

CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123 NEWSLETTER

3412 Pleasant Run Road, Irving, Texas 75062

January 2015

Chartered: Nov. 1, 1985. **Past Presidents:** *Nelson Oats, *Harold Ballard, *W. O. Mullin, *Verle Oringderff, *Harold Trammell, *William Oakley, Frank Polenta, *S. L. Baker, *George Payne, *Harry Steinert, & *Al Clement. *deceased. **Current Officers:** President-Mike Pixler, phone contact: 817-929-1557, First Vice President-Jim Rau, phone contact: 817-307-0889, Second Vice president-Pat Mann, phone: [info later], Secretary/Treasurer- Steve Porter, phone contact: 817-244-6714, Sergeant at Arms-Troy Jones, Chaplain-Rev. James Pixler, Kitchen Committee, [Open], Historian-Ruby Pixler, Reporter at Large & Newsletter Editor-Bill Stallings, phone contact: 972-255-7237.

Monthly Meeting is held on the *second* Saturday of each month from 10:30 AM to 1PM at the North Side Multipurpose Center, 1801 Harrington [North], Fort Worth, TX 76106. Dues are \$10 a person annually and are effective from Oct. to Oct.

Directions: Interstate Hwy 30 runs east & west. It accesses the downtown Fort Worth area from the south. Exit north on Henderson St. After a couple of miles it crosses a fork of the Trinity River and becomes State Hwy 199 which goes to Lake Worth, and the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. When you reach the traffic light at the intersection of 18th St. NW, turn right [east] and go up the hill four blocks to Homan St. Turn left [north], and go a block to the Y. Stay right and continue into the Center's rear parking lot. Our meeting room door with the CCC sign is to the right as you approach the building. Bring a friend & enjoy fun, fellowship & food. Sign the register for you may win the \$10 door prize.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES: Farris and Bernice Brewer, #65!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Tony Rodriguez, Jan. 1st{#84}; Newell Parsons, Jan. 5th; Edward Schuckert, Jan. 8th; Fay Clement, Jan. 9th; Robbie McKee Warren, Jan. 14th; Goldie Vaughn, Jan. 20th; G.M. [Boots] Brice, Jan. 30th.

MINUTES OF MEETING, CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123, January 10, 2015

Weather: Cloudy, Temp. 34°, Attendance: 8

The meeting was called to order at 11:04 AM by President Pixler.

The Invocation was offered by Chapter member Merle Timblin.

Pledges to the flags were led by members Tony Rodriguez and Pres. Pixler.

President Pixler reminded members present of the purpose of the CCC Legacy to promote better understanding of the CCC and its contribution to American life.

Secretary/Treasurer Steve Porter asked if all members present had received the December 2014 newsletter which included the minutes of the meeting; all had. No changes were recommended. A motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Jim Rau and Seconded by Tony Rodriguez, all in favor, motion passed.

The financial report was made available to members present by Sec/Treasurer Porter. Motion to accept the report was made by Tony Rodriguez and seconded by Merle Timblin, all in favor, motion passed.

Members Farris and Bernice Brewer celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary in January. Members Tony Rodriguez [#84], Newell Parsons, Fay clement, Robbie McKee Warren, and Goldie Vaughn all have birthdays in January. Happy Birthday was sung by the members present. Larkin Dilbeck was not feeling well enough to attend the meeting and we hope he is feeling better now. Telephone contact with Richard Crooks, Bill McKee, and Steve Wingo indicate all are hoping to attend a meeting soon.

Jim Rau gave an update on the progress of the Memorial Project for CCC Company 1816, Lake Worth. Donations may be made by personal checks to CCC Legacy [not the chapter]. Checks received by the Chapter will be forwarded to CCC Legacy, Inc. Secretary/Treasurer Porter stated that information and necessary forms have been forwarded to the IRS to retroactively reinstate Chapter 123 non-profit status. Reply is expected soon. President Pixler reminded members that dues for 2015 are due and newsletter will include a reminder to those not current.

A discussion with members present of the "State of the Chapter" was brought forth by President Pixler.

The Can was passed for donations. Tony Rodriguez won the door prize and donated it back to the Chapter. Jim Rau brought other interesting items as secondary prizes and members always enjoy what Jim brings.

The Kitchen Committee carried on despite the absence of Wanda Jones, aided by members who volunteered for "KP" and the meal was delicious as always. The blessing was offered by Merle Timblin.

Motion to adjourn was made by Jim Rau, seconded by Tony Rodriguez, motion passed. We adjourned at 12:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Porter, Sec/Treasurer

CHAPTER ETERNAL

We recently learned of the passing of member and CCC "Boy" Claude E. Tyler of Blossom, Texas, which is in Lamar County near Parris, Texas. We have talked with Claude several times and got his story, and finally got to meet him and his daughter and son-in-law at the 2012 Palo Duro Canyon State Park Reunion. Claude was born on December 14, 1920, and died January 27, 2015, age 94. He was the oldest of eight children. At age 16, he joined the CCC and was shipped off to Death Valley and then to Mt. Lassen, both in California, where he went from working in 120° heat to building ski trails. He also served in Oregon, Wyoming, and Arizona. When WW II came along he served in the South Pacific in the Army Air Corps from 1942 to 1946. He was featured in the PBS documentary on The National Parks a few years back talking about the work he did with the CCC. Claude and

his wife Nora settled on the Blossom Prairie where they farmed and ranched the rest of their lives. They had two daughters, Anna and Gail. He was also a carpenter building homes. He is survived by his daughter Anna and husband Randall Crawford, who are members also, and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

We have just recently learned that long time member Truman J. Pixler age 82, passed away suddenly. He was the uncle of President Mike Pixler and brother-in-law to our Historian Ruby Pixler; our condolences to the family. We will have more complete information in our February newsletter.

THE FOLLOWING IS THE PROPOSED WORDING TO THE PLAQUE TO BE INSTALLED NEAR THE SITE OF THE CCC CAMP 1816 AT LAKE WORTH

THIS MONUMENT IS DEDICATED TO THE MEN OF CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS [CCC] CAMP 1816

They lived and worked here from May 1934 to December 1937. Also designated SP-31-T, the camp was home to 240 young men responsible for building a multitude of stone structures around Lake Worth and the previously undeveloped area of today's Fort Worth Nature Center and Refuge. During their first year the Boys increased Fort Worth's public recreational areas by 50%, building masterful stone shelter houses, stone picnic tables and benches, picnic areas complete with drinking fountains and public toilets, nature trails, new roads and culverts, just to name a few. Most notable of these are the shelters at Mosque Point, Casino Beach and the Nature Center's Broadview Point which includes a picnic area for 300 people. Of the many structures built, only a few of these treasures remain useable today. We request your help in protecting and preserving all of these unique CCC historical artifacts.

*Dedicated xxxx xx, 2015
The National Association of CCC Alumni, Fort Worth Chapter 123
The Lake Worth Centennial Celebration Committee
Peninsula Club Circle Residents and Friends*

OUR RECORDS SHOW THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS HAVE NOT PAID THEIR DUES FOR 2015

Willie Adair Gloria Canchola Bill Hollingsworth Teri Majors Jeff McKee Tom McKee
Barbara Myers Kathy Rodgers Kathy Mann Cynthia White Woolley

The dues are only \$10 for all year so if you have forgotten, please remit and keep your newsletter coming. If you think our information is in error, please call or write to set us straight. Thank you.

A HEADS UP REMINDER REGARDING THE ABOVE MENTIONED CAMP 1816 PLAQUE

Donations to the fund for the plaque have come to a screeching halt! Please help us reach our goal so we can realize finishing this project and getting it installed.

RICHARD CROOKS, A LONGTIME MEMBER, TELLS OF HIS TIME IN THE CCC

The following is taken from an interview that Richard did for The University of North Texas Oral History Collection in July, 2003.

Richard Crooks was born September 21, 1920, in Covington, in Hill County, Texas, midway between Cleburne and Hillsboro. He was born on a farm, and was the youngest of five children. The farm had a variety of crops; they did truck farming, had orchards, raised some cotton and corn, and had a syrup mill. Times were fairly good for the family in the twenties, and Richard has few memories of that time. When the thirties came along, Richard was now old enough to remember the onset of the Great Depression. Along with the country, the Crooks family went downhill also. His father developed cancer and died in June, 1934. That January they had lost their farm because of unable to make payments; even though only \$2,000 was owed, but Richard said, "It might as well have been \$200,000." With the father gone, Richard and his mother moved in with his maternal grandmother, and he tried to farm, even though he was only fourteen. It was hard because there wasn't enough land to farm on. He graduated from Covington High School in 1938, and went looking for work to supplement their meager earnings. He went as far as Fort Worth and the larger county towns nearby, but had no luck until he heard of the CCC and applied to join. He understood up until that time, one had to be from a family on relief, and his family had never done that. But he was accepted, and he was put on a bus at Hillsboro along with 30 or 40 other guys. The first stop they made was in Waxahachie at a camp run by the Soil Conservation Service. This camp was short five or six men, and Richard was picked as one because, "I was big and looked like a workhorse."

Richard learned that all the CCC camps were run by U.S. Army personnel, usually a captain with a lieutenant and one or two sergeants, but in Texas most of the work done was supervised by what we now know as The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department assigned to build parks. However, the Waxahachie camp was a U.S. Soil Conservation Service project to help farmers to prevent water and wind soil erosion of their fields. The civilian supervisors of the SCS were mostly Texas A&M agricultural graduates. They were responsible for signing up area farmers who wanted their lands surveyed, fenced, and or terraced to keep the soil in place. The farmers' responsibility was to provide the fencing and the poles; the SCS to provide the labor with the CCC boys. If a farmer had some land that had been under cultivation but was washing away, he would be asked to turn it into pasture. Then the SCS would survey and recommend the land be terraced. The boys would run terraces, or build fences, water gaps across creeks, and clear brush. The land was supposed to stay out of cultivation until it recovered its productivity. They would re-sod the land with Bermuda grass. Richard said this was the hardest job, particularly in the winter. They had to shake the dirt off the grass roots and put them in a bin and keep them watered until they were planted. This method is no longer used. Richard felt sorry for many of the farmers who really wanted and needed help with their land, but due to the Depression, could not afford to pay for even the fencing or poles.

Richard told of their camp being rather unique in that most CCC camps had large barracks with 30 to 40 men per unit, but the Waxahachie camp had small cabins like little houses built for six, but usually with just four or five men each. They were pre-fab in that the men set them up and bolted them together. There would be two beds on each side and one across the back. There was a coal stove for heat, and a small wall locker for each man at one end. There was one door and windows all around to open in warm weather. Richard remembers they couldn't go to sleep in the summer until midnight or so before the buildings cooled off enough. The men usually bought footlockers for their personal things after their first paycheck. Their camp averaged 180 to 200 total men

living in about forty of the small houses. There was a mess hall, a recreation hall, and an infirmary with three or four beds. A doctor was available from Waxahachie with an enlisted man helper at the camp. In their case the helper was also the camp bugler who would blow retreat and reveille.

The day's routine began with bugle call at about 6:00 AM, get up and dress, fix the bed, go to assembly for flag raising, and then head to the mess hall for breakfast. After that the trucks left for their work at about 8:00 o'clock. Richard remembers breakfast as always a good, hearty meal, but lunch being kind of slack. They would be out in the field working hard, cutting trees and brush, or terracing and they would just have a sandwich and maybe an apple or orange with a sugar cookie and water. They would crawl under the trucks to eat in the shade to avoid the hot sun.

When they came back from work in the afternoon, they would take a shower and change into their Class "A" summer uniform – the khakis. In the winter it was the wool uniform. [Their work clothing was blue denims and a jacket, all of which they altered to suit their needs. Richard said they would cut off the sleeves to be cooler in the summer.] They then marched to the mess hall, entered and be seated at the table but be very quiet – until the mess sergeant blew his whistle and pandemonium broke out! Every so often one had to pull KP, either wait tables or work in the kitchen. This required getting up very early. If you had demerits for your bed not being made properly, a dusty blanket, or shoes not shined, then you probably had KP over the weekend. It was called the weekend "honor roll."

Richard related how he got on the KP "honor roll." The windows on their hut stayed open all the time most of the year. This meant their blankets were subject to dust and dirt from the unpaved road by the camp. So every morning the men had to beat them with blanket beaters because when the captain did his daily inspection, he would bang each blanket with a broken cue stick. If dust flew, that enrollee made the list. With 200 or so boys this created a lot of racket, and people living close by would ask: "What's all that banging and booming we hear every day?" Richard figured how to avoid all that by wetting his washrag after returning from the bathhouse, wring it out, and then rub the blanket with the damp cloth; so no dust flew from his when the captain came by. Well one day the inspection was delayed for some reason until well after the men had gone off to work and Richard's blanket had thoroughly dried out. When the captain came through with the first sergeant and hit Richard's blanket, the first sergeant said, "I've never seen as much dust in my life!"

When asked about the type of field work they did, Richard talked about building fences. They would use a transit to shoot a line and then go on. Then using a posthole digger, they would mark every ten feet. A truck would be brought in and cedar posts would be thrown off. Then another crew would dig the holes 2 ½ feet deep, with corner posts having to be 3 feet deep. If they crossed a creek with a rocky bottom, they used a long bar to chip out a hole just deep enough to hold. It was hard work. They did not cement posts, but used broken brick pieces to tamp around a post. They built whatever type of fence that was required. Barbed wire fences were built a standard way; a certain space between at the bottom and wide at the top, with the post top sawed off six to eight inches above the top strand. A different wire would be used if for sheep or other animals. The wire had to be "stretched," that is you had to get all the slack out and stretch it. Then they would saw the post tops.

When asked about what activities were available for the men on the weekends, Richard said they mostly just rested, but they did play dominoes, played ball or on the pool table, wrestled and boxed. Asked if they had actual boxing matches, he said occasionally when new recruits arrived, they would try them out by boxing. One fall there was a new guy that Richard said, "He was a big ol' German boy that weighed about 250 pounds." Since Richard was 6' 1" and had done some boxing, his camp buddies talked him into taking the guy on, even though

Richard was reluctant to box with him. So they tied on the gloves and started. Richard said, "This ol' boy was as clumsy as he could be; he swung at me just like an ol' barn door swinging." He telegraphed every punch. Richard's buddies were hollering for him, "to get in there and get him!" He said that he did jump in close with his punches and then back out, and soon the big guy had blood coming out of his nose and mouth. Richard would duck or sidestep to avoid his swings. However, Richard said he got hit one lick right in the chest. "I have had mules kick me that didn't hurt near that bad!" Richard said, "I think that's enough," trying not to let on how bad he was hurt. The next morning he had his ribs taped up, and found that two of them were cracked.

Thus ends Part One of Richard Crooks' Time in the CCC. Stay tuned.

The Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy is a non-profit organization dedicated to research, preservation, and education to promote better understanding of the CCC and its continuing contribution to American life and culture. *"I propose to create a Civilian Conservation Corps to be used in simple work, more important, however, than the material gains will be the moral and spiritual value of such work."*

--FDR, 1933

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