

Ron Ferguson 2-23-??

- 0:10 birthplace, childhood. Dad a bricklayer
- 1:04 after Vietnam worked on RR, in 1970
- 1:24 describes how he decided to work on RR; started working as brakeman
- 1:36 promotion system
- 1:52 duties as brakeman
- 3:08 engineer did all the braking (after diesel)
- 3:19 describes routes
- 3:35 mentions extra board
- 4:00 more stuff on routes
- 4:36 describes extra board
- 5:10 workdays were 16 hours at first, then 14, then 12
- 6:07 had to get your sleep whenever you could
- 6:27 coal mine locations
- 7:20 lumber locations
- 7:40 boarding houses
- 9:25 you're always too tired; play cards, watch TV, or dig ramps in the ramp season
- 10:44 being a brakeman back in the day
- 11:20 crashes
- 12:10 talks about men he worked with on train
- 13:39 qualities of a good engineer
- 14:13 importance of smooth braking
- 14:40 explains division of labor – esp. flagman
- 15:50 had flares to warn oncoming trains behind
- 16:19 back in the 70s, conductor could ride either end; now, they have to ride in the front
- 16:36 when I went to work in '70, there were 2 firemen
- 17:02 coming of diesel in 50s
- 17:44 phased firemen out
- 17:50 talks about getting stuck in tunnels; that was a problem with diesels, too
- 18:54 W. Md. A family railroad
- 19:38 United Transportation Union
- 20:00 talks about union issues
- 20:50 “callers” tell men when they're going to work
- 21:20 only one hour notice; once csx came, two hours
- 22:00 you had no days off; on call at any time
- 22:28 I worked a lot of Christmases, I worked every holiday
- 23:15 only strike Ron witnessed – only lasted two days in '74 or '75
- 24:00 merger stuff between C+O, B+O, W. Md.
- 24:53 regardless of company changes, the work never changed
- 25:20 went to Cumberland in '72
- 26:20 western Maryland worked lots of small, independent coal mines. But when CSX took over, they just wanted to work with big operations that could fill 80 cars at once
- 27:05 W. Md. Always a profitable railroad
- 28:00 talks about where they hauled pulp wood and coal, etc.
- 28:50 didn't have enough seniority to hold job after roster merged with B+O

30:10 talks about drinking on the trains
30:50 dangers of being a brakeman back in the day – GREAT story about woman with a basket. More dangers than being in a coal mine
31:53 talks about man he knows who had his arm and leg cut off. Lost a limb if you fell between cars.
32:30 had to jump over cars when train was stopped to put in empties. Talks about putting cars into coal mines
34:45 combining roster with B+O created resentment; seniority system
36:10 cooperation between brakeman, flagman, conductor
37:10 they carried walkie-talkies to communicate with one another
37:57 talks about RR men who left to fight WWII running trains in Europe
39:11 retired april 2005
40:00 future of railroad around here
42:46 talks about nicknames
43:30 it was a good job
44:04 talks about pay scale; you got raises through union negotiations
44:40 today no flagman or brakeman, and you go to school to become engineer or conductor
45:18 cumberland still has shops
45:37 talks about roundhouse
47:34 talks about why he doesn't want to pay to take the tourist railroad – back in the day, they paid HIM!
48:20 Spruce highest point east of the Mississippi on railroad
48:47 speed limit on railroad was 25 mph to prevent wrecks; 10 mph around sharp curves
49:30 talks about engineers he worked with
51:07 mentions guy mundell
52:20 everybody knew everybody and took care of everybody
52:50 spruce was a mining and lumber town; people used to live there