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Archie Guenther Memoir

G935. Guenther, Archie b. 1901

Interview and memoir

1 tape, 75 mins., 28 pp.

Guenther, an employee with the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad beginning in 1923, recalls railroad service, changes in locomotive technology, types of work performed, troop trains during WWI, mail service, a 1922 strike, floods hindering service, passenger service, cargo moving out of Galesburg, Illinois, and automobiles on the tracks.

Interview by Margaret Klusmeyer, 1974

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PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of tape recorded interviews conducted by Margaret Klusmeyer for the Oral History Office in August, 1974. Rosalyn Bone transcribed the tape and Kay MacLean edited the transcript. Archie Guenther reviewed the tape.

Archie Guenther was born in Knox County Illinois on September 26, 1901 and has resided there practically all his life. He started working for the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad in 1923 and did several different types of work for over forty years on the railroad. Mr. Guenther gives us some very vivid descriptions of the troop trains during the war, carrying the mail, and compares the steam engine to the diesel.

Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator, and editor sought to preserve the informal conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

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Archie Guenther, August 11, 1974, Galesburg, Illinois.
Margaret M. Klusmeyer, Interviewer.

Q. Mr. Guenther, tell me a little about yourself.

A. In the life of the railroad itself?

Q. No. Tell me where you were born.

A. I was born in Knox County, Illinois, on September 26, 1901, and I resided here practically all of my life, outside of the transfers on the Burlington Railroad. Some of these transfers took me out of town, but there was only one time that I had to move my residence out of town. I stayed in Galesburg for my voting residence all through my life.

Q. When did you begin working for the railroad?

A. I started on the railroad in 1923. I worked at that time on electrical work in the shops. They were changing over the steam-driven machines with the long line shafts to direct-driven--motor-driven--tools and lathes and machines of that kind. They did away with all the line shafts in the next three years.

When they came in with the gas-electrics [locomotives], I was made an inspector on the gas-electrics, with a roundhouse foreman's title, here in Galesburg. That I followed until 1933 when they abolished those jobs on account of direct legislation from the President of the United States for safety control devices, which they didn't need due to the fact that we were in a depression and there was very little traveling done.

After we got out of that--I wasn't out of work at any time during the Depression. The railroad took care of me, as a whole, in one job or another. I was transferred from electrical work to shop work, roundhouse foreman to yard job, and such as that, and was carried through the Depression as the Illinois District Gas-Electric Inspector. That carried through until along in the late 1930's when I was transferred over to the rip yard [repair yard] of the Galesburg division, with the B&B department and the water department.

Q. What do you mean by B&B department?

A. Bridge and building. After that, the superintendent of water passed away with a heart condition and I was offered that job and I stayed on. I was superintendent of water for, oh, about eight years--no, it was twelve to fourteen years--before I was transferred into the Chicago division on electrical work again.

Under the water department I had the Eastern District, which took me down

into St. Louis, over to Centralia, up through as far as Savannah, over to Burlington and up to the Aurora shops. When, with diesel power taking over from steam power, I was transferred back again into the Chicago office electrical department. I was general foreman of electricians of the entire system of over head construction and maintenance of all big equipment.

I stayed on that until I was transferred into Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1962. There was a big diesel [repair] shop that they were building out there, they wanted someone experienced enough that he could follow through with several men who would be working under him. At one time we had, oh, approximately seventy-eight men working in electrical work there. I had the territory from Omaha to Denver, up to as far as Billings, Montana, and down into Kansas City and St. Joe [St. Joseph, Missouri], with headquarters in Lincoln. That building they were constructing was approximately a little over a block wide and three blocks long when they got through with it. On the outside, they had at least three to five cranes on different ends of the building; some had as many as two lifts--trolleys and dollies--above the ground. One was a large one of seventy-five ton capacity. I retired from Lincoln, Nebraska in 1966 . . . yes, September, 1966.

Q. So you've worked for the Q [CB&Q; Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad] all your life?

A. All my life on the Q. I'd say yes.

Q. I heard you say you say you had been a call boy on the Q.

A. Yes, in my younger days, to get through high school, I was a call boy. I used to work from 4:00 to 10:00 or 10:30 during World War I. At that time they couldn't get men to do much work of that kind and they were glad to have any high school student fill in for jobs of that kind.

Q. Now, just what does a call boy do?

A. We had to call the enginemen, conductors, brakemen, firemen and engineers when a train was orderd. We usually had to give them two hours notice, but sometimes it was short. If we didn't get hold of the first one, we had to go to the second and so the notice would be about an hour and a half.

Q. And the men had to be there in time to take out the train.

A. They had to be at the roundhouse on what they call the leaving track [ready track] to take the engine out at the time it was ordered--whatever time it was to go out. I rode a bicycle all over town. (laughs)

Q. Oh, you did. You didn't have a telephone, then? You had to go?

A. Oh, we had telephones, but we couldn't always get through by telephone. The telephones weren't as good as today, not by any means. But I rode a bicycle all over town.

Q. Did you have some record, then, carry a paper of something for them to sign when you talked to them?

A. Oh, no, they took our word for it. If we got hold of them, we came back; if we didn't, we'd better come back.

Q. You had to find somebody else, then, I suppose?

A. Oh, yes. Somebody had to go at that hour, at the time they were ordered.

Q. Then from call boy, your next job on the railroad was in the shops, in the yards?

A. In the shops, yes, as an electrician.

Q. What type of electrical work were you doing?

A. Well, we took in everything that used power. Most of the power was of the three phase four-forty style, and we had motors all the way from, oh, two horse or three horse, and such as that, on up to the largest I worked on was up around six hundred horsepower, for air compressors. Those motors were large at that time. The motors are only about a third as big now as they used to be at the time I started out.

Q. Now, these were motors that they used in servicing the engines as they came into the roundhouse?

A. Wait a minute. They were motors for air compressors to build air around through the shops. They were big air compressor motors.

Back at the time I was roundhouse foreman we had the tube [communication] system installed here in the yards, and had five different lines made out. Those lines made in the neighborhood of fourteen miles, if they were all put together. In that line of work we had to give 24-hour service. Whenever there was any trouble they called me, and I'd have to call somebody to get help. If we had to have a welder, I'd have to get the welding department and get a welder out to have him weld up the joint. Sometimes we had to cut the pipe to get the carriers out when they got stuck.

This was the first 5 1/2 inch tube system that was installed by the Lampson people. They had installed 3 inch systems before, but never a 5 inch, and that way we expected more trouble with it; but it did iron out to where we got down to a minimum of calls all the way through our lines. It's still in use.

Q. You speak of a tube system--I don't know what you mean.

A. Well, the carriers are about five and one-eighth inch in diameter and sixteen inches long. You have a compressor at each end [in the system] and an interlocking system through electrical relays, so that you could send only from one end at a time.

Q. You send a message through a tube?

A. Yes, you put the messages in the carriers and drop them in the tube system. The receivers can be converted to sending [in either direction]

in the same tube. This relay on the electrical end keeps you from having one [carrier] coming from both directions [at the same time]. You'd only use it one way at a time because the interlocking device held the other end open until the carrier came through.

Q. Where did they go in the yards?

A. Well, the longest one went out to the Waterman Tower which was three and a half miles south of the yards. Another one went to Yard D, and we had one of them that went to Innesville, and one that went to Prospect Street. One, also, went to the ice house platform because a lot of trains, in those days, were iced at the platform and they would leave from the ice house and go on through.

Q. Now, these messages were the orders for the trains, then?

A. Yes, orders for trains, and whatever the clerks wanted to correspond back and forth with the general yard office. They would, at that time, come in with the bills and they'd check the bills and send them back to the yard office.

Q. Was that their main relay point, then?

A. Oh, yes. That's where the conductor would pick up his bills.

Q. I don't know much about it, of course, but isn't the conductor the guy who gets the list of orders as to where the train is going?

A. He has the train orders . . .

Q. And that's what you mean by bills?

A. Bills, yes, freight bills. Every car has bills. Some may have fifty bills for the car, and others may need just one single bill for a car lot [the whole carload of freight to a single destination]. Sometimes there's be freight, you see, going to a freight house and there would be several bills on that because it would be what we called local freight from there-- freight billed to many different destinations loaded into the same freight car.¹

Q. Then you installed, or worked with, this tube communication system?

A. Oh, yes. We maintained the tube system completely, air compressors, motors and relays and all. Our interlocking system was run through a cable from these places, which was tied up with the Western Union cable, which could relay messages along the railroad to the agent at the depots along the line.

¹This was called LCL--less than carload--and is no longer in use. This freight is now trucked to its destination. Sometimes it is seen being hauled in trailers on the piggyback cars on the railroad and the truckers pick up the trailers and deliver the freight to its various destinations. [Ed.]

Q. Oh, it was?

A. If we broke that cable, we had to get permission from them [Western Union] to break it. But that seldom happened.

Q. You said you were foreman of the roundhouse for six years. Tell me, when a train comes into the roundhouse, what is the procedure? They come in for servicing as I understand.

A. Yes. They come in across the turntable according to what repairs they're going to need at that time. This determines which side of the roundhouse they go onto, and when they get in there the different foremen inspect it—machinists, boilermakers, air brakes, et cetera. Each one of them would inspect it to see how much work his department would have to do, and would write it on his order. As they went through, each man that had done any work on it had to check it, then, when they got the work done, they had a general inspector who would check the engine to see if all the work was done. If it was ready, it would be ordered out again. Usually they allowed about an hour from the time the engine was completely inspected until it was ordered again for another run.

Q. How long did it usually take to go over an engine that way?

A. Oh, that would vary considerably, because sometimes there'd be different work that you'd have to do. For certain boiler work they'd have to completely what we call kill the engine—that is, knock the steam down to zero—and that would be a lengthy job. Sometimes I have seen engines be in for three days at a time; other times, I've seen engines come in in the morning and within three hours they would be out.

Q. How many engines did they handle in the roundhouse each day? Have you any idea?

A. In twenty-four hours we used to have in the neighborhood of seventy-five engines in and out of Galesburg.

Q. We had more business here then, didn't we?

A. Yes. I can remember when at the roundhouse we had in the neighborhood of five hundred men working, and today they have twenty-five I would say.

Q. Is it that they don't do very much here, or that it's become so mechanized that they don't need so many?

A. Well, this is just a repair point where if they have a minor trouble they can repair it, but if it's a major repair job, or serious work on something, they have to send it to West Burlington to the shops.

Q. Then the West Burlington shops do more work that we do here?

A. Oh, yes. Yes, they do overhauling, from the engine frame clear through the whole engine itself. The line west has shops at Lincoln, but for Galesburg, here, we have West Burlington.

Q. Once there was a big yard at Beardstown, but that's gone, too.

A. That's gone completely, you might say. I was in on some of the closing at Beardstown yard, and the roundhouse, when I was in the Chicago office.

The first roundhouse I can remember closing down was at Christopher, Illinois. At that time they were handling in the neighborhood of eighteen or twenty engines a day, and all of a sudden they decided to close it--they just stepped in and closed it and sent all the engines to Beardstown. When it changed from the steam power to diesel power they made quick changes; sometimes it was hard to realize they were going to make that quick of a change.

Q. Well, the Burlington was a big operation. Did you supervise the construction when they built this lake here?

A. No, but I did haul some men back and forth at the time they were building it. After I started working in the water department I was over the lakes, several lakes, and Lake Bracken was included.

Q. I asked somebody, "Couldn't they have used city water?" and he said, "Oh, no, that's hard water, and Lake Bracken water is soft."

A. Yes, Lake Bracken water is soft. It has to be treated, though, for boiler use, because there's certain chemicals they have to put into it that changes the water pumped out of there.

When I started with Lake Bracken, we were pumping right close to, you might say, two million gallons of water a day. I had to make a report every thirty days, and it would run all the way from fifty-eight to sixty-two million gallons for a month, so that would run at about two million gallons a day. At the present time, I understand, they're using just about six hundred to seven hundred fifty thousand gallons a day.

Q. What are they using the water from the lake for now?

A. It's going to the tie treating plant; they have now contracted the tie plant to the Koppers Corporation for treating ties--which is a separate company from the Burlington Railroad [Burlington Northern Railroad].

The other mains go on into town and they wash the diesels under a high-pressure water system, and they put chemicals in there for knocking off the grease and dirt that they accumulate while on their runs. At one time we had pumps that built up in the neighborhood of a hundred pounds pressure going against the framework and trucks of these diesels. When I left Galesburg, that's what we were doing. We were pumping, then, in the neighborhood of fifteen hundred gallons a minute onto the new diesels. That's why Lake Bracken water is being used today.

Q. So then they still wash trains here. Where do they do that? They don't use the roundhouse for something like that?

A. Oh, it's outside of the roundhouse, near the old cinder pit. That's at the leaving track pit; just as they're leaving town, as a rule, they give them a good washing. It has to be outside because they've got so much pressure that if it was close to a building, they'd tear the devil out of it. It would blow a window right out of a building, so it has to be out in the yard.

Q. Do you remember when the trains hauled the mail?

A. (laughs) Oh, yes! I had passes galore; a pass on every train—good for every train and on fourteen different railroads besides. I had all good passes that I could get on the train anyplace I wanted to and go where I wanted to, and come back home. And the mail trains, if you didn't have a pass like that, you couldn't even get on the train.

Q. I see. Did they go faster than other trains? Was that the reason?

A. Oh, yes, they made fewer stops. And they went through a lot of towns where they had what they call a hook on the mail train and they'd pick up a bag of mail and throw out a bag of mail. Where they had to pick up several bags, they had to stop. The largest mail terminal, I believe, that there was in this part of the country was right outside of Omaha. Pacific Junction, [Nebraska] was what they called it, and it was a very large mail terminal because there were seven railroads that came in there and they all handled mail—every railroad. That was one of the downfalls of the railroad, when they lost out on the contract for the mail. At that time they were handling mail much cheaper than it's handled today.

It was unbelievable, unless you knew and saw it, how they did handle it, because, like, at Omaha and Pacific Junction they had leather belts. I remember well the one at Omaha, because we worked on the motor for that one; that belt was four foot wide and eight hundred foot long. They'd throw mail onto that and it would go down, and if there was a certain tag on it the men along the line knew just where to grab their mail off and throw it onto the train for that place. That took in eight hundred feet, you had four hundred feet each way. That's over a block.

But that one at Pacific Junction was made onto a chain system, and they had the bags hanging on these chains, or they had a whole truckload. They would follow around and go down, and they'd have trucks numbered for the trains and all, and they'd zigzag through there. One of the best chain outfits that you could ever think of. The last time I was through there, it had all been scrapped—just all leveled off and filled in the pits, and everything else.

Q. The mail just hasn't been the same since they took it off the trains.

A. And we're paying more.

Q. Yes, we are. We sure are.

A. I'll have to tell you about the check that I got one time. I get an electrical union check that comes out of Washington, D.C., with my pension,

and one time it was about eight or ten days late. I thought, "Well, if it's another two or three days, why, I'll write to Washington, [D.C.] and see what they can do about getting it traced," but it finally came. It had been sent to Lombard, Illinois, up by Chicago, and they had marked it with a big crayola, "Ship this to the correct place." (laughs) I will never forget that one!

Q. Yes, they seem to get it mixed up more today.

A. Well, my golly, I don't know, they say they handle more here in this post office, but there were a lot of post offices tied in with this, consolidate and such as that, which made it a different setup.

Q. Most of the sorting used to be done on the trains, didn't it?

A. A lot of it. You take the mail train, line Number 7 going west, I saw it at times have three coaches and have at least ten men in each coach² sorting mail. It went as far as Lincoln, Nebraska, and it broke up there and turned around in the evening and came back this way; it was the same route everyday.

Q. Now, when the men reached the end of the road, did they lay over?

A. Yes, they had to lay over. They worked two days and off three days, as their run would go. You see, they'd make the trip, a round trip--out and back--then they'd be done. But in between time they would work eight to nine hours, then they would have ten to twelve hours of rest; then they would get on the next train back. For example, they'd go out to Lincoln--get there this morning--they wouldn't leave there until tomorrow evening and come back, and that would be their day and then to the next evening, you see, to get caught up. And they'd call it a three-day trip.

Q. What about the fellows who were conductors, firemen and brakemen, did they have a certain length of time they worked, also?

A. Yes, they had a certain mileage in each division. Most divisions ran approximately a hundred and twenty miles. You went to the end of your division and then were through, you see.

Q. You didn't go out of your division?

A. Very, very seldom, and if you were going to run over sixteen hours they didn't allow it at all. An engine run was normally sixteen hours. If they planned to get through in, say, twelve hours, like in snowstorms or train wrecks, or anything like that, they would allow the overtime on it, but not in normal times. No consideration for double time. They stopped as soon as the engine was out sixteen hours. Sometimes, they'd tie up in some isolated place, which made it hard to get the crew back, but we never got caught many times.

²This was called a mail car, not a coach. A coach was for passengers, and a mail car was a specially equipped car used only for mail. [A.G.]

Q. Is Creston the end of our division?

A. No, Ottumwa is. It's Galesburg to Ottumwa, Ottumwa to Creston, and Creston to Omaha.

Q. Well, when they got to Ottumwa, would the men get off and then stay there and catch another train back?

A. Sometimes the engine crews would have to lay over eight hours, but the conductors and brakemen could come back on the next train, as long as they were out and back in their eight hours. You see, they have the trains made up in swing; they time them in connection with one another. One train going west would meet a train coming east, and they'd get that one. But of course, if there was a delay on the one going west, you couldn't make it, so they had to have men to go both ways.

Firemen and engineers always had to lay over their eight hours; they couldn't come right back. Now, on short runs, like from here to Rock Island, Mendota, or Peoria turn-around, no layover was required. For example, you would go from here to Peoria and back. That's only fifty miles each way, so by the time you get over and back you didn't have the one hundred twenty miles for division qualification, but it would be your day's work.

Q. Weren't there some trains they called crack trains?

A. If you had a fruit train or something like that, a lot of times they would run from here to Chicago in less than three hours. They would have clear boards all the way, so they'd go straight through.

Q. They don't stop to change crews, or engineers, then?

A. Only at the terminal of their division. Like here, if they'd get on at Galesburg, they'd go clear into Downers Grove. They have an exchange up there they have to go to if there's anything that's perishable—fruit or like that, any merchandise of that kind. If they're going on east they would have a connection there with another railroad—sometimes they'd come from California and go clear through to New York. Originally the Burlington had a connection with the Pennsylvania and they'd pick them up at this terminal and tie another engine to them, and they'd go right out.

Q. That was perishable merchandise, though, things that had to go right through?

A. Oh, yes. Sometimes they'd be all refrigerated cars. They'd run, oh, eighteen, twenty or more cars of that type, and it was enough to pay them to move it fast.

Q. Mr. Guenther, do you remember there was a real bad railroad strike here in Galesburg? Do you remember what it was about?

A. In 1922. It was over wages and conditions.

Q. A lot of men didn't get back on, did they?

A. No. The strike was eventually declared outlawed, and they just started out and then they hired men, and for a long time the railroad had their own union. They called it MDA--Mechanical Department Association. Then later on, after Roosevelt became President and he commenced talking about the programs, unions and such as that, they were allowed to join the union as they saw fit. A lot of the unions were organized again, on the railroads in 1937. Of course now they're so strong it would be pretty hard to break them. There's a difference in the conditions at that time and the conditions today. At that time one department would cross the picket line and go to work, but nowadays, one union man won't cross another union man's picket line. That makes it tied up for everybody.

Q. Yes, it would. Now, somebody told me they remembered at the time of that strike, there were fences strung around the yards. Do you remember that?

A. Oh, yes. They fenced in certain places and they even boarded the men that would work, and such as that.

Q. Oh, you mean they kept them there?

A. Yes. They set up kitchens, sleeping quarters and everything else, right south of the depot up here. There were a lot of men that came in there and worked and never got out for thirty days or so, even to go home, or like that.

Q. Was that because they were afraid they wouldn't be allowed to come back?

A. No. They were from out of town, some distance away, and they boarded them right there and allowed so much for expenses. It was quite a common thing then. The strike was called the first day of June, if I remember right. It went through, oh, the biggest share of the winter before they ever declared it outlawed. Some of the men from the Burlington went to work on the M&STL [Minneapolis and St. Louis] some to the Rock Island Southern, and so on, you see, which broke their own union, where today they wouldn't do that. My father worked for the railroad, he was a materials yard foreman here for, oh God, I don't know, for the last fifteen years he lived.

Q. Then your family have been railroad men for quite a while?

A. Oh my, yes. I had five brothers who were railroaders. One was killed at the Aurora depot platform when there was a mishap and derailment on the track. A lot of people saw the accident who were waiting on a train there at the depot. Two worked here in the yards: one at the rail yard and one at the tie plant. One was an engineer on the Ottumwa division, and on the California Zephyr--that was his last run. He had a regular turn on the Zephyr train.

Q. I didn't realize you were all railroaders.

A. (chuckles) Yes, Lowell, Roy, Carl, Lee, Fred, and myself, all of us, at some time. Fred--he's the oldest one in the family--was a fireman on the main line for a good many years. That's back before World War I, but afterwards when he came back, he got away from it entirely--went into business for himself.

Q. You spoke of World War I. Do you remember the troop trains?

A. Oh, yes, at that time we lived on Cedar Street and they went right by our house. Our house was just about fifty or sixty feet from the tracks, so you can imagine how well we could see the troop trains go by--all hours of the night. At nighttime they'd wake you up, yelling, and such as that. You wondered when they slept. Yes, I remember the troop trains and saw a lot of them go by.

Q. We lived in Abingdon, I remember, and people seemed to know when the troop trains were coming, and the women would go down to the station with baskets of cookies and things for the boys.

A. They had to lay up here, you see, because sometimes they'd change engines and they'd have to get coal and water, and so forth, so they'd lay around here for maybe an hour. Some would get off the train to run downtown and back and forth, a lot of activity, you know. Yes, it was quite a terminal here, you know.

Q. Did they carry a dining car on those trains?

A. They had a kind of coach they could make up where they could get something to eat. They didn't have it like in World War II where they made dining cars for the trains--they didn't have those. Some of those old troop trains had regular dining cars that had been pulled off some other train, but a lot of them were just baggage cars made up for the train. It would have a stove, a cook stove for cooking, but they'd try to make it through to some terminal where they could get into a big restaurant to eat.

Q. Then they aimed for the boys to get their food at the stations rather than feeding them on the train?

A. Yes, there were a lot of places where they could feed them, different stations. Some of the bigger depots had restaurants that could feed a bunch like that. They'd wire ahead that they were going to have to feed so many, so they'd be ready for them.

Q. Well, I remember we had a restaurant here for a long while in the building south of the main depot.

A. Yes, the first one who owned that was Hoops--Hoops Restaurant. You see, that was aside from the Burlington Railroad. He did that on his own. Then after he left, J. J. Grier took it over as the Grier Dining Room, with the railroad. Grier's had all the cab crews, section men, and extra men, and like that. They opened the restaurant and worked it until, well, you might say it practically went broke [in the late 1960's]. They were open most all night, you see, and most of the people around town--that's where they'd go at late hours.

Q. Yes, I remember we used to go there sometimes. It was considered a good place to eat.

A. When Hoops had it, he ran a very good restaurant. Let's see now, a Mr. Palling managed it for J. J. Grier for quite a stretch, before he went into the restaurant downtown.

Q. Was that the man who later opened the American Beauty Restaurant?

A. No, this was down on Simmons Street. He had a good restaurant and that's how he finally made enough, on that Simmons Street place, so that he retired. He was a good manager and ran a nice clean restaurant [at the depot] and it was a nice place to go to eat. Where now your depots are, oh, so closed down and most of them are falling down. Really bad.

Q. Yes, it seems like that's true.

A. I see in our bulletin this time, that some place in Montana they have taken a big depot there that looks like it was a two-story-and-a-half building with a long, peaked roof, and are making a museum of railroad collections out of it. I think it was the American Legion that was in charge of it now, but the railroad had donated the building to them, and the ground, and gave a lease on it so they could go ahead and do that. This depot here in Galesburg, if they would do that, it would be a wonderful thing. It's a nice building, and it's too bad to see it go the way it's going.

Q. Mr. Guenther, do you remember the old depot, the one that burned?

A. Yes, I can remember the day of the fire. We left school and went down there to see the fire. I had one brother injured on that thing, in the cleaning up of it. Yes, we left school to go down to see the fire.

Q. Where did you go to school?

A. Cook School, Churchill School and then to the high school—those were the days. (laughs)

Q. Yes, I guess that's right.

A. Yes, I graduated from Galesburg High School. I've been looking to find a Reflector [high school yearbook] for 1919, but can't find one. I lost mine in the flood here one time, when we were supposed to have rented a house that wouldn't have water, but the water came up one day and went from window to window. (laughs) Our trunks were in the basement and the Reflectors got spoiled.

Q. Speaking about floods, do you remember when Beardstown had so much trouble with high water?

A. I was down to Beardstown several times on flood waters. And I remember one time when we couldn't get out of there—only by boat. (laughs) I went to Union Station, Chicago, once, when they had a flood.

Q. I didn't know about Chicago, but I know Beardstown had some terrible floods. What caused the flood there at Union Station?

A. Oh, yes, they closed the depot and I had to walk three blocks to get to the depot. They had a big flood water condition. I forget how many inches of rain fell in a short time, and down in that district it just flooded the sewers until they couldn't take it all. It came down the street and went right in the depot doors, you might say, and flooded the whole waiting room and office, because it was below street level.

We had quite a loss there. Everything that was below the street level was lost. And the freight house, oh, they piled it up as high as they could and if there was a freight car in there they piled it on top of that to keep from losing it. I had to wire the different towns around there for hip boots for the men to wear; had them send them to Chicago for the men to work in.

(laughs) We used to laugh about Beardstown because they used to get some awful floods—you had to be down there to see them. In fact, I saw one time at the hotel where we stayed, the first two steps going into the hotel were under water. And I've been taken to the hotel in a boat. After so many hours of that, you'd have to get some sleep.

Q. What did the trains do, were they able to go across the bridge?

A. No, they couldn't use the bridge at all. I saw a time when they couldn't get across the bridge because the water was up above the bridge. In fact, as different times there was so much debris would come down and it would be against the bridge and block up and there'd be an overflow of water down the tracks. I've seen it four feet above the tracks on the bridge.

Q. I suppose it would be dangerous—the tracks not safe.

A. Oh, the whole bridge, you see, if something gave in underneath there, one jerk would let the whole bridge go. Or if you had a train on there, the weight would. . . .

One time we were coming back from Lincoln when we had to come around through Quincy to get to Galesburg. We were supposed to be in at four o'clock in the morning, and got in here at one o'clock in the afternoon. We detoured around like that, but then we were lucky because there wasn't many trains that could get down to Quincy after that. I saw Quincy one time when the yards were completely flooded.

Q. I didn't know the yards were so low in Quincy.

A. Oh, golly yes. I saw one time when we couldn't even get an engine out of the roundhouse down there. Now, the new shop they've got over at West Quincy—oh, I can't give you the exact year—but we were down there one year when they had a flood there and we had to take everything out in the shops—everything that was connected with electrical—disconnect it and put it up on boxes and scaffolds, and such as that. There were no trains in or out of there for three days. This was about ten or twelve years ago.

Q. I expect you have a lot of memories of riding around on those [steam] trains.

A. Oh, I have, too, and the only thing is I wish to the lord I'd have kept one of the timetables when I first went to work, because it was like a pamphlet; today it is different. Nowadays, you get a little bit of a folder that's about four pages, you might say, doubled over.

Q. Yes, I remember what the old ones were like. They were nice thick ones and I think they had every train listed.

A. And there were lots of trains. One of the biggest depots and I saw go down was at S. Joe [St. Joseph], Missouri, where they used to have a train in and out every twenty minutes around the clock. That depot is completely torn down now, and there's not a thing down there at all, whatsoever. The depot they have at St. Joe now is out about a mile and a half from where the old depot was. You'd either have to take a taxi or drive your car (laughs) to get out there to the depot.

END OF SIDE ONE

A. That St. Joe depot was about the only depot of that size that I ever saw go so fast. It had so much business when they first started--because, you take every twenty minutes a train in or out of there, why, that was a depot. They had a hotel in combination with it, too. They're all gone, just leveled off as level as could be last time I saw it.

Q. Is it because they just don't have the business anymore?

A. No passenger business; the passenger business is gone.

Q. Even with Amtrak, they don't have much passenger business?

A. Well, this Amtrak, I don't know, they need some--I don't know how you would explain it, what they need and what they don't because they do need so much financing to keep that going. As far as making money, I doubt if they ever will.

When the railroads needed money, like the New York Central, when they wanted ten million dollars--or I guess they wanted three million--to keep going for a certain length of time, the government should have loaned them the money just the same as they did the airplane people out there. But they didn't, of course. Then the next thing, they filed bankruptcy and are asking a receivership sale now--at this time it's in a receivership. What difference it will make with that railroad, I don't know yet. Freight business is going good, but the passenger business is about gone. Amtrak is picking up some, but nothing like the railroads used to be.

Q. No, and lots of towns have no railroad connection at all, now.

A. Several big towns, too. Galesburg is fortunate, we have two depots here: the Santa Fe and the Burlington-Northern. We have several trains

going to Chicago each day,³ so Galesburg's not hurting as bad as other cities. The Tri-Cities [Quad-Cities] up there, they've only got one train, I guess, going right straight through to Peoria. They don't have a combination that we have here in Galesburg; the Rock Island Railroad takes care of it and that's all.

Q. Like you say, the fact that there are two railroads here makes the difference for us. I suspect it makes a difference in getting grain and everything that we handle in and out.

A. Galesburg is a large freight terminal; one of the largest there is around here. The closest to compare with it is Kansas City, and then going north, it'd be clear up to St. Paul, [Minnesota]. Silvis has lost considerable in its' yards. It's nothing like it used to be. Then the Aurora shops, all that combination there, that's all gone--closed up this year. We're lucky here in Galesburg.

Q. I know Galesburg has a large hump yard.

A. Oh, yes. Galesburg was one of the largest hump yards in the world at one time, and they're going to increase the size of the yard here now. There's estimates made out and their board has approved them. Some of it has started and the electricians have been in there working all these summer getting lines straightened up. Their hump yards are to be extended and they're to build a new roundhouse out in the yards.

Q. I thought with the advent of these diesel engines they wouldn't use a roundhouse as much as they used to.

A. They don't use it as much, of course. When we had two roundhouses here, we had forty-four stalls in one house and twenty in the other. Now, there's only about eight stalls left out of the whole thing, and that's where the diesels are now.

Q. You say they're going to build a new roundhouse?

A. Yes. It will be a tandem type, with approximately two or four tracks right straight through the house, you see. There'll be no turntable or anything like that, because they run the diesels either way, where the steam engines had to be turned around so they would be headed in the proper direction for their next run.

Q. Do they still use the turntable at the present roundhouse?

A. Oh, yes. They use it back and forth at different times to get certain connections they want without too much trouble when they're making up their three or four-unit connection of diesels. But if they don't have the turntable, they'll hook them up other ways--it would take a little longer is

³As of September, 1976, Galesburg has four passenger trains to and from Chicago, Illinois each day on Amtrak; two are Burlington-Northern and two are Santa Fe. [A.G.]

all. Those men are on duty, so it doesn't matter to them what they're doing as long as they keep busy.

I thought when they built that yard they would make it like the Beardstown division. They had four tracks there that were supposed to take over a hundred cars--I think it was a hundred and twenty cars at the time. Of course now they're putting on more than that when they can, and the tracks are not long enough, so they have to extend them. They're going to extend some more hump yards for retarding their own system, sorting yards, et cetera.

Q. They do a lot of sorting here?

A. Oh, yes, approximately a thousand cars every shift, three shifts a day--that's three thousand cars, you might say, that they move. That's busy! It's considered quite a job out there now for the towermen, you see, because they're the ones who control the car after it leaves the hump--the top of the hump--as there's nothing but just the air brakes--the switch yard is all controlled by air--that they have on the retarders that has any control of them until they get there. If they let the cars go too fast they can damage a car or wreck the engine.

Q. They used to have to stop them by hand, didn't they?

A. Yes, a man on each car. Now they have one man to control a whole section of the yard. I think they have forty-two tracks in this yard. They've added on. When they opened up they had thirty-eight, and I think they've got forty-two now with only three men controlling all those tracks. Three towermen to control them. The assistant yardmaster, he's the one who signs the lists, and all they do is turn them loose up at his office and they go down to the humps. When they leave him, they're on a single track; then the first towerman catches them and sorts them onto about ten or twenty [tracks]; then the next towerman sorts them into the district to which they're going. Not many cars have to be re-switched after they get through there. The towermen are pretty good, I give them credit.

Q. On the side of the freight cars--I'm sure it means something--you see those things that look like battle ribbons, you know, those colored stripes.

A. Well, they've put in a system now--it's a code marking of some kind. Right down here on Seminary Street, where the tracks cross for the Peoria branch, there's a little shed and it's got an electric eye in there that scans those stripes on the car. That marking tells them what railroad the car belongs to, and other information. They can catch the numbers off of that some way or other, I don't know just how. But that electric eye, it registers clear up to St. Paul, Minnesota--goes to St. Paul, and they have an accurate check on cars leaving the yard here.

Q. What is the point of having it registered clear up to St. Paul?

A. The computer system. A computer system takes care of all of that, and St. Paul is the central district office now. You see, it's all made up in books up there, and some of them go to Chicago, and wherever else. . . . So, they don't have to use car checkers. They have no car checkers now, this computer system takes care of all that.

Q. You said they had car checkers back when they had the old system. What did they check? How did they do it?

A. Well, usually he got into a position where the train was coming into town, he would check them as they came in, get the number and the name of the car, the company that it was with. You see, there were a lot of foreign cars--cars belonging to other railroads. He'd get this information, you see, and have it on a big sheet, then he'd have to go over to the yard office, or put it in this tube system if he were close to Yard D or the ice house and send it to the yard office that way. Then they'd check them, you see, with the bills they had up there. And that would have to be sorted out. They had big sorting desks on the wall, pigeon holes, like in the mail cars, where they'd sort the bills out for the train--to where it was going. Then they'd have to write out a type of letter and it would go over to the yard office and they would have to switch the train according to where [it was] going.

Q. I guess you had to be pretty much on your toes.

A. Well, now they've got what they call this CD, Chicago to Denver, and it doesn't break up here in Galesburg at all because it's made up in Chicago. And if they have, say, twenty cars for Galesburg to sort out here, they just take them off the front end and switch them out, and then whatever Galesburg has for Denver they pu on that and it goes right on through. Computer machines take care of every car on there.

Q. What are we shipping out of Galesburg? I suppose things from the factories?

A. Well, Admiral ships refrigerators, and there are boat motors and lawn mowers from Gale's and Butler has a lot of shipping for all over. And of course, each of them have full carloads; there are no split cars [less than carload].

These computer machines they have on the railroad, they're considered accurate. The only mistakes that are made are made when a man makes them. Another thing they have here in the yard that they didn't have here when I was working, that's this tower at the yard office. It's two hundred and twenty-five feet high, and it has this disc-like device on top. With it they can talk from here to California or anyplace like that. Wherever the railroad runs, they can talk to it. It's the same as the microwave in television.

Q. They use a relay system, I suppose?

A. They talk direct, no relays at all with it, this thing out here. Just like the microwave that your television works on. I saw in the bulletin the other day that this Wigton--Young Wigton we call him because his father was an assistant electrical engineer at one time here on the railroad and the boy has come up with the railroad--he's been perfecting these things to use them that way. All the retired Burlington employees get the Bulletin, it keeps them informed of what they're doing.

Q. We used to see lots of coal trains.

A. Some of the coal--it's unbelievable--that goes over to Peoria, comes from as far as Montana, and they're direct trainloads of coal, right straight through. That's why they use that Peoria switch. They made a switch down through here, you see, through Galesburg here, and they just keep them going right on through to Peoria.

Q. You say it comes from Montana?

A. Montana. That's a soft coal.

Q. Looks like we ought to have lots of coal here.

A. Not digging it fast enough. They're getting too many restrictions on it, you see. Here in Knox County you don't know whether these strip mines are going to be able to operate much more or not.

Q. That's true. I've wondered if they went back to put mining if some of these old yards--Beardstown used to handle an awful lot of coal--if it would open up some of these yards.

A. No, they'd handle them directly through. You see the yards wouldn't get much out of it. This Peabody, down here at Sesser . . . Isn't it Sesser, Illinois? They take a train right straight through to Chicago, you see--those Commonwealth Edison people. No switching at all on it. It's loaded down there at Walton and it's a direct connection and the train goes right straight through to Chicago, Illinois.

Talk about mines--they're opening up one of those bowl mines at Gillette, Wyoming, this next month. Those engines start up at the top and they keep going around in a circle, digging down and around--they don't dig like they do here in the strip mines. When they get through in one of those, all they've got there is just a big bowl that may be a hundred or two hundred feet deep. I saw one there, myself, that was over a hundred feet deep. The tracks just keep going around in a circle and they keep digging out, back and forth. Well, when they pull out they have to pull those all the way around. If they tried to pull that straight up, they wouldn't have enough diesel power to pull it. I think they went around four times to get up out of the one I saw out there. It's a sight; unusual to see. But that's where a lot of coal is coming from now. A lot of coal.

There's a lot of coal here in Illinois, a lot of it, but it looks like they're going to be forced to shaft mine it instead of strip mining. People have been objecting to strip mining because farm land is destroyed by it.

Q. I don't know what will come of this, if it would give more people work, or what the situation would be.

A. Well, the shaft mines would make more work. That's why they [mining companies] are going to fight it the way they are. One thing, you see, in strip mining you've got maybe two men handling the big crane and another handling a small crane, and they load from one to the other, and there's very little labor used.

Q. Do they bring in trains to get the coal from strip mines?

A. Yes. You were speaking of Beardstown. The other day I was told they were running a hundred and forty cars from here to the Beardstown division to those coal mines they've got down there now, you see. When they start out, at Galesburg here, it's a one hundred and forty car train. Well, that's a long train, but they're all empty cars, you see, and of course they can put three diesels on and pull them like a top. But they can't pull a hundred and forty cars back that way. (laughs)

Q. Now you spoke about the diesels, but how many cars did a steam engine pull?

A. Now, at different location they could pull more--if they didn't have any grades that were steep grades, they could pull more, like from here going east. You could put on a hundred to a hundred and twenty-five cars on a steamer; but in comparison you'd have to have four diesels to take those same hundred and twenty-five cars. But if you were coming from Beardstown up here with a coal train, you wouldn't have over eighty cars and they'd be a load for the steamer, but they'd have to have three diesel units for that.

Q. Is there more grade coming up from Beardstown? It's been so long since I've been over the road that I've forgotten.

A. Oh, you've got a lot of different grades and curves, hills and all. Down at Virden is one steep grade, and at Ayers between Concord and Centralia, there's an awful big grade down there. Then, coming out of Centralia--see, you go down like that and then you have to make all that up, coming up toward Ayers.

Q. You say a steam train could pull the equivalent of three diesels? Why are we using diesels when steam trains are so much more powerful?

A. They operate cheaper. A lot cheaper. See, when they stop you don't have to have a bunch of men go over them, oil them and like that. Two men would go over them and that's all they need. Some places, unless the engineer reports something, they don't even look at them.

Q. Then they're less troublesome?

A. Less troublesome. They're so new yet.

Q. You mean they're new in terms of the years we have used them?

A. You see, there's some electrical work that should run for, oh, golly--like in the shops there's motors in there that have run for fifteen or twenty years without any trouble. Might be another one that wouldn't run that long, and there's some motors that'll run fifteen years without a motor bearing changed.

Q. I didn't realize that.

A. Oh, yes, lots of them.

Q. Then that's the explanation as to why we don't have steam trains any longer?

A. Well, steam is more expensive; you've got to get the coal, you've got to have water, you've got to have stations for the fuel and water. See, like here, if you were going to Beardstown you had to stop at Avon, a watering station, say; and then you had one at Bushnell for coal and water, and then you could get on into Beardstown from there. If you went on to Quincy, you had another one at Colchester, one at Camp Point and one at Quincy, you see. And they had men working at every one of those stations to keep water in the tanks and everything else. It wasn't automatic, or anything like that, in all those towns. From Beardstown—you went south there, you know—you had Concord, Virden, and, oh golly, I don't know how many stations we had, and then coal stations. One time at Bushnell, down here, they had six men on days and four men on one night shift. We used to have two pumpers on down there, too, pumping out of that reservoir down there.

Q. Where did they get their water down there? It wasn't a lake or something like that?

A. It was a small lake. They had a reservoir there, south of the coal chute. But--all that's gone now--they turned it over to the American Legion Post they tell me, and they were building a park there, and it has been increased. Oh, at one end of that it was around thirty-five feet deep, and they've dug--as I hear it--they've dug that out, you see. The creek went by it and they had it dug down below that creek. When the reservoir was full, why it'd go on by, but when it got just so low, why the creek would fill it up.

Q. Could you see it from the tracks? I don't recall it at all.

A. Yes. Yes, it was right beside the track.

Q. I always thought they had a swimming pool in Bushnell. (laughter) Was it the reservoir?

A. Well, let's see now, you went right straight south out of Bushnell and there was a curve just before you got to Bardolph, the next station. Just before you got to the curve—you know where the coal chute was?

Q. I think so, because the trains stopped there.

A. It was only about three-quarters of a mile south of that. There was a creek on both sides and it went right through. They had a bridge there. I've seen that creek when it'd be out and that reservoir would be as full as anything you could think of. That reservoir didn't ever go dry. There were a lot of others that did. At Colchester one time, we pumped the creek dry, so we had to dam up that. And in Camp Point we had one backed up on that, and it was like a little lake. They've turned it over to the Boy Scouts, I think. I remember that one went to the Boy Scouts of Quincy for a camping ground—I forget how many acres of ground it was.

I was in on a lot of the transfers of reservoirs and sales to the cities, and such as that, before I left the water department. One in particular was at Chariton, Iowa. They had a reservoir there, a lake like our Lake Bracken here; it wasn't quite as big as Bracken, as we have seventeen or

eighteen miles of shoreline here and it had only fourteen. It was close to being the same size, but it wasn't as keep. They turned that over to the city, for one dollar. And we're paying what we are for this thing!

Q. (laughs) Yes. Well, that was when it was the Burlington. Someone told me that we got water from Lake Rice before we started getting water from Lake Bracken.

A. Well, the Burlington built Lake Rice. Built it, and then it got too small.

Q. Just wasn't large enough; not enough water out there?

A. It was too small, and they couldn't make it bigger. The pump line runs right straight down through Main Street, comes right down from where the overflow is at Lake Rice, goes right out to Main Street and comes down on the north side of Main Street until they get to the payment, then they reach out about four feet inside the pavement and come up to Main Street railroad crossing and go down the railroad tracks. That pipeline is still in there, and we worked on that a lot of times. We furnished water for that artificial ice company for a long while, from Lake Rice--before they sold the lake. I was in on a lot of the negotiations there and knew about a lot of it.

Q. Did they have anything to do with Highland Park?

A. They built Highland. Now, at one time, during my time, was when we closed the pipeline between Lake Rice and Highland. We had a pipeline from Highland over to the pump house at Lake Rice and then came on down. If Lake Rice got too low, then they'd pump out of Highland. They closed the pipeline during my time. Those pipelines were cast iron; they could be cleaned, you see. Cast iron pipes can be cleaned and will last a lifetime.

Q. What about the equipment they've got out here at [Lake Bracken]?

A. Well, this pipeline going from here to the tie plant is a 16-inch cast iron pipe.

Q. They use a lot of water at the tie plant?

A. Yes, they're using half a million [gallons] a day. I imagine another two thousand gallons go uptown to boilers in the roundhouse, storehouse, yard office, depot, et cetera for heat. I don't think they use city water, because they want too much money for city water. City water is expensive here in Galesburg. Then, too, they'd have to treat it to be able to use it in the boilers out at the tie plant or anyplace.

Q. Oh, they use some type of boiler at the tie plant?

A. Oh, yes, they've got a diesel oil-burning boiler out there--no coal, it's diesel oil.

Q. They use this to make whatever mixture they use to treat the ties?

A. Oh, no. No, the creosote is put under pressure when they've got the ties into a big cylinder. They run the ties in there on these little carts on a--it's called a tram--and that's close to two hundred feet long, you see. Then they close those up real tight and then use this steam to build up so much pressure--and they circulate that through the ties--that's what penetrates [the creosote] into the ties.

There is a big 12-inch cast iron [water] pipe going from the tie plant clear up to the depot. They've got a big main that they can use, but it's been used with soda ash, so they couldn't use drinking water in it after that.

Q. Couldn't it be cleaned?

A. It would be too expensive; you'd have to use acid to clean it. I imagine it's coated at least an inch all the way around inside.

Q. Just what does the soda ash do to the water?

A. It softens it.

Q. But it doesn't cause any damage to the metal?

A. Oh, no. Hard water will damage metal quicker than soft water.

Q. I realize this, but I thought that maybe putting a chemical in it would affect the metal.

A. Oh, no, you'd have to put in something like iron sulfate in order to damage any material that the water touches. That's why when they started out here at the lake, treating it, they [the railroad] weren't going to allow a lot of sulfates--iron sulfate, copper sulfate, such as that--to change the action of the water. They'd have to treat it so much that it would be a heavier treatment by far, and would cost them a heck of a lot of money to do that.

Q. There's a little brick building--or pump house--out there. Is that where they pump the water from, out at Lake Bracken?

A. That's a standpipe, they call it. Yes, there's a 24-inch main going from there into the basement of that pump house.

Q. Then they do have equipment in the pump house and it's still operating?

A. Oh, sure. There's a man there from eight o'clock in the morning until twelve, and then from two until six--they've got the shift split up. Then at night they've got a man from eight to twelve and two to six in the morning.

Q. Do you remember those little handcars they used that you pumped to get around--the section cars?

A. Yes. I should have had one. I had one of those little motorcars for years. (laughs) They ordered me around faster than I could walk, so they got me one of those. I had one of those motorcars, a speed car. I had a

fast one. (chuckles) Turned in several times for speeding with that thing.

Q. Oh, did they object to your going fast?

A. Oh, yes--safety rules. You see, if all factories and everything had as many safety rules as the railroad had, there be a lot different conditions in the factories concerning accidents. They have a safety program that they spend a lot of money on to educate the men to go out and take safety precautions. There's usually a safety meeting in every big shop once a week.

Q. Oh, is there?

A. Yes, in the bigger shops, now, like the one at West Burlington, and at Lincoln, they never miss a week having one. They have to have one in order to be within the limits of the program.

The superintendent's car is just like an automobile. The ones they bought were Buicks--a Buick Six. I had to keep a record of the things, and I'd ride in one of them once every couple of months, never misses on that, to see how they were working. I drove to someplace in one one time to pick up the superintendent, and every town we went through the people would just stand and look at what kind of an automobile it was with these railroad wheels on it and then tires, also; because we were [riding] on the tires with the railroad wheels raised up. The people would just stare. They'd never seen them before, but I hadn't either, until he bought one. They were something to see, those days.

Q. How did you get them from the road to the railroad track?

A. The first ones made up, we had to life the wheels up. Now they've got them with a hydraulic lift. You have a little hydraulic pump that raises them up. But the first ones we lifted up and after you put them in the groove they stayed in. Once or twice they came out of that, so we had to put safety chains on them to lock them so they couldn't come down, you see. (laughs) If one side came down it would tip your car, you see, so they had one on each side. The rear ones didn't matter, because they would make a noise if they fell down, you see, but the front ones, they'd just about tip you over if you were going any speed.

Q. Did you order just an ordinary automobile and have this running gear put on it? It used gasoline like an automobile?

A. An ordinary automobile. Put them in the Aurora shops and put all this equipment on them. Used just a pilot wheel to guide it on the rail. Then your steering wheel was locked in, you see. When they commenced locking the steering post, you see, then they would use it. But up until then they never could use an automobile, because nobody could sit there and hold it and you couldn't brace it hard enough.

Q. How fast did they travel?

A. However fast you wanted to--but we were under limits. We were never

at any time to go over forty-five, and we had to get orders from every tower--had to run the same as a train order. Every depot that had a dispatcher working, you had to get a train order to go through.

Q. To be sure the track was clear?

A. Yes, that you weren't going to meet anything, or anything like that. If there was something coming, we had to sit out.

Q. Did you go onto a switch, or have to lift it off?

A. Oh, we'd go on a switch if we could, because when you line them up you have to line them directly on the rails to drop those [wheels] down so their flanges would fit. It had to fit fairly tight.

Q. Do they ride hard?

A. No, just the same as any automobile or car.

Q. I just thought, because they were on train wheels, they might ride rough.

A. Same as an automobile all the way through; no different.

Q. It would be quite an experience to ride in one. I've always thought I'd love to have one of these private train cars like some of those people used to have. (laughs)

A. I stayed in a private car one time; it must have been four days, meals, sleeping, and all, at Beardstown during one of the floods. Mr. Fee and Mr. Eble both had their private cars down there. Of course, we were sent down there to the flood, you see, and they had us stay close to them, where they could get hold of us day or night, because they were always in danger. You see, we didn't know what way that water was going to go and we had to be ready.

My breaks were through Mr. Fee, as a whole, Mr. Fee and Mr. Eble. Mr. Fee was one of the best--and Mr. Eble, too--they were real railroad man. Now, if Amtrak had either of those men working for them or in charge of the whole thing, why, they'd have a much better system. Mr. Fee died a year or two ago, and Mr. Eble is now about eighty-three. Those men were railroad men all the way through.

Q. Of course, the railroad was the thing when I was a youngster. The real heroes of the day were the railroad man.

A. They built Galesburg.

Q. I guess this was true.

A. Well, I've heard say that more than 50 percent of the people that were employed in Galesburg worked for the railroad; it seemed like most everybody worked for the railroad at one time or another. At one time, gosh, with the repair yards, hump yards, car shops, and everything else, it took a lot of people to work it.

I believe the best salaries here were made by the railroaders. Everybody respected it that way. We'll never see the days again on the railroad that they once had. And Galesburg has lost a lot of the shops. . . .

Q. Have you any idea as to why they moved the shops away from Galesburg?

A. Well, the equipment here got old, you see, and then everybody was yelling about working under cover, in buildings, such as that. When they first moved the car shops out of here, they moved to Lincoln, Nebraska. Havelock, [Nebraska] had closed its stores department, and such as that, out there and there were two big, long buildings out there that were covered. They could take this repair yard out there. They'd have a building for the cars, and they moved them out there. Since then, they've increased it considerably. They've got one building where there's nothing but paint. They can take eight or ten cars in there and start painting them, you see, and move them on out. They've got car pullers so when you're through with a car and want to move it on out the door you can move it out.

Q. What is a car puller?

A. It's an electric-driven machine [a kind of winch]--we always referred to them as niggerheads--a big drum and a cable wraps around that for so many turns and you hook the cable onto anything you want to move, and it will pull it--it's got that power. The electric motor, drum and all that, are in a pit, and you attach the cable to the car you want to pull and the puller moves it.

Oh, golly, they've got them all over in car shops, so you don't have to call for a switch engine when you want to move the cars. Now, these car repair shops they've got now--one-stop they call it--would have three car pullers at each end. One would be used to pull them in, another one to pull them out--keeps them from having to bring in the switch engine. One man can do that.

Like at Havelock--we made one stop there at Lincoln, and we got four cars in a row. Well, we'd tie one car coming in and one car going out, so we had five cars in a row; one man can do that. They got little short cables, about six or eight feet, and you go ahead and pull them on in and stop them and park them right where they want them.

Q. They must be awfully powerful, to move those cars. Isn't a car hard to move?

A. After it starts to rolling, no, it's not any harder than an automobile.

Q. Oh, isn't it? I supposed they'd be terribly hard to move.

A. The gear ratio on the car pullers is what makes the power and they have considerable gear ratio on that drum, you see, They're not so big, just little, about three feet square. They have a cable as big as your thumb. Wrap it around that drum two or three times and hold it steady, and then just pull on it. And gosh, you'd be surprised what it can pull.

Q. Yes, I bet I would be, too, because I've never seen that done.

END OF TAPE