

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Erie Railroad Project

Personal Experiences

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CALVIN BANSE

Interviewed

by

Jerome Mullen

on

December 9, 1975

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INTERVIEWEE: CALVIN BANSE

INTERVIEWER: Jerome Mullen

SUBJECT: rail clubs, steam engines, engine classifications,
definitions

DATE: December 9, 1975

M: This is an interview with Mr. Calvin T. Banse for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the history of railroading on the Erie Railroad by Jerome Mullen at 2880 Red Fox Lane, Niles, Ohio, at Mr. Banse's home, on December 9, 1975, at 7:45 p.m.

First, tell me something about your family, your parents.

B: My parents, of course, have passed away. My father about five years ago. My mother about two years ago. I have one brother a year and a half younger than myself that's living in the Los Angeles area. He's a loan inspector for the Veteran's Administration. My sister is married and lives in Lake View, Arkansas.

M: Were your parents originally from Youngstown?

B: No. Both were from the Cleveland area. My mother was from the Cleveland metropolitan district, and my father was born in Chardon, Ohio. He did a lot of work as a carpenter in Cleveland.

M: How did you get so spread out?

B: Well, for a while there my brother lived just three doors up from us when he first got married. My father was in the building business at the time. He was a contractor. Then he moved over into inspection work. Jim [my brother] took up the carpenter trade through the carpenter school because he wanted to follow it. I was the black sheep. I went railroading. Then my father worked him into the inspection business because he could no longer handle all the business of the inspection work. They closed up the contracting business and went into just inspection work.

At a later time, the First Federal Savings and Loan over there wanted full-time inspectors. They wanted my father and they offered enough money. So he decided to take that position and try to let Jim run the other business. Eventually it became a little too much. Each of the banks wanted somebody full-time. They found out the value of having a full-time loan inspector who knew building work. At that time they decided to close the business out and go their separate ways.

My brother decided that he wanted to try the west coast. That's all. His wife had relatives, and her mother had moved out there after her father's death, so they went out to Los Angeles on vacation to see what they could find at the same time. Jim met a fellow that was in the real estate business out there and loan inspection service. They go around and look for properties and advise clients as to what type of buildings and businesses to put in it like if you wanted to build a plaza. That's the type of work they did. The fact is that they appraised the Dunes in Las Vegas and all that kind of stuff then. They did very good in that business for about six years when the state of California suddenly found out that Jim's boss didn't have a real estate license. They forced him out of business, so Jim went into the Veteran's Administration and got a job there as a loan inspector. He's higher up on the totem pole than just going out on inspections. He runs a group of inspectors. He okays reports and things like that.

M: Are you the youngest or the oldest?

B: I'm the oldest. My sister is three years younger than I am.

M: Where did you spend your school days?

B: First two years were in the Cleveland Heights area. Then we moved to Shaker Heights and I was at Shaker Heights school system through my sophomore year of high school. This was in 1943 during World War II. My father was in the contracting business. At that time, he was superintendent of the Interior Finish and Mill Work Company, which was located in Cleveland. They had opened up the Sharon, Pennsylvania office. He was superintendent of that office. With the gasoline rationing and all that, it became too much to keep the family still in Cleveland, and him in Sharon. So he moved us down to Sharon. I attended that Sharon school system for my last two years.

M: That was high school?

B: High school.

M: What did you do after you got out of high school?

B: Well, actually before high school was up, I had enlisted in the United States Navy with the promise that they were going

to let me finish high school. The ink wasn't dry on the contract when I got my notice to report immediately. Of course, this was during World War II. I had to finish high school when I came out. I spent two years in the navy.

M: Only two years?

B: Only two years.

M: So you went into the navy at sixteen?

B: Seventeen. I spent the two years in the navy and I got out on the point system ahead of some of the rest because I was only six weeks in this country. The rest was all foreign duty if you can call the Caribbean area foreign duty. But that's what it was. I spent most of my time in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and Panama, Virgin Islands, and off the coast of Venezuela; I can't think of the name of it; Calebra, if you've heard of that.

M: Is that an island?

B: Yes. I spent quite a bit of time all down through the Caribbean.

M: Was that protective against the Germans?

B: Yes. There were a lot of German submarines in the area and we had a lot of contact with them. The destroyers that were with us sank two of them while I was on that ship.

M: Did you ever have any engagements?

B: That's all that I knew of. I mean it was just NI submarine warfare down there because there were so many of them in the area.

M: I mean specifically, did your ship get involved?

B: I saw the debris of the submarine rise to the surface, that is the oil slick and the oil debris of all kind that came floating to the surface. The depth charged it. Then we had one of them surface after the war was over. It surrendered.

M: Was this right after VE Day?

B: Right after VE Day, yes.

M: Was your ship ever actually engaged in . . .

B: I never saw it. Of course, I was on an aircraft carrier. It was airplanes, and besides that I was in engineering, the black gang. I stood number two throttle watch, and in my spare time I was an air-conditioning and refrigerator technician.

That was my main job. I held a petty officer rating as a machinist, and made refrigeration which is a technical rate because of my experience with refrigeration. While I was going to high school, I also worked at the Sharon Coal and Ice Company. Of course, a lot of us teenagers in school did a lot of work during World War II because there was nobody else to do it. I learned refrigeration down there. In fact, I used to stand engineering tricks on Sundays. The only way a guy could get a day off during World War II was to have one of us stand the tricks down there, usually on a Sunday because it was very quiet. All you had to do was make sure the machines were all operating properly and the refrigeration room was keeping proper temperature, just the valves here and there to make sure everything was alright. I learned quite a bit about refrigeration. I was interested in it, so when I went into the service, they placed me in refrigeration.

M: On board the carrier?

B: Yes. Of course, you had to double in brass there. My main watch--four hours on and eight hours off--was stood on the number two main throttle.

M: What's that?

B: It's what controls the speed to your shaft that makes the ship go. In other words, I held the throttle valve that allowed the steam to pass from the fire rooms into the turbines that made it go. We had four shafts; we had four engines. I was on the number two.

M: Do you mean it's just a precautionary measure to keep things under observation?

B: Oh, no. This is what actually operated the ship. In other words, the bridge would bring down a telegraph how much speed it wanted, and we would answer back on the telegraph. Then we had a twenty-four hour clock with a dial on it that was movable that set up your acceleration or deceleration rate. We had an officer that was in charge of the engineering gang, and he was in the number three main shaft in the throttle room of the number three engine.

M: How big was one of these engines, and what did it look like?

B: Well, let's see. The main turbine in the number two--understand that we had four of these--was easily the size of this room.

M: That's just the engine itself?

B: Yes. The boilers took eight fire rooms. I stood at the control panel that measured about twelve feet long by seven feet high. On it were three, very large valves all nicely shined up

in brass. One of them, the middle one, was your forward throttle. The left one was your guard valve which shut off the steam from the fire rooms in case you had to cut your steam supply off for any reason. You would shut it off at the guard valve. The other one was the stern throttle. They looked just like you see pictures of the ship's wheel on the cabin that they used to steer the ship with. They looked something like that except they were brass not wood. I'm talking about the more modern type of ship, of course. When the bridge called for some type of action to either speed up or slow up, the main control, the engineer over there, would call the position he wanted on the dial, and you swung that around to where your minute hand was. He would call mark, and when he would call mark, you flipped it to the second hand and locked it immediately. It rotated with the hands then, and you kept that, and as the hand moved, you watched the dial. You adjusted your steam pressure on your throttle accordingly so that all four of your engines were going down speed or picking up speed indentically. Otherwise, you could imagine the way the ship might be running.

M: What did you do then after you got out of the navy?

B: I got out of the navy and went back to the Sharon Coal and Ice. I was out of the service exactly one month, and I was taking a load of ice by truck up to the Greenville plant. An automobile that had pulled off to the side of the road to discharge some passengers pulled out on the highway right smack in front of me. I didn't have any time to do anything. I hit it and bounced off of it across the highway and rammed into a building that was there. I ended up with a broken back and in the hospital and didn't work for over a year.

M: You were laid up for almost an entire year?

B: Yes, over a year. I was in the hospital for about four months. I didn't work for a year after that.

M: What happened after you got out of the hospital?

B: While I was recovering, after they took the cast off, I had to wear a brace on my back for another year. I couldn't do any heavy work. Without a question, you couldn't get much of a job that way. Immediately following the release from the hospital, I had to lay around quite a bit of the time. I was very weak and pretty exhausted at times. I had always had an interest in Lionel trains. My sister's boyfriend had a bunch of Lionel trains, and we ended up merging the companies. I had a bedroom that was approximately twenty-five feet long. It was a big, old house there in Sharon. We had tracks all over that thing. I used some of my mustered outpay from the service to buy a Lionel set because I was always interested in trains. The fact is that when we lived up in Cleveland originally we lived two blocks off the New York Central main line. I guess

that's how I got broke in on railroading. Every Sunday while mom was preparing dinner after church and Sunday school, my dad would take the kids over to Collingswood yards there on the New York Central right where they changed the electric engines off of the steam engines and vice versa. We would park right there and watch the whole show. That's what got me interested in trains I guess.

M: Was your dad a railroad buff too?

B: No, not really. He just enjoyed watching the steam engines. My brother and I both were pretty well interested in it.

M: Was this when you were in grade school?

B: Yes. Very young. I never did lose interest in trains really. I imagine the better part of the year, we had those Lionel trains running through all the upper parts of the house there. We saw an ad one night in the Sharon Herald that the Sharon Model Railroad Club was meeting at Joe Thompson's house on Oakland Avenue and was looking for new members. We trotted down there to Joe Thompson's house and that's where I first set my eyes on scale model trains rather than Lionel.

M: What's the difference?

B: Lionel is strictly a toy. The scale model trains are built either from kits or from scratch or purchased at very high costs. They ran on solid rail where the Lionel runs on tubular rail. Everything is more scale, built right to exact standards. Lionel is produced for children really. I got so interested in that scale that within several months I sold out my Lionel and purchased my first full-scale locomotive kit. At that time, it cost me eighty dollars, and the kit form was just sheets of brass that you had to put together. The frame was a casting and all that.

M: How much did you know about railroading? I mean, other than a train like that?

B: I didn't really know too much about how a railroad ran at all. The fact is that I doubt if I can even say I knew classes of engines. I knew a passenger engine from a freight engine by looking at it because a passenger engine had high wheels. But in getting into scale model building, I quickly picked up on the differences of the locomotive and how they classified them, what their purpose was, the numbering systems, the classifications. I picked that all up in a couple of years. At the time, I was pretty well versed on the local railroad, such as the New York Central, the Erie, the P&LE, and the Pennsylvania and somewhat the Bessemer.

M: Now this is still a steamer, right?

- B: Oh, yes. Everything was steam. Well, I'll take that back, the Erie was running the old FT unit in four unit combinations between Marion, Ohio and Meadville, Pennsylvania at that time.
- M: What's that? What kind of engine was that?
- B: The original freight locomotives of EMD, Electromotive Division of General Motors Corporation; they're all long gone.
- M: Is it steam powered or electrical powered or what?
- B: No. They were diesels. They were the only diesels anywhere in the area. Pennsylvania didn't have anything in the diesels anywhere around. P&LE didn't have anything.
- M: Do you mean during the Second World War?
- B: Right.
- M: They had diesels that early?
- B: Yes.
- M: That's strange because I've talked to quite a few old passengers, engineers, and conductors . . .
- B: These engines, the seven hundreds, the only place they had them on the Erie was between Marion, Ohio and Meadville, Pennsylvania because that was the bottleneck of the Erie because of its grades. They ran those all through the war.
- M: That's interesting.
- B: They ran off many miles on those engines. If we wanted to see a diesel engine . . . In fact, my boss down at the Sharon Coal and Ice one day was going to take some stuff out to Orangeville to the club where the president of the organization was a member. They were having an annual get-together, and we were to take some ice out there, plus we were charcoal and beer distributors too so we took some barrels of beer out there. He asked me if I ever saw a diesel locomotive, and I said no. He told me to jump in the truck with him to help him deliver this stuff out to the club. He said that we would try to catch an Erie diesel out there. We did. That's the first look I ever had at a diesel engine, believe it or not.
- M: How were they different from the ones today?
- B: Actually they were just a little earlier model of today's covered wagons. They look the same except the raised grids on the roof and the dynamic braking are highly technical differences. Now they use forced draft with fans so that they're all inside where on the old FT's they stuck up above the roof so they could

get the air cooler.

M: Do you mean that even the diesels today are air-cooled?

B: Oh, yes. The fans circulate air through. All the traction motors are cooled by forced draft.

M: Let's get back to these two diesels now. The newer ones have the fans on the top of the engine to suck the air in and cool the engines.

B: Right.

M: You say the older ones had the engines raised above the roof of the cab?

B: Not the engine. It was the grids for the dynamic braking, electrical grids.

M: Would you explain that to me?

B: In other words, the diesel motor has, of course, a generator attached to it. The generator produces electricity, and the electricity is run through the traction motors. The traction motors then turn the wheels. The fact is that the armature on the traction motor is the axle. Of course, they're geared down considerably.

M: Compared to what?

B: Well, it isn't like the electric motor you see run your washing machine with a V belt. These things are geared. You've got a pinion arrangement there where your traction motors hung from the axle, and it has a pinion on it which drives the ring gear on the axle to gear it down. Since these are DC motors when you shut the power from the main generator off, the traction motor turns into a generator and generates electricity.

M: What's the purpose of this energy now?

B: A DC motor can be a generator. I could take you downstairs and show it to you with a small DC motor. I could hook another motor to it there, and then hook a light bulb across the leads to the motor. Then I could start the one running and the other one turning which will light the light bulb. A DC Motor is a generator in essence. Here are these diesel motors all turning going downhill. They're generating all of this electricity. They took and put this through this grid which is nothing more than resistance. This electricity then goes through the grids and the grids turn it into heat, and the heat dissipates into the air. These grids draw a lot of amperage. So when you pull from an electric motor, it slows it up, doesn't it? So the more power you put into the grids with the dynamic brake lever on the control stand of the

engineer, the more it tends to brake the motor, slow the motor up. This, of course, acts as a brake on the engine without using air which is basically called a regenerative braking system.

M: It uses energy within the engine itself that the engine is producing.

B: To slow it up. That's why the more the engine slows up, the less effective the dynamic brake becomes. That's why eventually you've got to go to the air to stop it.

M: Let's get back on the track of you and the Erie. How did you get the opportunity for you to start to work on it?

B: Well, sometime after I first picked up that model locomotive, of course, that cost me a little money which I was rapidly running out of. My father had me doing bookkeeping duties in his business for a while. I didn't want to stay with the contracting business. Besides, I pointed out they were going to shut it up anyways. I started looking for another job, and I just managed to find one driving a delivery truck for a grocery store in Sharon, meanwhile keeping my eye out for a job. By that time, I had become so thoroughly interested in railroads, that I started visiting the local interlocking towers. One of the main ones that my sister's boyfriend and I used to visit was Latimer Tower. We used to sit by the hour. Of course, having been born in a town like Cleveland and following Cleveland Indians for many years when they had a lot better team than they have lately . . . The second trick operator at Latimer Tower's name was Tom Meikel. He coached a baseball team out in Hartford somewhere. He always had a radio up in the tower with the Indians' games on, and of course, that drew us more to Latimer than to other towers. With the coming of winter and the daylight hours getting shorter, the place would end up pitch dark, and we would all be hanging around the radio. The trains would be running. I got used to something when it hit the approach there that Tom would let me throw all levers in the interlocking plant for him and get back to the game. It got so that I could work Latimer Tower in the dark.

M: This was while you were working as a delivery man on the truck?

B: Yes, right. Finally, Tom suggested to me to go see if I could find a job since I was handling that interlocking plant so well. I got the information and drove up to Erie, Pennsylvania where the headquarters were located at that time. I put my application in for a job.

M: Which railroad was that?

B: New York Central. They okayed me to break in. They gave me a slip to go around and learn some of these towers. I broke in at Latimer and became qualified on that. I went down to Brook-

field Junction and got qualified at that place.

M: First of all, where is Latimer and where in Brookfield Junction?

B: Latimer is about, say, five miles north of Hartford between Hartford and Fowler. Brookfield is right where old [Route] 82 crosses the tracks there west of Brookfield Center. The Brookfield station was about two miles west of Brookfield right where old 82 crosses. There was a tower there. I also went to Ammessy Tower west in Osgood and broke in there.

M: That's in Pennsylvania?

B: Yes. Then I went over to Doughton Tower over in back of Doughton Golf Course back in Hubbard and broke in there. I was qualified to work in four towers. Then they told me to go over to Sharon agency there and learn the operator clerk's job in the Sharon agency. While I was there, I met the union representative for the operator's union. We got talking, and he couldn't understand why I wasn't at work yet after qualifying on all those positions. He sent me back up to Erie to see what was going on. They couldn't find any record of my employment up there. I showed them the slip they gave me to break in. They wanted to know if I had a little time and I told them I had all the time in the world. They gave me a set of files to go through. They wanted to see if I could find out what happened to my application. I sat down at the table and went through every scrap of paper and everything that was put together with a paper clip or a staple or anything. I pulled everything apart and finally found my application. It was stapled to the back of someone else's. They had just closed up two of their main line towers. They didn't know what to do with me. I wasn't officially on the roster because I had never worked for a day's pay except for posting. In those days when you posted a job, you didn't get paid.

M: So how did they work their way out of the dilemma?

B: They didn't. They told me to sit tight and the earliest opportunity they had, they would run me around all their other applicants. that they had there and get me on as soon as possible. Meanwhile, they couldn't do a thing.

M: What year was that?

B: That would be back in 1950. So in the spring of 1951, there was a rail fan excursion on the Erie out of Kent and Cleveland. They put the trains together at Niles and went down to the Lisbon branch. We had the steam locomotive, the 2920. I rode the thing out of Kent. The Cleveland section came down on number 24 which was the Morning Steel King then, the diesel power with two PA Alcoals.

M: Passenger train?

B: Yes. The section there. They passed us at Leavittsburg.

M: What was the name of the train?

B: Morning Steel King. The Erie had a fleet of steel kings with the P&LE; they ran joint between Cleveland and Pittsburgh.

M: The steel king was the name of the passenger runs?

B: The passenger train, yes. They had a morning steel king and an afternoon steel king.

Anyhow, we went to my new siting there at SN and waited for 24 to pass us. Then 24 was going to drop the cars right at Niles, just leave them. We were going to pick them up. We backed out of the new siting with the passenger train then and went down to Niles and picked the cars out of the coach yard there from the Cleveland section and went on down to Lisbon. By the time we got down to Lisbon, it was pouring rain. Everybody went inside the freight house to get dry. While we were in the freight house there, the superintendent of the Erie's Mahoning Division then got on the company telephone to talk to the chief dispatcher at Youngstown to find out everything that was on the railroad and so forth. Meanwhile, several of the rail fans and myself engaged in an argument over the signal indications at SN junction. While Mr. McMullan, who was the superintendent there, was talking to the chief dispatcher, we were arguing. Eventually he put the phone down and said, "Young fellow, do you work for this railroad?" I said, "No, sir. I don't." He said, "How do you know all the signal indications?" I told him that I kind of studied them a bit. He told me that I was right and asked me if I ever wanted to work on a railroad. I told him that I did and had been trying to get a job over on the railroad for a while. He asked me if I ever stopped over at the Erie. I told him that I had and tried to apply for an operator's job. They told me that they didn't need anybody and wouldn't for the near future. He told me to go see him Monday morning and gave me his card. That's when I found out he was the superintendent. Bright and early Monday morning I was at his door and he took me in and introduced me to Jim Kelly who was the chief train dispatcher then. Kelly said that he didn't need any operators because he had all that he could handle. He told me that I would never get any work. The superintendent said that he didn't care because anyone that was this interested in railroading should have a job. He told Jim to put me on and that they would find something for me. Kelly said that it was alright if the superintendent wanted it, but he didn't know what he was going to do with me. So they sent me over to fill in the yard to break in. I was there for about a week for the hours learning that.

M: Since that is close to Sharon, did you know that yard before, or was it something new to you?

B: Yes, I had been there before. It was just an operator's job, but I had never learned that job or even been in the place

as far as knowing that there was an operator there on midnight turn. I didn't even know it. It was a report clerk's job; that's what it was. I got writer's cramp on that thing. Then they sent me over to NK target, Himrod, Hubbard, Shenango. Shenango was the first place and then I broke in with another railroad. I hadn't yet qualified to work with the Bessemer there. When I went up for the examination on the Bessemer train order. . . . At that time, the Bessemer was all steam and no CTC [Centralized Traffic Control] except for a couple small, little portions. There were a lot of orders handled. I went to take the examination and the train master asked me how long I had worked for the Erie. I told him that I had worked for about two months, and he had about flipped. But he went through with it anyhow, and he okayed me. He said that he would rather have someone with a little more experience, but that I seemed to know my train orders alright. He wanted to see what kind of job I could do for them, but I never had any complaint.

M: When did you get your first regular job? Where was it at?

B: I think it was when I bid in the relief job. I worked as an agent at Hubbard on a Saturday, two nights at Verona yard. I think it was Valley Street one day. It was a day trip at Valley Street. I don't know where the other place was, Himrod, I think.

M: I suppose you were interested, and peaked there and wanted to continue on. From there, where did it take you for the next couple of years?

B: Well, I proceeded to learn all of the jobs. I wanted to learn them all. I proceeded to break in on all of the tower jobs except for DeForest. I never got to DeForest for some reason. I had so many under my belt then.

Walter Beard was the chief clerk at that time and called me up one time. He wanted to know if I could type. I told him that that I knew how to type because I took typing in school. He told me that they needed some monitors pretty bad. He told me to come on over and start working monitor. So I broke in on a monitor's job. That was the funny thing. They said that they would never find any work for me, and within two months from the time I was hired out on the railroad, I didn't hardly get a day off, mainly on account of the monitor's job. They were always short of monitors somewhere or another. I broke in on all three tricks of monitor.

M: What did you have to do as a monitor?

B: The first trick job was really rough. You had all those people on there that you were ringing for constantly, and you had to take your reports in the middle of it. You had a sheet as big as a dispatcher's train sheet that you took a car report on, and you would staple other reports on the inside of it for the

convenience of handling. They had all the message work; you had to transmit messages and receive messages.

M: From what?

B: Kept counts of all the trains. Every train that left the terminal, we used to get the counts of it. We would ring wherever the train was going. If it was a NE 74 for Meadville, we would just ring Meadville yard. If it was a 78 out of Kent, we would ring Brier Hill, Verona, and Meadville.

M: Because the trains stop at each location?

B: Yes. Then we copied all of the pickups that they made too, Leavittsburg, Niles, Brier Hill, Verona.

M: When did that system change?

B: Oh, I couldn't put a date on it really. When the teletypes came into their own I would say. We started receiving the through-consists like 74's and that on teletype.

M: That was a first improvement over just taking it one car at a time

B: Right.

M: How much of an improvement was in the general area? When did they change to the IBM system?

B: The IBM system is very recent. The teletype system had begun even when I was hired out in May of 1951. They were handling a lot of the message work between the Cleveland general office and all of the divisions and the freight traffic sales and the division engineer's office by a teletype message. Then, of course, they started the through-consists from Marion and Meadville and so forth like that. What we had to do then, we had to copy all of the consists out of all the outlying yards that did not have the teletypes like Leavittsburg, Niles, Verona. None of those had the teletypes at those times, just the main ones did. So we copied the consists and took them upstairs. Our office was on the fifth floor then, and we had to take them up to the teletype room which was on the sixth floor. They would transmit them from there.

M: What did a consists consist of?

B: It was not the individual car numbers.

M: What was it?

B: It was just want issues for Hoboken, one coal for Peterborough.

M: But there were no car numbers on it?

B: No.

M: Well, how did you tell what was what then?

B: The teletypes from Marion, for instance, would have had the car on there at some time or another. Then when it got into Meadville, they would punch cards on them.

M: So then they would match up the cards?

B: Yes. Then the teletypes, of course, went to Brier Hill. Verona never got them, that's right. Brier Hill got them. Verona did not have the teletypes. It waited until it got to the first through yard that had the teletype, then they punched cards in on them up there.

M: How long did you stay in that position as a monitor?

B: I worked it through the years a lot. A greater portion of my operator's work was spent doing the monitor's work, although I knew every tower by that time. They were constantly calling me on my days off and everything and field positions in the towers. Then I got interested and broke in at Greenville on the ticket clerk's job that we had. I operated a ticket clerk's job on the second track up there. I found ticket work fascinating. There was nothing I liked better than to get ahold of a big interlying ticket, you know, one about six yards long, and start routing somebody from Greenville, Pennsylvania all the way to the west coast by the most devious means you could find with all the attached baggage coupons and everything like that. It was quite exciting. It was also a job that could cost you some money because you had to be right when you looked the fare up. It's a prepaid ticket. Why, there's no way of getting that person even if you knew who the person was. You would try to accost them when they get back and say that you made a mistake on the ticket and that they owe you thirty-five more dollars. You stand very little chance of collecting it. So any mistakes, they took it out of your paycheck.

M: You're kidding.

B: No, I'm not kidding.

M: Where was the ticket agency? Was it in the present Greenville station?

B: Yes, that's correct. Of course, the Greenville station has been modernized to some extent. At that time, it was wooden inside and a little bay window in there from the freight office that you would step into to sell tickets.

M: Did you have to wear a uniform?

B: No. You were expected, though, to wear a white shirt and a tie.

M: A hat?

B: No hat was required.

M: How many passengers a day would you say passed through that place?

B: In the wintertime, in January and February and that, when the holidays were over, maybe we would only put two, three, or four passengers on any one of the trains. In the summertime when people are traveling, we would have a dozen or more getting on. Now just take holidays, it was so jammed that you couldn't hardly pack another person in the place.

M: Do you think that there is a place now for the railroad as far as passengers are concerned?

B: There is in certain localities where density of traffic is quite high. For instance, the eastern sea board, that is the way to travel. By the time you can get, by any means of transportation, from the urban area to an airport and take a plane, say, maybe from New York to Philadelphia and get off in Philadelphia and take other transportation from the field back into the urban area, you could be there by train and then some. They run those clockers every hour on the hour out of Penn Station, New York to Philadelphia. I think they only take ninety minutes or something like that. As far as the rural area is concerned, there are a lot of people that would rather travel that way. It has been taken away from them, but the trouble is that there is almost another generation that has come in since that time and a lot of them never saw a passenger train. They don't know any other means of travel. I understand from reading in some of the magazines out on the west coast when they found out that they could take a train from Los Angeles to San Francisco to Portland and so forth like that, they really took on to it. There was more room to stretch and meet with other people and so forth like that where the air time was so short for one thing and you were pretty well cramped. You could get up and walk around, although I had been on a couple of flights myself where I had to stay strapped in the whole way because of weather conditions.

M: Do you think that advertising would be the key then?

B: I think so. I think one big thing is going to be the energy shortage. If it does prove that we are going to have a tough time keeping up with the oil, we could save a considerable amount. The only trouble is this, right now the costs are so high that they are going to have to find some way to give the train rider a break on the fares. I don't know what to say, whether to say outright, subsidy or what the answer is. The trouble is the family car is still the most economic way for the average family

to travel.

- M: How do the prices of traveling by train, say in the 1950's, compare with . . . Now you have to take into consideration that the index has gone up and the dollar has shrunk. How do you think the price of a passenger train ticket in the 1950's compares to a plane ticket today?
- B: It used to cost you, if you wanted to go by air, twice as much. If you went pullman, though, it was pretty much the same as air fare because you had the first-class fare plus whatever type of a combination you chose, whether it would be a berth, bedroom, suite, or whatever it was.
- M: So the price was lower, but the speed was . . .
- B: If you went coach, it would cost you twice as much to go by air. That's one of the things that I still cannot see, yet they still seem to want to keep running in the face of all of this. Why do we have a first-class fare? Why don't you just pay the coach fare and a user charge for the room accommodations to sleep overnight in a berth, or a room, or a bedroom, or whatever it may be. I could never understand. I think that is one of the reasons that the railroads went out of the passenger business as far as they did; they kept that idea of the first-class fare, and I can't see it.
- M: Why not? Some people prefer to travel that way, don't they?
- B: Yes, but they were a very small amount as compared to what they could have captured from the airlines by running it coach fare. When I used to go to Chicago a lot on my pass, it used to cost me eight dollars and ninety-five cents for a roomette one way from Youngstown to Chicago. It wasn't on my pullman's pass because I didn't have one. Now, there is no reason why you couldn't charge coach fares plus, say, twelve dollars for a roomette? Why do you have to doubt the cost on it just because you're going to sleep in a pullman car?
- M: What's the difference between a roomette and a pullman car?
- B: Well, a roomette is in a pullman car. It's the difference between it and the coach I'm talking about.
- M: So what you're talking about is that you have a seat on the train, and what you're doing is renting a bed for that night?
- B: Right.
- M: If you travel in a pullman car, you have a room that you travel in the entire time you're on the train?
- B: Right. In the hey day of pullman travel, people that wanted to

save money, for instance, say they were going to go clear to Los Angeles. They were going to take number one out of Greenville, which came about 10:30 in the evening. We would sell them a first-class ticket on the Erie from Greenville to Chicago plus, say, an upper berth or lower berth or whatever combination they wanted. Then when they got on at the Santa Fe at Chicago, they would have a coach, say, to west of Kansas City somewhere, into Oklahoma or someplace like that. About that time it got to be about 7:00 or 8:00 at night there. We had them fixed up with a step-up charge to a first-class ticket from there to say Roswell, New Mexico or some point like that, and another berth reserved for the night on the Santa fe. Then came morning, they abandoned the pullman again and took the coach the rest of the way into Los Angeles. So it was called mixed class.

M: Wouldn't that have a tendency to drive the passenger conductors a little nutsy?

B: No, because this was all done on charts. They knew who went where and what time and so forth. If you ever rode a passenger train on the coach seats, when they came to take your ticket, they would punch it and put a little tag on your seat which was red, or blue, or green. Those all meant something. Maybe this particular conductor on number one out of Meadville went as far as Marion, and if he had a red ticket, red meant that he was going to Marion. There were various colors for points in between. When the train got to Marion, of course, the conductor who got on who went from Marion to Chicago came around and picked the tickets again and punched them all again. This could happen at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, and it wasn't too pleasant, but it had to be done. In the pullmans, the pullman conductor picked up your ticket and held it in a little space in his desk. Each little roomette or berth had its own little pocket.

M: Just like a hotel?

B: Right. Of course, the Erie was just a marginal passenger carrier. It had a service period. It was not streamlined in the sense of the word. If you got on something like the Old Captain on the Santa Fe, which was an all coach streamliner to the west coast, you didn't surrender your ticket at every place either. Or the California Zephyr was another one. I remember one night when we were coming in on the California Zephyr from San Francisco. A brand new conductor had never run the California Zephyr before, but he had been running passenger trains on the Burlington. He got on and turned the lights on in the dome cars at 2:00 in the morning and was getting ready to pick up everybody's ticket. One of the brakemen came flying upstairs into the dome car. He told him that he wasn't supposed to do that and showed him where the tickets were.

M: Well, he was disturbing the first-class passengers, then?

B: No. These were coaches then. See, I know streamliners like

California Zephyr, Union Pacific's Rose Streamliners, like the city of San Francisco, city of Los Angeles and that, their conductors had little offices in one end of the car. They kept all of the tickets.

M: Well, the Santa Fe doesn't run the quantity of passenger trains that it used to, does it?

B: No. What they did run at that time was some of the best in the nation.

M: How about the Erie? Why did they get into the business?

B: Of course, the Erie was really one of the first railroads in the country to go anywhere; that is from New York to the Great Lakes they were the first railroad. They were bigger than the New York Central on the Hudson River. The first thing they went into was passenger travel. Freight came later, so they always had the passenger service. The Erie as being a fast freight hauler in the days that we know it, they had these three passenger trains that they weighed between New York and Chicago.

M: Were they money-makers then?

B: No. I wouldn't say that they ever were. We would have to go before my time in order to say that they made money on passengers. It was a prestige thing, and it was a service. In those days, the railroad made a lot of money on their freight. They just carried their passenger losses.

M: Was there an ICC [Interstate Commerce Commission] or an FAA [Federal Aviation Agency] type of government administration?

B: Oh, yes, in my time there was. I don't know just when the ICC was established again. It might have been shortly after Daniel Jewel and Jim Frisk were married. I don't know.

M: Well, the Erie has gone to court several times with the PUCO [Public Utilities Commission of Ohio] to eliminate the passenger run now. Was there ever an attempt prior to the First World War to get rid of passenger runs that weren't profitable?

B: Prior to the First World War?

M: Second World War.

B: No. At that time and even following World War II, when the railroads started to spruce up their passenger trains, the Erie put all their mainline coaches through Susquehanna coach shops there and completely rebuilt them. That's when they started painting them in the two-tone green. Previous to everything, it had been a color that we called pullman green which was a

very dark shade of green. They spruced them up. Their first passenger diesels were in the black and yellow paint scheme. After they started painting the passenger trains in the two-tone green, they got a lot of letters from people saying how well they liked the colors and why they didn't paint the engines that way. So they did. They put the engines in the shop as quick as they could, and they came out painted in the two-tone green.

M: What kind of people rode in passenger trains in those days?

B: In those days, just darn near everybody, at the time I first started, rode on passenger trains to any considerable degree. You considered the airline traveler a person like a corporation executive, somebody high up, because it took money to fly. Most everybody else was going by train.

M: So it wasn't until the 1960's when the airline service probably looked more favorable to people?

B: It probably started to deteriorate before that point. It's probably pretty close. I could show you an article in Trains Magazine. Trains Magazine is probably one of the foremost magazines in the country that considers nothing but trains. Its editor, Dave Morgan, who I've met a couple of times on rail fan excursions, one time did an article saying that if you wanted a nice, leisurely trip with excellent service and excellent dining car facilities you were to try the Erie between New York and Chicago. It's not as fast as the rest, but it makes up for it in comfort and dining car service. The Erie used to have a steak dinner in that diner that cost four dollars and a half. Today that doesn't sound like much, but back in those days, that's like an eight dollar steak today. That was a meal; that was a real meal.

M: In 1968, they stopped running the New York-Chicago runs, didn't they?

B: If you've got that date, you're ahead of me. I just don't remember when it was.

M: Was it just because they had become unprofitable?

B: That's right.

M: That was the only reason?

B: Yes. At that time Gary White was the president of the Erie then who had been on the DL&W and at one time was operating vice-president on the New York Central. He was very much passenger oriented. When they took number one and two off, he was on the last runs of those trains. He had his private car attached to the rear end of those runs. He really hated

to see them go. He fought the board of directors on it for many years. I said Gary White, that's his brother. It was Wayne White. Gary White was the operating vice-president on the Erie. It was his brother.

M: What quantity of passengers rode the train in 1968, well, towards that later part of the 1960's?

B: We used to get whole families on there.

M: I mean as far as quantity is concerned.

B: On the Erie, numbers five and six, one and two, normally carried two coaches. They had more than that leaving like New York, as far as Port Jervis or some places like where they doubled as a commuter train as well. Two coaches ran all the way through. We, of course, had a coach yard out at Youngstown. We kept a lot of coaches at Youngstown. Akron always carried a spare coach over there in case it was needed.

M: I suppose a minority of the passengers got on in New York with the intention of going all the way to Chicago.

B: No. I would say not on the Erie. Probably only very few passengers traveled the whole way. Of course, the Erie was well-known in New York state as the southern tier railroad.

M: Because it ran along the New York-Pennsylvania border?

B: Right. They hauled a lot of passengers between New York and points like Binghamton, Waverly, Salamanca, and Jamestown. Jamestown always carried some coaches around there for spares in case you needed them. I would say if you had four or five passengers going all the way you might be lucky, per day. If you were sitting in New York City and wanted to go to Chicago, you could get on the Pennsylvania to the New York Central and arrive there approximately six or seven hours on the Erie's time because the Erie was serving all local points.

M: The Penn Central was straight through?

B: They had nonstop runs. I say nonstop, but they all made a stop at Newark like on the Pennsylvania, then Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne, Chicago. That's all the stops those fast ones made. Naturally, you would choose one of those unless you were like Dave Morgan a rail fan and wanted just a good leisure trip. You would ride the Erie or the Nickel Plate.

M: Let's go back to you specifically. When did you start your career as a dispatcher?

B: I was an operator for about five years, so that would be about 1956, I think.

M: You were just naturally motivated up to the next step?

B: That's right. I decided that I would like to try out as a dispatcher. Anyhow, when I was first hired out, I had no intentions that way because I figured the job was too elevated of a position. Jim Kelly was chief dispatcher then. He kept saying that he was going to make a dispatcher out of me one of these days, so I went right along with him. But I never saw it. The fact was that there were one or two of them on there that actually went around me. One day one of the older heads around that office who I got along with really well told me that they didn't want to make a dispatcher out of me because I knew every job in the division. They knew I could cover every job they had out in the field. Then the agent's job in Hubbard came up for bid. It paid pretty good money in those days. Plus it had the express business that paid a commission on the express. You made over \$125 a month on express commission, and at Christmas time you made a bundle on express commission.

M: You mean mail service or what?

B: Railways express.

M: I see.

B: Of course, you had Saturday and Sunday off, and it was only five days a week. I put in for the job. I had enough seniority to hold it there. At the time I was working down at Franklin on the operator ticket clerk's job. Now mind you, at that time Franklin had no passenger trains, but we did a lot of business in passenger tickets there.

M: Why?

B: They went up to Meadville and caught the train. You wouldn't think it, but, boy, we did a lot of business selling tickets. I remember one Fourth of July weekend, the agent and I ended up with money stuffed in every pocket we could find, drawers, everywhere. In one day, we took in \$2,000 worth of ticket sales.

M: The same day or for the week or so?

B: Over the Fourth of July weekend. But in that one day we took in over \$2,000 in cash.

M: Things have gone down now?

B: Yes. I was working down there, and the company phone rang. I answered it, and it was Jim Kelly. He asked me if I had put a bid on the job in Hubbard, and I told him that I had. He asked me why I did that, and I told him that you had Saturday and Sunday off, and it was a daylight job. He said that he thought I wanted to be a train dispatcher. I told him that I did, but that I was never going to see it. He asked me what I meant by that.

I told him that I knew all the jobs out there and that I was his errand boy. There was silence for a while. Then he asked me when I would like to start breaking in. I told him that night and he told me to come down. That's when I started breaking in as a dispatcher.

M: What did you have to do to learn to be a dispatcher?

B: By that time with working as monitor as much as I did, I was fairly familiar with the train sheets and familiar with the train operations. If you worked the monitor's job to any great extent, it was a natural thing to flow into a train dispatcher's job. You just sat in and started breaking in. Of course, you started to go out and ride the road too. They gave you a pass to ride the road.

M: To learn the journey?

B: I started riding trains. Of course, I had ridden trains anyway.

M: How long did it take you to learn?

B: I would say that I was on it for about two months.

M: Before you actually got to sit down and do it?

B: Before I actually got any pay. You had to wait your chance then too until the extra dispatchers were exhausted. I worked one Sunday. It was a fairly quiet day. I got along pretty good. We had the only chief dispatcher that didn't have Saturdays and Sundays off. Kelly worked on Sundays.

M: Because he wanted to or because he had to?

B: They had what we called a supervisor of train operations upstairs. The man that worked Kelly's two days off also worked the two days off for the man upstairs. He had Saturday and Sunday off. I remember the old way of doing things over there. About halfway through the day, Kelly came out of his office with a grin on his face. He reached down and snatched my train sheet and told me to tell him where all my trains were. I would sit there and tell him where all the trains were I had on the railroad from memory. That was the whole ball of wax. It was just something you had to have in your mind.

M: And that has stayed true?

B: Yes, that is more or less. I think train dispatching is in your mind.

M: What did you do or didn't you do, either way you would like to answer the question, in the 1950's when you first started train dispatching that you now do differently as far as train dispatching is concerned? Were there different kinds of reports?

- B: It hasn't changed all that much in that period of time, the manner of operations, the freight trains and that. You hear us laughing because they institute a new train and hope we ran that train ten or twelve years ago. They treat it as a new train. One of the big changes that has taken place is that we no longer have the yards that we used to have. They closed just about every other big yard in the system, for instance, Kent yard, Salamanca yard. You can't really call it any sizable yard like back when I knew it where there were major classifications of trains. You end up, a lot of times, with preblocked trains here nowadays where you're trying to make setoffs and pickups from road points, which we didn't do once a train left its terminal unless it was one of the working trains that ran by the first district; you just sail right along.
- M: Was that way of doing things more profitable or more efficient?
- B: It was a matter of cutting costs from what I could see. Sometimes we wonder whether it is right. Carl Dingle often said that the best switching yards we ever had on this railroad closed.
- M: Why so?
- B: Well, they wanted to eliminate every other yard.
- M: And they picked the wrong ones?
- B: Yes. The yards that you could switch in that they removed, for instance, you don't have any road crossings at Kent where they used to switch from the east end of the yard. There are none there. You could switch all day without blocking a crossing. In Meadville you were trying to switch from the east end and they were all tangled uptown with the switch engine. They have eliminated that now within the last two years, maybe less than two years because they put that new freeway in there and closed off all those crossings. That has just been done recently.
- M: When you started, what were the working limits of the dispatcher's territory?
- B: At that time, the Mahoning Division only took the first and second subdivisions, which would be Cleveland and Kent through to Meadville.
- M: When did they expand and add to our division?
- B: They closed up the Salamanca, New York office and moved it down ten or twelve years ago. At that time I lost my regular position down there and had to go back to SN tower. Al Palmer, Bob Hogan, and I were the three who lost our jobs.
- M: Because of the extras?
- B: Palmer and Hogan lost it on paper. I was the only one who

actually went back to the tower. They just lost it on paper because several of the members who came down from Salamanca never actually assumed the positions.

- M: I've heard you were an ace on train orders. I would like you to give me a short history on train orders and how they evolved and how they differed from twenty or thirty years ago and during the steam period.
- B: Well, actually, the first train order that we issued was on the Erie. I don't know if you knew that or not. It came about through a passenger train being very badly delayed in upstate New York. The conductor on the train that was waiting in the siding found out via telegraph--which at that time was just used for message work and was not used to advance trains or anything--that this train was disabled and was some hours away. He sent a telegraph message through to the first open place he could get to hold that train there because he was going to go and meet that train. That is how the first train order came about. The manager took a look at that and figured that system would bear looking into. It would work a lot better when these trains were delayed instead of having everybody sitting around waiting hours for a train that had been disabled for some reason or another. They could just issue a telegraphic order to the train to remain. This started being done between yards at that time until somebody decided that the way to do this was to have one central figure doing this. That's how the position of train dispatcher came about.
- M: Who issued them before the train dispatcher?
- B: In the first case, it was a conductor who wired the train ahead to wait there because he was coming to meet it there. After that period, I think it was done with yard masters, yard personnel. An agent would be the most logical one because they were everywhere at that time on the railroad.
- M: What specifically is included in a train order?
- B: It all depends on what you were trying to do. If you were going to set up a meet with another train, it was going to have to convey the information to both trains where they were going to meet and who was going to take the siding. Eventually the train orders got to be such a mess on various railroads in the country that they had to step in and develop a code of rules, which at that time was a standard operating code. Then a fail-safe system was provided that wouldn't be more or less hodge podge. Each and every individual had his way of doing it before those days when rules were developed on how to handle train orders. One dispatcher had a way of doing it, and when the next one came in after the first one went home, he had an altogether different way of doing it.
- M: When did this standardization take place?

- B: That I can't tell you. I would have to look that up in history records. I just don't know it. I'm not that deep into it.
- M: What other types of train orders are there besides a meet order?
- B: Well, of course, you're familiar with the slow orders. Any condition could affect the movement of the train as far as that is concerned. It might be to advise a train to look out for flooding conditions between points. We're not as concerned about it around here as they are on western routes. Western routes like to Rock Island had a standard train order that whenever they had a bad thunderstorm between here and Young, the first thing the dispatcher did was to put out a standard train order to look out for weekend bridges and water and what have you.
- M: Were there any that were issued thirty and forty years ago that aren't being issued today because the reason for them no longer exists?
- B: I would suppose so. I wish I could remember. I never got into the deep history. I've been interested in railroading, but I never went into the deep history to find any of this out.
- M: Well, let me ask you a few questions about rail clubs and rail fans. How popular are they?
- B: They're very popular. I think the railroads lose sight of this. Some railroads are very good with rail fans and others aren't. For instance, Trains Magazine itself publishes over two hundred thousand copies each month and not all rail fans get it.
- M: You mean specifically for rail fans?
- B: Yes.
- M: Now, these people could work for railroads?
- B: Yes. The fact is right now particularly with the bankrupt eastern roads, one of their salvations for getting management trainees and trainmasters and so forth have been the rail fans. Fellows who have gone through college as rail fans wanted a railroad job. I know a good number of them. I've met them at these various meets. For instance, when I was out at Colorado this year, I stopped at the Illinois Railroad Museum. I was taking a few pictures. They have a very nice setup there. It's beautifully landscaped and everything. They operate steam trains and trolleys and diesel trains. They even have the original Burlington Zephyr up there. Some other fellows pulled up and started taking pictures there. I thought I recognized the one fellow. I walked down and when I got closer, I did recognize him. I asked him if he was the dispatcher on the

Chicago Northwestern and he said he was.

M: How many rail clubs are in this area?

B: There's the midwest chapter, the NRHS.

M: Which is?

B: The National Railway Historical Society. It has both a Cleveland and Akron chapter. It's the same club really. Up at Westleyville, New York is what they call the Lake Erie chapter of the NRHS. A number of the rail fans from the Sharon-Meadville area belong to that organization.

M: Which one do you belong to?

B: I was for a while a member of the midwest chapter out of Cleveland and Akron there, but I haven't been affiliated with it for a good number of years.

M: I suppose other than just enjoyment, is there any other purpose for rail fans and rail clubs?

B: They take a lot of pictures, of course, and there's quite an exchange in photographs. They trade with one another to get things that they don't have. It's almost like trading baseball cards when you were a kid. They will have somebody who will put on a program on the general history. You have a lot of authors on railroad books. For instance, if you just look around. I've got hundreds of railroad books.

M: What kind of activities did they get involved in? What kind of plans did you make and things did you do?

B: Mainly, it's photographic trips. One time in the late 1940's and early 1950's when I was a member of that midwest chapter, they sponsored steam fan trips a good number of weekends through the summer and the fall. We used to take a good number of trips on the B&O [Baltimore & Ohio]. B&O at that time was extremely favorable on rail fan excursions. I had taken trips down into West Virginia. B&O had a great many coal branches all over the place and branch lines that no passenger trains ran on. This is the thing the rail fans always want to see. So we had a good number of those trips with all classes of locomotives. We would request certain locomotives, and they would bend over backwards to supply that particular locomotive or even an individual number if you wanted it. I would say back in those days, most all of the railroads were very public relations minded. They would bend over backwards for anything like this.

M: Have you seen the bicentennial train that is running over this country this year?

B: The Freedom train? No, I have not seen it.

M: What do you think about that?

B: It's a nice thing. Dave Lupert who works down in the valley there has seen the train. He went up to see it when it was in Erie. He said it was a very nice display. Of course, the trouble with us is that we know so much about railroading that it's kind of like old stuff to us. We see things that we have seen before many times, and this is probably a great deal of more interest to the general public than it is to somebody who works on it. I've heard a lot of favorable comments from persons who don't work on the railroads that it was quite a nice, little train, especially when it's pulled by the steam locomotive. The fact is I had a fellow by the name of Jim Marcus from Cleveland down here Sunday night. We spent about two and a half hours here with slides that he showed us of the Freedom train. They chased it on the Union Pacific between Omaha and Grand Island, Nebraska. They had two steam locomotives on that thing, the Union Pacific's 8444 and the red, white, and blue Southern Pacific's engine that's scheduled to pull it at this time. It has about come to the end of its run for this year. They're going to run it next year. It'll be down more in the southwest territories there, Texas and that. The Texas and Pacific are at the moment rebuilding one of their Texas class engines that they pulled out of the park in Dallas, Texas. It has been about twenty some years to rebuild it to pull this train. So you can see how interested railroads are in this kind of thing.

M: You helped to produce a book, didn't you, with a fellow named Shafer?

B: Stoffer. Alvin Stoffer from Medina, Ohio. He has got about eight books out now on railroad subjects.

M: Which one did you help on?

B: The Erie Power Motor. I collaborated with him on it to some degree. I wouldn't say that I was anything like a coauthor at all. I provided some of the pictures that are in it. My biggest task was going over many photographs that were sent in. Al and I would go over them for content and reject a lot of them and keep others. Then when we finally decided which pictures would go into the book, we tried to form captions for them. A great many of the fans who sent pictures in did not caption them. We had no idea where they were taken and what the train was doing at the time. That was my biggest job, trying to figure out what that location was and what the train was if possible. I think I had a pretty good percentage of being correct. I know several times just for the heck of it, Al would throw a picture down in front of me there and ask me where I thought that place was, and I would tell him. One of them he threw down looked like it was Hammond yard. He turned it over, and it was marked on the back, Hammond yard.

M: How long did it take you to get the book together?

B: I spent several weeks on the pictures. I did not attempt to assemble the book. Al did all that himself. His brother was a publisher. He does all of his own art work because he's a commercial artist anyhow. He does his own setting up on the pages. Most authors on these books do not set the pages up; that's done by the publisher.

M: What do you mean as far as setting the pages up?

B: Do you know how to put a book together in that nature? They have to take and provide the picture and caption for every page. It's marked what page goes where in the book. You have to make this up ahead of time. You set up each page individually.

M: How did you get involved in this?

B: Well, I had known Al Stoffer for several years in models. He was in models and that's where I had got my start there in the models. Al was the same way. Al has a degree for teaching. In fact, he taught school for a while. He taught commercial art in college over in Medina or the Cleveland territory somewhere. I don't know which one of the colleges it was, but he no longer does that. He has made enough money on his books that he does nothing but publish books now. He advertised that he had O gauge equipment that he wanted to sell. I called him up and asked him what he had. He told me that he had a New York Central-Niagara amongst other items there that was always a favorite engine of mine. I went over there with several other guys, and we cleaned him out of the rest of the O gauge stuff he was selling at the time. In the course of conversation, he mentioned to me that he already had a Pennsylvania and New York Central book out and that he wanted to do one on the Erie. I told him that I had quite a few good pictures on the Erie because I worked for the Erie. At that time he didn't know that I worked for the Erie. He became interested, so he made arrangements to come over and see me at the house. We went through my pictures and started to talk about where all this stuff was. He asked me if I could remember where all these photographs were without adding a mark, and I told him I could; I don't know if I could do it today. I don't think you can keep your memory that long, but I did it that time. He wanted to know if I could come over to his house and look through some of the pictures he had already sent in to see if we could find where in the heck they were taken. I did that. I went over to see him one night. I was coming through with a good percentage of them as to where they were taken just by looking at the locality. That's the way I really got involved. Steve Timko also helped out on it. He provided the diesel roster. I'm not much of a roster man. I don't bother to try to keep track of every single locomotive the way those fellows do. Some of them really got avid in that.

M: Well, I suppose you got quite a bit of enjoyment out of doing this thing. Was that your only reason then just for the sake of putting it together?

B: Oh, yes.

M: I suppose in conjunction with that, the Erie right now is in kind of bad financial straits and it looks like it's going out of business as the Erie and may eventually go with the Federal Conrail system or the Chesapeake and Ohio system. I would like to hear your comments on that and what you feel about that and where you would like to see the Erie go.

B: If I had my own way, which is almost impossible, I would think that it would be far better off to keep the railroad running as the Erie. It would be better for the federal government if they wanted to put money into the eastern railroads. They should just rebuild and maintain the track and charge the railroad user charges for it. I think it would make far more sense. I think the disillusion of the Erie-Lackawanna railway sale to the Chessie system is rather ridiculous particularly at the price named. I think that has been brought up here recently in the papers. I know it was in the Warren paper where the trustees and the bond owners have decreed that the railroad at its worst is worth 356 million dollars, and the Chessie is paying 54 million for a 356 million dollar railroad. It kind of makes the Chessie system look worse than Daniel Jewell and Jim Fisk back when they fleeced Commodore Vanderbilt with the Erie.

M: The former vice-president, Moonshower, was that his correct position?

B: Yes. He was vice-president of operations.

M: I suppose he has written a lot on the Marion yard and the beginning and decline of the railroad. Have you read it?

B: Yes, I did.

M: Do you agree basically with his opinion that management was basically to blame for the railroad?

B: I think first of all that the Erie, of course, was always a marginal money-maker, but it always seemed to pull out. It seemed that once we were tacked with the Lackawanna Railroad that the Erie was taking over the Lackawanna, but nothing could be further from the truth. The Lackawanna men all ended up in the top operating positions on the Erie-Lackawanna railway. One thing you could say about the Lackawanna Railroad was that its roadbed was beautiful and its passenger service was excellent. It had such a beautiful, high-speed roadbed and able to move freight at a good speed, yet it was one of the poorest in the heavy competition between New York and Buffalo. They couldn't

make any money with the Lackawanna in the high density traffic area.

M: What was the reason for that?

B: Mismanagement.

M: In what areas and in which ways?

B: They failed to operate freight trains at the top speed their railroad could carry. They were still working by an antiquated method and putting too much importance on the passenger service. In the declining passenger age it was ridiculous. For instance, as passenger trains declined, New York Central started to drop a lot of their passenger trains on their water level routes. Freight trains immediately picked up speed. That was one of the reasons railroads like the Nickel Plate and the Erie were always able to beat the pants off the New York Central and the Pennsylvania because they couldn't run a freight train worth a doggone. They had them in the hole for the passenger trains all the time. Not that I'm one for sticking passenger trains with freight trains, it was just a case that there were so many passenger trains operating that they just couldn't get one over the road. So these fast freight roads, the Nickel Plate and the Erie and what you call the alphabet route, the Wabash, Wheeling, PWV [Pennsylvania & West Virginia], Western Maryland setup; Lehigh and New England was what they called the old alphabet route between Chicago and the east.

M: Because they switched railroads so often?

B: Yes. That's why they call it the alphabet route because they use about six carriers. They were very fast like train 94 that came out of Chicago in the evening there. It was a real hotshot, even in the days of steam. The Wheeling and the PWV prepared the power. That is, down in the Pittsburgh Junction where the two railways came together, the Wheeling crew hopped off and the PWV crew hopped on the Wheeling steam engine, if it was a Wheeling steam engine that day, and took it clear to Pittsburgh and vice versa. The PWV engine ran right from Kalamazoo right through to Brewster before it got a change of power. In those days, the Lackawanna was still messing around with a very good piece of roadbed that they could have really operated freights and didn't know how to. They lost a lot of business, first of all, by building all those famous Lackawanna cutoffs. Are you familiar with that?

M: No, I'm not.

B: Lackawanna Railroad decided to do away with a lot of the grades in their railroads. They built a lot of cutoffs, for instance, the one that goes through the Delaware water gap over to the Taconic viaduct and Nicholson viaduct; they're all on cutoffs.

It's not the original main lines.

M: You mean tracks that run around hills?

B: Yes. When they did so, they bypassed all of the business too. The Lehigh Valley and the Redding Company and a few of those were sitting there with their tracks still running through the river valleys and picking up all of the business. So Lackawanna lost its mainstay of its freight business, its anthracite coal. Then the flooding of the anthracite mines in Pennsylvania there and the decline of anthracite coal hurt them even more.

M: How did the Lackawanna officials assume the management positions with the Erie-Lackawanna?

B: I have no idea. The management of these railroads, it's beyond me as to how they came about. But apparently it was something in the banking interest that put them in there, I would say. I think that's why the Erie was saddled with the Lackawanna's because the Erie owned money to the banks, and the banks most certainly didn't want to see the Lackawanna fold up and lose their investment, so they forced it onto the Erie to take the Lackawanna or else.

M: Well, regardless now, they are the Erie-Lackawanna.

B: Right. That was the biggest debt that we were ever saddled with. The decline started right there.

M: Taking all of this into consideration, since the Erie system is much smaller than the Chesapeake system and the Penn Central system which will become part of the Conrail system? Do you think they could still be competitive if the government backed the Erie and continued to let it run?

B: Well, first of all, you have it all mixed up there. The Chessie system is not going with Conrail.

M: I thought I said the Penn Central and the Conrail.

B: The Penn Central does.

M: Right.

B: Lehigh Valley and some of those.

M: What I'm trying to get at is, if you have the Chesapeake in Ohio as a private entity and then a second railroad or entity will be established with the Penn Central system as the heart of that, right?

B: Yes.

- M: If the government backs the Erie and keeps it afloat as a third railroad, do you think it can be competitive with the two larger systems?
- B: I think it could. It rather depends on whether shippers would ship over the Erie. If we had good track, we could beat this. See, we have the shortest mileage between New York and Chicago. We could certainly beat their schedules. I think you have seen that recently. A very good example was about three months ago, UPS [United Postal Service] announced that they were going to take the traffic off of us because of the impending mergers with Conrail and that. So they did. Remember for a while they stopped running the advanced cracks and 99, the second New York one hundred?
- M: No, I don't think I remember.
- B: It only lasted for a couple of weeks. They put them on the Penn Central. Two weeks was all it took; they were right back on us again.
- M: Do you think there is a solution to the problem, or do you think it's inevitable that the Erie is going to be broken up?
- B: I heard today that the trustees and the bondholders have filed suit in the federal court, and they think now that it could be up to five years before a decision is made. Right now neither the B&O, or the Chessie system if you want to put it that way, wants to make doggone sure that they don't get caught in the middle of a lawsuit where they may end up having to pay that other three hundred and some million dollars. Neither does Conrail, so the justice department has decided that they want to leave hands off and so does the Chessie system until these lawsuits are settled. As of today, the way they are talking in the office, they don't know what is going to happen.
- M: But as far as you're concerned, you are for the Erie, and you think it could survive?
- B: Yes. I think it could. It always did before. I think the one mistake the Erie-Lackawanna management made was when they had to cut expenses; they cut it in the track department, and that is the most basic thing you have to have. One thing if you want to look at the carriers that are making money today like the Union Pacific and the Burlington Northern, just go look at their track lines.
- M: So the track is a part of the railroad?
- B: Burlington and Union Pacific operate freight trains at seventy miles an hour, ordinary freight trains at seventy miles an hour.
- M: Well, I would like to get on to something a little different.

It's a little tamer.

- B: I could go back to the days of steam locomotives when I was first hired out on the railroad when the hottest trains on the railroad were the NE 74 and the NE and New York 98's before these hundred of piggyback trains came along. There were many times when I had paced the NE 98 in my automobile between Jamestown, New York and Salamanca, New York and had an awful time keeping up with it at eighty miles per hour. Seems fantastic, but they did it. They did it. I saw the 98 leave Meadville right ahead of train number 6 and go all the way to Salamanca. If I just stop and think, we had a standing call figure; when a train pulled out of Kent yard we rang Meadville yard right away to give them a two hour call. Sometimes a light NE 98 with an engineer like Pete Hoover or J. R. Williams could beat our figures by fifteen minutes.
- M: And that run today takes?
- B: Pretty near three hours.
- M: That's because of the track?
- B: Right.
- M: Let me get into something else. The Erie doesn't have names such as the Zephyr or the El Capitan for their trains these days. Did it have names in the past?
- B: The trains that we did run, the three daily passenger trains each way between New York and Chicago, number 5 and 6 were the Lake Cities. Originally, they operated only to Cleveland. Then they started to run number 5 and 6 through to Chicago. They put on a connecting train that went from Youngstown to Cleveland. That's how it got the name Lake Cities. Then number 1 and number 2 were the Erie Limited, which were really the pride and joy of the system. Number 7 was the Pacific Express, and number 8 was the Atlantic Express.
- M: How are freight trains named? Some of the names that are available now like the NE 74, the MC 3, the PB 999 . . . How do freight trains acquire names?
- B: The NE 74, New York 98, our old Erie, they are simply a 98 on most railroads. If you go back to the days of steam and back before my time, every railroad it seemed had a red ball freight that was called a 98. That was a universal name or number for a hotshot freight. So the NE was New England, the NY was New York; it was as simple as that. Now these MC 3's and so forth like that, they were Lackawanna symbols. They were mainly just Meadville-Cleveland, Meadville-Marion, Meadville-Chicago or something like that when they put those tabs on them. They were Lackawanna nomenclature. They were not Erie.

M: Is there anything else that you can add to that?

B: A lot of railroads do have names for freight trains. The Erie never went in for that very well. Although for a long while the Erie used to advertise the 99's and the 100's as the Flying Saucers. They used to advertise them in the magazines as such. But those were the only ones I've ever known the Erie to name. Other ones like the Chesapeake in Ohio had one that they called the Expediter and the Speed West. They were manifest trains east and west; they were box traffic.

M: Why do you think they name trains? Is it something psychologically stimulating?

B: I think so. If you take your symbols there, the Pennsylvania had one that they called BEC 1 and 2 which got nicknamed the Beezer, and it was their hotshot. It actually stood for Buffalo, Erie, Cleveland, but it also got nicknamed the butter, eggs, and cheese.

M: Quite a few old passengers, engineers, and conductors who I have talked to in the past few weeks seemed to indicate that in the steam era past they kind of lost the feeling for the railroad.

B: I think so too. Back in the days of train orders and steam engines, I believe that your class of individual who was working for the railroads had much higher mentalities. It took a lot of brains to figure out all those train orders and make sure that you didn't pass up the siding for the one that you were supposed to be in. The rules were complicated enough in a way that you had to know what you were doing under the rules. The way the train order was read meant whether you went in the siding or whether you held the main. If you were supposed to go in the siding there and you mistakenly held the main, you could imagine what might happen. For a while these guys had to figure out a lot of things; they had to figure running time; they had to figure where they could go for certain trains. If they had a first-class train coming up on their rear and they had a meet with an opposing second-class schedule, which was a hotshot freight somewhere, they had to figure now if they went here for the hotshot where would they be for the passenger train. And the order says that they had to hold that main track for the 89. If they go there for 89, then it leaves them standing there for 6, and they can't be on the main track for 6. So therefore, they would have to pull it ahead to clear 6 and things like that.

M: Most of that is handled by the dispatcher today, isn't it?

B: That's right. All of this is under direct direction of the dispatcher now. Of course, the dispatcher in those days would see that he had a conflict showing up like that where he had a meet set up with a second-class train at a certain point.

Somewhere that train was going to have to clear for the passenger train. It was getting close, so he would hoop up another order for them somewhere at the nearest block office to meet this other train at this other siding instead of the one they had originally set up, so he could make the meet for both trains at the same point. For instance, not as much here in the east as it was out west, you had a lot of expansion of desert, so you might have dispatchers in Salt Lake City or someplace like that and you didn't have another set of dispatchers except in Los Angeles on the Union Pacific. All that in between, all on timetable orders, was your schedule. I know a number of men who took a lot of pictures of steam locomotives that were locomotive engineers on the UP and the Santa Fe and like that, that would steam once they left. The railroad held no more interest to them after that. They went into other jobs. A lot of them like Walter Thrall who worked for years on the Union Pacific as a fireman, mainly as a fireman and as a locomotive engineer, worked about two or three years on the diesel locomotives, quit, and now has a very high up position in an insurance company today, executive.

M: What's necessary, then, to restimulate the attitude of the employee

B: Well, I think that it is not only limited to railroads. It's all over today. You don't see very much interest by most employees in most companies. The only time you see it is maybe in the younger fellows who are fresh out of school and gung ho and ready to tie into anything. It doesn't last like it used to. I heard something on the radio tonight on the way home where the government had made some kind of study where they said that the number of investors in corporations since 1970 has decreased so sharply that they are really worried. They figured that the reason behind it was a complete lack of confidence in the management in most companies. They didn't think the ability was there to make money, and therefore, they weren't investing their money any longer. The average person who worked for an hourly wage did put a little money aside and did a little investing in the stock market is no longer doing so.

M: Well, then you think that it relates back to the leadership on the railroad or leadership in any capacity?

B: That's right. I think that this is something that is not just limited to the railroads. We've lost a lot of confidence entirely in the country.

M: If you were in a position higher than you are now to make any changes or institute new programs, what would you like to see done to make things more efficient and make thing run smoothly?

B: Now you've got me. I never did consider myself smart enough to attack all the ills of a corporation.

M: Well, what do you think needs to be done that isn't done today?

B: The main thing is to get the tracks back in shape so that you could run freight trains at a considerably higher speed of seventy miles an hour. Another thing would be to get proper yard conditions set up. It doesn't mean that we have to go back to the old system of a yard every eight or ninety or hundred miles. But it does mean that we have to have proper classification, and they will do it easily. What we did was cut out the biggest yards we had because they were the worst expensewise. We were left with a bunch of smaller yards that cannot handle the traffic, and we were trying to make so many classifications. Another thing, I think, the period of drag freights is definitely gone if you're going to handle merchandise. You're going to have to get the merchandise trains on a schedule and keep them that way. The only things you want to tie tonnage on are coal, ore, and minerals.

M: What do you mean by drag freights?

B: Trains that cannot maintain high speed due to the fact that they have too much tonnage.

M: In that case then, you would let them work as a local train from location to location?

B: Yes. We want to keep the others moving.

I mentioned the BEC 1 and 2 on the Pennsylvania; they ran out of Buffalo. The Pennsylvania had track rights in those days on the New York Central to Erie. Then they came down past Brewen Tower through Greenville and that, went down to New Castle, went around crosscut Y there at New Castle and went up through Youngstown and went to Cleveland. That was a hotshot train. Going back to the days of when they were first dieselized, I remember they used to run that train with an ABA covered wagon set when everything else was running steam on that division. I would see them go by Shenango. You could darn near set your watch every night by the schedule on that train. That was on the Pennsylvania. The Erie was on much better time performance than the Pennsylvania, but that train was the pride and joy of that division and everybody knew it, and everybody was next to it. That was their scheduled train for that division because they didn't have any hotshots other than the Beezer. A lot of times when we were figuring close meets there at Shenango, running trains down, westbounds down for eastbounds and that, you would look at the clock and ask someone where the Beezer was. He would say that he would be there in five minutes, and then we would bring the westbound down. We knew doggone well that if the Beezer hadn't passed yet, you weren't going to get the westbound by Brewen. That was their pride and joy.

I think that we have lost a lot of pride in our work. Definitely,

it has gone in most cases. There is too much changing; they don't seem to know exactly what they want. We can't seem to hold schedules of trains more than a few months on this railroad. They have to change them all over again. We end up half the time back where we were. We try to figure out new ways of doing things, and it doesn't work out. The main thing is that they don't have the track to keep the speed of the trains, so that you can turn to your power. There again you wouldn't need near as many locomotives because if your power was turning on the trains that it should . . . Back in those days when we had good track, in fact as I said, we ran trains seventy miles an hour right along with the steam engines. Back in World War II those diesels that were plowing back and forth between Marion and Meadville, the engine that came out on any 98 out of Marion was expected to make XE 91 at Meadville. Except for very rare exceptions, it always did unless there was some considerable trouble that was happening.

M: Do you mean it was on schedule?

B: Right. That diesel didn't wait there for more than two hours.

M: I think that I have run out of questions other than one. How do they classify engine types as far as different manufacturers are concerned and the capacity of different engines?

B: Are you talking now about today's engines, the diesels, or the steam?

M: Well, steam and diesel.

B: In the steam they were known mainly by their wheel arrangements. For instance, a locomotive with two leading wheels, eight drivers, and two trailing wheels was known as a four-eight-four. That's your number of axles actually. That's a total number of wheels on both sides of the engine. In England that would be known as a two-four-two because they don't do it like that. They just count one side. Erie didn't have any of that particular type, but that's known as a northern. On some other railroads, for instance, the New York Central always felt that since they had a water level route, the word northern was a misnomer as far as the New York Central was concerned; they called them Niagaras.

M: These are steam trains?

B: They were engines. That's a class of engines. A four-eight-four wheel arrangement was known as a northern. The 330 class steam engines the Erie had, that were the fast freight haulers for so many years that really made the Erie money, had a two-eight-four wheel arrangement. It had a single axle in the front, four driving axles, and the four wheel trailing track. They were known as Berkshires because they were named after the first engines of that wheel arrangement built for the use in the Berkshire Hills

of Massachusetts on the Boston and Albany Railroad. The Erie's Berkshire turned out to be the heaviest ever built in that wheel arrangement.

M: Why so?

B: Well, the Erie being a railroad of larger clearances was able to build a bigger locomotive than most railroads clearancewise. So they had more weight on the drivers and were a real fast hauler. In fact one day when I was working monitor down there, the 2900 class passenger engine on number 24, the Morning Steel King, broke down up at North Randall, just west of North Randall. We had what we called the junker in those days. It was the clean-up train out of Cleveland to Briar Hill. It was up at North Randall, so they went down on top of 24's train and pulled it up to Randall's depot and set the 2900 in the spur there. They tied back on that and made up six minutes time in 24's schedule with the freight engine. So you can imagine how fast that Berkshire was rolling with that passenger train. That's how fast those steam engines on the Erie were, those freight engines we had. They were darn good engines. They made the Erie a lot of money. Single arrangement was very satisfactory the same way on the Nickel Plate.

M: That's what?

B: That's a steam engine. 060 was a switcher. That's how they classified them. Each individual railroad put a series of numbers on. The Berkshires were in the 3300 class on the Erie. It went from 3301 to 3404. There were four subclasses. There were S1's, S2's, S3's, and S4's.

M: What did that stand for?

B: The S1's were originally built by Baldwin; the second group was built by Alcoa, that was the S2's; the S3's and S4's were built by Lionel on different orders. Each one was slightly different. They were the subclasses. The Pennsylvania Railroad was very peculiar in this country in that they numbered their locomotives any old way. The 112 would be a K4S passenger locomotive; the 113 would be a 22100 decapod. They were numbered promiscuously all through. Can you imagine being a train dispatcher and being handed identical numbers of engines and they would be two entirely different engines?

M: And you had to know which was which?

B: Yes. Anybody on the Erie, when someone would say what kind of engines does the 98 have today, could answer the 3300. Everybody knew what a 3300 was. Some days you might say that four sections had a 4200 out of Berkshire. We used a 4200 which was a two-ten-two.

- M: Well, then, when they changed it over to diesel engines, did they continue to use this classification as far as the wheels were concerned?
- B: No. The diesel classifications are another thing. For instance, BB, CC, like our 3600's, our CC's, that stands for six driving axles. A BB was two four-wheel trucks like our 2500's. Now, I'll ask you a question. What would a E8 be then under that type?
- M: Eight wheel trucks.
- B: No, they're six wheel trucks. The passenger engines like the 29 or 28 they had for so long.
- M: Oh, I see what you mean. An AA then, right?
- B: No. I say a C is a six axle truck. An A would be a single axle.
- M: They're double axle, aren't they?
- B: They're six wheel trucks on the E8's. You would think that they would be the same thing as an ST45, CC.
- M: With six wheel per truck?
- B: Right.
- M: But they aren't, I suppose?
- B: They aren't because the center one doesn't drive.
- M: What does it do?
- B: It's an idler. It merely carries the weight of the engine. On those E8 passenger engines you only have four traction motors, where on the ST45 you have six traction motors.
- M: Who make the ST45's? What company?
- B: EMD division of General Motors.
- M: Who makes the E8?
- B: The same.
- M: What other companies are on the market?
- B: General Electric in Erie is your next largest competitor to General Motors, and then for a long while Alcoa is Schenectady was, but Alcoa kind of dropped by the wayside. What happened there was Alcoa got caught with their pants down. When the super power engines, the super charged engines hit--that is

your ST45's, your GP35's, what we call in the rail fandom, the second generation diesels--Alcoa got caught still in their regular lines with no precautions for a super power engine. When they tried to change over they went to the 2400's. They were really a miserable figure compared to the rest of the builders. Alcoa completely got caught with their pants down. They had to get into something in a hurry without really being better designed, and they ended up losing their market.

Going back to the E8 though, that's an A-one-A plus and A-one-A because there is a idler wheel in the center of that truck.

M: Would you like to add anything else? I'm out of questions. Are you out of answers?

B: Yes, I guess so.

M: Any comments you would like to make?

B: I can't think of anything at the moment, other than I don't know whether I'm going to have a job in a little while, and neither do you.

M: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW