

## Librarian's Shelf by Bill Jamerson

### CCC Boy's topic for May Program

Michigan based author Bill Jamerson will present a music and storytelling program about the Civilian Conservation Corps at the Columbus Public Library on Wednesday, May 18 at 6 pm. The program is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

Dressed in uniform, Jamerson's presentation includes reading excerpts from his novel, telling stories, showing a video clip from his PBS film and performing original songs with his guitar. The CCC helped dozens of farmers in Platte County during The Great Depression by terracing hills, planting wind breaks, digging ponds, repairing gullies, putting up fencing and implementing soil erosion control projects.

It's a nostalgic program with songs, much laughter and many heartfelt stories. He has performed at CCC reunions around the country and at dozens of CCC-built national and state parks. The program is as entertaining as it is important; as honest as it is fun. It's about people both ordinary and extraordinary, with stories of strength, wit and charm.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was a federal works program created by President Franklin Roosevelt in the heart of The Great Depression. During its nine year run beginning in 1933, over 30,000 young men were employed in Nebraska. There was an average of 16 camps in operation for each year. The enrollees were paid \$1 a day with \$25 sent home to their families each month. The money put food on the table for the families back home. Over 34 million dollars was paid out in the state during the length of the program. There was a CCC camp that opened on April 19, 1935 one mile northwest of David City. The men came into town on weekends.

In Nebraska the CCC was active in soil erosion control projects, building check dams, creating diversion ditches, and educating farmers about crop rotation, strip farming and fertilizer methods. The CCC built over a thousand miles of roads, erected hundreds of miles of telephone poles, planted the Nebraska National Forest, developed wildlife facilities and built Scotts Bluff National Monument and Ponca State Park. The camps not only revitalized Nebraska's natural resources but also turned the enrollees into men by giving them discipline and teaching them work skills.

Jamerson's book, "Big Shoulders" is a historical novel that follows a year in the life of a seventeen-year-old youth from Detroit who enlisted in the CCC in 1937. He joins two hundred other young men at a work camp in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It is a coming-of-age story of an angry teenager who faces the rigors of hard work, learning to cope with a difficult sergeant and fending off a bully.

Some of the songs Jamerson performs with his guitar include "Franklin D.", written by an appreciative CCC Boy. "Chowtime" is a fun look at the camp food while "City Slicker" tells of the mischief the men got themselves into with wild animals. "Wood Tick" is a song about the nicknames locals gave to the enrollees and "Tree Plantin', Fire Fightin' Blues" is about the hardships of work out in the woods. The folk songs range from heartwarming ballads to foot stomping jigs.

Along with a novel and CD of songs on the CCC, Jamerson has produced a PBS film, "Camp Forgotten". A question and answer period and book signing will follow his presentation. People who had family in the C's are encouraged to attend and to bring photo albums and CCC memorabilia. For more information please call the library at 564-7116 or visit Jamerson's website at: [billjamerson.com](http://billjamerson.com).

