

CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123 NEWSLETTER

3412 Pleasant Run Road, Irving, Texas 75062

July 2014

**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: 817-367-3343, 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 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. 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:** None this month.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY:** Janet Ketter, 07/01; Betty Gebhard, 07/06; Frank Borello, 07/09; Pat Mann & Steve Wingo, 07/17; Ruby Pixler & Evelyn Timblin, 07/26; and U.J. King, 07/28.

MINUTES OF MEETING, CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123, July 12, 2014

Weather: Sunny, Temp 85°, Attendance 9

President Mike Pixler called the meeting to order at 11:07 AM. Invocation was offered by Jim Rau. The Pledges to the U.S. and Texas flags were led by President Pixler.

President Pixler reminded members present of the purpose of the CCC Legacy.

Minutes from the June 2014 meeting were printed and made available for review by members present. A motion to accept with corrections was made by Tony Rodriguez and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Pat Mann, all in favor, motion passed.

The printed financial report was made available to members present by Steve Porter, Secretary/Treasurer. After Review a motion to accept was made by Steve Porter and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jim Rau. All in favor, motion passed.

Members present with a July birthday were young Ruby Pixler and old Pat Mann who were sung Happy Birthday to by those present. No anniversaries were reported.

Old business was discussion of CCC Legacy gathering in St. Paul, Minnesota, on 24-27 September, 2014.

New business was discussion of chapter financial assistance to member James Green to travel from his home in Alabama to the October 11, 2014, meeting of the chapter. Larka Tetens volunteered to set up a Chapter 123 website on Facebook which is now available for posts. Search under CCC Legacy Cowtown Chapter 123.

Program guest Larry Brown, a CCC Boy, was unable to attend but may be at the August meeting. Larkin Dilbeck, Larka Tetens, and Bill Stallings shared further info on their trip to Europe in May.

The Can was passed for donations. The \$10 door prize was won by Larkin Dilbeck who donated it back to the chapter.

The blessing was offered by Jim Rau. The motion to adjourn was made by Ruby Pixler and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Larka Tetens, all in favor. The meeting adjourned at 12:22 PM. The food was plentiful and enjoyed by all.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Porter, Sec./Treasurer

---

---

### **PUNS FOR EDUCATED MINDS...{OR NOT}**

The fattest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.

No matter how much you push the envelope, it will still be stationary.

She was only a whiskey-maker, but he loved her still.

A rubber-band pistol was confiscated from an algebra class because it was a weapon of math disruption.

A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.

Two silk worms had a race, but they ended up in a tie.

Atheism is a non-prophet organization.

I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger; then it hit me.

In a democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your Count that votes.

When cannibals ate the missionary, they got a taste of religion.

If you jumped off a bridge in Paris, you'd be in Seine.

Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says, "I've lost my electron." The other says, "Are you sure?" The first replies, "Yes, I'm positive!"

## RETUS WILLIAMS OF GRAPEVINE, TEXAS, TELLS OF HIS TIME IN THE CCC & AFTER

Retus B. Williams is a recent enrollee in our CCC Legacy Chapter 123, and we talked with him about his time in the CCC and, thanks to Janelle Taylor of Texas Parks & Wildlife for providing a copy of their interview with him eleven years ago, we now present his story.

Retus Williams grew up in East Texas, on a farm in Panola County in the vicinity of the town of Carthage. The family consisted of five, but the father died when Retus was very young. When he was a little older, he began doing his part working on the farm; picked cotton, pulled corn, whatever was needed. Retus said he could do a little bit of any of the farm work. His mother remarried, and Retus said they did not have a bad life on their farm; he never went hungry. They had their own milk, butter, and eggs; grew chickens and hogs. They never had beef, because there was no way to keep it without refrigeration. Sometime once a year or so, a guy might come around with a beef in the back of his wagon he had butchered and under a tarp to keep the flies off. That was the only time he tasted beef until he got in the CCCs. He said he had pretty good clothes and they were always clean.

In 1936 when Retus heard of the CCC, he thought he was old enough to join, but he was only 16. He went up to Rusk in Henderson County, and they in fact let him join. He was sent to the area of the Petrified Forest in Holbrook, Arizona, but he and other rookies were held in camp for several weeks just doing orientation and their physicals. Then they were put on a train and sent to Meredith, Colorado, to help build a dam and lake on the Frying Pan River. Retus soon learned to set explosive charges in rock walls to build the dam. He was slung in a bosun or boatswain's chair out over canyon walls instead of over the side of a ship to chip paint. He jack hammered holes to set sticks of dynamite in. The teeth-jarring jackhammer weighed about 60 lbs; almost as much as he did.

Retus decided he wanted to drive one of the trucks hauling the crushed rock away. He went to the truck shed and asked if he could try for it, and the supervisor decided to give him a try and gave him a brand new 1935 Chevrolet dump truck. Retus thought he was big as anybody now! Remember that he was just 16, but Retus said he never got homesick; he enjoyed being out on his own and considered it an adventure. It was challenging work, but after two or three months, he came down with severe arthritis. He was told it was due his coming from a low, damp climate to such a high climate. He was sent to Denver to the Army's Fitzsimmons General Hospital, and was there two or three months. He learned he was also having a sore throat due to bad tonsils. His six month enlistment was about up, and his captain told him they would take his tonsils out if he would re-enlist. Retus turned down the offer and decided he would just go back home for awhile. So for the next year and a half or so, he worked on the family farm and other odd jobs around.

He decided to try the CCC's again, and signed up in Panola County. He was sent to Patroon, Texas, in Shelby County, in Company 880, and their main job was setting out pine trees on land northwest of Center, Texas. The boys lived in five-man huts with a wood stove. They did this for four to five months and were moved to Austwell, Texas, to work at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas coast. He was first put on K.P. here in the mess hall, and he had to get up at 2:30 or 3:00 AM to fix lunches for the guys to go out in the field. He worked his way up to being a truck driver, and his last six month enlistment was as a leader making \$36 a month. They built roads throughout the refuge out of crushed oyster shell that they dug out of shell pits in the refuge using a number 2 scoop – a big hand shovel that they called a Mexican drag line. They also build 8 ft. fences to keep the deer inside the refuge. They worked in crews of about thirty boys to each crew; a lead man

for each crew which went out on flat bed trucks with sideboards with maybe two or three different crews aboard; dropping off a crew every five miles or so. at Austwell camp they lived in barracks with fifty to sixty boys each. It was humid there on the coast, but they were situated right on the bank of San Antonio Bay and had a good breeze nearly all the time. This kept the mosquitoes away most of the time, but Retus said if you got back in the woods or the breeze died, they would carry you off.

When asked about the food served in camp, Retus said, "We had good food. They fed good. They really did. We had an old mess sergeant that was a good cook. You didn't have no problem eating. You'd eat whatever they put in front of you." When asked, he said their food was brought by truck from San Antonio at least once a month, sometimes twice. There was a refrigerator for the kitchen that was powered by a generator. In fact there were two or three generators because they had lights also. If it got cold they had coal stoves, but when they had been in Patroon, they heated with wood.

Retus said their typical work day began at six o'clock, got up, went to the bathroom, cleaned up, washed your teeth and shaved. Then go back to the barracks and dress. They did about 30 minutes of calisthenics before going to breakfast. After returning to the barracks, they started milling around and, "Mosey on down to where we caught the trucks to go out to the jobs." They would get back from work about five o'clock, shower, and clean up. They would line up at the flagpole, let the flag down, and then go eat dinner. After that they had free time until lights out at ten o'clock, except on weekends they could stay up if they wanted to. They had a recreation hall with pool tables, domino tables, and pianos with singing.

He said he drove a truck most of his time here until he started helping to build the first telephone line from Austwell down to the camp; about 12 or 14 miles. One group set the poles, and Retus' group strung the lines. He said the poles were 25 feet tall and quite skinny. He used spurs, and if you fell off and hit just right, you were all right. This training came in handy because he worked as a lineman and installer for the telephone company for a time in later years.

When asked about recreation and if there were any dances held at their camp, Retus said when they were still at Patroon, they had a dance one Saturday night in the mess hall. Had a good band and a good bunch of people, but a big fight broke out and one of the CCC boys got stabbed. An outsider had done the stabbing, but that ended any more dances. Along those lines Retus was asked about their relations with local people. He said the locals didn't think much of the CCC boys and looked down on them. He said, "Out in the country it's kind of hard for them old country farmers to let them old CC boys come around messing with their daughters."

Retus told of his last weekend before he left the CCCs, he and a buddy hitchhiked home. It was hard to go from down on the coast to Henderson and back in just two days. On their return they left Center, Texas, about nine o'clock Sunday morning and had to hitchhike through Houston and Victoria and around. By nightfall they had gotten within twenty miles of their Austwell camp, but it was too dark for anyone to pick them up. When they had passed through Houston they pooled their last dime and bought three bananas. So they lay down in the bar ditch, ate the last banana, and covered their face with a newspaper and tried to sleep. When they finally got to camp the next morning and told their tale to the first sergeant, he believed them and just restricted them to camp the next weekend. So on Retus' last weekend in the CCCs, he just sat on the porch and leaned back. He couldn't go to town and said he probably wouldn't have gone anyway, so it did not bother him at all. It was 1939 when Retus left the CCC. He went back home and lived with his brother, and resumed farming. He worked hard for a year, raising cotton, corn, hay, and a garden. He had his own cotton crop, but did not make

enough to show for a whole years work; no money. He told his brother that he had had enough; no more farming for him. He got a job in construction, which became his career, got married and had a daughter. Because of his wife and daughter, Retus got several deferments, but he decided to let himself be drafted and get it over with. So into the U.S. Navy he went. He went through boot camp at San Diego, even though he understood that if you had had discipline as he had in the CCC, he could have skipped boot camp. He never mentioned it because he had no desire to be a platoon leader or such.

He was assigned to Amphibian Operations in San Diego and spent all four of his Navy years there. He learned how to operate the small landing craft that carried troops off the larger ships through the surf to land them on a beach. He was good enough that he became an instructor. He was carrying them in, dropping the ramp, they would hit the beach, and then he would back off and return for another load. He taught Army, Marine, and even Air Force personnel how to operate these boats just in case the boat driver was picked off or injured; so they could take over and take the troops to the beach. Also he taught how to get back off the beach and return to the ship and get another load. Transferring the men from the ship to the boat could be very tricky; the ship going one way and the boat doing another. While this was happening the troops had to clamber down a large rope ladder called Jacob's Ladder. At one time Retus was able to save a man's life while he was climbing down the ship's side. The man fell off the ladder and fell across the gunnel or side of the amphibian breaking his back. The sea was very rough that day, and the ship's captain, who knew Retus was skilled in boat handling, asked him if he could carry the injured man to the beach, because that was the only way to get him to a hospital. Retus agreed to try, so the man was put in a stretcher and laid in the bottom of the boat. Retus headed to the beach and got on top of one of the big breakers going in. He managed to stay right on top; if he slipped to one side or the other, the landing would have far too rough. He made it; landed high and dry, and the ambulance was waiting for them.

In 1945 Retus got orders to go to San Francisco, and after a few weeks, they were sent up to Seattle and assigned to a destroyer that had just come out of dry dock. It was here they learned the war was over, but Retus and most of the men on board did not have enough points to get out of the Navy. The destroyer left the Seattle area and headed south back toward San Diego, practicing dropping depth charges for 3 to 4 days along the way. In this way they built up enough points, so when they put into the destroyer base in San Diego, they helped put the ship in moth ball storage, and got out of the Navy and headed home.

In looking back Retus said that he really enjoyed his time in the CCC, made a lot of new friends, and learned a lot, but not so much for his time in the Navy. It was just something you had to get through.

-----

TheCCC Legacy Chapter 123 Newsletter, 3412 Pleasant Run Rd., Irving, TX 75062 972-255-7237  
The Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy is a non-profit organization dedicated to the understanding of the CCC and its continuing contribution to American life and culture.