

Interview with Mr. George Metro

**Interviewer: Gordon L. Swartz III**

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**RAILROAD HISTORY  
ON THE LINE**

**INTERVIEW WITH MR. GEORGE METRO**

**Gordon Swartz:** Say your name and the date.

**George Metro:** George Metro. Today's date, you mean. Well, this would be ... the twenty-eighth, October 28.

**GS:** George Metro.

**GM:** Yeah, Metro.

**GS:** Okay. I thought it had a "W" in it.

**GM:** No, no. M-e-t-r-o.

**GS:** Well, somebody wrote "W" on this paper I had.

**GM:** Oh, all right.

**GS:** I'd like to know. Give me a little bit of personal background.

**GM:** Well, how far do you want to start back? I'm seventy-seven years old.

**GS:** Well, let's start back at when you were born, you know.

**GM:** I was born and raised in Moundsville. In 1942 I enlisted in the Coast Guard. They transferred me over to Merchant Marines. Stayed there until the war was over. Come back here, and I think I hired out on the railroad in August 6, 1945. I worked there for thirty-seven years.

**GS:** So, you didn't get in. You were in the service, so you weren't in all the troop movements by the train and all that.

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**GM:** No, no, no, no, no. That was. I missed that.

**GS:** Mr. Rogerson was telling me he was.

**GM:** Well, he was, now Orville hired out I believe in '41.

**GS:** Yeah.

**GM:** If I'm not mistaken.

19 **GS:** He said he got a deferment. He didn't really want it, but it was because he was on the railroad.

**GM:** Well, yeah, well, I worked, I used to work at the zinc smelter when it was here in Moundsville. You remember, no, you won't remember that.

**GS:** No.

**GM:** Anyways, zinc smelter, hired out there at zinc smelter in 1937, and right after the war, why, there wasn't no zinc smelter. They didn't need it, because the war effort was over with by that time. That's when I went to work on the railroad.

**GS:** What did you say, forty-four or forty-five, I forgot.

**GM:** I was out of the service in forty-five.

**GS:** Forty-five.

**GM:** Yeah.

25 **GS:** How did you get a job on a railroad?

**GM:** Well, that's a little bit of a story. I did work two weeks with the Triangle Conduit, but that was a twelve-hours a night job, and I thought it stunk for thirty-nine dollars for a six-day week, a twelve-hours a day was a little too daggone much. So I went up to try to get a job on the railroad. I was walking down towards the railroad. I saw a friend of mine standing out on the main track. That's Louie Potts. I said, "Louie, what the hell you doing out there." He said, "I'm flagging." I said, "What do you mean 'flagging'?" He said, "Well, a train comes from that direction, I stop him." I said, "Where do you get a job like that?" He

said, "Well, go up to the trainmaster's office in Wheeling." So I went up, instead of going over to the roundhouse, then I went on up to Wheeling. The trainmaster's office was there in the old B & O Building where the West Virginia Northern College is now. Well, it's up there. Anyway, I went in the trainmaster's office and asked the clerk. I said, "Arch," (I didn't know his name was Arch then.) but I said, "they hiring?", and he says, "No, no, we're not hiring anybody now." I said, "Okay." So I turned around and walked back out and, about that time, there was a fellow going in, and he says, "Where's the trainmaster's office?" I said, "Right there, but," I said, "if you're looking for a job, they're not hiring." Well, he says, "I'm spoken for." I said, "Well, okay." So I followed this guy in, and he gave this fellow ahead of me an application to get a job. I said, "How come you gave him one and not one for me." "I'll give you both." So that's how I hired out on the railroad. Just a lucky thing that this fellow was a goin in.

43 Anyway, I went to work in Benwood Yard. Well, it was like I said, August the sixth. At that time, it was all steam, all steam, and we had a lot of business in Benwood. We had trains running out of our ears. Anyway, I worked as a brakeman, worked up to a yard foreman, qualified as a conductor, then I started to work as yardmaster. I believe it was 1947, in two years. Anyway, I worked yardmaster for about three years, then I got myself a promotion into general yardmaster which was at night. You worked twelve hours a night, and I worked from six in the evening till six in the morning, and you had control of the movements in and out of Benwood Yard. Well, at that time, then you had a yardmaster at each end of the yard, the south end and the north end of the yard, and we had, at one time, we had about twenty-two different yard engines in Benwood, twenty-four hours a day. We had a lot of business.

56 **GS:** The engines stayed in the yard?

**GM:** They done the classifying, the switching of inbound and outbound trains, and it was all steam at that time. Like I said, I worked twelve hours a night, and it was a hell of a job. We, at that time, we had fifteen passenger trains in and out of Benwood. That's a twenty-four hour period, and that was quite a few passenger trains.

**GS:** That's just passenger trains.

**GM:** Well, now freight trains, we had freight trains coming up out of Parkersburg, out of Fairmont, out of Clarksburg, and we had them coming out of Pittsburgh, coming down out of Holloway, Ohio, and coming out the Newark division.

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Actually, Wheeling was the hub of the B & O Railroad, I always thought, because we had railroads coming in from every direction, and we had a lot of business. We had a big office there in Wheeling.

**GS:** Benwood was the biggest yard?

65 **GM:** That was the biggest yard in this area. It wasn't the biggest yard on the railroad. It was the biggest in this area. We had a coal yard. We had it in Holloway, Ohio, and we used to move anywhere from eleven hundred to twelve hundred carloads of coal out of Holloway Yard alone. We had mine runs, coal mine runs, coming in off the Newark division, going into Benwood. We had mine runs out on the CLW, that's the Cleveland, Lorraine, and Wheeling Railroad. That's what that branch of the railroad was called, and we had. We weighed the coal in Holloway, and we classified the coal for different shipments to the lakes. That was under my jurisdiction after I made trainmaster.

**GS:** You named these other lines, and they were all part of the B & O.

**GM:** All B & O. Now the CL and W, Cleveland, Lorraine, and Wheeling, was bought by the B & O Railroad, I'm just guessing now, about 1907. The Newark division was the old Ohio Central, I believe, and the B & O bought it, and the line between here and Parkersburg was the old Ohio River division, or Ohio River Railroad. B & O bought it. Now the old main line was the original B & O Railroad, and it run from Baltimore to Wheeling. I think it was complete, I think it was 1852, if I'm not mistaken.

83 **GS:** Yeah, I've seen that Rosbby's Rock out there.

**GM:** Right, right, and the Pittsburgh division. I don't know when that could have originated, but, anyway, I imagine it was part of the B & O, old B & O Railroad, and we had interchange with the Pennsylvania Railroad then and Wheeling-Lake Erie at Martins Ferry.

**GS:** Those were different companies, but you changed.

**GM:** We interchanged freight with them at these, at Martins Ferry,

**GS:** Tell me how that works.

**GM:** And we interchanged at Wheeling. We had a yard in Wheeling. We interchanged with the Pennsylvania Railroad there. We had another interchange

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with the Pennsylvania Railroad in Bellaire, but that was for local businesses like the Rodifer Glass Company and the Ormet Corporation down there at Clarington. We used to interchange with them at Bellaire.

95 **GS:** You were a yardmaster.

**GM:** Yeah, you have control, and you supervise the yard engines that operated within your jurisdiction. We had yard limits. One yard limit border, I believe, was just north of Glen Dale, and the other yard limit border was just east of Wheeling. You controlled all the movements of trains within that jurisdiction. The classifying, dispatching, at that time, we had to get trains out at what we called on time. We had trains like the steel run due out of Benwood at 4:30 A.M., and if it was ten minutes late you had to answer why it was ten minutes late, whether you had difficulty in getting your air pumped up on the train and trouble switching the train, or just lax work, or whatever the case may be. You had to answer and tell them why you did it. A lot of time you lied a little bit, but.

**GS:** You've worked your way up through. Did you start as a flagman, a brakeman?

**GM:** A brakeman. I started out as a brakeman, and the next step was.

**GS:** Did you have to take tests for each step?

108 **GM:** No, at that time, you just, it was more. Well, I don't know how in the hell you would do it. You got stuck in some of these jobs. Maybe you wanted them or didn't want them, but, anyway, you say, you're the yard foreman today. They just said, "You're the yard foreman," and you took a crew and you run it. Now the conductor's a little bit different. You had to qualify. You had to know the territory you're running over. You had to know the rules, and you had to have a little bit of leadership, and you had to know the industries. A lot of these industries, work these industries up and down the river, you had to know how the track layout is in these industries. Like PPG, it has a big yard of its own, and they have their own yardmaster in PPG. They have jurisdiction of your engine while its in their plant. So it's. Well, that's the conductor, then the yardmaster, like I told you, you have control of all the crews within your jurisdiction, road and yard. You had to tell the road crews what to do with their trains when they're coming in, how to dispose of their train. When they're an outbound train, then you had to tell them where to get their train, and on.

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125 **GS:** A while ago you mentioned that everything was steam when you started.

**GM:** Oh, yes.

**GS:** But it was diesel by the time you left, probably.

**GM:** Oh, yeah, yeah, all steam, back in forty-five. I think we got our first diesels right around fifty-two, fifty-three, in that area, and it was, oh, they called them little puddle jumpers. They sounded like a, well, just sounded like a truck, and they were pretty good. I think they run about five thousand horsepower. They was pretty good engines. Then they built up. The engines now. I forget now. They're. I don't know what they are. I been off the railroad now for fifteen years, so I don't know, but they are very powerful engines now.

**GS:** Was there much difference in your job because of the steam or the diesel, or did that make any difference in your job?

**GM:** Oh, the supervisory job?

**GS:** Probably be about the same.

136 **GM:** Basic, no, you could get more work out of the diesel. Now the steam engines, every one had to stop. You had to get coal on them. You had to get water on them, and you had to do a little bit of maintenance, quite a bit of maintenance on them, but a diesel you could run for maybe twenty-four, forty-eight hours without any maintenance at all, but, yeah, I think the diesel engines were much more efficient than the coal engine, the steam engines.

**GS:** The steam engine, you had to have a fireman on that, right?

**GM:** Right, oh, yes, you had to.

**GS:** What was his job? Or did you ever do that job?

**GM:** I have helped. I've never done it, but I've helped the firemen, because they had one hell of a job. The engineer, he was the kingpin on the engine. He was pretty good. He had to be good. He had to qualify the mechanics of an engine. He had to know what he's doing, and the fireman was, he was just what you've seen. The fireman gets the coal and throws it in the boiler.

146 **GS:** Look's like hard work.

**GM:** It was daggone hard work, and later on in years they had that little kind of a rotary thing that pulled the coal up, and the fireman then would have to shovel into the rotary, and the rotary controlled the movement of the coal from the coal bin into the heat, but it was. Yeah, the fireman, then, as a rule, well it always was, the fireman would qualify as an engineer, because he would be on the engine, and he would understand how the engineer worked, and that's the way he qualified as an engineer, but it generally took anywhere from four to five years for a fireman to qualify as an engineer because the engineer had to know how to handle his train. In other words, you get a train of 150 cars. You don't stop it on a dime. You don't start it like you do an automobile, just step down on the gas and take off. You take off gently and move the train, because you got knuckles on it. You got knuckles on each one of the track, and you can break them by just starting the train. In other words, the strain on the head car, you can imagine the strain on the head car, on the 150th car from your engine. That would be one heck of a strain. So the engineer had to know how to start, and stopping was another thing. You didn't stop a train on a dime. I remember we had an accident down here at a place we called Foster. It's a passing siding, and we had a train stopped there making a pickup, and we had a train of coal coming up the river, 150 loads of coal, and the flagman was out, supposed to be protecting his train. Well, I originally checked on this fireman, and I didn't see him anywhere, but, anyway, that's beside the point, but, anyway, he was down the road. Down, I imagine he might have been a mile behind his train, but he would start to walk east towards his train. He didn't want to get left, you know, the train might take off without him. Anyway he dropped the fusee about three-quarters of a mile south of his train and walked up towards his train. He put down what we call caps, or torpedoes. You put them on the rail. When a train hits them, it explodes, alerts the engineer that there may be something ahead of him. So he hit two caps, but by that time he was too close. He come up and rearended the train and derailed four diesels and four or five cars, but the flagman had done his job, but he had started walking towards his train, and he was out of sight of the engineer of the oncoming train, 140 cars. We checked that from where he had his caps, it was three-quarters of a mile.

**GS:** It couldn't get stopped.

179 **GM:** Train couldn't get stopped. Now, can you imagine, you know, three-quarters of a mile, and he couldn't get stopped, been moving 140 carloads of coal and moving, I think we had a thirty-five mile speed limit in there at that time.

**GS:** How fast could those, did those trains go when they got going? I just happened to think of that. You said they go thirty-five.

**GM:** Well, we had speed limits, and a lot of times we had speed limits. We lowered them because maybe the condition of the track was such, we were only allowed to say maybe ten to fifteen miles per hour, but the maximum speed limit in the Ohio River was at one time was forty miles per hour, but, after this accident we was just talking about, we lowered it to thirty, but I used to go out on the railroad when I was trainmaster, and I had a radar gun, and I tried to clock our trains, and they were doing pretty good. We had good engineers. In fact you had to be good to be qualified. On this Ohio River was a terrific piece of railroad. We had a lot of business. We had, let's see, I think we had six district runs, worked the industries out of Benwood. Let's see, four, five out of New Martinsville and Brooklyn Junction. We had five working out of there, these industries in here. So that was quite a bit of traffic. I counted one time

eight trains between Moundsville and New Martinsville, and that's quite a few on a single track railroad.

197 **GS:** Wow.

**GM:** We had good business. Now with this, it's deteriorated to the point now that it's. I don't think there's maybe two trains a day, but they all end in Benwood. There's no through trains at all through here anymore.

**GS:** You're talking about having eight trains on the track that would switch around each other at various places.

**GM:** Each one of them though, well, we had schedules. In other words, a freight train had a schedule just like a passenger train. In other words, he could arrive at a station, say for an example we pick Clarington. He could arrive at Clarington at thirty minutes ahead of time, but he could not leave that station. Say he was due in there at two o'clock. He could arrive there at maybe one forty-five, one fifty-five, but he couldn't leave there till two o'clock, because the fellow up here working at Mountaineer Carbon or one of these industries up the road, maybe he's working out on the main track, not protecting against that train, because he knows he can't arrive there before a certain time, but he could leave there, but he couldn't arrive at say, he couldn't arrive at Clarington before a certain time.

212 **GS:** You were the yardmaster. Were there a lot of people that just worked in the yard and nowhere else?

**GM:** Oh, yeah, yeah, there's a lot of fellows just worked there. Well, they didn't want to go out on the road, because the road, you went from here to Parkersburg. You stayed overnight, and you caught your next, your train back out of there and went to Benwood. In other words, we had trains that would operate out of Benwood to Parkersburg and return to Benwood the next day, between here and Clarksburg and return the next day, here and Fairmont, return the next day. Pittsburgh division worked out of Glenwood Yard in Pittsburgh. They'd work them down here, a lot of time we could turn them back, because they was only sometimes four to five hours on the road. They were allowed to work sixteen hours before they, what we called, get on the law. The federal law restricted us working over sixteen hours. Then they dropped it down to twelve hours here in, I think it was about 1970. They dropped it down to twelve hours. I don't know what it is now. I think it's right around twelve hours yet, but we had crews worked out of Pittsburgh, out of Holloway, out of Newark. We had trains, hell we had five and six trains a day right out of Newark in the eastbound, a lot of business at one time.

228 **GS:** Well then you got to come home about every night then.

**GM:** I did, yeah, but, when I was trainmaster, I spent most of my time on a. Now, see then, I was transferred from here to Holloway, where we had the coal yard, and I was there, let's see. I was up there in 1958 and transferred from there in 1960, went down to Cowen, West Virginia. I don't know whether you know where that's at.

**GS:** Yes, I do.

233 **GM:** Okay, I was transferred there. I was assistant trainmaster, and I transferred from there to Gassaway as assistant trainmaster, I think in sixty-two, no, I take that back, about sixty-one. Then in sixty-two I went back to Cowen as trainmaster. Then from Cowen I got transferred back up to Moundsville as trainmaster, and I was here. One time I had territory between Holloway, Ohio, and Huntington, West Virginia. That was under my jurisdiction to try to control the movements of the trains, and, finally, they cut that up. It was Parkersburg to Huntington, cut that off. They put an assistant trainmaster at Parkersburg. Then they gave me the territory between Moundsville, or Benwood, I take that back, Holloway, Benwood, and Clarksburg. That's the only short line from New

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Martinsville, that's what they called the short line. Well the short line's still in operation.

**GS:** From New Martinsville to where?

**GM:** Well, it goes from New Martinsville. Then it has a branch that goes to Fairmont, right there at Lumberport, and cuts off and goes towards Clarksburg.

**GS:** Yeah, down around Route 20, down there somewhere.

**GM:** Route 20 parallels it.

**GS:** Okay.

250 **GM:** But Route 20's on one side and the railroad's on the other side of the creek, that's Fish Creek.

**GS:** Why did you get moved around so much, because they were laying off?

**GM:** No. It was just. I think they just groom you for different jobs.

**GS:** Oh, okay.

**GM:** And that was it. Down in Cowen, that was all coal territory down in there. We had a lot. Well, we had some lumber, but mostly coal. I think we had, I forget now. It was about ten, twelve coal mines down there.

**GS:** Did you, you moved down there?

**GM:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Then, well, at first I was transferred to Holloway. That was a coal yard. We had a lot of business up there. Then I worked out of Fairmont for about six months.

261 **GS:** Did you have a family during this time?

**GM:** Oh, yes, I had a good. I had a wife and a little girl, but, well, the little girl was born in sixty, so, yeah.

**GS:** Was this a good life for a family man? Probably not.

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**GM:** No, my family, my wife, well, I don't know, I imagine my wife had a heck of a time here trying to raise a girl while I was out gallivanting around on a railroad, but, then I'd be gone a lot of time, we had a derailment, or we had difficulty, I'd be gone, hell, three or four or five days sometimes at a time, if we had a major derailment.

**GS:** Did you consider this an exciting job?

**GM:** I loved it. I loved it. I loved it. You learned something every day. If you didn't learn something every day, you was pretty dumb, but what I loved was the, well, you had a good bunch of men to work with. Railroaders, I think, are a breed of their own, and there was a lot of. Oh, you had a couple of lemons, you know, you can find them anywhere, but, as a rule, the railroaders were, most of them were dedicated to their work, most of them, good men.

277 **GS:** Okay, let's see now, you mentioned 150 cars. Now that sounds like a lot of cars. What was an average train, say?

**GM:** Well, average, we tried to, well, we restricted them to 110 cars as a rule, because our passing siding, where one train met another. In other words, the main track and then you had a side track built so the trains could meet. Anyway, we tried to restrict them to 110 cars.

**GS:** So they'd fit.

**GM:** So they'd fit, one of them would fit. The other one, now, a train of coal we made, gave them 140 cars.

**GS:** It didn't have to fit on that.

286 **GM:** No, it didn't have to fit, because he would hold the main track, and the other guy would go into the siding, but we tried to restrict them to 110, the eastbound train to 110, the westbound train, he could go. Well, we tried, it was foolish to try to overload them, actually, because you had. The diesel, one diesel could handle about 5,000 ton. That's what we generally figured a diesel would handle, 5,000 ton of freight. That's counting the car, the lading, and all would be 5,000. So, if you had a 10,000 ton train, you had two units as a rule, possibly three, depends. The units were sometimes more powerful. The one was more powerful than the other. We tried to restrict them to 5,000 ton per unit, and a train of coal going to Holloway, say 100 carloads of coal. Two units would take that to

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Holloway, because we got hilly country up there, and we was kind of concerned about a diesel being able to handle 100 cars of coal.

**GS:** What kind of a grade can they handle?

**GM:** Well, we had a five percent grade coming out of Holloway, but you very seldom had any, well, that was going down into a five percent grade, which is a pretty good grade, about like that, and going up the hill from here to from, say, Benwood to Holloway, the steepest we had was about three percent. That was going westbound, but eastbound, coming out of Holloway, it was a five percent grade, and we had a tunnel there at Flushing, and that's where we tipped the hill coming down, but the diesel could handle about 5,000 ton of freight. A steam engine, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, we restricted them to, depend on the type of engine. We had the MacArthur engine, would be good for about 3500 ton, and what they called a Q-4 Macado engine, good for about 5,000, but the miley, that's a twin engine. I got some pictures. Did you ever see a picture? Did you ever see a miley?

314 **GS:** No.

**GM:** Well, wait a minute.

**GS:** The first time I ever heard that term was Mr. Rogerson mentioned that the other day.

**GM:** Miley?

**GS:** Yeah.

(Pause while Mr. Metro is retrieving photographs.)

322 **GM:** Now this is one of the first diesels they put out. This is what they called a yard engine, yard diesel.

**GS:** The first ones.

**GM:** Yeah, one of the first.

**GS:** You've got quite a scrapbook there.

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**GM:** That's one coming in to Moundsville.

**GS:** I may as well shut this off while we're looking at pictures here.

(Pause in interview during perusal of old railroad photographs.)

**GS:** You said that the C & O.

**GM:** This one's the C & O, yeah.

373 **GS:** That the C & O and the, well, the B & O took over the C & O, right. Is that what happened?

**GM:** No, the C & O took over. Well, actually, they said they consolidated, but I think the C & O was the richer railroad. B & O at one time thought about going bankrupt. They, for some reason, I don't know what the, why they wanted to quit, but, anyway, at one time, back in the, I think it was late, about, I would say, about 1960, they had a lot of difficulty.

**GS:** You wrote "Glory" on here.

**GM:** That's Moundsville.

**GS:** I know that's from that movie, yeah.

**GM:** Yeah, I was in that movie.

**GS:** Were you?

378 **GM:** Yeah, yeah.

**GS:** Saw that, read the book, too.

**GM:** Did you?

**GS:** Yeah.

**GM:** I have some clippings here some Goddamn place. I was a conductor then. I can't find them now.

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**GS:** Well, I'll have to rent that and watch it again to see if I see you there.

(Pause.)

**GS:** Okay, we'll get back to the interview a little bit here. I like those pictures though. I didn't know what a miley was.

**GM:** Well, what they were was two engines.

394 **GS:** Strong engines.

**GM:** They were powerful. I think we gave them about 5,000 ton for one unit, for one steam engine. They were powerful.

**GS:** You said it was a, you loved the job. Was it a dangerous job compared to other industries?

**GM:** Yeah, you had to be doggone careful. I would say, yes, it was a very dangerous job. It used to be, a brakeman, you could, they allowed you to ride the, they made footboards for you to ride the lead end of the engine. If that damn thing ever derailed, you had your legs cut off before you knowed it, but, anyway, they eliminated that and took the footboards off the engines, and you had to walk, you had to set handbrakes. Yeah, your biggest job was getting caught in between the couplers. I had one guy get his hand cut off up there at Benwood Yard. He put his hand in to open the coupler. The damn car hit it and caught his hand in there. Then I had another fellow. He just stepped back. We used to have two yard crews. We had one engine on this switch and lead and one on this switch and lead, and that engine backed up, backed right up over him and killed him. Then I had two men killed at New Martinsville. I don't know what happened. I don't think anyone ever knowed exactly what happened, but they come up into Brooklyn Yard and hit the, caught a car sitting on the main track and killed two men in there. Yes, it's a very dangerous, very dangerous. You had to be alert, and everybody come to the conclusion one time that they all fell asleep, the whole crew fell asleep, which is possible, at night, working out at night, but as far as any positive, we never did find out for sure what happened.

426 **GS:** Well, did you have a, you were in management side. Did they have a union?

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**GM:** You mean, the trainmen had a union, yeah. They called it, used to be you called Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, and engineers had one, it was Engineer, Brotherhood of Railroad Engineers, and firemen, and conductors had a, the yardmasters, they all had different unions.

**GS:** Different unions?

432 **GM:** Yeah, every one. The Yardmasters of America, yeah. I had withdrawal cards from three unions, Yardmasters of America, B of RT, that's Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, and one out of the conductors.

**GS:** You were a member of all three?

**GM:** I was a member of all three, yeah, and I got withdrawal cards from them, but, yeah, the union's still pretty strong on the railroad, but they've lost their touch in a lot of it now.

**GS:** Did you get good benefits when you got hurt or something?

**GM:** We didn't, there wasn't any such thing as, what do you call it, Workmen's Compensation?

**GS:** Right.

444 **GM:** No. They belonged to some kind of a, the railroads were controlled by Congress, and they, how in the hell was it? I forget, but, anyway, you got, as a rule, you got paid your wages, as you was off, and it was a pretty good. The railroad treated you pretty good, as a rule. We always thought sometime we had trainmen or someone tried to pull a leg, but, as a rule, the men were pretty reliable, and if they got hurt we took care of them. A lot of times the claim agent would maybe settle with them, some kind of a lucrative settlement as a rule. I wouldn't say lucrative, but, anyway, they got paid for their time being off.

**GS:** Yeah, that's what a lot of, I'm wondering what good the union did for you. So it probably helped you in that way.

**GM:** Well, the unions eventually, you know I told you about working the sixteen hours and the twelve hours all that crap, and the unions did do a lot of good in this state. I think they helped to get the work rules cut in such a way, and you know the

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caboose used to be we had coal stoves and you carried ice and you carried your own water and you had no such thing as a water fountain, and I think the unions finally got to the point where right now they give you water bottles, they give each and every individual, and they got water fountains, and they got, well, they don't use cabooses very little anymore, but they got to the point where even some of them were air conditioned. Oh, I rode on some of them cabooses, they was so doggone, you'd think you was in a furnace, you know, and colder than hell.

475 **GS:** I guess that the trains that are running now, you say you've been out of it for fifteen years.

**GM:** Fifteen years.

**GS:** Has it changed that much, or do you?

**GM:** Yes, they have changed considerable.

**GS:** Is that right?

**GM:** I, in fact, I was talking to a conductor here just the other day. He works out of Grafton to Cowen, and he was telling me there was only two men on a crew, engineer and the conductor, period. That's all.

482 **GS:** If you've got some trouble, you.

**GM:** Well, he says he takes a train of empty hoppers from Grafton to Cowen, and the only thing that's on that train is, well, naturally, air goes all the way back to the rear car, and there's a red light on the rear end or a red flag on the rear end, and that's it. There's no caboose on a rear end anymore. He rides the engine, and if there's any trouble, by God, you can go back and find out where the trouble is. You have radios, and you communicate with your dispatcher, and say, "I'm derailed at milepost so-and-so," and go from there.

**GS:** Say when you were working, were there five men on a crew at that time?

**GM:** Five men. When I first started, we've had as high as six. It depends on whose working. We had an industry, PPG down there, we had six men on a crew. The conductor, as a rule, was more of a clerk. He done all the maintenance switch lists and stuff like that, and the crew went out and done the work inside the plant, but we tried that, what they called peg leg crews, engineer, fireman, and a

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conductor. The conductor rode the caboose. Well, it worked out pretty good, but now they're down to just two men.

505 **GS:** Okay, let me look at my list here. Oh, you always hear about train whistles. Is there anything special about them?

**GM:** Oh, yes, yeah. If you're going over a road crossing, it's two longs, a short, and a long, and you must maintain the last whistle, the third, the long, the last long, while you're going over the road crossing. I don't see them any more doing that. It'd be two longs, a short, and a long when you approach the road crossing. Then if you got called from the west, it was five blasts of the whistle and a short. That meant that the flagman, you had a flagman back there, he was supposed to hear you. He might be two mile away, but, if he heard five longs and a short, he knowed they was calling him to come in, and, from the east, it was four longs and two shorts. I know a lot of brakemen have got left because they didn't hear that whistle, and maybe some other thing interfered with them. Yeah, we had whistle signals, and then, if you had trouble, you went by a station, you blowed a long and a short. That would alert the operator at that telegraph office that you was in trouble, and you might need help. In other words, you might be running low on coal, low on water. You might have some kind of a malfunction in the engine, or you're having trouble with the air on the train. We had different whistle signals for. You wanted to back up, you blowed three shorts. Then you was going to back up, or you go forward, you blow two shorts. One long, you're going to. Well, I don't know if you're familiar with the air brake system on a train or not, anyway, you got on a train, say you had a hundred cars, you had to blow up the brake pressure on the rear end of the caboose, for an example, we had cabooses at that time, to sixty pound of air. If you got sixty pound on a caboose, then you could try your air. In other words, that was a federal law. You had to have a good braking system on your train. You applied the air. The engineer blowed one long to say he was going to apply the air, and that air would go clear back to the caboose, and, if the brakes applied on the caboose, then the conductor or brakeman would walk the entire train, say you had a hundred cars, to make sure that each brake applied on the train, and so, when you got, when the brakeman got up to the head of it, or you might have had a car inspector, he might be the one to walk up to tell the engineer they're all working, you can go.

553 **GS:** There's a brake on every car.

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**GM:** Brake on every car, right. There was a handbrake, as well as an air brake. Now, the only way the brakes would apply would be reduction. You know, you would think your brakes would work when you make an application. That's when you pump them up the brakes were off. When you'd reduce the air, that would bring the brake lever out.

**GS:** That's different than what you would think.

**GM:** Yeah, no, see on a truck, I think, you apply the brake, you put the pressure on a brake. This one you release. When you take the air off, that's when your brakes apply. So, if a train came apart, that would release.

**GS:** And let the brakes come on.

566 **GM:** The brakes will come on. Right. So that's the way it worked. Yeah, they're different brake whistles, different train whistles, yes. They all meant something, all meant something.

**GS:** Mr. Rogerson said he could tell which engineer was blowing the whistle.

**GM:** Oh, yeah, they. I remember a guy Soup Bone Elliott used to be a good engineer. Oh, you could tell his train whistle ninety mile away. You could hear it. That's Soup Bone. Yeah, you could tell them by their train whistle, yeah.

**GS:** I'll be darn.

**GM:** Just the way they handled it.

578 **GS:** Okay, I think I've asked about all the questions I have down here, but I would like for you. If you've got any good stories to tell or something, go right ahead.

**GM:** Oh, I don't know. We have this breakfast up here at Young's every second Tuesday of each month, and I tell you, there's no daggone railroad story, and I think sometimes they're embellished a little bit. The trains get a little longer, derailments get a lot bigger, and Orville, I tell you, I like to hear him. He worked for me for many years. He was a good man. I don't have, I don't like to, I tell you, I wish, the only thing I wish that I'd have kept a diary from the day I worked on the railroad. I tell you, I think it would have been a bestseller. We had some characters on the railroad, really characters. A guy came down, I think he was

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little flaky, a guy named Ted Belinski. He worked, or lived in Bellaire. He worked what we called the district run, here at Allied Chemical. He come to work once with a pair of shorts on, that was a taboo because you're around all kinds of weeds, snakes, dogs, anything, you know, and I think he had a pair of tennis shoes on, and we were supposed to have, wear good, sturdy shoes, you know. Well, the trainmaster sent him home. Well, I wasn't the trainmaster then, but he sent him home, and he went home. Oh, he come and had a big army raincoat on too. This was in the summertime, a pair of shorts and a big raincoat on. Not a raincoat, it was an overcoat.

617 **GS:** Oh, it was an army overcoat, yeah, a big.

**GM:** Yeah. The trainmaster sent him home. I think he come out to work, I forget now, but, anyway, the same guy shot himself here a few, but he used to walk through the streets of Bellaire. He had a little, what do call them little motorcycles, one of them, little, like a dinky thing, they used to ride around with a pair of shorts on. They say he was nuts and everything else. He was flaky. No, I don't have any good stories. I'm not very good at storytelling. We did have a lot of. We had one, we had two guys up there, both brothers, Everett and Hall, no. What the hell was their name? Anyway, whenever they came there, they worked on the same crew. They'd come to work as sober as you and I are right now, but by lunch time, they couldn't hit the Goddamn ground with their hat. They was drunk. I never seen two guys get drunk any faster than them two. You know, the only thing you could do was say. You didn't want to get them in trouble, but, you know, they were, not only a danger to themselves, but to the crew they was working with, and you get them off to the sides and say, "What in the hell'd you do that for?" and you'd just have to send them home, send them home. I never did get them into trouble. I had another time. Oh, hell, I've got enough, I've got enough.

643 **GS:** Now these guys, like the first guy you were talking about. They sent him home. Did they fire him?

**GM:** Oh, yeah, well, they finally. Well, he, the next day he come out to work he was dressed properly, but he finally got fired. Him and the crew, they got into trouble. You know, I was telling you about these crews worked on a schedule. Well, they saw, when they was getting their orders at Moundsville one day, the crew looked down, and they saw a train sitting at the signal at Moundsville. They figured that's the train that's due at two o'clock in the afternoon. Well, they went down to work, went to work at Solvay in a taxi, went down there, and they didn't see any other train. They figured that's the train that's on the schedule that's sitting

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at Moundsville. They just guessed. They set a cut of cars out on to the main track, and , damn, here come a train up. Here, the scheduled train was not by. They all got canned, and he was one of them that got canned, but they all. We had one of the best engineers. You had mentioned Gilbert King. He, Gilbert King was the engineer on that turn.

665 **GS:** I'm hoping to get to interview him maybe tomorrow.

**GM:** Yeah, he was the engineer on that train, and they all, I think they all got back to work eventually, but Ted, Ted Belinski, the kid I was telling you about, he killed himself, but I think it was over something else. He was just a, but Gilbert was the engineer on that, and, you know, they blamed them for some reason, and I don't know why, but they said they thought the train that was sitting at Moundsville was the train that was overdue.

**GS:** They made a mistake.

**GM:** That's right. They set a cut of cars out on the main track, and the train come up and hit it.

678 **GS:** Was Gilbert driving the one that hit it?

**GM:** No.

**GS:** He was the one that was sitting there.

**GM:** Yeah.

**GS:** Okay. I thought so.

**GM:** Yeah, he was the engineer on the crew that was in the. Yeah, Gilbert was a good engineer. He was a good man.

**GS:** Well, what about Mr. Yourkevich? William.

684 **GM:** He was a good. He was the best conductor, well, besides Orville. I say Bill Yourkevich was one of the best.

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**GS:** I haven't met him. My boss met him at that breakfast you all have. He said I ought to interview him, but I haven't been able to get hold of him yet.

**GM:** Bill. I haven't seen him for a couple of months. He hasn't been down to the breakfast, and I've been concerned about him, and I think I'll try to give him a call and see what happened to him.

**GS:** When I called, I got his wife, and she said he wasn't around.

**GM:** He's a golfer. He likes to play golf. So he might have been golfing or something, but.

**GS:** See, I just let this thing run, but see, what we do with these tapes, we just use the part that, edit them.

699 **GM:** Yeah, that's all right. I don't care. I didn't say anything wrong anyhow.

**GS:** Okay.

**GM:** I had a good bunch of men here. They were good railroad men. I enjoyed my work. In fact, I miss it quite a bit, even, well, maybe not to this day, but I remember the first six or seven months that I.

(End of Side A.)

711 **GM:** We don't have the volume any more.

**GS:** Well, that's obvious. Of course, you know, I live in Cameron, when I moved there, they were tearing up the track.

**GM:** Well, I, we used to service that glass house. We used to have a, talk about rusty rail, we went up some daggone hollow up there, up to some glass house, where the hell was that, clear up in there. Anyway, I know the station is gone now, isn't it? Isn't the station gone in Cameron?

716 **GS:** Yeah, yeah, they built an auto parts store there where the station used to be.

**GM:** Yeah.

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**GS:** And that glass house. There was several glass houses in Cameron over the years. I don't know which one you want.

**GM:** Well, there was one up. It was about a mile up, went up towards.

**GS:** Pennsylvania?

**GM:** Yeah, went towards Pennsylvania.

**GS:** That's where I live. I live right close to that. It's Elite Glass Company.

**GM:** Alright, that's it, that's it. I couldn't think of the name.

720 **GS:** The company's still there, but they don't make glass any more. I think they etch it, or something like that.

**GM:** There used to be a restaurant there. What the hell was it? Right by the railroad. I used to stop there and get a bite to eat once in a while.

**GS:** Well, now, the restaurants have all changed.

**GM:** Yeah, I'm sure. Well, anyway.

**GS:** Of course, I've only lived there about twenty years. About the time, they were tearing up the tracks about the time I moved in.

**GM:** Well, yeah, used to have a main line local used to run out there. Then we had 196 and 97 used to go out through there. I rode the through trains in that tunnel up there at the top of the hill. What the hell's the name of that tunnel? I forget now.

**GS:** There's two tunnels. There's Sheppard Tunnel and Boardtree.

**GM:** Boardtree's the one.

728 **GS:** That's over by Littleton, yeah.

**GM:** Yeah, that's the one.

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**GS:** What about when a train's going through a tunnel? Is there any special things you do?

**GM:** Well, they used to have something like a mask to put over your head. It was canvas, and they had air they pumped, you could pump into it, but you always figured you were going to smother. All that did, when that air'd go in there, it'd just tighten up on your face like that, you know. So, finally, I got to going through the tunnel I'd put on a piece of waste thermal, a rag over my mouth. Oh, it was terrible going. We had a tunnel over here on the short line. What the hell was it? Boardtree Tunnel. It was about a mile long, and by the time you got through there, you was, you thought you was in hell. The heat from the furnace, or the boiler, would come back out, you know, you could feel it, and you'd think you was, you'd swear you was going to die in there, but you got used to it after a while. We had a fellow, that Louie Potts I mentioned, he, they stalled in that tunnel one time. Something happened, the train went on, the air went on the train. They come to a stop, and he jumped out. He jumped out of there, and he walked along the cat walk of the engine. That's right along the boiler, and he's trying to get ahead of the engine, and it overcome him. The smoke got to him. You know, that tunnel was not that big.

743 **GS:** Just barely enough room for the train.

**GM:** Right. That's about it, yeah, but, going in that tunnel, it was an experience. I'll tell you. It was an experience.

**GM:** Did he, did Potts make it out all right?

**GM:** Yeah, but he was overcome, but they brought him out of it. Hell, there was no such thing as running to the hospital with a guy back in them days. Hey, come on, get going.

**GS:** He came to.

747 **GM:** Yeah. Oh, it was muddy down, you know, in them tunnels, muddy, mud and slop.

**GS:** I guess the passenger trains. They started slacking off before the other?

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**GM:** Oh, yeah, we had, like I said, at one time we had fifteen passenger trains running in and out of. We had one from Wheeling to Cleveland, and it come back the next day. That was fifty-eight and fifty-nine. We had a train from Wheeling to Chicago. That was forty-five and forty-six. We had a train from Wheeling to Cincinnati. That was thirty-seven and thirty-eight. Then we had passenger trains out of Moundsville, out of Wheeling, rather, to Huntington, seventy-two and seventy-three, seventy-two down, seventy-three back. Then we had another train at night from Wheeling to Huntington, seventy-seven, seventy-eight, and we had trains from here to Baltimore, from Wheeling to Baltimore, originated here, forty-three, and forty-four. So we had, we had good passenger service, but any more we just don't have it.

**GS:** The ones that were going to Baltimore, would they go through Cameron?

761 **GM:** Yeah. Went through Cameron.

**GS:** When did they quit running passenger trains? They don't run them any more, do they?

**GM:** No, no, no, no, no, no, no. I think the last one was after I come here, I'd say right around sixty-two or sixty-three, the last one.

**GS:** My wife talks about that. She rode that train.

**GM:** Yeah. Oh, hell, it stopped at every milk can. You know the farmers used to go out and set their milk.

**GS:** Oh, is that right.

**GM:** Yeah, used to set their milk cans out, and it'd stop, and the baggage car, and the guy, you know, would hoist the cans up, and I guess that's the way they got the credit for setting the milk out, but, yeah, you talk about stopping at a milk can. That's it there. Stopped at every dang. You could, I imagine.

Well, Glen Easton, what, how many population left, two or three hundred? Maybe?

770 **GS:** Yeah, that's a good guess.

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**GM:** Yeah. They used to make a stop there. Well, Cameron wasn't that big either, a couple of thousand people, maybe not that much.

**GS:** I guess when, Cameron was good size. It's just dwindled.

**GM:** They used to have. I understand back in the late eighteen hundreds and early eighteen hundreds, nineteen hundreds they had a roundhouse there I understand. It was pretty busy.

**GS:** It's there because of the railroad. That's why it's there.

**GM:** Yeah, yeah.

**GS:** Well, so's Littleton and the rest of them, I guess.

776 **GM:** Yeah, but I've run over that railroad the trains I worked with. Pretty hilly country, but we talked about earlier about trains with empty hoppers in that direction to Fairmont because that's where we made coal hauling out of there and run the loads up the other way up the short line up the Ohio River, but we never did get around to it. We tried it a time or two.

**GS:** What caused the downfall of the railroad, do you think? This would be opinion, I'm sure.

**GM:** Oh, no, I think the biggest reason was they went out of the, less than carload shipments, that LCL shipments. In other words, you could send, you wanted to send this, you could send it by railroad. Well, the railroad didn't want that because there wasn't enough money in it. We used to have a freight house up here in Wheeling. Now this is, right there where the Civic Center is now, we used to have a freight house there. We used to load as high as fifty to fifty-five, sixty carloads of freight a day out of there, and run it. In other words, we accumulated freight there from the Fostoria, U. S. Stamping up here in Moundsville, Marx Toy, the Wheeling Steel, maybe some industries out of Bellaire, Martins Ferry, Wheeling. It all came in to the freight house in Wheeling and loaded in cars. Say you had a shipment going to Chicago, and maybe Fostoria had a shipment to Chicago, U. S. Stamping, maybe Marx Toy. It would load in this one car, Chicago car, but we'd load anywhere from fifty to sixty carloads of freight, that's LCLs, that's less than carload shipments. All right. Well, the railroad, to them, we had to keep a big force of clerks up there to load the cars, to keep them straight, and we had to have men to close the cars and all that kind of business. Well, it wasn't very lucrative.

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So they said they was going out of the less than carload shipment. Well, who took them over? All these trucks on the highway. You see one truck after another, one truck. That's where they're getting their business, less than carload shipments. Where the railroad, they make money in hauling bulk, in other words, coal, sand, gravel, automobiles, what have you. That's where they're making their money, but we used to have a lot of business up there in Wheeling, and Marx Toy up here, we used to ship anywhere from, especially at this time of the year, running up to Christmas, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five carloads of freight a day, loads of toys.

805 **GS:** I don't suppose the railroads will ever come back, will they?

**GM:** Oh, I hope so. I always say, I don't understand why they don't come back, because you see all these trucks on the highway.

**GS:** That's what I wonder myself.

**GM:** Well, what the railroad did do to try to get some of that back, they do haul trailer trains. In other words, say for, but that's out of a bigger city, say for an example, its Pittsburgh. They'll get a train of all trailers. They've got flat cars they can put trailers on. They'll haul them across the country. They have trailer-trains, and they do it, but you don't get all the business that way, but they don't want the less than carload shipments, because they're not a lucrative trade any more.

**GS:** It seems like they had all these tracks, had everything going. Now the tracks are being torn up.

**GM:** Yeah, well, you know, the railroads, the trucks, you know, you build the highways for the trucks to run on, your taxes as well as theirs, but the railroad had to, they taxed the railroads, they had to build their own roadbed, had to maintain their own roadbed, and they had to maintain all if their equipment, and the trucks don't have it. You build the highways for them. They can haul it maybe cheaper than the railroad can, because railroad is, but, one, like I said, two men can haul a train of a hundred loads of coal, where, say you had a hundred loads of coal, you'd need a hundred truck drivers, so.

823 **GS:** Yes you would, or more than that. A truck doesn't carry as much.

**GM:** Yeah. That's right, but they, but you see a few of them truckers have two trailers, you know.

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**GS:** Yeah they do.

**GM:** Here a while back they wanted to go to, they wanted to increase them to three or four. That'd be pretty dangerous, but, anyway.

**GS:** Couldn't do that in West Virginia, I don't think.

827 **GM:** I don't think so. I don't think so. It's be another train running on the highways.

**GS:** Yeah.

**GM:** But I think that's what happened to the railroads was back in the sixties and seventies, railroad business. We had kind of a semi-depression at that time. They had to find ways they could save money, I guess.

**GS:** Seems like they've gone out of the railroad business, and now they're, they own White Sulphur, Greenbrier, down at White Sulphur Springs.

**GM:** Oh, yeah, I was down there a couple of months ago. It's a, oh, it's a wonderful place.

**GS:** They're in the land business now, seems like. They've got all that land where the tracks were.

**GM:** Well, I think.

**GS:** That's just what I've looked at. I don't know.

835 **GM:** After we closed up the real main line, the one that went through Cameron, we had a, there was a minister, you call a priest, the Catholic Church, anyhow, Father Coglin's what his name was. He lived in, I think, he lived around Littleton somewhere. Anyway, back in the eighteen hundreds, his family gave the railroad enough land for a right of way through their farm country. Now remember that's back in the, say, 1850. So when we abandoned the railroad, the B & O abandoned the old main line, he sued the railroad to get back his property.

**GS:** Sounds logical to me.

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**GM:** Yeah, and he, I don't know whether he ever got a settlement out of that or not, but by God he sued the railroad for. He said his ancestors gave the property to have a railroad. The railroad gave it up, now he wanted his property back.

**GS:** I bet he didn't win.

848 **GM:** I don't know whether he won or not, but I know I had to testify.

**GS:** You did?

**GM:** Oh, we had, that we abandoned the railroad.

**GS:** Yeah, yeah.

**GM:** That's all. Oh, yeah, we had to go to court a lot of times. See the FCC, well you had, to abandon your stations you had to go through the FCC, not the FCC. What the hell was it? Anyway, it was some agency of the government we had to go through.

**GS:** Something to do with transportation.

**GM:** Yeah.

**GS:** Yeah, okay.

**GM:** We had to go through them so we could abandon stations. I was in court a couple of times justifying us, you know.

856 **GS:** In most places they still own these corridors.

**GM:** Oh, yeah, yeah, I think on just the old main line, I think they trying to get it to make it into a jogging track.

**GS:** They did that down in Clarksburg, didn't they?

**GM:** I don't know.

**GS:** That line between Clarksburg and Parkersburg?

**GM:** Oh, that's, that's the old, yeah.

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**GS:** I think they did that.

**GM:** The part we called the Parkersburg Branch, yeah.

**GS:** Well, okay.

**GM:** Well, if I can help you any more, I've talked more in this past hour than I did.

(End of Side B.)