

**Oral History Interview with**

**LURTIE McDONALD**

Saturday, Sept. 25, 1999

At Skyland Conference Hall  
66<sup>th</sup> Reunion of the Shenandoah Chapter  
of the  
Civilian Conservation Corps

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Park Volunteer in Archives

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Shenandoah National Park  
Luray, VA

Original manuscript on deposit at  
Shenandoah National Park Archives

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## Transcription

JA: This is September 25, 1999. We're at the Skyland Conference Hall in Shenandoah National Park, at Skyland. We're at the 66<sup>th</sup> Annual Reunion of the Shenandoah Chapter of the Civilian Conservation Corps. My name is John Amberson. I'm a volunteer in the park. And I'm sitting here today with Lurtie McDonald. Mr. McDonald, uh, would you state your name.

LM: Lurtie McDonald.

JA: Have you read over this oral history release?

LM: Yes.

JA: And have you signed it?

LM: Yes sir.

JA: Thank you. Uh, can you tell me the uh, can you remember the dates that you entered the CCC?

LM: Yes sir. October the 14<sup>th</sup>, 1934.

JA: 1934. And how long were you in the CCC?

LM: I was in there until March 31, 1939.

JA: Very good. And where were you at the time when you enlisted? Were you living in Virginia someplace?

LM: Oh yeah, I was at home in Virginia. I lived near Elkton, Virginia.

JA: Mm hmm. And how did you hear about the CCC?

LM: Well, I mean, uh, well I know it was a social program, and it was for people that, you know, had to have work.

JA: Right.

LM: And I got out of school, I finished high school. In 1934 in June. Couldn't find nothing to do, so I, I enlisted in the CC.

JA: What was your family doing at the time? Were they um, were they having a hard time? It was Depression times.

LM: Yeah, they, they, during the Depression, they was, having, you know, time, wasn't real pleasant. We had plenty to eat, but didn't have enough money to spend.

JA: Mm hmm. Did you, was your family, farmers? Or were they uh, did they work?

LM: Well my dad, he worked on public works.

JA: Ok. Very good. And when you went into the CCC, did you go directly to Shenandoah National Park or did you go someplace before?

LM: I went to Fort Monroe. I stayed 2 months, at least.

JA: Ok.

LM: Alright, they transferred us to Front Royal, Virginia, Shenandoah National Park, Camp number 4.

JA: Camp 4.

LM: And they discontinued it. I was there 19 months.

JA: Mm hmm.

LM: And they sent us to Roxbury, Virginia, 20 miles below Richmond.

JA: Afterwards? Ok.

LM: Afterwards. Alright, I was there 4 months. And in the meantime, my mother got sick, and I put in for a transfer to Shenandoah National Park, close to home see?

JA: Right.

LM: And I was transferred to Camp number 3, here on Skyline Drive.

JA: So you spent the last part of your enlistment here on the Drive again? So you spent 2 parts of your enlistment in Shenandoah National Park?

LM: Yeah.

JA: The first, when you first went to Camp Monroe, and you spent 2 months there, what did you do there?

LM: We, uh drilled and things like that. Painted. It was just more cleaning up. I mean you dig a hole here one day and fill it up the next. To keep you busy, I think.

JA: When you got to, to Front Royal and the park, what did you do? What kind of work did you do?

LM: Well, we worked it, it was uh, government Remount Station there, where they.

JA: Right.

LM: I don't know whether you're familiar with it?

JA: Yes I am.

LM: Alright, we worked on them trails, around different places in that Remount Station.

JA: In that area.

LM: Mm hmm. And then um, done some work on the Appalachian Trail. It was close by.

JA: So mainly your work was trail work?

LM: Yeah. Outside.

JA: Mm hmm. And you built new trails?

LM: Yeah. Or I think then we, well, we built trails. Yeah. Mostly after I come up here, in Shenandoah.

JA: And uh, the uh, so uh, your main experience at the Remount Station was working with trail work.

LM: Yeah.

JA: And then you, when you went to the other camp, what did you do there?

LM: Well, it was, it was about the same thing. Roxbury was a wooded area, and we uh, done a lot of trail work there.

JA: Then you were transferred back to the park again?

LM: Yeah, yeah.

JA: You transferred back to the Shenandoah National Park, did you do trail work here in the park then?

LM: Yeah.

JA: So that's good. You cleared trails, and you uh, and uh did you do any plantings along the drive? Any uh?

LM: Well, we done maybe some landscaping and uh, shot at the banks.

JA: Mm hmm.

LM: You know, like that.

JA: Uh, can you think of some experiences you had during your work here in the park?

LM: Yeah.

JA: Uh, any , any special things come to mind?

LM: Well one of the most special things that I can remember, I don=t know whether you=re familiar with South River Falls picnic?

JA: Certainly am, yes.

LM: Well I helped put water, I can take you right now, unless they changed it. And we put water down to that picnic ground.

JA: And you laid pipes? Mm hmm.

LM: It carried it down through there on gravity.

JA: On gravity?

LM: Mm hmm.

JA: And where did it come from? From a uh?

LM: It was a spring there. It was a spring, oh it was a mile away, and we uh, had a reservoir down here, built a reservoir. And this water flowed in to this uh, it was more or less a holding tank you know.

JA: Mm hmm.

LM: And then the pipe run right on down to South River picnic.

JA: So you had, you put in all that piping work in the ground? Dig all that trenches and put the pipes in?

LM: No, I don=t, I didn=t help put the pipe in. We just fixed the spring up more or less.

JA: Fixed the spring up, yeah prepared some of that? That=s very good. I=m sure it=s still there today.

LM: Uh huh, I=m sure it is.

JA: Did uh, did, when you were in the camps here? Did you go into town from time to time?

LM: Oh yeah.

JA: Was there much to do in town?

LM: Well, it was, in fact at that time they had these local theaters. You, you know, they, they just ain=t around in these small towns now.

JA: Yeah.

LM: But down in Elkton they had a theater you=d go to. And um, one in Shenandoah, a little town, and then close to Harrisonburg. We went down, we went to town at least once during the week. And then I was close to home, see, and I=d go home on the weekends.

JA: That was real good. Yeah. You didn=t have any problem getting home?

LM: No.

JA: There was enough transportation to get you there?

LM: A lot of times I walked. You see the truck would take you down, then you, you had to go from there on your own.

JA: Right. Right. Did you participate in any of the sports programs in the camps?

LM: No, not really.

JA: No? How about the educational programs? Did you get involved in any of those?

LM: No. No.

JA: Ok. Did uh, did everybody get along in the camps?

LM: Done real good in the camps I was in.

JA: Yeah?

LM: Yes sir.

JA: And the guys uh, would work real hard at their various tasks?

LM: Yeah.

JA: They did? Do you think there=s anything in your mind that uh, you gained from work in the CCC, that uh is lasting?

LM: Well the biggest thing that I have told a lot of people, is, is the CC has, it taught, it taught me, and I know it, discipline. You learned how to take orders, and you didn=t go in there and do it the way you wanted. You done it the way they said to, you know what I mean?

JA: Right.

LM: And they didn=t tell you nothing wrong.

JA: That=s great. And of course that helped you out when you left the, left the uh.

LM: Right.

JA: Did you uh, when you finished up with the CCC, did you go in the military?

LM: No, I didn=t pass on.

JA: You didn=t.

LM: But I did go to the shipyard where. I worked on uh, this essential you know.

JA: Essential war work, yes during that time. That=s very good.

LM: Yeah.

JA: Well uh, the um.

LM: We built liberty ships where I went in, Fairfield, Maryland.

JA: Fairfield, Maryland?

LM: Mm hmm.

JA: Oh I see, yeah. Well you uh, you=ve given me a lot of good information here and I appreciate you coming by to talk to us today, and I thank you so much.

LM: Yeah.