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## Interview with Ellis M. Jones (FA 81)

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The following is an unrehearsed interview with Mr. Ellis Jones on his work with the CCC at Mammoth Cave, Kentucky. The interview was conducted by Kelly Lalley in Cave City, Kentucky on July 1, 1987.

**Lalley:** Um, when were you born, Mr. Jones?

**Jones:** 18...uh, March 31st, 1898. My next birthday I'll be 90.

**Lalley:** Congratulations! [chuckle] And where did you grow up?

**Jones:** Uh, in Hart County. Four miles on the banks of...up, uh, north side of Green River, four miles from Munfordville, Hart County seat...uh, in Hart County.

**Lalley:** Tell me a little bit about your family.

**Jones:** Well [laughing]...uh, my father was a farmer -- great Democrat, rabid Democrat -- and my mother was from a Republican family, [not clear] Republican. But they had lots of...had to do lots of making up to agree to live with each other politically, see? [laughing] I'm not kidding about that. So that was about it, etcetera. So, as I say, we...my father owned this little farm. We's poor folks...or never...poor folks. Uh, I lived in a log house, big as a barn almost, but, uh, happily and, uh, so...as I say, I was raised on a farm and went to a local schoolhouse, which was a log schoolhouse. My first school and, uh, so that was about it there. So, I had to walk about a mile to the school and that...so, uh, eighth grade was the highest that school went so that was my limit there at that school. So, that was about it in my very young days. Of course, later years I got a higher education. I got that in Cincinnati. Well, anyway, mostly on the aviation subject. That's what I spent the big part of my life in. Nine years at Mammoth Cave and five years in [not clear] Aeronautical University in [not clear] Airport, Cincinnati, Ohio. I was an instructor and I was a flyer also and, uh, which, uh, [not clear]...oh, uh, Aircraft University is the largest aircraft university even today. So I followed that until I retired.

**Lalley:** Now, what did you do until the time you got out of eighth grade until you were in the CCC?

**Jones:** Oh, I was an automobile mechanic here in Cave City. At the old Dixie Garage [cleared throat] which is on the main traffic between Louisville and Nashville. On account of Mammoth Cave, great traffic...uh, at Mammoth Cave all the tourists had to come around Main Street here in Cave City right by the Dixie Garage, which was big business. And, of course, we had the agency for the T-model Ford. As I say, I come here in 19 and 19 and then later years we got the agency for the Model A Ford which is a later model and, uh, so I was at Dixie Garage as a mechanic foreman...we worked several mechanics there...for *nine years*. That's about it there.

**Lalley:** When did you get married?

**Jones:** Oh, Lordy...[calling out] Mrs. Jones?

**Mrs. Jones:** muffled response from some distance

**Jones:** We got married in 1918, didn't we?

**Mrs. Jones:** affirmative response

**Jones:** [laughing] What month? Ju...?

**Mrs. Jones:** July the 8th.

**Jones:** July the 8th.

**Lalley:** You have an anniversary coming up, don't you?

**Mrs. Jones:** Yes. [faintly]

**Jones:** Your age was, uh...

**Lalley:** 17?

**Jones:** 17. Yeah, almost had to steal the old gal. [laughing] And later I was sorry...no, I'm telling a big story there. No, we've been married happily all these years.

**Lalley:** That's wonderful.

**Jones:** It is wonderful. We had four children and college-educated them all [not clear]. Uh, we raised a wonderful family and, uh...so we lost one boy in World War II overseas. He was in the Airborne Division, and our oldest boy is a retired air force colonel, and our youngest boy, Zeke Jones, is a...he, uh, is employed in Indiana by a large firm. And, uh, our daughter...she lives in Florence, Kentucky, six miles this side of Cincinnati. She raise...she lives on a farm...owns her own farm. She lost her husband but she, uh, still lives on the farm. And, so, that's about it for my family.

**Lalley:** What were times like for you and your family during the Depression?

**Jones:** Well, we, uh, made it...what I'd call good. Better than our average neighbors because I was a aircraft welder and we put in gas in Glasgow, Kentucky -- the county seat for this county -- Cave City, Horse Cave, Hart City -- which was Glasgow Junction then -- and Smith's Grove and Hodgenville. I done all that welding which took several months to do, and I got top wages which I lived better than average because, uh, well, for the gas line...the same gas line we use today even, which is very old, and, uh, so that rid me through the Depression until I got my job in

Mammoth Cave National Park.

**Lalley:** How did you get that job?

**Jones:** I got that job through, uh...through, uh, recommendation of my Congressman, my Congressman from my native Munfordville, Hart County.

**Lalley:** Who was that?

**Jones:** Uh, oh...

**Mrs. Jones:** [not clear]

**Jones:** Who?

**Mrs. Jones:** [not clear]

**Jones:** Cap Carter. Cap Carter! United States Congressman from Munfordville. And, I got a congressional appointment at Mammoth Cave through Cap Carter.

**Lalley:** And which year did you go in, again? Did you go in in '33?

**Jones:** 1933. During the Depression. I was there the full time until 1942 when all CC camps over the nation was disbanded due to World War II, which took off all these young men. We called them CC boys but they's really young men.

**Lalley:** Uh, how old were you when you went in to the CCC?

**Jones:** When I went in the CC?

**Lalley:** Uh-huh.

**Jones:** Well, I was born in 1898 and, uh, CC started in 1933.

**Lalley:** 35, 40...somewhere in there. [laughing]

**Jones:** That's right.

**Lalley:** And which camp were you in?

**Jones:** No. 4, NP4...NP4, which is National Park 4. Across the railroad from Mammoth Cave. Then later I was put in as mechanic over the whole national park, which, uh, uh...but that was when the CCs all disbanded in 1942.

**Lalley:** First, you were in No. 4. Did you live with the boys or did you live...?

**Jones:** I wasn't a CC enrollee...I was appointed head mechanic in the camp. Then...each CC camp had forestry, special forestry where...they set out these, uh, uh, bushes...which was...they set out thousands and thousands of tulip poplar and walnut and locust to stop erosion...erosion.

**Lalley:** So did you live in Cave City?

**Jones:** I lived in Cave City then and...ever since 1919 and still live in Cave City. Except...well, my family lived here when I...the five years I was in Cincinnati. I lived...of course, I...back and forth on the airlines, see? But for five years I lived a big part of my time in Cincinnati but, as I say, was here and up there...I had rooms up there in Cincinnati and rooms here at Cave City, too, which I catch the airlines back and forth when I wanted to, for the weekends and so forth. Uh, so, that didn't cost me anything because I worked for them.

**Lalley:** And that was after the CCC or before?

**Jones:** Huh?

**Lalley:** When you lived in Cincinnati...?

**Jones:** That was before.

**Lalley:** Before...okay.

**Jones:** Oh, yeah. That was before. Yeah, I retired from Mammoth Cave Park.

**Lalley:** Okay. How much were you paid when you went in as a mechanic, the head mechanic?

**Jones:** Well, that was during the Depression. CC...regular enrollees only got a dollar a day and board...some of the higher grade CC enrollees got \$35 a month. There was specialties. But the foreman got a...I got \$120 a month, which is not much today but good money then.

**Lalley:** Oh, yeah. And how many children did you have at that time? Did you have all four by then?

**Jones:** All four of them...at that time. That's right. Thank goodness.

**Lalley:** So you were the head mechanic. Describe what your job was as head mechanic.

**Jones:** I was...I was head mechanic later. See, each of the four CC camps had their own mechanic, but later, when it commenced to disband one or two of the CC camps, I was transferred over to the circle, meaning the national park garage, uh, near the entrance to Mammoth Cave.

**Lalley:** But first you were a mechanic for No. 4, is that right?

**Jones:** That's right.

**Lalley:** Okay. What did you do as a mechanic for No. 4?

**Jones:** Well, uh, each camp...No. 4 camp had about 15 dump trucks, state trucks, and I was over

the upkeep of the trucks and two ferry boats. Well, I...they pulled the two ferry boats nearly 100 years by hand and...and I'm the one that put engines on the Mammoth Cave ferry boat and the Houchins ferry boat, which both are in the Mammoth Cave National Park...proposed then.

**Lalley:** And you're the one who put the engines in...?

**Jones:** Huh?

**Lalley:** You put the engines in...?

**Jones:** First engines on the ferry boats. It was the first engines put on the ferry boats cause we had so much traffic...had 900 CC boys and...and, uh...course they all didn't cross the Green River the same day but there was always several, uh, uh, truck loads of boys working on the opposite side of Green River and our traffic was so great, uh, I had to put engines on to speed up the traffic, which made it much easier, too...more up to date. And that's just like they've got today...just like Mammoth Cave Park uses on ferry boats today. Same system.

**Lalley:** Um, did you have anyone working for you?

**Jones:** Oh, yes! I had...I had three of the best CC boys in the county...they was young men, they called them CC boys. I was in the park...each camp had...they were trained so I would only have to sign papers each evening when we...end of the day. Yeah, they was well trained. They could...I could go to Louisville on business for the park service and, uh... and, uh, mechanic work went on just the same when I wasn't there.

**Lalley:** What kind of business would you go on for the park service?

**Jones:** Uh, miscellaneous. [not clear] iron company for iron rods, iron straps, to make doors to Mammoth Cave and other caves...entrance on doors. And, uh, each time I'd get more than a 100 gallons of paint for different camps, you know, and the park service itself and, uh, from Belknap Hardware and many other items that the park used. I'd buy 40-50 paintbrushes at one time, big paintbrushes which cost a lot of money even at that time. And other things it took to...for the park service. Anything they needed.

**Lalley:** So, aside from the CCC, were you working for the park service also?

**Jones:** Yes. Yes, but I didn't get extra pay. [laughter] I sure did. I'm the only one that really did of the CCC camps that done all the work. And I had quite a squawk about that, but finally that was taken care of. But, so...

**Lalley:** How was it decided that you would do that?

**Jones:** How what now?

**Lalley:** How was it decided that you would take on that role...?

**Jones:** Well, I, uh, I got a raise. I got a raise in salary and quite a consideration which mattered a lot to me, so...

**Lalley:** What other different types of projects did the CCC work on at Mammoth Cave?

**Jones:** Oh...what they call erosion. You know, what...the gullies that washed out? They put, uh... erosion dams was old fence, old wire and stop it up with the local sagebrush so it would catch silt and the dirt. Each rain it would fill up and they'd sow that...all that in grass, see? Which, uh, was, uh, oh, 40,000 acres which was a lot of work to do and, uh, well, of course, some of them worked at blacksmith work and, uh, and, uh, or helpers rather. And, uh...all the painting was done by CC labor because, uh, they was always short on appropriation for money and that saved money, see. They saved the national park money. Uh, yeah, and they done...oh, beautifying, uh, uh, oh, uh, the road grader...road upkeep and building. Oh, and trails all over the park...called fire trails. In case of having forest fires, they could go anywhere. When the CC camps first started, though, I...and first started Mammoth Cave Park proposed...it was a wilderness and no roads hardly. And they had to make roads all over the park, which was a great job; and we had two big rock crushers that crushed stone to put on that road so we could travel it in all weather. You know, through the winter times and all weather. And, uh, oh, forest work...trimming around the hotels to make it save for the public, you know, and necessary yard work...sowing grass and so forth...beautifying near the cave entrance and the hotels. Just about any kind of work. You name it and they done it.

**Lalley:** What kind of work did the CCC boys do in the cave itself?

**Jones:** Oh, uh, the only thing...they were real particular about preserving the formation in the cave and its original looks. They, uh, made walk trails in the cave and, uh, necessary trails [not clear] and they also made boats [not clear] in the cave and the, uh, uh, wiring. See Mammoth Cave wasn't electrically wired until the CCs done the labor but, of course, they had a foreman, you know, electrician to show them what it was all about. The CCs done all the hard work over there at Mammoth Cave for nine years and, uh, so, which was great in building up the park. As I



say, the park was nothing but a growed up wilderness when it first started, uh...proposed as a park or made a national park in full. So, it was 900 C...young men that was busy doing all that. Forty-five or 50,000 acres in Mammoth Cave National Park is a lot of area to, uh, build roads and...they built telephone lines, too, all over the park for fire suppression and they had...each camp had four fire towers rigged so the, uh...could use a compass in dry weather when they had fires. The CC boys were lookouts on the fire lookout towers, see? And they'd tell what the compass pointed...degree...and the four CC camps had arranged at different places in the park where that line crossed, compass line crossed, was where the fire was at, see? Easy to detect. So...but, see, only was on the fire tower during dry season...mostly in the fall of the year when, you know, danger of fire and the forest fires. And, uh, so a lot of the fields was growed up into grass and that was worse for fires than the woods was...so that was about it for the fire tower. And, as I say, that lookout, fire tower, was all run by CC labor.

**Lalley:** You stayed mechanic of No. 4 until some of the camps started disbanding then you got a more central job, is that right?

**Jones:** That's...that's right. Yeah, I was put over the whole park service but they still had...each camp had a mechanic but I was over the whole park service fixing, including the two ferry boats, anything mechanically and welding. I was first an aircraft welder. It helped me get my job at Mammoth Cave National Park because all them iron doors...each cave had to be done by welders because they couldn't be solid sheet iron. It had to be iron rods spaced close enough that man couldn't walk across...fall through into the cave but wildlife like bats, foxes, and coons could go in and out of the cave at their will. So at each cave, uh, the iron doors were made out of iron rods for that purpose so they can go in and out. And I made all of those with the welding. Them iron rods is welded to a big frame, see, and so, uh, I was the welder. Made all the iron doors for each cave. But I helped over a local blacksmith.

**Lalley:** You worked with a blacksmith?

**Jones:** Yeah, well, yes, yes, in making those doors.

**Lalley:** And you put them in?

**Jones:** Yeah, so...the blacksmiths had lots of other work besides welding and the blacksmiths helped me with the doors, yes.

**Lalley:** So you kept up the vehicles and you traveled for supplies and you...?

**Jones:** That's right.

**Lalley:** And you welded the doors. Did you do anything else?

**Jones:** Well, anything to be done that nobody else wouldn't do and sometimes things that they thought nobody else could do but [not clear] the fact, anybody could do it. But I'd go ahead and do things if I wasn't...for the park service that wasn't my line. You know, I wasn't really supposed to do. And, but I didn't squawk very much about that because I needed the job...my family needed the job and that was it.

**Lalley:** You had so many things to do, is there any way you could describe a typical day for you? Getting up and going to work or...?

**Jones:** Well, oh, yes, we...each camp had foreman's quarters. Yeah, I had foreman's quarters...had been dry weather...somebody had to be...in case of a forest fire, you see. Each camp had foreman's quarters and I stayed most of my time at home at Cave City. I'd drive back and forth which is about ten-mile drive, except my time to be in camp for fire duty. So, uh...

**Lalley:** How much free time did you have? Did you have any?

**Jones:** Well, yes. Yes, [not clear]. In time, I had a lot of time built up...I kept more than four weeks of salary time ahead, see, so I didn't worry about that but, uh, uh, I done lots of overtime work for the superintendent.

**Lalley:** What did you do with your free time, like during the week when you were off?

**Jones:** Well, I, uh, I was flying. I was flying at Bowling Green, uh, flying field for pleasure and experience to keep up my flying status.

**Lalley:** Did you ever participate in any of the recreation programs that the CCC had?

**Jones:** Uh, no, I tried to stay out of that. But they...I was forced occasionally in that but I tried to stay clear of all the camp...yes. Except that in instructing CC enrollees how to weld and how to do automobile mechanic work and electric weld and [not clear]. I taught that at camp.

**Lalley:** In the education program?

**Jones:** You had educational program at the camp garage.

**Lalley:** I think I'm going to turn the tape over.

**Jones:** That's about it.

**Lalley:** No...

[End of Side 1]

**Lalley:** This is the second side of the tape of my interview with Mr. Ellis Jones in Cave City. Did you notice if any of the CCC boys played pranks on each other?

**Jones:** Very much so. The worst...annoying prank was what they call, uh, remaking up their bunk beds and what they call short sheet. And the sheet is doubled so they couldn't get under the sheet, in the sheet or...and they...sometimes they would just tear the sheet [laughing] occasionally but, no, that was an old prank, camp prank, and a few others. Oh, we all pulled pranks on each other even in the park service a little bit occasionally, but we were very particular about [laughing] who we played the pranks on [laughing] and what kind of pranks we played. Yes, that was our...part of our daily, uh, tricks to get away from monotony. [laughing]

**Lalley:** What other kinds did you do? Do you remember any?

**Jones:** Well, uh, the thing...didn't amount to anything, of course, any harm or anything. Nah, just many...anything you happened to think of and you might be surprised some of them that was thought up to pull, uh, on different ones.

**Lalley:** Can you tell me on tape where the different camps were situated?

**Jones:** Uh, No. 1 CC camp was located in what they called Bluegrass Country Club, the former Bluegrass Country Club, which was near Floyd Collins Crystal Cave. About 200 CC enrollees and about ten different foremen, uh, including the special park service instructors and work program foremen, which was usually local enrollees...uh, uh, local...well, congressional appointments usually higher paid ones, so that was about it there.

**Lalley:** And where were the rest of them besides No. 1?

**Jones:** Well, uh, No. 2, which was near new entrance to Mammoth Cave on the south side of the Green River. Uh, which had the same amount of enrollees and foremen, and it was there like all four of the camps was there from 1933 to 1944. That was about it on No. 2. And No. 3 was over what they called Joppy, over Park City from the cave entrance, which was in, uh, oh, from '33 to '42; and, uh, No. 4, as I said, across the north side of the Green River in what they called Cade, which is about four miles from the cave, which was located there about the same time...length of time that the others...from '43 to '42...uh, '33 to '42!

**Lalley:** Was there much interaction among the different camps? The men in the different camps?

**Jones:** Yes, yes. Yes, they supposed to have good coordination. Each camp sometimes both from two maybe three camps be on the same detail, and they had to have good coordination to do that. Then they's very particular the CC boys didn't have falling outs with each other and falling out and fist fights or anything. And they worked that out really good cause they had good, very good coordination. If they didn't have, they would...these boys would get a dishonorable discharge! So they knowed they had to behave themselves. So that was about it.

**Lalley:** What about socially? Did they get together...?

**Jones:** Oh, yeah. They had what they called a Whoopie Camp, uh, where they had a dance hall or occasionally each...some of the camps would have dances at different times of the year where they wouldn't interfere with each other. And the girls from Glasgow, Cave City, Horse Cave would be invited -- usually their mothers would come along -- and, uh, they, uh...that worked out real good. But what they called the Whoopie Camp was located, uh, about central location from each camp which was near the Mammoth Cave, was about a fourth of a mile of Mammoth Cave itself and, uh, so...they's very particular about the, uh, the recreation. Only one camp there at a time to keep down any trouble or any fuss. That was arranged real well, they didn't have no trouble at all. Didn't have any trouble you might say at all the full nine years.

**Lalley:** How did the white people feel about the presence of the black camp...?

**Jones:** Uh, well, uh...the average white person...uh, you got to know us Kentuckians. We've always been used to colored folks and we was taught to be nice to colored folks so they would be nice to you. And, uh, so, uh, we had no, very little trouble, uh, or practically no trouble at all. When they first come in, they looked hard at the first ten CC colored enrollees they got at No. 1 camp, that was the first...then later that was made a completely colored camp for the last two or three years of the camp. So, they had no trouble, uh, because each one knowed to keep his job, he had to behave himself and they was well supervised and, uh, so, in fact of business, they was pretty well educated enough to know they better behave themselves. It was better for everybody. That was about it. We had no trouble with coloreds, never have, don't yet here at the local, in Kentucky.

**Lalley:** Did the black CCC boys participate in the same...?

**Jones:** Same categories that the white did. Yeah, practically the same, yeah. And don't...and don't miscalculate their knowledge of doing things cause they were good.

**Lalley:** Oh, definitely.

**Jones:** They tried to be the best.

**Lalley:** How did the local residents feel about the CCC being in the area?

**Jones:** First they, uh...we's in a Depression, business in Cave City was hard up for business in one sense, well, the whole country. They had a hard look at first but that didn't last long because they was welcomed, very much so, later. Uh, and, uh, the CCs didn't give any trouble to amount to anything at all because they's under good supervision and they, they was pretty smart boys. They had educational advisors to teach them different trades, very important trades, and, uh, instructors for special trades and so everything went smooth, wonderful.

**Lalley:** So, there wasn't much tension between the CCC and...?

**Jones:** No, no, no. Not at all. In fact, they come here to the picture show, they had special nights for each camp to come to picture show, don't have it now [laughter -- Lalley] but, uh, nah, they'd come up to picture show for recreation and each camp would have their own night and the other one, another, which kept down any, any trouble. And, uh, and, uh, so it probably wouldn't have been any trouble anyhow, anyway. So, uh, that was worked out very smoothly.

**Lalley:** What about, uh, tension with the park service being in the area? I heard from some people that, uh, a lot of local residents were displaced from their farms, that they weren't really happy about it.

**Jones:** Oh, oh, they was...that was the worst, roughest deal of the whole national park making... is local farmers having to leave his farm through force, through court, county court. And, uh, that caused a lot of unnecessary forest fires for the first two or three years, uh, because during the Depression they didn't get too much for the farms and, uh, some of them waited a year or two and farms going up higher and higher all the time and might near double! And it give a farmer a hard way to go and caused lots of resentment for the local people that had to move out of the park.

**Lalley:** That didn't go on with the CCC, just maybe the park service?

**Jones:** Yes.

**Lalley:** Okay. Did a lot of local men date...or, a lot of CCC boys date local girls?

**Jones:** Yes, yes. But that was well...that was well...done well in a broad minded way and the girls usually had their mothers along and so...the boys was well supervised, too, by the park's, higher park service men. That was well performed. As I said, the Whoopie House -- which was a large building built for that purpose -- uh, dance halls and, so, I...that was well done.

**Lalley:** How successful do you feel the CCC was in relieving the effects of the Depression?

**Jones:** Relieving the...?

**Lalley:** The effects of the Depression.

**Jones:** Oh, well, uh, they was there for...because they needed money...they sent some of their money home to their parents each month, a certain percent. Uh, that was worked out well, sending money home to their parents and some of the parents really didn't need it. So, uh, but as the average the parents really needed it, at an average.

**Lalley:** What about for the local economy around the cave and the park? Did it...did the CCC being there help?

**Jones:** Oh, the local towns, yeah. Even Bowling Green, which is a large town more or less. This deal with Franklin D. Roosevelt...Depression deal to help the hungry and the needy, uh, and it worked well. At that time it was well needed and, uh, but, uh, the nine years it come out of that depression to set...really didn't need all this.

**Lalley:** What do you consider to be the biggest success of the CCC?

**Jones:** Well, the biggest success...I'd have to say the Forest Service setting out those small, young walnut sprouts and tulip poplar, yellow poplar and, uh, locusts, which...locusts makes good fence posts, and they set them out in rows in gulleys to make dams to help stop up the erosion. So, uh, that...erosion, uh, deal was probably the best deal of the whole thing, to keep from washing the land away. And they reforested the naked, bare, washed away land. That was probably their best deal, although the second probably best was the better roads in that area. They made the roads. They done lots of work so...everything was to the good. but I guess they was two of the largest, best things...they called them the Bush Army, you know, cause they set out bushes, see, and, as I said, like walnut and other bushes...and we called it the Bush War...Army.

**Lalley:** What about for the military during World War II, did the CCC have a great impact on that do you think?

**Jones:** Oh, yes. Uh, due to the war program, these young men was well prepared and educated for the armed service which absorbed most of these young men and some of the older men and, uh, so, uh, that, uh, that was great for the build up. Now, one thing I didn't mention, all along during the CC camp days we got our supplies from Fort Knox, army supplies. That's where the camp itself was what they called the army. They got their supplies from Fort Knox...food and certain things they got in Bowling Green and they had bakers bake their own bread. They had as good a bakers as these cities have. And then, so, but the regular supplies they got from Fort Knox but, uh, the park service which is different to the army. The park service and the army... see, the army would turn over these boys at 8 o'clock every morning for eight hours work and they'd turn back to the army, or the CC camps, at night, see? Uh, so, uh, that way was you might say two types of service.

**Lalley:** Were there any major problems with the CCC that you can name or know about?

**Jones:** No, that...they was very particular about that. They was more or less broad-minded foremen and boys themselves, most of them were. It was just on occasion, certain occasion they'd get one or two they'd have to bring him in line with the others and...but that was very easy to do and soon he was doing like all the rest of them was doing. And, uh, that was great. Some of these boys was from back country and neighborhoods needed that and that was a great help to those boys socially.

**Lalley:** A little bit earlier you were talking about the educational program and you were saying you worked teaching some boys about mechanics. Could you tell me something more about the educational program in general at Mammoth Cave? What kind of classes they offered and how many people participated?

**Jones:** Oh, uh, well, yes. Uh, first, No. 1 the blacksmith taught some...I'd say a dozen boys black smithing, how to temper, how to, uh, make things out of iron which, see these gates...most of the gates at different cave entrances were made with CC labor if...if a, uh, local camp blacksmith, blacksmith was...acted as a foreman. CC boys done practically all the hard work and even installing doors in the..in the cave itself. And, just like I said before, each door had to be made

out of iron rods, uh, welded, you know, fairly close together but wide enough that wildlife like foxes, coons, and bats could go in and out the cave as a natural habitat as always have done before. They's very particular about their natural habitat. [chuckle]

**Lalley:** What other kinds of classes were offered at...in the education program?

**Jones:** Well, oh yes, I should have went on and told the rest of it. Oh, my goodness, practically everything that is needed in life. Uh, yes, done carpenter work...building houses...buildings for the park. Fact, all that brick was...nearly all of it was done with CC labor. But they always had a bricklayer for foreman, see? And, uh, uh, yeah they hard...any hard work to be done over there was done by CCC young men. We say CCC boys but they was actually young men...very fine young men. So, uh, they saved the park, Mammoth Cave National Park and other parks, probably millions of dollars doing all that hard labor, building roads and even building...as I say, the nice brick buildings you see at Mammoth Cave Park now...big part of that labor was done by CC labor, which didn't cost extry. So, uh, arbor...tree arbor work and trimming trees and so forth around the, uh, hotel and area itself to make everything safe, you know. And beautifying the parks and everything cause...especially around...close to the hotel where the tourists, most of them was active. Most of it was done by CC...even the harbor, clean-up work...labor...hard labor was done by CC work...all the washing up the ferry boats and cleaning them up and, uh, and debris...might be paper in the cave...they were very particular about not letting in...that was took care of...there wasn't supposed to be anything, uh...done away with in the cave. So...

**Lalley:** Were many men taught to read and write in the education program?

**Jones:** In the what now?

**Lalley:** Were many men taught to read and write?

**Jones:** Oh yes, oh yes. As I've mentioned, I believe, uh, once before, some of these boys in the back country -- and some in town --- couldn't even read and write. First thing they had on the program to do is teach them how to read and write and sign their own name and that...one old boy said, uh...they filled out a check for \$100...he says that's more money than I ever expect to have. [laughing] Well, anyway...now some of these boys was so far back in the mountains...so far back and a lot of them couldn't read and write. As I say, first thing on...to do is to learn to read and write and sign their name and figure up to a certain point.



**Lalley:** Did many of the boys participate in the education program...or was it a few or...?

**Jones:** Oh, all...all that's necessary...yeah, because they's under strict supervision. That's things they had to do and few other little things they probably didn't...they had to do that was really necessary and right.

**Lalley:** What did you do when you left the CCC? When the CCC was over, what did you do?

**Jones:** Oh, uh, well, I, uh...I was already an airplane pilot and I was already working for the biggest air university in the world, [not clear] Aeronautical University in Cincinnati, now at Daytona Beach, Florida...still the biggest in the world, [not clear] Aeronautical University. I was with them five years and, uh, so, uh, I, uh...all that helped me get my job to start with, but the war was on and I went with the Consolidated [not clear] Company in Nashville, Tennessee. Made the A-35 dive bomber with 1800 horsepower Wright whirl...Wright engine and, uh, so, uh, that didn't work out. The dive bomber didn't work out the early part of the war, especially where there's opposition. Uh, the ack ack guns on the ground would bring him down. What really done the job was the P-38, uh, with two Allison 1200 horsepower engines which was a straight bomber. It come over so fast, so quick...where did it come from and where did it go? And it done dropped its bomb. See, they couldn't get him. So that P-38 is what won the war.

**Lalley:** And you were working on it? What did you do after World War II?

**Jones:** They accused me of doing nothing. [laughter] Well, I, uh, I...course was retired...I retired...old enough to retire and so I, uh, built my rocking chair. [laughing] That's about it...that's about it today. Me being 90 years old, I'm doing a pretty job of it today.

**Lalley:** Yeah...oh yeah.

**Jones:** Well, I'll be 90 my next birthday...31st day of March. So, I'm so close to 90, I feel like I'm 90 now. [laughing] No, really, I've had a wonderful life in aviation and the CC camps kept me going, kept my table at home going. So, anyway, I've had a wonderful life and I've college-educated four children and, uh, by the help of Mrs. Jones. [laughing]

**Lalley:** Is there anything else that you'd like to tell me about the CCC?

**Jones:** Uh, well, I guess that's about it. Uh, you might say they's the only thing going during the Depression, uh...to help us get out of the Depression and it was a wonderful thing. In fact, it would be Roosevelt...it was one of his main programs...course he had other programs, which

brought us back to living again [laughing] like we more or less liked to live.

**Lalley:** Do you still keep in touch with people that you were in the CCC...?

**Jones:** Uh, very much so. Uh, it's a nice surprise that these boys...it's been so long now since CC camps have been in operation...during, well, even 40 and 50 years...boys that I'd just forgotten...that even worked for me, from other states would come in, knock on my door and I...and, uh, they...I wouldn't hardly know who they was until they told me. And a lot of them would play tricks on me because they were used to playing tricks on me anyway and that suited their fun and sociability...they liked...anything to throw me off [laughing] knowing who they was. And even some of them at different times worked for me during the nine years...

[End of Tape -- INCOMPLETE]