

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Railroad Project

Work Experience

O. H. 536

CHARLES VOGAN

Interviewed

by

Lillian Eminhizer

on

June 8, 1975

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWER: CHARLES VOGAN

INTERVIEWEE: Lillian Eminhizer

SUBJECT: Conductor, B & O Railroad, Train operations,
Duties, Railroad Life

DATE: June 8, 1975

E: This is an interview with Charles Vogan for Youngstown State University Oral History Program. The interview is being conducted at 1847 Estabrook, NW in Warren on June 8, 1975. It is about 8:00 p.m.

Chuck, what did you do on the railroad? What task did you work at?

V: I was trainman the first time.

E: The first time?

V: You had to hire out as a trainman. I came from the Pennsylvania at first. It got too serious of losing too many men. I rode a hump down there. You get on a string of cars and take it down into the yard. It was about eight to ten miles. It was very foggy down that way. There were a lot of lives lost because they ran into different ones. Most of the time, they had these people that didn't work too long. They just stayed for a while and quit. If they found that a car had some liquor in it, they would make an effort to derail it.

E: Where in Pennsylvania did you work?

V: I worked at Rochester, Pennsylvania.

E: Down near Pittsburgh?

V: Yes, down near Pittsburgh.

E: When did you hire out on the Pennsylvania?

V: Around 1923. Then I came over to B & O in 1925. I worked there as a trainman. The men at that time stayed pretty long. There weren't very many promotions for quite awhile because they were working until they were over 70 years old. As long as they passed the examination and there wasn't any pension, there wasn't anything to give up. You only worked there.

E: In 1925 when you came, which wasn't too long before the Depression came, did you work through the Depression?

V: No, I didn't. I was furloughed in 1930. It was the middle of the 1930's that I got furloughed. I went to work for the crew. They called them the Gandy Dancers then. I stayed there for a little while until I was cut off of there. My brother that I worked with some time ago said, "How do you like your job?" I said, "Not too well. It is pretty hard lugging these ties on this rail." He said, "Would you take a job in a service station?" I said, "I sure will." He saw this fellow that had this service station on West Market Street. He told me later on that I had this job as a grease monkey and working on the pumps. I would wash cars. I said that I was glad to do it. I was there for the duration of the Depression.

E: When did you go back, long about the war?

V: I had different jobs while I was there. I worked for the Penn-Ohio Tile. That was my last job during the 1930's. When the Second World War started, they began needing crews. They said they needed me now or otherwise they would let me work. I told them to call a younger man for my job because it was just a matter of working a little while and then I would be cut off again.

E: You were actually on call during those years?

V: Right.

E: But, you declined when they called you?

V: Right. We still held our seniority as long as we didn't quit or anything like that. After I got back on that, I was there for the rest of my time and I wasn't even furloughed again.

E: That is interesting. First of all, you hired out as a brakeman. Did you ride the head engine?

V: I rode the head engine, yes. First I was down here like Jerry was.

E: Down here at Deforest?

V: Yes. That was sort of like field work. It was all walking. Then with seniority you could bid on the jobs. When there was anything up for bid, you could bid on it. I bid on what they called the Butler Buck. It went from Deforest to Butler and came back. That was a good job which gave me a lot of overtime. Most of the time we worked sixteen hours a day. We worked sixteen hours and had to be relieved and brought in.

E: Was the Butler Buck a freight haul?

V: A freight haul, yes. I think I would rather do that than footwork in the yards where we classified cars to go to different places.

E: As a brakeman you had to classify cars and get the trains made up in the yard?

V: Yes. When the cars were brought in, the yardmaster classified them. We would straighten them out. He would give us the switch sheet and we would put them in the track that he wanted. As the other trains would come through here, they would pick it up and take it to its destination where they would transfer it.

E: Did you ever have any trouble with the conductors with the way you put your trains together?

V: No. We all had a pretty good idea of what they wanted.

E: Were there certain conductors that wanted trains made up certain ways?

V: Yes. We went according to the yardmaster's instructions. A lot of times we made our own moves to make it easier. So many cars would go to Youngstown eastbound or westbound and we would get them in the proper tracks.

E: How many sidings do they have up at Deforest or tracks that they can move the cars around on?

V: They had five switching tracks and then they had about two sidings that they could come in on, the other trains, to set off and pick up. They supplied Republic down here with their coal and ~~one~~ and did a lot of switching over there. There were about six or seven tracks over there where we lined and switched them out and got them in place.

E: Down at Trumbull?

V: Yes.

E: Where was the roundhouse?

V: The roundhouse was where the coal and water . . . The Painesville men would come down there. It was just about 700 yards from the yardmaster's house.

E: They did have a roundhouse over here at Trumbull?

V: Oh, yes they did.

E: Did you work out on the main line?

V: Around 1945 coming back from one of our movements going to Butler and back, we outlawed New Castle going east. They had us take rest and had us come back the next morning. When we arrived there, we were in a hurry to put everything away. We had to put our own train away and our caboose. I don't know if you understand this or not, but when you dropped a car or part of the equipment there, they got a way back and . . . One fellow handled the switch. One fellow worked the rear end, the flagman, he would get the slack and pull the pin. The engine moved right up the straight track. The conductor handled the switch and that would put it around there and then you would shove it in the clear. This stub track ran into one of the shops in there and he hollered for help. That was when I was in trouble. I tried to give it to him, but he was going too fast. It twisted around there, fell down, and busted my foot. I almost lost it. It cost me a year and a half off of it. I was off a year and a half on that.

E: I suppose they didn't have any hospitalization or workmen's compensation?

V: Yes, they took care of me.

E: They did?

V: They took me to the hospital. They got me fixed up there. He did all that he could. Then I had to go to Akron for a bone specialist. He fixed me up. They would then give me a disability pension. I was too young in service in order to make anything out of it. I said no, that I would take a job out on the road. I could hold some passenger jobs too, which wasn't too hard to handle. I didn't have to do too much walking. From then on, I left there and went out on the main line from New Castle to Willard. I was on the B & O pool. Sometimes I would work on the Pittsburgh run on passenger as a brakeman.

- E: Which runs would this be?
- V: It would be 17 and 18.
- E: That was the Willard to Pittsburgh run?
- V: No, that was from Cleveland to Pittsburgh. When I couldn't hold that, I would go back on the freight train. In the meantime, I was promoted as conductor. I took that examination. You had to be qualified on all railroads.
- E: What was the exam that the conductors took like?
- V: It was a written exam that they had. You had to tell all of the rules and regulations. If you wanted to run a train or anything, you had to qualify where all the sidings were and the stations were.
- E: Out on the main line, that would have amounted to quite a bit more than on the Painesville run or something?
- V: Yes. We worked mileage there. You worked hourly at Deforest in the yard jobs. You worked eight hours there for a day. The road where you were working mileage, sometimes you got on a working train which would take you about twelve or fifteen hours to make, working on your way just setting off and picking up. If you got on a QD train, that was a lot nicer. You went through there in about four hours. You had a day and a half made. That was pretty nice. But if you had some trouble, like a hotbox or anything like that, you had to get right out of the way, you were delayed. Outside of that, it was wonderful. If you got in there and you were first out, you might double back.
- E: What is a QD train?
- V: QD is fast freight and straight through. You don't do any switching.
- E: Refrigerator cars?
- V: Yes, we had to haul those. They were put on most any kind of a train though. They had these piggyback trains.
- E: They came later didn't they?
- V: Yes.
- E: You had straight orders on the main line?
- V: Yes. You got clearance as you left New Castle. You

had to get your orders at clearance and by then you went by blocks. If the blocks were clear, they gave it to you. If everything was clear ahead of you, you went along with that. As long as you had to clear a block and there were no delays, you went right along.

E: On the passenger trains, what were the duties of the conductors?

V: His duty is to see that everything is right and takes orders from the other conductor. Like coming into Pittsburgh, he turns the tickets all over to him to see who is in the pullmans and where they are going and check with everything. He writes up his line of work that he has to do and turns it in when he gets to his destination. Outside of that, he is busy most of the time.

E: On the frieght, you rode in the caboose?

V: Yes, when you were riding the train or you were a flagman. There are two that ride back there and there are three that ride in the head end at the engine. There is the fireman, head brakeman, and the engineer.

E: Where would the passenger conductor ride?

V: He finds a seat all on his own unless they are all taken. Then he had to go up in the club car or someplace like that and find a seat to do his work. He has all of those things to check like the tickets. Then he goes back when he stops at each one of the stations. He collects the tickets and goes along. He puts a step in there for their destination so they don't bother him again.

E: In the back of the seat?

V: Yes.

E: There is more work for the conductor to do on the passenger train than on the freight train?

V: Yes, to a certain extent. Years ago we used to have to write all of the cars up that we put in. Then he would be busy until he got to the next destination where he was going to set off and pick up.

E: When you picked up cars, it was up to you to write them to your sheet?

V: Yes.

E: On this long sheet where you wrote the cars up, what

was it called?

V: I can't think of the name of it.

E: Was it some sort of a log?

V: Yes, it was a log for their destination. You had to put what was in the car.

E: As you went along on your route, you set trains off?

V: We set cars off.

E: On this sheet, I understand that it would tell every car in the location of the train.

V: Yes.

E: As you set the cars off and picked up cars, how did you adjust your sheet to indicate where these cars were on your train?

V: You had to make a special sheet where it was from the head end to the rear end. At that time, there were sixty to eighty cars until they got to hauling about 150 or so. Then it was all made out by the clerk before it was handed over to us. We just turned them in when we got to our destination and he had another sheet going out. New Castle was our terminal on freight and Pittsburgh was our terminal on passenger. It was 150 miles from New Castle to Willard.

E: Why did they feel that you could work a longer route on passenger than you did freight?

V: It only takes so much time to make that run from Willard to Pittsburgh. It is 4½ hours to 5 hours. As long as you weren't delayed anywhere you went right along.

E: That would be your passenger run?

V: Yes.

E: Did they feel that you worked longer hours on the freight train?

V: Yes. During the old times, it took you about 16 hours to make it. The company was very much pleased with that because you didn't go on overtime until you were out there for twelve hours. Then you got about 4 hours overtime. Outside of that, we weren't delayed too much. They tried to get it back on an hourly basis. The organization didn't go for that. We still had our regulation of move-

ments. If we picked up more than three pick ups, we got a local day out of that. That made a little bit more money than if you were working a workable train.

E: In other words, when you went along and made more than three pick ups, then they added a day?

V: No, not a day. It was just a little higher rate of money. You made more money connected to that.

E: I suppose. That is interesting. What is the inside of a caboose like?

V: That is our home. We had an icebox. We supplied that ourselves for whatever we wanted to put in there. It was edible stuff like for sandwiches. If you were going to stay in it overnight, you would have a lot of stuff that you would cook right in there. We had a coal stove for a good many years and then afterwards we got this oil stove when we got the diesels. When they had the smokestacks and engines like that, we had coal. We lugged our own ice in the caboose. We always had coffee.

E: I have heard about that coffee.

V: It was about as strong as you can handle it.

E: There must be bunks or something?

V: Yes, there is. We had our own blankets. There were four bunks in there down below. There were two on each side. There was a place underneath where you could store your bedding. We would get those out. They furnished us with a mattress, but we furnished everything else. We kept it nice and clean.

E: Did you bother with sheets on your mattress or did you roll up in blankets?

V: Mostly in blankets. A majority of them had sheets. We lugged a bag's worth from home.

E: It was rather civilized then?

V: Yes.

E: What type of food did you cook on your stove?

V: Most anything that you wanted. Beef stew most of the time. In the mornings we would get up and have eggs, bacon, toast, most anything and flapjacks.

- E: Who was it that made the big knee pads on the road?
I heard about the big, thick pancakes that somebody used to make.
- V: The flagman was usually put in charge of that. As long as he was back there, he planned dinner. Of course, we paid for the grub that went on there. Every now and then we would have a chicken.
- E: Was it fresh chicken as you went down the road?
- V: That is right. A lot of times we had corn too when it was in season.
- E: There was a good bit growing alongside of the railroad.
- V: We would get out while we were flagging on the lake branch, we would get lovely strawberries. We would get some milk and we were right in heaven.
- E: You surely didn't take the time to milk a cow when you went down the road?
- V: No, we didn't do that. We did know the best place to get it. We had all the ice and we could keep it good.
- E: Did you ever work the Painesville Run?
- V: Yes. I worked with I. J. Brooks and a lot of the old-timers that were up there.
- E: Who did you originally go to work under?
- V: I forget the names now. There were a lot of old-timers.
- E: Did you work with Lovejoy?
- V: Yes, Lovejoy. He was one of them.
- E: Jerry Vennettee?
- V: Jerry was up there. Jerry got his feel of it.
- E: He worked the yard line?
- V: Yes, the yard line. I broke for Jerry a lot of the time down there too. Lou Howland and a lot of them. Most of those men are older or dead now. I worked with Glenn Griffith.
- E: The brother of Judge Griffith?

- V: Right. They had different names for everybody. Nobody could understand them.
- E: I heard one today. It was something about a cauliflower.
- V: We reminisce. There are things that one brings up and recalls. After you get so old, you forget all these names and things that happened. It has been so long ago.
- E: When you went to Painesville, you stayed in your own caboose?
- V: We stayed in the caboose.
- E: I understand that was assigned to a . . .
- V: We all had our own caboose. They were very particular about it. We kept the cockloft, windows, and everything clean.
- E: That is that little cubbyhole on top?
- V: Yes. And we would watch the trains. We would watch for hotboxes at every curve that we would come around or anything that was dragging, or anything where you could tell immediately if you had trouble or not. That is how we saved the company millions of dollars. Before we would ditch a train, we would put the air on and stop the train. We would see if we could haul it or cool it down or set it off. We would get to the phone and tell the dispatcher what we had. He would have the idea of reversing the other trains around us until we got rid of the hotboxes.
- E: How close are the phones located?
- V: They are several miles between, but you had to know where they were and the sidings where you could set a disabled car off. If you saw smoke or sparks of anything, you better find out what it is. When I was running the train, there were some that were pretty careless and some that weren't. If you get a lot of young students out there, they figure, "This is pretty nice. It is all padded up in here." They would lean back and the first thing you know, they were asleep if you didn't watch them. You would shake them out of there and say, "Friend, they are going around your side. The curve is going your way. Now look the train over." They would get their head out and see what they could see. It was very easy to detect anything that was going wrong. You could see the fire flying or smoke. If that was it, you were in trouble.

E: If something was dragging then you would see sparks?

V: Yes. We would go along there and break rigging down or something like that.

E: Did you have any interesting experiences?

V: Yes, a lot of them. We had a lot of derailment.

E: What would cause a derailment.

V: One thing you would burn a journal off. That was a wheel. That would upset the train or the car and it would take everything with it.

E: You tried to get to the journals before it became a problem?

V: Yes. That was the idea of the curves and things where you go around. That is your job. When you go by the telegraph office, he looks them over and you look at him to see whether he is going to give you a highball or a sign that you have a hot one up there.

E: Highball signs mean to keep going?

V: Highball is you are okay and everything is fine, so you keep on going.

E: What else would cause a derailment besides that?

V: You could have a broken rail. If you run onto one of those, the car that is going over it with the way it was loaded would spring that around. It would be out of line then. It would go into that and jump the tracks. The first thing you know you have them all . . .

E: You had some derailments during the time you were there?

V: Yes.

E: What would you do with a derailment? How would you handle it?

V: The only thing you can do is get to the phone and tell them what trouble you are in, the derailment. That is exactly what he wants you to do, so he knows what is going on. He can put that track out of service and just use one track. The first thing he wants to know is is it number one or number two track, if you are going east or west. If you don't have clearance or they are all over everywhere well, it is clear out of service. Then he had to reroute them over the Erie or some other ways.

E: When the trains run over the Erie or some other road, they had to have a pilot?

V: Yes, they do. Nobody is qualified in there. If they want to run over our tracks, they have to find a conductor or somebody that is qualified to take them over our tracks for the head end and also the conductor. We would get them there.

E: Some of these conductors after they worked the road a certain distance for a number of trips, they get to where they can tell by the sound of the train where they are? Is that true?

V: Yes, to a certain extent--if they don't go to sleep which they don't do. They just might close their eyes for a moment.

E: Did you ever have any trouble with your young men that you were breaking in?

V: Yes. I was pretty sincere and some of the other conductors were too and others didn't care how they did. When they brought a young head out to me, hired somebody, the first thing they wanted to know was when was payday, where they got paid, how long did they have to work here, when did they eat. I tell them, "If you think it is money your after, yes, you get pretty good money." They got just as much money as a fellow who had been there all these years. They got straight pay right from there. I said, "One thing you have to watch is getting on and off these cars because there are lots and lots of people who have your arm or you are coupling the cars up. You see that they couple up right and don't get in between them." When you give the engineer a back-up signal, stay out from in between the cars because you are liable to get it.

E: Did you ever have any that came to the misfortune of getting it?

V: I have seen other pictures like that, but no, I was pretty lucky on anybody getting hurt when they were working with me.

You take your work sincere, you are on the job pretty well yourself and you see that he is on there. There are a lot of young fellows that don't like to work with the conductors like that. They say, "He is too damn particular" or "He doesn't have to be that way. He is too cautious." You do have to be that way. The dispatcher wants to know what is going on. If you have trouble, get to a phone and let him know what is going on.

E: What does a dispatcher do?

V: He runs that train. As long as he says everything is all right, he keeps you going. If you delay something and there is another train in back of you, like a QD--a through train--that doesn't have any work from Willard or New Castle, and you aren't making the time, he is going to put you in the hole which is the siding.

E: Did they have a dispatcher in every tower?

V: No. The tower man just goes by what the dispatcher tells him to do.

You talked about the steam engines awhile ago. Do you want to know how they got the coal on them?

E: Yes.

V: The engineer and the fireman are pretty close. If they are buddies, they will try to get . . . If so-and-so is called after us and we can get through here, we won't get hooped. Hooped means that he will run around you and be first out at the destination. He will be called ahead of you. We were on a steam jack going. In Warwick, we had to stop for coal and water. He said that we could get by without the coal if you can get so-and-so to help you. He is busy keeping the steam which is what he has to have for the train to go. If he lacks and the steam goes down, he is losing power just the same as it would be in driving a car. When I saw them yacking like that . . . I was interested in that too; that was when I was on the head end. I was head brakeman. I said, "Yes, I will get you coal." That is when they ran short if you get so low you'll run out of coal and see if they get close to home . . . I got back there giving him all of the steam that he could get and kept that boiler hot where he wants it. If I think that we are going to win and there isn't any chance, I don't have to do that. It is his job. All I have to do is set cars off and pick them up on the head end and watch the train. I went back there with a shovel. I put it up where the screws take the coal in automatically.

E: The stoker?

V: Yes, the stoker.

E: They could be set?

V: Yes, they could be set and bring it all in until a certain time. Then they are back there at the rear of the engine.

If they run out, he has got to get back there and there goes the steam because he is not there watching it so he can't get to it.

E: I would think that eventually the coal would fall down into that?

V: Yes, sure.

E: Somebody would have to go back there and pitch it loose?

V: Yes, get it loose. I worked at the head end lots of times and still got hooped. We got into New Castle and that wasn't what we wanted to do. If you get hooped a couple of times . . . You are sure, you have got these all planned out that you are going to get a working job back to Willard and maybe he is going to get a QD job. We all make the same money if you don't get on overtime. I worked ten to twelve hours making my day where he would work four hours and be through. That was were the catch was. It was pretty nice crawl up in the engine or caboose depending on what end your working on and ride and watch the train. You would get there fresh as a daisy. When you work ten, twelve, or thirteen hours on working train, you are ready to go to bed.

E: We were talking about the steam engines, coal, stokers, and so forth. Where would they take on?

V: Warwick. They would fill it with coal and water and then they would have enough to go. It takes 30 or 40 minutes to fill it with coal and water. We would help them out with that too.

E: You were saying that they would carry a reserve tank of water?

V: No, not most of the time. If they had too much tonnage, they would call another engine. They had to have another crew on that engine. There is where they lost out when they changed ends. They tried these diesels out on there and they were so happy, especially the engineman and the fireman. "I hope we got some more of these in," I heard the engineer say he was right. He said, "Brother, you are going to feel awful bad when they come in with all of those diesels. Sure, it will be clean. You will go in clean and won't have to change clothes. You won't have the dirt in your eyes. You aren't going to have any job either."

They could hook, tie on, any amount of diesels that they want to tie on with one crew, the engineer and the fireman. It doesn't require near that amount with . . . Everytime

they put on another engine, they had to have another engine crew.

E: With the steam?

V: With the steam. They could not operate those, as they can the diesel. That is exactly what happened. They weren't promoted so much then. But the diesel was nice.

E: When you had more than one steam engine together, who took care of the air for the train?

V: The head engine. He had control. They put it all onto him.

E: Even the air on the . . .

V: Yes, he would have to because he was watching the blocks. All that the second engine would do was give him help. He kept as much steam and stuff and ability to haul that train. He was just the same as he was in front only he didn't have the responsibility. He took all of the power and all of the stuff off of him, in the rear, and took care of the air and everything and the blocks.

E: Did the length of the train or the number of engines have anything to do with the pay of the crew?

V: No. They all got paid the same. That is the regular amount of money. IF you were first engine, or second train, you got that amount for whatever you were called for.

E: You said out on the road they got paid by the mile?

V: That's right. They got paid by the mile too. Where there was that distance and you went back and forth, it was mileage. A hundred miles was a day; that would constitute a day. Fifty miles was a day and a half. You could go in there and make a day and a half.

E: Did you get to where you ran regular runs?

V: Yes.

E: On passenger?

V: No, not exactly on the passenger. I was mostly an extra on the passengers.

E: You were an extra on the passengers?

V: Yes.

E: You had a regular run on the freight?

V: Yes. They stayed too long. That wasn't compulsory even when I quit. This new thing, annuity, that they had out forced us to quit. The company wouldn't tell you to quit. As long as you passed the examination, you could work. There were rules and regulations that if you didn't quit at that time, you automatically lost your annuity which they had for you.

E: Was there anything on the road that bothered you or bugged you in your job?

V: Yes, to a certain extent. The crew in the back, the rear end crew, we had one fellow in the head end and two in the back, well, we got different engine crews. We were going along and we knew what kind of a trip we would have by the engine crew. He will do business. He will try to do this. The other fellow said that they didn't care whether they got in today or tomorrow. They were getting paid. I didn't like that at all because the conductor wanted to get through, even when I was a conductor working on there. We did everything in the book to get it going. If we saw some smoke ahead, we said, "Are we going to stop or not?" The engine crew doesn't see it. If he looks back and see it, he will stop if he sees smoke. Nevertheless, there are a lot of times that he doesn't see what we see. I've crawled and so did he up because we thought there was a brake sticking or a hand brake tied up. Sometimes when they were classifying these cars, they would tie up a hand brake so they wouldn't go out the other end. We did that several times to keep from getting hooped. That was bad for us. The company didn't want that at all to be like that. They wouldn't say anything as long as they didn't know it.

E: They didn't want you crawling over them?

V: No, of course not. We used to crawl over that when we had the steam jack. I would walk right over the train if it were mostly boxcars, gondolas, or whatever it was to get to the rear end. Maybe I knew that it was going to be an hour or so and I would get something to eat back there. I would get coffee. That was years ago.

After we got these diesels, you wouldn't dare get up on there because they were going as fast as a passenger train, if you had the proper train.

E: How fast would one of those steam trains go?

V: They go between 65 or 70 miles per hour. Seventy was supposed to be the amount that they would go. A lot of

them chiseled on that a little bit to make up a little time. We had these signs here like they do on the highway to tell you what speed to take the curve on. You might come down to 30 mph if they had a sign up there. It was a regular board that said, "30 mph". If you went pretty high around there and derailed, it was your baby. The dispatcher knows from the time that you left Willard until you get to the first telegraph office. They know whether you are on time, killed time, or what's wrong. The conductor has to have that in his report or tell him over the phone what the delay was. That is mostly the dispatcher's job. He wants to know what happened. That is one thing that I used to hate, getting the wrong crew on. We weren't hitched together like the Butler Buck. I worked with your dad on that. He had that regular. We had an engine crew like that. I worked with Mike Fenton too. We knew exactly how it was going to work.

E: Some of them I suppose rode the train a little smoother than others?

V: Yes.

E: You were on the passenger. Did you have dining cars?

V: Yes.

E: What passenger runs did you work?

V: I was on 1718. I was on all of them.

E: You were an extra boy with the passengers?

V: Yes, but I held regular jobs at different times. We would get a brakeman on there who was really the conductor. You want to cut in on that and get all the ideas and qualify yourself on those. You have to know all of these places too, to tell the telegraph office and how to write them up.

E: When you were going to go from one job to another like the Painesville Run on the line from freight to passenger, did you have to make a certain number of trips to qualify.

V: In the first place, you can't go out there unless you are bumped or cut off. If there is a younger fellow than you out there you can go and bump him. That is the way that you get out there.

To run a train and to go over on that if you are a conductor, if I had never been out on the main line,

- I would have to go in and tell him where the sidings are and everything like that. If you don't come up with the right answers, he would tell you to take another ride. You were on your own. You would crawl on a train and go over the road there between New Castle and Willard. You would get all of those memorized. If you didn't, he wouldn't pass you.
- E: You would do all of those trips on your own time?
- V: Yes.
- E: These were extra trips?
- V: Yes, if you wanted to work you did. As long as you were working the head end or the flagman, you can learn it then. You always have the answers before you get a conductor's job. You would then be qualified and promoted as a conductor. The minute there is a vacancy, they put you on the extra board. They would get in a crew when they needed a job. The conductor lays off and if you are there, they will call you to run it.
- E: Did you ever have an interesting experience with the rest of the people on the railroad when you were out?
- V: Yes. I had good ones and bad ones. It is the idea of handling the people that makes the difference. You have to "bite the bullet" as they say now. You had to smile when they were very provoked. At that time when I was on passenger, it was hard to get a seat most of the time to satisfy them and everything. We did have real fancy, clean cars. Towards the end, we hardly had anything. We did have many passengers. We didn't have any nice coaches. It was a rough road bed. I don't know. They tried at different times to discontinue the run, but they wouldn't allow them to. I guess they thought "We will just leave the track go and lay off the people that do the work." When they got to their destination like Chicago or Washington . . . The coaches were beautiful, but by the end of my career, they were terrible.
- E: When did you retire?
- V: 1967.
- E: Just before Amtrak came out?
- V: Amtrak didn't get in there until 1970. They stayed on about two to three years after that and they had a lot cut off and finally they were running them halfway and turning them at Akron and back.

- E: On these passenger trains, the dining car crews went farther distances?
- V: They went the whole distance from Washington to Chicago.
- E: They had a crew cat?
- V: When they went to bed . . . They had a conductor on the pullman also. They always reserved a space back there for them to go to sleep. They had to be put to bed. There were two chiefs and a couple of helpers in there. They were really nice to the conductor or anybody that did some favors. They had me. They were fed up pretty good where I was way out of line in weight. I weighed about 190 pounds. I was eating pies and muffins and drinking. They were wonderful cooks and did a wonderful job.
- E: On some of the railroads they had like a crew car that they carried for the dining car employees and so on. The B & O never did that?
- V: No, not that I know of. They did where the gandy dancers were. They set them off to where they were going to work at a certain place.
- E: What did the gandy dancers do?
- V: They kept the roadbed in shape. They carried all of these ties. They tamped the trains where they have automatic works. The cars working now, the dispatcher gave him so many miles on a track, say from Youngstown to the Niles Junction or something like that. You had so many minutes or hours to work that and you better be through. They would come along and have regular diggers. They would go along there. They would come along and tag it. It used to be there was a whole crew of these gandy dancers with fourteen or fifteen working. They would really do a job. They had foremen on the fence. You would tell them how much stuff was there. They really tamped those roadbeds down where they would be solid. This would be solid, but it wouldn't stay very well at all. That is where they worked. It cost them too much money to have the fellows working like that. They were workers.
- E: The gandy dancers did a better job than the machines?
- V: I think so. You can tell in a minute when the track is bad.
- E: That is very interesting.

V: It is just a matter of forgetting a lot of this stuff too. There are a lot of old-timers that are along before my time. They could tell you how they spent their hours. They were pretty good poker players too. When they landed a place on the roadbed, they would play poker most of the time until it was time to call.

E: They didn't take their rest hours and sleep?

V: No. Well, the movements were slow then at that time. They took about sixteen hours to get over there to most of the places.

E: Did you play poker with the rest of them?

V: No, I don't gamble hardly at all. I am too much of a loser. When a loser can't afford to play, it is best that he stay out of the game.

E: Do you recall any interesting experiences that you want to put on tape? Are there any anecdotes to people?

V: We have had a lot of people who had to get off at Akron because they had a heart attack or something like that. We would throw a message off at Warwick in order to get an ambulance.

We have had drunks to take care of. When we were coming in late in a lot of places, we wanted to get in and out of there, like Number 6 going east. We would say, "Anybody that is not going on this train, please don't get on." Everybody was crowding around there. They would get on. When we got off the platform, "Let me off! Let me off!" "I am sorry, but we can't get the train stopped now until we get way down around there at Willard and the next stop is Youngstown." They said, "We wanted to help them on." "We had porters here." That is all we could do. "They will handle the luggage." That is the thing that we ran into a lot of times. We tried to be nice.

E: Did you charge them fare when they went to Youngstown?

V: We should have. Lots of time some of the conductors would charge them. I would give them a message. We would haul this brother by, pick him up, and take him back to Akron. If we were lucky enough, we would meet Number 5 going back to Youngstown.

E: Otherwise, he had a long way over?

V: They knew better than to get on there. They wouldn't say a word. They would just crawl on there. I don't know. They thought they were getting a seat or something. Seats

weren't available at all. But we got by.

E: What would you do with the drunks on the train?

V: Coming out of Cleveland one night, there was a fellow back there. He was sitting there bobbing along. He was singing. This lady said to me, "He is drunk and he is annoying me." I said, "We will see what we can do." He said, "I am not doing a thing." I said, "You are disturbing these people. They say that you are drinking. Where is the bottle?" He said, "Oh, I wouldn't think about bringing a bottle on here." I reached down a little bit and found a bottle. I said, "I am going to give you this back if you leave it alone." The first thing you know, he was back there swinging the bottle and singing. I went back and said, "This is it. I am not going to put you off and let you go, but here goes the bottle." He said, "Oh, my God! Don't take that bottle; don't take that bottle." I said, "I have to." I gave it to the next conductor. I said, "When you get him off at his destination, give him the bottle. Keep him away from it." There was stuff like that. You tried to be nice to them. The thing is to try to be courteous and everything like that to your passengers if you can.

E: No matter what you thought of them.

V: Another thing, you find people who are smoking. You get a problem from another passenger. "There is a smoking sign up there. Will you please go up there to the other car. I think you can smoke up there." You try to be nice and congenial with them. That is about all that you can do.

E: You enjoyed the passenger conductorship more than the freight?

V: Yes. It was a lot easier with me on there with my foot. I still have a numb foot. I spent my time out on the road.

E: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW