

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Railroads

Personal Experience

O H 950

Thomas Kendrick

Interviewed

by

Lillian Eminhizer

on

August 9, 1979

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE THOMAS B KENDRICK

INTERVIEWER Lillian Eminhizer

SUBJECT History of Railroads

DATE August 9, 1975

E Mr Kendrick, tell us a little bit about your railroading history

K I first started to learn the Morse Code in 1902 I was born and raised in Shelby, North Carolina One of my neighbors, who had recently moved in from Charlotte, North Carolina, had a son about my age and he was interested in Morse Code to date I had been around the station and been around the Western Union Office and picked up a right smart of information about the telegraph There were three other families in Shelby that had sons that learned the Morse Code and they all did well They worked for the postal telegraph and also for the Western Union and a few for the railroad

So, after school and during the summertime vacation, I did a lot of chores around the town so to speak I picked up nickels and dimes and a quarter now and then as a lot of the other boys tried to do This man that started me into the telegraph was with The Western Union Telegraph Company for a few months, so he got a job down at the railroad office as a ticket seller and freight clerk, shifting and delivering freight So, when he left at Western Union as a messenger, he notified me and the manager at Western Union gave me his position as messenger boy I wouldn't have stopped that job for the President of the United States's job I put on that little blue suit and that cap and delivered telegrams for , I believe, eight months

This agent down there where this boy went to work contacted me to come work in the depot So, I went to work at the depot in 1905 I was 15 years old and I wouldn't have stopped that job for two president's jobs So, us young boys, most all of them went to work at the depot We did most of the Morse Code work for the agent For two years after I had been there on this freight station job, they put on a second trip delivery after the Seaboard Railroad connected with the Carolina, Clinchfield, and Ohio Railroad at Boston So, they gave me the second trip at Shelby

In 1908 they sent me to Boston because I had had some experience with interchanging cars from one railroad to another and I stayed at that job six months and then they sent me back to Shelby So, I bid in an agency and worked it three and a half years and left it Then I went on what we call down on the main line running from Hamlet to Raleigh That was the main line of the Seaboard that went from Richmond into Florida I never did get in a job there because I didn't think I'd like to live down in that section I came back to Boston then as a telegrapher and

agent I was doing different chores That's where Clinchfield and the Seaboard joined That was a joint position for the two railroads So, during World War I, 1917, I was delivering checks for the trainmen, engineers, all transportation men Their pay was much greater than what I was getting in the yard office So, I went to the headquarters of Clinchfield Railroad in Irving, Tennessee and applied for a job as a brakeman They were needing men awful bad so I almost doubled my pay when I left the office and went on the road as a trailman Later I was promoted to conductor

During the meantime, the yardmaster's position in Spartanburg, South Carolina came open I did not want the job, but they asked me if I would come down and work it until they could get a man to come down permanently, but it was such a mean job. It was awful aggravating. We connected the Southern Railway and the Piedmont Northern Railway and C&W Railway It was what us railroad men say, a mean job You had so many railroads to work within those three lines But I stuck it out and stayed on this yardmaster job for lacking one month, forty years You might say 39 years and 11 months The telegraphers and agents and the yardmaster's age limit was 68, but having conductor's rights on the Clinchfield, I left the yardmaster position on a Saturday and went out of Spartanburg to Irving, Tennessee as a conductor on a freight train and worked there 13 months. I could have worked 11 more, but the pay my wife and I would get in retirement lacked \$129 of being as much as I would have made working So, I decided to retire after 13 months on the Clinchfield as a conductor So, I gave someone 11 months work riding up and down the railway every day, night and day, depending on the train you belonged to Of course, it was much more dangerous than being in a stationary job But I think I did pretty well I was pretty accurate up to that time And the Lord willing, this coming Sunday, which would be tomorrow, I'll meet my 85 milepost in age So, I'm just about finished up A lot of that train work was pretty hard I worked locally, worked on local freight for quite some time

My first work when I left Western Union as a messenger boy, went down to freight depot, freight and ticket office. I went in as a clerk There was two other young men there besides myself, and the agent did not have us assigned to particular duties, but we all sold tickets and we all delivered freight However, we did have one man that had more responsibility and that was the senior clerk We called him the Chief Clerk We shifted freight off of the wagons We did not have any automobiles in those days Everything that came into the villages and towns back in those days over five miles or six distance was hauled to the depot and then we'd give them a bill of lading for the freight

In the spring and fall was the heaviest months of the local railway stations I sold tickets and received freight off the wagons and also delivered freight It was a pretty hard job in the spring and fall because that local freight would stop by and unload freight off, sometimes as many as 15 cars It did not have any transferring places then like they have now. They didn't have those back in the days.

The agent that hired me there, he went into another business and a new agent came in Of course, he was just as good as the other one, but he wasn't quite as tight on us boys What I'm trying to say is that we stood in line and lived like young men should live I enjoyed that After six years, I bid in this agent and I stayed on this job for a little over three years and they cut my help off So I went down on what they call the main line in Hamlet, North Carolina, where the headquarters were The division I worked on was known as the North Carolina Division They run from Raleigh to Columbia up to Rutherford. It's 75 miles from Charlotte up there They

used to have a superintendent's office in Charlotte, but they moved it to Hamlet some years later

E Was this when you went on the Seaboard?

K Yes, ma'am

E And then you fired on the Seaboard? (Fired steam engine)

K No, I didn't fire I never even worked on the trains there on the Seaboard and Clinchfield

E What did you do on the Seaboard?

K That's what I was just telling you now I was clerk and the depot agent Then I worked on a good many of the stations between Raleigh and Columbia I remember well in 1914 I was in Columbia, Christmas Day, 1914 I'll never forget that The lady we boarded with had an extra Christmas dinner and we all understood that we got some of that turkey.

So, then I left the Clinchfield in 1918 and came back to Seaboard as a yard conductor in Charlotte and also worked extra at Western Union Telegraph Company in Charlotte as they had the relay office there and they worked over 200 electricals. That was during World War I, of course I was worried that after the war was over I didn't know what would happen I didn't have much seniority, but I knew I was coming back to Clinchfield I'd get a very good job because Clinchfield wasn't a seasonal railroad, so to speak, a full-hauling road, and also I handled merchandise, too. But you always had a job on the Clinchfield, you never worried about seasonal On the other roads it was seasonal In the spring or during the summer, they didn't have enough to work for all the trains, so they were laid off and they were picked back up when business picked up in the fall

So I could see the handwriting on the wall I did not want this yardmaster job at Spartanburg, but they asked me to take it The boss had been mighty good, so I told him I'd work it until they could get somebody to come and take it, but they never did fill the job So, I stayed on this job 40 years

E What did you do as a yardmaster?

K Now you asked a big question there Well, we had about five or six trains in and five or six trains out. The yardmaster's job was to have tracks ready to accept these trains and to store them away until we got them delivered to the connecting lines, that was the Southern C&WC and the P&E It kept us pretty well on the go. They had a system, the yardmaster worked at night And those jobs and my job were paid by salary and didn't get any paid overtime I worked many, many days for 12, 15, 16 hours, especially if I had some trouble in the yard like a derailment or a wreck of some kind Why, it kept you on the ball all the time I worked lots and lots of times 14, 15 hours

E Was it your job to see to the wrecks and inspect them?

K That's right When we had a wreck we'd call the Southern The Southern Railroad had a big

wrecker at Hane Yard. Hane Yard is an extra large yard.

E Hane is the same as Spartanburg?

K Yes, ma'am. That's the main line that runs from Washington near Angelport. Trains were coming in from Nashville, Columbia, Atlanta, and the north, Charlotte, along back north, of course. They were running about six to eight passenger trains south and six to eight north. That was before we built the good roads. It has reversed itself now and it's just the other way around. The trucks and busses just about robbed the railroads of transportation. Of course, they do have about 30% of the business now, the trucks do. But there's so many things that the trucks can't handle and a lot of them that they won't handle anyway at all because of containment.

E Did your job as yardmaster change over the years as they moved to larger steam engines?

K No. When they put the diesels on the railroad as motor power, it would save them. I have heard that you can run a diesel for \$ 20.

E What? A mile?

K I presume that's hard to prove. I never did hear exactly how they divide it up. But that was a godsend to the railroads, diesel.

E How much was it costing them to run a steam engine at that time?

K It was \$ 20 for the diesel and \$2 40 for the steam engine, a great difference. See, when the steam engines came in, they had what they called a hostler who would clean the fire, put coal on, put water on, put sand on, and it would take two hours and 30 minutes to work a steam engine.

E It took a hostler two hours and 30 minutes to get a steam engine ready?

K That's right. So, we ran five or six or more diesels with only one engineer and one fireman. On steam engines you had to have an engineer and a fireman on both engines. So, you can realize right quick, you had five or six steam engines to handle, get them ready to go back to Irving, Tennessee. But what we would do a lot of times, a train with 100 cars would come in from Irving that had five diesels. As quick as they could get them diesels unhooked from the train they brought in and take them around the north end and hook them right onto another train for Irving. Lots of times in 30 minutes from the time five or six diesels would bring in a train to Spartanburg, they'd be on the way back to Irving. You can realize what five or six steam engines would be. And instead of having five or six engineers and firemen, it would be just one engineer and one fireman. So you realize pretty quick economy, savings in that.

E That's a pretty rough road section, isn't it, on the Clinchfield up through there?

K Yes it's pretty bad. It's across the Blue Ridge Mountains. Oh I wish I could take that trip. They run some excursions through there now, round and round up that mountain, Three loops.

E There's three loops on that railroad?

K Yes

E How many tunnels?

K Nineteen between here and Irving and then there's four or five north of Irving

E What kinds of grades do they have up through there?

K Well, the finest ever There's nothing on the main line over 1% and that is a great saving The Asheville of the Southern was built It came in here in the 1880's, I believe, and they have five and 6% For just a five-car passenger train they have to have a pusher, but there's no passenger trains that run there now

E I think they've taken out some of those heavy grades on that, Asheville Run.

K There was something on the radio last night, the news They have a line there now on what was called the Asheville Division It goes from Asheville, 65 miles, and then they have another line that comes from Cincinnati to Knoxville to Asheville and they go to Salisbury It did, but they've cut that off now Probably don't even use that now, but you can't blame them because people just aren't going to ride the trains See, they got to get a taxi and maybe poke around at the depot Maybe the train being out too late Then when they get to where they're going, they wouldn't have a car And, naturally, if you had an automobile, you wouldn't think about going from Spartanburg to Asheville on a train They used to run a few excursions, but the Southern doesn't run anymore and the Clinchfield, they lease out trains from here to Irving for different organizations They have, I believe, ten beautiful coaches and they have a little steam engine on the head end Then they have what's called a B-unit, which looks like a coach back behind the steam engine People think that little, small steam engine pulls that whole train up the mountain

It's a road, they say it's something similar to the Rio Grande out in the Northwest They had a train of tomorrow several years ago come in here And I went to Irving on the passenger train that morning A few of us went up to ride this train of tomorrow to Spartanburg They did not have a diesel engine, but they had some special coaches made It was sponsored by some drug company I can't remember now just what Rexall, I believe And it stayed here It got in here about three o'clock that evening, put on a display, and then left the next morning for Charlotte It was a wonderful trip It had those new dome tops Prettiest trip a person ever made I just think that there should be more of these excursions because there's grown children here in Spartanburg now that have never ridden on a train

E There are grown children everywhere that haven't ridden on trains You like your pipe? How many years you been smoking that pipe?

K 70

E Same pipe?

K No, I've got about 40 or 45 down in the basement and there's two in there that I haven't used yet. My son gave me a cob pipe, an extra good cob pipe. When they used to cost a quarter, this cost a dollar and a half. And he got to playing with it, so I let him take them home with him.

E Corncob, huh?

K Yes.

E Where are the main shops for the Clinchfield?

K Irving, Tennessee.

E Did you do much work here in Spartanburg?

K Mechanical work?

E Yes.

K Very little. If a diesel happened to break down, if they can fix it, they fixed it here, otherwise, it was towed into Irving. We used to have to do steam engines that way too when they'd breakdown and we couldn't repair them here. So, they do not have any shops here, except to repair cars.

E What about a roundhouse? Did you have a roundhouse here?

K Yes, a small roundhouse.

E How many trains did it hold, engines?

K We could handle ten locomotives. That was about all I had room for in there.

E When they were getting the steam engines ready to go back out, did they have a ready track or a ready pit or what?

K Yes ma'am, what they called an out-going track. In the yard office we had a special phone. It was about 200 feet, I guess, from the yard office down to the roundhouse. So, we'd call to them wanting a certain engine number at a certain time. So, if it had been worked and ready to go, they'd have it on the out-going track.

E Did you have the hostlers working around the clock or was that mostly a daytime job?

K Yes, around the clock. They worked three shifts, say like seven till three and three till eleven.

and then eleven till seven the next morning. The hostler, he didn't do too much manual labor. They had a hostler and two or three fire cleaners. And oh, there was so much to do. They had to put grease in all the main rods, driving rods, and fill up the lubricator in the locomotive, up in the cab. So, they had to take a half a gallon, haul it up there and pour it in this lubricator.

E. The hostler had a crew of men that worked under him?

K. Yes, three fire cleaners. Oh, I've been down there talking to the foreman many times. These hot days, maybe the locomotive would be headed that way. The sun came right in on top of it. Oh, I saw them fellows, wasn't a dry thread on them. They'd take them great big old, what we call pokers to reach in there and shake them grates. It would take them a good hour to get the fire box cleaned out. Then, they had to take them to the coal chute and fill the tinders, they called them tinders, with coal. They'd take 15 to 18 tons.

The Clinchfield, I mentioned, they had several different kinds of locomotives. They had about 30 or 40. And then they had some fast locomotives to handle boxcar trains, then smaller engines that handle the local freight, and then a smaller engine to handle the passengers. Now that little number 1, that was about the size engine that pulled a passenger train. It had four or five, sometimes six coaches, but six coaches was pretty hard on it coming up the mountain.

E. Now that little number 1, what did it have? Two wheels?

K. Yes. So, pretty hard getting up the mountain from Irving to Elder Pass, Blue Ridge Mountain. Then after they topped the mountain coming this way, why, it was most all downhill, that is, not over 1% grade anywhere. After it got to Elder Pass and going north, then it was all downhill into Irving.

E. What were the sizes of these other steam engines they had? Do you remember?

K. I can't remember, but they were the largest they ever manufactured. They were the largest in use. They were what some people called compound. The steam would go first through these two cylinders and then it was used a second time in the other two. So, that was before they had the stoker. I've been on those trains, those boys, they'd scoop coal in those boilers all day long.

Then they got the stoker and they didn't have to shovel the coal. They had to watch the fireplace though. Now, since we got these diesels, they don't have firemen on all the trains now.

E. They're not hiring firemen anymore, they're just running the seniority out on the other ones?

K. That's right, and keeping a good many of them supplying the engineers.

E. How are they going to get their engineers when there aren't anymore firemen to move up? They used to train the firemen and move them up.

K. Yes, the federal law used to be that you could not promote a fireman to an engineer with less than three years experience as a fireman, but I think they've abolished that law now. But what they're doing now, they've got enough firemen to supply the demands whenever a vacancy.



comes up

Yes that Clinchfield Railroad is supposed to be one of the best money making railroads in the United States. You might put it in the class like a D&RG, Denver and Rio Grande. It goes through mountain sections there. It has been said that it's very pretty scenery. There's no better than right in Spartanburg to Kentucky. Oh, it's rough up there. What I'm trying to say is, there's rough mountains. Yes, they were several years ago building that 33 mile from Virginia. It first started as a coal hauling road, but they took on merchandise years later. We have a special Florida troop train through there today and we went from 90 to 125 cars on the train during the season.

E How many cars would they haul behind those steam engines?

K With pushing engines, anywhere from 90 to 110. I was a freight train in Spartanburg over two years and we could bring 90 cars of coal out of Boston yard. And if they had more than that, why we'd have a pusher. Say like a crew would come into Boston where we'd leave from with these 110 or 120 cars. They'd take one of those engines that just came in from Irving, use another crew on them, then they'd push the regular train into Spartanburg. They'd help push them up the hill so to speak and then go back to Boston because the crew would be ready to go back to Irving.

E Where is the hill between here and Boston?

K Well, over here past this river, on each side of the river. That's 10 miles north of here. There's two pretty long hills there. And then coming out of Boston coming this way, there's about 3 miles of 1% grade. They used to give us a push out of Boston over that hill about 2 miles I guess. Maybe then it would take 10 to 15 minutes, and without the pusher it would take 30. I've seen them pull a whole train length and never increase the speed a bit, during cool weather. And it gets pretty cold up at that Elder Pass, anywhere from below zero to 10 and 15.

E When they had the steam engine, how did they keep their men warm that were out on those trains?

K They had a curtain they could let down behind the engineer's seat and the fireman's seat, and the heat from the boiler, from the firebox, would keep that pretty warm. I've ridden them hundreds and hundreds of miles.

E I bet they had to wear their long underwear though.

K Yes ma'am. You had to be sure to prepare for that cold weather. You didn't know when you were going to have to get out as a brakeman. The conductor didn't know when you were going to have to get out into it.

E Did they have much trouble with snow slides up there in the mountains?

K Very little. Our trouble with the slides were rocks that would come off the mountain.

They've had several awful bad wrecks and a lot of men killed. Rocks would come off the side of the mountain and land on the tracks. The North and Western had that trouble too. But they had a wire fence, say about a mile back yonder charged with electricity. When the rock would come down off the mountain, it might tear the fence down all right, but it would put the red signal on.

E Break the circuit?

K That would break the circuit and show up the red light. So, that saved lots and lots of lives and bad wrecks by putting that up, but the CC&O never did have that. There's so many places beyond Alder Pass. There were rocks up there that looked like they'd fall any minute, as big as this house. Of course, they had them checked by some of the best. I don't know what you'd call them, engineers. . . geographical.

E Have you had to go out and clean up some of these wrecks from the rock slides?

K Yes, the trainmaster would be there all the time to get advice. I've had a lot of wrecks over here, nobody there but me on Sunday and nobody to call. So, we'd call the wrecker crew at Hane to come down and clear the main line for us, set the cars off to one side so the other trains could get by. The wreck master, with all the wreckers of course. . . we'd talk and would see what we thought would be best to do to try to turn this car back on the track and tow it to one side until we get the main line clear. The main object was to clear the main line, regardless of the freight. We've had cars with citrus fruit from Florida. I've seen 15, 20, or 25 of them just tore all up to pieces.

So, if a car wasn't too far from the track, they'd chain it up and try to draw it back to the track and put the track under it. But that was only just once in awhile you'd find that.

E Whose wreck equipment did you use?

K We don't have a wrecker crane here in Spartanburg, but we would borrow the Southern wrecker from the Southern Railroad, Hane Yard. Yes, they have a big yard up there, and every time we'd have an accident, why the boys would come in and tell me what had happened and I'd just pick up the phone and call the wrecker down to clear the main line. We had to call them time and time again.

E Now, if you had the track blocked up there somewhere, did you have another railroad you could run over until you got the track cleared?

K Yes, we have had to take our passenger trains up through Asheville and back to Marion. Marion is 60 miles from here after the Asheville Division. We'd get permission from the Southern to let us run our passenger train over the Southern tracks from Asheville and down to Marion and make it back to the CC&O.

E That's all Southern track to Marion?

K Yes. And then we'd help the Southern. Time and again they'd have bad wrecks up on

Asheville Division and they'd run three, four, sometimes five passenger trains and maybe more until they got the track cleared up to Marion. They used me several times as what they called a pilot. I'd ride the engine. Being familiar with the track, they had me run over as brakeman and conductor for a while. I'd ride the engine, of course. Only CC&O men ran. Some of them never had been there before and you had to tell them where the bad curves were, where to stop for water and yard limit. They gave us a train order, say, Southern Railroad engine #1410 would run extra Spartanburg to Marion. It would ride over all the trains, if there wasn't any other trains coming. They'd say, Southern engine #1410 would run extra Spartanburg to Marion, meet engine number so and so at a certain place. Some time, they'd meet up.

E Now, when these guest trains would come over, you'd pilot trains over your tracks. Who had the right of way on the track?

K That was handled by the train dispatcher. They would always give those trains precedence. They all had right over all the Clinchfield trains except passenger trains. So, they give the train orders as I said. There'd be an extra Spartanburg to Marion with right over all trains, or it would run extra from Spartanburg to Marion, meet #27 engine #1410 at Boston or Chester, somewhere like that. But those Southern engines, not being mountainous roads, except from here to Asheville, why they all had beautiful passenger engines. They started from 1,100, way back, I'd say 75, 80, or 1,200, 1,300, 1,400, 1,500, 1,600. They've got up to 1,410 in the Smithsonian Institute over in Washington now and then they've got a Pennsylvania Engine in there too, steam engine.

When they left though, I'll tell you, the fascination and pride of railroading left the railroad when those steam engines left.

E That's what I've heard from a lot of fellows.

K And those old horns. I just despise them diesel horns. The steam engines would blot that whistle, the prettiest music you ever heard. So, the railroad got pretty hard on the engineers. The prettiest music a railroad man ever heard is that chime whistle blowing.

E Did you have single or double track up?

K Single track.

E And your trains operate on train orders?

K No, they have the CTC now.

E What's that?

K Centralized Train Control. A train dispatched in Irving, Tennessee, 141 miles from here can throw a switch right here in Spartanburg. Did you know that?

E Yes.

K See, the Southern has double track through from Washington to Atlanta. Oh for a long number of years they built the second track around 1909 or 1910 and just took up one of the tracks about two years ago.

So, they used to have this automatic block. No, they first had a manual block, a little block, about every five or eight miles. So, then they got this automatic block working by electricity of course. Each line crew had about fifteen miles to look after. They had linemen yet, but it doesn't take as many. That dispatcher, all he does is turn that little knob and that will throw a switch that turns the lights red, green.

I was here forty years and never went back in train service, never seen such an improvement in my life. Of course, I knew how to operate it. We'd be going along and we'd come to a red board. The first board would be a yellow board, caution. Then go there about a half a mile, see a red light, come to a switch. If they wanted to side track you. . . And you didn't know what you were going in for. It didn't make any difference to you. You go down to the end of the track and you just sit there. A train may be passing you going the same distance you are. But most of the time, the trains didn't meet. So, whenever this train would get by, if there were no other trains coming and they wanted to keep you in the sidetrack bar, you'd still stand there. The engineer and the fireman and the head brakeman had to watch the light. If that dispatcher turned the board green up there, that opened the switch right up. Oh, I've never seen such an improvement in my life.

All the main line switches are automatic. You turn that little button just like that electric light button there and that turns the light red or green. There's a motor in every switch and you hear it working. You turn that switch and see them rails moving right over with nobody on the ground at all. That is a real improvement, too. That was the greatest thing that ever happened. Of course, the diesels, I think, were the most economical thing that ever happened.

E Before they got the Centralized Control, did they have the little towers along the road with the man in it? What did they do when they had the steam engines?

K Same thing.

E When did they put Centralized Control in the Clinchfield?

K They started before I left over there. I guess about a year before I left. So, they found it the most economical operation. But however, it is not fool proof. Up here on the mountain one Sunday afternoon, a train coming this way and a train going the other way collided. It was one of them fruit trains I was telling you about. The train coming this way said the board was green there and they were here at the main line. The train going to Irving, this fruit train, just split that train in two. That train didn't hurt the diesel, but diesel that was coming this way. It just splattered oranges and grapefruit and vegetables all over that country up there.

E Who had the right of track, north or south?

K The northbound train always had the right over the southbound. But that has been done away with now since that CTC. Now, a lot of times, the northbound train had the right of way. Say it didn't have many cars maybe, so when they put out train orders, say #34, engine 210 would take

side . of course, they don't have that anymore, they don't give out any train orders The dispatcher handles all that himself So, the eastbound and northbound had right of way and westbound and southbound, they were inferior to the trains in the opposite direction Things actually got to be very, very particular about it because it means life or death and they've had plenty of them

So, they fired all this crew that claimed the board was green when it shouldn't have been But they had the United Transportation Union, put in the signals And they had them down there checking and checking and come to find out that the error was the electricians who put the switch in They had a wire to this post when it should have been to the other one It caused the train coming this way to just split that other train in half So, they put them fellows back to work and paid them for all the time they were off

Mr Manion, nicest boy, he was the head man of the CTC And he told me himself, "I was just as responsible for anything because I accepted it " But how he could tell they had this wire to this post here when it should have been over there he didn't stay here long. He went back to the General Electric people in Pittsburgh, I believe Mr Manion, he was an awful nice man He sure was a nice fellow But he said there was nothing for him to stay here because if anything like that would happen again, they'd fire him He didn't want that to happen.

E Who put the Central Control System in for the Clinchfield?

K United States Signaling Company, I believe I believe the headquarters are in Chicago But we hear of a lot of things being fool proof; that was supposed to be 100% fool proof It lacked a whole lot didn't it?

E What kind of signal system did they use before they got the Central Control?

K They used operators and what they call manual signals They didn't have any telegraph stations, but they used three operators 24 hours around the clock at these little weigh stations to block the trains.

The greatest savings in the world was with that CTC and the diesel, that made the dent They claim they're broke now, a lot of railroads Shoot, what in the world did they do with all that money they made back before that? They were saving millions of dollars a year on the motor power, and I'd say they were saving half that much on the CTC They ought to be the richest corporation in the whole county, but trucks and busses are. yes, they're just grabbing everything themselves

E You knew Thomas Rhodes, who used to be yardmaster and superintendent for the Southern?

K Oh, the man down at Greenville?

E Yes

K Oh, I've known him for 50 years, Tom Rhodes

E What was your connection with him?

K He was superintendent of the P&E That was the road that we connected with, but didn't have a physical connection with We do have a physical connection with P&E because

E. They put that tunnel in for the physical connection.

K That's right Yes, for 50 years or more we exchanged freight cars I would work with them, I guess, not less than six times a day. If there was any trouble, why maybe 15 or 20 times a day we talked on the telephone And then we had to make interchange, of course, they would give us six or eight reports of cars coming over to us and we'd send them our interchange of cars over to them and they had to check it and sign for it, and the same way with the Southern, and the same way with the C&WC

The C&WC, of course, they've been taken over now by the Atlantic Coastline, and that in the end took over the seaboard So, this is one of the main operations in Spartanburg that comes in from the South Goes through Georgia up there and then going down to Jacksonville

E Is the Clinchfield still an independent road or is it owned by someone else?

K No, the N&N and Coastline leased CC&O several years ago The stockholders wanted to get rid of it So, they're paying 60% interest, and all over that goes back to the stockholders But the CC&O, being a mountainous railroad, like the D&RDW, the stockholders . Well of course, it's all right, they got good pay I mean they made the best money, paid more interest than any railroad in the United States for years and years They pay the stockholders 60% and then they keep all that's over It has been paying off extra good

E Yes, it's supposed to be one of the good moneymakers

K They moved all of the office equipment though, everything they could move from Irving That was the general office up there for years and years But they moved it all to Jacksonville Yes, the traffic department and transportation department

E Does the CC&O operate a passenger train?

K Not now They did though for many years They had three passenger trains into Spartanburg and three out of Spartanburg until the highway department built these good roads for automobile transportation and then these good roads caused people to leave the railroad and go to their own transportation And it hurt too, because we haven't got a passenger train into Spartanburg The C&WC hasn't even had that for years, and the Southern used to operate about eight or ten south and eight or ten north, that is to New Orleans, to Washington and New York But they've cut that down to one a day now They just had two on, but they've cut one a day off Now just one south and one north

E How many passengers would they handle on those early passenger trains?

K It paid off good for several years The revenue of the passenger trains paid off real well because they handled mail in baggage and express Of course, they didn't get anything off the

baggage, but express in the postal service pays off real good. But it didn't pay enough to justify keeping them on. I've seen them leave here many a morning on that 8:30 train. Cars used to be loaded, got to where there wasn't four, five, or six, maybe as many as 10 sometimes. So, they continued on the express mail, but it got to where it didn't pay.

E Did the Clinchfield have very many private cars that they used?

K They only had two, one for the general manager, and one for the superintendent.

E They didn't waste a lot of money on those then?

K No, ma'am, they didn't waste too much money on that. They were real nice. The second one they got was a good many years ago. It looked like it had been President Theodore Roosevelt's private car. It was a real dandy, I'll tell you. I never saw a Southern Railroad private car. I used to see one, or two, or three parked up at the depot, but I never see them anymore.

E I don't know whether they still have any or not. What were those private cars like on the inside?

K Beautiful, and the finest hotel in New York didn't have any finer furniture and equipment than this thing. Now the Southern President, he has two cars, one for his business secretary and so forth. The P&E had the private cars too. And then the CC&O private cars, they had two. What do they call that big hotel in New York? It wasn't a bit nicer than these.

E Astoria?

K That's right, that's right.

E Did they have a lot of wood paneling and velvet drapes?

K That's right. I have heard it was nothing for the bosses of the Southern to send their private cars here, spend \$20,000 or \$25,000 on each car, renovating. They were getting tired of this car.

E Did they have any food services on the CC&O?

K Yes, they ran a buffet car out of here for several years. And then they had the kitchen and then the dining room came and then at the other end of the car there were just plain seats. Yes, they ran that for years and years. And they made money off of it too, because you couldn't ride the automobiles up the mountain.

We had a large coal company here, Clinchfield fuel company. That was a multimillion dollar outfit, too. So, the president of the Clinchfield fuel company would take his staff, a lot of times, up to Denton, Virginia where they mine the coal. So they were so glad we put that car on so it was just like you were at your own home when you were in that car, so to speak. And they were so proud of it because that coal company is sold out now. And they don't have anything at all now. Millions and millions of tons of coal that they've sold. And all of their clerical work

was done here

E All the Clinchfield's clerical work was done here?

K. Yeah, this is the fuel company They had a Clinchfield coal company too Clinchfield railroad's first name was CC&O Then this Clinchfield Fuel Company The same company that built the railroad owned Elcorn in Virginia Northern part of Tennessee, Virginia, and Kentucky And I've been to that I worked there for two weeks They told me they needed extra yardmen so they got a lot of coal out Oh that's a deserted place It's not Elcorn, the city I don't know how the railroad got the name Elcorn But praise, p,r,a,i,s,e Folks taught that to me in Elcorn

E Elcorn is not the city?

K No Elcorn, Kentucky

E Elcorn, Kentucky

K Clinchfield railroad has three or more very important cities to work through One, Kingsport, Tennessee There's a big plant there Borden Mills has a big plant And I have heard for a long time that their receipts from Kingsport, Tennessee were around a million dollars a month 18 miles south of Kingsport is Junction City and the Marble Mills are there and several other big plants and corporations Clinchfield had a lot of revenue from all these plants and they didn't hear about the total Marble Mills was there Probably General Mills, I believe You see on television, General Mills products. On the north end we connect with the North and the Western They delivered us coal and we delivered them coal in Kentucky Of course, there is no business there except the coal mine We get out four or five hundred cars a day Elcorn, they also get out probably 100 cars a day Coal mining isn't as heavy in Elcorn And then they connect with the Southern in one they call the Asheville connection Then at Junction City, Tennessee they connect with the Southern The North and the Western would not use the diesels They said that railroad was built on coal and they were going to stick to it And they did for several years That is to say the Southern Railroad would use diesel so they would bring the train from Bristol, take the diesels off and put on a steam engine 60% more than the diesels This train would come from Memphis, the same diesel, they'd take it off and put on a steam engine until Lynchburg In Lynchburg, they'd take the steam engines off and give them to the Southern They've been selling as much coal as they ever did

E Can you think of anything else that you'd like to tell us?

K I used to work in the Western Union, I typed pretty good there A 10 to 15 word message in a minute You had to count your words as you put them down on the typewriter On the left hand you had to mark who the operator is and the time They had special typewriters there The Western Union went from penmanship to typing telegrams

E When did the Western Union go from penmanship to typewriter



K Since WWI.

E Did they give you a test in penmanship when you first got hired?

K Yes I had to write train notes I had to turn the board to red so the engineer would know to stop, then you go in and tell the specialist the signal is out

E When did they go to a block system?

K They had that in 1970 I read a lot about the block system They used to have pegs A train would come by and you couldn't let another train pass by for 10 minutes So they put the block down They worked on this for years and years

E The flag system?

K Yes The flag system. It was a little office way out in the country I worked several places down between Hamlet and Columbus

E You used to work some of these little stations down around there then? You would run the flags up?

K Yes Yes ma'am Turn the switch and pull the ropes

E The Clinchfield never used anything like that?

K No They never used a regular block system. They didn't call them block systems The Souther would specify one railroad to be in charge of two or three others Somewhere in there the CC&O had the P&E I don't know what they did with C&WC, but the Southern bosses took charge of the CC&O They had some mighty good men working for them

E You worked under a lot of different superintendents?

K I don't know how many Never had any trouble with any of them all those years If I didn't want to do what they suggested I wouldn't tell them I wouldn't do it No,no, no They said maybe you should put your thinking cap on

E What did they call you?

K Captain One conductor in Spartanburg called me Skipper Different names I got along with all the boys mighty well Never caused them any trouble at all I didn't have any friction in any way, shape, form, or fashion. I'd always talk it out with them

E Do you know anything about the C&WC?

K The C&WC Railroad in North Carolina. Came up through Georgia and then Spartanburg

For some reason, the C&WC and the CC&O, when they first came into Spartanburg in 1909, joined each other and exchanged cars. Clinchfield would deliver to the C&WC, 150 to 200 cars a day. Vice versa the other way. For many years a whole lot of coal to Charleston during WWI. It was privately owned, I never did know who the freshman owners were. But Mr. Jesse Kebin was present for many, many years and it didn't help his commission. The Southern Railway took the contract to deliver to the C&WC. And from the C&WC to the Clinchfield. All great cars, loaded and empty, of course. The PMN was also the same as the C&WC. It was an 80 line from Spartanburg to Greenwood, South Carolina. And the same system was used in the PMN as the C&WC. We got about 70% more traffic from the C&WC than they did from the PMN. For about 40 years now the C&WC and the Clinchfield took on handling of citrus fruit out of Florida. They got this traffic from the Atlantic Coastline. Went from 50 to 100 cars a day came through here. Five to six years ago the Atlantic Coastline and Seaboard bumped the PMN out. They're still operating the PMN Railway the same as it used to be because it gets so much freight from these mills. It's been paying off mighty good for years and years. I don't know how many years ago, but the Atlantic Coastline leased the C&WC and now it is in with the C&WC, Atlantic Coastline and Seaboard. They've got several other smaller lines down in the south here. Used to have 50 to 60 cars in these freight trains, citrus fruit and so forth. They handle over 100 now, 125, 150 with four or five diesels. So I never did know just how it came about to have a building at the C&WC. There's two other railroads here. A road they call the CNNW, runs from Chester, South Carolina to Newton, North Carolina. Then there was a railroad line from Kingbear, South Carolina to Marion, North Carolina. And I never did know who built that road.

E: What was the name of it?

K: It was known as the SC&GE for a long period of years and in 1907, when I was working in Shelby, the Southern leased that road. The South Carolina and Georgia extension. They had the main shops and everything in Lexburg, South Carolina. But when the Southern took over they moved all that from Lexburg. Lexburg is a place on the Southern mainline between Atlanta and Washington. This SC&GE had options there and had physical connection with the Southern and made a lot of money. The 1907 depression hurt all the railroads in the United States, like it did so many other industries. They still operated that line, they had patching services there. C&WC had their patching services. The fact of the matter is there is no patching business owned local. All the patching business now is through Spartanburg.

E: Was the C&WC a steam operated road?

K: It was. They were into diesels too.

E: Both of these other small roads were steam roads too?

K: Yes, steam roads too.

E: The only electric road around here was the PMN?

K: That's right.

E How many of these roads did you interchange other merchandise with?

K Shelby interchanged with the Southern Railway Boston Seaboard and Clinchfield Here in Spartanburg we were connected physically with the Southern Railroad The C&WC and the PMN we had to get to the Southern It used to be only about two dollars and a half per car About five years ago they finished a tunnel between C&WC and CC&O.

E That was a joint venture wasn't it, that tunnel?

K Yes between the Clinchfield and the C&WC

E I was thinking that the Seaboard was in on that, but only through the C&WC

K No, the Seaboard never did come in as a partner Yes, at first, we were talking about that tunnel, \$800,000 That was the first about 1918 It cost them over two and a half million dollars The Yardmaster down there asked us to come to Wilmington, North Carolina to headquarters at that time to give our deposition to try and build the tunnel So we went down and stayed four days

E That tunnel, that really made a good tunnel.

K Same diesels, same cab, they may have gone to Elcoin, I don't know The CC&O train, the same thing The CC&O train would come in there take the C&WC . I understand some of those diesels go on, pumped up to Jacksonville

E They go all the way to Atlanta?

K Yes, ma'am, Elcoin to Jacksonville Then the same thing from Jacksonville, from the C&WC and CC&O Right on through The Atlantic Coastline ran some trains to New Orleans and California, same diesels

E On some of the railroads each conductor and crew was assigned a caboose and as long as they were, that was their caboose. Now, what about the Clinchfield Did they rotate the cabooses among the men or was one crew assigned a caboose?

K It used to be that one crew was assigned to the caboose But competition about getting the cars moving and keeping them moving They had to give that up and let the caboose cars and the diesels go I remember when the conductors didn't want the crew to handle his cab I want to tell you something else about the diesel If they'd break down it would take three or four hours to find it and two minutes to fix it Steam engine breaks down it took two or three minutes to find it and six to eight hours to fix it. It might just be a plug burnt. Our crew didn't know nothing about the diesels The minutemen don't know about them They was messing around using the flags to check this, check that Then something was set on fire, it burned up It happened several times, they just hit the wrong thing and it would cause it to catch fire and burn them up

E Who built the steam engines that the Clinchfield used?

K They'd buy them from different places The last they bought, I'm sure was from New York Every time they'd buy, they'd buy 10 at a time Then different locomotives throughout the United States and they made steam engines from Lima, Ohio for years and years And then the Richmond Locomotive

E Who made your diesels?

K The ones Clinchfield bought They bought from General Motors. Always buy them 10 at a time One or two men would come down and stay about a month There isn't one man that knows everything about it Like a typewriter or this recorder Not one person knows everything about a machine. Goes to show that one man doesn't know everything.

E When you worked with the freight house and the Seaboard you said a lot of the freight came in on wagons and horses Did you have as much damaged freight back in those days as later years?

K Yes, ma'am Breakage I've heard it said the railroad never did make any money on local freight Always too much damage there Say they had 150 pound bags of flour, maybe 200, too much damage, sacks are torn and lost and then they had so much robbery. Back in those early days, oohhh, freight trains went up at hundreds of thousands of dollars So they quit handling local freight now

E Those early cars didn't lock Do the current, the later cars, those metal ones, can they be locked?

K Yes, we always have had what they call a seal A little seal on a wire You'd put one of those wires down through the hole and put that seal through it and mash it together and station would put that on and lock that car, it sealed it and it had the station number All the stations had numbers, like 219, 220, maybe 320, 420 So they can tell where it is coming from Shelby was 245 Every car you opened, once you got the freight out, you had to put a seal back on and then you had to keep a record of that seal But oohh that robbery

E Did a lot of the robbery take place in transit or did it take place while the cars were sitting in the yard?

K Oohh Yeah, I'm glad you asked that question The rope back in those days was maybe not quite as small, but a lot of that division with rope people would catch this freight train and ride it out, maybe one, two, or, three rope And get up on top of this car and put the rope around the running board and maybe two or three men would hold it too and this men would go down and break the seal on that car. And go in that car while the train was moving So boxes of cloth, merchandise, two or three hundred pound boxes of bacon, shoes, everything in those cars that you could think of Going up those slow hills and then they'd come back down to the wagons that night and pick them up Down here on the Seaboard going from Monroe to Atlanta

Cigarettes, oohh they steal We had a man that came to the CC&O to the job and he was on the Southern for several years before he came to the Clinchfield He told me a lot of different things people would do They'd open those cars, get that seal off of there and never break it You could take heat to that thing, undo that thing, steal what you wanted out of the car, and put it back and you'd never know it was broken into Ooh it was terrible At the freight depot they would break into them, take out stuff More of it now because there are more ropes

E Did people file a lot of claims against the trains?

K I handled claims at Shelby after I'd been there a couple of years These men would get five or 10 bags of sugar and maybe there weren't four in the car, somebody stole one Shoes, boxes of clothes, shirts, all kinds of them. Steal a whole case of shoes, they didn't know what kind of shoes they were getting They got clothes, they weren't shipping too many ready made clothes then. I remember so well these men come down and say, I hate to tell you but I was short 10 boxes of clothes in the last shipment I got And the railroad would pay it, if it's signed or concealed damage or what If it wasn't there they had to pay for it and damage

E I think there were a lot of these store people that made a lot of money off of the railroads?

K Oohh, millions of dollars. There was one in Spartanburg I said if there is anything broken in the box let me know It seemed like you just go along with the day, I never gave it much thought It was awful tough on the railroad When I was 17, I made mistakes against the railroad men If they gave you a 5-dollar bill and you gave him too much change back They told me don't worry cause it didn't hurt the railroad, they take it out of pay It was your loss Sometimes it had to come out of my pocket

E Do you remember anything about the fares back in those days?

K Yes, they were much lower than they are now But there's something they did back in those days that they can't do now since they passed this law here They had what they called a jemco car and only certain people had to ride in the special car Then they had what was called first class and second class tickets, there wasn't much difference between them But some people would buy them. First class tickets were a little more. That went on for years and years Then they had a mileage book Each little coupon counted as a mile You would go to say Monroe, 75 miles, you'd get 75 miles out of your book They'd sell them to you, I think they were \$20 a piece, but I forget how many miles A lot of times, I don't know whether it's true or not, I heard in a lot of cases that it is true, but the conductors would keep some of the money You would not pull all the cars and come up with that and cut that out But there is no way to cut out the crookedness in some, It's less than 1% They had some fellas with sticky fingers The good old days And another thing, the train men, 1907, I believe when they got the first contract They'd work you 48-56 hours and give you no rest Long days The crew would work from Monday morning go back to Charlotte six or seven o'clock that evening They had a train ready to come back that way and didn't have any crew to run it They'd just put that same crew back on Terrible

The Pennsylvania put on the biggest campaign to keep people from getting hurt Railroad

men would get hurt, killed, it was just terrible. One depot station down here in Georgia, He's getting out his third book now as his experience of 45 years of being an operating agent. I've got two of them. I pass them onto some of the other boys.

E: On this tunnel they built up here a few years ago, how long is that tunnel?

K: I should know. 282 miles. It's about 10 or 12 hundred feet long.

E: Not terribly long?

K: No, no. The Southern Railroad and under North Church Street and then it comes out right down yonder.

E: Right down here in Spartanburg?

K: Yes, ma'am. Right down here beside the old Union Station. They tore it down by the way, the old depot. I've been down there hundreds of times checking with the Southern on the transfer of costs. You could hardly walk through that track.

E: When you used to work as a delivery boy for the Western Union, how did you deliver the telegrams?

K: We had to have a bicycle and we would deliver in person, and I mentioned we had blue suits and a cap. All the telegrams were put in a little black book. So when you deliver this telegram to the individual or the company they had to sign for it. I got as much as two dollars and a half a week. That was a lot of money then, that was my money, that didn't belong to my daddy.

E: Was that in tips?

K: No, just regular salary. Once in a while, there were pretty prominent men there in Shelby. They had a lot of money, they'd maybe give you a dime, fifty cents, or a quarter. I'd run with it. Five or six men played the stock market in New York. I remember one time he came down to his office that morning and the stock market that day. Oohh man, it had cost him 700 dollars maybe more, I don't know. When he saw that he went back to his office and committed suicide. When the stock goes down you got to keep going up, maybe he didn't have the money.

E: Was this around '29?

K: No, that was in 1904. I remember the earthquake, in California I do believe.

E: Did you ever get telegrams for people that lived out in the country?

K: Yes.

E: How would you get these telegrams to these people?

K Well, if they had a phone, we would reach them alright If they didn't have a phone we would phone the sheriff's office and ask if he knew a John Q Smith He said yes and I'd ask how far out does he live He'd say about 10 to 12 miles I'd ask if there was anybody who lived close to him that might have a phone, so they'd help us out Sometimes we'd have to hire out Buggies, carriages, and things that delivered out Lots of trouble there They didn't have one claim file and they sued the Western Union, but they lost their case They didn't have very many lawsuits, they had a few They kind of keep you on your toes Sometimes we would get freight we didn't know a thing about, we'd send the cards out, and try to find out who it was and so forth If we didn't get it out they'd have to pay what we call storage 50-75 cent storage Stays in the depot before it's delivered by

E But they do allow a week or so?

K Yes, I think it was seven to ten days They'd come get it and we'd have to charge them, boy that would make them mad You had 48 hours to unload the car If you didn't unload in that 48 hours they charged you a dollar a day on that car That would make people mad too When you were a joint railroad agent, express agent and Western Union manager They gave you 10% of the money that you have A telegram that came in paid and the one that they'd send out to collect at the other end of the line you did not get anything. Independent stations, they paid the manager a salary That could cause a lot of strife among the Western Union people Business would pick up and you're working on the commission so you can get more I had a friend in Cherryville that sold bonds He made arrangements for his clients to go to Hawaii and collect so I would get 10% off his admission. They went on commission and some would make more and some would make less You would get 10% of what you collected at the express company. But what comes off the foreign line you only got 5% Packages would come in from the Southern over into North Carolina So, we'd take protective care of that to come in off of your own line The others you had to take care of it We didn't like that because you only got 5%

E Where is Cherryville?

K It's located a quarter mile west of Charlotte Up to Rutherford 100 mile district Back then in the days when they were building railroads, they'd go eight or ten miles at a time The map shows how they hook through the towns Clinchfield went through there and didn't hit any towns at all. Of course there weren't many mountains Man, North Carolina, poor city

E Did the Clinchfield have a lot of spur lines for the business?

K Not too many They had one little spur line up here in North Carolina Just over the crest of the blue ridge named the Black Mountain Railroad, 65 miles They brought out lumber, pine bark, telephone poles, and pulp wood for paper Matter of fact there is a place up there, Canton, North Carolina, a multimillion dollar plant up there It never stops, never slows down, seven days a week, seven nights a week I knew fellas, fine men that worked up there They'd come down here and we'd go up there, fine time Up in the corn fields they have several spur lines up there The Clinchfield crosses the North Western up there in St Paul, Virginia, just about 6 miles, where the big coal mines were They didn't deliver much coal to the A&W The A&W dug up some, but not very much The general manager made a big mistake there Opened up

another mine up there about 30 or 40 years ago. Built a side track up there about ten or twelve miles. Manager said that will never pay. The A&W says they'd be glad to build there. So they did! Two, three, and four hundred cars a day of coal comes out of there. That's one place our general manager made a mistake. He should have just said yes, I'll put that mine in there. They're talking about strip mining, but those are coal producing. They sure are ruining that land though. I think they're making them fill them up though.

E: Yeah, I think they should. Put the country back something the way it was.

K: Sure. They're talking about now, trying to stop, I believe it to be about 800 miles, shoot coal south into Illinois from some of those mines up there. Trying to stop it, cut the railroad, bothering those people while they're working. It's ruined.

E: Is this going to be a tunnel sort of thing?

K: Yeah, it comes down in the pipeline and takes millions of gallons of water. I wondered a lot of times how they got it down through that way. They dug the ground up before they put in the pipes. We got it stalled now. It will hurt millions. Not thousands, but millions. The people will sell the steel for cars. The people that make them, then there's service because they have to be kept up.

E: Does Clinchfield own most of its own coal cars?

K: You might say yes and no. They only bought 500 coal helper cars. Maybe 100 box cars, maybe 100 flat cars, and a wood tuck car. They borrowed the money from some of those rich folks in New York. They paid for them and paid them so much interest on them. They sell us 50 buses, and you paid for them so much a month. You can't go up there and buy 50 buses, unless you could plant down the money. They have orders, this bus number, say like 2,050 and you pay for them by the number of miles they've been driven. So that's one reason why the railroad isn't using buses like they used to. They've got money invested in it.