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## Interview with H. B. Jackson (FA 81)

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The following is an unrehearsed interview with Mr. H.B. Jackson on his work with the CCC at Mammoth Cave, Kentucky. The interview was conducted by Kelly Lalley in Glasgow, Kentucky on July 9, 1987.

**Lalley:** When were you born Mr. Jackson?

**Jackson:** July the 7th, 1918.

**Lalley:** 1918?

**Jackson:** Uh-huh.

**Lalley:** Where did you grow up?

**Jackson:** Allen County.

**Lalley:** Allen County? What's the closest town around that way?

**Jackson:** Scottsville.

**Lalley:** Scottsville.

**Jackson:** Uh-huh.

**Lalley:** What did you family do for a living?

**Jackson:** They were farmers.

**Lalley:** What kind of farmers?

**Jackson:** Just regular farmers...tobacco, corn...that's about all you could grow in Allen County.

**Lalley:** How many people were in your family?

**Jackson:** Three boys...two brothers.

**Lalley:** And where did you fall...in that line? Which number were you?

**Jackson:** I was the oldest.

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

**Jackson:** They were pretty rough. There wasn't no work available at all. [not clear] had to just about produce your own food.

**Lalley:** How did you hear about the CCC?

**Jackson:** Well, that was in the early days of President Roosevelt. Everybody knew...I can't say exactly how I heard about it.

**Lalley:** How were people selected for the CCC in the Allen County area?

**Jackson:** Really, I can't tell you how they were selected. It seems like [not clear] in the family or something like that. I'm not even sure if that's a fact. Seems like I remember something like that.

**Lalley:** Did you know of anybody who wasn't able to go into the CCCs, who wasn't accepted?

**Jackson:** Not to my knowledge.

**Lalley:** When did you enter the CCC?

**Jackson:** July the 8th, 1935.

**Lalley:** And how old were you?

**Jackson:** 17.

**Lalley:** And how long did you stay in?

**Jackson:** The camp that I was in was abandoned on or before 1940. I can't...I just can't say exactly. It could've been the last part of '39 or it could have up in '40.

**Unidentified female:** It was in '40. It was after Charles was born.

**Lalley:** You were already married? Which camp were you in?

**Jackson:** Camp No. 4, Company 516.

**Lalley:** So you were married before you went into the CCC or during?

**Jackson:** No...during.

**Lalley:** Do you remember how you felt when you left home for the CCC?

**Jackson:** Well, pretty well. I was glad to have a job. I considered it a job in those days. Something to do...training, whatever they had. Of course, at that age you didn't know what you were going to find.

**Lalley:** Did you get homesick at all?

**Jackson:** No, I didn't.

**Lalley:** Did they send you anyplace for training before you went to Mammoth Cave or did they do the training there?

**Jackson:** They did the training there.

**Lalley:** Was it a certain period of time? Do you remember anything about that training period or conditioning period?

**Jackson:** When you first entered as a rookie? I can remember...I can remember the first six months working on a forestry crew. See, they had different crews...uh, maintenance of the road building, operated a quarry, communications, telephone lines...things like that. And this forestry group was...helped put out forest fires, things like that...cut the timber, put it laying crossways on the hill [not clear]. I guess about the first six months I was with that and then I started working in the kitchen. I don't know if we were called trainees or not. And the rest of my time was spent

there. There's a second cook and a first cook and whatever you didn't have. Another thing I can't remember is...when I first went in, I don't think you could stay but six months. That's hard to explain...I was there, what, five years, I guess. I know there was a limit on it. I guess they had a cadre to keep the fellows company. Seems to me like they kept so many people like, of course, company commander, first lieutenant and second lieutenant...maybe captain...first sergeant, mess sergeant, supply sergeant, company clerk. I would say they was the ones that opened and closed the company. Now what I mean by closing, new enrollees. Seems like a full company was 240 men...does that sound right?

**Lalley:** Somewhere in the hundred range. [laughing] How...how were you paid when you worked with the CCC?

**Jackson:** To start?

**Lalley:** Uh-huh.

**Jackson:** To start with you got five dollars a month to spend any way you wanted to.

**Lalley:** And the rest...?

**Jackson:** ...and 25 was sent home, yeah. Then after you worked so long...I can't remember the ratings...I believe it was referred to as leaders and assistant leaders. It may have been that. They did have a stripe for your sleeve of your shirt. [not clear] I worked up to \$45 a month after a while. And in the '30s, \$45 a month was pretty good little money. I can't really compare it with today, but that's the way it was.

**Lalley:** How did you spend your personal money? Your \$5. [laughter -- all three]

**Jackson:** At Cave City. You can imagine, especially when there was four companies over there...Cave City with a population was probably 1200, I don't remember...so 6 to 800 men in Cave City on a Saturday night and it was a wet town in those days. So there was a lot of ways you could spend your money.

**Lalley:** You say first you were in the learning...in the forest learning about...

**Jackson:** They might send you on different jobs. [not clear] worked a little bit on the fire tower but it wouldn't have been very long.

**Lalley:** Well, tell me about your job as...learning to be a cook and the different positions that you held.

**Jackson:** As a cook?

**Lalley:** Uh-huh.

**Jackson:** Well, as a cook...they had older cooks...you learned from them really. It seems to me like that in later years we trained a few people as cooks there. So we were working, uh, really you were working for the Army when I come to work as a cook. And at 8 o'clock of a morning the men were turned over to ECW, Emergency Conservation Work, uh, and then go back that night back to the Army. We referred to it as that; the company did. [not clear] But back to your question...how we trained and...a lot of times some of the cooks would leave after six months. I remember there was a couple of us that didn't, that was there through the years, one on each shift. And, uh, it wasn't long...after a few years, we could train the cooks. I can't remember if we shipped them out to other areas or not. Seems like we might have sent some to Ft. Knox occasionally. Another thing I can't remember...the fifth corp I believe at that time was Columbus, Ohio. And I'm not too sure but what Ft. Knox was Camp Knox in those days. Does that...does that sound right?

**Lalley:** Well, I haven't heard that but it's a possibility.

**Jackson:** I wonder how long it's been a fort?

**Lalley:** I don't know either.

**Jackson:** [not clear] you're talking about 50 years and I can't...but I do remember something about Columbus, Ohio because I remember taking a physical once...they were going to take five men from the fifth corp area in the Merchants Marines. I failed my test because, the physical, because I was five pounds overweight. That's how close it was. That's why I was a member of the fifth corp area.

**Lalley:** So you started out as a second cook, is it?

**Jackson:** Yeah, you start as a...well, you start as a helper.

**Lalley:** Helper. And...

**Jackson:** You started as a helper then you made second cook and then you'd make first cook. Well, it didn't take a genius to make a first cook, but you had to know how to cook. And we had good food; we had wonderful food. But you learn in there...uh, over the years, during all that time, at a certain time you'd have to act as mess sergeant and everything else. I may have been

mess sergeant for a while. [not clear] you were just glad to have a job and if they wanted you to run a garbage truck, you would've done it and wouldn't have said a word. And if...I remember...I learned enough in there about numbers and things like that to handle the food, but World War II come along and I was drafted in the Army. I didn't volunteer; I was drafted in the Army. And I was sent into a special school [not clear] made mess sergeant in the officer's club at Ft. McDonald, Alabama. And I was never moved. It was because of that. Because in those days, World War II...like if you were a teacher or something, everybody was drafted in the Army [not clear] and we had professional cooks. But even if you were a professional chef...I remember we had one chef from the Palmer House and one from the Waldorf Astoria...they were out of this world, *but* they didn't know anything about writing menus and ordering supplies...they were professional bakers. And if it hadn't been for that work over there, I'd a been...I don't know where I'd have been. I wouldn't have been put in an officer's club as mess sergeant.

**Lalley:** Oh no.

**Jackson:** You take a professional now, he might just handle meats, vegetables. But handling the whole ball of wax was a little different.

**Lalley:** Tell me the difference between what the helper did, what the second cook did and what the first cook did.

**Jackson:** On the shift?

**Lalley:** In the CCC.

**Jackson:** Yeah. Well, the helper would help prepare...let's say you had potatoes that day. We're talking about 75 or 100 pounds of potatoes for 200 men. He might say wash potatoes. [not clear] assign that to them, they prepare it and work with the KPs to clean it up. Around there, you lost your stripes if you didn't have 180 degree water. [laughing] Things had to be sanitary. And clean it up. Shifts run from 12 to 12...it changed at noon each day. I don't mean you worked all night, but you did start at 3 o'clock in the morning...for breakfast. We didn't always have helpers. [not clear] but a lot of times we served meals out in the field. We served meals in Mammoth Cave. After we'd have a rain, have high water or something back up in the cave...they'd take men in there to clean those trails and everything, and we'd go in there at noon and serve lunch and spend the afternoon waiting for them to come out.

**Lalley:** What did the first cook do...the second...second or first?

**Jackson:** Second and first cook. The first cook was responsible for the whole things. Meals and how to prepare it, everything else like that.

**Lalley:** Now, how many cooks did each camp have...total, or people working with the food?

**Jackson:** With the food? Well, I'd say, uh, if you're setting up a company like that you need two first cooks, two second cooks and a baker...and KPs. KPs were pulled alphabetically. Maybe you didn't do your job too well and you got KP this weekend, see? And...something like that. That's the way KP worked. So they wasn't too enthused about their work.

**Lalley:** Now, did you alternate shifts or did you have a set shift? You know, someone took the early one, some took the late one?

**Jackson:** Well, it was all the same. See, if you got off at 12 today...in other words, you come on at 12, I would serve the meal of the day and you'd start preparing the night meal and then for breakfast the next morning and then tomorrow at noon as soon as you serve lunch, you go off shift, see? The baker does his work at night. I don't mean he'd bake bread. We had contracts from different, in those days, Honeycrust and Bond...people like that and you'd buy bread. We baked different things. The first cook and the mess sergeant had to be in the position, if something happened to the baker, you could bake. I'm no expert baker, but they could eat it.

**Lalley:** So when you had to take meals out to the field, were...did you have people who served as servers and took everything out...like you cooked it at the camp and then somebody else took it out or did you go out with them?

**Jackson:** Well, you could send a helper or something to serve or occasionally you might go yourself. I've gone to the cave a lot of times. Of course, you kind of liked to go there in the summertime cause it's 58 degrees down there. It just all depends on how much help we had.

**Lalley:** So how long did you spend in each position as helper, second cook and first cook? Do you know?

**Jackson:** Oh, I don't know. It'd be pretty hard...I'd say after six months...after six months, I was working in the kitchen [not clear] but you'd do other assignments if they come up. If they needed to send you some place. Not like it is today, I'm a cook, I don't do that...I'm a supply sergeant...whatever the task come up [not clear].



**Lalley:** You also were in charge of supplies...food supplies and so forth?

**Jackson:** Well, yeah. [not clear] mess sergeant. He'd write the menus if he was there and, of course, if he wasn't around, we'd write it ourselves. You had to know that and, uh, we did order supplies. If I remember correctly, we were allowed 33 1/3 cents a day per man to order enough supplies for 30 days. And 33 1/3 cents a day...someone your age would think we'd starve to death, but we didn't. The ones that came in there was underweight or medium weight...the ones that was overweight lost weight. That just about happened because we didn't have to jog to get exercise.

**Lalley:** No.

**Jackson:** And, uh, the food...I'm not going to say it was the best prepared in the world [not clear] it was a balanced diet. If I remember right, for 240 men you'd order about 2,000 pounds of potatoes a month. We didn't just serve potatoes but [not clear] canned goods and your meat and we'd get a lot of that out of Ft. Knox. We'd go up there to the commissary. We might mix a little of that with farm animals...now you take farm animals, I'd buy all contract stuff from Swift and Armor and people like that. We might mix that up a little...still, it's the same principle.

**Lalley:** What makes a good menu? What would you put together for a good meal?

**Jackson:** Well, are we talking about at night or what?

**Lalley:** Uh, yeah, say an evening meal.

**Jackson:** An evening meal, you want something special. Well, in there you couldn't serve a t-bone steak. You could at an officer's club. A good evening meal would be an, uh, choice beef roast with vegetable gravy...you know what I mean by vegetable gravy? Flour and meal and grease...carrots and everything grated and you put them in it...in the gravy...with mashed potatoes, buttered peas, cole slaw, a box of [not clear] for dessert, individual...that's a pretty fair meal. Beef stew could be made...you can make beef stew if you use the right kind of meat. [not clear] you got most of your vegetables in beef stew so you don't have to have potatoes and everything with it. And Sunday night, of course, was cold cut night. Don't mention corn beef to me today. Your lunch was a real problem. If lunch was going out in the field and would be out for quite a while...now what I mean all day. It was a job, the heat...you had to watch what you...in other words, you could fix peanut butter and cheese and tomorrow cheese and peanut

butter. Because, seriously, that's why I can't hardly eat cheese today. What are you going to fix if you don't have refrigeration? You had to have something to eat. So it was meals like that for sandwiches cause you sure didn't want mayonnaise on a sandwich in hot summer. I guess that was about as tough as anything they'd come up with.

**Lalley:** You all probably had lots of special dinners around Christmas or Easter or holidays or special celebrations.

**Jackson:** I can remember turkeys. We just about always had turkey Thanksgiving and Christmas. They'd rather have turkey than ham. Dressing, we even had oyster dressing [not clear]

**Lalley:** Uh, but one of the men I talked to, Hobart Vincent, gave me...he kept some menus of what...

**Jackson:** Did he?

**Lalley:** Uh-huh. I made some copies of them.

**Jackson:** I should have kept some of them but I didn't.

**Lalley:** Maybe I'll send you the copies of the menus that he...

**Jackson:** I think I've got one of the books here, *American* [not clear], that we used for a recipe.

**Lalley:** So do you still...do you cook a lot now?

**Jackson:** No. During World War II I got to where I could cook some but, uh, since then I haven't at all. I can still cook. If I want something real good, you know, I fix it.

**Unidentified female:** He's still a good cook.

**Lalley:** [chuckling] Well, can you describe a typical day for you then as cook?

**Jackson:** A typical day?

**Lalley:** Umhumm.

**Jackson:** Well, a typical day the night guard would wake you up at 3 o'clock...if you had something unusual, it might be 2:30. So you're in there preparing brea...you're talking about meal? You're preparing your breakfast...cooking scrambled eggs and bacon, hash browns, probably a little gravy and toast...we didn't do much baking biscuits or things like that. [not clear] I mentioned was a pretty big breakfast and you could come back and have cream gravy with beef on toast. Of course now, hash browns and...what's the other potatoes we...hash browns and there's another one...we have in a restaurant.

**Lalley:** Home fries.

**Jackson:** Home fries...yeah! Hash browns and home fries were the two...of course, they're about the same. And, uh, really I think that was pretty good.

**Lalley:** So were you preparing...?

**Jackson:** At the same time, though, we were preparing, depending on what you had...let's say you had a roast beef and depending on the size and thickness, you might be lining that up for your break...I mean, for your evening meal.

**Lalley:** While you're doing breakfast, too?

**Jackson:** While you're doing breakfast, yeah. If you had stew...am I talking too long on something?

**Lalley:** No, I was just making sure the tape wasn't going to run out.

**Jackson:** Stew or something like that, it don't take too long. But I'm a real believer...I've had, in the company where I retired, with our home economist; I've had some good discussions...I believe in preparing food slowly so far as cooking [not clear] tasty in its natural juices. We had some good cooks in there. Of course, I wasn't one of them, but they had some good ones.

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

**Jackson:** Well, I had from noon today till noon tomorrow. A little over the weekend or something...you work for me, I'll work for you this afternoon. You wouldn't have to come in till noon...or work for you tomorrow night.

**Lalley:** What did you do with your free time?

**Jackson:** Well, they had educational programs. I tried to take advantage of them. For example, like I say again...somebody like Joe Kulesza could correct me on some of this stuff...seems like you could take typing for 50 cents a month. Did anyone mention that to you?

**Lalley:** They didn't mention the cost; they mentioned some of the classes though.

**Jackson:** You could take typing and woodworking. Uh, I remember taking some typing. I don't know what for [not clear] but it wasn't...I kind of knew the keys was about all. By the way, if anybody ever asks you, Joe Kulesza could type 100 words a minute. Faster than any man I know. In fact, he's a very talented person.

**Lalley:** Oh, yeah.

**Jackson:** And, uh, there was a lot of projects that you could learn.

**Lalley:** Did you take part in any of the organized recreation?

**Jackson:** Oh, yeah. We had a tennis court. A nice tennis court. We had a baseball team...one company played the other. We had some pretty good players in there, baseball. I don't think we ever played basketball...didn't have a gym or anything like that. There was all types of recreations from horseshoes to wrestling matches, exercises, exercising programs...not that you needed them [not clear] Of course, there's a lot that I can't even remember.

**Lalley:** Did the...many of the CCC boys play pranks on each other?

**Jackson:** Oh yeah, yeah. They could get pretty bad.

**Lalley:** Do you remember any of them?

**Jackson:** Oh yeah. One thing was short sheeting people. You know what that is?

**Lalley:** Yeah. [laughing]

**Jackson:** Especially on a cold night...hear some pretty rich remarks. [laughter] See, it was pretty...uh, I was always in the fourth section. I was No. 4 barracks and you'd have to call them down if it got too loud because, after all, there was, what, about 40 people sleeping there...wake up everybody else. Some people go to bed early...lights go out 9 o'clock, that's...

**Lalley:** Nine?

**Jackson:** This is like anything else. If you couldn't take it, then you got...you were the butt of them and that's all there was to it.

**Lalley:** Were there any pranks in the kitchen?

**Jackson:** Oh, yeah. They were relentless in the kitchen. But they was having fun. I remember one guy, every time he came through...you know, you wanted to be as nice as you could...but no matter what you were doing, he'd want to taste it, especially soup. You do your own tasting, you know. I remember one time I broke him of that. I had some Tabasco sauce. You know what that is? It was perfect that day because I had tomato soup. I saw him coming so I got me a teaspoon, really a tablespoon, full of Tabasco sauce. If you know what Tabasco sauce is, you try swallowing a tablespoon of it. I'm standing there like I was...“Let me taste that.” And I let him taste it. He swallowed it. We had to help him outside. [laughter -- Lalley] I got kind of scared. I thought when he got strangled and couldn't get his breath, we might lose him. He didn't like me

for awhile. [laughter -- Lalley]

**Lalley:** Was there much interaction among the different CCC camps? You know, 1, 2, 3 and 4. Did you all interact with each other?

**Jackson:** Like recreation and stuff?

**Lalley:** Uh-huh. Or in general.

**Jackson:** We couldn't very well. Uh, that's the way I remember it. They had a place over there, for example, called the whoopie house. And they thought they'd try to have dances and stuff and, uh, seems like I remember one where they had two or three of the companies together, and by the time they got it all over with and home that night, they didn't try any more. Cause there was a little drinking and getting out of line. Just a bunch of young kids just didn't want to get along. I'd say school might give you an example, if you put them together, what might happen. Say after a ball game...you might compare it [not clear]

**Lalley:** So in general they kept the camps fairly separate when it came to social life?

**Jackson:** Yeah. You had...they would send trucks to different places. I remember going two or three trucks one night, or one Saturday afternoon, to the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. I never did go no more because...take some of those country boys, by the time you get them back on the truck in the city of Nashville after 12 o'clock, you wished you'd stayed home.

**Lalley:** I'm going to turn the tape over before it runs out.

[End of Side 1]

**Lalley:** This is the second side of the tape of my interview with Mr. Jackson in Glasgow. How did the whites feel about the presence of a black camp nearby? Was there any racial tension at all?

**Jackson:** None at all. Because there wasn't any segregation that I knew about in those days. Really, there wasn't, to my knowledge, no association whatsoever. They worked [not clear] to themselves. I just knew they was over there, was about all I knew about it.

**Lalley:** Did the recreational teams play each other?

**Jackson:** Yeah, we used to played them in basketball. Couldn't beat them though [not clear]

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

**Jackson:** Well they... I'd say were pretty good about it. There were some upset. About the

time...I don't know how long the camp had been there, it had been there a short time, the first people came down from Martinsville, Indiana. Uh, [not clear] park started buying right-of-ways and, uh, once it's approved, the money to buy...set the park up and everything, they go in and appraise the property and then if they don't accept it, why it's...you know how it's handled from then on. The appraiser sets the price but a lot of people would be unhappy. And I'm sure I couldn't even name any...I wouldn't want to anyway...that were unhappy, but I know there was a few because we had a few fires over there burning at one time. It would be in all places hard to get to. So you talking about Smith Meredith; you was at his home? The park, when I was over there, that was as far as you could go, down that road. If you'd gone on the other side, you'd had to gone around through Brownsville and come back. So you get a fire over there in the right place, it'd be all over the country before you could get there.

**Lalley:** Was it more the...what about...was it more the park service that people were unhappy with or the CCC do you think?

**Jackson:** Oh, I'd say the park service. Because there were a lot of people...Smith was a local guy and a lot...you've named two or three that lived there...but Kulesza, he's from Indiana. But this, you named somebody else I've heard the name but I didn't know him. They were local people [not clear]

**Lalley:** Were there ever any problems in town like when a whole bunch of CCC boys went in...any tension between the residents at all or did they usually welcome the business?

**Jackson:** Well, let's put it this way. I don't think you could take a group today and go in, it could even be girls, [not clear] but, in general, I'd say they were accepted very well because the economy. See, you go into Cave City...remember...say if there's a full strength, 240 people, a full company...that's quite a few people in a little town. They had two policemen over there...[not clear] I got to know them real well because I lived in Cave City for a while. Uh, well, I did a little police work back then, too. You didn't have to read them their rights in those days. If somebody was acted up, you show them a nightstick, the next thing you used it. You didn't have any problems. You wouldn't have it today if...and they'd have carnivals. In those days, a carnival was a big thing. And, we'd hear of a fight once in a while but it didn't amount to much. In fact, if something...somebody started to get out of line, a CC boy would probably be trying to correct it

before they got there. They wouldn't have to. I think...I'd say they [not clear] to people...Cave City, Brownsville or anywhere else...course, those towns were small. It's hard to believe one time Cave City was wet in those days but it was.

**Lalley:** Did a lot of the men date local girls?

**Jackson:** Oh, yeah. Sure they did.

**Lalley:** Were there a lot of social activities, uh, organized social activities with...?

**Jackson:** You didn't hear too much of that in those days, not like it was in World War II. But now they attended...a lot went to local churches and things like that. And some would invite them into their homes. And then, you know, other people wouldn't let anybody into their homes. It's just the way it goes.

**Lalley:** Somebody told me the story about local girls setting fires [laughing] to get the CCC boys out to their hou...areas.

**Jackson:** I'm sure that that happened. I'm sure it did. [chuckled]

**Lalley:** I think that's funny [not clear] [muffled amusement -- both]

**Jackson:** Unless you had to fight that fire.

**Lalley:** Yeah. I don't think would be funny but I guess people will do anything...

**Jackson:** You got pine trees back over there. You get a fire with a wind in a pine tree, it's up here you know. You can't control that thing.

**Lalley:** Well, in general, how successful do you think the CCC was in relieving the effects of the Depression?

**Jackson:** In relieving it?

**Lalley:** Umhumm.

**Jackson:** Gosh, I think they did a lot. [not clear] put a lot more money into the economy. Now you're thinking start out with \$30 a month and you call that money? Well, it was in those days. I don't...I'd say \$30 then, we talking about \$120 now? And it did a lot to places like Cave City because there were a lot of people working there. Now like Arlis Chalmers...you were talking about...now Arlis Chalmers was...he wasn't an enrollee like I would have been. They were hired as...I'd say as instructors because remember a way back I mentioned the forestry thing? There was Les Randall...I understand he might still be living. He was a forester...I don't know what title

that really is...what do you study to be a forester?

**Lalley:** I guess...sometimes there's forestry divisions.

**Jackson:** Forestry divisions. But he could tell you anything about the disease of a tree or what have you. And then you had [not clear] was a mechanic and then a fellow by the name of Cates was...seems like it was roads or communications, uh, like I say, road-building [not clear] learned to operate bulldozers [not clear] what have you.

**Lalley:** How did it...for your family...how did it make a difference? I know you probably got married somewhere in the middle of everything.

**Jackson:** Well, that was the problem there...gave up...that was it. [amusement -- Lalley] I don't know as it made a difference. It, uh, one camp shut down [not clear] like I said either on or give or take a year there 19 and 40. And, uh, I went from there...I went from there on to state police...pretty soon. It wasn't state police in those days, it was the highway patrol.

**Lalley:** What do you think...what do you consider to be the greatest contribution of the CCC?

**Jackson:** To me or to everybody was there?

**Lalley:** Every...both. You can tell me both.

**Jackson:** Well, actually, what we learned in there. Discipline. I mentioned discipline a lot of times since we've been talking here. I believe in it. In other words...I don't know...if you won't listen to anybody or what they tell you, somebody has had more experience or your instructors or your teachers, you never will get anyplace. We've got so many people today that don't listen to anybody. I lived too...I made too many interviews in the last 35 years before I retired [not clear] you can almost tell in an interview, what you've got. But I think the difference then...when you...when a person entered over there, you knew what you had, how much money you were going to make and everything and you knew if you didn't make it, there was no other place to go. I don't know why [not clear] they come out with a pretty good attitude.

**Lalley:** Do you think it made a difference in the military for World War II?

**Jackson:** I think so, yes. Cause World War II...they couldn't get by being as tough as they was *now* in the Army. It's just like police, you know, reading you your rights. In other words, if you're stopped for anything, they have to read you your rights just like you was a criminal. And that's why they can get by with so much. I'd say it improved it 100 percent cause I don't know



how many officers I did know [not clear]. If I'd been smart enough to go into the Army earlier, I knew enough officers from being over there that I could almost pick my place. [not clear] The way they knew me was on account of the kitchen, not the kitchen but the food in it.

**Lalley:** Were there any big problems at all you can see with the CCC in general or the camps at Mammoth Cave, uh, any administration problems at all?

**Jackson:** No. We had a superintendent of the park, Homer Salisbury...he's deceased now...was a fine person. And, like I say, I'm almost positive our company was the last to go out over there. No, I can't...

**Lalley:** What kind of interaction did the...did the CCC have with the park service or did they have any?

**Jackson:** Well, you were actually...CCC...you were actually working for the park service. In other words, remember I said...okay, you and I were working together and I was working with the food. Okay, I was actually working for the Army and you could have been working for the ECW, Emergency Conservation Work. You could have been anything from a clerk to a truck driver. So you were turned over to them at 8 o'clock in the morning and back at 5, whatever time you quit in the afternoon. Then you would [not clear] projects like I was [not clear] no telling how many thousands of pine trees they set over there. Well, that was for the park service, see?

**Lalley:** So were there park service supervisors?

**Jackson:** Oh yeah. Well, like this guy Randall I mentioned. He was a supervisor [cough] for the park service. See, they were looking for work for you. I forget what they called it...in other words, what we did over there. We had this rock quarry, we put down roads, and we had the communications, telephone lines, and stuff like that. Seems like I mentioned another one. For example, when we first went over there...all the chestnut trees in about 1935 died from some kind of disease [not clear] there's a long straight pole, like you see along telephone lines now, I mean telephone poles you see now out here? They went in and cut all those trees cause they used to be huge [not clear] course we don't do anything like that today. Uh, now there was a camp at, uh, at Elizabethtown and they worked on erosion. They helped farmers [not clear] Let's say you had a farm and there was a lot of gullies and stuff, lot of erosion was taking your land away, washing it

away. They would go in there and help stop the erosion...things like that. Course they were all over the country and out west [not clear] there were even camps in Death Valley. I don't know exactly what they did.

**Lalley:** So...what exactly did you do after you left the CCC? First, you went to...into the Army...

**Jackson:** Umhmm. No, let's see. After I left the CCC?

**Lalley:** Uh-huh.

**Jackson:** Okay. I worked at [not clear] in Cave City. I worked at Hill Service for about...Hill Service was a filling station there [not clear]...I guess for about...oh, let's just say six months. Then I went on the highway patrol. That was the state police. We give... just like they do now only they've got people that don't do nothing but give driver's tests. But those days you give driver's tests, you patrolled the highways -- especially on weekends -- we didn't even have radios back then. Of course, [not clear]crooked, especially 31W. Can you imagine chasing a speedster...a speeder on that? Well, we did. And, uh, I guess I was on that for about two and a half years and, uh, drafted in the Army. I ended up right away...there were...as soon as you go in the Army, the first place [not clear] they always look at your record. Of course, when you're in the Army, you don't ask what you do. You do what, in those days, what you're told. And, uh, they're always looking it seems like for cooks, especially...of course, they were running like a kitchen there...it was running all night long because [not clear] and there were men coming in all the time and women...course there wasn't as many women then as there would be now. They must of opened my record the first one because I wasn't there any time and they sent me up there one o'clock at night to run a french fryer...pork chops. [not clear] cause you just serve one group after another. As a train is going in, another is going out. Then in two or three days I ended up [not clear]. You either get assigned to ten weeks or twelve weeks, I don't remember, of training [not clear] NTC, National Training Center. And, uh, you take so many weeks of that or you go into a specialist company and take four or five weeks. They sent me into a specialist company. We were real short on cooks back then and, uh, [not clear] they sent me into a specialist company, uh, as a cook. After a month there, they sent me to headquarters, the ROTC. The headquarters company was a kitchen that was almost run like civilian. There was two of us as mess sergeant. It was that big. You had officers and training staff and inspectors out of

Washington and stuff. Like I say, [not clear]. It was a little different cooking for officers; we did serve steaks there. In the time I was a mess sergeant there I ordered stuff from Swift and Armor and all that. It was set up as a nonprofit organization. To be a good mess sergeant there, what you had to be able to do was serve free beer once a week and [not clear] for a dance about once a month. In those days, there...it was like we were talking about cooks...good musicians were drafted in the Army [not clear] They'd play all night if you'd just give them beer. That was a...actually, a play job but I was never moved, never transferred. They'd all leave; sometimes there'd be a new bunch. When they come in, it was...it wasn't how well I done my job, it was I'd had the experience [not clear]. Anyway, it kept me there. In the Army, they don't ask you if you want to stay, they keep you if they want to.

**Lalley:** So you were there until...?

**Jackson:** I was there until about '46. In 19 and...yeah, 1946 and then I was discharged. I had a leave of absence from the state police; it was state police then. I made one trip to Frankfort and I could see I didn't want that. I didn't tell them I wasn't going to take it, but [chuckle] this person had been looking for me from Western Kentucky Gas. In fact, he met the bus...I don't know how he knew it was coming in from Bowling Green [not clear] asked me to go to work for Western Kentucky Gas and I did. I went to work here in Glasgow for them. It was 19 and 46 and, uh, I worked here for about 17 years, and I was district manager for about the last 15 years I was here. They transferred me to Owensboro which is our largest town and I retired there in 1981. I had 35 years. I retired as regional manager.

**Lalley:** So you think the CCC made a difference in your life with discipline...is that the main...?

**Jackson:** If it hadn't been for the 3Cs, I'd never had the job.

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

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

**Lalley:** Well, then, I'll turn off the tape recorder.

[End of Interview]