

# History Nook

## Based on the Photography & Life Notes of my Father, Hubert Ray Kaltenbach

by KATHY HENSLEY  
for the Orcas Island Historical Museum

What was life like in the Pacific Northwest 80 years ago? What did Orcas Island look like back then? Were there pristine lakes, rolling hillsides, mountain tops with sweeping views and "green space" all those years ago?

What did people do here way back then? My father was about to find out.

This part of the country was completely unknown to a young lad named Hubert Kaltenbach. He wrote, "I came into the world at a very early age. In fact, I was quite young when I was born. This was in Tonawanda, NY, in 1914.

In 1929, the Stock Market broke and things got bad all over. The entire United States was trying to survive the Great Depression, and that included Washington state. So, the country got discouraged, and in 1932 the people elected their new president, Franklin D. Roosevelt. He lost no time in putting men back to work. Prohibition was repealed, breweries reopened and related industries were functioning once more.

President Roosevelt also started various work projects that were sorely needed to help bolster the economy. Among these was the Civilian Conservation Corps for young men; it became known as the CCCs. This is where I came in, signing up for it in April of 1933 at age 18. Since the Army was really the only organization set up to handle all these men, ours from New York went to Fort Dix, NJ for processing, for all our shots, and to do some work to keep us busy while waiting to go to the various locations we would be sent.

Some of our New York fellows went to Florida, but I always felt lucky that I came west to Fort Lewis, Wash. and then to Moran State Park on Orcas Island. Our service was to be for six months, but I stayed for 18 months. Many of the New York boys didn't like the woods that much; they missed the bright

lights and activities of the big city. But they all worked hard constructing foot bridges and roads, trails and buildings. A Bridge I remember so well, having worked on it, was still there in the late '60s, but the hand rail was gone and hadn't been replaced.

We stayed in the military-like compounds, and during our free time, some of us explored the island. We played in the winter snows, hiked far and wide and relished many sunsets over the water. I enjoyed taking many pictures of the people and scenery, as well as of the work we were doing.

Seattle shipbuilder Robert Moran, builder of the battleship Nebraska, had given the state this land, so the local state park was named after him. His home was, and still is, called Rosario. I didn't get inside his mansion, but some of us wandered around the estate. It fronted on a long bay with high hills on either side. Walking back from Mount Constitution one summer evening, a camp mate - Lock Hicks was his name - and I were picked up by Mr. Moran and his chauffeur, and we were driven back to camp - a very special treat!

In the CCCs, we were paid \$30 a month: \$5 came to us, and the rest went to our families at home."

So, the rural life that exists today is much as it was when he arrived: the people were, and still are, independent folk; the lakes, mountains, trees and vistas are all still here. A few years later he felt extremely fortunate to be stationed in the Pacific Northwest as a member of the United States Army. He truly loved this area, and he made it his home for life. But he visited his family in Tonawanda every few years, when he could.



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