

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Railroading Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 1076

CLARENCE W. GRUBBS

Interviewed

by

Lillian D. Eminhizer

on

August 17, 1982

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: CLARENCE W. GRUBBS

INTERVIEWER: Lillian D. Eminhizer

SUBJECT: conductor experiences, operating procedures,
training, examinations, co-workers, runs

DATE: August 17, 1982

E: This is an interview with Clarence Grubbs for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on railroading, by Lillian Eminhizer, at his home, at 63 Lawnview, Niles, Ohio, on August 17, 1982, at about 8:00 in the evening.

Clarence, you worked for. . . I am going to call you "Grubby" because that is what everyone called you on the railroad, right?

G: Yes.

E: What railroad did you work for?

G: B & O.

E: The B & O, the Baltimore & Ohio. You hired out in 1916?

G: 1916.

E: What was your job?

G: Brakeman.

E: Brakeman. Now, how do you get to be a brakeman on the railroad, at that time?

G: Well, I always wanted to go on the railroad, but mother wouldn't let me go because she had a brother that lost a leg in the railroad. I was twenty-one in March, and I

went on the railroad in June. So, I cleared there, yes.

E: So, you always wanted to be in the railroad? Did you, when you were a little boy, used to go down and wave at all the men that went through?

G: Yes.

E: Yes. Were accidents, like losing legs and that, common at that time?

G: What kind of accident?

E: Well, if somebody had an accident on the railroad?

G: I was very fortunate. As long as I was a conductor, I was a conductor for about twenty-four years, I never made out a 790. That was for personal injury. Nobody was ever injured and I was never injured. My motto was. . . We would get a young fellow that wasn't experienced, I would say now, "If I tell you to do something and you don't understand it, you ask me to repeat it." And I said, "Never get in a hurry, because when you are in a hurry, there is where you get into trouble." Twenty-four years a conductor and never had an accident.

E: Marvelous. That is really something. Well, what is the job of the brakeman?

G: What is the job? Oh, if you are a brakeman you have to work under the instruction of the conductor. If you are a conductor you have to work under the instructions of the trainmaster or LCR master. We would break up trains and make up trains.

E: You would break them up and make them up?

G: Yes.

E: Now, the brakeman doesn't do any flagging, does he?

G: No.

E: Now, you would be putting the trains together in the yard or when you were out on the road when you would back into a siding?

G: Yes, in the yard.

E: And that was your job to see that the cars get uncoupled?

- G: See that the train is made up and ready to go.
- E: How did you decide where to put a car when you picked it up?
- G: Well, the yardmaster gives you a sheet of paper that had the numbers of the cars and the destinations on them. Then it was to your advantage to make the train up. The majority of the trains you would have to make up. . . Now, take that Detroit Steel for instance. You would have to put the Akron's next to his engine. You would put them on the number five track or six, wherever you would build them up. But the Akron, because that is the first set off he is going to make, then to Warwick and then through, that would be Willard or west--they had to be made up that way. If you were going to Painesville, you would start right in at the state road: West Farmington, Middlefield, Burton, East Claridon, and Chardon. That is where you would build them up.
- E: Did you only set off at these particular junctions?
- G: Yes. It was to your advantage to figure out how to switch these cars with the least movement. We generally had a westbound track, with no builds and cripples or bad orders. We would throw them in the westbound and leave them there because they weren't going anyplace.
- E: Now, why would a car have a bad order?
- G: Well, the car inspectors would inspect the cars. There might be a grab iron gone, might be a hot box, might be a bad drawbar, several things. Triple valves might be bad on them and then they would put them on a rip track.
- E: If the car was loaded, would they have to unload?
- G: No, no. Sometimes it would be a minor defect and if the car wasn't going on a foreign railroad, they would put a bad order tag after unloaded. When empty, chop it for this or that, when empty. They wouldn't hold a load up unless there was an interstate defect. That would be a grab iron or a brake rigging or something like that.
- E: Now, you were very closely regulated by the interstate?
- G: Yes, the car inspector would put the card on. Then your switch list would have B. O. on it. That would be bad order.

E: Now, you said triple valve?

G: The grab iron.

E: The grab iron, that is for getting up on the car.

G: Yes.

E: And the drawbar has to do with the coupling.

G: Yes, the coupling, where you couple them up.

E: Yes. Now, you mentioned something else there.

G: The brake rigging down or the triple valve.

E: Triple valve. What is that?

G: Triple valve is what regulates the air. The majority of the people figure that the engineer puts on the air. The engineer doesn't do that. He takes the air off. In the car there is a reservoir; it has got two pistons on it, one at each end. Well, when you let the brakes off, you pump up the air to the required amount. Some are sixty, some are eighty pounds, different railroads. That air comes in from the engine and goes in the piston and holds that brake off. There is a triple valve in there that regulates that air. Well, when the engineer turns the valve on the engine to stop the train, the air escapes out of this end here. The pressure on this side pushes your brake off. That is what the triple valve does. It just turns the air from one end of the piston over to the other one. Now, if you put the air. . . When you send a car off you have got to bleed it, because there is no air coming into it to equalize that. So you pull a rod on, rigging, to get the brakes off. Everybody says the engineer puts the brakes on, but he doesn't. The engineer takes the air off of them so the brakes do go on.

E Well, that is interesting. I never knew that one. Then when you moved up to conductor, did you have to work the extra board then first?

G: Yes, start all over again.

E: Now, was this a required promotion like from the fireman to engineer?

G: Yes. The engine crews. . . They would make the firemen take the examination. Then if you fell down three times

on the examination, he would put "off." He would put to the youngest man on the B & O pool. You would lose that much. Then he would have to work himself back up. But the trainman wasn't that way. If you fell down three times on the examination--it was a pretty stiff examination, it would take you three or four days; you had to write it all out--they didn't take your seniority away from you, but they put you back braking. Then in six months or so they would give you another chance.

E: What would the exams be like, that you would have to take?

G: Well, you had a book of rules about that thick. You had to answer every one of those questions. You wouldn't read the book--the way I got through with it, I got ninety-two percent on my examination. I would study about twenty-five questions. We would go down to Youngstown once a week to the depot. I would study about twenty-five questions and I would get them in my noodle. Then when I went down there that was all I answered, those twenty-five questions that night. I wouldn't try to go on. I would come home, wait a week, and go back again. That way I got through it ninety-two percent.

E: Now, were you ever re-examined over the years? Did you have to take the. . . Did you have to take your examination more than once?

G: No. You had to go down for review, that is all. You go down and have a review on the book. Well, once a year you had to have a physical examination.

E: Tell me about the railroad watch. Everyone always felt that the railroader had a special watch. Did you have one?

G: Yes. After I retired I gave the watch to my son. I carried it for forty-four years. I said, "Now, Paul, if Denny," that is his oldest son, "if Denny is living when you pass on, you give that watch to Denny." I don't know what he will tell Denny if Denny is still living. You had to have a Stemline and Leverset. You couldn't have roman figures on it, you had to have the regular numbers. It had to be twenty-one jewels. Anything less than twenty-one they wouldn't have. And you had to have a glass crystal. Glass crystals break easy. You generally carried them up here in your pockets. You would lean up against something and break the crystal. Then plastic crystals came out. The cinders would get into your pocket. Of course, they don't anymore. Then those cinders would

scratch that crystal, and the first thing you know, you could only about half see through it. So, they wouldn't let you have that.

E: Did they ever check your watches?

G: Every month.

E: What kind of watch did you have?

G: I had a Hampton. It was made in Canton, Ohio. There was a big watch factory there at that time. I guess the building is still standing, but the Hamilton Company bought them out.

E: Did you get your watch new or was it inherited?

G: No, I got it new. I paid \$31 for that and a gold chain.

E: Now you can't find one for that.

G: That used to be a standing joke in those years. You could always tell a railroad man as soon as you saw him. "How is that," they would say--his big, gold watch chain on a dirty neck. Your neck used to get so dirty with those cinders coming down. You would wear a handkerchief but. . . The old smoke would come rolling down and you could have wiped your face off but you couldn't wipe your neck off. Big, gold chain and a dirty neck.

E: You worked mostly on the steam engines, didn't you?

G: Yes, I only had about two years on the diesel.

E: Did you like them?

G: Oh, I don't know. It was nice for the engine crew, but it wasn't any different for us, only a little cleaner. I never did work a diesel on the main line, it was all steam.

E: Where did you go on the main line, Willard to Pittsburgh?

G: New Castle to Willard. I broke for about three years on passenger, that was from Willard to Pittsburgh.

E: Did you prefer the freight to the passenger?

G: Oh, you starve to death on the passenger runs.

E: Oh, really?

G: Yes. They didn't pay any money. You starved to death. You had to buy your own uniforms and everything at that time.

E: Well, I would have thought they would have paid the same.

G: Oh, no.

E: How do they determine the pay rate?

G: Well, a passenger man had to make 150 miles a day. Freight only had to make 100 miles a day, and they got more money for the 100 than you got for the 150. The passenger run was 206 miles from Willard to Pittsburgh. The train crew got 206 miles and the engine crew got 211, because they had to take their engine down to lock and junction. Anything less than 100 miles, they paid you eight hours. You would come out of Painesville with the train roaring and take it to New Castle. That is only eighty-six miles. If it took you more than eight hours for the eighty-six miles, you got overtime after eight hours. But those runs out of Willard were 150 miles and you had to work twelve hours. You would work 100 miles and then fifty miles and that would be another half of day without overtime.

Take it on the other hand, you would come out of Willard on those 92's and 94's and stock trains and they allowed you three hours and ten minutes to make the 150 miles. You were alright if you made it in three hours and ten minutes, but if you were more than three hours and ten minutes you had to explain about it. As a rule, you could make it in about two hours and fifty minutes. Well, they had to pay you for 150 miles, that would be twelve hours. And you actually were only on duty for about four hours, but they would have to pay you for twelve.

E: Did you work on the stock trains?

G: Yes. I will tell you about a stock train. Your dad would know all about this old engine. They call it Emerson's Folly. It was a 4045 and this Emerson was the chief mechanical engineer. He got it in his head that he was going to build his own engine, instead of having those big engine companies make it. So he made it. Frank Jacobs was the engineer. We came out of Willard with a stock train and we lost about ten minutes between Willard and Greenwich. That darn thing. . . You would be going along and you would have 175 pounds of steam and all at

once it would go right down to 120 or 125 and we would just chug along. Well, pretty quick we got the steam up again and we went right along for a while and then it went down.

Every time you would go by a tower they would hoot you up and order--advise a delay. We were about forty-five minutes late on it. Between Newton Falls and Ohio Junction is twenty-one miles. We used to make it in sixteen minutes, if everything was going right. Well, we came over to the XM tower and hooted up an order and we lost five minutes between Akron and XM. Advise a delay, that made Frank mad. You know that engine took a hold by the time we got just by Ravenna coming this way. You never saw a train go so fast in your life. I swear that going around the corner at Ohio Junction, that engine came up like this. We could feel it when it dropped back down and got on straight, lined it up.

God, the next morning we were called into the trainmaster. He had the dispatcher sheet there. You see, they mark every time you go by one of the towers. The trainmaster says to Frank, "Frank, I have got a bad report on you." Frank asked, "What is that, Mr. Angel?" He said, "You know when they unloaded that stock down there at Cumberland. . ." They only allowed eighteen hours from Chicago. Then you had to unload this stock and feed and water them and rest them. He said, "When they unloaded that stock down in Cumberland yesterday morning, they had nineteen bobtailed bulls." Frank says, "How is that?" "Why," he said, "you went so damn fast that their tails sucked right out through the slats and it just clipped them off. They were bobtailed when they got to Cumberland." Then he kept saying to Frank, "How fast were you going when you went by Newton Falls?" "I don't know," he said. "I don't know how fast we were going."

You see, the engineers had speedometers on them but they were run by a belt. This belt was a spring, about like a screen door spring. When they wanted to make up some time, they would get down and take the coal pick handle and they would put it in between there and give it a twist. Well, that would stretch the darn belt and then it wouldn't register right on the engine. Frank didn't do that though, he didn't do that. He said, "I don't know." He said, "I can tell you what you were making between Newton Falls and the Ohio Junction." That is over here by the new Chevrolet plant. He said, "You were just making seventy-nine and eighty miles an hour. You know that sixty miles is the limit on there." Well, Frank said,

- "It didn't seem to be going that fast." We got by with it anyhow.
- E: So you made up some time.
- G: We came to New Castle on time. He made about fifteen minutes up, besides exceeding the speed limit between Newton Falls and the Ohio Junction. We had a lot of good times.
- E: Well, you had control of the caboose too, didn't you?
- G: Yes.
- E: How was your cooking ability?
- G: Oh, we got by. None of us starved and none of us got potent poison, so I guess we got by.
- E: Did you have your caboose all fixed up inside?
- G: Oh, yes. We had a pretty nice caboose that we took care of real well, a regular crew and all.
- E: What did you cook in the caboose?
- G: We really used to have a lot of good times. Sometimes funny, and sometimes it wasn't. I remember one time you (Gene Eminhizer) had one of those little Crosley, wasn't it? This was just a little bit of a thing. There were elderberry bushes over in there. Jay Brooks and I and, I believe, Art Fenton, and I forget who the engineer was... Anyhow, Gene had this little car parked out there. So the four of us got a hold of it and we lifted it up and set it right down in the middle of a bunch of elderberry bushes. Well, Gene came to get it out and he couldn't get it out. We were around there and we saw him trying to get it out, so we went over and helped him.
- E: Now, where was this, down at DeForest?
- G: Yes. Another time, I was yardmaster for six or eight months I guess, working in another man's place. Gene was the clerk. We had a fellow from the Butler run. It was the clerk's job assigning the time slip, the time you started. He would take it over to Butler and they would sign it there, the time you quit. I forget that engineer's name, but he made me so mad. You handed him the time slip, and he looked at it and said, "Who signed that!" I said, "The clerk signed it." He said, "I can't read it!" I

thought what is the matter with you tonight. Didn't you get your rest today or what? I said, "He has been signing those time slips for three or four months here. Were you ever short of pay on payday? Seems as though the timekeeper can read before you start and you can't read when you go to start." He said, "I don't want it. I want another time slip." I said, "Well, you are not getting it. You are either going to take that the way it is, or you don't get one out of here. One or the other." Well, he took it. Gene signed it alright. I could read it.

E: Hit a bump or two.

G: He was mad. Something was wrong with him.

E: How much did you work around the yard in comparison to out on the road?

G: I worked about half the time at DeForest.

E: Did you ever have a car get away from you on the top of that hill?

G: No. You know, I was on a job here one time with Pat Baker when he was a foreman in Newton Falls. That darn job was fifteen hours a day. My son was a little fellow then and I suppose it was about six months that I didn't see that boy awake. He would be sleeping when I would come home. He would get me out and maybe it would be in the evening or next morning. I didn't raise those two children, my wife raised those two children. I was on the road half the time.

E: That was a hard lot of those railroad men. He was gone so much. When you were on the road, where did you sleep?

G: Well, if you were in Willard you slept at the YMCA. If you were in New Castle, you would either sleep in your caboose or up over the roundhouse. They had bunks up there.

E: Well, wouldn't that have been noisy?

G: Oh, noisy and dirty. In those days you had what they called boomers. They followed where the work is. In the fall of the year, they would be in the west where the grain and everything is. Then come here in the summer when they were moving the coal and the ore. They were boomers. They wouldn't stay anyplace for over six months.

The first thing you did down at New Castle when you went to bed, you took your shoes off and you lifted your bed up and put the bed legs in the shoes. Your watch and your trousers you would roll up and put under your pillow and your pocketbook. You couldn't take them off ordinarily and hang them up like you should; somebody would steal them on you.

In 1920, I think, that about fixed the boomers. The war was over and they wouldn't hire them from that time on. You had to have an established residence and so forth. It was good for the young man starting out because he gained seniority so fast. Those boomers would be quitting, or they would get drunk and they would discharge them.

- E: Somebody said there were a lot of bedbugs and that sort of thing around some of these places.
- G: We didn't have any trouble in Willard at the YMCA. That was a big YMCA, it had 107 rooms in it. Then you had the recreation room, the pool hall, reading rooms, and showers. That was a good, clean place. We had one caboose one time, it was on a local here, that got bedbugs in it. But they fixed them. They would take them up to Painesville and they would paint them with some kind of poison in the paint. They would spray inside and that fixed the bedbugs.
- E: Were you gone for several days at a time when you were out on the road?
- G: Yes.
- E: You had to make so many round trips?
- G: Well, if you followed your turn. You see, that was uncertain. You might go into New Castle or Willard maybe four times out. Well, sometimes you would get out right onto your rest, at eight hours. Other times, maybe you would be in there for sixteen or eighteen hours before you would get out. You couldn't tell.
- E: Was this the pool runs?
- G: Yes, the pool. First in and first out.
- E: Did you always draw the same firemen and brakemen?
- G: No, you never got the same one, very seldom got the same. The train crews were generally on those advertised jobs. There were three engine crews for two jobs. One engine

crew would work from the first of the month to about the twelfth. Then he would have his mileage in. In those twelve days you would make. . . I think they were allowed 3,500 miles a month, something like that. Well, then another crew would take it. Then when they would get theirs in, they would put the swing crew in. But, the train crews weren't that way. They made all the time they could. What made the engine crews get out faster than the train crews was the double-heated engines. See, they would take two engine crews and only one train crew, and that is why they got their mileage in so much faster than we did.

E: Did you ever have more than two engine crews on a train?

G: When we were working out in Painesville, you would have five engine crews on. You would have two on the head end and three engines pushing you. It took five big engines to put a train of ore out of Painesville up to Chardon, five engines.

E: You don't think of that being uphill.

G: Well, it was eleven miles from Chardon to Painesville, and I think it rose 900 feet in the eleven miles.

E: That is pretty good.

G: Then when you were going down the hill, you had to set retainers on at least a third of the cars.

E: What is a retainer?

G: A retainer is a little lever about that long that went up on the side of the car. The air pumps wouldn't supply enough air to hold that train. You couldn't hold the air on too long, because then your wheels would run hot. Well, you set those retainers and the engineer could build his air up, but those retainers wouldn't let the brakes come off. That is what held them. If you didn't have the retainers and you released all the brakes, away you would go.

E: You couldn't use extra engines on the front or the back to help slow the train?

G: You put three engines on the back end of the train and two on the head end.

E: To hold them back?

G: No.

E: Oh, to go up.

G: If you have two engines, they had a double-headed cock on the engine. If you had both engines pumping air through that line, the lead engineer would put that air on, but the second engineer would pump it right off. So, they had the double-headed cock on there. He had no control over the air, the second man.

E: Were you ever in any accidents on the railroad?

G: Only road crossings. The worst one that ever I was on, was at Cuyahoga Falls. They had run 215's that night. We had the General Motors that morning. That General Motors came out of Detroit and was all export. There was nothing in there, only General Motors' stuff. It was a hotshot. So, they ran the 215's and they were due in Willard at 12:30 or 1:00 in the morning, and we were called for 6:00. This train would be loaded in Detroit and come out of Detroit to Willard, and we would get it about 6:00 in the morning. This passenger engine, they wanted it back to Pittsburgh. So, they just hooked it on the head end of us. Well, that gave us double-header out of Willard. We were about 1,000 tons light for two engines.

We made good time, we had a Pittsburgh division crew in the engine. We came down to Akron, we had ten or fifteen cars set off at Akron. The yard engine would come up to the main track, he would figure on for the other train. Then the brakeman on the through freight, he would drop off at the cutback, ten, fifteen, twenty cars, whatever you want. But, the brakeman on the yard job would unhook your engine and run it down the clear. Then they would reach out and pick the cars up. The brakeman back there would tell them to go on, and you would ride down and shut the switch. Back to your original train you would go. You wouldn't be there over five minutes.

So, this engine crew figured: Well now, if we take water to Akron, we can go to New Castle because we are going to be a whole lot lighter leaving Akron. With two engines they figured they could make New Castle for water. So, they went down and dropped on down the water while I was making this move up here. I came back. . . T. K. Fairady was road foreman. He was sitting on my seat. I said, "Where you going, Mr. Fairady?" He said, "New Castle." Well, I said, "I am not about to stand up on this engine from here to New Castle. I am going back in the second

engine and ride." He said, "Go ahead." It was the trainman's duty to ride the head engine.

We left there and, God, they gave us a push out of Akron. He was up at the depot and they put a pusher behind us. And were we going when we left Akron--three engines running white. We went up to Cuyahoga Falls. There were two, great, big, air reduction sales trucks and they were loaded with these cylinders. One of the trucks was broken down and they had a log chain, it was as heavy as a car chain, pulling. We were going all aboard. The head man got across, we didn't hit him, but we hit the second one. That chain was so strong that it didn't break and it pulled this other one right around under the front engine, knocked the air pumps off and bent the side rods and killed the both of them. That was the worst one that I was ever in.

E: You would have a large delay there, wouldn't you?

G: Yes. Killed both drivers.

E: When was this, early on? When did this happen, in the 1940's or 1950's?

G: I suppose it was in the 1940's.

E: You were working for the railroad during the war.

G: Yes, both wars.

E: You were a brakeman during the first war, and a conductor during the second?

G: Yes, a conductor in the second war.

E: What was it like working in the train during the two wars?

G: Well, I don't remember too much about the First World War, about working conditions. The Second World War, I remember them really well because I was a conductor. They were getting a bunch of young fellows that weren't broken in and weren't very reliable anyhow. You couldn't do anything. Well, the first thing you know, the conductor did about half of the work that he hadn't ought to have done. You would get behind and the general yardmaster would get after the conductor. The trainmaster would get after the general yardmaster, and the superintendent would get after the trainmaster. Keep you going.

We were working over in the mill one day, we were switching

the boxcars for the warehouse, and it started to rain. Doggone brakeman went on the engine. I went up and I said, "What are you doing up there?" He said, "It is raining." I said, "That doesn't make any difference to the railroad man. Rain, snow, or anything, the work is here and it has got to be done." He said, "Well, I am not going to do it." So, I went in. Don Child was the second trick yardmaster. I called Don up and I said, "Send another man over, Don." He said, "What's the matter," and I told him. He said, "I haven't got a man. Can you get by switching those boxcars out and I will talk to Woodcock." He was the second trick yardmaster at the mill. He said, "I will talk to Woodcock and he will let you get out as soon as you get those boxcars switched." We made the arrangements. As soon as I got the boxcars switched, we went to the gate. That is the kind of men you had to put up with. The yardmasters were up against it too because they say they were after them. They would tell them, "Well, we can't get experienced men and the ones that we do hire work a couple of weeks and then they quit." Well, we know that. It was pretty tough. You had to have eyes in both ends of your head and watch them to make sure they didn't get injured. That mill was pretty tough, there were six engines working around in there then, cars going in every direction sometimes.

E: Did you work in the mill during the war, or out in the road?

G: I generally worked at home when the war was on. I worked here at DeForest. There was good money. They were short of men all the time and you would make a lot of doubles and time and a half and so forth. The wife used to say, "I don't know why you work so much." I said, "Well, get it while you can." So, we did. It paid off when we came to retire. Our pension from the B & O was based on the last ten years of your service, plus years of service. We built up quite a little bit.

E: The B & O has it's own railroad pension?

G: The railroad, yes, it has a retirement. I don't know how that is going to work out. I got a \$31 raise on the railroad retirement July 1st. I got the bill from the Traveler's Insurance Company, that went up \$10 a month. I got my gas bill the other day, it went up \$20 a month on that budget plan. Well, there is \$30 gone right there out of the \$31 raise. That B & O annuity is the best thing that ever happened to me, and a lot of us.

E: Now, what is it?

G: I paid in an average of \$12 a month for seven years and I have been drawing \$91 for twenty-two years.

E: You did alright then. Of course, some of them didn't get to draw much.

G: Some of them wouldn't take it.

E: Oh, they wouldn't?

G: No, it was voluntarily. You had to pay four percent over the amount that railroad retirement took out. Then the railroad matched it, four percent. It was based on your last ten years of service, multiplied by the years of service.

You remember Vic Parr, don't you? Well, he just died last September, I think. We went into Willard, we were both in the pool, and Mr. Jenkins was the superintendent of the YMCA over there. He said that up in the auditorium there was going to be a fellow there to explain this annuity. You had to have thirty years of service before you could get it. They said, "It might be to your interest to go up and hear what he has to say." So we got washed up and went up.

Parr was pretty inquisitive and he said to them, "I have got a question to ask you. How does it come that the B & O is taking so much interest in men? I have been here for thirty-three years and all I am is just a brakeman. If I don't work, I don't get any money. All I am is a number. Now they are going to give us a pension and pay half of it." "Well," he said, "that is easy to explain. If the B & O has a good year, then they make money by it. If the B & O has a poor year, we lose money by it, where you don't lose one way or the other." He said, "If they have a good year and make a big profit, that four percent that we put in on you pension we deduct as business. If we don't make a good year, the deducts would be more than what we have to pay taxes on. So, we lose." Well he said, "Alright, I thought there was an error in the file someplace. I have been around here for thirty-three years and the day I was hired the B & O was losing money, and they are still losing money. How do you figure you are going to gain anything?"

E: Well, did he take it out?

- G: Yes, he took it out. He quit in June and I quit in November of 1960.
- E: Who did you work with out there on the road?
- G: I couldn't tell you all of them.
- E: You worked with most of the engineers?
- G: Yes.
- E: You mentioned Jacobs. Now, who was your road superintendent?
- G: When I quit, Jack Willard was the road superintendent. I wouldn't know who was now.
- E: Was he pretty good to get along with?
- G: Oh, Jack Willard was a good fellow. In those days, they took the men out of the ranks that came up, and they knew the score. After a while, you had to have a college education and everything before they put you up. A lot of those kids didn't know a gondola from a boxcar. Same way with an engine, they wouldn't know one thing from another. They quit promoting the men out of the ranks like they used to. Conductors, they used to put them as yardmasters or trainmasters or superintendents. The engine men, the firemen, they would go to road foremen of engines. Jack Willard was a good man to work with.
- E: He came up from the ranks?
- G: Yes. T. K. Fairady came before him, your dad worked with Fairady. He was an engineer too.
- E: Was there a difference in the way the engines handled, in terms of the size and the weight on the road?
- G: Yes, they got paid for the weight on drivers, the engine crew did.
- E: Did that have any bearing on the conductor's salary?
- G: No.
- E: Just the strick mileage?
- G: Just the engine crew. The conductor and trainmen, if they had fifty cars that would be alright. But, if the engineer

had one of the biggest engines they had hauling those fifty cars, he would get more money. The weight was on the drivers.

E: The conductor's salary was based on the number of cars?

G: Right after I quit, I think you got a little more compensation for a block of ten cars, after so many cars. I don't know what the limit was. When I quit the railroad. . . Just like old Pop Simpson, Pop quit the railroad. He came down to the yard office one day to get some information or passes or something. Art Fenton was running an engine around there. I said, "Come on up, Pop, I want to talk to you." He said, "No, sir. If you want to talk to me, you come down here or come up on Youngstown Avenue where my porch is. The day I step off that engine, I am done with the railroad." That is the way I was. I never bothered to talk. I don't know what is going on, I just left.

E: That is interesting. When Gene Eminhizer retired, he never went back either. It was over and done. Did you guys just have so much of it when you were there?

G: You just get fed up. You just get tired of it.

E: There is no nostalgia there for you. Did you ever have cinders in your eyes?

G: Lots of them. Cinders down your neck and down your shoes.

E: What kind of soap did your wife use to get your clothes clean from those engines?

G: We didn't get so dirty. You get awful dusty, but no grease like the engine crews had. We didn't get grease or anything, but the engine crews would get greasy and coal dust and that was certainly a mess. The train crews didn't get so much of it. If you were on the road with the head man you got pretty dirty. The flagman and the conductor didn't.

E: They stayed pretty clean.

G: Now, the engine crews go down and get on those engines dressed up better than I am.

E: They sure do. Do you have any other stories that you want to tell?

G: I don't know. About the most amusing one that I remember, that we had a good time over, Jerry Vennette and George Kitchen, and Lovejoy on the Lake local, and this Andy Gorman, he was on. Well, we were going to Painesville and Jerry, Lovejoy and I would go up and eat. George would go and eat and then he would come back and sleep up in the loft, he didn't get a room. We slept in the caboose too. Andy and "Smoke" were always arguing. I remember one night when we were in bed, and George had been down around the roundhouse or something and he came back. Andy always had the Cleveland paper. He would get it in the morning when he would go to work, but he couldn't read it until we got to Painesville. So, Andy had read the paper and left it on the caboose table and George came in and was reading the paper. Well, Andy didn't have anything to growl about all day. He said, "George, before you go to bed just leave 5¢ on that table for that paper that you are reading. I paid 5¢ for it, now you just leave 5¢ on the table." Well they started arguing. Andy said, "By the way, just leave another 10¢ on the table for the matches you have been sneaking out of here three or four at a time." They got into quite an argument. In the meantime, Andy had gotten up and gone around the corner to the cot loft, around the cupboard.

When Andy went to bed, he would hang his coat up here and take his false teeth out and put them in his pocket and go to sleep. George hung his coat up on the other side. That darn Jerry, when he got up, he reached in Andy's pocket and took his false teeth out and put them in Kitchen's coat pocket. Kitchen would get up in the morning, build a fire, and then call us and he would go over to Blair's to eat. We would get a cup of coffee and a doughnut or something for breakfast, the four of us in the caboose. That was alright.

George got up and made the fire and we waited until the caboose got warm, then we got up. Andy got up and he couldn't find any teeth in his pocket. He said, "Jerry, did you see anybody monkeying around with my coat?" He said, "Yes, I saw old 'Smoke' monkeying around here last night." Well, he started. I said to Jerry, "Let's not eat in the caboose this morning. Let's go over to Blair's because there goes Andy. He is going to hump George."

We went over. We caught up with Andy. Then we went in the restaurant and we sat down. There was a bunch of construction men in there eating breakfast. Andy went up and he said, "Smoke, where are my teeth?" Well, George was innocent of it. He didn't know they were in his

pocket. He said, ~~what~~ would I be doing with your teeth? God, I have got teeth of my own. Besides, I would not want yours anyhow." Well, Andy said, "I got it from pretty good authority that you were prowling around that caboose last night." He didn't say Jerry told him, he said he got pretty good authority. Smoke says, "Search me. I don't know anything about your teeth." Old Andy reached in and come out, and he held them up like that. He said, "See," he is swearing, "that is the kind of man that you work with. By God, he would even steal your false teeth off you." A couple of the men got up and left. Mrs. Blair came out and threw Andy and Smoke both out. Poor old George was innocent. He didn't know those teeth were in his pocket. Such things as that, turned out funny. It was pretty embarrassing.

- E: You guys probably had a pretty good time out there on the railroad. You seem to know each other pretty well and each other's temperament pretty well. Well, you lived with each other quite a bit.
- G: Yes. I went up one day to see Cecil and he said, "Let's go someplace today." I said, "Alright, where do you want to go?" He said, "I don't care. You are going to do the driving, I will ride wherever you go." I said, "Let's take a ride up to Painesville. I haven't been up there since I retired five years before." So, we went up and I got lost. I got at 44 and you used to go down in by the railroad. It is all gone. There is a new, four lane highway from Chardon that goes clear out around. The cut was at the twenty, just down below into the yards. Now, Jackson Street used to be ninety percent of where the railroad men lived. Now, it is McDonald's, automobile sales rooms, Burger King's, and it is hard to tell what all is there, clear down to the railroads.
- E: It is all gone then, all changed?
- G: All changed.
- E: Did a lot of the men used to take rooms out in the town?
- G: Yes. We used to. . . Sometimes, on Mentor Street there was a great, big, old house there. It must have had about thirteen rooms in it. Sometimes we would go up there when it would get zero. The darn caboose would be so cold. You would wake up in the morning and there would be frost on the nailheads. If you had your blanket up around your face, it would be frozen stiff where you had breathed on it. We used to go up and room there quite often. One

winter we had Bob Stanhope and Tribar Guthrie and I in Canton. We were the only two 44's, they were all in Painesville. We used to go up and. . . This was the room we had that had three beds in it. We would stay there in the wintertime.

E: How much would it cost you for a room like that?

G: It seems to me we paid 75¢ a night.

E: When you were there or did you take the room. . .

G: Just when we were there.

E: Because sometimes, the fellows would take a room and just keep it all the time. It would be their room.

G: Well, they would in the summer, but not in the winter. In the wintertime there would only be about two or three trains out of Painesville a day besides the local. In the summertime there would be a train every hour. The majority of the road men lived in New Castle.

E: Is it because the lakes froze over and they weren't hauling ore?

G: Yes, they don't haul the ore in the cold in the wintertime. That is all abandoned now. It is hard to believe the business we used to do up there. One time, about 500 men worked on the B & O Painesville.

E: Really?

G: Oh, yes. They had a big roundhouse and they had a big shop there. There must have been 125 or 150 working the railroad shop, besides the train crews.

E: What would they work with in the shop, the engines or the boxes?

G: No, it was all cars. The engines, they always work in the roundhouse on them. But there were all cars. They rebuilt them up there, tear it apart, and rebuild them.

E: Tell me about this Emmerson's Folly. What ever happened to that?

G: Why, it was such a failure that they took it back and tore it apart.

E: Did it only make the one trip?

G: Oh, no. They experimented with that engine on all divisions. The darn thing wasn't successful on any of the divisions. Posed engines on them, Emmerson's Folly, it was a terrible engine.

We had an engineer by the name of Jacobs and a conductor by them name of Brooks. Toby Young and I were brakemen and we were on that Newton Falls job. Well, we would pick up sheet bars in Warren and then work around Liberty Steel for three or four hours, then we would go to Newton Falls. We picked our sheet bar up in Warren and I went up to Frank Jacobs and I said, "Frank, you have got air in everything but the caboose. The air is all working." In the meantime, we would go up there in the morning and you had to pull by. There was a gate there by the scales where the conductor would drop off, go over and unlock the gate and open them up, and we would shove into the mill.

This Frank Jacobs, every morning he would be going just a little bit faster. So, Brooks told Toby and I, he said, "I am going to fool him this morning. I am going to just put the air on and make him stop here. He is going a little too fast and I am afraid to get off." So after we had the air all through everything, I turned it on the caboose. We went up there and Frank Jacobs whistled for signals, four shorts. Brooks got out on the back platform and came outside in the back. Of course, he wasn't slowing up any. We came up to the gate, he reached down and pulled the emergency valve on the caboose and no air. Brooks jumped about that high. Somebody double-crossed me. So, we went right up to Leavittsburg, had no business going up there, that is as far as we were concerned. Our orders read run extra from Highland Avenue or from the next one up, run extra to Leavittsburg.

So, we went to Leavittsburg and Jacobs stopped up there. Brooks ran up and said, "What are you doing up here?" He said, "I don't know what we are doing up here. I asked you for signals back there and you gave me the sign to back up. So, this is all the further I can go because the orders ran out." Brooks didn't know what to say. Then I told Jacobs, I said, "Frank, don't try to kill that fellow. You are going to hurt somebody with your fooling around." They were always fooling. Well, then Jacobs slowed up and let old Brooks get off. Brooks would get off there and his heels would be hitting the back of his neck.

E: Did you run with Gene Eminhizer?

G: Oh, yes. We were on the North Warren job quite a bit. Gene was the engineer and I was the conductor.

E: Where is North Warren?

G: Then I broke up the lake when your dad was firing. Your dad fired out in Painesville for five or six years, maybe longer than that. Then he got driven out of Painesville one winter and he came down here and liked it. He just went and built himself a house and stayed here until he went on passenger. I think he was on Butler run for a while.

E: Did you work the Butler run?

G: I didn't work that Butler run very much, once in a while, not very often. It was an undesirable job. You would leave here at midnight, and as soon as you got down by Youngstown in the fall of the year, you didn't see the ground until you got to Butler. You followed the river all of the way. The water and the river are so much warmer than the atmosphere that it created a big fog. You couldn't see your hand, clear into Butler. You followed the river right into Butler, same way you would come out of Butler about 11:00 at night. Then you wouldn't get to DeForest until 11:00 the next morning. You would come home, go to bed and rest, and go again at 11:00 out of DeForest. It was a mortgage lifter, lots of money in it, but a lot of hard work too. It was so foggy down there in the fall of the year. Then, if they would run you around by the way of Calgary, there is a big tunnel along there. If you didn't have a Pittsburgh engine you would suffocate in there because it only cleared the smokestack about that much.

E: About four or five inches.

G: If you had a Pittsburgh division engine. . . They had masks hanging on the side of the cab to put over your face. The tube ran clear down to the rail. Before you would come to the tunnel, you would put that mask on. The breathing you did, you got fresh air from way down at the bottom of the tunnel. If you had a New Castle division engine, oh boy, especially coming this way, it was a grade and you had to work the engine pretty hard to get through the tunnel. It wasn't a good, desirable job.

E: They had a lot more tunnels in Pennsylvania though.

G: Yes, we only had that if they went by the way of Calgary. If they went by the way of Edinburg, you didn't have a tunnel.

E: Why would they run you in two different directions?

G: One was a BR & P and the other one was the B & O. The B & O took the BR & P over and they were single tracks. If there was a B & O going towards Butler and you were coming out of Butler, they would run you around this way to hook up, keep you from meeting in there.

E: They used it like a double track then?

G: Yes, then you would come up to the double track and keep right on going.

E: It was sort of an extension of this double track.

G: Yes. Where your dad got in trouble, he was coming home that morning. You had pushers, and your dad just didn't shut off. He was going a little faster than he figured and those pushers back there didn't shut off. So, they just pushed your dad right into the back end of the caboose. I wasn't on the crew at the time, but that is how he got into trouble. He was making a little bit too much time and then those pushers behind him didn't shut off in time and pushed him right into it.

E: Didn't he have a block?

G: Yes. He had a yellow block. He slowed up a little bit, but he didn't slow up quite enough. If he had been by himself, he would have been alright. He was up there and those two, big engines pushing. Those engines on the back didn't know what kind of a block he had, because when they came along it would be red.

E: When was this?

G: In the 1940's.

E: Anything you would have changed over the years?

G: No.

E: You were pretty happy with railroading?

G: Oh, yes.

END OF INTERVIEW