

priority #11

☒ Scanned
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Note: Technical difficulties w/ phone - kept beeping continuously.
Interviewee requests to review transcript.

Tape Index Sheet

General Topic of Interview: Early Parkway Surveying (1934-36)

Date: 11/12/96

Place: phone interview spruce pine to Arlington, VA

Length: 40 mins

Personal Data:

Narrator

Name Thomas "Cal" Muse

Address 3501 N. Perry St.

Arlington, VA 22207 (703) 525-4780

Birthplace Storey Pt. VA

Birthdate 11/29/13

Occupations(s) Surveyor

Interviewer

Name Julie Mullis

Address 1489-1 Brown's

Chapel Rd Boone NC 28607

Title: Interp. Ranger

What was the occasion of the interview?

Oral History Project

Interview Data:

Side 1 Surveying job.

Side 2 Professionalism, request to review transcript

Estimated time on tape:

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons & places mentioned)

<u>1804'</u>	<u>Boarding accommodations</u>	
<u>1808</u>	<u>Annual salary \$936</u>	<u>Luray, VA</u>
<u>1812</u>	<u>Surveying</u>	<u>Shenandoah</u>
<u>1817</u>	<u>Ride from Floyd, VA</u>	<u>Bureau of Public Roads</u>
<u>1820</u>	<u>Pkwy, Landscape</u>	<u>Waynesboro, VA</u>
<u>1821</u>	<u>Pkwy Route</u>	<u>Humpback Mtn.</u>
<u>1825</u>	<u>Land acquisition</u>	<u>Pee Wee Verner</u>
<u>1827</u>	<u>Current Pkwy Impressions</u>	<u>Carpenter, Chief</u>
<u>1834</u>	<u>Professionalism</u>	<u>engineer George</u>
<u>1836</u>	<u>Request to Review transcript</u>	<u>molton, David Cockey</u>

Use back of sheet if necessary

Interview with Mr. Thomas Muse 11/12/96 Arlington, VA
(Phone-Interviewed by Julie Mullis)

SIDE ONE

JM: This is an oral history interview with Colonel Thomas C. Muse.

TM: No, no no no no, I'm not a Colonel.

JM: Are you not?

TM: My nickname is Cal. C-A-L.

JM: Oooh, then it's a typo. OK, I'm very sorry.

TM: No, no Colonel, it has nothin' to do with the military.

JM: (Laughs) OK, well I'm very sorry about that.

TM: That's no problem.

JM: OK. Well, this is an interview, then, with Thomas Muse, of Arlington, Virginia. Um, I'm gonna start with a few just basic questions, like, when were you born and where were you born?

TM: When was I born? A long time ago, in 1913.

JM: OK. When was your birthdate?

TM: November the 29th, 1913.

JM: Wow, it's comin' up again, soon.

TM: Yeah.

JM: Where were you born at?

TM: At a place called Stony Point, Virginia, which is just outside Charlottesville, Virginia.

JM: OK. SO you have more or less lived in Virginia all of your life?

TM: Yeah. Well, not really. I worked in California, and so on, for a while. I roamed around.

JM: OK. You were a surveyor on the Parkway. Tell me when you were doing this surveying.

TM: I didn't understand that.

JM: When were you surveying the Parkway?

TM: Well, I started in 1934.

JM: Oh, so right at the very, very beginning.

TM: Yes. In fact, the Parkway really hadn't started. When I, I reported to Luray, Virginia, and we worked some of the Shenandoah Park before we departed, ended up in Waynesboro. And at that time, we started on the Blue Ridge Parkway, we were over there at Humpback Mountain and down through there. But we did some check work on Shenandoah Park before we left. And so, OK. Very beginning.

JM: OK. How did you come about getting the job at Luray?

TM: Well, I-- (Laughs) I finished high school in '31, and that was Depression days, and it was pretty hard to get a job, and so I worked around a couple a years, jerkin' soda. You know what jerkin' soda means?

JM: Right, you were a soda fountain worker.

TM: OK. Anyway, I did that for two years and saved enough money to go to the University of Virginia, and take engineering. And so, I went one year, and ran out of money. And we had a friend that knew somebody over in Luray, who was connected with the Park Service and the Shenandoah Park, and that was kind of a rumor, so we went over there one day, and sure enough, he signed me up. And I started working for the Bureau of Public Roads, on what was, I don't know exactly whether that was defined as the Blue Ridge Parkway or not. But anyway, that's what, and then, I went to Waynesboro, Virginia, where the troop was stationed, and we started workin' out of there, goin' South on, out through Humpback Mountain, and that part of the region. And, as I say, we did some work though in Shenandoah Park. Tied up some loose ends. OK?

JM: OK. Where did you live at while you were working on this project?

TM: Well, that's very interesting. We lived in boarding houses, and with people that opened their homes to us, and gave us rooms, and sometimes board, and that sort of thing. Everyone we met, as far as I remember, and anybody knows, they were just great. They were wonderful, they let us in, and made us one of the family.

JM: OK, that's great. Was that in Waynesboro?

TM: Well, that started in Waynesboro, that was more of an inn-like, type thing. So that was more commercialized than just a plain home. As we went on down through the mountains, down along the Blue Ridge Parkway, we stayed in a lot of individual private homes. And as I said the people were just great.

JM: Did they tend to be mountain people, or more townspeople?

TM: Well, we tried to stay in towns. We stayed in places like Floyd, and Galax, and Independence, and Sparta, and West Jefferson, and Boone, and places like that.

JM: How many years did you work as a surveyor, on the Parkway?

TM: Uhh, total of almost two years.

JM: OK.

TM: I worked for roughly a year, this was, at the end of my first year in college, I ran out of money, and so I worked the next year, essentially the whole year, and went back to school for summer. And I took some summer courses, and then I came back to the Parkway, and worked another year. And after that year, I no longer worked for the Parkway. I got some other jobs, I worked for the geological survey, in survey and work, and so on. And so, I had about two years with the Bureau of Public Roads, on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

JM: OK. What was your first impression of this project, that was going to be the Blue Ridge Parkway.

TM: Well, as a (laughs) strict peon, I'm not sure I had much of an idea. I mean, you first started out as a, cuttin' bushes and that sort of thing. And I had one year of engineering, so I had, as a freshman engineer you had surveyin' as a compulsory course. So I had some, uh, work on surveyin'. So I was probably a jump ahead of some of the guys that were just gettin' a job. So that, that helped a lot. And so it kinda fitted in with what I was plannin' to do. But I didn't plan to be a civil engineer, I did surveyin'. But that was just hard times. It was Depression times. I mean, people did-- in fact if you really want to know what I got paid, my annual salary for the first year, was nine hundred and thirty six dollars.

JM: Wow. But that was a lot of money for back then, though, I guess.

TM: Yeah. Because you got room and board for a dollar a day. (Telephone beeps) Is that you or me?

JM: I'm not sure, it may have been you. I'm not sure.

TM: Well I don't know why I would do it.

JM: I don't know. It may have been somebody on another telephone in the office.

TM: OK. All right. But anyway, those were Depression days. People didn't have anything to eat. They didn't have jobs, they didn't have anything. That was 1934, which was just about the height of the Depression.

JM: Right. When you started, the Blue Ridge Parkway wasn't even named the Blue Ridge Parkway yet. What were you told about this project? How was it described as? (Telephone beeps) That must be the other Ranger in the office.

TM: OK. Now, what was your question?

JM: I'm sorry. It was, what were you told about this project that didn't even have a name. It wasn't called the Blue Ridge Parkway when you began, I believe it was called the Road to Connect Shenandoah with The Great Smoky

JM: (Continued) Mountains. What did you think about this whole project, did you think of it as a Park?

TM: I didn't recall it being that, I-- (telephone beeps) kinda understood it was the Blue Ridge Parkway from the beginning. But uh, it was-- (Beeping continues)

JM: I'm sorry about this. I'm not sure why it's doing this.

TM: OK.

JM: Maybe it will stop. If not, I will go and talk to the other Ranger. Tell me, describe one of your typical days of work. (Pause)

TM: Hello?

JM: Hello, did you hear me? Can you describe a typical day of work? (Pause) Can you hear me? (Pause) Can you hear me now?

TM: I can hear you now.

JM: Ok. I'm-- can you describe a typical day at work?

TM: Well, uh, it depends on what day of the year you're talking about. We worked all y--(Beeping) There's that thing again.

JM: Yeah, I know it. I'm gonna put us on pause for a second, and I'm gonna ask the other Ranger if he's doing this. Hold on just a second.

TM: Talking about summer, winter or whatever.

JM: Uh, let's go with a summer day. (Beeping)

TM: Talkin' about winter, I remember (Beep)Goin' up (Beep)

JM: Yeah, I'm sorry about this happening. I'm not touching the telephone, I don't know why it's doing this. Are you still there?

TM: Yeah, I'm here. I'm curious to as what's going on.

JM: OK. I know. If it does this more, I may call you back, and see if we can get a better connection.

TM: Want to try again?

JM: Alright. Letme call you back and see if it goes away?

TM: OK. (Tape off, then on again)
There's always refers to something.

JM: Right.

TM: All right. Let me tell you a little about me.

JM: OK, I will be glad to hear it.

TM: And that might be a more interesting way to approach what a day in the Park was like.

JM: That sounds good.

TM: OK. I had one year of engineering. AND this was Depression and I had trouble gettin' a job, during the summer, and I had a friend that knew somebody in the Park Service, and he suggested, "Why don't we try him to get you a job." And we did this, and the headquarters was in Luray, Virginia, at that time. And so we went over to Luray, and sure enough I got a job. And the job started in Waynesboro, Virginia, where the group was situated at that time, and we, as I said, we started pushin' the line on down from where it was going to be the Blue Ridge Parkway, from the Beginning of the Blue Ridge Parkway. But we did some work North of there, which was in the Shenandoah Park. And so I worked with that group. This was a primary survey group. I don't know how familiar you are with what you do in primary surveyin'. But we did that, and I did that for a year. And then at the end of a year, I went back, I took the summer off (long beeping)

JM: Sorry about that.

TM: And went back to UVA, and did some work that I had been conditional on in entering college. I was lackin' some math courses and this sort of thing. So I went back and took those during the summer. And at the end

TM: (Continued) of the summer, I had no more money than I had to begin with, (laughs) at the beginning of the summer. So I went back to the work for the Parkway. For the Bureau of Public Roads. And I went back to a different group. Originally my group was doing primary survey work. AND when I went back the second time, I was on what was called a floatin' party. And this was a group, of about five people, a basic survey group, that roamed all around doin' odds and ends that needed to be done. And so we, we did lots ~~of~~ more traveling, we were not as fixed-base as most survey groups were. And I had taken surveyin' in school, and so I was, the group consisted of only five people: a party leader, ~~an instrument man~~, a recorder, two chainmen, or whatever, and one guy that was an axeman and a truck driver and so on too. And so, since I had surveyin' in college, that helped me a lot, and so I was part of makin' some of these decisions and so on, in the field. Not overall ~~for~~ the Parkway, but in the field. And I did that kind of work for a year. And we went all the way, from, I guess when I reported back, we were probably maybe in Galax or something like that. And we went all the way down to Asheville, down to Oteen. And we stayed in places like Sparta, and West Jefferson, and Burnsville, and Black Mountain, and all kinds of places. And we did surveying with that group, which meant pickin' up pieces that the basic primary group did not do. They ran the primary line where the road was going. They did all the, making the decisions, not making the decisions, but providing the data for the decisions, as to where the Parkway was (telephone beeping) So I worked at that for a year, my first year. The second year though, we did things that were left over or needed or something like that. Like we ~~made~~ bridge surveys, we made, we ran off things, we went to help a contractor if he needed help, and so we roamed from 150 miles from our base, up and down the Parkway, doing whatever work was required. That was very interesting and I enjoyed it. And, well I enjoyed it too. But that was basically what I did, and at the end of that time, I went back to school. At the end of the year. And when I went back to school, I thought it was very interesting. I think this is worth telling you. We were in the little town of Floyd, Virginia. And there was the headquarters of the operation of the Blue Ridge Parkway was in Roanoke, at that time, and one of the leaders out of Roanoke was comin' through Floyd on his way home that weekend. For the weekend. This was Friday night. And so he agreed to pick me up and take ~~me~~ to Roanoke, on my way to Charlottesville, give me a ride. And so on Friday night, I was sittin' there and waitin' for him to come by and pick me up. When all (telephone beeping) all the members of my survey group, there were five of us, you see, came by to tell me that if I had a problem (beeping) ~~and~~ I ran (beep) ~~(beep)~~ ^{in college or if} ~~into~~ ^{out of money or} anything, let them know. And they would take care of it. I think that's worth knowing.

JM: Huh. Yeah, I think that's interesting too.

TM: So, that's, that's the kind of guys they were. I came back one year, the (beeping) as an assistant to the head of the area. And his flunkie, and I drove him around, and I did all kinds of work of, like, draftin' this that and the other, which, after two years of college I was beginning to learn some of that. (Laughs) And so I worked that sort of thing for the summer. And then went back to college. So I had two, essentially, full years, and one summer.

JM: OK, I see. Uh, what was the land like that you were surveying?

TM: Beg your pardon?

JM: What was the land like that you were surveying?

TM: Uh--

SIDE TWO

TM: This, is this anything like what you wanted to talk about?

JM: Yeah, it sure is.

TM: I thought you wanted to talk about characters.

JM: Well, that doesn't matter, too, because all of it's important. Um. Have you been across the Linn Cove Viaduct?

TM: Have I been where?

JM: Across the Linn Cove Viaduct? The very last part of the Blue Ridge Parkway?

TM: Yeah. Sure.

JM: And what do you think about it?

TM: I don't know. (Laughs) What am I supposed to think about it?

JM: I don't know, do you think that it goes within the theme of the rest of the Parkway, as far as its beauty?

TM: Oh, I don't really get too involved in that sort of thing.

JM: (Laughs) OK. How do you feel about the Ranger staff, last time you were on there? Do you feel like they were doing the job that they should be doing?

TM: Far as I know, everyone I've ever encountered seems to be doing all right. I haven't really made much of an effort to be studying this problem or anything. I just, what I see of 'em, they are nice. They know what you're talkin' about. They give me the directions I need. And that takes care of my problems.

JM: OK. Did you have any bad experiences while you were working on the Parkway?

TM: Did I have what?

JM: Any bad experiences. Can you think of a worst experience?

TM: Not really. I uh, I- (laughs) we had some bad weather problems, and things like that. But as far as I know, nothing other than what you would expect for a hard winter snowstorm, or something like that.

JM: Did y'all continue to work, even though there were snowstorms? Or did you get the day off, when it snowstormed?

TM: Well, we-- it depended on the weather. I mean, some of the things you couldn't do, in the weather, like, in the rain. You couldn't work in the rain. And, uh, sometimes in snowstorms, you couldn't very well work in snowstorms, because you had to have a visibility, you had to see a feller down a block or more down the road. The weather was a critical factor. And those times, when it got bad, we sat around and waited for it to get better, and if it didn't get better, we went home.

JM: What did you do on your days off, for entertainment.

TM: (Laughs) I don't really remember doing anything special. Relaxed, I guess.

JM: Right. Can you think of anything else that you would like to add, to this interview?

TM: Well, uh, I, I think that it was a terrific job, done under fairly difficult circumstances, and the people were very professional. I was very impressed. Like my boss, for this floatin' part that I talked about. He was the number one highway engineer in the United States. He was (telephone beeps) This was Depression though, you know, and he had trouble finding a job. He was workin' at this job (long beep) which was really, uh, I guess it was almost a late work project, and I guess some time he talked about the CCCs and so on. And he was the top man in the country, and he was working for essentially amount of money I was. But he just couldn't find a job. That was Depression. You just don't understand what a Depression is really like. So uh, that was one of the things, and we had (beep) bright people, (beep) that (beep) to work, (Beep) I'm not sure what this electronics is gonna do. I think somebody needs somethin' for that.

JM: Right. I've never seen it do this before. I hate it. (Laughs)

TM: OK. Now, on this, you're recording this.

JM: Right.

TM: Will you send me a copy of it?

JM: Yes I will, once it's transcribed, I sure will.

TM: And now, will I have an opportunity to, to check this, whatever's written, to see that it makes sense accordin' to my view?

JM: I believe so. I'm not gonna be the person transcribing it. But I will ask that question. And if it's at all possible for me to send you the first draft, I will.

TM: I don't really intend to censor what you want, but I mean, it's kind of uh, especially with all these interruptions.

JM: Right. I agree with that.

TM: Make sure it makes sense, that's all.

JM: Right. I know some of the old, ones done in the 70s, they sent them back to the original person who went through and corrected spellings of names and such as that. So probably we'll do the same thing.

TM: Yeah, you can spell better than I can, I'm sure.

JM: (Laughs)

TM: We're not gonna argue with that. But I would like an opportunity to comment on it, and to make corrections, that I think are sensible and needed.

JM: OK. Well I'll agree with that. Can you tell me one more time what your supervisor's name was, that you talked so highly of?

TM: Well, the head of my party, that I worked with the second time, was George Moulton.

JM: Moulton? M-O-L-T-E-N?

TM: Moulton....M-O-U-L-T-A-N, I guess. And the previous fellow that I was working with, was Dave Cockey, C-O-C-K-E-Y. David Cockey. AND I worked with him in the summertime, when I was back, I was kind of his assistant. Not in standing, but I helped-- I guess, more of a flunkey, put it that way. AND the previous fellow we had worked for was Cockey, the original assignment was Cockey, and, let me think of the guy's name now. Uh, Cockey was the head man of that, of that group.

JM: OK. I'm gonna go ahead and cut the tape off now.

TM: OK.