

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Railroading Project

Railroad Experiences

O. H. 594

DONALD SAAM

Interviewed

by

Lillian Eminhizer

on

August 16, 1982

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: DONALD SAAM

INTERVIEWER: Lillian Eminhizer

SUBJECT: Conductor, yardmaster, B & O Railroad

DATE: August 16, 1982

E: This is an interview with Don Saam at his home at 20 Poplar Avenue in Niles, Ohio, on August 16, 1982. Lillian Eminhizer is the interviewer, and this is for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program.

You worked for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad?

S: Yes, that is right.

E: What was your job?

S: I was brakeman when I started. Then I got promoted in 1928 to a conductor. I was working at Dover, Ohio at that time. I was on a mine run down through Tippecanoe, Stillwater, and Uhrichsville around the sewer pipe works. We worked those jobs all at night. When I got old enough to work daylight, I got on a daylight job and worked around Uhrichsville. We used to have anywhere from thirty to forty or fifty cars out of Uhrichsville of sewer pipe and different things there from those sewer pipe works.

E: Where is Uhrichsville?

S: Uhrichsville is in Tuscarawas County. It is down east of New Philadelphia. It is down there.

E: Sort of west of Pittsburgh?

S: Yes, oh, yes. It is on the Pan Handle Railroad.

E: Pan Handle?

S: Yes. That runs from Pittsburgh to Pitcairn on the Pennsylvania. They go right through Uhrichsville and Dennison. They used to have a big shop in Dennison. Then they quit that there. All of those guys were moved someplace else or laid off. That was the end of that. They took all of the shops to Pitcairn. We had shops in New Castle. They moved them all out of there and they are in Cumberland and Willard.

At that time we had all steam engines when I started there. Then we got those diesels. I think it was around about 1960 or something like that. At that time they just used the diesels at first on the passenger trains. They had some beautiful steam engines on the B & O there that they named after the president.

In 1929 during the Depression, we were all cut off from most of the jobs. So I came to DeForest. Then I had to go to Painesville, and I worked out of there for a while on the lake branch; that was what that was called. Then from there I went back to DeForest. That was between Painesville on the lake branch to New Castle. In 1922 I was back here in DeForest. Then I was yardmaster for about two years. Gamble and I were both yardmasters there while the war was on. When the war ended, I quit the yardmaster job and went back to running the crew.

After that I got working these jobs around here. We used to have a lot of jobs around here. We used to have around twenty-four jobs around here. Now we only have about ten or eleven; that is all they have. Of course, it is just one of those things. The railroads have to move these cars into these places where they are shipped to--these factories. Then they have to unload that car. With a truck they could back that right in there and unload it and put it right where they wanted it.

Automobiles and trucks are what caused all of this with the railroads because that was what cut the biggest part off. About the only things they can't haul are iron ore and coal and things like that for a long distance, like they haul it from West Virginia to the lakes here. That was where we used to have all of our business.

I used to be on that Butler Run out of DeForest here at night. We would go to Butler. I think Gene was on that for a long time if I am not mistaken.

E: Yes, my father-in-law. He worked the Butler Run.

S: Yes, and he was on that for a long time. We used to haul all that Bessemer coal from Butler into DeForest.

E: Yes.

S: They had the coke plant over there. They used all of that Bessemer-Lake Erie slag coal for making coke. All of that-- coke plants and everything--you take the biggest part of them around Youngstown and they are gone. We have this one going up here all right. It is still working, but at the same time you can never tell. I think that these blast furnaces and things are going to be out one of these days because they are all going to electroids. That is what they are going to-- electric furnaces, and that is what they are doing now. That is how it is at Copperweld; they are always working, and they are making all of that good steel.

That is trouble again because the trucks go in there and pull that stuff out of there and take it right to the company where they want to send it.

E: Yes, but the railroads had their loading docks right up against . . .

S: They have their loading docks right there. It takes about thirty-five to forty drivers to a truck to haul a train of steel or coal to its destination where it only takes five men when it starts out; then they change crews at each terminal. When I started up here at DeForest--this is no kidding--I was paid \$5.48 a day for eight hours. That was when I switched in the mill there.

E: In the 1920's?

S: 1929.

E: 1929?

S: Yes. Then we got a raise and went to \$6.07. Then after that I got to running the crew. Of course, that paid me \$7 something. I forget what it was anymore. Anyhow, that was what it was. When we first started there in the mill, we used to work about four or five hours until Saturday. We were lucky to be there over five hours after we got the warehouses spotted and everything. But then they cut that all out. We had to put in our full eight hours because the business had gotten a little better and they wanted to stay there and do the work. You can't blame them. They were paying us. We had eight hour pay regardless whether we worked five hours or six hours.

E: You got the same?

S: That is right. We got eight hours pay regardless, and you had the same amount of men on the crew. When I went out to New Castle after my legs went bad, I worked on a freight train from New Castle to Willard which was 148 miles. That was how we got paid, by mileage. If you made that in five hours, you got paid the full amount, 148 miles. Now with passenger . . .

That was in freight service. On some of those fast runs you made that run in about five hours.

E: This was with diesel? That was what you would have made in five hours?

S: That is right; that is right. You would have done the same thing with a steam engine if you had one of those fast trains. Those engines would go just about as fast as a diesel would. They wouldn't have such big trains. But with the diesel after they got the diesels they had three units on there, and they handled more cars that way. They went faster. I went as fast as eighty-eight miles per hour down through Hartford going to Willard.

E: You didn't tear the track up?

S: No, no, not that time. That is another thing. At that time they had fifty to sixty pound rail all over the railroad. Then they went from there to eighty pound. Now it is 100 to 120 pound, and that is continuous rails. There they are put together and welded. There are no splices in that. There aren't any angle irons or bolts or anything; that is all continuous rail. That is what it is right from Niles junction into Ravenna. That is all continuous rail there.

E: When did they start putting continuous rail down?

S: They put that in there around 1952 or 1953. I imagine that was when it was.

E: It has been down for quite a while.

S: Yes. It has been down. When they started that, they put it clear through there. The first of it was on this division was from Niles junction up through Newton Falls and to, I think, Ravenna.

E: Yes.

S: Yes, that was where it was. That was the continuous rail. On these other places wherever they had this lighter rail, why, lots of times you had to go slower anywhere from twenty-five to fifty miles per hour. The speed limit on your division is in the timetable.

E: How do you get hour slow orders?

S: They are given to you. Whenever there is any trouble on the rail, then the orders are put out with a section foreman. They give an order to the dispatcher, and he puts them out to these operators like between Youngstown and Newton Falls. That is where the order goes to, Newton Falls and to Hazelton

or the Ohio junction, either one. The way it was with us was that the westbound rail was number one. The eastbound rail was number two. A lot of places here where they had three or four rails, they had one and three as the westbound. The odd figure is the westbound, and the even figures, like two and four, are the eastbound.

E: I didn't know that.

S: That was all put out. Then when we had to cross over someplace or go through a plant, an engineer and the conductor were responsible for the speed and everything. If the engineer got to going too fast, the conductor had to pull the cord on him and slow him down. If they had a slow order and something happened, you would all be in trouble. It made no difference what happened. If the brakeman or anybody else saw any trouble like they were getting careless or something with the cars or something, you had the right to say--You worked there; you were an employee there; you didn't want to get anybody hurt. That was what they always preached.

E: So you always kind of worked together.

S: That is right. We always worked together. Whenever we got a new man, many times I have grabbed ahold of a new man. He would go to kick the drawbar; I would grab ahold of him and would tell him, "Don't you ever let me see you do that again." That was one of the worst things in the world. The old fellows used to always kick the drawbars to put them in place instead of leaving them alone. That was where a lot of fellows lost their feet and their legs. No kidding.

E: Really?

S: Oh, yes, lots of them. It was like a man on a brake wheel. If you ever see a man on a brake wheel and he is trying to stop that car with a hand brake, why, that is another thing you have to watch very carefully. Their brake chains will slip lots of times. When they slip, it will throw them then.

E: You always see them like it is such an easy thing for them to turn the wheel.

S: That is right. If that chain happens to get tangled up underneath there and it gets crossed or something and then you pull on it with a hefty pull, then that chain will slip and your wheels go around, and if you don't have a good hold on them, look out.

E: Did you ever know anyone who got thrown?

S: Oh, a lot of them got hurt that way. Of course, it is rough in the wintertime anyhow. One time I had a brake sticking

coming out of Dover. I dropped off. The engineer said, "Don, you better drop off and see what that is." I dropped off and it was breaking off of the car, so I left it off. When I went to get back down off the car, why, I started head first. I happened to have a grab iron that saved me.

It saved me at Akron one time. I grabbed the grab iron and I would have gone right down onto the switch stand if I wouldn't have done that. It was just one of those things. You just have to be careful every time you make a move. That is all there is to it. I have been very lucky. I was very lucky. Of course, I stepped in a couple of holes getting off a train or something, but I was never really hurt bad. The only time I was hurt was when a brake wheel-- just like I told you--slipped and broke this arm.

E: Really?

S: Yes. That was over at the Trumbull Furnace where we used to pick the pool up for coke. We put it up on a hill. We had to set a brake on every car. Then when they dropped that down, they would leave that brake off and the rest of the cars would stay there because the brake was set. That was what happened to me there one time. My legs got bad, so I decided to get out of there and get on the road. So that was what I did. I was out there for about six years.

You had to learn all of the routes all of the way from Willard to Pittsburgh, all the crossings--road crossings and everything--and the same way going from Cleveland to Akron. I had to learn all of those road crossings and all of that territory. You had to know where the slow orders were and everything because that was up to the conductor while I was the engineer. You are supposed to pull the cord on him; that was with the passenger trains. It wasn't with the freight trains because you didn't have a cord. You didn't even have any walkie-talkies until, oh, I don't know. The first walkie-talkie I had was when we bought that stove. After I got a walkie-talkie the rest of them started to pick them up, so there you are.

I liked my job all the time. Christmas time and through the holidays, you had a terrible time with passenger trains because they were just loaded. A lot of people would get mad at you because they wouldn't have a seat and they wanted to know why they weren't told that they didn't have a seat. We didn't know how many people were going to get off at the next station or anything like that. That was up to them. At the same time we got them through. It was just a hefty job. I used to be wringing wet when I got into Pittsburgh.

E: When did you move to passenger service?

S: I worked the passenger in around 1957. It was 1955 or 1957.

It was one of the two. I forget to be honest with you.

E: Which one of those runs did you work then, or did you work . . .

S: I worked from Cleveland to Akron on the CT & V. That was the Cleveland Terminal & Valley. Then we got off of the CT & V at Akron. We had the main line of the P & W. That was the Pittsburgh & West Virginia. That was the Akron division.

E: The B & O ran over the P & W then?

S: No. That was the B & O Railroad; that belonged to them. When I got out there, I had to learn all of the crossings from Willard all the way. Each one of these crossings on the crossing sign has a number on there--a little number. You had to get that number. If anything happened, they would put it on your report.

E: How close were the crossings? Were they spaced?

S: Lots of times they are two miles. Sometimes they are every half of a mile, and sometimes they are maybe five miles.

E: Are these road crossings or railroad crossings?

S: They are road crossings.

E: Oh, road crossings. Okay.

S: Yes. Then, of course, there are a lot of farm crossings, but they don't count that too much. They don't figure on them too much, but all of the public crossings, I should say, have that number on there. That was where you would get them, off of that crossing marker. It is right on that crossing sign there. It was just one of those things that you had to learn the whole works. I used to have a lesson in everything. It is just one of those things that you kind of have to take upon yourself. If you don't do it, you are out of luck when you go to tell them something.

E: What is the conductor's job when there is an accident?

S: When there is an accident, you have the report of everything. You have to report whether the engine is hurt very much or what happened, what you hit, what car, whether the guy had a license to drive, and all of that; you have to have all of that. You had all of that report and had to send it into Akron at that time. That was just one of the things the conductor had to do. He had to make a report with the engine crew and the train crew and how fast you were going and what crossing it was and whether anybody was hurt or not, all of that. That was what you had to do. You were in control of that train from the head end

of that engine to the back end of the last car. The engineer was in control of the engine for water or for anything like that. He was in control of that because that was what he was examined on. We were examined on the road and on the train services and things like that and blocks and everything.

One time Gene Eminhizer was on the train when we came through Manassa. There was a truck sitting on the crossing. We came around the curve and couldn't stop. We tore that whole interlocking plan up by him sitting on the track there. The front end of the engine was damaged. We had the master mechanic on with us that day too. That was right. We did.

E: Who was master mechanic?

S: I forget who it was anymore, but we had him on there. At that time we had a couple out of Akron. This one was out Baltimore. The head office for everything was in Baltimore for us, but Akron was our division office. That was where we had to go whenever we had any trouble.

I always liked my job. I always did. You had a lot of work, and you had a lot of walking. When you walked one of those twenty car trains, boy, I will tell you something, you had something to do. When I had a good brakeman who I could depend upon, I would say, "Chuck, get that ticket back in the pullman area and show it to me." I knew it was back there, and that would save me a walk because he was going back there anyhow. He would get that ticket, and I wouldn't have to go that far after I caught onto it. Of course, you have to learn all that stuff.

When conductor Guthery from Painesville got out there, why, he and I were on six and seven. We came out of Willard on six and got to Pittsburgh over the P & LE from New Castle. About two years before I quit, the brotherhood got a room for us at the hotel. We didn't have to stay around down there in the shacks and stuff, in the bunk rooms. That was the first we ever had anything like that. They never paid for any of the meals or anything like that. We never had any expenses paid away from home or anything. If you were working out of Willard, you had to figure on your own time getting back home, driving or else coming back on a train, getting off at Youngstown and driving home. We worked those jobs every other day. We were out two days, and then we were off two days.

E: You made two round trips?

S: That is right. We worked two round trips. Then we were off two round trips. That was the way Guthery and I worked. We had that arranged that there were no time claims by anybody at the office at Akron. If you would have done that on your

own and not made any suggestion or any arrangements with a superintendent or trainmaster or somebody, there might have been some time claim that would have come in on that; then everything would have been fouled up, but we never had any trouble. The superintendent and the trainmaster all went along with us on it.

E: You got the runs arranged so that you fellows wouldn't have to be deadheaded so much?

S: We got off at Youngstown.

E: Youngstown?

S: That is right. I liked the railroad myself very much. I was on there forty-six years and one month. When I retired, mom had the press from the Vindicator and the photographers come out there and take pictures. They took my picture when I got off of the train. There were a couple of nuns there, and the one nun kissed me and blessed me and told me to have a good retirement. That was kind of hard to watch the train pull away and everything. It was the last time. I always did like railroading.

I worked on the railroad down there in Dover, and I worked on the Pennsylvania. They had a strike, and I didn't go back. I worked a hot mill. After that all of the fellows from Cambridge and those places were going on the B & O, so I quit the hot mill and went to B & O too. In the summer they hauled me out a couple of times out of the hot mill. That was hot in there.

The railroad is a nice job. Of course, it is down now on account of all of these plants being down there. They are changing everything all the way around.

E: It seems as though you had quite an experience over the years.

S: I did. Of course, we worked with all of these engineers and everybody like Gene and those fellows. I always got along good with everybody. I never had any trouble except with one brakeman out there. That didn't last long, only about twenty minutes; that was all.

E: You won?

S: We quit. We thought what was the use of that. We just made up.

E: I'm looking at a clipping here from the Niles Times on Don Saam and his service for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad including twenty-five years as a conductor. I'm reading from the article on August 14, 1965 in the Niles Times:

'A native from New Philadelphia, he began his career with the railroad as a flagman and advanced to freight conductor before becoming a passenger train conductor six years ago. Retirement will mean more time in his garden and his home. He has been away for two days alternately for the past several years. Until ten years ago, [this is from the 1965 paper now] he had been stationed at DeForest yard between Niles and Warren. During his long tenure he has been in three wrecks but escaped injury each time. The most serious accident involved a thirty-three car derailment near Newton Falls, but he was in the caboose which was nineteen cars back.'

S: That is right.

E: 'In his service as a passenger conductor, his train has carried such notables as Mickey Rooney, Maimee Eisenhower, and the Baltimore Orioles and the Cleveland Indians.'

S: I carried John . . .

E: Kennedy?

S: No, no. He was a movie star. John . . .

E: Wayne?

S: Wayne.

E: Are you sure now?

S: Oh, yes. We carried him too. Yes, we carried him.

E: Very interesting.

S: Yes. That was just another one of those things. You would get all of those people in there. There were a lot of them, of course, who were very good to get along with. I never had trouble with any but only one. At that time the pullman conductor had charge of the pullman. He wanted to put him off, and I went and told him what was going on. I told the man what was going on. I told him to go back there and not to bother those people anymore. The patrolman at Youngstown got on that night. I told him right in front of him that I didn't care who he was or what he was worth or anything and that he couldn't come on here and cause trouble for these people. At that time he went back to his room, and we didn't have any more trouble. We were delayed about twenty minutes that night on account of the pullman conductor who put his baggage on the ground and he said he was going to put him off. I found out what was

going on, and I wouldn't put him off. That was the whole thing.

E: Who was this?

S: That was John Wayne.

E: John Wayne?

S: That was one of those things. He had a little too much to drink. It was just one of those things, and I didn't want any trouble with anybody, so I told him right in front of the B & O patrolman there that if he would go back to his room right then and not say anything more to the conductor back there or anybody else, then he would be all right. I never had any more trouble with him.

There there was a football player from Pittsburgh. One time he and his bride or whoever she was was walking through the back part of the train on number six. I asked them where they were going. He said that it was none of my business. I said that I wanted to know because I didn't know whether they paid their fare or not. He was going to throw me off the train right there while it was going. I told him to just forget about it and that when we would get to Akron I would find out about him. I told the patrolman at Akron what had happened.

E: The B & O had patrolmen who got on to take care of disruptive passengers?

S: Oh, yes. Yes, that is right. They took good care of the employees too. If they were riding with them, they took good care of them because they knew when a man was telling them something right or when they were telling them something wrong. I had a patrolman at Willard one time who thanked me for helping him out with taking care of a passenger over there.

I used to get along with all of them. I never got really mad. There was only one time. He was a colored fellow, a soldier. He came from the dining car up to the coach where I was. I was taking tickets. This little brakeman was right behind me. He said, "Captain, somebody took my pocketbook back here in the dining car." I said, "What?" He said, "Somebody stole my pocketbook in the dining car." This little brakeman was right behind me. I said, "Did you have anything in it?" He said, "Yes, I had all of my money." I said, "Come on." We went back there and the little brakeman followed me. When we got back there, here his pocketbook was laying on the floor where he was sitting.

A guy came on at Cleveland one time. He did the same thing to me. He wanted to know how long it was going to be until we . . . He was always pestering somebody. I said, "It won't be very

long now." He said, "I know, but you told me that before." I said, "I take the fifth amendment with you. I'm not going to tell you because you are liable to get me in trouble." He turned around and walked away. He was asking you something all of the time. Half the time you were right and the other half of the time you were wrong. I never did get in any fights or anything like that because I didn't care for that.

E: Did you ever have to put somebody off the train?

S: No, no. I never put anybody off the train, no. I used to work with a conductor out of Akron one time, a fellow by the name of Manson. Honest to God, one of those niggers shot a patrolman down in the bar. He was on the train, and this Manson was shooting at him from the caboose. I was the flagman on the caboose. They finally got him; they shot him. It was just one of those things. I wouldn't monkey around with some of those guys at all. It didn't do you any good anyhow. That is no lie; it didn't do you any good.

E: How many passengers would you have on a train?

S: Anywhere from maybe 190 to maybe 400 at different times. That is right. On the holidays you would have so many that you couldn't move; you just couldn't give them all seats.

E: Did you have places where you could pick up extra passenger cars along the road?

S: No. The only place we had extra passenger cars was at Akron and very seldom they had one there. Sometimes they had one there and at Pittsburgh. Those were the only places you could get extra cars. They put an extra car on for me a couple of times at Pittsburgh.

E: Do you think it would have helped the travel situation during the holidays if they could have set extra cars on at different places?

S: Oh, I think it would be just like Youngstown there with all of those passengers. If they would have had extra cars around there someplace that they could have put on, or either out at Akron, why, it would have helped.

Another thing is you take the railroads; they didn't want to put anymore than they had to, and you can't blame them for that. With the power they had, it wouldn't do them much good. It was a funny thing. There were so many different things that would come up at times, and you didn't know what to say. You had your own judgment; that was all you could do, so that was how it was.

E: That is interesting. What was this train derailment over at

Newton Falls?

S: The cause was unknown because we never did find out. We had a carload of big buckets of Riggin's Beans.

E: Beans?

S: Candy beans. They were candy beans.

E: Jelly beans?

S: Jelly beans. That is what I mean.

E: You had a carload of jelly beans?

S: I had a carload of jelly beans, and then we had a carload of some kind of oil. It wasn't olive oil. It was oil that they used around these places.

E: Cooking oil of some kind?

S: Yes.

E: What was that in, a tank car?

S: That was in the tank car. When it upset, it started to run out.

E: And it mixed the jelly beans with the oil?

S: Oh, yes. It made it good.

E: Slippery jelly beans.

S: It was the worst wreck I have ever had out there.

E: What did you think?

S: I just told the flagman to stay there. I told him that I was going back to phone. About that time the section foreman . . . See the in-locking plant at Newton Falls knew we had a wreck because all of the blocks went red. So the section foreman drove down there. He picked me up and took me back to the telephone. Mr. C. T. Williams, the trainmaster, talked to me. He asked me what we had next to our caboose. I said that we had about four cars next to the caboose. I said that if he would send a crew up the old line to Newton Falls and come down and get that, then you could get it on its way. That was the only thing I knew to do because there were only four cars out. That was what they did.

E: On these perishable cars, do they run on their own motors, or do they have to run off the power of the engine?

S: They run . . . Some of the refrigerator cars have the motor on them and some of them have to be iced at Willard.

E: Do they still ice them now?

S: I wouldn't want to say because I don't know for sure, but I imagine they do. I imagine they would, some of them. I don't think that they are all refrigerated yet. I really don't.

When I started to work on the railroad, all of the cars--boxcars and that stuff--were 80,000 pounds, forty ton. When I quit, it was fifty and sixty ton and seventy ton.

E: Smaller?

S: Bigger. Oh, yes, bigger. A boxcar was 80,000; that would be forty ton. When I quit, they were all fifty and sixty ton boxcars. A lot of them were seventy ton. They were stronger with steel and everything. They had a different cover on them all.

E: How many cars did they put off out there when they derailed it at Newton Falls?

S: At Newton Falls?

E: Yes.

S: I think there were about twenty-four or twenty-five cars.

E: What year was that? Do you remember?

S: I don't remember.

E: The late 1950's?

S: Yes. The late 1950's was when it was. That is right.

E: I think I remember that wreck.

S: Yes. I never did get any pictures of that.

E: You blocked that whole line out there then?

S: Yes, both tracks.

E: I remember that.

S: There was that big wreck over in Sterling. I don't know whether you ever heard of that or not.

E: What happened there?

S: The Erie had to block and so did the B & O.

E: On the crossovers?

S: Where the B & O crossed the Erie Railroad. It came down and ran right into that Erie train when we were going across the crossing. I can show you some pictures of that.

E: I think that was before I came to Warren.

S: Maybe it was. It could have been because it was quite a while ago. Those cars were all over there. They tied everything up there.

E: That is rather interesting.

S: That is about all I know.

E: When you were out there working with these men, did you have control over the dining car also?

S: No. They had a steward on the dining car. That was handled by him unless something happened that something broke on there or something. Then we would have to notify the people at Akron or someplace about it.

E: Did you have a telephone on the train, or did you have to always get off?

S: No, no. We had to always get off. We never had any way of talking to the engineer or anybody else at any office or anything. We had to get on a company phone. When we stopped at a company phone, we had to get on there. That was all we had at a crossing accident or anything else.

E: Did you ever have anyone get really sick on the train when you were running passenger service?

S: Only one person at Akron one time who was coming from Chicago. They took her off at Akron and took her to the hospital.

E: What did you do in a situation like that?

S: All you can do is take them off where . . . Her mother was with her, so they took her off. You just have to get somebody to try and help her; that is all you can do. It was one of those things. I was very lucky that way myself because that is the only lady I ever knew. It was just good enough to get at Akron where they could take her off and take her to the hospital.

E: Did you ever wonder what happened to somebody like that afterwards?

S: As a rule they would let you know. You would want to find out.

E: Oh, they did? That was nice.

S: She was alright a couple of days afterwards because I found out about that.

E: That is interesting. Did you ever work with George Snook?

S: Oh, yes. I worked with George Snook quite a bit. I worked with him out of the main line even.

E: Over at DeForest did you ever have any cars get away from you up there because that yard sits on top of a hill?

S: That yard does sit on top of a hill. I never had any get away from me, but one guy had a car go clear down through Niles. I have shoved tracks. Sometimes when you go to put one more car in there, you shove a track out at the other end. You run through the switch or something and get the section men to fix it; that is all you do.

E: Who did you work with over here in the yard?

S: I worked with about all of them over here in the yard. I worked with Lot Grahm and George Snook, and I worked with Jack Wall, and I worked with Eminhizer and Frank Simpson. Did you know him?

E: No.

S: Also a guy who lived up there across from where the yard was. I just can't think of his name.

E: I haven't thought about some of these men for a long time.

S: I worked with about all of them.

E: Did you work with George Lucas?

S: I worked for George Lucas.

E: He's dead now.

S: Yes, that was what Gene was saying. I used to call him George Washington Lucas.

E: That was what his name was, yes.

S: Yes, George Washington Lucas.

E: I used to spend a lot of time with him. I didn't officially interview him, but there was a lot of casual talk. He was

Eminhizer's nephew.

- S: Yes, he was a good guy to work with. I worked with practically all of the engineers up here I guess. Tom Mahoney was another one, and then Howard Bower was another one.
- E: There was a man named Forest and something or other. He lived down in Canfield and eventually moved to Florida.
- S: I don't know him.
- E: I'm trying to think of his name.
- S: Was he an engineer or a signal maintainer?
- E: That could be.
- S: I believe he was. He was a signal maintainer; I'm pretty sure. I used to know all of them. I can't remember anymore.
- E: You have been away from it for a while.
- S: I have been away for seventeen years. I retired in 1965, and this is 1982. I enjoyed all the time of it regardless where I was. Before I came to DeForest junction I worked on the section as a Gandy Dancer.
- E: You did?
- S: Oh, yes. In 1928 we were laying new rail between Dover and Strasburg. I worked on that with a fellow by the name of Goody.
- E: It is hard to get young men to work that hard today.
- S: It is hard to get anybody to work that hard today. That was work.
- E: You walked all the track then.
- S: Yes. We didn't all walk the track. We laid rail. We tore the old one up and laid new ones. That was what we did.
- E: Was that the only time they used the Gandy Dancers?
- S: That was the only time when I ever worked on them, yes. Those sort little Mexicans were workers. I'm not kidding you.
- E: Did you ever do the calling?
- S: No, I never did the calling.
- E: You just did the pulling.

S: That is right.

We put in a lot of hard times. In the wintertime that is rough.

E: Did the Gandy Dancer that you worked with have a certain thing that he sang, or did he just make it up as he worked?

S: No. They have certain guys who would sing. You would do like they would do. They had it on television the other day.

E: They had some on, yes.

S: That song of theirs.

E: Do you remember any songs?

S: No. They would sing those songs and every so often they would heave on those bars.

E: Moves that track though.

S: Yes.

E: I was amazed.

S: Every time they would move that, they would have to have it up on those jacks. When they would get the bar under there, they would start to sing that song. That is about all I can tell you, I guess.

E: Looking back over all of your years would you have changed anything?

S: The only think I would have changed . . . I had a chance to be superintendent down at Pittsburgh. The general manager wanted me to come down there one time. He wanted me to be trainmaster. I told him that I didn't care to.

E: You liked it out on the road.

S: I liked it on the road. I liked the outside work just like that yardmaster job. I don't think I would have been better off if I would have, but I don't think I would have been around here as long as I have.

E: You think the fresh air and the people . . .

S: That is right. The railroad track would be terrible with the cinders and everything. Today they have all the limestone and that stuff along there.

E: Did you ever have any problems with fires from the old steam

engines?

S: No. We never had any trouble there, but there are a lot of places that set the field on fire and we couldn't do anything about it.

E: So you kept on going?

S: Yes. That was all we could do. I did stop a train at Sterling one time at the Wadsworth Paper Mill there. I saw a house on fire behind the paper mill. I stopped. I got on the phone and told the operator to get a hold of the firemen and tell them that there was a house on fire.

E: This is a map?

S: This is a map of the railroads.

E: It has all of the railroads on it?

S: Yes.

E: It is for the whole state of Ohio?

S: Yes.

E: It is issued out of Columbus?

S: That is right.

E: The Commission of Railroads and Telegraphs of Columbus, Ohio.

S: It is an old map.

E: It was issued in 1903?

S: Yes.

E: That is really interesting. I bet there have been a few changes over the years. George Snook was telling me that they took up everything north of the Copperweld.

S: That is right.

E: The lake branch is all gone.

S: That was what they were telling me.

E: You used to run that lake branch some?

S: Oh, yes. I used to run up there myself.

E: Did you ever work with Jerry Vennette?

- S: Oh, yes. Jerry broke for me for quite a while, he and Clarence Grubbs.
- E: Where is Grubby now?
- S: Grubby lives on Orchard Avenue.
- E: Here in Niles?
- S: Yes. No. He lives on Lawnview. I'm sorry.
- E: They put a lot of track down after this map.
- S: Oh, yes.
- E: And, of course, there is a lot of track gone now.
- S: There is a lot of track gone and also there is a lot of track going into places that we never owned here before.
- E: I never have seen one of these maps though from 1903.
- S: That is where it is.
- E: It sure is. It has all of the main lines in red.
- S: Yes. That is right.
- E: Now the double line would be a double track?
- S: Yes. It has Fort Wayne on here and everything.
- E: It has the shipping lines coming into the fort up here where the trains pick up their ore.
- S: Yes. You see the different lines there.
- E: You know all about this.
- S: I know about all of it. Yes. Fairport and all of those places are on it.
- E: Did you work the passengers after the diesels came on, but not with steam?
- S: Not with steam, no. No, I didn't have anything to do with the steam engines on passenger. It was on diesels. That is right, yes.
- E: But you worked with the steam engines when they were on the freight?
- S: Oh, yes.

E: Did you ever work Detroit Steel?

S: Oh, yes, lots of times. That was my main job. They liked me on there because I made a lot of money for them. I worked that a lot of times.

E: I used to hear about Detroit Steel a lot. My father-in-law used to be called for it and like that. It was sort of local, wasn't it?

S: All the way to Willard.

E: How did it ever get the name Detroit Steel?

S: Because we picked up all steel from Youngstown. They came out of New Castle with a caboose. They would come over to Youngstown and got all of that steel from all of those mills. They were going west. They would come up through DeForest. All that steel was in DeForest from Trumbull Steel and from Republic Steel; we picked that up. We used to have anywhere from fifteen to twenty or thirty cars out of here.

E: You left New Castle with just a caboose?

S: Oh, yes.

E: By the time you got west of Willard, you had what?

S: We had a train. We used to stop over at Akron and set off the Akron cars and pick up all the through cars that went west of Willard and lots of times empty boxcars for the salt works at Rittman and the paper mill. We would pick up at Rittman. Lots of times we would get ten or fifteen cars out of there.

E: From the salt works?

S: From the salt works and the box works, yes.

E: That is interesting.

S: That there was a job.

E: That was a twelve or sixteen hour job sometimes too.

S: That is right. They wouldn't leave you off ahead of anybody because you had work to do. They put everybody around you.

E: They kept putting you in sidings.

S: Oh, yes.

E: What did you do when you had to sit and wait in a siding?

- S: As a rule a lot of guys never got out of the caboose, but I always got out of the caboose and walked over to the head end and looked the train over. When we pulled out of there, we had to close the switch and look the train over on the other side. If anything was wrong, I knew about it.
- E: You completely ran the train?
- S: Yes. Sometimes we had fellows who would never get off of the caboose; they would stay right in the caboose, but I couldn't see that myself. Lots of times even if I was cooking a meal or something like frying some eggs or potatoes, I would stay until I got that done; then I would walk around.
- E: You cooked on the stove there?
- S: Yes.
- E: Jerry Vennette was telling me how the coffeepot was suspended so that it would just barely miss the stove.
- S: We had a wire coming from the . . . See, the smokestack in the caboose had a wire that would hook into the smokestack. Of course, it had holes in there. It had a shield around the other smokestack, and it had holes in there for air to get in so it wouldn't catch the caboose on fire when it got hot. We put that wire on there, and we would hook the coffeepot on that. If somebody would hit that caboose really hard or the engineer would stop really hard, the coffeepot wouldn't spill. It would slide, but it wouldn't spill. Many times I had potatoes and everything else spill all over the floor.
- E: You mean you didn't do a good job of taking off and letting out?
- S: You didn't have enough hooks thereto hook everything to it. I used to be on a local between Dover and Holloway with a fellow by the name of Bill Bear. They called him Nigger Bear; that was what they called him. He was a dark-complected fellow, but he wasn't any nigger. When we would get down there, we used to have a half of a carload of flour to unload at Tippecanoe and Stillwater and places like that. At Freeport we used to have tombstones to unload and buttermilk and those big, hog heads. That was a job. We used to unload those down there, and all I ever did was protect them while they were working down there watching that nobody would hit them. Lots of times I went over and helped them because I knew they had work there.

At Freeport when you would walk that track there, there was a swamp along there that is just full of black snakes back there. There were all kinds of them along there. We pulled

out of there one day with John Shaw. I don't know whether you know him or not.

E: No.

S: Didn't you know John Shaw?

E: I don't think; I don't remember.

S: Anyhow . . . No, that was from Dover. He was an engineer. One day we were in a siding waiting on an eastbound, and these guys got a water moccasin. They caught a water moccasin; they would snap it and kill it. They took that water moccasin and laid it on the switchboard where I had to get off and closed the switch. When I came up to it, I just took it and kicked it. They were all leaning out of the engine. We only had a few cars; they had seen me. I just kicked it off the switch down into the ditch. That was all I did. I don't like snakes anyhow. Ray Duey would really go crazy if you brought a snake around him. He was a conductor; he was an awfully good fellow to work with. He would do all of the work himself if you would let him. He was a very good guy to work with. That is all I know.

E: I bet you know a lot of stuff. I never knew they shipped buttermilk and hogs' head.

S: Oh, yes. They used to ship that down there to that feed mill down there. They made stock feed out of it.

E: Out of buttermilk?

S: Oh, yes. We had a skid. We would get it around there so that we could slide it down there. We would get it down there on the platform, and they would have to come and pick it up.

E: Did you unload the cars for them?

S: That was a local. When you had a local, you had different things in there for different places. At Uhrichsville the last time; we transferred a whole car.

E: Really?

S: Yes. In the summertime that was a bugger because those steel cars were hotter than \$700.

E: You took the empty with you then? You didn't leave the car for them?

S: No. We left the empty car in on the sput for loading. Those tombstones and hog heads were a mystery in how we

ever got them unloaded. No kidding. It took three or four guys. Some of those stones were really high and wide and thick.

E: How did you get them unloaded?

S: We had bars. We would pinch them, and we would put a roller on the one end. Then we would roll it up to the door, and then we would put it on that skid and put it down. That was the way we used to get those hog heads out. That was the only way to do it. You couldn't lift them. No, you couldn't. They had that buttermilk in there for somebody at Freeport. I can't remember anymore. Anyhow, they had the hog heads and the buttermilk. They would mix it with grain and stuff for the hogs and the cattle. That was what they would do with it.

E: You have had a lot of interesting experiences.

S: Oh, yes, I have.

E: Do you have small timetables there?

S: Yes.

E: This article here from the Niles Times is a very nice article.

S: I have a rule book here. That was the last one.

E: Some of these things are blacked out. Did they change the rules? Is that why they blacked them out?

S: Yes. That is right. That is why we blacked them out.

E: There are changes here and they pasted over them.

S: Yes. We have to learn all of those things.

E: Yes. General block rules. This was in 1953 on April 26 when it was effective.

S: Here is a B & O timetable that they had for passengers in the passenger station for the passenger to use to see how much they had to pay for berths and everything else and what time the train was due in there and what time it went in the other place.

E: You had to see that these people got their berths and got set up and got in the right one and everything else?

S: Oh, yes. That is right. If somebody came in there and you had extra berths and they wanted a berth, why, you had to sell them one if you had an extra one.

E: So you had to handle money too?

S: Oh, yes. Then you would turn it in when you got to New Castle or Willard or wherever the end of your tour was.

E: This Pittsburgh division, where did it run to? Cumberland?

S: Yes. No, that Pittsburgh division ran from . . . All the B & O ran over was from New Castle to Pittsburgh; then they went back on the B & O again on account of the hill down there at Ellwood City. That was the reason they went over the P & LE. All the fast trains went over the P & LE.

E: So they didn't have to drag?

S: That is right. They didn't have to have a helper on there or something. They had a map on the back there.

E: Did the freight trains go down through Cumberland and Martin's Ferry and down that way?

S: That is right. They went down through there, yes.

E: But the passenger trains would run a little different route.

S: No. They went the same route after they got to Pittsburgh. We got back on to the B & O Railroad on the other side of Pittsburgh at McKeesport.

E: McKeesport?

S: Yes.

E: There is a big yard at McKeesport.

S: That was where they went back on the B & O. Then they claim that track down there is not . . . Here are all the crossings.

E: This is in the conductor's?

S: Yes. This is the conductor's for the Akron division for P & LE.

E: All the crossings?

S: All the way through on the Akron division. It has all the instructions in there.

E: Railroad crossings and drawbridges.

S: Yes. Then you had your telephone calls in there too wherever you stopped or whoever you wanted to get ahold of. You had one long and two shorts or one long and three shorts or four shorts.

E: Here is a list of the whistle signals.

S: Yes. That was for clearing the track or anything. When you went on the other track like you were going west and you used the eastbound track, you got orders wherever you got on that track to wherever you were going. Lots of times you would have a middle order in there like if you were going from Newton Falls to Kent, you would get an order at Newton Falls. Then you would get a middle order as they called it at Ravenna. Then you would get another order at . . .

E: That was when you took it off of the big hoop?

S: Yes.

E: Was that your job getting it off of the hoop?

S: Either the brakeman or the conductor; it was either one. Whichever one was on the platform got it.

E: Did you ever miss it?

S: Oh, yes. A lot of those people are afraid to get up close there.

E: Then you had to stop the train and back up.

S: Yes. I would stop the train and walk back.

E: Oh, walk back. This says water and fuel and deschler. I haven't heard anybody say anything about deschler in a long time.

S: That is in that book right there.

E: I see it, yes.

S: Even the time when the trains get in there.

E: It tells you exactly where the fuel station is; for example, it says sixty-four feet north of the eastbound main track on the west side.

S: That is right; right you are. We would go from Willard to New Castle with the diesels for fuel. Then when they got on the P & LE, they would go fuel at Pittsburgh then. Then they would go to Cumberland.

E: How far could the steam engines go?

S: A lot of them there would go . . . See, with the steam engines they had an extra large tank on them--water tank. They would go from Willard to New Castle.

E: They could go the whole distance then?

S: Yes. They would go all the way.

E: Without water or fuel?

S: Without water, but when they got to New Castle, they would change engines there and get fuel. That was one thing about diesel. All they would have to do was put fuel and water on them, and they kept on going. The diesels changed everything. They don't hardly have anything at New Castle anymore, only a few to fix those yard engines and stuff like that.

E: Yes, I guess they have really cut the yard service down.

S: Oh, yes. It is the same way at Hazelton. They still have a shop at Hazelton, but only for these engines like around DeForest and Hazelton. They have a pedlar. They call it a pedlar. It goes from DeForest to Hazelton; that is where they trade and get another engine that needs rejuvenating so it is brought back.

E: Ohio junction was Youngstown, wasn't it?

S: That was west of Youngstown.

E: Oh, west of Youngstown.

S: It was where they tore those steel mills down. Ohio junction was right west of Division Street.

E: What is the next one down the line?

S: Tower?

E: What is the next tower?

S: CH. That was right at Haxelton.

E: CH at Hazelton.

S: More trains crossed that crossing--it used to be--than any place in the world. The Pennsylvania, the New York Central, the B & O, and all of them crossed right there at CH Tower.

E: A pretty big place.

S: Crawford's son used to have that job down there at the crossing. We used to call it Abe Brothers Crossing.

E: Heck, and Farris and . . .

- S: I worked with Charlie Heck.
- E: Heck is superintendent and D. E. Farris is assistant and trainmaster Don Mosenburger and H. E. Kramer.
- S: Don Mosenburger was a fine fellow to work for.
- E: There were E. A. Howard and Jay as assistant trainmasters.
- S: Howard used to be the guy who would ride all of those troop trains with me and call me out whenever they had a troop train out of Cleveland. He would call me and tell me to be at Cleveland at a certain time because they would be having a troop train coming out of there that was going to Pittsburgh. I would have to take care of all the tickets on there.
- E: Now you worked as a conductor then on the troop trains?
- S: Yes, yes. It was right out of Cleveland and right into Pittsburgh. You didn't have anything. You stopped only for water and fuel whenever you needed it.
- E: Tell me something. Who paid the fare for the men on the train when they had a troop train?
- S: Government.
- E: Did they have individual tickets, or did they have a mass . . .
- S: They had a group ticket. We had to see that they had that many on there. If they didn't, you had to make a notation of it on that fill, and I kept that in that books.
- Do you want anything else?
- E: No. We are going to terminate this tape here.

END OF INTERVIEW