

## CCC STATUE – Gambrill State Park, Maryland – 5 November 2011

Walter Atwood

Distinguish guests, Madam President, former CCCers, Ladies and Gentlemen

Do you believe in Miracles?? Today is a miracle. As the old saying goes – you should never say never!! Many are saying that there will never be a CCC statue in Maryland. Small donations have been received for many years for the CCC STATUE, Joe DeCenzo and his staff of helpers and believers do not know the word NEVER – their word is “perseverance”. Today, you will see the miracle come true with the unveiling of the the CCC Statue. Thanks, JOE and your helpers for making believers out of us. I’m a former resident of Maryland and a member of Chapter 113.

In attendance here today are a few of the 3 ½ million boys who served the CCC from 1933 to 1942. President Roosevelt brought together two wasted resources, the young men and the land, in an effort to save both. CCC members fought forest fires, built roads and firebreaks, planted trees, ( estimated three billion) built dams, and terraces to slow soil erosion, fought insect infestation that threatened timberland and crops, built many camp grounds, fireplaces, roadside parks and many are in use today. These are just a few of the projects worked on by the CCC boys. We did this without chainsaws, bulldozers, backhoes, and snowmobiles. Our main tools were wheelbarrow, ax, saw, pick and shovel.

The CCC was a great life saving program for the enrollees and a godsend to the families and communities. We were paid \$30 per month but \$25 of that was sent by allotment to the family. We were paid \$5.00 a month. Most camps were far from town so nowhere to spend except a small canteen in camp. I was the eldest of eight children and my parents were glad to get all the help they could get. I was reared on a farm near Lebanon, Kansas (center of the 48 states) and after completing High School I served one year in the CCCs. I was put on a train with several others and we were sent to places unknown to most of us. It was the first time out of the State for most of us. A few days later the train arrived in Basin, Wyoming. Many were not sure where Wyoming was and especially not Basin. It was cold – 55 below zero – in January 1940, but very little work at that temperature. However, I was lucky in that the commander was looking for typists. That was the best class I took in High School because it has helped me all through life. I do not know how it happened but a few days later I was put on a train to Worland, Wyoming – the county seat. I reported to the Department of Interior – the Grazing Office, in the Court House where I served 6 months as a clerk. There was a CCC camp in the city where I stayed. I do not know of anyone else who was transferred to a government office while in the CCCs. After the 6 month assignment I was transferred to another CCC camp in Lowell, Idaho. I worked as a clerk in the orderly room for 6 months. During those six months, all of us were sent to fight forest fires during the season. This camp was destroyed by fire a few years ago. It was a great experience for many and helped them obtain jobs but many were drafted or enlisted into the Military Service. Because of my experience in the CCCs, I was appointed assistant drill instructor during my first week of basic training in the Army Air Corps. After basic

training, I continued clerical and personnel duties. We survived the great depression and many of us continued to serve our county by serving in WWII and winning that one for our country.

I believe there should be another program established similar to the CCC. It would give an opportunity for the unemployed, gangs, high school dropouts, people on welfare and some criminals. As a start, a number of military bases are being closed and this would be an ideal place for housing and training. Our forests, parks and many streets and communities are in need of constant repair and cleaning. It would also be a ready work force for disasters, such as hurricanes, tornados and forest fires.

The National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni (NACCCA) was established in 1978 with several thousand members but that number is decreasing each year. There are very few of us here today. Because of the dwindling membership, the next generation, with the assistance from NACCCA members, established the Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy, CCCL, to continue the CCC concept. The Headquarters is in Edinburg, Virginia – the location of the first CCC Camp. Our President, Joan Sharpe, is in attendance today.

Bill Bailey was president of Chapter 113 when he was elected President of NACCCA. Bill died after a few months in office. I was 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President and I assumed the office of President.

During my presidency of NACCCA and Chairman of the Board of CCCL, I attended the dedication of a number of CCC statues and I am happy to be a part of this dedication. I have lectured at a number of CCC related activities. One question I would get from the audience – how often did you call home? There were very few telephones at that time. In my area several people were on one line and all could listen to any conversation. Our means of family contact was a penny post card. Our goal is to have a CCC statue in each state. This is the 58th statue in 37 states. As you can see some states have more than one. By next year Pennsylvania will have seven. As I believe that we had a miracle happening in Maryland such can happen in the remaining states.

I have a great interest in this statue as I'm a member of the Chapter 113. I have many more accolades to put forth but will close with "I believe that we are the greatest generation but now the forgotten generation" but we have earned a place in history. Our heritage is here to stay. Thank all of you for coming to this dedication and I'm sure that this CCC statue will be a great asset to this park and to the Great State of Maryland. //

*Halter Atwood*