

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Erie Railroad Project

Railroading Experience

O. H. 731

JEROME MURPHY

Interviewed

by

Jerry Mullen

on

November 13, 1975

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: JEROME MURPHY

INTERVIEWER: Jerry Mullen

SUBJECT: teletype system, promotions, administrative work

DATE: November 13, 1975

MUL: This is an interview with Mr. Jerome T. Murphy for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the History of Erie Railroad, by Jerry Mullen, at Mr. Murphy's home, on November 13, 1975, at 3:45 p.m.

Just to get a general background of you as a person, can you tell me what you remember of your parents and your family?

MUR: I remember my two grandmothers and two grandfathers and my mother and father, of course. They were all living and I knew them all.

MUL: What were your parents engaged in, what kind of work?

MUR: My father was a railroader; he was an engineer on the old LS&MS which later on became the New York Central.

MUL: In Youngstown?

MUR: Yes. He worked out of Youngstown as an engineer on that railroad between Youngstown and Buffalo. My mother worked on the Erie Railroad as a clerk. My two brothers worked on it.

MUL: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

MUR: I just had two brothers.

MUL: So your entire family was a railroad family?

MUR: Well, it was only for a short time. One brother worked in the Depression days, and days that he could get, but he

did work on the railroad. Both of them left the railroad and moved on to other pursuits.

MUL: How did you spend your childhood days?

MUR: Just normally in Hubbard, Ohio like any kid in a small country town. I went away to school when I was thirteen. When I left the grades, I went to high school at a boarding school down in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. It was called St. Vincent's.

MUL: Was it a prep school?

MUR: There was a prep school there and there was a college too, and a seminary.

MUL: What were your intentions then?

MUR: I was figuring that I was going to be a doctor. I went through three years of college and quit. I did one year of academic work, two years premed and quit.

MUL: Why did you quit?

MUR: The money ran out. Mother was a widow. My father died when we were young. So I gave it up.

MUL: What do you remember about your college days?

MUR: It's getting hazy now; that's a long time ago. It's over fifty years since I've gone to school, 1925.

MUL: What kind of subjects did you have?

MUR: It was premed; I was going to be a doctor.

MUL: When and why did you decide to work at the Erie?

MUR: I needed a job and there was a lot of work there and eventually . . . My father had been a railroader and I thought I would try it out. I did and here we are.

MUL: When was that?

MUR: I worked in vacations of 1923 and 1924 and then I started to work regularly on the railroad on May 6, 1925.

MUL: So you were working while you were going to school?

MUR: Just part-time. I worked June, July, and August and then on Christmas vacation I would come and work a week or two and the same thing with spring vacation. I did a few days work as an extra clerk but it doesn't even show in my records.

In those days, they hardly even made a paper for you; they just wrote a letter. We worked for a week or ten days and that was it; we went back to school.

MUL: What was your first official position of the railroad?

MUR: The first one was the summer of 1923. I worked as a mail clerk at the freight house, the mail messenger. But my first regular work was the yard clerk and that was in May. In fact in some of the vacation in 1924, I had done some yard clerical work. I quit school in 1925 and started to work on the railroad as a yard clerk.

MUL: What would a typical day be like in 1923? What were your duties?

MUR: Normally at first when you start out, you work a few days to learn the flight, but after that when you're young, you are usually working the second or third trick. Most of your yard clerk work was checking tracks, getting the numbers and everything so that the guy inside could match the bills up to the way that the track is lined up to form a train.

MUL: So the cars would go in the right direction.

MUR: You marked cars, like when a train came in, you went out, took the bills, and marked the cars so that the conductors would know how to switch them and what tracks to put them in. A car for Cleveland was put on the Cleveland track; a local was put on a local track. The way I mark it and the way bills go on the inbound train, to switch the train, you put seals, check seals, records, and side cards which inform the conductor how to switch.

MUL: Where was this position?

MUR: Brier Hill yard in Youngstown. That was my first official spot.

MUL: When did you get your first promotion?

MUR: I started in May and in November I was moved up to the superintendent's offices as a file clerk.

MUL: And what was the difference between those two jobs?

MUR: You were inside. You weren't outside all of the time in all of the rain and snow like you were out in the yard, and it paid a little more money. It was a salary and the other was a daily rate.

MUL: Was there a particular person who promoted you or was it seniority?

- MUR: The job came open and they bid on it and they gave it to me. I was the oldest of all those who bid, but in those days there wasn't too much about seniority. When you bid and they thought you were liked, they would give it to you.
- MUL: So after 1923 you worked continuously for the railroad until you retired?
- MUR: It was after 1925 when I started to work continuously. I worked vacations in 1923 and 1924 and after spring vacation in 1925, I quit school and went to work in May.
- MUL: What was railroading like in the 1920's?
- MUR: Steam engines, old cars which were a lot smaller than they are now, smaller rail that was like ninety pounds a yard; now it is up to 150 I guess. The yards were essentially the same as it is now. You had to go out and check tracks. You had to take a pencil and write the numbers down the same way that it is down now. Of course, then when I came into the superintendent's office, I was a file clerk and that was a different set of work altogether. I had to handle papers, know how to file them, assign file numbers for incoming mail, handle all of the night shifts as they called it, match the inbound letter up with the previous letters on the same subject, and give it to the chief clerk and then he would assign it to whoever was going to handle it.
- MUL: So you were kind of responsible for keeping the records straight?
- MUR: Yes, and all the files and papers there, the correspondence and everything that came into the office.
- MUL: How did the Depression affect you and the railroad in your position?
- MUR: I was up to assistant to the chief clerk to the superintendent when the Depression came on. Then I knocked off that and went way down to a report clerk in the car distributor's office in about six months.
- MUL: What did that job involve, the assistant to the chief clerk to the superintendent?
- MUR: I was assisting the chief clerk, taking care of anything that he assigned me to do, almost anything. I handled correspondence that came into the office, kept the office straight, partially oversaw the file clerk, and handled things when the chief clerk wasn't there. In other words, if they had a meeting or anything, I would have to act as the secretary for the meeting which he would normally do if he was there. Or I would take his duties if he was on vacation. It was just like any other assistant job; you

have to know practically what the chief clerk does.

MUL: As you progressed from job to job, did you have to do a lot of traveling?

MUR: No. In fact, all the jobs that I had, in the maintenance-away office and the transportation office, were all in Youngstown, but I did go over to Greenville. I was the track supervisor clerk over there for awhile. That was in the maintenance-away department there.

MUL: How did you manage to go from job to job?

MUR: Well, you got knocked back too, like in the Depression I was way back to just an ordinary, little clerk.

MUL: Did you ever change departments on the railroad?

MUR: Yes. I've been in maintenance-away, transportation and operating, track supervisor's office, time and material checker, and different jobs. I kept tabs of all the materials used on the whole division and helped to make inventories of materials. That was in the maintenance-away department.

MUL: Why did you go from job to job?

MUR: If a better job came up that paid more, I would bid on it and if I was old enough, why, then I got the job. It was to get more money. I would go to any department if a job paid more money. I worked as night transportation clerk up in the Cleveland general transportation office. I worked as car distributor at Hunnington, Indiana, and Hornell, New York. I was up in Cleveland as assistant car distributor and did different jobs up there. I also worked out of the western district office in Youngstown as a traveling man and transportation inspector in the western district. That was from Hornell to Chicago. Then I worked as the transportation inspector out of the Cleveland office again all over the railroad from Jersey City to Chicago.

MUL: What are the duties of the transportation inspector?

MUR: You are a car serviceman. You go out and check on people and see how they handle the cars through interchange, and all kinds of car service work: Car orders, handling, checking the different divisions, and finding the mistakes that were made and getting them corrected and things like that.

MUL: And that was for the entire railroad?

MUR: I had the district, then the railroad, then the district again, and then the railroad again. Then I went up to

inspector of operations of the vice-president's office in Cleveland for several years.

MUL: Did you work with the public?

MUR: No. I would meet the public; I would go to meetings; I would even attend the superintendent's association meetings in Chicago where they would have a convention and things like that. I would meet the public when an agent who was having trouble with charging . . . I might get with a demurrer man and we would go out and see the public or car handling with the public by car orders, see that the local people were taking care of the customers with cars and how they did it. Sometimes I would work with the local people, but it wasn't very much public. It was usually with your own and other railroads. I would check with other railroads in connection with interchange of cars and things like that.

MUL: You were kind of a troubleshooter?

MUR: Yes, that's right. But that's what decent inspectors are. They go out to find out if somebody had been mishandling cars and not using them right. We try to find out and show them how to do it right.

MUL: Do you remember any occasions where you just couldn't get a point off to the employee?

MUR: Very seldom. It wasn't too hard. Sometimes you get a little complicated subject or something. For instance, in handling cars, you have a car that belongs out on the west coast here and you would try to get a load for it to go in that direction, wouldn't you? It's common sense, see. But a lot of times it was pretty tough because if the guy wanted a car to load right now, and he had to have it and he didn't have much of a choice of a car--he had no car handy at all that belonged out there--he would want to take somebody else's car here in Youngstown. He would load it; it would go to the coast, and it would be away from home, in other words. There were different ways that you could explain it. You could load it out there--if it was a New York Central car--and you give him part of the haul; that was legitimate. The thing was to always try to keep the cars loaded to places where they could get loaded back quick, so they wouldn't have to haul them back empty. You tried to avoid as much empty movement as you could, to get sufficient use of the cars.

MUL: How about the Second World War and the period just before and during that period?

MUR: It was really rough. We had all kinds of government

regulations on cars. They had a rule out that you had to insist that everybody got sufficient car use. In other words, load the car to its capacity, either volume or weight. If the car could hold one hundred tons, they wanted it loaded at least ninety percent of capacity. Of course, if it was something light and you had a boxcar, for instance, if you loaded it right up to the gills, you still only had 30,000 pounds in the thing. As long as they loaded to cubical capacity, it was all right too. They were always trying to get the best use of cars, get the car loaded to its capacity, either cubical or weight capacity, so you wouldn't waste the cars.

MUL: Why was that?

MUR: I'll give you a good example of that. Say you had a boat with 10,000 tons of ore coming in at Cleveland at the docks. If you could get all 100 ton cars, you could load it in a lot less cars than if you had 50 ton cars, couldn't you?

MUL: True.

MUR: And that would be that many less trains you would have to haul, wouldn't it? Sufficient car use was one of the big things and that was my whole work on the railroad.

MUL: What was your position during the war?

MUR: Car distributor in Youngstown. A couple of years after war I was made transportation inspector on the district. I was working in the general manager's office. We had a general manager's office in Youngstown here.

MUL: The war years were kind of hectic for you.

MUR: The war years were terrific. I was distributing cars and I would need seventy boxcars for the division for the next day. I had orders for that many--it was what they figured on unloading--and I would only have ten in sight. So you could imagine what a chaotic condition it was. There may be a plant up here that needed fifteen cars to load some barrels coming off the line. And if he didn't, say he only had five cars, when it was coming off the line, he would just have to pile it someplace because there was no place to put it. When he got everything piled up, he would have to shut his lines down. A lot of times we would have to tell him that we couldn't get the fifteen and he would have his men lined up and working to load only the five cars and stop, rather than line up the place which would take them a week to get out of the mess.



MUL: Right after the war started did the president of the railroad or any officials make an announcement how you would have to carry on?

MUR: Yes. We had all kinds of rules and regulations coming out. They had the car efficiency. If you didn't load a car to capacity, the only exception would be if you had vital, especially military, stuff to load. Then you would get a permit to allow the customer to load it. Say he only had 20,000 pounds to put in the car; well, when you had a fifty ton car and it was the smallest that you had . . . It would have to be special stuff before they would even give you a permit to let them load it. Otherwise, you would have to arrange for a truck or something else, some other way to get it there.

MUL: After the war was over and a lot of fellows came back, how was the work on the railroad then?

MUR: The work was terrific. For about five years after the war, our diesels were used more than in the war; we were so busy.

MUL: Why was that?

MUR: Well, there was more business and everything going. It was terrific. Another thing the war changed in the car handling standpoint was it used to be that your roads going east were so much more than the loads going west that you would get a surplus of cars on the east end of the country; that was normal. But during the war a lot of that changed and you were tough on the west end. The AAR (American Auto Association) used to make regulations that eastern railroads would have to load a lot of empty cars west for the grain season to take care of the grain. They would raise Cain because if I had a car in Youngstown that belonged to the west railroad and I loaded it to New York or Maine . . . It got to the point sometimes where the railroad would get fined for it, for permitting such a load. In other words, if we had a Southern Pacific car here, don't load it east at all unless you could load it or send it up a hundred miles east to get a load to the coast or someplace out there. They had regulations like that all through the war and after.

MUL: When you worked in Youngstown, which office did you work in?

MUR: I worked in the superintendent's office, the track supervisor's office, the master carpenter's office, and the signal supervisor's office.

MUL: I mean the building itself. Which building did you work in?

MUR: When I was a yard clerk I was working at Brier Hill and

one time I worked in this general manager's office which used to be on . . . At the top of the bridge at Fifth Avenue there used to be the office building; then down at the foot where the cleaner is, there used to be an old freight house there and I worked in there.

MUL: Can you describe the terminal building during the heyday of the passenger service?

MUR: When I started to work, the terminal building had the general manager's office, superintendent's office, division engineer's office, and the traffic office. We had district traffic offices there and passenger traffic department there. We even had a joint railroad all the way down to the second floor. Track supervisors were out in another building that used to be out along the railroad.

MUL: What was the terminal itself like, the terminal that the passenger's used?

MUR: A lot of passenger service was in the room downstairs of the station. You've seen it but it is all locked up now.

MUL: That's in the back of the building?

MUR: Yes, facing the tracks. There was a little restaurant, a newsstand, and before they widened the street there used to be a one story offset. There was a pharmacy downstairs, a poolroom, barbershop, and a great, big men's room down in the basement. It was quite an elaborate outfit.

MUL: How many people used the passenger trains a day?

MUR: I wouldn't know that. There used to be eleven passenger trains between Youngstown and Cleveland.

MUL: Hundreds or thousands daily?

MUR: I would say maybe 150 to 200 a day. You had all kinds of train service. There were trains from New York to Chicago on the Erie alone. You had trains from Washington come from the B&O and P&LE in Erie to Cleveland, New York Central over to Toledo, and some to Michigan and Detroit.

MUL: What kind of competition existed between them? Was there any competition between the competing railroads?

MUR: Oh, yes. For Cleveland you had the Pennsylvania going to Cleveland; the B&O had a few. Pittsburgh had P&LE, the B&O, and Pennsylvania. But the P&LE were adjoining with the Erie. The P&LE used to come up through the Erie; those were joint trains. I would say of the eleven trains

that used to go each way, maybe five of them would be Pittsburgh/Cleveland trains. Then you had trains come into that station from Pittsburgh just to Youngstown and back, between Youngstown and Pittsburgh coming to our station. And you had Youngstown and Pittsburgh in the New York Central station down on Wilson Avenue and then, of course, they used to go from Pittsburgh to Buffalo on the New York Central. There were two or three trains there a day going to Buffalo.

MUL: Was there out and out competition between the . . .

MUR: Yes. You could get to Buffalo on the Erie by going to Jamestown and up. The three of them--B&O, Pennsylvania, and the Erie--had a joint station over in Akron; they were altogether in Akron.

MUL: Do you think the passengers preferred the fastest service?

MUR: Well, of course, to Chicago you couldn't beat the Erie. It was seven hours.

MUL: It was better than any other one?

MUR: Well, Pennsylvania had about the same I would imagine. The times were pretty close to the same. There wasn't too much competition from that angle except the guys trying to sell the tickets; the clerks and the ticket agents were trying to bring more business to the one railroad.

MUL: The Erie has a motto or a nickname called, "The Friendly Service Route." How did that start and what did it mean?

MUR: That was before my time. All the railroads had them. It was some years ago. They even had a woman inspector on the trains at one time, to check the trains and the stations and everything from a woman's standpoint, but that kind of petered out.

MUL: When was that?

MUR: After the war.

MUL: Was it the women's liberation?

MUR: No, some guy got the idea that that would be a good idea to have a woman inspector and she could check the stations and see if they were nice from a woman's standpoint. Of course, we never did get to the point of having attendance on the trains like the Santa Fe and those other railroads had.

- MUL: What kind of special trains and special occasions did the Erie run on passenger trains?
- MUR: They had excursions and things like that but . . .
- MUL: Can you remember any?
- MUR: They used to have baseball excursions to Cleveland quite often. The Erie veterans used to have a big picnic every year at Conneaut Lake and we had various trains coming in from the east and the west. Of course, some of them were combined and went over to the Bessemer at Shenango and ran the Bessemer right over into Conneaut Lake Park. We usually had about two or three trains over there. People from Chicago . . . they had sleepers on those trains. More than likely they would have a couple of cars come from Buffalo down to Jamestown and come by on the train and take it over to the Shenango. They had special things like that. Then for the Centennial, they had special trains which came around and showed a lot of historical stuff that belonged to the railroad. In fact they had a museum on the railroad.
- MUL: You mean for the Erie's Centennial celebration?
- MUR: Right.
- MUL: How do you think the Erie rated with other roads in the 1950's?
- MUR: In the 1950's the railroads were starting to go down. The passenger service was getting . . .
- MUL: How about the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's?
- MUR: I think around the 1920's was the passenger heyday. During the war, troop trains took over a lot of passenger trains and a lot of people traveled in connection with the war. There was an awful lot of passenger service during the Second World War and all kinds of special trains, troop trains, and what have you.
- MUL: Do you remember the president of the railroad during the 1930's and 1940's, I think a man named Robert Woodruff?
- MUR: Yes.
- MUL: Can you describe him?
- MUR: Tall, gray-haired fellow, who had been working quite awhile, one hundred and eight pounds or something like that, about six feet tall, a pretty good fellow.
- MUL: What did he do to help the railroad?

MUR: I didn't know him that well. I was just a clerk.

MUL: Well, his philosophies, did they filter down toward the men?

MUR: No. The president when I first started was Underwood.

MUL: How did those two differ in their operations?

MUR: Underwood was the old-fashioned beau of the woods type and McGruff was kind of like that too. Then after that you got kind of smooth guys, like P. W. Johnson. He was an operating man and started out as a clerk.

MUL: How do you think a fellow like Woodruff influenced the railroad as say, man for man, as far as the employees were concerned?

MUR: He had quite a bit of influence in a lot of things in his time. I personally didn't know him well enough to pass an opinion of him. He was a good operating man.

MUL: The Erie has been through quite a few bankruptcies and reorganizations . . .

MUR: I went through a bankruptcy before.

MUL: Do you know the reasons why?

MUR: Yes, the letdown after the Depression in the 1930's. The railroad hardly got through the Depression and had a reorganization after the Depression. Then the war brought it back out again. She really, really went to town after the war. 1927 was the first year that the Erie stock ever paid a dividend. The Erie had been manipulated by these old robber barons back in the 18th and 19th centuries. They really crooked the railroad. Then the first war brought it out. And then the Depression in the 1920's, they got hurt, but they got by that. It was in the 1930's, when I was there; they really went into reorganization. After that, after the war, they really went to town again.

MUL: If I mentioned a few names, I wondered if you could place them, like Cleveland and Mahoning Railroad?

MUR: Cleveland and Mahoning Valley. That's from Cleveland to Youngstown and over towards the state line.

MUL: In Pennsylvania?

MUR: Yes, the Erie Pennsylvania state line. That was about eighty miles long from Cleveland to Sharon, this side

of Sharon, the state line.

MUL: You mean this part of the Erie Railroad?

MUR: Yes. The Erie leased it for 99 years and then a few years ago they took it over.

MUL: So it's the Cleveland branch of the railroad now?

MUR: The Cleveland/Mahoning Valley is the backbone of the original Mahoning division which went from Cleveland to Pymatuning. Of course, we had the Niles to Lisbon branch, the canal branch, the Y&A branch, the Hazelton branch. It was 89 miles main line from Cleveland to Pymatuning; that's where the first and second district came together. There are a lot of little pieces of railroads; I would be able to pick them out.

MUL: How about the Atlantic and the Great Western?

MUR: The main line which was the Atlantic Great Western was up through Leavittsburg.

MUL: Leavittsburg in the west?

MUR: In the east. I don't know how far west . . . It would go west but I think it ended at Leavittsburg; I'm not sure. That was a long time ago. What other railroads do you have?

MUL: Those were a few that I had heard about but . . .

MUR: Those were way before my time, but are there any others?

MUL: None that I can think of.

MUR: I worked on the Marion division out in Huntington, Indiana and Marion yard, Ohio in Hammond. That used to be the old C&E, Chicago and Erie, even when I worked on it. We used to get a pink paycheck, a different paycheck than the green ones over in the Erie. The Erie leased it, so it was part of the Erie but the C&E owned it. Like the Mahoning division here, the Cleveland and Mahoning Valley owned that railroad but the Erie leased it.

MUL: What were the boundaries of the Erie?

MUR: Jersey City to Chicago. Of course, they had a branch up to Buffalo and to Rochester and a branch from Rochester over to Buffalo. Then you had a branch from Jamestown, a B&SW. Then you had branches down in Scranton, in Wyoming division and the Jefferson division and some of that was trackage rights over to the D&H. We had a big place down in Scranton too, before Lackawanna. Then you came to

Salamanca, which went to Dunkirk, New York. The B&SW crossed it going up to Jamestown. Then you cut a little further west on that Meadville division and the railroads separated. They made it that way on account of the grades. Then you got to what they call Clemens and Erie. Then you had the Franklin branch down at Franklin and North City out of Meadville. When you came to Pymatuning, the main line veered off to the right and the Mahoning division came down around through Sharpsville and Sharon. When you got to Sharon, you went to the New Castle branch. Then you came to Youngstown through Hubbard to Valley Street and over Valley Street to Himrod Junction. Then you went up through Youngstown and, of course, from Himrod Junction is what was called the Hazelton branch. Down at NK you had what they called the canal branch. That branch went all the way up to Girard down by the river.

MUL: All these branches were local switching branches?

MUR: Yes. They used them for industry and then for switching. Also we used to use our canal branch a lot for wide shipments. If you got them wider and bigger, then we could take them up through Youngstown, on account of the bridges. At Prohibition where the Y&A branch takes off and goes out . . . it's an industrial branch. You know all of these companies like Youngstown Steel Door and everything are running out there.

MUL: On the west side of Youngstown?

MUR: Yes. This canal branch went up to Girard and came back on to the main again. The main went through Brier Hill and all the way up to Leavittsburg, where it crossed the old second district which was the Meadville division. Of course, the Mahoning division was going up to Cleveland. Then you went west from the main line and you got over to Kent and Marion. At Marion you turned and went down to Dayton branch and then the other one went straight out to Chicago to Hammond, which was the end of the Erie part of it. Anyway, that's the general picture of the whole railroad.

MUL: Most of your years were put in in a clerk's position.

MUR: Clerical and clerical inspectors.

MUL: Can you describe the system of teletyping trains and sending?

MUR: Consense. Of course, when I started, there was even a few Morse Code lines that we had to send messages on the wire. Most of it where I worked was telephones and a lot of our consense we would send on telephone lines.

MUL: How did that whole system evolve?

MUR: It started out as a telegraph line at first. All your messages, train orders, were sent by Morse Code over telegraph wires. Then in a lot of places we got telephone systems and each division had a party line for the whole division. Of course, when you got to the second division, you had a separate line for each district. But the Lisbon branch didn't have a phone and the car distributor before me was an operator and he used to talk to the agents on the phone. Then they finally got permission to use the telephone for train orders instead of Morse Code. When we had the teletype, we used to send our consense.

MUL: What is a consense?

MUR: That's to tell what the train is. The man at Meadville phones ahead to the man at Kent and he starts telling that there is a train coming out of Meadville and what is in the train. You got a car of eggs for so-and-so, a car of meat for so-and-so, and five cars of ore for so-and-so. When the train gets to Kent he knows what is in it, and he knows how he is going to have to switch it. It is the same way coming to Brier Hill. Everybody had consense in the same way. If you had some cars to pick up at Brier Hill, Brier Hill would phone the dispatcher's office ahead so they had cars for this train to pick up. That is what we called the consense; they wouldn't give you car numbers; they would tell you what was on the train. It's to tell you what is coming.

MUL: So you started with Morse Code; then you went to telephones and then what system came after that?

MUR: The teletypes, through the main switching yards they had teletypes, but for a lot of small stuff you still have to send it by phone.

MUL: How did the teletype work?

MUR: It worked all right.

MUL: I mean, would you describe what was involved.

MUR: When the teletype came, it was a complete jest to the train, car initial, number, and everything.

MUL: Was it an automatic system, telephone system? What kind of system was it?

MUR: It was used for the main terminals; you didn't have teletypes in all of the little stations and yards. For a through



train they would start it out of New Jersey and they would have it typed up on the teletype machine. It would type and then come out on the yellow slip. That teletype would go to all of the yards that the train was going to come to. As each yard took cars off or added . . . it was revised where each one of the main terminals had another teletype. Finally they got teletype for all of the through trains. Of course, the small trains and the short locos you couldn't have teletypes at every yard so they still went on the telephone.

MUL: When did the teletype come into service?

MUR: After the war, about the 1950's I would say, the early fifties they started.

MUL: Have they been improved?

MUR: Yes. They were pretty good. Another thing about the consense with teletypes, all your car service people, like the car distributor's office and traffic department, all got copies of the consense. A customer could call up and say that he had a car and do we know where it is? The traffic men can look and see what train it was on, when it left, and when it should arrive.

MUL: Did you ever make any embarrassing mistakes on the railroad?

MUR: Oh, yes.

MUL: Do you remember any?

MUR: When I started, I remember distinctly walking up to a car and checking it. You always had to mark whether the car was empty or loaded. One car, for instance, was signed up on the track for the westbound cars out of Brier Hill. It was dark and both doors--it was a boxcar--were opened about a foot or foot and a half. I started to write the number down and I looked in the car and I saw the other door open and the lights of the steel mill. I marked it empty. It was a southern car to go down to Cincinnati on the track. So I marked it empty and came in and the kid had lined up the bills for the train to pick up or start out what we call the bill box, so we marked it up as an empty and there went the car. Of course, when the car went down to Cincinnati on the B&O and was delivered to the southern, they found that this car had a load of lumber in it. It wasn't loaded to the edge of the door and I thought it was an empty car.

MUL: Where was it destined?

MUR: Fortunately, it was destined, but nobody down there knew

what it was. It didn't belong on the southern anyway. The bill was up in Brier Hill yard. It was a car of lumber for someplace in Kentucky.

MUL: Did you ever get bawled out by any of your bosses?

MUR: I got a demerit mark on my record for it. I've had a couple like that where you make a mistake and I've had other embarrassing mistakes too, mostly in car handling.

MUL: Do you think railroading has become more efficient today than it was?

MUR: I would say no.

MUL: Why?

MUR: They haven't got the maintenance that they used to have, and it is what you call deficiency in getting cars moved. I don't think that they are any more efficient now than they ever were in the heyday. They got to be pretty good back in those days. They are trying to speed up the railroads now as I understand. They have these hotshot trains and everything but for anything in between there is a lot to be desired.

MUL: Was there a special train or a train that management liked to move along the tracks a lot faster than the others in the 1920's?

MUR: Yes, they always had special trains. You had regular freight trains and they were getting to the point where they were doing pretty good with them. How to block a freight in it and get all you could together, efficient set off and pick up, and certain trains that handle certain traffic out of certain places, yes, you had a lot of hotshot trains.

MUL: Do you remember any of the names of the trains?

MUR: Flying Saucer, Eastbound, Westbound --that was from New York to Chicago--Coxtan 77 and the 98's. They were based on certain departures out of Halum and arrivals to different main terminals, and deliveries to the parks of New York and the Boston markets were to be delivered to the B&H and B&M. This 98 had to connect with certain trains on the B&H and B&M. There were a lot of trains like that. We used to have ten or twelve what we called manifest trains.

MUL: Did you do a lot of train riding?

MUR: No, not too much.

MUL: Do you remember your first train ride?

MUR: No, I don't. I've ridden on freight trains and the locals. Mostly I rode locals to get out to the side places, but I very seldom rode on a fast freight except to get someplace. When I was an inspector, sometimes it was more convenient to get on a freight train than to wait for the passenger train if I wanted to get somewhere.

MUL: At times, did you have to spend a lot of time away from your family?

MUR: Oh, yes. Quite often I would go out on Sunday night or Monday morning and get back Friday night or Saturday night. I would go to different places all over the railroad.

MUL: Which jobs were those?

MUR: The inspector jobs.

MUL: And you would be gone for a week at a time?

MUR: The other jobs . . . I had a job as a car distributor and very seldom--maybe once a year--would I be overnight away from home. We might have a car distributors meeting for the whole railroad and we would have it in Jamestown. So I would go over out of Youngstown, get up in the morning, have the meetings, and be back the next night and in the office the next day. I would only be away from home one day.

MUL: We are getting closer to the position where the Erie may go out of business or may go out of existence as far as the Erie is concerned.

MUR: That's right. The name will go.

MUL: It is rather regretful at times.

MUR: Yes. I've seen railroads go. We used to have a railroad that connected with Hornell, the PS&N, the Pittsburgh, Shamot, and Northern. No more, I think Pennsylvania bought a few pieces of track in some places and Erie used a little piece of it at Hornell to do something, and I think we used a little at Friendship or someplace.

Then there was YO&W. That was a pretty good sized railroad, about 700 miles of railroad. That went completely out of business; they sold their engines and cars and everything else and went bankrupt. We used to have a PL&W around, Pittsburgh, Lisbon, and Western. We used to connect with

them. We used to have YNOR, Youngstown and Ohio River. It was a coal railroad and we used to connect Washingtonville with it. We used to get 50 cars of coal a day off the railroad down at Washingtonville, come up the branch through Niles and through Youngstown. We used to connect with the PL&W at Lisbon. I think that connection is still there. There was a piece of the New York Central Railroad where you could come up to Alliance to Braceville and Failax and that's all gone. We used to use that railroad from Braceville to Failax for our Kent to Cleveland trains.

MUL: Do you think people nowadays, boys in the railroad, are as involved in or say, in love with, the railroad as they were in the past?

MUR: I don't think they have the old spirit that they used to have years ago. Years ago, a railroad man had quite a job. He didn't make as much as a lot of your industrial jobs but in nine cases out of ten, he has a steady job year round whereas a bricklayer wouldn't be working in the winter, or a construction man. A railroader would keep on working. They had a lot of enthusiasm and morale. It is nothing like it used to be. Everybody is getting more sophisticated nowadays. You take your young people who are a lot more educated than in my day; they are losing a lot of these old-fashioned ideas.

MUL: Was it more like a family or was it . . .

MUR: Yes, the Erie was a very nice railroad to work for until about fifteen or twenty years ago. It was no great shakes; other railroads paid more. Pennsylvania was comparable in jobs until unions got in and they were a lot better than the Erie and the smaller railroads. Take the Bessemer Railroad which was owned by the United States Steel, they used to pay pretty good too, compared to other railroads.

MUL: Is there another railroad that you think sometime during your career you would have rather worked at?

MUR: No, I'm pretty well satisfied; the Erie was pretty good to me.

MUL: You have no regrets at all?

MUR: No. Well, I had the regrets of seeing it go to the rocks.

MUL: Well, as far as you're concerned, your job.

MUR: I hate to see anything like that go down the drain.

MUL: If you had to pick out one or two events during your life on the railroad that really impressed you or stuck out,

what would they be?

MUR: I can't offhand think of anything special. Just the promotions I had, that's it. It was quite a thrill going out on the road; of course, I had a little bit of traveling when I was car distributor; I had to go to meetings and things like that.

MUL: Do you think you would have been happy with, say, a factory job or an inside job?

MUR: I think I could have been happy on other lines of work. I don't think I would have been very good in sales or anything like that. There are a lot of operating and transportation jobs I think I would have liked. A lot of railroaders went to industry particularly from transportation and traffic.

MUL: If you could make any changes on the railroad when you were working, if you could institute anything now, what would it be?

MUR: I don't know. I can't think of anything. I always said that you should take what you get and make the best of it and use it and then when you have to change it, don't try to make a great big flip-flop of it, but work right into modernizing it, which they did somewhat when they started going to diesel. I was on the railroad when it was all steam and then went to the diesel rigs. That was quite a turnover.

MUL: In what ways?

MUR: Turning from steam to diesel.

MUL: How did it change things?

MUR: It was all the difference in the world. I imagine from the engineer and fireman's standpoint and the engine alone, it would be a lot nicer and neater to work in a diesel than it was in the steam engine, and a lot less work.

MUL: Well, I've kind of run out of questions; do you have anything else that you would like to add?

MUR: No, that's about it.

MUL: Are there any comments you would like to make on the future of the railroad?

MUR: I can see that we are going to have to have something along the lines of the railroad; I don't think we can do without them, but it may be a lot different in the concept as well.

It's a lot different than the concept of the old railroad now. The railroad now is a lot different than it was 50 years ago. Steam engines, diesel, all kinds of modern technologies of signaling, and electronics and everything to work on, it could be adapted and used like communications. There are all kinds of things that seem technological and those are the things that I think we have grown up with and changed a little. But the basics of any any kind of business of supply and demand are no different now than when Adam was a pup. We are still eating food and we still have to have food to take care of us the same as we always did and we are still human beings.

You can take any of your technology; now we have all kinds of stuff even in the home and on the railroad the same thing, like computers, for instance. When you make a mistake on a computer, all hell breaks loose to try and get it straightened out because it is hard to adapt to it. In the old days when you made a mistake entering something in the book, it was easy to find it, but now you have to practically go back through the whole process to get to that mistake and it is really a job. I went from changing in railroad from transportation to Cleveland. We used to do a lot of work with the car service. They used to have handbooks of car records; everything was in a book for all the different railroads. Then they changed them to the IBM cards and it was as different as night and day. In other words, when you were making hand records, you had the records of the car progressing as it went. But the IBM, you didn't have any typed records or anything. All you had was a heck of a bunch of cards or card reports. At the end of the month, when they put them into the machine and typed them up, then you had a nice page of your whole records just like you did with the old hand record. But all through the month, the old hand record was as fast as the people could book them and you would have your records up to a few days behind. Of course, you had the records there with the IBM, but you had to take a fistful of cards and go through a lot of cards and everything else to find each move of the car.

MUL: Which one do you like better?

MUR: I like the hand system for record; it was a lot better. But you can't beat the other record. It was easier to get a lot more mistakes with the complicated cards and everything. And when you had a mistake it was a devil to find it.

MUL: Can you describe some of the fellows that you worked with on the railroad?

MUR: I worked with a bunch of swell fellows. Normally you think of the bosses that you had. I had a lot of nice bosses in my recollections.

MUL: Did you have any nicknames for each other?

MUR: Yes. Of course, mine was Jerry. I worked with a guy for years and they used to call us the Dutch Cleanser Twins.

MUL: Why was that?

MUR: We worked together and we were about the same size. I worked with another fellow named Luco. They used to call us L&M, Luco and Murphy. On the railroad pretty near everybody had a nickname. The memories are pretty pleasant looking back.

MUL: Did you spend most of your working career in Youngstown?

MUR: Yes, I would say most of it.

MUL: What other towns did you work in?

MUR: Greenville for little over a year, year and a half maybe. I worked in Huntington, Indiana for about a year and a half. About six or eight months in Hornell, New York, then the rest of it was traveling, twelve or fourteen years of traveling. I worked out of Cleveland too, a couple of sections in Cleveland.

MUL: While you were traveling, which job did you have?

MUR: The inspector's job, transportation and operation inspector.

MUL: How were these little towns that you worked in different from a larger town like Cleveland, Chicago, or New York? Did you like them more?

MUR: I liked the small towns. I was born in a small town and I always liked a small town. Huntington was a nice town; Hornell wasn't bad; Greenville was a nice town. Cleveland is like a big town; it isn't like a city. We used to go out about 1:00 a.m. and there weren't anymore people on the sidewalks than there are in Hubbard. Cleveland was the kind of city in those days that was a big county seat, which it is, of course.

That's about the extent of my railroading. I worked in different departments and worked with all the other departments, of course. I worked with traffic, mail handling.

MUL: Anything else you would like to throw in?

MUR: That's about it.

MUL: Thank you.

MUR: You're welcome.