

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Railroading

Personal Experience

O.H. 864

ERNEST BRYANT

Interviewed

by

Lillian Eminhizer

on

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E: This is an interview with Ernest Bryant for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Railroads, by Lillian Eminhizer, on June 7, 1975, at 1103 Perkinswood.

Ernie, what railroad did you work for?

B: Baltimore & Ohio.

E: What did you do on the railroad?

B: I was a freight conductor.

E: Did you ever work passengers?

B: No.

E: Where did you work from? Were you out on the road?

B: Over the years I was. I worked from New Castle to Painesville and New Castle to Willard. I also worked at DeForest junction.

E: Did you work with Jerry Vennetti?

B: Yes.

E: Who else worked with you up through there?

B: In forty-six years down there, I worked with just about everybody.

E: When you worked up at the Painesville run, did you work in the pool?

B: A lake pool.

E: How many crews did they work in the lake pool?

B: In the summer they would have anywhere from ten to fifteen crews. We would haul ore down to New Castle or Youngstown and then come back empty, or bring coal back. That was their big business. The old ore docks went out in 1927 or 1928. That fixed the ore business. Then they ran the coal business until about 1940, then it ran out. Then they started sending coal to Lorain. Most of the transferred stuff from Painesville either goes to the N & W (Norfolk & Western) up there or the New York Central.

E: Was it the line that is basically used for transferring cars around then?

B: Yes. There are no more ore docks or coal docks there.

E: What did you do as a conductor? What was your job?

B: To start with, you had to check your train to see where you had the cars. If I had cars for West Farmington, I would set them off for there and give the bill to the agent. We had a sheet that listed where you set all your cars off. You would leave the bill with them, or you filled that sheet out if it went all the way through and turned in the bill.

E: Did you have anything to do with the making up of the train?

B: No, the yard crew did that. When you worked out of New Castle to Painesville, if you came in DeForest, you would maybe pick up fifteen or twenty cars off of number three and set off on number two, and pick up and fill out and go on about your business.

E: When you came into DeForest like that, you were working in a pool run. You still set the cars off in the yard?

B: Yes.

E: You did not have a yard crew do that?

B: No, we set them off and we picked up. If you had fifteen or twenty cars for different people, you did not classify those cars. The yard crew did that down there.

E: How long of a day did you have when you worked up through the lake?

B: I worked anywhere from eight hours to sixteen hours.

E: Sixteen was the most.

B: That was what you would work, sixteen hours.

E: Did you ever have to be deadheaded in?

B: Oh, yes. Sure.

E: What did they do when they deadheaded you?

B: They would send another crew out to relieve you. Then you were relieved and you deadheaded in the caboose on into the terminal.

E: Did you wait in a siding or what? How did they know?

- B: You had to notify them two hours before you want on the sixteen hours. Then they would tell you what to do; whether to go inside in East Claridon or Middlefield and wait for a relief.
- E: Now that is a single track to Painesville.
- B: Yes.
- E: How did they work that, when they have got trains going both ways?
- B: One way is your train is superior to the other. In other words, they had a number coming out of Painesville. It used to be seventy, seventy-one, seventy-four, and seventy-six and like that. Going west, you were extra. Well, you would run the train orders. Those trains coming east were superior to the trains going west, so you had to get a train order. If I was called out of Painesville at seven o'clock and you were called out of New Castle when you got to Ohio junction over there in Youngstown, why, they would give you a train order where to meet me. Then, if I stubbed my toe and fell down, they would change that order when I got to DeForest.
- E: I take it you never stubbed your toe.
- B: They changed the orders all the time. That was why they had these operators. They used to have a telegraph at Ohio junction, Avon, DeForest junction, State Road, West Farmington, Middlefield, Burton, East Claridon. Maybe you would have trouble. Those big ore trains at that time and hot boxes and everything else, they set cars off at.
- E: What is a hot box?
- B: It would burn the generator off and cause a wreck. They set them off. They had a car inspector. He would come along on one of those little motor cars. He would repack it, and the next day you would pick it up. Somebody would.
- E: How would you know when you had a hot box?
- B: You can either smell them or see the smoke. They are packed with an oily waste, and you can smell them. You can also see the smoke. If they get hot enough, they catch on fire. Then you will not have too much trouble seeing it, especially at night.
- E: You said you worked the Lorain run?
- B: I have, yes.
- E: Where did you work out of when you worked the Lorain?

- B: They went from New Castle to Lorain. They had a Lorain pool, a B & O pool, and a lake pool--that was at Painesville. Then they had maybe fifteen buck cars, and they went everywhere.
- E: What is a buck car?
- B: They would have maybe ten of them. They would send them either to Painesville, Cleveland, Willard, or Holloway, anywhere on the division. With lake pool--I worked Painesville--they would send me on a trip away from home, and then they had to send me back to Painesville. It was the same with the B & O pool or the Lorain pool. These buck cars, they would send them from Willard to Holloway and back to Cleveland. You might be gone a month from home.
- E: A buck car, though, is a crew?
- B: Yes. There are five men on the crew.
- E: It has nothing to do with a railroad car except that it is a crew that works on the railroad?
- B: Yes, and you are on the caboose and everything.
- E: Were you assigned a caboose?
- B: Yes.
- E: Every crew had their own caboose?
- B: Yes.
- E: What is a caboose like on the inside? Is it all fixed up, or is it pretty rough?
- B: It was then, but it is not now.
- E: They have it pretty soft.
- B: Yes. They have refrigerators and oil stoves and all that stuff. We used to carry water or milk cans to wash in and stuff. We had an ice box and had to carry ice. Now they have some electric equipment on it.
- E: What did you have to heat then, a potbelly stove?
- B: Yes.

E: Is that what you cooked on, too?

B: Yes, when they were not turned over. Did you ever ride a caboose behind one hundred cars? Try it some time, and then try to cook.

E: Tell me about it. How did you keep your pans from coming off the stove?

B: We used to put a nail up in the ceiling and a wire on it. It would come down and hook through the bail. If you would hit something, she would go this way and back. Then you would set them back on the stove.

E: Just clear the stove.

B: Yes.

E: What about the coffee? I heard the coffee was really something.

B: I always had the coffee pot on there. An old conductor I used to work for up there said, "The more dust on it, the better the coffee."

E: Who made the coffee? You?

B: Anybody. Generally the flagman made the coffee. That was me. The conductor had a flagman and a head man.

E: The flagman rode at the rear.

B: Yes. He went back to stop anybody from running into you. The head brakeman rode on the engine. If you had two or three cars set off to pick up, he did it. The conductor did not have to walk clear over there.

E: When you had cars that you were setting off, were they near the caboose, or near the engine?

B: Near the engine, if your train was made up right.

E: Then as you added cars, you added them near the caboose.

B: Yes. Say if you had five cars for Chardon and five for DeForest. If you picked up some through cars, then you would hold onto ten cars and go in and pick them up. That way, you keep all your New castle cars together and your set offs at the head end.

E: I have heard of drawbars and things like this. What is a drawbar?

B: It is in between the cars.

E: Is that the coupler?

B: Yes, that is the coupler.

E: When you worked out on the road like that, how many days would you be gone before you got back home? Were you around the main line? From New Castle to Willard?

B: To Willard. You would go over one day and come back the next. You are supposed to get eight hours rest. So it was eight going over and eight for rest and then eight for back if they had a train for you. If they did not have a train, you waited until you got one. You were not gone over three days in a round trip. By the time they called you, you would be back home.

E: Where did you stay in Willard? In the boxcars?

B: At the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association). They had a railroad YMCA.

E: When you went to Lorain and when you were working in Painesville, did you stay in the caboose?

B: I stayed in the caboose.

E: Some of the men, I think, had rooms in town. Did they?

B: Yes. Part of that time, I lived in there. When I first went up there, I stayed in the caboose. After I moved down here, when I worked the local, I stayed in the caboose up there. Now Earl Green had a room up there when he was engineer on the local.

E: Who is Earl Green?

B: He was older than Jean, who was on the road top. I do not know what year he did hire down there.

E: When did you hire up?

B: In the spring of 1920, at New Castle.

E: Oh, you hired out at New Castle?

B: Yes.

E: Were you from New Castle?

B: No. I am from Charlestown, West Virginia.

E: How did you happen to get up here on the B & O?

B: I do not know, to tell you the truth.

E: What was railroading like when you first hired out? How did it change?

B: The old steam engine we would haul out to Painesville and that was about thirty-five or forty cars. Now they bring one hundred or one hundred and fifty out of there. When we would come out of Painesville, you would have maybe two steam engines on the head end coming up to Chardon, and two on the back end. When you got to Chardon, they cut the two pushers off and took them back to Painesville. We would go on east with a train of ore.

E: You worked on the steam engines, did you not?

B: Yes.

E: What type of engines did they run up to Lake Erie from down here?

B: Most of them were the 4000's. Later we got to the 6000's. That was a five-drive engine. Later on we got the Maui, which was an eight-drive on the side.

E: On the eight-drive, how many of those were big wheels?

B: Four here and four here.

E: Four in the front and four in the back.

B: Yes, on each side.

E: Did you ever have any interesting experiences when you were out on the road? You worked with Jay Brooks?

B: Yes.

E: What did Jay Brooks do on the railroad?

B: He was a conductor. I broke for him. He was older than me.



E: Oh, he was older than you.

B: Yes. I think he started in 1912.

E: He died just recently.

B: Yes.

E: He was quite a guy. He was a pretty good cook, too, was he not, in the caboose?

B: Yes, he was.

E: Is he the one who used to make the knee pads that I used to hear about? Those big pancakes that were about a half an inch thick?

B: No, I do not remember that.

E: When you cooked in the caboose, what did you cook?

B: Anything we got a hold of.

E: Did anybody have any specialties?

B: No, I do not think so. Generally, it was up to them; whatever they put in your basket, that was what you cooked.

E: Oh, you mean your wives?

B: Yes. You carried a basket with stuff.

E: The other day they were talking about making mulligans and things like that on the caboose. I just wondered.

B: They made a mulligan stew. Anything you could find was put in it and was cooked.

E: You worked the Holloway branch? What was that?

B: If you went down to New Castle, you went to Warwick and turned off and went south to Holloway on the single track. If you came out of Willard, you came east to Warwick and then took the branch line there.

E: Now, where is Holloway?

- B: I have a timetable.
- E: We are looking at this map on the timetable for the Baltimore and Ohio. Timetable number seventy-nine. It shows New castle and the east just over the Pennsylvania line, Willard to the west, which is just south of Sandusky; it shows the double track areas, and it also shows where Warwick is. It is about midway between slightly west of Akron junction where they turn south to go down to Holloway. I see some double track and some single track down through there now. How did they work that, because I believe the train orders were different for single and double tracks?
- B: When you are on double tracks, you do not get train orders. You get them on the singles. Now here these are all single tracks.
- E: The Painesville run. Is that called the Cleveland run from Cleveland to Akron?
- B: Yes.
- E: You say that you run by signals on your double track. On the single track, they have signals, do they not?
- B: Just at the station. If they have a train order for you, they would throw the signal red. You did not have to stop. If there was the old thirty-one order, then you had to sign for it.
- E: How did you know what kind of order they were going to give you?
- B: They would hold the red dot. If they were on a caution, they would hand you a nineteen order.
- E: How would they hand an order to a moving train?
- B: There was a cane made into a hoop. They held it up there, and then you hooked your arm on. These orders were tacked to it.
- E: Were they tied on string between the hoop or something?
- B: Yes. Later on they had those kind that were three-cornered with just a string in there. You just took the string. When it first started, it was a hoop and you took your order on and threw the hoop back on the ground. They would pick it up when they got around to it.
- E: Could you go a good distance before you got around to pitching that hoop off?
- B: All it was was your orders just clipped to the side. You could pull them off pretty quick.

With a thirty-one order you had to stop the train and sign for it. Later on they changed that. They handed a thirty-one order to you. The thirty-one order was on a yellow form. I have some around here, but I do not know where they went. I wish I had them.

E: I have seen a lot of those yellow forms. That was the nineteen.

B: No, that was the thirty-one. Green was the nineteen.

E: Why, would there be a difference in those two orders?

B: One was a helping order and the other one was a restrictive order. If they made a meet order for somewhere, they would give you a thirty-one order. If you went up there and just went into Painesville, they would put in on a nineteen order. Then you could ride to Painesville if you were not meeting anybody.

E: In other words, if you were going to meet somebody and had to go into the siding, then they would give you a thirty-one?

B: Yes.

E: Were the sidings different lengths, or were they always the same length?

B: They were different.

E: Now, did you know which siding to go into?

B: If they said Middlefield, you went into Middlefield.

E: Oh, the orders told you.

B: Yes. At Middlefield or East Claridon. They had a siding at East Claridon, Middlefield, and Chardon. They used to have a lot of trains up there at one time.

E: What did they do with the men in the winter when the ore docks were down?

B: Some of them came to Youngstown to work. They would come from DeForest. They were just scattered all over. That was how I got down here. I could not hold a job up there. I came to DeForest and I stayed.

E: What did you do during the Depression? Were you working or were you off?

B: I worked. Here is the way they used to schedule the trains.

- E: Oh, yes (looking at a paper), east and west trains and a regular time schedule, just like a passenger train. How was the diesel different from the steam engine? You did work the diesels?
- B: Yes. We got the diesels in 1948. I worked until 1966. They were a lot cleaner and easier to work. All the firemen and I would sit there and look out the window to look for signals before you would go down shoveling.
- E: I thought they had stokers on some of those trains.
- B: They did on road engines, but the yard engines did not have any stokers. No shovel.
- E: How did they keep those steam engines around the yard? They could not shut them down. What did they do with them?
- B: They had men to watch them there. Engines watchers.
- E: Is that what they called them, engine watchers?
- B: Yes. They were under the hostler. They had one hostler and two or three helpers. The helpers kept water in the boilers.
- E: What is a hostler?
- B: He is the one who takes it to the ash pit. They clean the fire and put coal on the engine and water in the tank. Then they put it on what they call a ready track. She would be ready to go out again. If she does not go out for eight hours, they have to have somebody there that puts coal and water in it, or it will blow up. With the old diesel, they just let it run there for twenty-four hours a day. They keep them from freezing up. With the old steamer, they had to keep so much steam on there. If that thing froze up, why, you had a job on your hand. Over at the Republic where I worked, we would bring the diesels out there and lock the door and just let them run for forty-eight hours. I have seen them sit there from a Friday night until a Monday morning, just idling.
- E: They run on oil, do they not?
- B: Yes.
- E: When they did away with the steam, they did not have to have a coal car that ran behind it.
- B: No. They even tore the coal temple down there. There is no coal temple and water tanks.

E: When did they dig those up?

B: I think about 1955 or 1956 they took the old coal temples out.

E: I have heard about the mallies. Were they a form of a diesel, or were they a steam?

B: No, they were steam.

E: You mentioned Lovejoy. Was he an older man than you?

B: Yes.

E: Is he still alive?

B: No.

E: Did you brake for him?

B: Yes, I did.

E: Did you go through any wrecks or anything like that with a train?

B: Yes, I have been in a lot of wrecks. There have been a lot of snowstorms where we got stuck, too.

E: What did you do when you got stuck in a snowstorm?

B: We sat there until a snowplow came along and plowed us out. One time we were going west up there and we got stuck in the snow. They told us to get off and we had to walk two miles. They could not get another engine down to get us. We sat there until the next day. Then they brought this snowplow up with just two engines on it, to get it through the snow.

E: Where was this?

B: Near Painesville. They have cuts maybe thirty feet deep. When the snow blows across, it fills them up. The old engine runs into it, and it is just like running into a brick wall. You do not think snow will pack, but it will. You cannot go ten miles per hour. An inch of snow on that rail will stop it in one hundred yards.

E: I never thought about snow on the rails. I just always thought that the train would move it off.

- B: That is why I say it is different in the winters now than it was then. When they started to get a big snow in Painesville, they called a snowplow. They put two engines in this snowplow, head up. It was a car, and you rode in the car. You would come to DeForest, turn around in the Y, and go back. They kept the railroad open. If they left it for maybe twenty-four hours, all those cuts would be full of snow, and it would take a week to clean them out.
- E: Did they push the snow off, or did they blow it off?
- B: They pushed it off. Now, the Erie down here year-round had a snowplow on the front of their locomotive. They were not running in the hills like when we were going to Painesville.
- E: Where are your big hills up that way?
- B: You start at Farmington and it is upgraded all the way to Middlefield. They said that it was a ninety foot drop to the mile from Chardon to Painesville. I forgot what it was between Farmington and Middlefield.
- E: I thought in the winter the trains carried plows in front of them. The B & O never did.
- B: They did not have them, no. They had a car and there was a snowplow on the front of this car. The steel car was heavy. It had to be heavy because they put two steam engines behind it, shoving it.
- E: I have heard they never put a caboose in the middle of a train, not even to drag one or to deadhead it.
- B: No they did not.
- E: Because they were made rather light?
- B: Yes, there is not enough weight on them. Those pushers coming out of Painesville had two engines put on them behind the caboose. Sometimes when you went around a curve, they were pushing so hard they would raise it right off the track and set it down in the ground when they straightened it out. Then they got to putting one engine on the back of the caboose and one ahead, or two ahead. If they had three, they would put two ahead of it.
- E: When they get pusher help, they have to undo the caboose and run it behind then.
- E: When you go into Chardon, one engine is cut off by your caboose and the other two engines head in on what they called number nine. They put the caboose on and away you

go.

E: How far would they take you up there near Chardon? Was it all the way to Middlefield?

B: They took you from Painesville to Chardon; that was eleven miles up a hill.

E: When you were going north, where did you have pusher help?

B: From this side of Farmington, there at Fayo's. They had a little run off in there. They came down and headed in with the pusher and killed them off.

E: When was this?

B: It was in the 1930's, I guess. Two great big engines came down and they backed in this spur here. That was the main track. They had a spur like this. They backed in here and they did not throw the switch. This road man came out of the train hollering. He had to run in and knock the engine off to the corn field, which was an awful mess.

We were going to a dinner down at the YMCA that night. President White was supposed to be out speaker of the Baltimore & Ohio. Everybody thought he was going to raise the devil about it, but he never mentioned it. He never mentioned the wreck or anything.

E: Did you ever get questioned on the things the crew did? The conductor was over the train. Did you ever get called in to explain?

B: Sure, I have been called in to explain and give statements.

E: Who would you give the statement to?

B: Generally, the trainmaster.

E: Would he come to the area?

B: Yes.

E: He would come here. Who was the trainmaster at that time?

B: J.B. Dorsey.

E: Where was he based? Akron?

B: At that time, it was New Castle.

E: Did you work with Vern Kelly?

B: Yes.

E: What did he do on the railroad?

B: Engineer.

E: You worked the same run. Which run was this?

B: When I worked with Kelly, he was at Painesville. There were engine crews and train crews. Maybe this time you would be my engineer and I would be your conductor. The next time, he might be my engineer. You did not have the same engine crew every day. Down here at the yard crew, you do have the same engine crew every day.

E: That seems interesting. When they would bring the train in, you would have the same number of crews rotating, right?

B: Maybe.

E: How could they get more engine crews?

B: If they would have a half of a dozen engines down there and they wanted them over at Willard, they would call up engine crews for each one of them engines to take them there. All they would have on it would be a flagman. If they stopped to take water, he would go back to flag. They would not have a conductor.

E: Was this just true of the steam engines, or do they have to have an engineer on every one of those diesels?

B: They had to have it on the steam, but they do not on the diesels. You just get a little more if you are running more units--the engineer does. I think after it goes either two or three diesels, why, the rate jumps up for running them.

E: On the steam engines, you had to have a crew on each one.

B: That is right.

E: If you had three steam engines, did you have to have three flagmen, too?

B: No.

E: One engineer and fireman for each?



B: Yes.

E: I see how you get rotated around, then. Were there ever trains held up because they did not have enough crew members? Did they have to wait for the resting time to run out?

B: Sure.

E: Did you ever work the Detroit Steel?

B: Yes.

E: That was a road job, was it not?

B: Yes. We came out of New Castle and picked up the steel at Hazelton and DeForest. Then, if they did not have their tonnage, why, they would pick up anything that Akron had. Akron did not have any steel mills.

E: Was that a regular run? B & O had a few freight runs that were regular that went every day?

B: Yes.

E: They had other trains in between. What did they call them?

B: The regular trains had a number on them, like a passenger train. The others were just B & O pool turns. You worked first-in, first-out. If you got in the terminal first, you went out first. These regular runs were just like the passenger trains.

E: When did you retire?

B: 1966.

E: How many years did you have in at the B & O?

B: I had forty-six and a half.

E: Did you ever see anybody get fired off the railroad? Were you ever there when they fired anybody?

B: Yes, a few of them got fired, buy I never actually saw it. They just disappeared. If they were bad enough, they had the hearing. They did not show up anymore.

E: What would happen if you were out on the road and had an accident? Would they have a

hearing on that? Let's take an accident that you were involved in. Name one.

B: I can tell you an accident down there that a brakeman got killed, if you want that kind of stuff.

E: Go ahead.

B: I do not know what year it was. It was back in the 1930's though. We brought three of those acid trains over from the Republic and went down number nine to the Republic; that was where they dumped. George Fletcher was yard manager. He told us to go over and make a drop at nine. When we made this drop, this old steam engine could not get away from the cars far enough for me to throw the switch. It hit the engine. The kid who was riding the cars went right down between the two of them. When I went around there and looked, a pair of wheels were sitting right there on his chest. His glasses were not even off of him, but he was laying across the rail. This car could not go back when it hit. It could only move about six inches. It stopped right there, but it was on the wrong side of him. It was on his heart side.

It was snowing. It was the night before Thanksgiving. I will never forget it. I was there until four o'clock in the morning. I called the ambulance. They came down. They could not find DeForest and went back. Joe Mahoning was the fireman and Frank Baby was the engineer. Finally, Joe went back over and called them again. Somebody had to stay with the fellow. They finally got down there about four o'clock in the morning. We carried him across there and put him in the ambulance. The bad job was that we had to tell his wife.

E: Was he a man with a great number of years?

B: He had about ten or twelve years at that time.

E: Did they have more accidents with young fellows just starting out?

B: We decided that the young men were a little more agile and more careful. It seems that the older employees had a tendency to be less agile and a little bit more careless.

E: When there was an investigation into an accident like that, what would occur? You said you had to file reports and all this other stuff, no doubt.

B: Yes, you had to turn in your own report. Then they looked that over. If they were not satisfied, they would have you all in the next day and take a statement off of each one to see how they corresponded.

E: Did the police or anything ever become involved, or was this strictly within the railroad?

- B: We never called the police. We would call the B & O doctor; he would come down. He would either pronounce you dead, or send you to the hospital.
- E: Like with this old chap here who got caught under the wheel. You did not have to wait for the doctor to come for that. You just sent him to the hospital.
- B: No, I called the doctor and told him. He said to send him to the morgue and that he would see him there.
- E: But he did go and check.
- B: Yes.
- E: He always went and checked, even if it was the body.
- B: That is right.
- E: Did the B & O have any law suits from families? Did you get any of these?
- B: I never was in court for the B & O. We had accidents, alright. It just happened that nobody sued. I never was in court.
- E: Did the B & O make payments to the families years ago when there was an accident?
- B: They made settlements with people. Whatever that settlement called for, they would do.
- E: I mean for an employee in the yard or whatever. The railroad always made some type of settlement with the family.
- B: Some of them got a lifetime job. This Cunningham we were talking about got a lifetime job with the B & O and got so much of a settlement. He lost his legs down there, and he worked in the office until he retired.
- E: Now, if a fellow got killed, there was a cash settlement with the family?
- B: She got so much money. I do not remember.
- E: I just wondered how that would work. Even years ago, they did this.
- B: If it was just a woman, she would not get as much as if she had two children or one child. That was all taken into consideration.
- E: They did not have the unions back years ago, did they?

- B: They had them ever since I worked there.
- E: Going back to this Holloway run, how was it different from the Painesville run or the Lorain run?
- B: I do not know how you consider them different. There were no hills like there were on the Painesville run, where they used a pusher or anything like that. You would get a train of coal and come right out of Holloway with it. They did not haul any ore up there, but they hauled coal. That was a coal road. They did not have any pushers anywhere when I was down there.
- E: Where did they pick up that coal, from another railroad?
- B: It came up from West Virginia into Holloway, on the B & O on the Wheeling division.
- E: And Holloway was a terminal then.
- B: They had a yard there. One outfit would bring it in, and the other one would take it out from there. When they came out of Pittsburgh, they would bring the stuff into New Castle and the Akron division crew would take in to Willard and the Chicago division would take it on to Chicago. You only had certain districts you could work in.
- E: Did you ever get cars that were sent the wrong direction?
- B: I guess so.
- E: How did they know where the cars were going? Today, they have computers to read these things.
- B: They did not then.
- E: Who did the reading of the orders on these cars so that you knew where they were going? Did they tack orders?
- B: They gave you a bill with the number of the car and everything on it out of Painesville. They gave you a wheel report, and they have a number of the station where it would be set off.
- E: The number on the car identified the car.
- B: Yes.
- E: On your long wheel sheet, you had a space for every car?

- B: Yes.
- E: Every car was listed?
- B: And numbered.
- E: In the order that they appeared in the train?
- B: Yes.
- E: George Fletcher, what do you remember about him?
- B: He was on a car at Hazelton the first time I met him. A fellow by the name of Kline was the terminal trainmaster there. He brought him out there and gave him a job. He worked there as a clerk. He came to DeForest as a clerk, and he worked there for several years. Then he got to be yardmaster there. During the Depression, he was laid off for about a year or so; then he came back and worked for a while. Then he got to be train master. He went to Akron. Then he retired.
- E: What about hobos riding the trains? Do you remember anything about hobos?
- B: During the Depression you had a lot of them. Nobody bothered them; that is only the police. When you would come into Willard, you would have a trainload of them. You had to make a safety stop because you crossed the Pennsylvania and the New York Central there. The cops would go along and chase off what they saw. Then as soon as they turned back and walked down the track, before the train started going too fast, they would get right back on again.
- E: Did they ever create any disturbances?
- B: No, I never knew of them. The only thing that ever got robbed was the whiskey car during dry time. They had a couple of carloads of Canadian whiskey. They put it right ahead of the caboose, and then they would have a B & O patrolman in there to watch the car. Ever time you stopped, he would go out and go around and watch it. Somebody cut a hole in the roof between Youngstown and DeForest one night. Thirty-eight cases of whiskey disappeared from the time it left DeForest until it got to Youngstown. You know, that does not take too long, even with an old freight train. How they ever did that without him seeing, I do not know.
- E: They must have wanted whiskey awfully bad.
- B: They put over a carload at Hazelton one time. The Erie sent it over. I was on the Cleveland run. I came in there. I kicked something when I was walking back in there. I

was riding the cars. I ran into something. I picked it up and put it up on the back of the tank of the engine. Everybody was up in an uproar. I did not know what was going on. We went on New Castle. The next morning they had robbed the whole car-load of whiskey there. This sack I had picked up had twelve packs of whiskey in it. Somebody got close to them and they dropped it and took off. That was all there was to it.

E: Did the railroad ever have any trouble with men drinking on the job?

B: I do not think so. It was not enough to do any damage or anything, but they do not want you to drink on duty. They overlook a lot, too.

E: As you look back on the railroad, if you had it to do over again, what would you change?

B: I do not think I would change anything.

E: You like it the way it was?

B: I liked it the way it was.

E: Most of the old railroad men hated to see the diesel come. They wanted the steam engine to stay. You were glad to see it come.

B: They were cleaner to work around. They did not need so many cinders.

E: Did you ever get a cinder in your eye?

B: A thousand times.

E: Who took care of the watches for the diesel men around here?

B: Votro and Myers.

E: Thank you.

End of Interview