

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Railroading Project

Work Experience

O. H. 591

HARRY BRADY

Interviewed

by

Lillian Eminhizer

on

August 16, 1982

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: HARRY BRADY

INTERVIEWER: Lillian Eminhizer

SUBJECT: Conductor duties, promotions, hiring

DATE: August 16, 1982

E: This is an interview with Harry Lester Brady, better known as Les, at his home at 1686 Den Jean Drive in Warren, Ohio. It is about 2:30 in the afternoon of August 16, 1982. The interviewer is Lillian Eminhizer, and it is for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program.

You worked for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

B: That is right.

E: What type of a job did you have?

B: I hired out as a brakeman in 1941. Of course, when you go to work for the railroad, you work an extra bond, and you live by the telephone because you go to work at any time that they desire to call you. At that time they had a lot of extra jobs, and I went to work. It was any time of the day or night. Mainly out of this terminal they were switching jobs or what we call district runs, just short runs to deliver to the mills and for the outbound and such as that. They would switch in the yard and make up trains to move out. We didn't have too many road trains that worked out of here. We only had a local that went to Painesville. Then we had a job that went to Butler, and those were the only two road jobs that we had that worked out of this terminal at that time.

E: You worked out of the course?

B: Yes. I enjoyed working on the railroad, and I enjoyed the fellows, especially the older fellows. When we went there, they just took such good care of us young guys. They taught us everything. You really appreciated it because they had to

put up with a lot while they were teaching us what do to, but I did enjoy it and I enjoyed the older fellows very much.

I think that is the sad thing about the railroad in the situation today because the people they are hiring now don't have the same feelings like the older men. In fact I had one fellow who was there three months. He said, "Les, I know everything there is to know about these railroads." I said, "John, you must be a lot smarter than I am because I have been here thirty-five years, and I don't think I know it all." This seems to be the trend in the last few years, and they have no feeling for experience for the time that you have spent there.

A lot of people wouldn't work on the railroad under the conditions that we worked. Until the last few years we worked seven days a week with a straight time with no overtime unless you worked over eight hours and no holiday pay. This all came about just in the last ten years. Up until that time you would tell people on the street, and they would tell you that you were crazy. But we worked in those conditions.

People didn't understand this for so many years. It was the type of work; I liked it. It was outside work. I was working in the shop when I hired out on the railroad and hated every day that I walked in there because I liked to be outside. I heard they were hiring up on the railroad. I heard it on a Saturday night, and Monday morning I hired out.

E: Did you originally hire out with the group that went in during the war to work because of the increase in the amount of the flow of traffic?

B: I imagine that was starting, yes, because they hadn't hired any men for ten years. From 1929 to 1939 they hadn't hired a man on the railroad. Of course, with the advent of the war they needed more men. That was the way it was. We hired out because business was picking up. We were very busy.

E: What was your job like that you did on the railroad?

B: When you first hired out, you were a brakeman. If you were working in the yard, it was a matter of cutting cars as we call it or separating the cars. You would switch them from the different tracks and set hand brakes and throw switches and assist the conductor in switching the trains. That was the main job of the brakeman.

Of course, when you are braking on a road job, why, the brakeman rides on the head end of the train. He leads the engine around and goes where the engine had to go, where the train has to go, whereas the other brakeman is a flagman. He protects

the rear end of the train; that is his primary duty. Back then you did a lot of paper work for the conductor. You had a lot of writing to do with filling the reports and so forth of all the cars that you handled. Wherever you set off and picked up you had to list them on where we reported in and check whatever. The flagman usually did that for the conductor; it wasn't really required. A lot of the times the conductor would be on the head end assisting the head brakeman setting off cars and picking up cars.

E: The brakeman on the head end was the one who had more seniority then?

B: No.

E: No?

B: No. The flagman's job was an easier job because most of the time you are riding in a caboose. The only time that you got out was when you were stopping and you had to go back and flag. Back then they were very strict about the flagging rules in the distance that you went back. Now they don't do hardly any of it. In automatic block signal territory you don't have to flag at all anymore.

E: They don't have any trouble with the blocks falling?

B: No, not that I know of. I don't know if they have had any rear end collisions because of block failure. Of course, you knew always two blocks behind whether there was a train ahead of you or not. Then you would get a yellow block and you would get a red block. You always know that far ahead what is ahead of you.

E: How far are the blocks apart on the railroad?

B: I can't answer that. They are different distances.

E: They vary.

B: Yes. I don't know what the average spacing of them is.

E: How long were you a brakeman?

B: I was promoted to a conductor in 1946. Once you are promoted you go back on an extra board again. That is if you can hold a big job braking; if not you move and get put back on the conductor's extra board. So you work all nights and so forth again. I was pretty fortunate at the time. I came back from Akron from the promotion in the afternoon, and I got on with a crew that night. I ran a crew practically all the time since I was promoted. Very few times I was back braking after I was

- promoted.
- E: You could go back and brake?
- B: No. As long as you held a job as a conductor, you had to work as conductor. If it got slow such as the steel strike and so forth, why, then you would go back as a brakeman. You still held your seniority term as a brakeman. When things slowed up, and you couldn't hold a job as a conductor, then you exercised your seniority as a brakeman.
- E: Now would you bid into a regular job?
- B: Yes. There were times when I couldn't hold a job braking and I could still hold a job as a conductor also.
- E: How can that be?
- B: Some of the brakemen never took promotion.
- E: They weren't forced to take it?
- B: No, they weren't forced to take it. Engine crews were forced to take promotion. The brakemen and flagmen were never forced, but they are now; they have to take it now just in that last couple of years. Then you didn't have to take it. A lot of them preferred not to take it because they figured they could hold a better job as a brakeman than they could as a conductor. I have seen a couple of times when I had a regular job as a conductor and I couldn't hold even a brakeman's extra board if I had to go back braking. That was the way it worked out. I felt that I was much better off taking promotion in running a crew because I worked better that way.
- E: There is a lot more responsibility in being a conductor.
- B: Yes. You had charge of the train. It was your responsibility to see that the work is done right. If anything happens, you are the first one they ask why.
- E: Do you think that some of the fellows might not have wanted the responsibility?
- B: Yes. I think that a lot of them didn't want the responsibility.
- E: Was there a considerable difference in pay, or was it similar?
- B: No. Probably when I took promotion, there was probably \$1.50 a day in pay; that was all, but, no. Then the pay increases the same percentage increases. In the last few years the spread got bigger by \$5 or \$6.
- E: That is for a whole day.

B: Yes.

E: When you were out on the road, where did you work? On the main line?

B: I never worked much on the main line. I never had to leave here that much to go to the main line. Of course, that would have been all away from home so I had no desire to go out there. I could always hold a job here. A couple of times I was forced away. I had to go to Painesville. I worked out of Painesville to New Castle. One time I ran out of New Castle, Pennsylvania, to Cleveland, Ohio. Then, of course, I worked the Butler Run. In fact I was the conductor on the Butler Run when they lost it. Of course, that was when they called it Mortgage Lifter due to the fact that you were on the road sixteen hours every trip. You spent practically all of your time on the railroad. You were only at home eight hours every other day. When you were called, you were called while you were resting and you were ready to go again. If you had a long layover, it was in Butler. If you got in here on time, you were called out here at 11:00 in the evening, and you would get to Butler in sixteen hours. But then you wouldn't be called out of Butler until 3:00 in the morning the following morning, so actually you had a longer layover in Butler than you had at this end. You worked out for the overtime and for the money, so we worked those kind of jobs.

E: Did they pay a flat fee for the trip, or did they pay by the mileage, or did you get paid by the hour?

B: It was a 100-mile job. They paid a road rate for 100 miles plus overtime.

E: What do you mean by overtime?

B: After eight hours.

E: Oh, after eight hours. Did the fellows have a tendency to mess around so that it would take longer than the average?

B: No. I never believed in that. It has been known to happen, but I never believed in it because I felt the company was paying you time and a half anyway, so why should you slow up too, once they are paying you the time and a half? I know a lot of them used to goof around; I never believed in it. I work hard. I believe in eight hours work for eight hours pay. In fact some of the switching jobs I had at DeForest as I would recall they would call some of the extra men, and they wouldn't even come out because they would work too hard. That is a known fact that they wouldn't come out and work for me. I was out there working, and that was what I did. That is the way I have always done things for myself or anybody. I give a day's work. This is another situation with today's men; they don't want to do

a day's work.

- E: That is rather interesting about the way the people have functioned on the railroad over the years. Were you working when they had steam engines?
- B: Yes. Of course, we lost a lot of nostalgia on the railroad when we lost the steam engines too.
- E: Were you happy to see them go or not?
- B: It is progress. You weren't happy to see them go. If you worked on the steam engines, it just wasn't the same working on diesel after you had worked on steam engines. There just was nostalgia connected with it; it was just something that you liked. For instance, we were on the Butler Run. You would go up the Conoquenessing River Valley at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. You would hear that engine exhausting and the whistle blowing at the road crossings; it was just something that you didn't have with the diesel. It was something that you enjoyed.
- E: Did people have more nostalgia as you say for the days when the steam engine was being run than when you got the diesels?
- B: Oh, yes. It just completely changed. It just completely changed your feeling about the railroad. I think the general public too didn't . . . Even when I was hired out on the railroad, the railroad man was kind of looked up to and his job and everything. Now they are not. People really look down on them it seems now.
- E: Did you ever run any passenger runs?
- B: No.
- E: Just the freight runs?
- B: By the time I got seniority enough to hold passenger trains, why, they were all gone.
- E: When you would pick up a train, how would you organize your train?
- B: When you were on the road, your train was already switched up. That was the yard crew's responsibility. Your train was built up in station order. Wherever you set off your train was ready for you.
- E: Who in the yard would tell them?
- B: Yardmaster.
- E: The yardmaster would tell them how to put it together?

- B: Yes. Of course, above him was the terminal trainmaster. He saw what the yardmaster did, but that was the yardmaster's responsibility to get with the crews that were working and line up the trains and have that ready to go.
- E: As you went down the road, especially on a local run, you would have to set off and pick up cars?
- B: Yes.
- E: Now is that the conductor's job to say where they go on the train?
- B: Yes, that's the conductor's job. It tells you on the waybill where the cars go and who they are for. You just look through your bills, and you set off wherever or pickup whatever. Usually there was a station agent around. He would line the work up for you that you had to do. On the local we used to have out of Painesville when I first went to work there, you unloaded freight. We loaded freight also.
- E: Unload it?
- B: Yes.
- E: In other words, you emptied the cars.
- B: If you had freight for West Farmington, you stopped at West Farmington with the local freight cars. You pulled in there at the station, and you unloaded the freight that was for West Farmington. If they had anything to ship, you would put it in the car. Of course, you went on to Middlefield, East Clarion and Chardon and so forth. You unloaded at every station and loaded.
- E: What were some of the things that you would be handling up there?
- B: The biggest things that we handled were sap evaporators. They always seemed hard to get out of a car because they were big, galvanized pans that they evaporated maple syrup in, but farm machinery and dried goods, at Christmas time a little candy and presents and whatever was being shipped. Local freight as we called it then, why, you hauled it and you unloaded it. One of the worst things ever was that we used to load cowhides at Middlefield. They were stinking, old cowhides. We had to move them. Of course, you didn't load them in a local car; you loaded them in a special car. A lot of times we would have two cars of local freight that we had to work on. Then a few years later they got where they just set the car off. The agent and the section men unloaded it then. Then you would pick it up the next day. Now they don't even fool with any local freight at all.

- E: George Snook was telling me that they have taken up all of the line north of Copperweld.
- B: Right. It is all gone.
- E: Will the railroad retain that property, or will they sell it?
- B: I don't know what they will do. They probably would like to sell it. There is no reason to keep it. I think that the New York Central sold the line they had going north of here. I don't know what the CSX Corporation is going to do.
- E: How do you feel about the CSX Corporation taking over? First went the Chessie and then . . .
- B: I think it is a good thing; I think they are making money, and I think that they are going to make money.
- E: Are they keeping the roadbeds any better?
- B: I'm afraid not. I'm afraid that is one thing that should be improved upon. They have let it slip. I wouldn't work on one of those road jobs today in the fast freight service for anything because it is not worth it. A fellow out of New Castle told me one time he went out of New Castle one day with thirty-six slow orders. How could he keep in mind all thirty-six of those places where he has to slow that train down between there and Willard? That isn't right. He shouldn't be given that responsibility.
- E: They almost would have to have a rack for a book that they keep turning the pages on as they go past the different mileposts or whatever.
- B: Yes. They just give you a handful of orders.
- E: Is that the way they did that, just hand them to you?
- B: Yes. He has to keep his mind on that all the time--the engineer, and the conductor too. The engineer has to slow them down.
- E: Did you get one copy or two copies of an order like that?
- B: You would get one copy on the head end and one copy on the hind end.
- E: So two.
- B: Yes, two copies. Everyone reads the orders; everyone on the crew reads the orders.
- E: Before the train leaves?

- B: No. As you are going. Usually the engineer and conductor read them before it leaves to see that the orders are alright to run on, and the rest of the crew reads them as they go. Of course, they don't have too many train orders anymore. With automatic block signal territories, you don't have any manual block rules hardly at all anymore. When I first went to work on the railroad, we had twenty-two crews working out of a pool in Painesville. When you would go out to DeForest on that local, you had a handful of orders because you met trains everywhere. In almost every siding you would meet one or two trains. You really had to keep your mind on your work then.
- E: What did you do when you were put in a siding?
- B: What did you do when you put there?
- E: Yes. What would you do with your time?
- B: Just wait. There was nothing to do. If you had a scheduled train or a train superior to you, why, you had to just sit there and wait until you met that train; that was it.
- E: Were you ever bored?
- B: No. I'm not the type of person who gets bored because I can sit contentedly. The only place I was ever bored was when I stayed at the other end of the road when I was working out of Painesville, especially that time that you laid around the rest house in New Castle and waited to be called to go back to Painesville; that was the most boring thing that I had to do.
- E: What was one of these rest houses or bunkhouses like?
- B: It was all according to where you were at. The one at New Castle--the old one--was bug infested.
- E: Literally?
- B: Literally. They had bugs, yes. Of course, at that time most of the train crews stayed in their cabooses. You lived in the caboose; you did your own cooking and everything. It was the engine crews that had to stay in the rest houses. It was the same with that one at Butler. I would have rented a room uptown before I would have ever stayed in that rest house.
- E: My father-in-law used to have a room uptown.
- B: Yes. I wouldn't stay in that rest house. They built a new one at New Castle; it was fairly nice and fairly clean. They built a new rest house there.
- E: How would a place get bedbugs and like that?

B: Different people.

E: The railroad men weren't . . . You just don't think about them bringing something like that to that place.

B: Well, I don't know how they got in there, but they were there.

E: Did they have any . . .

B: Even some in the cabooses.

E: Oh, really?

B: Yes.

E: Would you always be assigned one caboose?

B: Yes.

E: So if it was messy, it was your caboose and you didn't have to go in someone else's?

B: Yes. That is right. If they changed cabooses for any reason and you didn't like it, why, you could take that caboose back and tell them that you didn't want it and that you wanted a decent caboose.

E: I saw a caboose one time that was lined with walnut on the inside. What was yours like?

B: The one I had on the Butler Run, which was a 2058, I fixed it up really nice. There was linoleum on the floor and it was all painted with bright colors inside instead of that old, dull grey that they used to paint them. I think it was a pink and creme color inside. I had it all painted up and the bunks all fixed up in it and sealed the ceiling up instead of just the high ceiling. We used to set off some cars at the glass plant down at Renfrew. I talked to that foreman down there one time. I told him that I wanted a glass top for the table. He said that he would make me one, so I had the carpenters at Butler make the table bigger; then I stopped there one night and he took the measurements of it. He made me a black onyx, glass table-top; it was about three-quarters of an inch thick. He made it perfect to size. I stopped in there; he brought it out and we sealed it on that table.

It wasn't long after when we were at Butler and a caller came over and said that the superintendent of Pittsburgh, the superintendent of Buffalo, a couple of trainmasters, and a couple of other fellows wanted to see my caboose. You weren't supposed to change anything in it. They just wanted to see it; they heard about it.

At that time I had a flagman. He worked at DeForest. He never left that caboose. He took pride in that caboose. The flagman usually took care of the caboose. That was his responsibility to keep the caboose clean. All the fellows took turns cooking. When I was there, I did all of the cooking though. I liked to cook.

E: Did you have the engineer put your food on the floor?

B: Yes. I can tell you a story about that. This was on the Butler Run. When we left DeForest, I always put the coffee-pot on first thing. By the time we got to Ohio Junction it was ready. We had a cup of coffee before I went over to the head end. We were going down to the stop there at the tunnel of Girard. This young fellow's name was Paul Teeple. He was on the head engine. He was going to make a grandstand showing that he went sailing down there and then he was going to stop. I knew what was going to happen. I just reached for that coffee-pot and over it went; the coffee was gone. We had quite a laugh out of that.

E: Did you know Jerry Vennette?

B: Yes.

E: He had his coffeepot rigged with wire, and it just cleared the stove. If the caboose moved, the coffeepot would swing out and come back.

B: On the old steam engines everybody carried a whiskey bottle with coffee in it. You could stick it up by the ejector pipes; that kept it hot. Once you opened it, why, it would change the flavor of it. Everybody had it and just drank along as they went.

E: Somebody was telling me about cooking eggs in the firebox on the engine. They would take a shovel and put the eggs in there and stick them in the firebox. I don't suppose you ever did anything like that?

B: No. I never did anything like that.

E: I bet you had some good times though on the caboose?

B: Yes. We did. Old Monk Fenton was the engineer on the Butler Run years and years ago. I was on there one time braking head end. Ray Mohn was the fireman. That Mohn was ornery. Ray and I were dozing one time. Monk got up one time and smeared Limburger cheese all over the ejector pipe on our side of the engine; you couldn't stand it.

E: Did it keep you awake?

B: Yes.

E: How would you ever get anything like that off?

B: Just wait for it to wear off.

E: Wear off?

B: To wear off.

E: I pity the poor crew who got the engine next.

B: Yes. We had an engineer on the lake local. His name was Wilhide. We had a regular assigned engine to that job at that time. He kept all the brass shined on that engine--all the brass, all the copper, all the valves and everything just shined. He kept all of the handles painted red and shined the brass. He was assigned that engine, and he really kept it shined up.

E: Was this true with the other fellows that if they were assigned a piece of equipment they took better care of it?

B: Yes, yes. I think so. You would have a regular assigned caboose. If you would be off or something and some of these extra men catch it, you would come back and it would look like a bunch of tramps had been in there. It would just disturb me to no end to have to come in there and clean up after them when they knew the way you kept your caboose.

E: Did you keep food supplies and like that on the caboose?

B: Yes.

E: Did you have a refrigerator?

B: Yes, an icebox.

E: An icebox?

B: The company furnished the ice. We always had ice in every terminal. We kept it on ice.

E: Just a regular, old-fashioned, oak type?

B: No. It was usually just a square box lined with galvanized built in back of one of the seats in the caboose. You put your ice right down in there. There were shelves in there.

E: How did you get it drained? Was there a drain in the bottom?

B: Yes.

E: When I think of the icebox, I think of the old standard household icebox.

B: Yes.

E: How often would you have to put ice in something like that?

B: Every round trip you would fill it up. It was usually when you left your home terminal. On the Butler Run you would fill it up at DeForest; then you wouldn't need to fill it at Butler.

E: Where would DeForest get the ice? Would they have it there for refrigerator cars too or something?

B: Years ago they used to bring it in refrigerated cars. The last twenty-five or thirty years they just trucked it in. The local ice companies would bring it in. They would have a big storage box there that they would put it in. You would go to that box and get it for your caboose.

E: I don't know that you can even buy block ice around here anymore.

B: Yes.

E: You can?

B: Yes. They still have that place over on McMyler Street called Trumbull Ice Company. In fact they still deliver at DeForest.

E: They do?

B: Yes.

E: I guess they would need it for their iceboxes.

B: Yes.

E: But all the refrigerator cars are motor self-contained?

B: Yes.

E: They don't have to ice anymore?

B: No, they don't ice them.

E: When did the icebox cars go out?

B: I would guess probably the last of them were gone fifteen years ago.

E: How did the size of your cars and the make-up of your train change over the years?

B: Just getting bigger. When I first went there, if you had a forty-six ton car, you had a pretty good sized car. It is the

average car now. Then they were up to fifty.

E: Now seventy.

B: Yes, seventy ton.

E: Did you ever haul any--other than the cowhides out of Middlefield--interesting things? Don Saam was talking about hogs heads with buttermilk this morning.

B: No, I don't.

E: You don't hear anyone talking about this sort of thing.

B: No, I don't. I wouldn't be familiar with that.

E: He used to haul tombstones and all sorts of things. Did you work the same with the same whole crew all the time?

B: No. Crews keep changing. You would get to a point where you would get somebody who likes to work with you and you get along and are compatible. I think that probably I had the same crew for the last ten or twelve years that I was there.

E: Who would determine the make-up of the crew like that?

B: You have a crew; then they advertise jobs for bid. They bid them in or else bump onto them. They can bump your crew. You would bump onto whatever crew your seniority allowed you to hold.

E: So your crews did change even though it was a good crew and worked well?

B: Yes. Maybe they considered what was a little better job opened up, and some of them would go.

E: You were out for some service during the war. Was it straight military service, or did you work in a railroad battalion?

B: Railroad. Yes, we took terminal training on the Union Pacific Railroad between Cheyenne and Laramie, Wyoming. It was just a detachment of us after technical training. They sent us up into the mountains of India. They really trained us rough for twenty-eight days. It was really rough every day; it was really tough. Then all of sudden they just moved us out of there. They moved us out and sent us to Iran. There I was put in the 730th railway operating battalion. I didn't do any railroading; I was a clerk. I saw the equipment they had over there. The fellows told me that they were out there thirty-six hours on the road. That wasn't for me. When the colonel interviewed me and asked me what I did, I told him I was a company clerk.

E: Had your training as a brakeman and like that trained you to

do this type of work, or was it just something that you said so that you could get it?

B: It was just something I said because I could type. I knew that I could do the work and that I could learn it. I had done a little bit of it up to that time in the army and had some idea of what it was like. Somehow I got the word that they needed a company clerk, so I figured that was what I would do.

E: You were lucky in a way.

B: Yes.

E: They moved a lot of stuff over there in Iran. Was there any action?

B: There was no fighting at all.

E: No fighting?

B: No. It was an amazing railroad. If you talked to George, he probably told you about it.

E: Yes. George told me quite a bit about it, yes. He managed to get himself a desk job too.

B: Yes. He clerked too.

E: He was telling me too that quite a few of the people hired into the railroad during the war just to get the draft exempt status.

B: Yes.

E: You hired out during the war. That was why I asked you that question.

B: I didn't do that. I did it because I really liked the work and I was raised down at DeForest. I knew all of the old fellows.

E: Are there other members of your family who are railroad men also?

B: No.

E: You just had been raised around it then.

B: Yes. I was down around the yard all the time. I had visions of being a hostler when I was a kid. I bummed around down there as a kid at the railroad yard.

- E: What is the difference between a hostler and an engine tender or the man who would take care of the engines?
- B: That is what a hostler does.
- E: That is what that is?
- B: Yes.
- E: I wondered because George Snook didn't use the word "hostler". I thought afterwards that was a different job. I thought it was the same. He talked about working under his father and cleaning the fireboxes when it was ninety degrees in the summer. That job was a hostler helper?
- B: Yes.
- E: You were smart. You stayed up on top where you didn't have to.
- B: Of course, that came under the seniority of the engine crews. If they needed an extra hostler or a hostler helper, why, then the fireman did that. We had no claim to it being in train service.
- E: If you moved up from a conductor, what position would you move to on the railroad?
- B: You would have to move into some official capacity such as yardmaster or something like that. That is the only promotion you would go to because you couldn't go in engine service. You didn't hold any seniority in engine service at all.
- E: Would you move up to trainmaster?
- B: You could moved to trainmaster. Yes. Most of them at that time they took out of train service to make yardmasters. I worked yardmaster for several years. I finally went back in and it was getting to be where I had to go away from home again. I was more or less working an extra board again. When it got to that point, I just gave up the yardmaster work and went back to running a crew.
- E: It was easier work?
- B: I don't know. Yardmaster work wasn't hard; I didn't think so.
- E: He is the man who makes up the trains and puts them together in the yard.
- B: No. He instructs the conductor. The conductor is the actual man who does the work making up the trains. The yardmaster makes up the switch lists. He has the bills in the office, and he makes up the lists and issues you a list of every track in the

yard. He will tell you if he wants the local bilt up first or another bilt up first--whatever he plans to work that way. But it is the conductor who actually figures out how to put the train together except in a closed yard. Then the yardmaster has to give the conductor what they call a cut list. It tells them so many cars each track. In the yard at DeForest, which is a hard yard to switch in because you are limited as to track space . . .

E: You are also on top of the hill.

B: You had to remember where you were holding cars there because you didn't have a track for every classification. There were five tracks in the yard. I have had as high as nine classifications on the steel run. Of course, you would have to get the Akron's and Warwick's and everything there. You are holding cars out until you get the ones in first. It was a hard switching job because you really had to remember where you held cars out. In fact there were several guys over the years who were conductors and worked in the yard at New Castle and Youngstown. They would sign for the switching job at DeForest. They wouldn't have any conductors at DeForest. They would bring the oldest conductor. They would sign with these jobs, and then give up their conductor's rights because they couldn't handle them because they weren't brought up with it. It was a tough job.

E: That was a large yard down there at Youngstown.

B: Yes. Youngstown and New Castle had a track for every classification. The yardmaster made them a cut list. When you went to work at DeForest, he would just hand you the switch list; there wasn't any cut list or anything. You just sat down there and looked it over and figured it out and went to work. It was quite an experience.

E: You enjoyed the challenges it appears.

B: Oh, yes, I did. I really liked to switch cars. When you would get a good engineer, you could really switch a lot of cars.

E: If you could go back through the years and change something, what would you change?

B: Do you mean as far as working is concerned?

E: Yes.

B: I don't know if I would change anything. I would like to work on the railroad again. As tough as it was and the weather conditions and everything, I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed it.

- E: That is interesting. George Snook was very happy to have the diesels come in. He was glad to get rid of the cinders and the dirt and all this. Then I turned around and here was Don Saam. He said that the railroad really went when the diesels came in and steam went. I guess it is mostly what you prefer.
- B: Yes, I guess, and it was your attitude. Of course, the diesels were easier and cleaner for the engine crews. Still, I rode a lot of miles on them and ate a lot of cinders and picked a lot of cinders out of my eyes.
- E: This is interesting. Is there anything else that you can think of that you would like to contribute?
- B: No, except from a safety standpoint. I think that they ought to do more for safety. I was a safety committeeman for quite a few years. I tried to run a good safety program. I know they have let it slip. As soon as I retired they just let it slip because nobody pushed it the way they should. It didn't go through the proper people.
- E: This is the safety of the employees?
- B: Yes.
- E: From the employees' action or the company's action?
- B: Both. I had no qualms about telling a crew member or anybody working if they were doing something wrong. At the same time I would go to the company if I thought they weren't holding up their safety end. It was the same with Republic Steel. I had a lot of meetings over there and got a lot accomplished. I think it is all shipping.
- E: I picked this up in another interview too that the older men used to really come down hard on the younger men if they were kicking a drawbar or something like that.
- B: Yes. That is right.
- E: Or if they felt they weren't handling the hand brake correctly or whatever. I picked that up in another interview. Now with today's train where the men for six weeks . . . How long do they educate these men before they put them on an engine?
- B: Yes, I guess about six weeks.
- E: This camaraderie isn't there.
- B: No. It isn't there.
- E: They don't really feel responsible for the safety of someone

else in their crew.

B: No. It is the general attitude to the people hiring out today that they have no concern it seems like for their fellow man. I feel a couple of accidents that have happened at DeForest were just because somebody wasn't paying attention to what was going on.

E: In the recent months?

B: Yes. Recent years. I was involved in safety for a long time. I held safety meetings . . . Well, it was all according to who the trainmaster was, how many times I could pressure him to have safety meetings. Some of them would go along with you. At the same time some of them didn't seem to want to go along with you. Of course, I had run-ins with one terminal trainmaster because I asked him to attend. I would like to have him be there if I am going to his office to have a safety meeting. I would tell him that if he wouldn't attend the safety meeting I would call the superintendent. He has no concern for these men or anything. There is nothing more important than safety on the railroad. It disturbs me to think that they are not having a program like they should be. We had a general manager here, and he was all for it. You could go to him for anything.

It was just like with some of these local officials. If you would refuse to do something that was unsafe, why, they would come up and say that you refused duty. I didn't want to hear that; I didn't want to hear that at all. If it was unsafe, period; that was all there was to it. I have had some problems with that. I have had to go to the superintendent.

The engines a couple of times were all over with oil or there were too many fumes coming out of them. I got sick on those fumes one time. I think a lot of fellows have gotten sick and not realized it because it is just like getting behind a bus or a truck. I can't do it now; five minutes and I am sick. I just couldn't work those diesels in those conditions. The yardmaster wanted to give me a bad time, so I would go to the superintendent and get it straightened out. Regardless, if it is an unsafe practice, they shouldn't pressure you to do it at all. It should end right there; that is all there is to it.

E: Do you think the companies try to pressure the men to proceed even when it is unsafe because they might save money?

B: No. I think it is just local officials that do these things. If the men would go to the proper authorities with it, then they wouldn't have this problem. Over the years I'm sure that when I would tell them something was unsafe, why, it was unsafe; that was all.

E: In terms of remuneration for the family or the person who is

injured, is this extremely difficult to deal with, the company on this sort of thing?

B: I think there has been so much of it that has been false that has made it that way. I don't think at the time that they were too hard to get along with, but there are too many of them--too many back injuries and so forth--that didn't exist. I think this turned things around. It just made it harder for everybody.

This is another thing that I didn't believe. I had a couple of injuries. I would go back to work; I didn't stay home. A lot of people would be off work for months. One time I got knocked off the top of a boxcar, into a car of scrap, and fell down on the ground. I was all cut up and beat up. I went to the hospital. The doctor wanted to keep me for two or three days. I told him that he wasn't going to because I was going back to work. He patched up my cuts and I was gone. I didn't have any broken bones. A lot of people don't do that. They think I'm crazy.

E: It is probably the difference in society from your generation to another generation.

B: Yes. They seem to dwell on those things and look out for those things and penalize the company every way they could. I didn't believe in that.

E: How about the railroad beds and the tracks and like that? Did the company over the years make any type of effort to maintain this type?

B: They used to maintain them and keep them repaired where they should be. When I started for the railroad, they had a section crew at Girard; they had one at DeForest; they had one at North Warren; they had one at West Farmington; they had one at Middlefield; they had one at Chardon; they had one at Painesville. Now they have two or three men--before they took the railroad out--trying to take care of all our railroad; it is impossible. So you have to blame the company for that. They cut the men back, and it is just lack of maintenance; that is all. They just cut those men off. They had a three-man crew at Middlefield who tried to take care of all the railroad from State Road to Painesville. It is impossible. This is the situation all over all of the railroads. The roadbeds are in terrible shape. That is why you have derailments. Just think back over the years. You never had derailments like you have now.

E: You don't think the speed of the train has something to do with it?

B: No.

E: It is the roadbed?

B: Yes. That is the concern.

E: Do you think the roadbeds could have been involved in some of these accidents?

B: Outside of just local derailments. A lot of those were caused by bad track. Most of them were by bad track.

E: By bad track, you are talking about crooked track or . . .

B: Wide gauge, unproper alignment, bad switch points.

E: How much variant is the rock that they use along for the bed they had on the track?

B: There are a lot of them. When the track gets down, they start pumping mud up through those ties. It is soft and that is it. If they had stone with the drainage in there, they wouldn't have that problem. There was a time when they had it raised up and lined it with limestone. All the section men would go down along there and trim up the edges of it and just straight as a die. Now they put a piece of track together, and they just put it together and that is it. They don't line them up. They used to get down and line them up with their eye. Now they put a gauge on them. It doesn't make any difference. There were a couple of wrecks on this side of Mahoning Avenue. That last time they fixed that track, why, it was the worst yard track there was, and it was a main track. Of course, I wasn't working then.

E: Probably now as you look back you seem to feel that the companies didn't do enough to maintain their property and railroading would have been in better shape today if they had possibly done all they could do.

B: I get back to local officials trying to do things . . . They are the ones who take care of customers; they don't take care of customers. I was on these local crews around here, and I had good relations with all of the people that I serviced. I would hide cars for them and everything. If I would have depended on the yardmaster to get those cars, they wouldn't have cars. I would hide them here and there, and I would have cars for those customers. I took good care of them. These other people--the yardmasters and the conductors--could care less whether those people had cars or not. This is not the way you take care of business, the way I see it. If you don't give people good service, why, you are not going to have it.

E: How can you hide a railroad car?

B: For instance, I would get cars off of mills. I would never

show them on my list. I would set them off in the hill yard or someplace, and that yardmaster at DeForest never knew that I had those cars out of the mill. The next day when Ohio Scrap or somebody wanted a car or Livi Steel, I had a car for them. They didn't have to wait two or three days to locate a car. It was on some track that they didn't check it. I always had cars. Some of the yardmasters would have been perturbed if they would have known or a trainmaster had known that I was doing things like this, but still the customer was happy.

E: Yes, right. He is going to come back and ship more overall.

B: I think that is the way it should be.

E: Instead of putting it on a truck someplace.

B: Yes. After the coal strike at McCleary's coal down there in 1948 or sometimes around there or in 1958, they didn't have any cars for days and days. We had two cars in the yard for him, and I happened to be working that job. I was the conductor. Instead of taking the cars and giving them to the men, he had the trucks out there, and he had his men called out to unload those cars because he needed that coal. This was when they were using a lot of coal. That yardmaster told that crew to take them to Copperweld and set them off on the way back. By the time we got to coming back we were on overtime. The terminal trainmaster said to take them back to DeForest. Here that man has had a crew down there all day waiting for those cars. If I would have been running that crew, I would have set those cars off on the way up. Then I would have settled that with the trainmaster afterwards. Now that man is mad at the B & O.

E: Yes. You are right. He will haul it in dump trucks after that.

B: Yes. Here this terminal trainmaster is trying to save twenty minutes overtime. He stopped us up there somewhere along a road someplace and told us not to set those cars off at McCleary's. He told us to go on into DeForest. How long is it going to take you to back two cars in there to keep that guy happy even if it is in the middle of the afternoon? He is going to get somebody to unload it before it is time for his men to quit. I don't know what time he got it or whether he got it the next day or not; I don't know because I wasn't on the job then. That is a disgrace, and they did so much of this stuff. These paid officials did so much of this kind of stuff, but I think they did a lot of harm there.

E: Would it be more of an egotism on their part that they wanted to feel that they were in control of this thing?

B: They wanted to maybe make things look good for them and cut down on the overtime. That is no excuse for not satisfying

a customer.

E: That is interesting. I never thought about hiding railroad cars. I can see how you do it. Wouldn't the yardmaster's record show that there was supposed to be ten cars up there?

B: No. I took the list of the cars from the outbound out of the mill. He didn't get a report out of the mill--the yardmaster didn't.

E: Oh, he didn't?

B: They would send it to the car record office, but by that time the car showed up. By the time the car record got around to checking the record the car showed up someplace. It would be filled in there for Ohio Scrap in my list there. Then that would go to the car record. Then they would pick up the car there whereas the yardmaster never knew about that car and that I took it out of there. I would set it out, and I would have it. If I took it to the yard at DeForest, maybe they wouldn't get it switched up for the next day. Maybe he has already been waiting a couple of days for cars. It wasn't according to the book, but . . .

E: You got a lot more done, didn't you?

B: Yes. And had a lot better relations.

E: Yes. That is very interesting. Can you think of anything else you would like to tell me?

B: No, I guess not.

E: I think we will terminate this.

END OF INTERVIEW