

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Erie Railroad Project

Railroading Experiences

O. H. 782

CHARLES WILLIAM ARNOLD

Interviewed

by

Jerome Mullen

on

December 3, 1975

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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Erie Railroad Project

INTERVIEWEE: CHARLES WILLIAM ARNOLD

INTERVIEWER: Jerome Mullen

SUBJECT: various locations worked, dispatching experiences,  
various agencies

DATE: December 3, 1975

M: This is an interview with Mr. Charles William Arnold for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, History of Railroading Project by Jerry Mullen at Mr. Arnold's home in Niles, Ohio, on December 3, 1975, at approximately 7:00 p.m.

First, tell me something about your parents and your family?

A: My mother is dead. My father is retired and is 78 years old. He is still working part-time and is in very good health. My mother was deceased at the age of 71.

M: Where were they born?

A: My father was born in Parma, Ohio and my mother was born in Middleport, Ohio. Middleport is midway between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati.

M: What was his occupation?

A: My dad worked for U. S. Steel at the McDonald Mill for 35 years or so. He's retired.

M: How did he get into that business?

A: First, after they were married, they moved from Middleport to Akron where he worked in rubber factories for awhile. Then he left Youngstown Sheet & Tube and they moved to Girard, Ohio. That is where he got the job at McDonald. I was born in Middleport, Ohio also.

M: Is that in the southern part of the state?

A: Yes.

M: A direct line between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati?

A: On the river, on the Ohio River. Middle Port, that's where it got its name.

M: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

A: I'm the only spoiled brat in the family. My wife is the only spoiled brat in her family.

M: Where did you spend your childhood days?

A: Girard.

M: You were born and grew up in Girard?

A: I was born in Middleport and I moved to Girard when I was one year old. That is where I spent my entire life until I was married. After five years of marriage, we moved to Niles.

M: What about your school days?

A: Girard Grade School, Girard High School, a graduate of Girard High School in 1941.

M: Did you go on to college?

A: No. I tried nine weeks of it, but I couldn't make it. I was working in Niles, had a girlfriend in Youngstown, and lived in Girard, and I just couldn't make it.

M: What do you remember about your high school days?

A: They were very clean, nice, good times and hard studying. It wasn't like today where if you don't like the subject you can give it up and take another one that wasn't so hard. When you had subjects then, you had to study for them.

M: Like what subjects?

A: Latin, French, algebra I and II, geometry, a little history, a lot of English, and that's about it.

M: What did you do after you got out of high school? Where did you start to work?

A: The first job I had was with Western Union in Niles.

M: What kind of a position was that?

A: Clerk. We used teletype machines instead of Morse Code. I worked there for six months, maybe longer. Then I got a job in what they call a factory store; the lunch counter down

at Republic Steel in Youngstown. I didn't like that so I got a job on the railroad.

M: Was that your only motivation? You just wanted a different job?

A: Who would care to wait on tables and throw food around?

M: Why did you specifically pick the railroad?

A: I had a chance to get a job from a good friend of mine. She recommended me to the chief dispatcher who was Max Forts. He was a great fellow. I went up to see him. He said, "You can fill out the application, but I can't promise you steady work." So he sent me down to the M. K. Target and I didn't have a day off for six months.

M: What year was that when you started?

A: It was 1942. I worked in Youngstown six months and then they sent me to Cleveland where I worked at the Westend Tower. They said I wasn't going to handle that because of the levers--couldn't throw them. But I went up there--we drove five hours and went to work the next day--and I worked there steadily.

M: How old were you when you started?

A: Nineteen years old.

M: These jobs you are talking about now, these were jobs as operators?

A: Yes. Operators of Stoney Point, Pennsylvania. They put me on the back end of a mail train, old number 12. Number 12 stopped at Stoney Point to let me off. I got off there, looked around, and said, "My God, where am I?" All there was was one little shack and the rest was fields with deer in them hopping around. That was the most lonesome looking place in the whole world. I got off, learned that job, and stayed there for a long time.

M: Did you commute back and forth each day or did you stay there?

A: No. I stayed at a section foreman's house. It was about a mile and a half down the track, so I walked back and forth until I got an automobile.

M: How long did it take to get an automobile?

A: Not very long after I got there. Because there wasn't anything to do. So after you got an automobile you were out this road, down the hill two miles, and there was Conneaut Lake, Pennsylvania. It was a good experience.

M: What was in Conneaut?

- A: A lot of friends. It was just a small town where you could walk up and down the streets and you knew everybody.
- M: Did you live there?
- A: Not at that time, I didn't. After I left there, I was an agent in Atlantic for awhile. Don't ask me how long because I don't remember.
- M: You just went into Conneaut Lake as a diversion or when your time was up?
- A: Yes. I had a girlfriend down there and that helped.
- M: Then you continued to stay at the foreman's home?
- A: Yes, for awhile. Then I left there and went someplace else, Pymatuning, I believe, the 19th Tower. We used to have the crossovers and all the . . . Well, they had a tower there.
- M: That's right on the Ohio/Pennsylvania line?
- A: Yes, right on the swamp. The mosquitos were bad at night too. Anyhow, we went to Sharpsville. It was nothing much. They had an awful hard bench to sleep on, I know that.
- M: Would you describe the various jobs you had to do in each one of those places?
- A: Such as?
- M: Stoney Point.
- A: Well, you had a CTC machine. You had two sidings and a main track at Stoney Point and you had one siding and a main track in Atlanta which was all operated from Stoney Point. You talked to the dispatcher; the dispatcher would tell you what to do to the trains. Once in awhile, well, quite a few time, I would hand train orders or train messages.
- M: How did you hand the message?
- A: We used a wire loop, and a string was tied to the wire. Then the engineer put his arm out through the wire and gets the message. You would stand on the ground, hand the message up, and close your eyes.
- M: What did you do at Atlantic?
- A: Atlantic, I was a freight agent in the railway express, which was a very dull job for me. All you did there was report trains as they went by and handle the freight.
- M: Did they have a yard there at the time?

A: No.

M: Business?

A: Coal and weight freight came down once a day, left off the freight and express, and that's all there was there.

M: Was there a business there that you serviced?

A: Yes, there was the feed mill; we serviced that. That's the only thing down there.

M: Was that the only purpose for being in Atlantic then, to service that one feed mill?

A: At Atlantic, we took care of Geneva which I should have mentioned, and Stoney Point. If Geneva had sidetracked for unloading coal in Stoney Point, of course, you have the Pittsburgh Plate & Glass, which it is called now; it used to be the old KOW during the war.

M: What's that?

A: What does that stand for? It was some kind of munitions dump, but I can't remember exactly what it stands for. The track runs down in there about two miles long.

M: Was it built specifically during the war?

A: It was built specifically during the war for that purpose. Of course, I never handled that; that was all handled from Meadville. If you were working at Stoney Point, you have to unlock that switch so you can get in there. At Stoney Point that's the only thing besides the team track. They throw in a couple of carts of coal or something for somebody that wants to come up and unload them.

M: You mean from a business up in that area?

A: Yes. If somebody comes from let's say, Conneaut Lake . . .

M: Do you mean private individuals or companies?

A: Private individuals or a company would come up there and unload the car.

M: You were in charge of selling it then?

A: No. It would be billed to them. It is up to them to come up and unload it.

M: What did you do at Pymatuning?

- A: First of all, Pymatuning was coming off the main line. The main line train is coming off and the first district train is coming from the first district which would meet at Pymatuning; we had two tracks there. You would throw switches if you wanted the main line train to go to the first district. The main line train coming off the main line or first district train coming off the first district going to the second district which was . . . Then you had the siding. You had a crossover transfer.
- M: How large was the tower at Pymatuning?
- A: It was two stories. The furnace was in the basement and the levers in the top.
- M: How did you report to the dispatcher? Did you use a teletype?
- A: No, we used telephones in those days. One dispatcher would have to report to the first district train, another dispatcher had to report the second train. So you had two dispatchers. So you had hand-on messages and train orders.
- M: How long did you continue to live and work around Stoney Point and Conneaut Lake?
- A: About three or four years.
- M: Did you come home in the meantime?
- A: Off and on I came home, sure.
- M: What happened to your girlfriend?
- A: She got married. (Laughter) That was after the war.
- M: Was there a lot of activity during the war years that maybe the old-timers mentioned that hadn't normally occurred?
- A: There were two trains, one right after the other. Fact is, one night I was coming to work from the foreman's house. I saw this big, red fire up near the tower. I wondered what was going on and figured I probably wouldn't have to go to work that night because I bet somebody got the fire too hot and burned the tower down. What resulted was that one troop train ran into the rear end of another troop train and it was all on fire. Luckily, nobody got killed or hurt.
- M: That was a steam engine, I suppose.
- A: That was a steam engine, yes. I was working the day the first diesel came through; that was quite an experience seeing that big, old thing. It was an old 700 I believe.

M: They came out of Meadville?

A: Yes, it came out of Meadville, 702 or something like that. Anyhow, I thought it was quite an experience to see that.

M: Which one did you like better, diesel or steam?

A: It's pretty hard to say. You never have as much trouble with the steam engines as you do the diesel. But the steam engines had to stop a lot of times to get water. Now you can run from Meadville to Marion on a tank of water.

M: You started work just prior to the time that steam engines were being phased out, didn't you?

A: Yes, they started to fade out. I remember one winter up there at Stoney Point, they had us train inside for about a week. We couldn't get into Meadville because of the snow conditions. When we decided to move that train, they put five units on the rear end, and you couldn't move that train.

M: Why not?

A: Because they were Bessemer engines. (Laughter)

M: There has to be another reason besides that?

A: It was all frozen up after sitting that long. The air froze. But they finally got it moving. I don't know how many engines they put on it all together, but they finally got a wheel. It must have had about six inches on it; I know it had five.

M: After the war ended, were you still working as an operator?

A: Yes, until 1952 or 1951 when I became a dispatcher.

M: Which year was it that the first diesel came in?

A: Oh my, you are asking me something that is way back there. I can't remember that, 1950 or something.

M: How did things change from the time they used steam engines to the time that they used . . .

A: We kept getting more diesels and kept hauling more cars. The more cars they haul, the more diesels they get. We used to have 3300 steam engines. A 60 car train of them was a big train. Now you can haul 120 to 140 cars with three diesels.

M: Did business pick up when they started using diesels?

A: How would you look at that? You would get less trains and the same amount of cars.



M: Did the volume of traffic increase?

A: I would say no that it didn't increase. During the war, we had a lot of business. During the war, we had an awful lot of business and those were the best years. But after the war, it started going downhill. You get a lot of trains that haul more cars. We used to have one right after the other coming up the hill at Stoney Point, now you get one or two. Just longer trains, that's all.

M: Was business good because of the war?

A: Yes. There were troop trains and freight trains.

M: These were the units that came out in the 1950's. How much of an improvement did they make a decade later in the 1960's? Were they much more powerful?

A: Oh, much more powerful. The horsepower per ton increased immensely and the engines got smaller.

M: How large were they? Were they as large as the steam engines?

A: Yes. They were as large and as high.

M: I suppose this decade of the 1950's was an experimental period for the diesels?

A: Yes. The first ones were experimental.

M: Do you remember any kind of tests they did?

A: No, that was all handled from the big office; I was just an operator.

M: What did you think when they started using diesel?

A: We all knew that was the coming thing and that the steam engine was just about a thing of the past, which it is.

M: Which other positions did you work in between, say, the first year you started and the beginning of the diesel era besides an operator and locations?

A: That was the only one until the diesels came in. After they came in, I worked a monitor and dispatching job.

M: What was a monitor's job like?

A: The monitor's job was twice as hard then as it is now because you had all the messages that had to be delivered to the yards. You had to do that one by one. You would read them off over the phone to the yards, power orders and so forth. Nowadays,

they have a computer. They put it in and it is all done in five minutes. We used to have to spend, sometimes, eight hours on it. We used to have to trace trains in between.

M: What is the purpose of tracing trains?

A: You take the arrival and departure of a train at the terminal such as Meadville, and the arrival and departure of the train at Kent. You have a schedule of the time that it is supposed to arrive and depart and if it doesn't coincide with what time it arrives and departs at the other terminal, you have to figure out the delay. If it was delayed by another train, a bad track, broken rail or numerous things which would delay the train, you would have to account for all that time. You also have to figure the tonnage, like the number of cars in the tonnage. It should make the same time as an ordinary train, but if it is overloaded, you would have to figure so much time for too much tonnage.

M: Who got the copies of these reports and what were they used for after you got finished?

A: After I was finished with them . . . We used to have to type on the typewriter after we traced them in longhand. We would have about eighteen copies. They would go to the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, the train master, the road foreman, the engines, and the chief dispatcher. There were about eighteen copies.

M: What was the purpose of that report as far as you were concerned? What did these people who received them use them for?

A: They used it to iron out the difficulties that the train might have had in losing time. That was one of the purposes. They would take it into the conference and all go over it. They had a conference every month.

M: How were you chosen or picked to become a dispatcher?

A: There was a dispatcher down there at Youngstown by the name of Ralph. I was working at Henrod Junction and one night he told me to come on up because he wanted to see me. So I went up and he said, "Do you want to be a dispatcher?" I said, "I sure do." He told me to sit there. Of course, old Ralphie would never let you sit down at the table, you just sat there and listened to him work, but you had a lot more trains than you do nowadays. All of a sudden, old Ralph said, "Where's that train? Where's that train? You're supposed to be paying attention. That's the way I started.

After that you couldn't sit down and work until you saw the superintendent. So I went to see the superintendent. He called me into his office in the back and said, "Go ahead.

Sit down and start working." You have to post; you had to post a long time. So I sat down and posted one side and then I posted the other side, the first district and the second district. But you had to know both of them before you could go to work. That was a long growing outfit. I spent eight hours down there on my own time doing the paper work, but it was worth it in the long run.

After you learned that, then you have to take a long examination for it [the engines] which lasts eight hours. First of all, you had to peel out the rule book. Every question you had to have answered and you had to memorize it. That was a long one. The air brakes is what got me. I didn't know anything about air brakes. I got a 93 on the test. After that, you go to work.

M: How long did this learning process last?

A: Two or three months at least.

M: Was that eight hours a day for two or three months?

A: Well, no. You couldn't always do that, not every day. You are doing this on your own time so you just aren't going to work eight hours out on the road and then go in and work eight hours posting. The main purpose of it was feeling out the book of rules and learning them and taking the examination. Then you go to work.

M: Did you get paid for doing this learning work?

A: No. We never got paid for learning at all.

M: What motivated you to . . . Why did you want to become a dispatcher?

A: Because it was fascinating to me when I was working out in the towers. I used to sit there all the time with the earphones on my ears and listen to the dispatcher dispatch, which was fascinating I thought.

M: Why?

A: The way you run the trains in and out, meeting one train with another train, broken rails, putting out train orders, getting a train around another broken down train, stop and picking up cars, how long does it take to do this, how long does it take to do that, figure you'll meet with another train.

M: If you had to compare it to something, the dispatcher's job, what would you compare it to, a position, a game? Can you think of anything offhand?

A: You mean an outside profession?

M: Yes. Something that would illustrate the work involved?

A: It is a tedious eight hours. I never even thought of it that way.

M: I thought of it as a chess game in a way.

A: Well, it is. It is quite a chess game. But you don't like that checkmate. (Laughter)

M: As far as your own personality was concerned, what were the most important things that you had to have to be a good dispatcher?

A: You had to have a good, keen mind, a very keen mind, and a quick pen. And know how to cover up some of your mistakes.

M: Can you remember some of the different personalities that worked as dispatchers when you first started?

A: They were real old-timers: Max Swartz, Ralph; he worked midnight all of his life; he never did work days. He was the smartest and the most hated.

M: Why?

A: When he said, "Do it," he meant do it, and you did it or else.

M: When he was talking to train crews?

A: Train crews and operators.

M: Aside from the normal task that you had to perform during the day, how would you describe the job in terms of how it affected you personally?

A: Made my mind keener. I mean, a keener mind. I could snap things off just like that. You are handling both sides down there, first and second district. Back in the old days when it was real busy and you handled both side, you didn't have time; especially at 7 o'clock in the morning or 12 o'clock at night when they were changing turns. You had to give all the train crews coming on line ups, verbal line ups . . . I can't say that I didn't make mistakes, because I did. I did make mistakes but you are bound to. You're just bound to when you have crossover after crossover and you have three hundred miles of railroad track to watch; it's pretty rough. Cleveland, Youngstown, Meadville, Kent, and Leavittsburg.

M: When was it that you first got your steady job as a dispatcher?

A: You don't get that right away; you have to wait until somebody retires or passes away. That is the way you get a steady job. I worked vacations. When you get the steady job, of course,

you get the benefits.

M: When did you start on a steady position?

A: I can't remember. It might have been 1953 or 1954. Let's put it this way, I worked eighteen years as a night dispatcher and days when I could grab it.

M: Were you ever involved in any serious accidents? Can you remember any?

A: Yes. One I hate to remember.

M: What happened? What was involved?

A: The way it happened, I was working the third trick. We had an ore train at Cleveland. I had ordered these trains to run extra cars. The weight freight was down in Mahoning working.

M: XR and RB are?

A: Two designated points on a single track. XR is the beginning and RB is going out of a single track.

M: And Mahoning is in between?

A: I forget what kind of orders the freight had but he had some kind of orders to Mahoning and back from XR. That's North Randall to Mahoning and back. It had to be in that kind of an order because there is nobody else . . . They had to copy it once and that was it. Anyhow, they had 29 going up to Cleveland--it's a passenger train--and the ore train was ready to take off from XR as soon as 29 cleared XR. That was the understanding. My tour duty ended there at 7 o'clock and good old Andy came in and wanted to know what was going on. So I explained to him that 29 was running a little late and the 21 by XR--this ore train--was going to take off and go, which it did. For some reason or another, sometime that morning this weight freight started back toward Cleveland and coming around the bend towards Garrettsville here comes the ore train. The weight freight shoved its caboose ahead of him and so he plowed right into him. Nobody got killed, luckily.

M: Where did the mistake occur?

A: That was a big investigation. I really don't know. But I know Andy got fired and he shouldn't have got fired.

M: You mean the local was returning to North Randall and . . .

A: So he wouldn't outlaw. So he could get back before he outlawed. He didn't throw a switch at Mahoning to protect himself against

the eastbound train. He closed the switch and the block was green for the ore train and when the ore train got by the block, the weight freight opened the switch and headed back toward Cleveland. Andy didn't want the weight freight to outlaw and he thought the block was red. The weight freight should have been down there with the switch open to protect himself but he didn't.

M: Was the local supposed to clear up for the ore train?

A: Yes.

M: On the side?

A: I don't know.

M: Did the ore train know that the local was in the track?

A: No. In those days, you would have to tell one train where another train was.

M: As far as the ore train was concerned, he thought that he was permitted to go from XR to RB?

A: Yes.

M: After the arrival of the passenger train?

A: Yes, that's right.

M: How did the 1940's differ from the 1950's as far as you were concerned?

A: In the 1940's, I was younger, more agile. In the 1950's I got married and raised a family.

M: How did railroading change?

A: In the 1940's, we had a lot of trains but they weren't very long. They were all steam engines. The steam engines out of Meadville and Shenango, when they got to Shenango they had to stop to get water. That is how far they would run; it wasn't very far either, about twenty miles. They used to get water at SN; that's the way they went. They could only go so far before they had to stop and get water. That was one thing about the 1940's.

In the 1950's, I said, the diesels came along and they could go and go and never need water or fuel. You had more towers in the 1940's; you had a lot of towers. I guess before the 1940's they had a lot more than what they had then too. But they kept going down and going down, less and less towers. And you see that they are still taking out towers and putting

- CTC in or something like that. Everything is more mechanical. It's getting more diversified, your signal system, your office machines; everything is becoming more modern.
- M: How about the mood and the attitude of the men who worked on the railroad during that period? How do you think that changed with the coming of the diesel?
- A: They could all see that the diesel was going to take over. There wasn't a bad attitude or anything.
- M: Did you feel that men had a desire for . . .
- A: The men had a feeling for their job; they wanted to protect their job. They are talking about taking 28 and 29 off now. They don't want to take it off because it will do away with jobs. Well, that was the same thing as diesels. They could see that they were going to take two or three trains and one diesel bunch and they are going to lose jobs which they had been doing.
- M: As far as you're concerned, one mode of operation or one mode of moving trains over another wasn't any better? It was just progress.
- A: That's what it is, progress. You move them in a more efficient way with diesels. Of course, the longer your train is the more trouble you are going to have with the train too.
- M: You worked primarily with diesels, didn't you?
- A: Yes, when I was dispatcher. It was always diesels when I was dispatching in 1952. I didn't have a steady job; I guess I worked about six months before that.
- M: Were there any changes of major proportion from the 1950's into the 1960's?
- A: Diesels became more efficient. The cars became bigger and more efficient.
- M: How about management? Did they do things any differently?
- A: [No response].
- M: If you had to pick out a couple of events or occurrences that happened to you during your career, what do you remember most?
- A: I would say the snow of 1942 to 1943 at Stoney Point. We were snowed in there for two months. We had a snow plow to clean off the roads so that the school busses could get through. We had training inside. We couldn't get into the Meadville yard because of the snow conditions. It was so bad that I couldn't walk

from Dewey's house to the tower. I used to get on old 192, on the engine, to keep warm, ride to Meadville, and get a room. Ride back at night to go to work because they couldn't get through. They had trains one right after another stashed away at Stoney Point and all the way back to Pymatuning because they couldn't get them into the yard. That lasted about two months. They would take one train and there would be four or five hours of snow and they didn't come back. Another train in . . . It wasn't very fast progress.

M: You mean the trains came into the Meadville yard and they would have to break them down and add them and then send them on east?

A: Yes. We did the switching, classified training.

M: Did things thaw out when the winter was over?

A: Yes. When the winter was over, after February, everything started moving. And it moved at the proper rate of speed and everything was back to normal.

M: When you commuted into Meadville, where did you stay then?

A: There was a little hotel right there, close to the track, about two blocks away. We never stayed at the bunkhouse.

There was another time while working up at Westend Tower where it was the busiest it ever was on the line. This was during the wartime. I had sixteen crossovers within a half an hour by lever. They were going into the yard, going into the diesel shop, passenger trains going into Cleveland's Union Terminal, weight freight trains coming up and backing in. That was a busy, busy place. Yes, that was quite a place.

M: When did you get married?

A: 1962. The boys down at the office made it possible for me to work steadily for two weeks so I would have enough money to take a honeymoon.

M: How did they do that?

A: They would take off and go on vacation. They were pretty nice to me; they all were great guys.

M: Since you have retired, do you miss it?

A: Oh, yes, you always miss it. It is the excitement that you miss. Everytime that you go to work there, there was nothing the same; everything was different. It was a different mood or a different something every time you went to work.

M: Things are the same but they are different?



A: Yes.

M: Why did you have to retire?

A: For physical reasons, high blood pressure, sugar.

M: You basically had a desk job, right?

A: Yes.

M: How would these things affect your judgment or work as a dispatcher

A: I don't know, but the doctor must think so.

M: You didn't want to retire did you?

A: Well, I wasn't ready to. I would have given it three or four more years. It wasn't a hard job physically. Mentally, yes.

M: Do you think you are still capable to perform?

A: Sure, I'll never forget it.

M: Was there anything done on your part to try and preserve your position, to return to work?

A: No. I figured that they were going to knock me out sooner or later.

M: Do you think you had any recourse to retire?

A: No.

M: Was there something that you could have done to stay on the railroad?

A: I don't know whether they would have kept me off, or taken me back after three or four more physical examinations. They gave you one every six months. You had to have one every six months. How long that would last would be something else. So I took it that it was to give somebody better than me a chance.

M: If you had your preference, I suppose, that you would return to the Erie if you could?

A: Sure. That's where all of my friends are.

M: Were you satisfied in the railroad or was there another job you think you might have liked?

A: No, I was satisfied. After all, it raised my kids, gave me a family, and a lot of good years.

M: Did you ever aspire to anything else?

A: What could be better, I ask you?

M: What were the good points about the job?

A: It was a test of skill. How your run the trains. To be sure that you didn't get too many cars in one siding. And another train coming the other way with too many cars so it didn't fit.

M: Do you know of any other jobs that you think are as demanding?

A: No. No, that was just about the best; I don't think anybody could get a better job. Well, you probably could if you wanted.

M: Was there something special about the railroad, maybe not as far as you're concerned but as far as everybody on the railroad was concerned, that made it more enjoyable to work on than, say, another position?

A: That's all I know, just the railroad. It's good money and you can go higher if you want to. You could become a train master and work twenty-four hours a day. You could be assistant superintendent or superintendent.

M: Were you ever offered any of these jobs?

A: No. I wouldn't have taken them if they were offered to me.

M: How did men climb up the ladder on the railroad from job to job, higher position to higher position? Were there any special qualifications that they had to have outside of railroading?

A: I don't know. Maybe you have to have a college education now. I think experience is a better teacher than a college education.

M: Were the past superintendents and presidents of the railroad, that you knew about, do you think they were as versed in business and railroading too?

A: They had to be to . . .

M: To be successful?

A: Why sure. They had to be.

M: Why did the Erie go through so many bankruptcies in its history?

A: Management.

M: What do you mean by that?

- A: Well, it must be. What else could it be? We always got along before. We had the same amount of traffic. I don't know, it must be management.
- M: Well, in what ways? You don't have anything . . .
- A: Not specific. But that is where it has to come from; that's where they are going bankrupt, at the top.
- M: From what you can see working in your position, were things done differently from the 1940's to the 1950's to the 1960's?
- A: No. It was all done the same.
- M: Everything was done the same yet. . .
- A: No crew . . . Very, very seldom would a crew ever come and mark off an honest day. He will not stay full-time which is eight hours. Mark off eight hours straight and that's an honest day, but it's either that they get a quit or if they see that they are going to work eight hours then they are going to get overtime.
- M: What is a quit?
- A: When you get done before your eight hours is up.
- M: That didn't occur in the 1940's?
- A: It happened all the time on the railroad. This will never change, no way.
- M: What other problems existed that caused the railroad to decline?
- A: From where I look, back track, unable to maintain schedule.
- M: How many slow orders did you have?
- A: When I left, there was an awful lot of slow order. And if you didn't have the tracking to fix them, the slow orders would hang on for months, some of them, before they could work. What do you have? Three men to cover from Kent to SN, three from SN to pilot 2.
- M: You mean to do repairs on the track?
- A: Your track end. You used to have five or six on the track end and they have three times as much territory to cover. They just can't do it.
- M: Why did they reduce them?
- A: Economy. So they cut off all the men and all the work. So if

your track goes bad and maintenance goes bad or you can't maintain a schedule and training or something like that.

M: How important is a schedule?

A: I don't know. The shipper ships them from California and expects them to be in New York at a certain time and it is a schedule. That's how it works. You have a schedule on all your eastbound fast freight and westbound fast freight and they are supposed to maintain a schedule.

M: The passenger trains were the only trains that had a specific schedule?

A: Yes.

M: How good was their on-time rate?

A: If you were delayed, you got reprimanded. I still think you do. When you first started out, you had a passenger train one right after the other. You had a heck of a lot of them coming into Youngstown off the P&O, out of Cleveland and out of New York. Now you don't have hardly any of them. Well, you don't. You only have 28 and 29.

M: How did keeping these trains separated from the freight . . . Did it cause you any great pain?

A: Yes. It's partially up to the train crews to stay out of all the passenger trains. And they always did.

M: Do you think that the men who worked in the 1940's as engineers and conductors were as responsible and as aware of their jobs and willing to work as hard as the men who work today?

A: Yes, I do.

M: You don't think the quality of the workman has changed at all?

A: No. I couldn't say anyhow. All the training that I had was with the engineers and firemen and they were pretty doggone nice guys. They would go out of their way to help you and help themselves too, the biggest majority. None of them ever gave me a hard time. I can't think of anybody, any of them, who ever gave me a hard time.

M: What about the passenger days when the passenger trains were running like crazy?

A: Between SN and SR?

M: Leavittsburg to North Randall, Ohio.

- A: That was all double track and it wasn't hard to keep one train out of another train's way, no way. We just didn't run that many trains in the first place, but we ran quite a few passenger trains up to Cleveland. The main line would get the freight trains out of the way and let the passenger trains go. The crew went on duty in Youngstown, YO Office, switching. We always had a line up asking how they were coming: on time, slow, this and that. They were always looking for them.
- M: If you could change something on the railroad, if it was in your power to change something to maybe make things better, what would you do?
- A: [No response].
- M: I have one more question. A letter recently appeared in the last six months or so in the Marion, Ohio Star by a former vice-president of the railroad. He laid a lot of the blame for the decline of the railroad on management. He said that he thought that the Erie employees were as good as any other group of railroaders. Do you basically agree with that?
- A: I basically agree with that.
- M: Can you find any fault with anything that he says in that letter?
- A: No, I couldn't. Actually, he's got the same men working for the Erie . . . If there isn't a good man working for you, a trained dispatcher can pick him out. As I said before, all the men I ever worked with such as flagmen on crossover movement, and conductors on crossover movements were proof. I would say that they were perfect; they always knew how to do their job and were very conversant with the dispatcher which they are supposed to be.
- M: Why do you think he made a comment like that considering that he did kind of malign his own character and position?
- A: Yes, he did. What happens up there in the top echelon is something that I have no idea of what goes on.
- M: Considering the number of people employed by railroad therefore the number of families that depend on these men, do you think that changes of any great magnitude will effect the railroad?
- A: Yes.
- M: Do you think that the employees should have a part in that decision?
- A: I think they should, yes. From their representatives such as their union representatives for instance.

- M: Considering the fact that most officials of the railroad were former employees, do you think that makes them better able to communicate with the men?
- A: It should make them better.
- M: Do you think it does?
- A: Let me think of some of the officials such as . . . Some of them will communicate quite well. There's one assistant superintendent we had; his name was Mr. Rushwin. He was a very good communicator. He was assistant superintendent and he would go out of his way to help you. He would communicate.
- M: In what ways?
- A: He would stand behind you, writing down the delays on trains. If somebody would say something on the radio or on the phone if you were in a quandary about it, you would turn around and ask Mr. Rushwin what he would do. He would never hesitate to tell you. He never backed down. He would tell them to go ahead and do this and if they had to do it, they had to do it. If it was out of the way it was something to do. Then there are some that are not quite communicable.
- M: What do you think the key to success on a railroad is?
- A: Not really enough. A lot of it is what you got, I would say.
- M: Other than service, what do railroads have to offer to the public and to the people such as the stockholders who back a railroad?
- A: The stockholders back a railroad, yes, but the men do the work for them. You have to have something to work with when you work too.
- M: What do you mean by that?
- A: You have to have a pen to write, you have to have railing where the trains are.
- M: Would you like to add anything else?
- A: I don't know. What more do you want?
- M: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW