

WITH APOLOGIES FOR THE LATENESS OF THIS ISSUE

CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123 NEWSLETTER

3412 Pleasant Run Road, Irving, Texas 75062

February 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-Jim Rau, phone contact: 817-307-0889, 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 in February.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY:** Marga Lyde, Dallas, TX; Frank Polenta, Benbrook, TX, 02/22; Albert Scott, Tyler, TX, 02/03.

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MINUTES OF MEETING, CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123, February 14, 2015

Weather: Sunny, Temp. 62°, Attendance: 19

The meeting was called to order at 11:08 AM by President Pixler.

The Invocation was offered by Merle Timblin.

Pledges to the flags were led by Sgt.-at Arms Troy Jones.

President Pixler reminded members present of the purposes of the CCC Legacy to educate and further understanding of the Civilian Conservation Corps and its contribution to American life 1933 – 1942.

Secretary/Treasurer Steve Porter asked if all members present had received the January 2015 newsletter containing the minutes of the January 2015 meeting. All had and no changes were recommended. Motion to accept the Jan. 2015 minutes as written was made by Jim Rau and seconded by Tony Rodriguez; all in favor, motion passed.

The financial report was made available by Sec/Treasurer Porter. Motion to accept the report was made by Tony Rodriguez, seconded by Bill Stallings. All in favor; motion passed.

Members Albert Scott, Frank Polenta and Marga Lyde celebrated birthdays in February. No members had wedding anniversaries in the month. A report was given of the "Boys" Bill McKee, Steve Wingo and Larkin Dilbeck who were all contacted by phone. 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Jim Rau gave an update and review of the progress of the Memorial Project for CCC Company 1816. Donations are still being accepted. Sec/Treasurer Porter stated that no word has been received on the application to reinstate the tax exempt status of our chapter. President Pixler reiterated the need for members to submit dues for 2015 to remain in good standing. Rick Shepherd updated Friends of the Nature Center activities and the ongoing development of the Broadview area in the Refuge.

Our guests today were six members of the Americorps NCCC Southwest region stationed in Granbury, Texas. The team members and Team Leader Molly Flynn described their activities and projects they have completed in the area. A short question and answer period followed. These young people are an outstanding example of CCC-type work being done nationwide currently. The program was applauded by all members.

The Can was passed for donations and drawing for door prize was won by Bill Stallings who donated the \$10 to pay dues for Josh Tetens.

The blessing was offered by Merle Timblin, Motion to adjourn made by Jim Rau and seconded by Tony Rodriguez, motion passed. We adjourned at 12:22 PM.

Even with the large attendance, the pot luck meal was plenty and enjoyed by all; many thanks to the ladies of the Kitchen Committee. Our next meeting is March 14, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,  
Steve Porter, Sec/Treasurer

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## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

This is just a reminder to those that may have forgotten to renew your membership in our CCC Legacy Chapter 123. It's only \$10, even with inflation! While we are reminding, please send your renewal [or join if you haven't!] in to the national CCC Legacy organization, and it's still just \$20 which includes their highly readable national newsletter. About a third of our local members receive their newsletter via email which cuts expenses greatly, what with stamps going up every year or so. We gladly appreciate the rest of our members that do not have [or want!] emails. Just stay with us any way you can. We have two anonymous donors that are helping with the renewal of some, who for one reason or another cannot renew. As you know, our CCC "Boys" are Life Members

and not subject to the fee, but many contribute anyway out of loyalty. We greatly appreciate this. Surviving widows of our “Boys” are also included as Life Members.

This past year or so has been a tough one because we have lost a number of our members; namely in no particular order: Houston Fruge, G.E. Pixler, Claude Tyler, Norbert Gebhard, Ernest & Helene Hubbard, James Green, Herman Elliott, Dan Small, Eugene Singleton, Ben F. Yung, Charles Varro, Bob Nettles, and Truman Pixler. Keeping their memory alive and what they accomplished is what we are all about.

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## **THE BLUE GHOST**

We recently had occasion while visiting in Corpus Christi to go aboard and tour the U.S.S. Lexington anchored in the harbor there just off to one side of the tall Bay Bridge that crosses the Nueces River channel. We got to go on in the evening, and when you approach the ship, it is lit in a ghostly blue light, fittingly because the ship was called “The Blue Ghost.” I believe this is the last surviving aircraft carrier that was a veteran of World War II, and was called a ghost ship because the Japanese claimed to have sunk it numerous times. The original Lexington was lost early in the war, but this one was built to replace it during the war. There are numerous Navy veterans that escort tours and give talks on the ship. There are a number of different restored types of aircraft, both piston engine and jet powered, that flew off of carriers on both the hangar and flight decks that you can freely wander around. And speaking of the Japanese, as you enter the ramp to board, if you look closely there is a small sign with a Japanese flag and arrow pointing up towards the bridge above to where a Japanese Kamikaze plane crashed into the ship. There are a number of self guided and escorted tours to different parts of the ship, including the flight and hangar decks, the bridge where the ship was controlled from, as well as some of the below decks spaces. The Lexington’s last duty assignment was to train carrier pilots out in the Gulf of Mexico, so it is only fitting that her last port should be Corpus Christi on the Texas Coast!

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## **RICHARD CROOKS, A LONGTIME MEMBER, TELLS OF HIS TIME IN THE CCC ...PART II**

When asked about the type of field work they did, Richard talked about building fences. They would use a transit to shoot a line and then go on. Then using a posthole digger, they would mark every ten feet. A truck would be brought in and cedar posts would be thrown off. Then another crew would dig the holes 2 ½ feet deep, with corner posts having to be 3 feet deep. If they crossed a creek with a rocky bottom, they used a long bar to chip out a hole just deep enough to hold. It was hard work. They did not cement posts, but used broken brick pieces to tamp around a post. He said they didn’t use cement, but we did use that crushed, broken brick. They built whatever type of fence that was required. Barbed wire fences were built a standard way; a certain space between at the bottom and wide at the top, with the post top sawed off six to eight inches above the top strand. A different wire would be used if for sheep or other animals. The wire had to be “stretched,” that is you had to get all the slack out and stretch it. Then they would saw the post tops.

Their other principle job was terracing to protect the land from losing soil to heavy rainwater run-off or sodding to keep exposed soil from blowing away. Richard said they had no machinery; they would just put stobs [stakes] on the terraces. It took careful measuring to keep water from running off too fast or keep from standing. It was demanding work; they would lay out how the terrace was supposed to go, and they would then mark it. They would build a terrace with a grader, and then they would put down sod to hold it. Once the sod took hold, it

Richard said there was a small canteen in the recreation hall that would be open when they had free time. You could buy cigarettes if you smoked, also candy bars, cold drinks, and razor blades; small items such as that. By the time Richard enrolled in the CCC, they got to keep \$8.00 per month; either in cash or canteen books. Most took the pay in canteen books. With them you could buy drinks, other items, or theater tickets for a movie in Waxahachie. You would send your laundry off because there wasn't one in camp. He said that when he went to the university, he had about three sets of clothing. [This was his Khaki Class "A" dress clothes.] He said all of his money went for his laundry. They washed their work dungarees themselves at the bathhouse. They used big tubs with rub boards and soap. If you wanted them starched and pressed, you had to go through the canteen.

Asked about the educational opportunities, Richard said they had woodworking shops, were taught music, and English composition teachers were available. Saying that he didn't think he needed any of that, he decided to take some college class work. Because he had completed high school, he was selected to take classes at Trinity University, at that time it was there in Waxahachie; now in San Antonio. In order to take course work there you had to re-enlist in the CCC so you could go for a whole school year. The professors were well qualified; Richard's English professor was from the University of Wisconsin. While Richard was there at the camp, four scholarships were offered, but he was the only one accepted. He said that it was not a free ride; if your grades were not acceptable you would be out and another would take your place. Also you were required to do your regular camp job as well. To keep up with his school work, Richard got off working in the field, and managed to get a night watchman's job that was open. In interviewing for the job, he was asked by the leader by the name of Schieffer, who told him some enrollees had apparently been stealing some gasoline to go home on, and had cars stashed away on nearby farms or in the downtown area, even though this was strictly forbidden. Richard was asked, "Do you think you can stop the stealing?" He said he would give it a try. They had been getting the gas from the trucks where they were parked at night.

Richard would check and lock the gates behind the trucks, check their fuel, and check all the sheds and equipment for being locked also. And sure enough, he would catch one of the guys slipping around with a gas can. If he caught one stealing gas, he was supposed to report them, and they would be discharged, however he did not report them. Several months passed and Capt. Evans, the camp commander, was asked at a meeting if he knew of any thefts in Richard's patrol area, and he said that he did not.

One evening Richard got a note to report to Mr. Schieffer and was asked how things were going. Richard said, "Well, it is going great." Mr. Schieffer then told of talking with Capt. Evans, and asked, "You haven't had anybody pilfer stuff?" Richard replied, "Yes, I have." Schieffer said, "You have? Evans said you didn't have any." Richard then said that he probably should have reported it, but everyone here is here because they need a job, and that he could relate to the ones who wanted to get gas to go home. A gallon of gas cost 12 cents {Remember this was the '30s!} "Out of my pocket, I gave them fifty cents or a dollar, and most of them have paid me back. I told them you're not going to steal on my watch, and you're not going to take advantage of our friendship. Now get out of here, and if I catch you again, I'm not going to put up with it." Schieffer then said, "You know you are supposed to report that." Richard replied, "Yes, that's my fault, but you told me to stop the stealing, and that's what I did." Schieffer replied, "Well, I really don't have a problem with that."

He told of having to go to the infirmary because he wasn't getting enough rest. He got rundown and caught a bad cold. It was at the end of his first semester, and it was exams time. He had to walk into town or try to catch a ride; it was over two miles to the university. He was determined to take the exams, but got so sick, he hired a guy to night-watch for him. His leader noticed it wasn't Richard's signature on the sign in sheet, and came down

to check on him. He had pneumonia and was put in the infirmary. He wanted out to go take his exams, but was told he had to wait for his temperature to go down. Just before the doctor came out from town, he slipped in and got some aspirins, but took too many. When the doctor checked his temperature, it was 95, and Richard said, "That's great!" The doctor said, "No, that's bad." So, he had to wait after all.

Richard night-watched for three six-month enlistments, and finished his freshman year of college and started his sophomore year. At the time he could only stay in the CCCs for 22 months, and lacked two months finishing his class work and would have no place to stay. He also had to buy his books and they were expensive. Several of those attending had arranged to share them because their classes were at different times, and he was told he could stay on for the two months if he had a place to go, but he did not.

Richard thought about his situation since he could not finish his schooling. To get an honorable discharge from the CCC he had to show that he had a job or a place to go. He and a friend got to talking about joining the Army Air Corps. It was really starting to expand then, and they went to Dallas and joined up. That was in January of 1941. He reasoned that the country would soon be in the war, and he figured that if he was going to be shot at, he would rather not walk to it, but by flying to it.

Pearl Harbor happened on December 7, 1941, and he had been in the service by eleven months then. Richard says he stayed in all the way through until the end of World War II. He went overseas twice, but did not make the service a career. With the war over in Europe, he was supposed to go to the Pacific to be in on the invasion of Japan. He was a crew member on a B-29 bomber. While home on leave, he got married, and then the atomic bomb was dropped. He told his wife that this would end the war and he could stay home. He went down to San Antonio to find what his assignment was. He was told he was going to MacDill Field, Florida, for B-29s to be deployed to Okinawa. Richard told them, "Well, the war is over," and they said, "Well, we have to have the Army of Occupation." "I was 25 years old then, and am 83 now, [This was 2003] and I actually felt older then than I do now. I was completely burned out, and I said, I don't want any more of it. I had a good rank, and I asked for my discharge, and they gave it to me."

Richard tried for two years to find a decent paying job, but wound up back in the airplane business working at Convair in Fort Worth where the B-36s were being built. He worked there for over 12 years until there was a cutback. He then got a job at Bell Aircraft. At this time he lost his first wife, and he decided he did not want to work there anymore. He re-married, and got on with General Dynamics. The first years here were hard because he was sent to work at air bases in California, Washington, and back to Carswell AFB in Fort Worth. He felt like he had never left the service. Richard said all in all, he has had a good life, and feels that everybody who had been in the CCC would give it great credit for teaching discipline, responsibility, and more. +++++

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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