

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Theater People from Ohio

O. H. 361

HENRY BURGUESS JONES

Interviewed

by

Carol Mills

on

November 5, 1981

## Henry B. Jones

Henry Burgess Jones was born in Pittsboro, North Carolina, on October 8, 1900. Since there were so many children, she asked to have Henry stay with her during part of his childhood in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Henry became involved in scouting in his youth, and received many rewards of merit for his excellence in scouting duties. His family moved to the Youngstown area since they had heard that "the grass was greener" workwise there. Henry worked as a young boy for the newspaper and was always finding some new way to inventively add to his boyhood income.

Henry agreed to help out a bank officer's wife, Mrs. MacCalla, at the infant Youngstown Playhouse, even though he was already very busy with his job. Therein, at the old Arlington Theatre, he began his 50-year association with the Youngstown Playhouse. Generations of children remember Henry with love, as he always has time to help out the kids. Henry became a favorite person to hundreds of children throughout the years.

The entire theater participated with great glee in Henry's 80 year old surprise birthday party on October 8, 1980, which was held on the big stage, to Henry's complete surprise. His only living sibling, his sister from Rahway, New Jersey, was brought in to add to his delight and surprise of the evening.

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INTERVIEWEE: HENRY BURGUESS JONES

INTERVIEWER: Carol Mills

SUBJECT: St. Augustine's Church, Boy Scouts, Erie Railroad

DATE: November 5, 1981

M: This is an interview with Henry Jones on November 5, 1981. We are at the Youngstown Playhouse in Youngstown, Ohio. This interview is for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program. The interviewer is Carol Mills.

We are now speaking with Henry Jones at the Youngstown Playhouse. I'm going to start by asking Henry where he was born and when he was born?

J: I'm Henry Jones. I was born in Pittsboro, North Carolina, on October 8, 1900. When I was a few months old my parents moved to Coatesville, Pennsylvania.

M: What are a few memories that you have of your childhood?

J: There were thirteen of us children in the family. Sorry to say, but at present there are only two, myself and my sister. Sister Thelma lives in Rahway, New Jersey. I had an aunt in Philadelphia who didn't have any children so I spent seven of my years in Philadelphia. I went to St. Peter Clayburn's Catholic School in Philadelphia. I can remember my aunt taking me to Atlantic City on the boardwalk. I had a little halter around me like a leash on a dog, so I wouldn't get too far away into the water. I can remember that very well.

M: You were at the original boardwalk, isn't that great!

J: The original boardwalk in Atlantic City. I can remember the New Year's Day Parade in Philadelphia. I lived on Juniper Street, just a block from Broad Street between Pine and Spruce. I remember very well going out to watch the New Year's Parade.

M: What New Year's? What year?

J: That would be 1909. I was a little fellow then. I stayed there until, I guess, I froze. I went with people who brought me home, but it was cold.

M: You didn't want to leave?

J: I didn't want to leave. I wanted to see all the things there. I can remember that very well. My aunt and uncle had a little vaudeville act that they did. Her name was Mabel Kennedy and her husband was Bryant Kennedy. He played the guitar and she sang; that was vaudeville in Philadelphia.

M: Did they travel on a circuit of vaudeville or did they stay in Philadelphia?

J: They stayed in Philadelphia and played for local theaters. My uncle also manufactured a hair oil. It was called Kennedy Coconut Hair Oil, and he sold that. He is deceased now. I remember very well my mother's first cousin, William E. Day. He was a tombstone maker, a carver in marble, and one thing or another. I have it right now, at home, a lamp that he gave to me and also a clock, a marble clock. It didn't run, but the figures and hands were put on it.

M: Those are works of art.

J: Then I came back home to my mother and dad. My father was employed for the Worth Brothers Iron and Steel Company. They had two in this town, Lukens Iron and Steel and Worth Brothers Iron and Steel. I think he was called a heater. He had to heat the furnace up. Then when he was looking for greener grass, he heard about Youngstown, Ohio.

M: And that was greener grass?

J: I can remember that when I left, I told all the kids that I was going out West. I really thought it was going to be western country with cowboys and Indians being a youngster. I didn't see any cowboys when we got here and I was a little disappointed.

M: How old were you when you got here?

J: Ten years old.

M: In 1910?

J: Yes, 1919, is when I came to Youngstown. I sold newspapers. At that time we had the Vindicator and the Youngstown Telegram. Samuel G. McClure was the owner of the Telegram. As strange as it may seem, I would pass Esther Hamilton, with a copy sheet, coming down where the Phelps Street Bridge is now to the Vindicator in order to take the copy and come back. I would have a load of papers from the Telegram and a load from the Vindicator. I sold both papers up and down Federal Street.

M: When you say you would pass Esther Hamilton, you mean she would be out . . .

J: Yes. She was young . . .

M: She was a kid, too.

J: She was carrying a copy, what they call a copy sheet, which the Telegram was exchanging with the Vindicator. I knew Esther very well.

M: Why did your dad think Youngstown was greener grass, as you said? Was there more work here?

J: There was more work here. Not only that, money from the mills was greater here than what they were back there in Coatesville.

Another thing that I remember is that we would buy our flour, not from the grocery store . . . I had a little grocery wagon. I'd have to go down Oakhill Avenue to, they called it Spring Common at that time, where the old mill is across from old Marshall Street. I remember very well the sack of flour that I would go to get my mother. She made her own bread. I would pull a wagon up Oakhill Avenue to where I lived on Mount Pleasant Street, which is now called Ridge Avenue.

M: Really?

J: Yes. The street I lived on later was McKinney Street, and they now call it Kenmore Avenue.

M: I know all those streets; they are south side streets.

J: Overland Avenue was formerly Garlic Street. Garlic Street was named for the Garlic family. So many streets were changed later on. I am an Episcopalian from the Trinity Episcopal Church in Coatesville. My godmother was Mrs. A. J. Stone, of the Stone Webster Company. They were very wealthy people; they had a footman and a driver and all of that.

M: What did they manufacture? What made them wealthy?

J: They had a lot of interest in the steel mills, and I don't know what all. They had a Cutlass, a fine automobile, and a footman, a coachman, I guess you would call it. The colored family, who worked for the Stones, were the Butler's. She also taught in the elementary schools, which I had gone to in Coatesville. They call it Lombard Street. We had a colored principal there. I can remember him. Professor Garrett only had one arm, but when he was using the strap on you, you would think he had a dozen. Mrs. Stone, after my mother wrote and told her about Youngstown and the church where we were at, would send things from Coatesville to the church each year when we had our bazaar. My mother worked on the altar guild at our church; I was a altar boy too.

M: What church was it here?

J: St. Augustine's Church. It was organized in 1910, so I am one of the originals.

M: You have been going to that church for 71 years?

J: And still going, too.

M: Well, that is amazing, Henry.

J: I have been on the advisory board. I was treasurer for at least ten or twelve years. I taught in the Sunday school. And I headed up a troop of boy scouts. Back in my scouting days, John H. Chase was the cause of us organizing a troop of colored boy scouts, Troop 24. Sully Johnson was our first scoutmaster. I was the first black scoutmaster to rise from the ranks of a boy scout here in Youngstown. I remember Clay Vietz; he's up there where the college is at. He was a photographer and he and John H. Chase were interested in the boy scouts. Then they got a commissioner here for boy scouts. I think it was Hunter. Then we had another one by the name of Mineke. We went to a camp before they had the Stambaugh Reservation. It belonged to Dr. Bunn in Poland, Ohio. That is where a very close friend of mine who has passed on, Attorney J. Maynard Dickerson, broke through the ice. I can remember vividly that we were warned to stay off the ice. He was on water duty. We stayed back in a cabin which belonged, I'm sure, to Dr. Bunn. We said, "Don't trust the ice." But Dickerson got on the ice. The ice broke and he fell through and got pneumonia or something that made him crippled. Later on he was Bill Spagnola's right-hand man. He was, I guess, the prosecutor here in Youngstown. Then he went to Columbus. Anyhow, he was crippled.

M: From being out in that ice?

J: Yes. The next time I had an experience with the scouts was on the corner of Hillman Street and Warren Avenue. There was a boy--he wasn't a boy scout--by the name of Eugene Hubbard. He went down over the bank on Glenwood Avenue and between Cleveland and Chalmers Avenue where there was a quarry. He fell down there and I, with my little rope and one thing or another, worked myself down and administered what I called first aid. I used the fireman's lift. I carried him on my shoulder to Dr. Frye's office. I took him there, and I can remember that very well.

M: And Dr. Frye gave you a medal?

J: Yes.

M: That's very interesting about those streets. You mean that the curbing was not made of poured concrete or cement but was just rough quarried stone pieces all along there?

J: Most of that was on Glenwood Avenue. You could start and go almost to Garfield Street and look west and that was all stone quarry there. A Syrian family named Joseph owned and worked the quarry. They furnished those curbing stones for streets all over the area.

Now, talking on scouting, the Executive Scout Council brought part of a tribe of Seneca Indians from the Red House, which is a reservation on the other side of Salamanca, New York. We did a play of Hiawatha down in Mill Creek Park, in back of Idora Park. I can remember it vividly.

They made me a quartermaster sergeant. Each troop would come out and have to do chores, and one thing or another, but I was there all of the time. I had to issue the candies and everything. There was a little stream that came down through there. We dug it out so that people could sit on the ground up there, but so their feet would be comfortable. Each troop would sell the merchandise--the candy or whatnot. Sid Moyer was one of them.

And so we did the play of Hiawatha. We didn't have much electric then, only oil lamps with reflectors behind them. As the story goes, Hiawatha and the other Indians were in this little wigwam. They had a stuffed squirrel, which the Indians call Adjidaumo. They would sing, "By the shining big sea waters . . ." The stream was there. They had a rope down under pulling this boat through the wigwam of Nokomis. She was teaching the little Hiawatha and the others about the animals. Towards the finale, he had killed his first deer, and placed it on this canoe.

And that would be the end of it.

M: That was what you would call a living theatre.

J: That was right there in Youngstown. Naturally, we had a little time off after everything was done, and we would go up to Idora Park. Idora Park would let us and the Indian children ride things for free.

M: Idora Park was functioning at that time? I didn't know Idora Park was that old.

J: Oh, yes!

M: How old is Idora Park?

J: I don't know how old it is but back then a man named Billings used to run Idora Park. The last one who ran it who I knew well was Tonly Cavalier, that's Judge Cavalier's brother. I wanted to tell you that because it goes right along in with the scouting part.

Then I got a job on the railroad.

M: As a what?

J: My job was a messenger. We were in the Wick Building then. Erie's general office was on the eleventh floor. The division's office was on the sixth floor, and New York Central was on the tenth floor. I would have to go over to the station and get the RRB, railroad business mail. I'd bring it from the station, sort it, and one thing or another. Finally, J. B. Dickson, our general manager, asked me if I would like to work on a private car. I said yes. The number of the car was 993. J. B. Dickson was general manager, I guess, of what you would call the lines west of Salamanca. That would make Salamanca the division point. The train ran through Meadville, Youngstown, and Mosier, as they called it in Briar Hill. It would go clear into Kent.

M: How old were you?

J: I was about sixteen or seventeen then. I was too young for World War I and too old for World War II.

M: You really lucked out, Henry. But, the way things are going, they might catch you yet.

J: I tell them all that I'll go on to either the Salvation Army or the starvation army.

I worked on this private car. I was a messenger. I'd have to take a bunch of our railroad mail down to the



New York Central, a depot, and I would pick up the mail that was for us. Finally, they got another man here. They called him the General Superintendent, W. A. Baldwin. He married Dr. Gibson's daughter.

M: A local girl?

J: Yes.

Is that Sacred Heart on the corner of Wood Street and Wick Avenue?

M: You got me, Henry. I don't know.

J: I think it's Sacred Heart, before you get to the college.

M: Yes, okay, I know which one you mean.

J: Right there is where old Dr. Gibson lived.

Then I got on W.A.B., William Ayres Baldwin's private car. That took me a little further because he was up a little further. We went into Hornell, New York and into Chicago. I got a chance to travel.

M: You did quite a lot of sightseeing.

J: Yes, on the private car.

M: What were your duties? What were some of your duties that you used to do?

J: On the private car, I was a waiter. I got an itinerary that would tell me to go to someone's house and pack his clothes. I knew what was needed for the trip. That was my job. And when we got back, I would take the clothes back to the house or any other chores they wanted done.

M: What a fascinating job.

J: I can remember when I had the honor of kissing Cardinal Mundelein's ruby ring. I think this was at the first Eucharistic convention in Chicago. I was on the private car when I, with the others, received the honor.

M: Would you allow me to ask you about what rate of pay they paid for something like that then? I'm just curious because your job was pretty prestigious.

J: There was nobody to question me on my expense. I remember that. I would go to the office and say that I needed an annual pass, over to the B&O, to the Sante Fe or any of those railroads. I didn't have to go through a form to go through this.

In New York, my people mostly stayed at the McAlpin Hotel. When we got into Jersey City, that was the end of the line. You go down in Jersey City to Pavonia Avenue, and either go to Chambers Street or 14th Street or 23rd Street. All of our offices are on each place which I just mentioned. The main offices were at 50 Church Street. I would have to go up there to take the mail and the baggage that we brought with us over to the McAlpin Hotel, where my boss stayed. In Chicago, I would have to go to the Blackstone.

M: They are both very famous hotels.

J: Yes.

I don't know whether I'll be able to say this or not.

M: Who's going to stop you?

J: I'm going to tell about Aisel Adams. His father was president of Union National Bank. His son was also president later. His other son, Avery Adams, was president of the General Fireproofing Company. Roberta Parsons is the girl Aisel Adams married. He was courting her and their was nothing too good that she couldn't have. My boss, Robert Stephen, was her father and he would do anything for her. He was born in Hohokas, New York.

M: I know where you mean; I know that territory.

J: She asked her dad if they could go to Sagertown. There was a Riverside Hotel there. They were going to go up to have hotcakes and sausage. The girls were going to sleep on the private car. They put our car on the side track. And don't you know around three o'clock in the morning, a switch engine hooked our car up and was bringing it into Meadville to put in on Number Three, the main line train to Chicago from New York. We weren't supposed to do that until Monday morning because the banks didn't open until Monday. I went outside. Jimmy, my chef, said, "Henry, what are they doing?" I said, "I don't know. I guess I'll have to see." I put my robe on over my pajamas and went to the observation end of the car. Well, they were prejudiced and didn't want to take all of this from me. I said, "You got your orders mixed up. We don't leave out of here. These kids' parents are at the hotel now. They came up here for sausage and hotcakes at that hotel." "We are going on to Number Three in the morning." Nothing else to do but to take us into Meadville. I said, "Okay." We got into Meadville. I put my clothes on and went into the local telegraph office. Each town had a code. XD is the general office in Youngstown; OB is Briar Hill; HF is Meadville; and YA is New York. I knew them all.

I got on up to special operator XD. I notified the general office where Pat O'Neil was the head man over the entire telegraph. I asked him if he knew where we were at now. I told him we were in Meadville, and some dumb asses brought another car on up to put us on Number Three at three o'clock in the morning. Mr. Parsons and all the others were up at the hotel, and G. C. Manning and his daughter was with us. I said that they didn't pay any attention to me. He got on the phone then, and I bet you in twenty minutes they had the car moved, the engine and all, and they took it back up here.

M: Did they know you called them?

J: Yes, they knew I called them.

M: How did they act?

J: I believe their paper, The Meadville Tribune, said, "Carload of Chickens Stolen."

M: Chickens? (Laughter) They were that mixed up? Well, they were chickens in a way.

J: I have to tell you that because it was something out of the ordinary.

M: Well, it certainly is out of the ordinary.

J: Another time, the same group wanted to go away to the race track up to North Randall.

M: You had quite a sporting life.

J: On this trip going to North Randall we had, and this is what the girls wanted, a caboose, a private car and an engine. Jackson Moddy could tell you about that. He worked with the crew that serviced the 550 engine, which is the one that pulled car 992 which was my private car. He had a book with a picture of the 550 engine in it and showed it to me. I said, "Yes, that's my old engine there." On our way to Cleveland, the gals got into the caboose and they let their feet hang out of the caboose and waved.

M: They just thought it was like a toy?

J: That was all. They hadn't even seen the first horse on the track. (Laughter) But that's what they wanted, and dad was giving it to them because they were getting ready to get married, and they did get married.

M: In other words, they were spoiled and they got whatever they wanted.

J: Yes sir. See, every time you mention something I think of something else on the railroad.

M: Henry has just handed me a card that he had when he worked for the railroad. It has his name and title on it: Henry B. Jones, Jr., Business Getter, Youngstown, Ohio. In the corner of the card there is a little notation that says "What I goes after I gets." And Henry says that's the way the railroad operated in those days.

J: A bread company on Mahoning Avenue, out there just across the bridge . . .

M: Wonder Bread?

J: I think it was Holland at that time. They were getting about two carloads of flour a month. Two carloads was a lot of flour.

M: Yes.

J: The B&O was handling it.

Mr. Parson was quite a comedian in his own way. He was also in Esther Hamilton's Christmas Show, among other things. He did all of this with the Holland bread man.

But here was my idea. I went into the drafting room and I had S. B. Ginn, who was the head of all of the architects or whatever, draw me up a plan. I knew what the arguments would be. The argument was if they came down Mahoning Avenue into town, we wouldn't have grade elimination then. All those trains and tracks were right down level and they would hold you up until the freight goes by, or whatever it was. Anyway, they claimed that they had their trucks, and they would get paid by the hour, which meant how long it took them to get the flour and things. While they were telling me that, this was stewing in my mind. I said I know we got a spur, a side track at Waverly Avenue and Steel Street, but they don't even have to come into town. I had already got Sam Ginn to fix me up a blueprint, so I was prepared for the man.

When I went to the office, I gave the girl my card. I can't think of the man's name who was in charge, but it wasn't long before she came and said that he would see me. I went in and told him that I was asking for a return. He said, "A return? What do you mean?" I said, "You know, Mr. Parson, I had to play the clown on your program, and this and that. But now I need your help." "What do you mean?" I answered that I knew that he was

getting two carloads of flour from Minneapolis, I think, and its destination was the B&O in Youngstown. He went on to tell me about the side track and how it was. So I got my blueprints and said, "No." I told him that I didn't want all of his flour, but I did want one carload of it.

M: Just half. (Laughter)

J: I put these blueprints down, and showed him our side track and everything. It was closer than coming to town to get it. We got the flour.

M: No wonder your card says, "What I goes after I gets."

J: So I got the flour. So much for that.

The railroads were doing pretty good. We got a new president. He was brought in by the VanSwearengen brothers of Cleveland, who built that city's Terminal Tower Building. That's when little Henry was sitting on the 35th floor in the seclusion of his walnut desk. I'm the one who would tell the lies when men came in. I would tell them that the president, Mr. Bernet, was in conference or out of the city. I knew who he wanted to see, and who he didn't. I would get my line up every morning.

M: You screened people?

J: Yes.

M: What years were this, roughly?

J: Clear up to 1935. That is when he died, and I came back home because I had enough of the railroad.

M: How did the Depression affect you during your years at the railroad? What is your recollection of the Depression?

J: It didn't bother me because I was . . .

M: You were secure.

J: I was on the railroad. There was a lot of others who I helped out as well as I could.

As I was saying, the VanSwearengens were taking the railroad over, and they bought their man, F. D. Underwood, who was president of the Erie way back during their heyday. Anyway, the VanSwearengens were seeing where

they could make money, so they built the Terminal Tower Building. They had it so the trains could come in down under it.

M: Ingenious at the time, right?

J: What they did! Anyway, J. K. Ross was their man. And the Nickel Plate was their own out of Cleveland. The company merged with the Erie, taking over the Chesapeake and Ohio, the Pere Marquett, the Hocking Valley, and the Nickel Plate. They made it all one road. We weren't satisfied; they wanted the Missouri Pacific. And that's when the government stepped in and called it a monopoly. It didn't happen, so they never did get that.

While I was with J. J. Bernet, who lived at 19300 South Park Boulevard, Cleveland . . . Many times I had to go up there and pack up the bags and get things ready when we . . .

M: Now you are with the president, right?

J: I'm with the president.

M: You're at the top now.

J: J. J. Bernet. Young Cokely came in here because his father was a friend of Bernet's. But Cokely remembers very well when I used to take them on the private car. The occasion came that we were going out to California. My boss was a guest of the president of Southern Pacific Railroad. When we got to Oakland, California, the president of Southern Pacific told his crew that Mr. Bernet was his guest from an eastern railroad and that we were his men. The boss then said that he wanted them to show us around Oakland.

It happened to be one of those days that I call an English day, for it was misty and foggy. Now, if my recollection is right, it seemed that I sat in front of the pilot; here's the pilot and there's the cockpit behind you. And it was difficult in hearing him. This open airfield was something new, and it wasn't finished yet.

Anyway, my chef was there that night at the airport. He was an old man and the crew was old. This was before 1938. The pilot was going to take us up in the airplane, and nobody would go but me. He said, "Now it's three dollars to take up one, or it's five dollars to take up two. After you are up in the air, if you want a thrill or anything you hold up your hand and I'll do it for the other two dollars, making it a total of five." I said, "All right." He took off, and we were riding up over Frisco Bay. I always heard they couldn't find a bottom

to it to build a bridge across it. (Laughter) It just dropped off. Well, he zoomed straight up in the air and then dove down again and I tried to motion for him to quit. He claimed he thought I wanted a thrill. I'm trying to tell him I had all the thrill I wanted.

M: That's it, no more.

J: So we get down to the ground, and they had holes there because of mud and everything. They just washed the plane all over. I guess the fellows standing there were newspaper reporters, and I didn't know anything about who it was and didn't ask about it, but I'm glad . . . I wanted to make sure my foot was on the ground. I had to go over to the Palace Hotel in San Francisco.

M: You really got around.

J: I had to go over there to get the boss ready for his engagement. He asked me what I had been up to. I said, "Nothing, why?" He said, "How many times did I tell you not to get in one of them fandangles?"

M: Fandangles, the plane?

J: Yes, the plane. My boss threw the paper down, which said, "Eastern Railroad Executive's Valet takes a disasterous ride."

M: They put it in the newspaper?

J: That is what the buggers did.

M: And he had read that?

J: Yes. He asked me how much did it cost? He then told me I was foolish enough to pay that, and he was foolish enough to give it to me. I said, "He wanted five, but I only gave him three because I didn't tell him I wanted a thrill."

M: You didn't want the extra thrill.

J: (Laughter) They got a laugh out of that. That's the one thing that happened with the president. Then in the finals . . .

M: What's a final?

J: Of the railroad, now. We are getting toward the end of it.

M: Okay.

J: The John Carroll drive was on in Cleveland, the three

million dollar drive during the Depression. My boss was the chairman of it. Now, this is all Catholic, you know; I can't think of what they call the motherhouse or where they house all of the dignitaries in Cleveland.

M: Where they house all of those people? Were they all near where the Catholic dignitaries were?

J: Yes, all the dignitaries were there. I had on a red jacket, too, but I wasn't a cardinal or anything. I was the one who served the liquor. We were all worried at the end of the road, for this was where the drive was concerned. They knew, but Bernet didn't know. I got in on it at the tail end of it, before Bernet. He was feeling bad and everything.

M: He thought he didn't have enough, huh?

J: That's right, so let me see if I can come up with the right names now. Let's see, Michael Gallagher was head of East Ohio Gas. I'm trying to think who was vice-president in charge of traffic at the Swift Company. He was a Catholic, and all these people were Catholic. David Cokely came with his father. Anyway, before they were ready to go in, they all had their little nip going in to the table. Bernet went way over the three million dollar drive and he was happy. I was just as happy, and I had nothing to do with it. I didn't go out and campaign like I do here.

M: It made you feel good because . . .

J: I felt good because he had never lost a campaign.

M: What was the money being raised for, scholarships and so forth?

J: No. They were building a new John Carroll University. It was a three million dollar drive. The money had been endowed to them from very wealthy people. I was so glad to hear that it went over.

M: About the time that you were doing all this with the railroad, you were married for the first time.

J: I got married in 1928.

M: You know how you see all these stories about wives not wanting their husbands to travel. But at that time, did your wife just take it for granted that if you wanted that nice job, you had to be absent a lot?



J: She was living the life of Riley. She knows that.

M: She was liberated.

J: I even had a maid for the gal.

M: She had a maid?

J: Yes, she did. I have no regrets.

M: What made you decide to leave the railroad?

J: I said my boss died.

M: You didn't want to do anything else, then?

J: When another president comes up and brings his own staff . . .

M: His own retinue. You didn't want to go to another faction?

J: No, I had enough of the railroad anyway.

M: So then what did you do? We still have forty years to cover somehow. What was your immediate switch over?

J: I have been off and on with the Playhouse since 1925.

M: I didn't know. I want to hear about that.

J: I started with them when they were on Arlington Street.

M: Please tell me that part.

J: There wasn't anything to tell. I fired that little pot-bellied stove that they had downstairs, with a great big grate upstairs, and that was all the heat that they had sitting on the benches. I told that to them on television when we had our fiftieth anniversary celebration.

M: Who got you to work? Was it Sidney Moyer, who you knew since you were a boy, or who else? How did you get approached to work at the Playhouse?

J: There were people who had money besides Moyer, like Ann MacCalla.

M: I know that name, too.

J: Her husband was head of Ohio Edison. He was an Australian and had white hair. I remember now, his name was C.S. MacCalla.

M: Okay.

J: She is the one that paid me.

She used to go on the private car. At one time they called me "the Black Rotarian." That was because I had made three international conventions. I was taking the guests in the private car to Toronto, Denver, Chicago, and Cleveland International Rotary Conventions.

Sometimes we would take a group of local doctors on the private car and they would attend a football game somewhere. I knew all the old doctors. Ralph White was the head of White's Drugstore. The only money that could be used on the car were poker chips. No matter how many I got, they would cash them in for me at the end of the trip. No liquor, for the country was dry then, but they did get prescriptions, which was real whiskey.

We made the Ohio State-Michigan game at Michigan. We saw Red Grange in Illinois. There were three games that we made every year in the private car. We would take the private car and the bosses of the Erie Railroad would take, or hire, three pullman cars to go along with our special train to see the Ohio State game, the Illinois, the Michigan game, and the Army and Navy. Someone was from each of those schools. That gang would go together, and they would shoot craps. I remember Dr. Eddie Goldcap, who's gone now. I also remember Dr. Jack Lewis.

M: Now, Henry, before you leave the road, I want to ask you just one thing, then we will jump back to the old Arlington Street place. Those were days of grandeur for the railroads, when everything was class, when you went on the private cars with linen and flowers. Would you describe what a typical car, a private car, was like?

J: When Bernet was made president of the C&O Railroad, we had the C&O private car. Now, Bernet was a staunch and a devout Catholic, and so was Harrahan who was president of the C&O. Now Harrahan's private car had crucifixes and all of that in it, but Bernet had all that taken out.

M: He did?

J: He had all that taken out of car 28. The other was 993 and 992 and car 28. He had all of that taken out. You had sterling silver; all of your dishes were Haviland China

M: The best of linen and everything?

J: Yes, the best of everything. The best of food, too.

M: I remember those days when I was little. I always wanted to go on those big, fancy trains; that was a glamorous

thing to do.

J: The private car is altogether different.

M: But I saw them in the movies, and so I thought I could go on them. I didn't know you had to have a lot of money to go on. (Laughter)

J: I could tell you one for the books. It was long before I got to this big car 28 of the president. I was still on 933. When you go into Jersey City, there is a station there with big gates and an elevator. In Manhattan you could go to 14th Street, Chambers Street, 23rd Street, and 53rd Street. You could go to any of those places and you would still be on the Erie.

There was an Italian family in Youngstown who lived on my street. I went to school with Joe Russo, Freddy Russo, and the two sisters. The father's name was Pasquale, and they called him Patsy. The father had a tenor voice that was out of this world. His wife had died when his youngsters were really young. Patsy would don her clothes; he would put them on and come up and sing. People were around to hear him because he could sing like that.

M: When he donned her clothes, where would he sing?

J: Out on the porch on the street. They would sing Caruso's favorite song, "O Sole Mio". And he could sing it.

At that time we were bringing laborers in, carloads of laborers from the old country. Now they were on Ellis Island, and the labor agents brought them to the Erie. They already placed them to be on these cars, but the private cars were always on the end of the train with the observation. If we were going west the observation was to the east so they could observe the railroad bed and everything. There were two carloads of the labor camp cars, besides the regular train with the mail cars and all that. I got my step box down--I'm on the end of the train and we are close to the shed into the station--and I'm standing out there waiting for my guests to come in. My brass handles are clean and they get up on the platform of the car. After they got on the car, they opened up the gates to the immigrants because they were from Italy and here for labor. Somebody said, "What are you? What are you?" I looked at them and . . . It was Patsy Russo, Pasquale. He'd been over there. I guessed he got in with this labor gang to get back without having to pay.

M: He spotted you and you had a reunion.

J: They wondered how the hell did I know him. He had come

here from Italy.

M: He called you what?

J: He called me "boy" in Italian. I knew, for I could say two or three words. I said to him, "Hello, Sir" in Italian, "Buon giorno, signore." Later my boss said to me, "Who is your friend?" I said that it was Pasquale Russo, a neighbor of mine. He had been getting labor together, all the labor who were going to different camps along the road. My boss then said, "Tell the chef to fix you up a big pot of coffee and sandwiches to take back and give to him." I went and told the chef I would give him five dollars for the food, which was a lot of money at that time. I said that he could use it because he liked to play poker. At that time, we would all go up to the dining car, put some table up, and start playing poker the rest of the way, until we got into Youngstown or wherever we were going. The chef prepared the food, and you would have thought I was some kind of lord or king when I took these sandwiches back to Pasquale. They were all looking for money. I told Patsy that it was for him, and I didn't want any money.

M: They must have thought it was like a dream.

J: They said, "Thank you, thank you, thank you." I got a kick out of that, though.

M: That was a wonderful story.

J: Who would ever think that . . .

M: The coincidences.

J: Yes. I'm giving them to you straight from the shoulder, the way it was.

M: That's an absolutely wonderful story. I'd like you to tell now, in some of the time that we have left, about when you started at the Playhouse. You have become a legend at the Playhouse and everybody knows Henry. We've all been hollered at by you when we did things wrong. (laughter) I remember one time you hollered at me because I put my pop bottle in the wrong place. And that was about twenty years ago. You would always make us mind.

J: I have a lot of letters that I've gotten from different people. Some have told me how great I was with children.

M: Well, you have been.

J: And the old. And they have liked all of that. I have

gotten letters from teachers. I have also bought a lot of tickets for kids to come in to see the shows.

M: Now we are going to backtrack a little. Henry has said that he started at the Playhouse, on and off, in 1925. At that time they were at the old Arlington Street Theater. In my earliest recollections of the Playhouse, Henry was always there. I would now like him to talk about his days at the theater. A typical day for Henry lasted ten to fourteen hours, even at his present age of 81. Would you please talk a bit about your memories of the Playhouse, Henry, the good and bad and indifferent?

J: In 1925, after making the International Rotary Convention on the private car, Mrs. C. S. MacCalla, whose husband then was the head of the Ohio Edison Company, asked me how would I like to see the Playhouse. She said that we couldn't pay you a big salary, but we'll see to it that you get something. I said that I would be glad to.

The only heat they had was from one, big grill in the center of the place. Down under the grill was a big potbellied stove, and we fueled it with bituminous coal, which is eighty percent gas. When you open the furnace door and throw a shovelful of that coal, you had better back out of the way.

M: I remember it well, Henry.

J: They would tell me upstairs, "Henry, we didn't ask for smoke; we asked for heat." They didn't know what bituminous coal meant, and that's what we were burning. I enjoyed it and I stayed around. But I didn't depend on that for my job. That was only a little extra job. At that time, my job was, I guess you would call it, secretary to the head waiter of the Youngstown Club, not the country club.

M: The prestigious Youngstown Club.

J: It was my job to kind of be an inspector. If the shirts weren't cleaned, they didn't look good in the hands of the sales desk. If you didn't go in the washroom and get fixed up before you went out in the dining room, you couldn't go out there. I kept time for Jim Stewart. He was someone who everybody knew. The club was run by Jim McGoogan who has passed on.

I waited tables too. I had the Sheet & Tube tables, one long table at noon. I knew the people so well that I knew what our bill of affair would be for the noon day luncheon, like sauerkraut and weiners, things that you didn't get often at home. I know that's what they would want, and I didn't even have to ask them what they wanted. They would say, "How did you know what I wanted?" I answered, "That's good for you." I had at my table, one,

big, white, oak table, the big officials, like Frank Purnell, Walter Watson, George Kaufman, and George Brainard. I also had men like Walter Meub, who was Sheet & Tube's vice president when he died. Anyway, at the end of the lunch, they had to shake dice to see who was going to pay. The old cronies, we called them over there, Harry Round, George Kaufman . . .

M: I remember hearing these names when I was little.

J: I knew all of them who were at my table. There were about twelve or fourteen of them, like Walter Meub, and John Hall, who was the treasurer for the Sheet & Tube. I also knew C. H. Longfield. Yes, I knew them all. I've just mentioned some of the people who I've taken care of. I wouldn't have to ask them what they wanted; I might for their dessert, though. But for most of them, I knew what they wanted. I would write it down, go and get it, come back and serve it to them.

I enjoyed it because at Christmas time there was always something nice for me in the form of the table fee. Now and then, I would take one of the rookies and have him bring in the water and the coffee, and things like that. I took care of the food myself. I did that even while I was working for the Sween Wagner Building.

I, and a crew, had three buildings at the same time. The girl in the checkroom at the Playhouse worked for me as one of the elevator girls in the Sween Wagner Building. One more worked for me in the Salon building. I had also The Arena in Boardman, which Lou Troff and Carol Trigg could tell you about that.

M: And you still managed to work at the Playhouse on and off, too?

J: Yes.

M: I want you to tell me what happened when they were able to leave Arlington because they had a little bit more money. You said that they were scraping the barrel; the Playhouse didn't have much expense money.

When did they move to Market Street?

J: I believe it was 1945.

M: Right at the end of World War II?

J: Yes.

M: They stayed there until they came here in 1949 or something?

J: Yes, we did our first 1959-1960 season in September of 1959. The season runs from September to June. I believe "Tobacco Road" was one of our main shows that we did. You know we did "Tobacco Road." I don't have to tell you that.

M: No, "Tobacco Road" is one of my all time favorites.

J: I can see you now in "Tobacco Road."

M: I did love that show, Henry. You know, I loved it because so many people came to see it. It was such an old show, and it went over so big so much later.

J: Look at "Oklahoma," I love that show. I hope we do it again. I was just reading the script for "Little Foxes". I was in that, you know.

M: Where at?

J: Bob asked if I'd take it. I said I'd take the part of Cal in "The Little Foxes."

M: You did it before when they did it?

J: Yes, sure.

M: Are you going to do it now?

J: I think so.

M: I want you to tell about a typical day for Henry at the Playhouse. I was astounded a couple weeks ago to learn that you came here at 7:00 a.m., or something, get going, and are still going at ten o'clock at night. Tell me about a typical day in your life at the Playhouse. You are always doing something different.

J: I get up around 6:30, and the first thing I do in the morning are my exercises.

M: How little is it? (Laughter)

J: It's too little, believe me, but I do it; I don't do any chin ups, but I can do all these other things. I go out and crank up the car, and come to the Playhouse. My duties include preparing the coffee, so that all they have to do is to plug the pot in. I leave a note and they will know what to do. The coffee is already in there.

Then I pick up the mail. I get a load that has to go into the bulk mail. If I don't have a check to take down, I'll take the mail the first thing in the morning. But when you have money or a check going to the post office, that

department doesn't open until 8:30, so you have to wait. At these times by 8:30 I would be out to Boardman or to the bank. I fool around down there for awhile then I come back. I then go and have a cup of coffee with Nick or Betty. When I come in and get the mail, I open it up and separate it. I give the bills to Bob. If somebody wants to make reservations, I make a separate pile; if somebody is paying money, I make a separate pile. I get the money, and go to the bank. I do all of the banking for them; I make all the deposits. After I make the deposits, I come back and see if they need coffee or anything else before I go home. I arrive at my home around 9:30 or 9:45, my wife is just getting up. Then maybe I'll fix breakfast, but if she's feeling better, I let her fix the breakfast. We then listen to the news a few minutes. I crawl back into bed and get up at two or three o'clock. I like to be back at the Playhouse at four o'clock. I like to see that things are on the up and up.

Bob rehearses late. A lot of times it is 11:00 or 11:30 before I get out. There are times that I have to make a second or third trip downtown. I used to have to go to the Cornersburg Post Office after they closed down the Fosterville Branch. But Cornersburg was no good for us so we got a box downtown where I now go.

M: You also run the tickets and supervise the plays when they are in performance, besides your day duties.

J: Yes, at night.

M: In front of the house?

J: Most of the time, front of the house . . .

M: Front of the house, back of the house, side of the house. You even have a candy concession that you run for your church don't you?

J: Only fudge, I sell that for my church.

M: Henry's fudge has become famous.

J: The other candy is the Playhouse's. I am in charge of the pop machine. When somebody says that they put money in and nothing came out, I go back and find out why that happened. I can always tell whether they put it in or not.

M: Whether they are lying. (Laughter)

J: The front is no easy job because half of the front of the house doesn't show up. For example, half of the time



the ushers don't show up. Now it is up to me to go up to the stage manager and ask him to loan me a couple of ushers to put out the programs. Most of these people know where their seats are. Now and then, they get some who don't know so they show them. They cooperate very nicely; they send them down. I always give them some candy; I take two or three pieces of different kinds of candy, put it in a box, take it up, and thank them for ushering.

M: Of all the shows that you have seen at the Playhouse in these many years, what are some of your favorites? You have already told me about "Oklahoma."

J: I call them my favorites when I decide to take a part in it, or else I wouldn't do it. Let's go back to "Detective Story," I loved that. "Portrait of a Madonna," Tennessee William's play, I loved that.

M: I never did get to see that.

J: We did that downstairs, A Night of Tennessee Williams, four, one-act plays. "Wonderful Town," that's another musical that I liked. I must also like "Little Foxes" to tell Bob that I'll go back for it. But I think "Hello, Dolly" is one that I thought was excellent and "The King and I." I am partial because I love musicals.

M: I like drama the best.

J: I couldn't carry a tune from here to that door over there. And people ask me how do I get in musicals; I don't know.

M: What are some of the things that stand out in your mind all of the time that you've been at that place, odd things, something that makes you angry or something you really like?

J: The children's theater; I just love to be around the kids. A lot of them are grown and married now.

M: I don't know how to tell people about you. Henry has been in every nook and cranny of the Playhouse.

J: I think so.

M: And he has done everything. Last year, they had a birthday celebration for Henry for his eightieth birthday. A surprise, wasn't it?

J: Every bit of it was. My sister came here from Rahway, New Jersey.

M: How wonderful.

J: And my wife was here. But I couldn't understand it, for she never comes to an opening night. It was the opening night of "Dolly" and I always go to the front and take over for whoever is watching the front. I take over so they can see the curtain go up.

Anyhow, John Griffith came up to me and said, "Henry, come with me." I thought he was going to take me back to the lounge and buy me a beer. But instead, he took me up the backstairs up to the stage and I heard the stage manager calling something like "Lights, bring up spot number one." And before I knew it I was out in front of the curtain with John Griffith who was telling the audience that it was my eightieth birthday and the orchestra struck up "Happy Birthday," and the audience all stood up and sang it to me. I couldn't hold back the tears. All I could say was just "Thank you, thank you." It was a wonderful evening that I'll never forget.

END OF INTERVIEW