dams, was it

pretty steady work, or was there a lot of time being killed?
What do you think?

Western: I think that they were very effective. I think that they probably are still doing good because they were built strong, and they were built in there to where it would break that water and keep that erosion down. That wasn't just the crew that I was on. There were several different bunches that were building these dams--different crews.

Marcello: So what you're saying, in effect, is that the people who worked on those dams put in a good day's work.

Western: That's right. They did.

Marcello: You mentioned Mr. Chaney and Mr. Footes on several occasions. Were they connected with any government agency? Do you know?

Western: I don't really know. As far as I know, they were just hired by the Civilian Conservation Corps as foremen to have supervision of the jobs.

Marcello: Who ran the camps themselves?

Western: There was an Army lieutenant who ran the camp.

Marcello: Describe what Army discipline was like in one of the CCC camps.

Western: Well, you saluted the officer when you saw him and when he was outside and all that, just like the Army did. You addressed him as "sir." You respected the orderly room and everything, and you didn't bother those people unless you had a problem. Then you could go in there and see him. You could see him if you had a problem.

Marcello: What kind of discipline would you be subjected to in those camps? In other words, suppose a couple guys got in a fight.

Western: Well, they would give them some sort of punishment. We did our own KP there, and they would put them on kitchen police there for a while. We did have an incident that I missed a while ago. A bunch of us went to town one Saturday night or Friday night. We came in and a lot of beds that had been short-sheeted, you know, by the people that had come in. Well, the guys that were in the barracks...we knew that they were the ones that did it. So it started a little bit of trouble. They just grabbed these beds and turned these guys over. Well, it got to where nearly every bed in the outfit was turned over, you know, because they didn't like that short-sheeting, and the other guys didn't like to be just knocked out of bed (chuckle). It created a problem. The next day, whenever they got through interviewing people and finding out what the cause of it was, well, they really put a stop to that. We didn't have any more of that kind of problem. Some of the guys wound up doing KP and extra duty, first one thing then another.

Marcello: I'm assuming that another punishment would be to restrict you to the camp or something like that.

Western: Yes, they could restrict you to camp. They would do that, too. You could be restricted to camp.

Marcello: You have all of these men coming together from various

backgrounds and various parts of the country. How did everybody get along?

Western: They got along fine. There wasn't any trouble. I don't believe I ever saw a fight. They had disagreements, but I didn't see any fights.

Marcello: Was theft a problem?

Western: It wasn't. As far as I know, I never knew anybody in that camp to lose anything.

Marcello: Was this camp made up entirely of Anglos or did you have any Mexican enrollees or anything of that nature here? Do you recall?

Western: I don't believe we had any Mexicans. As far as I know, we didn't.

Marcello: What would you do in the evenings?

Western: Do you mean after we got off from work and retreat and all?

Marcello: Right.

Western: Well, we'd play cards or dominoes or something like that for a while. Killing time wasn't too much a problem for me. I cut a little hair before I got in there, and I got started cutting hair there. I could stay busy most any time. They'd pay you a quarter apiece for cutting hair. I could really get around on that.

Marcello: Did you go into town very much?

Western: I went into town and would go to the movies nearly every weekend or something like that, you know, every Friday or

Saturday night.

Marcello: How large a place was Globe at that time?

Western: As far as actual population, I don't know. It was a good-sized town.

Marcello: You would be going into town in your O.D. uniform like you mentioned a moment ago. What sort of a reception would you receive from the locals?

Western: It didn't seem to bother them much. They seemed pretty friendly. We didn't bother them, though. If we'd have bothered them, we might have run into some trouble. We didn't bother them, and they didn't bother us.

Marcello: Did you run into any problems with the locals your own age when it came to girls or anything like that?

Western: No, we didn't have any trouble in that line. I don't know how we got by without it, but we did.

Marcello: You also mentioned a moment ago that this camp had a library. What do you remember about that library?

Western: It had several books in it. You could go there and read a book if you had a day off, you know, like Sunday. You could go there and read a book or something like that. You could get a book out and bring it to the barracks and read it in your spare time.

Marcello: I know that a lot of these camps--maybe this would have been only some of the larger ones--had educational programs in the evenings where an enrollee could take some classes or maybe

learn a trade such as diesel mechanics or anything like that.

Did this camp that you were in have anything like that?

Western: I don't believe that they participated in that. I don't much think they did. If they did, I didn't know anything about it.

Marcello: Were there any other Army personnel in this camp besides that lieutenant?

Western: No, sir. He was the only one.

Marcello: And what exactly was his function?

Western: Well, he was in charge of the whole operation, is the way I saw it. He was in charge of the whole operation.

Marcello: But he really did not get involved with the work projects, did he?

Western: Oh, no, he didn't have anything to do with them. He was in charge of the camp, but after you left there, the foreman was responsible for you then.

Marcello: When did you say you went into the CCC? Was it 1937?

Western: In 1937.

Marcello: So you were about twenty-three then.

Western: Twenty-four.

Marcello: Twenty-four when you went in. Was that the average age, or were most of them younger than that?

Western: Most of them were younger than that.

Marcello: You mentioned that you had enrolled for six months. Could you enroll for longer than that if you wanted to? Maybe for

a year or eighteen months.

Western: No, sir. The six months in my case was all that I could do because twenty-four was the shut-off date. They wanted me to stay, and I was going to stay. They did everything they could to get me assigned as a junior foreman there, but they couldn't. There wasn't any vacancies, so they couldn't get me to be a junior foreman. If I could have made junior foreman, I could've made more money and would have stayed there. But I couldn't get hired in there.

Marcello: So you just got into the CCC under the wire.

Western: Under the wire, right.

Marcello: If you could have reenlisted, would you have done so?

Western: I believe so, yes. I would have.

Marcello: Why was that?

Western: I don't know. I kind of liked it after I got headed out and into it and understood what it was all about and everything.

Marcello: Plus you were getting steady pay.

Western: At least you had a steady job.

Marcello: Three square meals.

Western: Yes.

Marcello: Roof over your head.

Western: That's right.

Marcello: When one got out of the CCC, what kind of a certificate or diploma or whatever did you get?

Western: We got an honorable discharge from the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Marcello: Is it not true that if you screwed up, that is, if you went AWOL or if you were a real discipline problem, you could get a dishonorable discharge? Isn't that correct?

Western: Yes, sir. You sure could.

Marcello: What kind of a stigma did a dishonorable discharge have at that time, whether we're talking about the CCC or whether we're talking about a similar sort of thing from the military?

Western: Well, as far as from the Civilian Conservation Corps, it might not have had a real big effect on you. But if it had been from the Army, it would have. I don't know what a dishonorable discharge from the CCC would have done. If they found out you'd been in the CCC and you had a dishonorable discharge, when you were applying for a job, why, you'd have to tell them that, and it would have affected your career and your future.

Marcello: When you were there at Globe, did you have very much of a problem with people going AWOL or deserting or anything like that?

Western: We didn't have anyone go AWOL. We never had anyone even stay in town overnight. They always came into the barracks and stayed. We didn't have anyone go AWOL or anything.

Marcello: You brought up something here, and I should have followed through on this. I should have asked you earlier. What

kind of policies did the CCC have relative to leave or overnight liberty or anything like that?

Western: You could get a five-day leave with pay, or you could get a five-day leave with pay and so much without pay. It had to be authorized, you know, so much time without pay or something like that. You could get that. But I understand that if you took this leave, you had to come back and maybe serve it on your time or something like that.

Marcello: Did you ever take any leave?

Western: No, sir. I did not.

Marcello: So you didn't come back home until your time was up in the CCC.

Western: That's right, yes.

Marcello: What time did you have to be back in camp at night, assuming you went into town or something like that?

Western: We had to be in by about 11:30, I believe. There wasn't any transportation there. There always had to be a truck to take you to town and bring you back, so you had to catch that truck and come in whenever it was ready to go.

Marcello: Did they have bed checks or anything like that to make sure that everybody was there?

Western: Sometimes they did, yes.

Marcello: You did not have to have a pass or anything like that to get out of camp in the evenings, did you?

Western: No, sir. You didn't have to have a pass.

Marcello: While you were there in Globe, was there a constant turnover of personnel?

Western: No. These guys, it seemed to me, all came in about the same time I did, or most of them did. I don't know whether they came in from different places, but there were very few that had their time up...I think we lost about three or four in the time I was there--in the six months. They'd be replaced in a little while.

Marcello: Did you have a canteen in this camp?

Western: I don't believe we did. No, we didn't. We had to buy what we bought in town.

Marcello: How far would that \$5 go that you received?

Western: You could buy a lot of stuff with \$5. You could go to the movies two or three times a week. If you didn't spend it on booze, well, it'd last you pretty well.

Marcello: And like you were pointing out awhile ago, you were supplementing your money by cutting hair.

Western: Yes, I was cutting hair. I didn't depend on the \$5 either way. I had more than that.

Marcello: What did you make a week cutting hair?

Western: Oh, I'd make \$2 or \$3 a week or something like that--cutting hair. Maybe I made \$2 on a good day or something--a good Saturday or Sunday.

Marcello: What kind of recreation was there in the camp? You mentioned this awhile ago in connection with your job.

Western: They had this basketball court. You could play basketball. You could go hiking or something like that. But other than that, there wasn't too much recreation.

Marcello: Did boredom seem to be a problem?

Western: I don't think so.

Marcello: Would most people get out of camp in the evening and go into Globe?

Western: On the weekends they did, but in the evening, why, they didn't. You know, during the week days, they weren't allowed to go every night, except on weekends.

Marcello: So you could not go into Globe every night.

Western: No, sir. You couldn't go every night. You had to go on weekends.

Marcello: As you look back on those six months in the CCC, how did it prepare you for Army life?

Western: Well, it taught me to live with a group, and it taught me to respect discipline and all that, and to be disciplined. Also, it taught me a little bit more respect for the military in the fact that they had the retreat and all that, and I learned what that was all about. If you just go in the Army, and they say, "Well, you're going to stand retreat tonight," well, you'd probably wonder what that was all about. But we knew what it was all about.

Marcello: Suppose we were ever to have an economic situation such as that one that you went through in the 1930s. Would you

recommend a program like the CCC again?

Western: Absolutely, I would. It'd get a lot of young men off the streets that don't have anything to do.

Marcello: Is there anything else relative to your CCC experience that we haven't talked about?

Western: I don't believe there is. I think we just about covered it.

Marcello: Okay. Well, Mr. Western, once more I want to thank you very much for having taken time to talk with me. I enjoyed listening to your comments about the CCC, and you said some things that I think are going to be very important and interesting to the people who listen to this tape or read the transcript.

Western: Dr. Marcello, it's been a pleasure to do it. I wish I had done it many years ago. I would probably have given you a much better story than what I did now, because after fifty years you get a little rusty on some things.

Marcello: Once again, thank you for your time.

Western: You're welcome.