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Interview no. 867

Roscoe Weaver

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
ORAL HISTORY INSTITUTE

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, 1994

INTERVIEWEE/ADDRESS: Roscoe Weaver, 24375 Eichman Road, Von Ormy, Tx., 78073. Phone: 210-624-3158.

INTERVIEW BY: John R. Moore

DATE: Feb. 3, 1994

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW/LANGUAGE: 1 hour, 30 minutes/English (By long-distance telephone)

SUMMARY: Weaver was a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps who resided in Big Bend National Park from 1940-42. He provides extensive details about the CCC and its activities in the park in the few years immediately preceding its acquisition by the National Park Service.

He discusses the environment, plant life and wildlife of the Chisos Basin and other park areas as he saw it while constructing hiking trails and access roads. He recalls relations with residents at Castolon and other communities along the Rio Grande and his acquaintance with several ranch families then living in the area. He provides detail about CCC policy and activities in the park, and he describes a typical CCC work-day in the park.

He remembers purchasing *sotol* from Mexicans at Boquillas and elsewhere along the river. He relates details of a work strike at the Chisos Basin in a dispute with a U.S. Army officer and the subsequent arrival of armed troops from Fort Bliss. He discusses at length the economic and social benefits of the CCC to young men like himself who were destitute as a result of the Depression. He also briefly discusses discovery of several skeletons between the Chisos Basis and Boquillas, and he comments on his perspective of environmental changes in the area between 1942 and 1992 when he last visited the park.

Big Bend Oral History Project

Roscoe Weaver, Von Ormy, Tx.
By John R. Moore

February 3, 1994

Big Bend National Park Oral History Project interview with Roscoe Weaver, conducted by John Moore, graduate history student at the University of Texas at El Paso, Feb. 3, 1994. This interview is being conducted by long distance telephone connection with Mr. Weaver at his home in Von Ormy, Tx., near San Antonio.

M: Alright, Mr. Weaver, if you would please tell us when and where you were born and where you reside now, please.

W: Well, I was born at Segovia, Tx. That's just east of Junction, about 12 miles. And my mother and father were moving in a wagon from, uh from Menard to Junction and they camped there in the wagon and that's when I was born. And my father went looking for the, for the doctor, and he got to Junction and - he was riding horseback - and when he got to Junction the doctor had gone out, way out on a ranch some place where some man had killed his wife with an axe. And so he didn't get the doctor, but when he got back to where my mother was, why, I'd already been born. She'd already taken care of me and she was sitting up with - by the fire - with me in her lap (laughs). And uh ... but anyhow, that's where it started off, and then when I was about

M: Mr. Weaver, what year was that that you were born, please?

W: That was 1923, in December 1923.

M: And your family lived in Segovia?

W: No, we were just passing through there. We were moving in a wagon from Menard to Junction.

M: And where did your family finally reside, and what was your father's, or parents, occupation?

W: Well, my father was, he was a cowboy and he drove trucks and he did a little bit of everything. Which, you know back in those days just about everybody did. He was an awful good bronc rider. Then during World War I, he broke horses for the Army. And, but anyhow, then we moved to Junction. We lived there till I was about four years old, and then we moved to Fort Stockton, and he bought a small place out there, a small ranch, and then he had, he started a wholesale grocery business. And he'd just bought some new trucks. He hauled the groceries to those stores out there from San Angelo - wholesale places in San Angelo - and when the depression hit, he lost everything he had.

M: What was your father's name, Mr. Weaver?

W: Uh, James Issac Weaver.

M: And did you live in Fort Stockton most of your early life?

W: Well, until I was, oh, about thirteen, and then my father left and never did come back and there was nine children and I just started working around. I worked all over that country out there. I just worked for my board, mostly, on,

around on ranches, around Van Horn and Kent and, oh, just about all over that country.

M: What were the conditions like in that area at this time - we're talking here in the late 1920's or early [19]30's?

W: Late 1930s, during the 30's. See I was born in [19]23.

M: OK. This would be during the depression, then.

W: Right. Right. And boy it was tough. You, uh you - well a man couldn't get a job, much less a kid. And in that country it was hard. You couldn't hardly raise, raise gardens, you couldn't, you know, you didn't have.... And there just wasn't any work. And it was just hard to get anything to eat. And it was just, it was just, well, you'd had to live in that time to realize what it was like.

M: Were you able in those times to go to school, Mr. Weaver?

W: No, I wasn't. I just went through the sixth grade - or partially through the sixth grade - and I had to quit school.

M: I assume that these conditions and the situation with your family led you to the Civilian Conservation Corps.

W: Right, right....

M: Could you explain how that came about.

W: Well, I was uh, uh working on the, oh, the ranch about twenty miles north of Lobo, in the winter of [19]39 - in the fall actually - actually just in the early fall and it was so cold, and I decided there must be something better than that. So I went back to Fort Stockton, and I signed up there

for the CCC. And I got in the CCC. I was, well, I wasn't quite sixteen yet. You were supposed to be seventeen to get in, but I fudged a little on my name and, uh, on my age, and got in when I was sixteen.

M: How had you heard about the CCC?

W: Well, uh, there was uh, they had uh, uh, oh, the uh, a social office or something there. I don't know just how they worked that. And, and uh, they uh, did.... The boys from the area that that office covered, they, they would uh, uh.... A lady named Stevens ran that office, I believe. Yea. Anyhow, she would, she would nominate the boys from that area, you know, that were eligible to get in.

M: What were some of the requirements to get into the CCC.

W: Well, the requirement was you, you were supposed to be seventeen and your parents could only have a certain income. Had to be below a certain income level.

M: And what were the benefits of CCC? What, what were you to get out of it, and what were you to be required to be doing as a member of the Conservation Corps?

W: Well, you uh.... They paid you 30 dollars a month and they sent twenty-one [\$21] of it to your folks, and uh, they gave you eight dollars and they put one dollar in a saving for you.

M: Was that a lot of money for you at that time?

W: Well, it was a lot of money for anyone (chuckles). You know, soldiers at that time only got 21 dollars a month.

M: So you thought your were fairly well paid?

W: Oh, yeah. It was - I tell you - it was a wonderful thing. That was, I think, the best program they have ever had in this country.

M: How did that effect your family? Was it obviously a big help to your mother?

W: Oh, it sure was. It sure was. It was an awfully big help.

M: Were you the oldest of the nine children.

W: No, no. I was the third from youngest. And, uh.... My older brother, he'd been in the CC at Fort Davis and helped build up - you know where that Indian Lodge is there?

M: Yes, huh, huh.

W: Well, he helped build that and then, uh, he got, he got married and worked for the railroad. And then I had a brother two years older than me that was in the CC when I got in. And, uh, I went to the same place he was. But after we moved to Big Bend a little while, then they came around recruiting boys to go in the Merchant Marine, and he signed up to go in the Merchant Marine.

M: Where did you enlist in the CCC?

W: At Fort Stockton.

M: And where were you sent and what did you do after - immediately after enlisting?

W: Well, uh, I was sent to that camp at Balmorhea, well it's Toyahvale, it's about three or four miles out of Balmorhea. You've probably seen that, at that park.

M: Yes.

W: Yeah, and they were just finishing that up when I got in. And we were, uh, I was working.... I was on a pick and shovel when I went in, and we were digging some drainage ditches. And, and we dug a fish pond - we were loading dump trucks. Did everything with, you know, by hand. And, uh, then we finished up, we got everything there finished up, and then, uh, it's hard to remember dates, but it was, uh.... They had some pamphlets down there [at Big Bend National Park] said we moved back down there July 2, but that doesn't seem right to me, because it was cold weather when we moved back down there. It was still cold.

M: This is back to Big Bend?

W: Yes.

M: And this would have been what year?

W: Well, that was [19]40. Early 1940.

M: What types of projects were you working on? You mentioned drainage ditches, etc. Were these all community improvement projects?

W: Well, it was a - it's a park. We were building parks.

M: That was the CCC assignment at that time to build parks?

W: Right. Right. Uh, we built that big swimming pool there at Balmoreah, and all the drainage, you know, for it, and uh, and those bath houses and that stuff there, we built. And, uh, of course like I said, I wasn't in on much of that. Just the tail end of it. And then we got to Big Bend, uh, we, we

were building, well improving the roads down there, and, and building cabins and building trails up those mountains, you know, the trails for the tourists to go.

M: Had you ever been to the Big Bend area before?

W: No, I'd never been there.

M: What was your first reaction, if you recall.

W: Oh, I loved it. I still do. I wish I could be there all the time. I, I just love that kind of country.

M: What struck you about it, Mr. Weaver?

W: Well, it just, it's the openness. You've got so much space. Uh, you know, I just love open space and where you can see from here to there, and where you can get away from people, be away from everybody and just uh.... That's just the kind of person I am. I just like lots of space around me. And I don't like to be cooped up. I don't like many people at a time. I like a few friends, you know, but as far as crowds, I don't like crowds.

But that, there was so much to do down there. You know, well I... When I first went down there I worked on pick and shovel building those trails for a little while, and then they got an opening in the, uh - to drive a truck - and I'd never driven a truck. I'd never driven a car over three or four times. But, I.... They'd just put you in one and you start driving (chuckles). That's the way it was. I don't know how in the world a bunch of us kept from getting killed down there in those mountains in those old trucks,

but no one ever did.

M: What type of truck were you driving? Do you recall the model?

W: There were [19]36 Dodges. We had some dump trucks and we had some flatbeds, staked bodies. And, those old Dodges, the front spindles on them would break, and the wheels, the front wheels, would fly off of them sometimes. Those spindles would crystalize and break, and the wheels would come off.

M: Did you ever have an accident?

W: No. Never did.

M: What were you living conditions like when you got there?

W: Oh, they were good. They already had all the buildings there, and soon as we got there we repainted all the buildings inside and cleaned up all the grounds, and did everything before we started the, started work, you know, the work project. And the recreation hall - I'll never forget. We could not figure it out. When we got there the recreation hall was painted black, up about four feet on the walls, and then the rest of the walls and the ceiling were painted a bright orange. It was a, it was weird, but we repainted everything and got everything to going.

We had a radio station down there. We didn't have any telephones or anything, you know. And they had a radio station, and the radio station couldn't, they couldn't reach Fort D.A. Russell at Marfa. I don't know if it was account

of the mountains or what, but they had to radio Fort Bliss at El Paso and then El Paso would relay the message to Fort D.A. Russell in Marfa.

M: These were two-way radios you used to communicate for supplies or emergencies, or ...?

W: It was just the code system, you know, dot-dash.

M: Oh, telegraph, then.

W: Telegraph, right, right. I don't know what I was thinking about.

M: Did you ever learn why the rec hall was painted black and orange?

W: No (chuckles). We never did. We never did.

M: Where was that located at the time?

W: It was, it was down in the basin [referring to the Chisos Basin]. The same place the camp grounds are now, where the people camp.

M: At the Chisos Basin?

W: Right. And up where they have the cabins there now, where they have, you know, the center up there where they have the tourist courts and all that, that - we used that for a baseball field and also that's where we took all the men every morning when they'd go out and work on those trails. We'd drive them up there, and then they'd go out to work from there. [They would] walk [from there].

M: How many people were there at that time?

W: Well, you know, I don't know. I would say around, probably

M: Were they all males?

W: Yes. Oh, yes. There was no such thing as coed stuff then.

(Chuckles.) Uh, and we had, well, we had, let's see, a commanding officer, an assistant commanding officer and a company clerk and a top sergeant. And we had - that, I don't know if you know but that was in two segments. The army part fed you and clothed you and furnished your living quarters and all that, and then they had the part they called the state part. That did all the work projects, and the army part was painted, everything was painted OD [olive drab] color. And the state part was all alike, green. All the equipment and everything was painted a light green. The only equipment the army part had was a garbage truck and an ambulance.

M: And, and the army was regular army, like from Fort Bliss or Fort D.A. Russell?

W: Well, they had, they had regular army officers as commanding officer and assistant. They usually had a little old first or second lieutenant, you know, for assistant commanding officer.

M: Was discipline strict?

W: Well, uh, yes it was. But about the only thing they did, they'd put you on KP [kitchen patrol] and make you wash pots and pans and dishes. But it was, uh....

M: What would you have to do, Mr. Weaver, to get KP duty? What

infraction?

W: Well, get in a fight or refuse to follow orders. You had, well you had what they called barracks leaders, and they had like, well it'd be in the army, it'd be like corporal and sergeant but in there they called it assistant leader and leader. And, and I had, I had to put a few guys on KP when I was barracks leader. But then after I made a leader in, uh, well first I made, uh, I started driving a truck and then I started driving a Caterpillar. And made assistant leader that.... Driving a Caterpillar had an assistant leader's rating, and I got that and then the old boy that was assistant mechanic, uh, he got out [discharged from the CCC]. And then I got his job as assistant mechanic and then I was a leader then, and then I had a private room down in the garage. Beside the, well, beside the garage, between the garage and the parts room.

M: Did that mean more money for you?

W: No, well, yes. Assistant leader got 36 dollars a month and a leader got 45 dollars. And we kept all except the 21 dollars they sent to our parents. They still sent the same amount to our parents, but we got the rest.

And, oh, I tell you I had a wonderful time down there. On the weekends if.... We'd either, they'd either, they'd always take a bunch to town if they wanted to go. Course so much of the time you didn't have any money to go, and we'd climb those mountains. I think I climbed every mountain out

there. Explore all of them. And just wonder around over that country, you know, and sometimes we'd gather up a truck load and go down to Boquillas, down on the river, and we could buy, oh, they had some kind of, some kind of liquor they sold down there called *sotol*, S-O-T-O-L. And, you had to take your own bottle. Those guys would bring it across the river in goat, goat hides. They'd have them sewed up, you know, and have them full of that *sotol* and take your own bottle. And we used to go down there and buy that stuff.

M: Was that breaking the CCC rules, by any chance?

W: No. They, they, they weren't that strict on that. And, uh, that stuff (chuckles).... I don't know, I've never seen any of it since. It tastes just like kerosene, the first drink you took of it and after that you didn't taste it. But it didn't leave any hangover.

M: How did you get to Boquillas? Was there a dirt road?

W: Yes.

M: And - what was that like going to Boquillas? Did it take ... ?

W: Well.... (Chuckles) I tell you, all the roads were more or less just cow trails. Weren't much more, and any of, any of those creeks and dry washes and anything out there didn't have any bridges. There was one between there and Marathon, one of the, one of the creeks, Maravillas or something like that, they called it, that had a bridge on it and all the rest of them, you just went down through the creek bed. And,

it was 85 miles of dirt road into Marathon.

M: Is that where you went when you got to go to town?

W: Yeah, well, if you wanted to go there.... If any of them wanted to go on to Alpine, they would take them on to Alpine. But, I don't know, for some reason there was a, there was a road from the park down there to Alpine, straight through. But for some reason they never went that way. I don't know, I've never been over that road. I don't know why they never used that road, but maybe it was bad, awful bad or something, but they never used it. We always went to Marathon, and if we were going on to Alpine went from there on to Alpine.

M: Was there a road that did not go to Terlingua, or over to Study Butte?

W: Yeah, it went right by there. Yeah, it went through Study Butte. Terlingua was off to the left just a little bit. And that road went through Study Butte and right on, straight on to Alpine then. And, and then sometimes on the weekend, we'd load up the trucks, whoever wanted to go and go over to the mouth of Santa Elena Canyon and swim. There was a big hole, big deep hole, right in the mouth of Santa Elena Canyon over there. And we'd go over there and swim, and then sometimes we'd just climb over those mountains and.... I tell you what, that was the most carefree time of my life. I loved it, I loved it down there. I would probably still be there if I could.

M: You mentioned Boquillas, Mexico. Did you row across the river to get there, and what were your impressions of Boquillas?

W: Well, it was just, it was just a little bitty old, just a few little old adobe and, and mud, and - huts would just, you know, would cut these canes and put on top of them, and just criss-cross them back and forth up there, and you know, for a roof. And there was also, there was a place on this side of the river, also, on the United States' side called Chata's, and every rock along the road all the way from Marathon down there had a, had painted on them with red paint, "Chata's place, Boquillas." And it was a real popular place. I think - I've read about it lots of different places, you know. [Chata's was a Mexican food restaurant, one of the few structures then left in what was known as Boquillas, Tx. Boquillas, Mexico, was immediately south, across the Rio Grande.]

M: And what was there?

W: It was a restaurant, just a restaurant and they sold beer and food and, and they'd dance and just little, you know, road house or whatever you'd want to call it.

M: Would that be located where Rio Grande Village is today.

W: No, no. That's not exactly where it was. Boquillas is not at Rio Grande Village. It's east of there, down the river a little ways. There were several little places there.

M: Have you been back to this place.

W: No, we didn't get to go last, last time I was out there. In fact I haven't got to go back down to Boquillas since I left there. We had just about used our time up already. My wife and myself and, well, we went back through Fort Davis. It was our wedding anniversary and, and we had, we had spent our honeymoon over there at the Indian Lodge when we got married. We got married at Fort Davis. And, so we'd spent a couple of days there and went through Marfa and saw some friends and went on down to Presidio and then we just had two days left by the time we got to Big Bend before we had to be home. And I had my daughter and son-in-law and two grandchildren with me. And, they all loved it down there, but we just didn't have time to see all the things we wanted to see.

M: How did you get along with the Mexican citizens in Boquillas?

W: Oh, we got along fine. We had no problem with them. None whatever.

M: Were there people, ranchers, still living in Big Bend...?

W: Oh, yes. Yes, while I was there, they had a big meeting out there, with all the ranchers. Got them together out there, just outside the camp. I was, oh, I was in on it. I didn't, not on the negotiations, but I helped. We had a barbecue and furnished the beer and all that kind of stuff, and I hauled it out there and helped take care of it and all that kind of stuff.

M: What year was this meeting and what was the purpose of it?

W: Well, it was to, to get those ranchers to sell out to the park, is what it was for. They got all those ranchers that owned land around there, you know, in the area where they wanted to buy for the park.

M: Were they resistant to sell at that time?

W: Well, they didn't seem to be that much. They had been working on it for quite a while. And, that was hard country. Those ranchers, they didn't have an easy time of it. And they had a lot of trouble with people coming, those Mexicans coming cross the border and stealing their horses and cattle and stuff like that. And, you know that country's pretty tough. There's not a whole lot a, whole lot of stuff down there for livestock.

M: Do you recall any specific names of people that lived there that you met?

W: Oh, well, the Babbs were one family that ranched down there. Roy Babb, and he had two boys and a daughter. W.L. Babb was the oldest boy and the youngest one, I don't know what his first name was. They called him Smokey. But, he got in a.... I understand, I read in the paper, about he got in a scrape down there after that, with some of those tick, uh, tick inspectors down there. I understand he killed one of them. Down there over something down there. But I don't know any details about that.

And then there was the Burnams. There was a Burnam

ranch that is right at where the park headquarters are out there at, what's it called, Panther Junction? There was a Burnam ranch right there. That's where the park started at that time. But the, the house that burned, it was an adobe house and it had burned, and the only one living out there was one of the boys, Wadie [?] Burnam, and he lived in one of the sheds or something out there, and he still ranched out there until they sold out.

M: Who were they meeting with in this meeting? People from the state or from the park service?

W: Well, you know, I don't know exactly. I guess it was probably people from the park service. And, they got all these ranchers together there to talk to them about buying their land, you know.

M: Was there a Ross Maxwell from the park service there at the time you were?

W: Well, no, I never did know of him if there was.

M: He was the first superintendent of the park and....

W: No. The only officers I could recall are the people, well, the people that worked for the state part of it. The superintendent was, [pause], well shoot, well there was - Lloyd Wade, was one of the foremen. And there was a fellow named Warnick, was a foreman. And, Davenport was a superintendent. He was from, he lived in Alpine.

M: Was the park called Big Bend at that time or something else?

W: No, it was called Big Bend park. I was in company 1856. They

called it Camp NP1T.

M: That stood for national park?

W: Yeah. First in Texas or something, I don't know. Interna - International. At that time, well they still are, they're trying to make an international park out of it. They're trying to get Mexico to build a park on their side, and make an international park out of it.

M: What was the feeling about the international park at the time? Were the Mexicans in Boquillas and elsewhere interested?

W: uh, they didn't even know anything about it.

M: What was your opinion about it as a worker there?

W: Well [chuckles], I really didn't have much opinion of it. You know, at that age I wasn't thinking about anything but just doing my job and having fun. And I really, you know, wasn't too concerned with any of that.

M: Tell me about a normal day in your schedule as a CCC member from the time you got up until the time you went to bed.

W: Well, uh, you got up at five o'clock. They turned the lights on. We had a light plant, and we had one guy that run the, that would start the motor at five o'clock in the morning. And the lights would come on, and then everyone would get up and go to the bathroom, and, you know, clean up and dress and everything. And then at 5:30 [a.m.] you went to - you gathered at company headquarters building and had roll call and then you did calisthenics until six o'clock. And then

you went back to the barracks. And then at 6:30 you went to breakfast. And, oh, that would probably take close to an hour, time you had your breakfast, go back to the barracks and then you cleaned up everything, straightened up everything, got your work clothes on and, and, and then at eight o'clock everything gathered at the - that went out on jobs - gathered down at the state and loaded up in the trucks and went to whatever job they were working on. And, then worked till noon, and if you were working very far away you took a lunch. If you weren't, why, you came back to camp for lunch. And, and then at one o'clock you went back out on the job, and then at four o'clock - I believe it was four o'clock, yeah, pretty sure, four o'clock - why, you quit work. And then by the time you got in and got cleaned up and everything and, and they had, had your chow at about 5:30, or I guess it was at 5:30 we had chow - yeah, 5:30 - you had chow, and then got through with chow, well, then the rest of the time was yours until nine o'clock. They turned the lights out at nine o'clock, and you had to be in the barracks at nine o'clock. Sometime, occasionally they'd have bedchecks, come through after the lights were out and have bed checks that you're....

END OF SIDE "A," TAPE 1

M: There were about 150 men there. Were they all from that part of Texas?

W: Well, they were all from Texas. But I only knew one that wasn't. There was an old boy from Arkansas. From Amity, Ark. And I can't remember his name, but he used to get the, he used to get a paper from home - a little old.... I don't remember if it was weekly or monthly paper. His mother'd send it to him. We used to all read it because it was so funny. It would say, Mrs. so-and-so's prize hen died, or somebody got an opossum in their chicken house, or you know, little things like that. And, of course, he knew all the people. It was interesting to him, but we used to sure get a kick out of it, you know.

M: What town in Arkansas?

W: Amity.

M: A-M-I-T-Y.

W: Right.

M: Did you have other newspapers or magazines and mail that came to you regularly?

W: Oh, we had mail once a week, but we didn't have any, any newspaper or any magazines or anything like that.

M: How did you entertain yourselves when you weren't working?

W: Well, we had a rec hall and we had pool tables. And, and we played - at night a lot of time, we'd play pool or we'd just sit around over there [at the recreation hall] and talk, you know. And we did have some... We had two horses and three burros - three pack burros - and two saddle horses there. And I always liked to ride, and I used to on weekends....

Another boy and I - guy named Otis Slayton from Wink - he was a great big tall... He must have been six foot five or six, something like that. And great big guy. And he and I used to ride horses every chance we got. We'd ride around over those mountains and, and.... Then there was horses would drift in there from, well that Ira (?) Hector had had that, had owned that before the park service bought it from him or something. Anyhow, he, he ran cattle and horses in there.... He'd been gathering them up, but he still missed a few, and there was horses that would drift in there.... I don't know where they'd come from. And we'd catch them and ride them, well some of them we didn't ride. (Chuckles) They'd throw us off, but any of them that we could, we'd catch them and ride them. And, we just, uh, we had a great time.

At one time they got a bunch of hogs down there and was going to raise hogs (chuckles) in there for, for the camp.

And then they wouldn't let anybody have a, have an automobile, if anybody could have afforded one. They wouldn't let anyone have an automobile, but they'd let you have a horse. And some of the guys bought horses and brought them in there. And then it got to where there was quite a few of us would do a lot of riding, and then the burros all got on.... They let them run wild when we weren't using them, and they all got on loco weed. And they just as crazy as they could be. You get on loco weed and you can't ever

get them off of it. We penned them up and fed them for months, and the minute you turn them out they'd go to hunting that loco weed again and they'd get just crazy, and they were. But when they get on that loco weed, boy a little bitty, just a little shout or stick laying across the road, and they'd just go nuts. And they come to a little old place maybe six inches high, and they'll jump like they was jumping off a big bluff or something. They just really get crazy. I guess they're just ruined. I don't know if you can ever do anything with them.

M: It sounds like you were living some adventuresome times.

W: Oh, it really was. And you didn't have any worries in the world, you know. You were just so carefree, you just.... You didn't have to worry about anything. Just do your job, and I really had a great time.

When I was driving a Cat, why, I used to pull the blade that you scrapped the roads with, you know, like a maintainer, only you didn't have such a thing then. They just had a thing you pull behind a Caterpillar. Big old iron wheels on it, and it had the blade on it, and then you had a man riding on it. And, that guy named Warnick, he'd, he'd been down there with the first bunch that were down there. and one of them had turned him over on that blade and broke his leg, and (chuckles) he was real scared of that. But he was the only one that could operate it - you, you know, could really work those roads with it. So, then, he was

scared to death, but I had some fun out of him. You know, I was driving a Cat pulling him, and he got pretty excited sometimes (chuckles).

But, you know, those roads in those mountains were just narrow and dirt, you know. They weren't like they are now. They were just gravel, and very steep.

M: You mentioned that you helped construct some of the trails. Do you remember any of the specific trails that you worked on and, and what that involved, making a trail?

W: Well, I worked on the trail going down to the Window. And, I worked on some of the - part of the trail going up to the, well they call it Juniper Flat now, up to the South Rim. And, well, we had, we had to move big old boulders and dig up big tree stumps, and then we would level down, you know, where it was too steep, and some places you'd kinda make steps in the rock so people could, could walk up them, where, you know, it was too steep. And, it was hard work, no doubt about that. But it was, it was a lot of fun.

M: Were there any tourists visiting the park at that time?

W: Uh, very seldom. Once in a while somebody would come down there, but the college, some of the colleges would come down there on outings, occasionally. I know Sul Ross - they would bring a bunch of students down there now and then. And they would have - designate some of us to show them around.

M: Do you recall a lot of wildlife in the park at that time?

W: Well, there was a lot of deer, and there was black bear.

They used to come in and raid the trash cans at night. And, we had (chuckle) a little old second lieutenant came down there and just a few nights after he'd been there the, uh.... He heard the trash cans rattling outside the officers' quarters, and he went outside to see what it was and (chuckling) he run up on those black bears, and it liked to scared him to death.

And, he didn't stay there long. He left. Well, any of the officers didn't stay there long. I don't know why; boy, they, there was a really big turnover. We had about four or five different commanding officers while I was there.

M: Now, were these military officers?

W: Yes. And I remember one of them. They said he was a navy captain. He'd been a cap.... He was a captain in the navy.

M: And had been assigned there?

W: Right. Right. But we had one that came in there; he didn't last hardly any time. We had a.... Well, we had a sitdown, (Chuckles) actually. We went into lunch one day at noon, and the, the officers' lunch was partitioned off in the end of the regular mess hall. And, we just sat down to lunch, and he decided we were making too much noise and he came out and ran everybody out of the mess hall. Wouldn't let us eat. And, so we just all went back to the barracks, and when it came time to go to work at one o'clock, nobody just didn't - no one went to work. We just all sat, just stayed in the barracks. And, he radioed, or telegraphed out - anyhow to

Fort Bliss and they got with Fort D.A. Russell. And the next morning they sent two or three truck loads of soldiers down there, and an officer down there. And so this officer came around to each of the barracks asking the guys what the problem was and everything. And when we told him, why, there was no more problem. He just shipped, they just shipped that commanding officer out. And we went back to work. We'd just decided if he wouldn't let us eat, we wouldn't work. And that was really all there was to it. But, I think that those soldiers they sent down there, they thought we were having a riot or something down there. But there was no....

M: Were they armed when they arrived?

W: Huh?

M: Were the soldiers armed when they arrived?

W: Yes. Yes. They all had full - full packs and all their stuff, and you know, there's guns and everything. And I suppose they thought it.... No telling, he probably told them we, you know, made it sound worse than it was but it really was no trouble. And the top sergeant, he was with us. He, he told us he didn't blame us. He wouldn't, he didn't think we ought to go back to work till they let us eat.

M: What year was that, Mr. Weaver.

W: Well, that must have been, let's see. That was in, I'm pretty sure [19]41. That commanding officer's name was Scoggins. I can't remember his first name, if I ever knew it. I doubt if I ever knew it.

M: Was this before Pearl Harbor, in 1941?

W: Yes. Yes.

M: Were you at Big Bend when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

W: Right. Right.

M: What do you recall about that? How did you hear about it?

W: Well, you know, we didn't hear, we didn't hear a whole lot about it. We, we just heard a little bit, you know. We got most of our information when we went to town, but they did have everyone sign up for the draft. I.... When they first started the draft, you know, after Pearl Harbor, everyone [age] eighteen and up signed up. Well, I had quite a dilemma, because I still wasn't eighteen yet. And I didn't know what to do, whether to sign up or whether to admit (chuckles) I wasn't old enough or what, so I went to the superintendent, Mr. Davenport, and, and asked him what I should do. And I explained to him, and he liked to have died laughing. (Laughs) He thought that was about the funniest thing he'd ever saw, because, you know, I'd already made sergeant and, the fact of the business, I think - might of been a little after that, I made project assistant. It was probably after that; I don't think.... Course you could only stay two years [in the CCC]. And then the only way you could stay longer than that, [was] if they wanted to keep you, they could make you a project assistant, which you only got the same amount - you didn't get anymore money or anything, but it was just a way of keeping somebody in [the CCC] that

they thought was, was needed, you know.

M: Is that what you opted to do, stay with the CCC?

W: Yeah.

M: So you were not drafted into the military?

W: No. I'll tell you what, I never did get drafted. I was 4F. I have, ah.... My right leg is about two inches shorter than my left. I was hurt when I was a kid, and my right leg never did grow as much as my left one. And, so I never did, I never did go in the service.

M: But that didn't prevent you from staying with the CCC?

W: No. No. In fact it's never prevented me from anything. To be honest, I have done anything anybody else could do, all my life. It has never, never had any problem, you know. It just

M: When Pearl Harbor was attacked, what was the atmosphere with the CCC in Big Bend.

W: Well, we were all, we couldn't understand, really, what all was going on. We were so cut off from any, from any news or anything down there. I don't think anyone really realized just what it, what it amounted to. We didn't seem to, you know, no one seemed to get very excited. And, then it was I stayed in until 1942 and then they were fixing to close that camp [at Big Bend] and they were going to let everyone that wanted to go on into the regular army could go on into the regular army, and the others could go back home and wait to be called up in the draft. And, at that time I

got a job in Marathon, and I went to work there. And I got a job in a service station working as a mechanic and also work in front. And, I worked there a while, maybe four or five months. Then I went to Fort Stockton and got a job gassing airplanes out.... They had those little old Steerman airplanes, that they - the first training the pilots got.... I got a job there gassing planes, and then I, I don't know, I think they quit.... I think they started doing away with that or something. Anyhow, I got out of a job there, and I went to Marfa and went to work for Holland-Page building an airbase out of Marfa there, that they built a airbase out there just for the first twin-engine flying, for training. And I worked for Holland-Page for a while till we got through with that job, and then H.B. Zachary had, had a job building just a landing strip, one of those touch and go landing strips out, close to Valentine. And I went out there and worked for them till they got that job finished up, then I went to work for a freight line in Marfa. I worked there till, oh, nineteen and, well I was nineteen then, so ...

M: About 1943, then?

W: Yeah, and

M: Was there any concern in the CCC camp, after the war began with any problems out of Mexico.

W: No. No. I never did hear of any.... The only problem I ever, I ever.... Well, I don't know if it was a problem, but it scared us. There was three of us going down the river....

There's a little old road went from Terlingua down the river to, down to, oh where that trailer park thing is now [Rio Grande Village]. Anyhow, we decided.... We were over at Santa Elena Canyon, and we decided to go down that river a little piece, just.... Somebody had told us there was a beer joint down there. And, and we went down there, and there was an old tin building down there with a beer sign on it, and we went up and went in there. There was three of us. And that place was full of - I guess it was people from across the border. They had on those old white ducking pants, and old slip-over white ducking - looked like it was made out of cotton sacks - clothes and they had pieces of tire, you know old automobile tire, tied on their feet for shoes. And everyone of them had a big old machete or an old - looked like old flintlock pistols and rifles, all real ancient looking stuff, you know. And man they glared at us and (laughs) and it scared the [inaudible] out of us. We grabbed us a beer and took out. We didn't stay there long.

M: Could you be more specific about where this beer joint was?

W: Well, it, you know, my memory is vague now. But it was just down the river a little ways from that Santa Elena Canyon, the mouth of Santa Elena Canyon. Uh, have you been there?

M: There is a village called Santa Elena on the Mexican side near the canyon mouth. Would that be the vicinity it was in?

W: Well, it probably was, because But I didn't see any village on the other side of the river. All, I.... It was

just this little old tin building out there all by itself.
It was probably, maybe a 100 yards on the American side of
the river.

M: Would that have been at Castolon?

W: No, no. I know where Castolon is.

M: It would have been down river from Castolon.

W: It was up river from Castolon

M: Up river.

W: Right.

M: OK, was there a farming community at Castolon at that time?
What was at ...?

W: Yeah, and they had an old general store there. And, that old
general store, in the back of it, they had a brand new old
buggy with a fringe on the top and all that fancy stuff, you
know. It was sitting in the back of that building, and it
had rotted through the floor. The floor had rotted under it
and it was sitting down on the ground. It was.... The floor
was maybe a foot off the ground. And that old buggy was
sitting through the floor. The wheels were through the
floor, sitting on the ground in there. But that thing had
never, never been used, and it had all that, you know, that
fancy fringe around the top and all that kind of stuff. It
was.... It would really be something to have now.

M: Were there many people living at Castolon in 1941 or 42?

W: Very few. There was very few. Just a few little old farms
around there.

M: What kind of crops did they try to grow?

W: Oh, they grew melons and different vegetables. Some of them looked like they were raising some kind of grain for hay, you know, maybe milo or something like that. They called it maize. A little corn, you know, and squash, okra, just stuff like that.

M: What was the climate like then? I guess it's not much different than today, and before air conditioning, did the climate give - present any problems?

W: Well, it, it did out of the mountains. Up in the mountains it was fine. Up in the basin. It never got too hot or too cold - too hot, it got cold. But out in those flats, it was terrible in the summer time. In July and August.... We used to, at one time we were - we were digging flagstone for We'd come 20 or 30 miles out in those flats where we could find that flagstone to build those cabins with and everything, and it was so hot.... Well, I've seen it over there at Study Butte, uh - there was a little ole general store there, and it was made out of tin, had a, had a porch on the front of it, and they had a thermometer under that porch and I've seen it 125 [degrees] just many a time there. And it was so hot that you couldn't, you couldn't stay on that ground very long. It'd burn your feet. It'd blister the bottom of your feet, even through your shoes. And, we used to take.... We had these ole blue ducking hats, you know, just made out of blue ducking - the round, just with a round

brim on them, that just flopped down around, and we used to take and fold up undershirts or anything we could get and put under them before we went out there to keep that sun from beating our brains out. (Chuckles.) And that country is terribly hot in the summer time, out in those flats.

M: Did anyone ever have heat stroke or heat exhaustion? Were there medical problems because of the climate?

W: Well, we had, we had one or two get heat exhaustion.

M: Was medical treatment available at the camp?

W: Well, they had, they had a doctor. Had a little old infirmary. And had a doctor - I can't remember his name. He was real old. That guy must have been 75 years old. And Or at least maybe cause I was so young, he just looked awfully old to me. But he was awfully old.

And, of course when anybody had a real, a real problem, why - like appendicitis or anything like that, we loaded them in an ambulance and took them to Fort D.A. Russell at Marfa. And, this friend of mine, Otis Slaton, he drove the ambulance. And, lot of times I'd go with him, just for, you know, just to be going when he'd take someone in. But when someone had appendicitis then, they kept them in bed for about two months after they operated on them. And when they got up, it'd take them six or eight months before they'd ever get where they could straighten up and walk, straight. They'd go around bent over all the time. And I understand they don't do that anymore. But, they would just keep them

in bed so long that when that grew up, then they couldn't straighten up, you know. And, it was really (chuckles), really I guess they've improved medicine so much now, you know.

M: Mr. Weaver, do you feel that the CCC was really helpful to you and your family.

W: Oh, it was very helpful. And, it was really helpful to me. I grew up in there. It was just, you know, I just went from a kid to a man, where I could hold down a job and, and really make it on my own then. But

M: You mention

W: I had no problem after I got out of there. It was just a job. I, I worked for a truck line in San Antonio. I came to San Antonio in [19]46. I worked for a truck line 46 years. I just retired two years ago.

M: And you now do what?

W: Nothing! Nothing but take care of my cattle and fool around.

M: And how many cattle do you have?

W: Ah, I have about a hundred head. I'm not sure exactly. I have, I have three different places leased where I run my cattle, and, I got forty-something head one place and I got 20 head another place, and let's see - I'm not sure how many I got the other place.

M: Mr. Weaver, you mentioned that you traveled all over the park area there, uh, do you recall any old villages, or settlements or cemeteries in any specific locale?

W: Well, I tell you what, can you wait a minute or do you want ...? I've got to go to the bathroom!

M: I sure can. I'll pause.

W: OK.

(Pause in interview)

M: Yes, sir. Right back here.

W: OK. I'm sorry. I didn't

M: That's no

W: I didn't mean to quit on you, but ...

M: That's no problem. That's quite okay. (Weaver chuckles) We don't have too much longer go here. I was asking if you could recall any specific settlement sites or cemeteries around the park area that you may have visited.

W: Uh, no, uh, I never saw any. We did find a few skeletons around out in that flat out there when we were surveying there one time.

M: Which flat would that be?

W: Well, that's out in, out of the basin, like out there The part they were surveying for.... That was from, oh, that would be, from the basin, that would be east and southeast of the camp, there, down toward Boquillas and up toward Marathon and, and toward Boquillas and back in that area.

M: Were these burial sites?

W: No, no. There were just where.... In fact we found one one time that hadn't been dead too long. Had a bullet hole that, uh.... It was a Mexican from across the river I suppose. Had

a bullet hole in it.

M: And did you ever find out what the circumstances of that were?

W: No. No, I didn't, because.... It was talked all the time down there that those ranchers, when they saw one of those wetbacks, er - Mexicans - over on their property they just shot them and left them lay. That was the general consensus that they all did, and there was no, no questions asked about them because if they were over there, they were over there to steal cattle or horses. So, there was really nothing said about it.

M: So there was a lot of rustling going on.

W: Yes, quite a bit, quite a bit. In fact (chuckles), I shouldn't say this, it's probably not true. Just rumor that the Babbs - Roy Babb and his family - would go across the river and steal those Mexicans' cattle and horses. But I, you know, that is just, that is just a rumor....

M: A rumor.

W: I wouldn't say anything.... It was certainly.... Had no idea whether it was true or not.

M: Right. What are your impressions of Big Bend, now that you've gone back? We're talking 50 years later. What are your impressions about changes?

W: Well, it, it, uh, like I say, everything has changed an awful lot. Uh, for the worse, I would say. There's lots of the trees in there dying. There was no dead trees, no dead,

no dead plants. The *sotol* in there, uh, lots of the *sotol* and *lecheguilla* and stuff is dying now, and, uh, lots of dead trees all up in there. And there was nothing dead back then. Everything was pretty and green, and I don't know if it's.... It's probably just pollution in the area that caused it. I don't know what would cause it. But it's.... It was.... Well, I guess you'd say pristine then, you know. It was, it was really beautiful.

M: Do you have any opinions about how the National Park Service manages Big Bend, and operates it?

W: Well, uh, my main concern when I was out there [in 1992] is none of the rangers that were there knew anything about it. They had never been over the park, didn't seem like. They, they knew nothing about the park. They couldn't tell you anything.

M: And when was this, Mr. Weaver?

W: Well, it's been a couple of years ago. I was trying to think. That must have been, uh, well that's been two years ago. Two years ago in, uh, I guess, two years ago in July, I believe - June, or July.

M: So you talked to a number of park rangers...?

W: Oh yeah, I talked to a number of them, and they don't really know.... They, they said, they told me they don't ever get to stay anyplace very long. They just switch them around from one place to another. And about, I think, about all they know about a place is what they read about it, you

know.

And they had changed the names of lots of those mountains down there. And, uh, well they call them different things.

M: Do you...?

W: What we used to call Christmas Mountain, they call Ward Mountain now. And, uh, going up to the, going up to the South Rim there's a, kind of a plateau up there. They call it Juniper Flat. And, uh, we used to call it Lion Canyon.

M: R-Y-A-N? Or...?

W: Uh, what?

M: Ryan, R-Y-A-N?

W: No, L-I-O-N.

M: Lion Canyon.

W: There was lots of mountain lions.... Uh, the reason we call it that, there used to be an old, there was an old fellow that trapped lions down there - mountain lions down there. And he had a little old pole cabin up there, up in that place I was talking about - what they called Juniper Canyon, or Juniper Flat, or whatever they call it now.

M: That was at the time you were there? He trapped lions?

W: Yes.

M: Do you recall his name?

W: No, I sure don't. I sure don't. He was a, he was an old fellow. Had a - great big old tall rawboned fellow - had big old long white mustache, hung way down on each side of his

face, and, uh, he.... I sure don't....

M: Did you ever talk with him? Did he ever ...?

W: Oh yeah, I talked to him a lot of times. But, uh, I , he.... They, they moved him out of there not long after, after that or something. He wasn't down there too long after we came down there.

M: Did he have any interesting stories to tell you?

W: Oh, (chuckles) not really. He, he was - every time - he would talk about, you know, about trapping lions and how to trap them and stuff like that. How he'd get them to go where his traps was, and different things like that. But, uh, I don't recall too much of it.

M: Do you, you still find Big Bend a pleasurable place to visit, and ...?

W: Uh, I certainly do. I - that whole country.... I just love that whole country. I like it around Fort Davis awful well too.

M: Are you glad that the park service has preserved the area?

W: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Very glad.

M: If you could advise the park service on anything in particular, what would you recommend they do differently.

W: Well, I would recommend that they had people that knew the area better, that could give people better information, uh, about the places there.

M: Just better history, what exactly happened in a given place?

W: Well, yes, and about, uh, you know, all about the park. They

need people that know more about the park and about all the mountains and some of the, like you say, the history and, and the areas and things that happened in those areas in the past and, and stuff like that.

But, uh, out there at Panther Junction where the park quarters - headquarters - are, they used to be a spring there we called Coyote Springs. It was a little hole of water, and uh, we used to go up there sometimes and haul water when we needed water for road work. We'd go up there and load up. We had a tank we tied up on the back of one of those flatbed trucks and hauled out there and loaded up with water - one of those old one-armed johnnies, they called them that you just slipped back and forth and pumped the water through the hoses, you know. Man, those things a lot of work. Take you all day to fill up that tank, just about. Course you wouldn't get over half a gallon at a lick, if that much. It was.... It'd take you all day to do it.

But we used to haul those rocks out of that flat when we were - hauled them.... We had a water barrel about ever quarter to half a mile, all the way up in there [Weaver is referring to the road to the Chisos Basin]. And, uh, we'd have to stop - had pull-offs there - and put water in those old trucks. They weren't very powerful. And, lot of time we have to stop and unload some of the rock on the side of the road before we'd get up that mountain.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

BEGINNING OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

W: (inaudible) ... and they couldn't get over that mountain and I'd have to go up there the day they were coming and, with a Caterpillar, and sit down there just below where you topped out [on the road to Chisos Basin], oh, maybe a 150 yards - there was kind of a dog-leg there and it got real steep and I'd go over there and sit over there and wait for them to get there, and then I'd push them on over. [Weaver is referring to grocery trucks from Alpine, Tx., that had difficulty pulling their loads up the Chisos Basin road and to the CCC camp in the basin.]

M: Do you recall who that was from Alpine that was bringing groceries?

W: No, I sure don't. I sure couldn't tell you what company it was. I really can't.

M: Did you have refrigeration of any kind at the camp.

W: Well, we had a ... we had, yeah, we had a little old, little old walk-in icebox. Yeah, we had a little refrigeration where we could have some, some meat. It wasn't but - a few vegetables - it wasn't very big. And it was always giving trouble. But we did have refrigeration. And we had great big old iron stoves in the barracks. They [were] to burn coal in. And, it got awfully cold down there. And one winter there in the barracks that I - I was in barracks B when I stayed in the barracks. And, somehow or other.... We'd bank those fires at night and leave them burning and the

damper.... I don't know how it got - happened - but that night the damper got closed on there and like to killed all of us with that coal smoke. Uh, I know I was, I was in the infirmary for about two weeks. And just old yellow junk a'running out of my head constantly. And, uh, and some of the boys they had to send to Fort D.A. Russell, were in such bad shape. It, it just come very near killing a bunch of us. And, to this day I can just get a little whiff of coal smoke and it just nearly chokes me to death.

M: So there were some dangers of working and living there?

W: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I tell you, the most dangerous thing - and I don't know until this day, I've marveled at it ever since - is how some of us boys driving those trucks over those mountains didn't get killed. Because none of us knew how to drive. We just started driving when we - just get in the truck and start driving. And those old trucks, you know, had mechanical brakes on them. They didn't even have hydraulic brakes. And, we hauled some pretty good loads on them up and down those mountains. And, uh, those, those grades were steep.

And, uh, you know, not knowing any more about driving than we did.... The only one we ever had, we had, uh - one boy run into the back of a, another one out there in the flats one day. They were hauling, uh, I don't remember what they were hauling - dump trucks, and just going down old dirt trails, you know. [They] just made the road in through

there, and it was so dusty this one guy stopped and another one run into the back of him - couldn't see him in that dust. You couldn't see anything.

And then we had one, uh, one boy.... It was up on that, oh, that little flat area up there where the, where the cabins are now - the park, you know, the tourists courts are now. Uh, he was driving a truck and he had epilepsy and no one knew it. And he had a, had a spell, and liked to ran off that mountain, but he hit a big rock and stopped him. And it didn't do very much damage. And, uh, but they, uh, put him out, you know, they wouldn't, wouldn't let anybody with, with epilepsy....

M: Work in the CCC?

W: Right.

M: I see.

W: If they knew.... He'd got in without them knowing he had it, you know, and they.... But that's when they found out, when he had that spell and, he's just lucky he didn't start off that mountain. He hit that big rock and stopped him.

M: You mentioned, Mr. Weaver, that there were a lot of, uh, wildlife there. Were you allowed to hunt deer to supplement your diet, or any...?

W: Oh no. No. We didn't.... We weren't allowed to do any hunting. And, uh, course no one had guns. Course, back then, no one had guns anyway, except just the people in their homes, you know. Everybody had guns in their homes, but

nobody carried pistols or anything like that, at any time, except the law [inaudible]. The commanding officer - he was allowed to carry a gun.

But other than that.... No, we had, and do you know all the time I was there no one ever got bit by a - snake bit. And, uh, they say now, two or three - two or three, they have two or three tourists a year, maybe more, get snake bit up there. But we never had - I never saw a snake all time - a rattlesnake - all time I was there. There was lots of deer and javelina and black bear. There was a few black bear. You, you didn't hardly see them in the daytime. You just - at night. Quite a number of mountain lions. But, uh, they were all more afraid of us than we were them, you know. And, uh, we had no trouble.

You know, there was one mountain there I always, I often wondered what it was that - well, you know, do you know where the Window is?

M: Yes.

W: Ok. That, that mountain right on the right side of it. If you face, going toward the Window on the right side, that big old bald mountain - we called it Baldy. You know, we were over there one day and on, around on the back side of it there was a great big crack in solid rock going down in that mountain. Oh, it's probably a foot, foot and a half wide, that big old crack was. And, I don't know how deep it went. We threw rocks in it and never could hear them hit the

bottom no place. Hear them ricocheting one side to the other.

And there was an old hand-made windlass there by that. Uh, it just, uh, oh, you know made for a winch, you know. But it was just handmade, made out of wood. And it had a great big old rope, must of been, oh, inch and a half or two inches around. That rope was at least an inch and a half big. Un, just about a five-foot piece of it, you know, tied on to that old windlass. And I often wondered if somebody was trying to mine down in there, or, or what. But, I tried to find out some of those things from some of those park rangers and they didn't know anything about anything, you know. And they didn't know where the springs were down there, and, or anything like that.

M: Were, was some mining taking place in that area while you were there?

W: Uh, no, just at Terlingua. And, Study Butte was doing a little mining there, but Terlingua - that quicksilver mine over there - was only thing.... But, uh, the way I understand it, from, from way back in - I don't know how far back - people have been exploring that country.... You know, there's supposed to have been buried treas., uh, the uh, way back in the.... The Spaniards were supposed to have had a mine there, that Lost Mine Peak.... They was supposed to had a real rich silver mine there and, and they had, they had covered it up, hid it when they left. The Indians run

them off, or something. And, people have been exploring that country as long as I can remember, trying to find treasure, and looking for ore and all kinds of stuff like that.

M: You mentioned finding a couple of bodies, or skeletons. Did you ever find any artifacts, er, from the Spaniards or the Mexicans or the military.

W: No. Sure didn't. Never did. Never found anything.

M: Never found any silver or gold, either.

W: No. No. I understand that guy at that Burnam ranch had found uh, uh, a real - oh, it was a bar of silver, but it was real, wasn't refined down real good. They found it up there some place close to that Lost Mine Peak. But, uh, that's the only thing I ever heard of.

M: Did you socialize any with the, the ranchers in the area? Like the Stillwells? Were you familiar with the Stillwell family.

W: Uh, yes. But, uh, oh yeah. I knew quite a few of them. I can't recall too many names, now. Uh, the Burnam Ranch, I worked out there sometimes when, during roundup. Well, one of the foreman down there, Lloyd Wade, I dated his daughter. And, uh, he was, some way he was related to the Burnams. And, uh, when they were going to round up, why he got them.... They'd hire, hire me. I'd take - every so, every hitch, every six months you got a six day leave. And, uh, I would, I would put in for my leave when they were going to, going to be working cattle out there. And I'd go out there

and, and work cattle for them.

M: Where was the Burnam ranch located from the Basin?

W: Well, it was, it was, uh - you know you come out Green Gulch and it was right where the entrance to the park was before they bought all that, it's, uh.... Like I say they moved those roads, and I can't - I was trying to figure out before where that old building was. I couldn't never find the, see where the site of the old building. But it was right there around where, close to where the park headquarters are now.

M: What do you, er, what did the building look like, that you recall?

W: It was an adobe building. White, white-washed adobe building.

M: Were there corrals and windmills?

W: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Had corrals, windmill and everything. And, uh, uh, like I say, I went out there and worked cattle with them. But the house had burned before I ever went out there and it was just the walls standing. And, uh, the, the Burnam that live there - Wadie Burham they called him - he, he lived in one of the out buildings at that time. And, uh.... But there was also another little house there, a little old wooden house, just inside where the park was. It was just as you are going in, just.... Well, they had a fence there and they had a cattle guard where the park entrance started at that time before they bought the other land.

- M: This would have been where Panther Junction is, approximately, today.
- W: Right, just, just on up further from Panther Junction toward the camp [at Chisos Basin] just a little ways, maybe a quarter or half mile. Just as you went through that cattle guard into the camp on the right, sitting back there about, about fifty yards off the road was a little old wooden house. Had a, it was facing south. Had a porch out on the front. It wasn't very large, maybe, you know, maybe two rooms. And, uh, real peaked roof, shingle roof. It was just a old, typical old wooden house. But it was in pretty good shape. I think somebody had recently been living in it or something, because it was pretty well, pretty well, you know, kept.
- M: You mentioned Ms. Wade. Was she one of the few ladies around the area?
- W: Well, uh, Lloyd Wade was one of the foreman down there. And they had, uh, two houses for the foremen up there, and, and during the summer when there wasn't any school, why they'd bring their families and live down there. And, uh, it was Lloyd Wade and his wife and he had two daughters. And, uh, I went with the youngest one.
- M: Do you recall the daughters' names?
- W: Uh, Sarah. Sarah _____ [sounds like Farrell] was her name, and she had an older sister named Alice. And Alice taught school at Study Butte.

M: In the winter, did they live in Alpine or Marathon?
W: Marathon. In the winter they lived in Marathon.
M: So they could go to school?
W: Right. But back in those days, uh, that's the way lots of the ranch people did, anyway. Their families lived on the ranch with them in the, in the summer when school was out, and, uh, then, uh, the women and the children all moved to town for the winter all through the school term, and then each summer they'd go back and live with their husband on the ranch. It was so far, some of those people live so far from, from any school or any town or anything.

Yeah, you were talking about the Stillwells. I've met Hallie Stillwell, but it's been a long time ago. And, uh, I don't know if her daughter or her what, but I knew her.

M: Miss, er [covers up Weaver remark]. She has a daughter that lives with her at the Stillwell store. I don't recall her name, immediately.

W: Well, where is the Stillwell store. Tell me that.

M: Uh, it is located, uh....

W: On Persimmon Gap down there on the Stillwell ranch?

M: Yes, it's east of Persimmon Gap.

W: OK.

M: Just before where you enter Big Bend.

W: Yeah, that's where Stillwell ranch was. Alright, her daughter was red-headed, and she was kind of chunky, when she was young. And I been in a crowd with her a lot of

times. I knew her, you know, at that time, quite well. After I, uh, got out of CC camp and was working there at Marathon, we were in the same crowd a lot, you know, going out dating and stuff like that. I never did date her, but I was in the crowd with her when she....

M: Mr. Weaver, you left the CCC in 1942. Uh, what prompted that?

W: Well, they were fixing to break it up and close it up. And they had told us there were going to, there were going to close it and the ones that wanted to go right on into the, to the Army, could do that and the others, the others could, uh, you know, could...

M: Would be discharged...?

W: ... wait for the draft, and, and, uh, so a little while, just, they were, they, er, they had told us they were going to do that, and just before, uh, time - maybe two or three weeks beforehand - why, I got this offer, this job, in Marathon, and I took it and got out.

M: Were you in a much better financial situation after you left the CCC?

W: Oh, yeah, Yes, much better. Uh, yeah, like I said, you can't, uh.... People that didn't live those times, can't, they can't imagine. You know, you just can't comprehend how tough it was. Uh, you just couldn't get any money. There just wasn't any money. And it was hard to get food. There was no work. There was no work, for a man couldn't even get

a job, much less a kid.

M: So you feel that you would have had a hard time surviving had it not been for the CCC opportunity?

W: Uh, yeah. Sure would have. Sure would have. I think that, I think that CCC kept a lot of boys out of, from getting in, leading, into criminal lives, you know, from stealing and, maybe robbing, and stuff like that. Because it was, it was so hard to make it, that I think a lot of them would have, would have probably done that if they hadn't gotten in the CCC.

M: Have you maintained any friendships or contact with, er, fellows that were there in the camp with you?

W: No, you know, I really haven't. Because everybody, uh, well, I stayed with - a couple old boys and I - we stayed around together for a couple of years, pretty close, and then we, we split up and each went their own way. Uh, old Otis Slayton, he got married, and then, he left and went back - he lived at Wink [Tx]. And I think, I understand that he went to Wink. And then, uh, oh, there was an old boy named Ely Bradford, lived at Fort Davis. And, uh, he went his way. He was a close friend. And then, uh, I worked for that freight line, and then, uh, my wife's father came out there as terminal manager.

They, well they had a mess out there. That freight line, the old boy that was terminal manager out there, had gone south with a bunch of the money and, uh

M: This was at Marathon?

W: No, at Marfa. And he [his future wife's father] came out there to straighten it out, and he brought his daughter and that was my downfall, cause when I saw her, [laughs].... I, I though I couldn't live without her.

M: What is her name, Mr. Weaver.

W: Uh, Nellie Jean Gunter. Well, it was Gunter before we were married.

M: Right. Mr. Weaver, we've talked about a lot today. Uh, is there anything I haven't asked you about that you'd like to mention.

W: Well, I can't think of anything. Just off hand. Like I say, my memory is not as good as it used to be. I can't recall, you know, things, uh, especially dates and names. I have a hard time recalling dates and names.

M: Well, Mr. Weaver, I'm going to conclude our interview right here, and I'm going to shut off our tape. I appreciate your time.

END OF INTERVIEW