

## CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123 NEWSLETTER

3412 Pleasant Run Road, Irving, Texas 75062

December 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-Wes Culwell, phone contact: 817-246-8197, 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, (volunteers), Historian/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 1:00 PM at the North Side Multipurpose Center, 1801 Harrington [North], Fort Worth, TX 76106. If you are using a GPS display, this address is the FRONT of the building; our meeting room is at the BACK, off of Homan St. The door to the meeting room is on the right as you approach from the parking lot, and will have a CCC sign on it.

**Driving Directions:** Interstate Hwy 30 runs east & west, and 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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. If coming from Loop 820 North, go south on Hwy 199 and left on 18<sup>th</sup> St. Our meeting room door with the CCC sign is to the right as you approach the building. Our dues are \$10 a person annually, effective from Oct. to Oct. Bring a friend & enjoy fun, fellowship & food. Sign the register for you may win the \$10 door prize.

MINUTES OF MEETING, CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123, December 12, 2015

Weather: Cloudy, Temp: 65°, Attendance: 16.

The meeting was called to order at 11:07 AM by President Mike Pixler.

The Invocation was offered by Jim Rau. The pledges to the flags were led by Sgt.-at-Arms Troy Jones.

President Pixler reminded the members of the purpose of the CCC Legacy to educate and further the understanding of the Civilian Conservation Corps and its impact on America today.

The minutes of the November 2015 meeting were in the newsletter which all members had received. Motion to accept the minutes as published was made by Troy Jones and seconded by Wes Culwell. All in favor motion passed.

The financial report was given by Secretary/Treasurer Steve Porter. Motion to accept the report as given was made by Corky James and seconded by Pat Mann. All in favor motion passed. Porter stated that the status of Chapter 123 as a tax exempt organization under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) had been reinstated effective October 2, 2015, by an approval letter dated December 3, 2015.

Birthdays in December are Merle Timblin, who turned 94 on Dec. 1st, James Garner, who was 96 on Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, and young Larka Tetens who acknowledged she will be fifty-something on Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>. Members sang Happy Birthday to Larka. Apologies to Norris "Rusty" Rodgers for failing to list his 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

President Pixler reiterated that members who have not paid dues for 2016 must be dropped from the Chapter roster on December 31, 2015.

Wes Culwell, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President and co-chairman of the CCC Legacy Gathering TEXAS 2016 committee, brought the members up-to-date on planning efforts for the event. Members are urged to offer ideas for funding the event, such as prospective sponsors, items to be donated for silent auction and raffles, and possible vendors for booths if booths are available.

Various members read in-turn parts of the poem known as "Twas the Night before Christmas." The tradition was started by the late Curtis Greer, former Secretary/Treasurer of Chapter 123. Gifts brought by members and placed under the Christmas tree were then exchanged.

The can was passed for donations to Chapter operations. The door prize was won by Wanda Jones who used it to pay on her future dues.

The blessing was offered by Jim Rau. A motion to adjourn was made by Corky James and seconded by Gary Mitchell. President Pixler adjourned toe meeting at 12:26 PM. The Christmas meal served by the Kitchen Committee was enjoyed by Chapter family and friends.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Porter, Sec/Treasurer

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## A PLEA

Echoing President Pixler's statement above, we need to remind our members to please renew their membership in our CCC Legacy Chapter 123. It's only \$10 for a whole year, and even though most of us are on fixed incomes, we hope you believe that the \$10 is worth it. We also strongly encourage you to renew your \$20 membership in CCC Legacy National. Each group is highly supportive of the other, and together we can have an impact on keeping the memory and ideals alive of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

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## A CCC BOY SPEAKS OUT

We recently came across a letter in our files written in the year 2000 by a CCC Boy. Roy writes from his home in Belen, New Mexico, a small town about 35 miles south of Albuquerque. What he has to say, his writing is heartfelt and he does not pull any punches.

“March 31, 2000, marks the sixty-seventh anniversary of the founding of the Civilian Conservation Corps, which was made up of 225,000 World War I Veterans, plus over three and one-quarter million youths between the ages of 17 and 28 years. During the three and one-half years between the Stock Market crash and the creation of the Corps, these men would pay a very dear price that would forever affect their lives. In the case of the WW I Veterans, many would march on Washington in 1932 in an attempt to get early payment of their promised War Bonus. They effected a peaceful demonstration towards this end; they erected a shanty town in which to live on the U.S. Capitol grounds. All this became a major embarrassment for the Hoover Administration.

These men were facing extremely dire straits; they were hungry and in need. Instead of helping them, Army Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur branded them as communist trouble makers, and unleashed the U.S. Army on them with bayonets, tanks and cavalry in the wee hours of the night; drove them from the field and sacked and burned their dwellings and belongings. I was about fourteen, selling papers on the streets, when this happened. I could not believe the headlines. I feel very strongly that this Government owes these men an apology, even though there are only a few of them left. I knew some of these men that suffered injuries from mustard gas, they were a horrible sight to see; I can still hear their struggles to breathe.

For the young men that made up the Corps, a great number had to drop out of school in order to provide for their families. The end result of all this: the average grade level for the entire Corps was at the eighth grade level. During the past three decades, I have gathered stories from these men as to how they and their families survived those first three and one-half years of the Depression. What I heard borders on the unbelievable. One fellow told me recently that his mother would get her seven children out of bed at 4:00 AM, the entire family would go to some horse stables, break apart the pieces of manure and glean out the whole grains of undigested oats or corn; this was their means of survival. Another man, raised in the Dakotas, told me his family survived by harvesting tumble-weeds in their early growth stage, chopped them up like green beans and canned them for winter use and ate them in summer for as long as they lasted. As for myself, I still hear the sobbing of my siblings as they cried themselves to sleep because of the hunger in their bellies.

The origins of the three and one-quarter million young men of the Corps were from the 25% of the Nation's unemployed. During the nine and one-third years of their existence, the men of the Corps restored this Nation. Over 360 Civil War battle fields and 4000 historic structures were restored; four billion trees were planted; they constructed 60,000 buildings, 38,500 bridges and the Great Smokey Mountain and Bandelier National Parks – even the Presidential retreat, Camp David. Thousands of miles of roads, trails, fences, telephone and electrical lines, dams, reservoirs, and lakes were built or restored.

The Corps greatest project was restoration of the “Dust Bowl” region on the Great Plains. They furnished the labor that surveyed and staked out the contoured furrows for the farmer to follow in order to contain the erosion of our precious soils, planted wind-breaks to harness the wind, hauled and spread limestone to sweeten the earth again, sodded and reseeded thousands upon thousands of acres, repaired the washed out gullies and built check-dams. This part of the country is now once again the great producing “Bread Basket” of America.

On January 8, 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called on the Congress for an increase to 158,000 officers and men for the U.S. Army, which included the Air Corps at that time. By the year's end, two and one-half million men were in or had passed through the Corps. They had learned vocations that would be extremely useful to the military at the outbreak of hostilities with the axis powers four years later. In my opinion, they were a ready-made cadre absorbed into our armed forces during the first two years of conflict. They, in fact, became a large part of the backbone forces of that early conflict.

The CCC was swallowed up by the armed forces. I believe they made up 25% of that group. They perhaps made up 62% of all those American forces that defended Bataan and Corregidor, plus the U.S. Marines that invaded Guadalcanal. John Basilone, an ex-CCC enrollee, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, plus the Navy Cross for his defense of his position. Another ex-CCCer, Tony Stein, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his initial assault on Mt. Surbachi on Iwo Jima. Two others, Michael Strank and Ira Hamilton Hays, helped raise the flag atop Mt. Surbachi. Hays was the only one of the four that returned alive to American soil. He too became a casualty of the Flag Raising; he was returned to the States and assigned to selling war bonds. He simply could not allow himself to be portrayed as an American hero by the mere fact he had raised the flag. He took to drink and died in a gutter in Chicago. In my opinion, he was a Hero of the first order.

In October of 1983, the CCC Alumni Association held its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention at Eagle River, Wisconsin. Prior to that date, we invited President Reagan, Vice President Bush, and the Secretary of Interior to address and honor the three and one-half million Corpsmen for their great contribution to this nation and its freedom. They all declined as had each subsequent President since our yearly conventions began. Shortly after Reagan declined, he crossed the Atlantic to pay tribute to the dead German SS. For nothing else, the Presidents should have thanked the CCC for constructing Camp David, the retreat they all seem to have enjoyed for the past 67 years. High ranking government officials seem to pay tribute and bestow honors to show business personalities and sports teams. For all the men who labored to rebuild this Nation, who suffered and died to help preserve freedom, there has never been even a "Thank You" for a job well done. From the time Reagan started running for office, all he could talk about were American values. Something is wrong, for in no way can I correlate his sense of values to those we, the CCCers, lived our lives by.

To the Nation's historians, to our elected leaders, and the heads of our education systems, you all should hang your collective heads in shame for the treatment accorded these men and the trashing of our history. Case in point: Mr. Tom Brokaw recently published his book *The Greatest Generation*. He completely deleted these three and one-half million men who made up the CCC. In all probability, for all the years he has lived, he walked the trails, camped in some of the 800 state parks, fished in the thousands of lakes we created and did not know from where these things came. In my opinion, he simply did not know anything about us. Tom Brokaw, we harbor no hard feelings, you are a victim along with the baby boomers and all the generations since.

I close this article with a poem I composed while driving across southern Kansas on Route 54 westward on my return from our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. This area was the approximate center of the Dust Bowl. The poem tells the story of these CCC men, together with what happened to many of them. Following that, is an expression regarding our legacy. Both the poem and what I call our "epitaph" I wrote in 1983. America, I say this to you: We were your true and faithful sons, we served you in hunger and hopelessness. We never faltered or lost our faith. The bodies of our comrades are in the depths of the seas, on a thousand far away battle fields and in local grave yards all over America. All we have ever asked of you is recognition for our service.

The Poem:

I gaze across vast fields of grain  
That spread for beyond these western plains  
Where contoured furrows weave and flow  
To yonder hills you know of yore  
  
Where in your youth you labored so  
To plant the trees, reclaim the land  
You did so many things that stand  
  
And as you labored there  
“Oh did you hear that distant thunder in the air?”  
  
It called for you “Oh silent ones”  
from far off shore you never knew  
  
You would know the sound  
of shot and shell  
Screams of death, the firey hell  
  
For four long years, you struggled there  
You dreamed of home and things to be  
But dreams are never as they seem  
And now you sleep on far off shores  
  
And in this place you called your home  
Those trees you planted now reach the sky  
They spread to yonder mountains high  
Where even eagles dare to fly  
  
Oh hear their screams  
Remember Me, Remember Me”

The Epitaph:

To the future generations of Americans....we men of the CCC,  
who labored to restore this great mother land....pass it into your  
hands. Her productivity fuels the torch of freedom. Neglect and  
weaken her and the flame will die, and you shall surely perish.  
Keep her production of natural resources strong and she will  
reward you and keep you free forever. If you future generations  
see fit to raise voices in song of praise for us, we will consider  
this our reward.

--from “a Proposed Plaque for a CCC Memorial”

Like the great Martin Luther King I too have a dream and that is one day a duly elected President of these United States of America will, while delivering the State of the Union address, call before him an ex-CCC enrollee or the President of our Alumni Association and bestow, as a unit citation, upon that person the American Freedom Medal. Perhaps this would help preserve our history. The century is ending, we are out of time. If our ears are ever to hear the singing of our song, the time is now.

*Roy Lemons served in the CCC from April, 1936 to September, 1938, in Co. 819 at Grand Canyon, Arizona.*

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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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