

## **George Raber** *Engineering on the B & O*

Michael Nobel Kline: It's just, it's just real easy. Let's start out by saying, 'My name is.'

George Raber: George Raber.

MNK: Say, 'My name.'

GR: Oh. My name is George Raber.

MNK: Once more, please.

GR: My name is George Raber.

MNK: And you live at?

GR: Eleven-oh-three Parriot Avenue, Moundsville, West Virginia.

MNK: And your phone number is?

GR: Eight-four-five, seven-five-five-five.

MNK: And your date of birth?

GR: July the 24th, or a July the 3rd, 1924.

MNK: All right. Why don't you--Could you just start off by telling me a little bit about your people, the place you were raised, just some stuff like that?

(010)

GR: Well, I was raised in New Martinsville on a small farm down there. My dad, mother and my brothers and sisters. And I worked in a machine shop for, when I was about thirteen years old. Then you could get a job pretty easy, you know. So I worked in there for about four or five years down Sistersville. But then I didn't like to be in a building, you know. I couldn't cut that, being in a building every day. And I used to-- The trains used to go by that building in the back. And my father was a railroader. He was conductor on the railroad. And the more I seen the trains go by and all, the more I got adjusted to it and wanted to try it, you know. So finally--My dad knew the road foreman real good. At that time it was Radcliff, Mr. Radcliff. Well he knew my father, and he knew I wasn't

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old enough, but he told my dad, he said, "If he wants a job that bad, I'll give him a job." Because you didn't have to have a birth certificate then. So he did; he give me a job. I was a little over eighteen, but you had to be twenty-one at that time. And the people signed the papers. So anyhow, I hired, he hired me on the railroad as a fireman, and I went to Parkersburg. If you're hired on the Ohio River Division, you had to go to Parkersburg where they had the shovel engines yet. The Twelve, Thirteen Hundreds. And you had to work out of Parkersburg west to Conova and Huntington, down that way. And believe me, them was hard jobs.

MNK: What do you mean hard jobs?

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GR: Well, they was shovel engines. See, up here they had the stoker engines already back then. And down there it was 132 miles, and you shoveled that. Then took your own coal and water and cleaned the locomotive and done it all. And it took you sixteen hours every day.

MNK: What did you--What was it you shoveled?

(041)

GR: Coal. It was all coal burners, you know. And so you just--It took you sixteen hours a day, a day to go to Conova and back, you know, because they done work along the road and maybe went in a plant and worked and picked up cars and set off cars. The engines was small, but they was hard to fire. They had a real long fire box. And there's some of them in that book, but they use like two of them on--They had the end of the train to haul freight. But--

MNK: And you'd be shoveling coal into this firebox all day long?

(052)

GR: Oh, yeah. Yeah. As long as he was moving, you know, then you shoveled coal. I never could get by with laying the shovel down as long as I was down there, you know. I was either cleaning up the deck a little bit out from under my feet because I wasn't used--A fellow's not used to riding on a locomotive, he doesn't, he doesn't understand how rough it is. It's not like riding in an automobile or something. You got to hang on or it will throw you off. And a fireman on them engines is sitting back on the tank. He didn't sit up in the engine part. The--You probably never seen none of them. Well, the boiler

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come back. The engineer set up there, and the brakeman set up there. And the boiler was like here. And the firebox. And that's all you needed. And the tank, you know. And it had a shovel and plate on it, which was, that was made for shovel engines. That's what they was. And the reason they kept the shovel engines down there at Parkersburg because they had a bridge over to Point Pleasant, to Point Pleasant that wouldn't carry a big engine. It was a swinging bridge. And when you went over that bridge, you had to sit down. It was like walking over a swinging bridge. It just jumped up and down like that, you know. So the biggest engines they could--And they could only take one engine across at a time. It'd stop on this side, cut the two engines off and take one of them over. Then a yard engine'd get up behind you in the rear and shove you over that bridge in the one engine. And you'd stop and get the other engine back on and then go on. Because it wasn't safe. Well, then finally the government made them tear it out.

MNK: How long did it take to, to make all those transfers?

(077)

GR: Oh, maybe an hour, you know, by the time you stopped, got the yard engine on the rear and the other engine went across the bridge. And I think it was only like five or ten miles an hour across the bridge. And, like I say, that, that bridge, you'd just--You walk across a swinging bridge, I'm sure. Well, that's the way the engine done. Just--You had to sit down and hold on, you know. An engine jumped up and down just the same and swing. And finally--The ... had cables like that, you know. I suppose it might have been safe enough, but it wasn't safe enough for two small engines. Finally in, must have been in the '50s, when they made them tear the bridge out and put in a bridge good enough, which is there today, for the bigger engines to

go across. But never big enough

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for the Mallies. Only the big enough for the Forty and Forty-five Hundreds, class locomotives. They--And your small Fifty Hundreds for your passenger trains and stuff like that. But still occasionally they use some of these small engines on their passenger trains and down that way when they'd run out of the bigger engines. Seem like the railroad around here at that time was always short of engines because they had so much work here. Just, just seemed more like a junction place from Grafton to Clarksburg, Fairmont and the coal coming out of them parts of the country. And their other freight that come up and down the river here and the boxcar freight and all this coal went to the lakes at that

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time. And one day I remember they brought twelve hundred loads of coal down a single piece of track on the, which they called the short line, in one day which went to the lakes. Went to Benwood. Went to Holloway and up to Loraine where they load it and sent it to Canada. Well, all summer long they would haul that coal until the lakes froze over. And after the lakes froze over, they'd take--They wouldn't let them have no insurance, them boats, so then the railroad would be kind of slack in the winter months. Although it never seemed like it to me because I had a lot of seniority and I worked sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days in the year. Although I--Thanks, John. How about a little milk in that John, if you please.

???: Okay.

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GR: And sugar.

???: You want milk?

MNK: No thanks.

GR: And anyhow--Oh, I think in about five years I was off two days. They had a couple of wrecks and--But when they called you, you knew you was going for sixteen hours. You wasn't going for no eight hours or ten hours or twelve. But you knew that you was going to be there sixteen hours or more.

MNK: And shoveling coal all that time.

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GR: No, no. Now, up here they had the bigger engines. And they had the Mallies. Although we did one time keep a Mallie hot with a shovel and a full train. But it took me and the brakeman and the fireman and all to shovel the coal on that firing plate, which was the stoker plate, just to keep that engine hot enough to keep it moving. And finally we got it to Benwood. They said we couldn't do it, but we did. And--

MNK: Who said you couldn't do it?

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GR: Superintendent said we couldn't do it. And the road foreman said, 'No, we'll send a couple engines down and come and get you.' See, Mallie--We took the place of two engines. And they said, 'We got no Mallie, but we'll send a couple'--I said, 'No, let us try to, let us try to fire it.' Steaming good, you know, the engine's steaming good, so let us try to go as far as we can with it unless we're tying up the railroad. They said, 'No, we ain't got nothing coming right now.' So we did, we got that lousy thing half full of coal and

started and got a good bit of water in it. And--But me and them guys never stopped. Boy, I'll tell you, just as fast as one guy could shovel, then another guy would shovel and then another guy would shovel. Then we'd start all over again, you know. And we

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did. We got that Mallie to Benwood and put her on the pit. And they thought that was pretty nice, you know. The company.

MNK: Who, who were the other guys?

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GR: Louie Potts was a brakeman, one of the brakemen, or he was the brakeman on there. And Sabbot was the fireman. And he was a real good fireman, and he was strong. And I was pretty stout in them days myself, you know. And--But I wasn't sure we could even do it, you know. Because--Was you ever on a Mallie or anything? Well--And then--Okay, the firebox was about as big as this room here, this living room. Okay. Well, you got to keep it covered, and you got to keep it covered good, you know, with coal or you, you ain't going to get no steam out of it. So you figure keeping this--

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MNK: This is, this is--

GR: Keeping this--

MNK: Sixteen by--

GR: Huh?

MNK: This room is sixteen by twenty?

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GR: Oh, it big as this living room. But I think longer. On the Seventy-six Hundreds I know it was longer because we had to fasten two hooks together, two of the big, long hooks, to reach the front end if we wanted to get a clinker out or something. So, I'd say it was longer than this living room, but about as wide. And--

MNK: And you had to keep it covered? You were firing through a doorway, through a--

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GR: Yeah, through a, through a door. Yeah.

MNK: A fairly small door.

GR: Well, yes, about so, you know. The door was about that big. And one guy could step on the pedal and keep the door flying open as the one other guy threw the coal in. And then when we changed, the other guy would step on the pedal to keep the door flying open so the other guy could shovel the coal in. But we had to put about--Oh, I suppose we put ten inches of coal on that, in that thing before we ever started so we'd be ahead of it a little bit, you know. And it was a Seventy-six Twenty-nine, that engine I'd give you. And we did; we fired that thing to Benwood. We never--Oh, we had trouble. It was hot that day and--

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You just grab a shovel and start shoveling sand and see how long it takes you before you start sweating, you know. And on them engines it's hot. In the summer you wouldn't understand if you wasn't on one, how hot it can be. And in the winter, you can't understand that if you set a jug of water down in that deck it will

freeze and bust. It's that cold on there. Because they're insulated, these engines are, with asbestos. About six or eight inches thick. From the back, which you don't see because the jackets is over it. But it's white asbestos. And today I got asbestosis from it, riding on them, see. I rode on them so many years. That's the reason I have a little trouble talking. So if I happen to stop, it's just because I have to get a little bit of air. But they give me some pills

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to take for it. It won't cure you, but it does help me to breath a little better.

And--You sit there in all kind of dirt. You know, that coal dust just blowed around. And that asbestos would shake under them jackets and sift out under the jackets. And we'd keep washing it out with squirt hose, you know, because it would get white looking in there even from that asbestos. And today there's probably quite a few fellows, if they worked long enough on there on the engine, like the engineers and fireman, that's got asbestosis. I got it pretty bad, but I lived on there for thirty years of my life, just lived there in a little suitcase. Anything that you took with you, anything that you needed, you carried it in a little suitcase. And you--Like I'd go from Benwood. They'd call me. I'd be sixteen hours going to Fairmont. Then they'd give me eight hours off. Then I'd be sixteen hours coming back. Or if they needed a wreck, somebody for the wreck train or the work train, they'd call me out of there for a

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twelve or fifteen hours to work that. Then I'd go back to Fairmont. Then they'd call me for another sixteen hour trip to go back to Benwood. So it might be three days before I got back home. Every time you went out, you was two or three days before you ever got back. You either lived there or you didn't work there. That's the way it was on the big engines, you know. Or on the trains that went out on the road. Now your yard engines was different. They worked eight hours. And when you got done, why, you went home. And most of your older engineers would stay on them jobs because they was home all the time, you know. And they--Oh, they spent their time out on the road when they was younger when they started. But as they got older, they more lingered to try to stay on a job that would keep them around home more because they couldn't

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cut that sixteen hours a day, seven days a week. And so they more or less kept bringing up a few younger engineers for the road. Although I was promoted real quick on the railroad. Because when I went there they hadn't hired nobody for fifteen years. And I already had fifteen years of seniority. Well, I worked a year or so, then I went in the service during the war. Well, as soon as I come back out of the service, they needed engineers. So they said--It was mostly the men though. They figured, well, 'He'd been in the service three years. You can't know nothing about locomotives. He's been gone too long. We'll make him take his promotion and his turn, and we'll get his seniority.' Because at that time if you didn't pass promotion, they discharge you. You got three chances, and if you didn't pass, why, they just let you go. Well, I was kind of

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lucky. For a while while I was gone from the railroad up here, I worked in a back shop down in Marshall, Texas. A big back shop they had there where they built locomotives like Baldwin Locomotive and all of

them. And I worked in there for about eight months. But the government sent me there. But still I got all that experience. And then when--

MNK: What experience did you get?

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GR: Well, building locomotives. The whole inside that you would never see by being an engineer, you know. If you go up here and fire an engine all your life, you never get to see in the cylinders or in where the throttle valve is in the steam dome. Or inside the cylinders and all that. Where down there, they just tore an engine down right to the ground, started with the frame, and they built the locomotive all brand new. So I got to see it all. Then after I went in the service, I went overseas. I run almost all the locomotives they had overseas. The English, the French, the Belgium

MNK: What--

GR: The German.

MNK: What were some of those--Name some of those locomotives that you ran.

GR: Huh?

MNK: Do you remember any of the locomotive that you ran, the makers of them or--

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GR: Not the makers, the owners. Like the English locomotives. They sent so many of them there to France to help out with the power because so many engines had been blowed up. And the United States built some engines even for over there. About the size of our Forty Hundred class locomotives. And--But then we--Like I say, we had Belgium engines. We had the French engines. The English. The United States engines. The German engine, which they captured. And all these engines I had a chance to keep fooling with. So I stayed up on the locomotives pretty well. So when I come back, I made ninety-eight and a half percent on promotion. Everybody thought I was going to flunk and get canned,

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you know. They'd get my seniority. So, they'd be a little better off. Well, it didn't work that way; I made the best grades that was ever made up here on the

B & O. I still got my promotion papers. And anyhow, after I passed the first year machinery and the second year machinery--You have to take three years of machinery. Well, it's supposed to take you three years.

They said, 'Well, no, you can't have three years because you already got three years in the service.' So they made me use that, which they figured that's what would get me canned, I guess. I couldn't pass it. But it didn't. So I was promoted in 1949. And I had a regular pool turn. Because of the seniority I had a regular pool turn in 19--Oh, I was promoted in '48. In 1949 I had a regular pool turn to Fairmont.

MNK: A pool turn?

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GR: Yeah, it's a--It's like where they run ten trains to one destination. And first in, first out. You don't probably know what I mean there. I don't know just--But if they got enough work for ten turns in that pool, they call it a pool. It would be like going to Fairmont, it would be like the Fairmont pool. If you'd be going to Holloway, that's the only place you went. But it would be like a Holloway pool. So however many turns

it took to keep that pool going every day and take care of the work, that's how many turns they'd have in it. So it would be--But then engineers on the railroad was always a greedy bunch of people as

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far as working. They figured they had to work every day, you know. Especially your older engineers. And if they lost a couple days work, then they'd say, 'Well, cut the pool.' Well, that meant take a couple turns out of it because I lost yesterday or day before yesterday, you know. So it was a, just a continuous grind.

Twenty-four hours a day. And you always worked at night. Very seldom did you ever work on the railroad in the daytime. They run all of their locomotives at night. I think because of the dirt and the smoke, where people couldn't see it. Now this is my belief. Because if you take four or five Mallies out of here on the track, the smoke is tremendous, you know. Even up at the shop where they're just building new fires in them or keeping them hot, ready to go on the road. Oh, up in Benwood was one of the dirtiest places in the world.

The

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cinders, you could just stick your hand out up there, and in a little bit it would be black with cinders and coal dirt. And the women up there couldn't even hang their clothes on the line because of this. They would hang them out when, early in the morning before they knew that these, they was going to start getting these engines out to go at night. And that's what really happened. So it was all night work. And I've always thought about it since that I haven't worked on the railroad. It all comes back to you, you know, of the things. Because when I was firing a, on the railroad for somebody else, I used to look over in the dark because it's dark on there. All you got is a few little bulbs by the gauges so you could see the gauges. But if you had much light on there, you wouldn't be able to see outside. You understand that? You know, you just got little--You got two

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gauges here, whatever the fireman had, the engineer had. You just had wee little bulbs in them to make a little light on them gauges so you could see them. But you had no light on there to amount to anything. An engineer was like a, everything to him was like a computer. One time a fellow said to the engineer, he said--It'd be foggy out. So foggy that you couldn't see your face. Now all this railroad, you better know, and you better know it like the back of your hand too. You can't just say, 'Well, I'm going down First Street here and turn off over here,' or this. You better know where that switch is out from here to that heater. In the fog, the rain, the snow, regardless of what. And this fellow said to him, "Glen"--It was old Glen Harman; it was on a passenger train. He said, "Glenn, how do you know when you're coming into a station out there at Cameron?" He said, "All right, come over here." And the fellow went over. He said, "Now you listen." He said it was so foggy I couldn't see out my hand. And he went over, and he said, "Now listen real good," he said, "and you'll hear a

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dead sound." He said, "You hear that?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "We just went over a culvert. That's what you got to look for." He said, "And when you go over that culvert, you take off five pound of air because you know you're coming to the station." Now this seems funny to most people. Of all the lights that

you might have on the railroad, in towns, street lights, going through town, you would--Thousands of lights from here to Fairmont at night. In houses, in windows. If any one of them lights burned at night a lot, you let that one light go out and you'd know it. The engineer would know it. He'd look over there and think, I have many a time, 'I wonder what's wrong. The bulb must have burned out over at that house.' Or, 'That street light's burnt out.' But you would know that in all them lights clear to Fairmont. That's how well you had to know that

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railroad. And it would be, like I say, so foggy up and down this river. And we had single track railroad. Everything we done, we done with train ... You probably don't understand this, but I'd be going down the river and I'd have a meet order with a man. Say Natrium, Foster or someplace. And it would still be so foggy you couldn't see nothing. Well, you had to go down there and stop at the switch and go in the siding and put the switch up and make sure you was in the clear, you know, for the other fellow to go by you. If you got by that switch and he was sitting there, you had a wreck. If you got by it fifteen feet, you done run into him. So you better not get by it. And you can't stop way back because if you do, the brakeman's got all that way to walk, you know, to get that switch. So you practically had to pull right up to a switch and stop. Let the brakeman

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get the switch, pull in, slow down so the flagman could get off to put it up, get back on the caboose and pull on in the clear. Well, that way the other man could go. And we had so many trains at that time on the railroad around here that you went in and out every siding from here to Fairmont. They had hundreds of mine runs at that time. Over on from Lumber Port to Fairmont. Hauling coal out of hollows. And you'd have meet orders with maybe four of them at a siding.

MNK: A meet order is?

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GR: Yeah, is where you have to stop and make sure that he's come, okay. And you better make sure it's the right engine because a fellow might come down there and pull in and it ain't the right fellow at all. He's still coming. If you take off and leave, you meet him up the road some place. We had that several times. And fellows got killed. So these things was--But for all the business we had, it was very seldom. Even the company in Baltimore said if a man can run an engine on the Ohio River Division, he can run an engine any place in the world. Because there's no harder place to run a locomotive than here. We had up hills. We had down hills. We had tunnels. We had--You name it, we had it. We had to go in these mines. We had to know them mines. We had to know them

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tracks in them mines to pull the coal out sometimes, you know, If there wasn't no miner in there, why--And they got blocked off and you was going by, you just stopped and went in and pulled the coal out and took it with you to Fairmont and then it went on to Keyser. And so it was a bigger thing than what you can really visualize, you know. I'm going to rest a minute. Anyhow, you could talk for a month on it. It would take a month to tell it.

MNK: I've got a month if you want to talk for a month.

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GR: Well, I'll, I'll do the best I can for you. You know, I ain't got--

MNK: ... wonderful.

GR: A good voice no more.

MNK: This is great.

GR: Huh?

MNK: This is great.

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GR: Well, if it suits you, that's all I care about. That's what I'm here for. And--

MNK: How did the--Well, go ahead with what you were going to say.

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GR: Like I say, engineers was something that had to be--They was born, they wasn't made. I've always believed that. They was a certain type of people. And if you wasn't that kind of a person, you didn't work for the railroad very long. They'd get rid of you right now. They'd know it, and they'd get rid of you. Or you'd get in trouble. If you--If things didn't come to you real quick and stuff. Just like at ... Now, them big Mallies we had, they held twenty-five ton of coal and 22,000 gallons of water. When we left Benwood with a train, that tank was full of coal and water. When we got to New Martinsville, we had to take coal and water. Now you figure how much it burned. That stoker just continuously pouring that coal in there like that, and that big water pipe pushing that water in there to make steam was really more than the mind can conceive. On one of them big engines. Even on the small engines. Your Forty-four Hundreds and your Fifty Hundreds and them class of engines. But your Mallies, like more than

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any of them, I was--I stuck with the Mallies all my life that I could. And they used to call me The Old Mallie Man, you know, up there. I wasn't old, but then still they used, what they used to call me because I liked them. And we would--

MNK: What, what did you like so much about the Mallie?

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GR: The power. You could handle a train so much nicer with a big, the bigger the engine. Because they give us such big trains to haul, your smaller engine on a wet rail would slip. And the Mallie was heavy. Four hundred and fifty thousand pounds. And you could start a train easier and slow down easier. And do such a much better job with it than you could the small locomotives for the size trains they give us, which was big. A hundred and ten loads of coal with a Mallie. Now, that's a lot of coal. That's 10,000 tons. And I even hauled one time, I believe I told you, 150 loads of coal with a Mallie out of Fairmont. They said, "Can you haul it?" I said, "I don't know whether I can haul it. When I can, I ain't hauling it, the locomotive"--They said, "Well, we want you to try it." Well, they had an old fellow there that was, I'd consider him a pretty good engineer,

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you know. He'd been there years. I said, "Well, Poling's head out." I said, "Call him for it." They said no. I don't know why the dispatcher wouldn't do it, but he said, "No, we'd rather you take it." Well--Although they wasn't going to really give you no excuse, you know. It'd make the other guy if he heard it feel bad. Which it would make me feel bad. But anyhow, he said, "Can you haul it?" I said, "I'll try it. I'll do the best I can." That Mallie--I hooked on that 150 loads of coal, just walked away with it like it was feathers. ... Seventy-six Hundred. Took it down to Haywood and set down, set all, I don't know, about forty loads and got a four unit helper for the hill, you know, to shove us over the hill.

MNK: Which hill is that?

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GR: Hartzell was our big hill. Down at Hartzell. Between Smithfield and Lumber Port. And right at the top of the hill there was a big tunnel a mile long. And that Mallie just fit that hole, believe me. You couldn't put your hand out very far or it would drag. And when you went in that hole, it got to about 170 degrees in about two seconds because all that heat was coming right down on that, back down in that cab. And we did have tunnel masks, you know. I never hardly wore them because I'd just take a big ball of waste and stick over my face because the eyeglasses would sweat so bad that I couldn't see. If the engine was slipping I couldn't hear with that mask on. Where with the waste--And we had a couple fellows got burned bad in there because of that. The engine--The rail was wet in the tunnel. It was always wet. And they got slipping in there and hung up. Well, then they got their lungs burned. So for that reason, I always just put the waste over my face.

MNK: Waste?

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GR: Yeah, it was rags, chopped up rags. You know what it is?

???: Um hmm. Cotton.

GR: Yeah. It's like a big ball of cotton, only heavier. And I just put that over my face. But most of the fellows, they put the mask on. And you would screw the hose onto the engine air and turn a valve on when you got in the tunnel. And you would breathe the air that come out of that valve into that mask, which you could get through there pretty good. But I think of--If the guy told me right or I remember right, he put a thermometer on the engine. When he went in, he said it went right up to 178 degrees. That's how hot. You'd feel the gloves pull right up on your hands and your shoes on your feet. You'd know that you had shoes and gloves on. That's how hot it got in there. And we had three of them going out the short line, tunnels. But two of them was short. One--You just went out of one right back into the other one, but they was short tunnels. But then the

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one at Hartzell was seven eighths of a mile long. And it was right on the hill. You had to keep working the engine to get through there. And you had to keep firing the engine to get through there. Or the steam would drop down; you'd hang up, you know. So that was one bad feature that we had. That a lot of engineers wouldn't work on the short line because of the Mallies and the tunnels. They said, 'No, we won't run them things through there.' Over the main line here. The main line is what they call from Moundsville to Cameron and out through there to Fairmont. The short line is from down the river to New Martinsville and

out through Hundred and Smithfield and out through there to Lumber Port. That is the short line. This is the main line up here. But they

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brought the Mallies here and they said, 'No, we won't run them.' The Wheeling Division engineers said they wouldn't run them. So they said, 'Well, wherever the Mallies go, that's where the freight goes.' So they just took the Mallies and put them on the short line. And the Ohio River engineers said, 'Well, we'll run them.' So they kept the business and the Mallies from that day on. Wheeling Division engineers, they worked up the Holloway where they very seldom had Mallies or anything up that way. They used small engines, you know, two or three engines on a train. And they--Well, and it was a short run. I don't know, it's only like--From Benwood to Holloway, I'd say it's only like fifty mile or something like that. You got any idea?

???: Something like that.

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GR: It's around that, ain't it?

???: Yeah ...

GR: I never, I never worked up there too much. I ... up there a little bit for a couple fellows. Like during the coal strike or something. But I never just paid that much attention to it because I never liked that piece of track up through there. I liked it down in here. And all the fellows that they had on the Wheeling Division, they didn't like this part of the railroad. They wouldn't even learn it. They'd lose work before they'd learn this. I had two or three old engineers. Not because they wasn't good engineers, but they'd got demoted for some reason, some small thing they had done wrong or some little thing had happened. Well, if you couldn't answer for it, they'd just demote you, you know. And maybe for six months. They'd just say, 'Well, you go back firing for six months.' And it didn't have to be too much either. And--So they'd take a turn with me and figuring, 'well, while I'm back firing, I'll learn that piece of

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railroad.' And I considered them some of the best Wheeling Division engineers. And I had one fellow, his name was Greer. Lived over in Ohio. He'd worked on the, over in the mountains to Keyser, over that hilly railroad. And you had to be good to work over there. I never worked over there, but I know about it. And you had to be a good engineer. Huh?

???: West end ...

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GR: Yeah. Yeah. And he was on with me about three months firing. Well, I'd leave him run the engine most of the time when we had the diesel. If we had a steam engine, I'd fire the steam engine even and let him run the engine because he was a good man. And so after about three months it was kind of a nice morning, we was going into Fairmont. I said, "Now"--And I liked Greer. And I said, "Greer, you've been on here three months now. You've worked all over the railroad, and I know you know this railroad." I said, "Eddie will be at the station this morning," had an office there. I said, "If I tell him to pass you, he'll pass you." He said, "You know something. If I had seen this railroad in the last three months, I would probably know something about it." But he said, "I haven't even seen this stinking thing in the last three months since I've

been

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on with you.” He said, “It’s been so dark and foggy that I’ve never seen it.” So he said, “How you going to pass on a piece of railroad you don’t know.” And he said, “I’m scared to death of it right now. If you wasn’t sitting over there,” he said, “I couldn’t get this thing two miles down the road.” “Oh,” I said, “That’s bull.” He said, “George, you worked here since you was a kid. You come up with it. You know it. I never worked on a piece of railroad like this.” And he said, “I’d quit tomorrow before I’d pass on this piece of railroad.” And he was good engineer. Now, I had two or three fellows told me that, you know, that fired for me. For some reason, if they got demoted, they’d take a turn with me even though I was a young man. Preference of taking a turn with one of the older engineers for some reason. I don’t know why. But--And they usually come out

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and say, ‘George’--Like Harley Mason got demoted. A good man. Just a little thing that he done, which I wouldn’t thought they’d have done nothing to him. They give him six months firing. So he come out, and he said, “George,” he said, “Do you care if I take the turn with you firing?” I said, “Hell, no, I’d be tickled to death to have you.” I said, “Harley, I always considered you a good man.” And I--So, he did. He took--Why he didn’t take a turn with one of the older fellows, I don’t know, you know. But I let him run the engine. And whatever he done was fine with me. Oh, I kind of watched like--Everybody watches when you’re up there on the head end because if a man overlooks something, you’re dead. You

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know, if he overlooks a meet order, you’re dead. You’re going to get killed on single track. There’s no way that you--

(Side Two)

GR: Pretty good tales like things that--Oh, nobody would ever know about, you know. Things that people don’t know about. I was coming up the river one morning at two o’clock in the morning. It was drizzling rain. I had a two unit diesel and 100 loads, 110 loads of coal. Well, I was not trying to run too fast, because I was trying to save sand for what we called the gravel bank down here. It’s from Moundsville here up above the conduit, you know, or the toy works. That was up hill. And you had to have sand and stuff to get over that little piece of hill. So I was killing a little time that morning; I was trying to save some sand. And they’d been--Everything always works out just right. There’d been a dredge boat working down there at the bridge below, there at the Merry Tavern. You know where it’s at don’t you?

MNK: Down in Benwood?

(015)

GR: No, down Moundsville here, the lower end of Moundsville. That motel, the Merry Tavern Motel. Well, there’s a creek comes out there. And there had been a dredge boat working right off the edge of that creek for three or four months. Well, the pilot light on a dredge boat looks like a pilot light on an engine, you know, especially a diesel engine. So anyhow, we was coming up there about two o’clock in the morning, and I looked and I seen these lights, you know. But I thought, just in my mind, it just flashed a dredge boat. You

know, that quick. But--And Harley had his lights on in the cab of the diesel because he was reading his orders leaving Moundsville here. He'd get orders here at

(027)

Moundsville for down the river. Well, Harley seen that light of mine coming around the curve, and so he reached up to make sure what it was and turned out his cab lights. Well, when he did, hell, all I seen was two big number plates on the side of that engine! I said, "Get off, that's an engine." Well, the fireman jumped in the river. I jumped off on the other side. The brakeman, he went off somewhere. And--Oh, I don't know, Harley was running pretty fast because he didn't have but a small train, and he was getting wound up to go down the river. I wasn't running too fast, but I had a heavy big train. And when I run across the highway, I remember, and jumped up against the bank. And I looked back, and it just looked like the two locomotives-- He had a two unit diesel, and I had a two unit diesel. I looked back and it just looked like they went up there like that and stopped. And all--I thought, 'Oh, boy, they stopped.' And all at once I heard

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the slack action coming in. You know what I mean? Well, that's your draw bars between your cars. You got about that much slack in each car. That's so you can start the train. If you had to start the train all at once, you couldn't start it. So you got this slack action. Well, the head end stopped, but the rear end's still coming. All this coal is still coming. When I heard it coming, boy, I went on up over the bank! And right behind his locomotive there's a flat car. And I looked and that flat car went at least forty feet in the air, just jumped right up out of that train. I had a load of coal behind my engines, and it just bent it half in two. And both engines just stood right up in the air like that. Ruined them both. Well, I think it was 380 some thousand dollars on mine and about 300 thousand on his. Just that--Now, all the harder they hit, but it was the slack that done it.

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We got stopped, but the train didn't stop. And this is a bad feature as far as the public's concerned. You're coming up the track, and they think you can stop just like a wheelbarrow. It takes a mile to stop that train. I mean it. When you go in an emergency with a heavy train, it takes a mile to get that thing stopped on sand and everything. Well, people think you can just stop. 'Don't hit me, I can't get off the crossing.' Well, that's too bad. You know, I hit several cars. In fact, I've even had cars run into me. One fellow run right between the tank and the engine, a coal miner over there! And the car got stuck between the engine and the tank. And I got stopped. I wasn't running very fast because there's a little town there. Shinnston. And I got stopped, but I pulled him out on a bridge right there, and I was afraid he was going, the car was going to fall down in the creek. So, we got off the engine, told him, 'Just sit there till we make sure that car's fastened solid enough that you can get out of it.' Didn't hurt him a bit.

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And he did. We called a wreck truck and got him pulled out from between the engine and tank. And anyhow, he started walking away, and I said, "Where you going?" He said, "Well, I got to go to work." And he walked, and I stood there. And he walked about ten feet, and he turned around and walked back, and he said, "What in the hell am I talking about." He said, "I just almost got killed." He said, "I ain't going to work!" He just walked back down to his house. He lived right along the track. And so I was lucky in the

sense that I never killed nobody. In all that time, I never killed a soul. Like I say, I hit several cars like him, but I always got stopped enough that I just shoved them back off the track or to the position of where they didn't get hurt. And I was always glad of that. That was one thing. The nearest I ever come to killing anybody was like up here

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at the conduit. We'd have to go up by that--Or, I mean the toy works. We'd have to go by there lots of days when they'd be letting out work. Well, they'd see you coming and a start a running to get across that track. And some big heavyset woman fell right smack in that track. Well, there's no way I could stop, you know. And just lucky there was a guy not too far from her, he just run and grabbed her by the shoulders and just drug her off the track as I went by. It'd just cut her half in two. That's the nearest I ever killed anybody. But believe me, it's scary. But you can't let it work on the mind or you couldn't run an engine at all. You know, if you thought you was going to hit somebody every time you went across a crossing or seen cars going, you never could run an engine. You just got to say, 'Okay, if I hit them, I'll stop.' Well, that was the

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company rule. If you hit them, you stop. If you didn't hit them, you didn't. A fellow tried to beat me one time down there at the ... plant. And he seen me coming, and he kept gassing that car, a going to go across that crossing to the river. I kept blowing the whistle; he kept a coming. He had a big, brand new car. I don't know, official of some kind down there at the plant, I suppose. When he went across I just took them clips off his back bumper. That's how near I come to killing him. I just took the clips off, and I said to Bo, I said, "Did he get over, Bo?" Bo said, "Yeah." And I said, "Well, I guess forget it." And we just went on. No use to stop, what was I going to do. I couldn't put the clips back on. And you, you can't, you can't waste two or three hours sitting around with a

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freight train on the track, you know. You got to get going. The company ain't going to put up with that. If you, you do that a couple times, you wouldn't be there. So they expected you to move that train. They didn't care what, you moved the train. If you kill somebody, then that's their fault, they'll take care of it. They never asked you--Hardly ever would they ever ask anybody anything, you know. Like an engineer, if somebody got killed, unless it could be proved that he, that he just didn't try to stop or do nothing after he killed them. But otherwise, they really wouldn't--If you'd hit a car two or three times and didn't hurt nobody and stop, hell, they'd have up and put you back firing. That'd be what would happen, you know. They wouldn't put up with you sitting around all over the railroad. When they wanted you to move, they wanted you to

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move. And they had slow orders, but they didn't expect you to live up to them. They expect you to move. And that's how you got a good name, by getting over the railroad and running as fast as you know you could run safe. And that's what I done all of my life from the time I went there. I run as fast as I could, and I knew where the slow orders was. Like I say, just like the back of my hand. But they was there all the time I was there. So after a while, you don't have no wrecks, you don't have this or that, you don't pay no attention to it

no more. You don't bother slowing down. Fifteen miles an hour or twenty-five. Well, if it's fifty, you just go on fifty. Get going. Why waste the fireman's time and coal and water and that stuff. I never could see it. And I was never in the superintendent's office. I was never in the road foreman's office. And I

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never got a reprimand in my life all the time I was there. Only time I ever talked to superintendent, he called me up after I was there about, oh, a year. And he was sitting up in Benwood there, and I was coming getting ready to leave Benwood. I went up, walked up by him to get the engine, he said, "Come here a minute, George, I want to talk to you." I said, "Okay." I went over, he said, "I want to tell you something. You're doing one hell of a good job." And he said, "I'm tickled to death." And I said, "Well, coming from you, I thank you." And I just went on. And that's the only time that that man ever said anything to me about the railroad. Sell. Old man Sell was the superintendent then. Although he's dead now and--

???: Yeah, I know his son.

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GR: Huh?

???: I know his son.

GR: Oh. But really, the--I never had no problem with the officials any way, shape or form. Except I would not let them run the engine. If they wanted to run the engine, I said no. Everybody else would get up and let them run it, but I said no. I told Jack Farrell that lived down here, I said, "You can't run an engine. You couldn't follow one, and you're not running mine. This is mine as long as I'm on it. Now, if you want to take full responsibility and run this engine and tell the fireman that," I said, "I'll gladly get up and let you run it." He would never do it. Because I said, "Anything goes wrong, don't blame me." And I never was in trouble, and he was in--When he was an engineer on the railroad and a fireman, he was in trouble continuous. Before they ever--I think that's why they made him a road foreman to keep him out of trouble! That's no kidding. I think that's why they did.

MNK: Kicked him upstairs.

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GR: Yeah. You know, that way they didn't have to fool with him. He couldn't fire an engine. He wouldn't get three miles down the road, and he had to stop and clean the fire, you know. And--Well, there's nothing wrong that if there's something wrong with the engine, but there didn't have to be nothing wrong with an engine if he was firing it. They just said, 'Who's firing it, Farrell?' 'Yeah, Farrell.' 'Well, forget it. He'll get going after a while.' And that's the way they talked about him. And one time he did come over, and I was trying to go to Hannibal. The superintendent wanted us to go to Hannibal for the passenger train because they had, we had a hotshot train and superintendent was wanting that train in Grafton. And he told Farrell, 'You get on there and ride. If he needs anything, you see that he gets it.' He didn't tell him get on there and run it, or we never would have got there! Anyhow, I was going down

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the river and a slow order, like I say, I never paid no attention to it. I was running about fifty-five over it. I think it's something like twenty miles an hour, twenty-five. And he come over and started easing the throttle

off. I slapped him on the hand, I said, "What are you doing?" I pulled the throttle back open. He said, "There's a slow order here." I said, "It's been here ever since me and you been here and a long time before, ain't it?" "Yes." I said, "You want to go to Hannibal for Seventy-two, or do you want me to pull in Natrium?" "Oh," he said. I said, "Oh, yes we can too. Touch the throttle again, and I'll pull in Natrium." Well, he went over and sat down, and he never did touch the throttle no more for me. Never. Because you-- He hadn't been out here running the engine long enough to, you know. Once he got to be the road foreman, then he never run the engine every day and every day to where

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he could really do the job. Now, he knew it from the book, but you don't run an engine according to the book. You run it according to good judgment in my opinion. I never run it according to the book. And we had fellows here, one fellow was a good man. And he stayed here till he retired, so he had to be good. But they was always after him. His name was Earl Poling. And--But he lived up to the slow order. He took his time doing everything he done. And he was always late, way late. The road foreman over on the Mononga Division was always waiting on him every morning. 'Earl, where you been, where you been?' 'Well,' he said, 'I've been a coming.' Well, he said, 'Hell, I know you've been a coming,' but he said, 'Why does it take you so long? The superintendent wants to know.' Well, he said, 'You tell the superintendent that I was living

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up to the slow orders. And he'd just shake his head and walk out! Because that's all he ever did get out of him. But he had to be good or he wouldn't have been here all them years, okay. Just because he lived up to the rules--Now, if they could have got something on him, they would have put him back firing. They'd have been tickled to death if he'd have been back firing. Because then they'd have got somebody on there that would have stepped it up a little bit, see. But he wasn't about to!

MNK: Tell me about the first, the first Mallie you ever fired. Where was it and what, how'd you feel about it?

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GR: Oh, I had--The Mallie, the first Mallie I ever fired was the Seventy-four Fifty. It's in that book in there. And it was called Columbus Ninety-seven then. It was a fast freight over the short line. And the regular fireman--I just went to Benwood as a fireman. And the regular fireman was off for some reason. Nobody wanted that job though. It run too fast with that Mallie. And Red Hamilton was the engineer, which was a first-class engineer. And I remember I went out that night and I looked at that thing. I knew the number, you know, that the caller told me to get. I looked at that thing, and I thought, 'My god.' I never seen nothing that big in my life. So anyhow, I got up on the engine, and I was looking at it. And he got up on the engine, Red did. He said, "Did you ever fire"--He knew me because they lived in New Martinsville when I was a smaller

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kid. So he said to me, "George, did you ever fire this engine before?" I said, "Good lord, I never seen one of these engines before." He said, "Then you do what I tell you, and we'll get along okay." I said, "I'll do that." I said, "I can do that fine." And we did. I fired for him. I was on there--The guy never come back for the

job, and I was on there about three months. But old Red, after that he wanted me to stay on there as a fireman, but an older guy bumped me, you know, with a little more seniority. But to me that Seventy-four Hundred and that Seventy-four Fifty, they is like sister engines. They was the best Mallies, not to get down and haul, but they was the best high speed Mallies that I ever saw in my life. And they would go where a black snake would go. If a black snake

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would go around that curve, they would too. Because they had two oscillating plates, which is big plates under the boiler where the boiler moves back and forth on them. Your Seventy-six Hundreds only had one. And they had four drivers in the front of that oscillating plate. They had four drivers in the back of that oscillating plate, which made them very stiff. And they would actually raise--If you went around the curve a little bit too fast--I've got down on the steps, they'd actually raise up off the track and move the track over. And the section men would have to go back and put it back. Well, then they made us keep the speed on the Seventy-six Hundreds cut down because of this. And we had several of them that jumped the track. One of them just flopped over. We had another one just jump the track, you know. So, they wouldn't let us--And all of

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us knew better than to run the Seventy-six Hundreds too fast over that crooked track. But them Seventy-four Hundreds had three drivers, an oscillating plate, a, an oscillating plate and three drivers and then another oscillating plate and three more drivers. And boy, they'd just go around anything, I'll tell you. And I really liked them, you know. They had lorry stokers on them, and they steamed good. And they was really built for mountain passenger trains, engines, over on the mountains. And they could run them engines seventy, seventy-five miles an hour with a, on a passenger train. But they'd stop on the mountains, and they had seventy-two inch drivers, which is six foot wheel. And if they stopped there on the mountain at a two or three stations on the mountain, if it was raining and stuff they couldn't get them, the train going. Because they'd have maybe twenty-five coaches, heavy coaches. And it wasn't that they wouldn't

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haul them, but they slipped so bad with them big drivers. So they took them off of the passenger train, rebuilt them and brought them here, and put them on fast freight, which they was perfect for that. And I just loved them engines. I loved to run them. Years later after I fired for him, I got to like that engine. And then I had a lot of occasions to run it after I was promoted, you know, over the short line. They--Like I say, they was slippery because of them big wheels, but they had a carriage on the front. If you look in that book, you'll see that big four-wheel carriage on the front. That carriage would be sitting clear out here, and the boiler would be sitting clear back here like this when you went around the curves and stuff. And I seen fellows that would have ... on the branch on

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them oil trains in the siding. They'd see us coming down the hill, they'd run clear up over the track over the road. They'd think it was jumping the track, you know. And they did look like that, but they rode--To be on the engine they actually rode good, you know. They was--The carriage on the front took up a lot of the side

slack. And they had good spring rigging on them, which I liked. Made them ride better. The only thing, if anything at all, that didn't make them ride as good as they would have is they'd had a smaller driver on them. Like a five foot driver would have maybe made them ride a little better and haul a little better. But for some reason they never could see to change them. The B & O was a great company to change their locomotives from the way they was built. They didn't want them for speed like around this mountain country. They wanted

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them to haul a lot of freight, heavy freight. Coal and everything and iron ore. And they would even take and put bigger cylinders on them. Well, then the firebox was too small, and you had to really work like a dog to keep the engine hot. Because you was taking more steam. If you was really working that engine, you was using more steam than the firebox was capable of making. So they never--But they never would increase the size of the firebox, which would be a major job, you know. You couldn't. So they figured, well, 'we want them to haul coal, and on the downs they can get them hot for the ups.' I guess that's the way they looked at it. But they would really haul a lot of freight. We had Forty-eight Hundred, Forty-four Hundred and Forty-twos, Forty-sixes. Seventy-one Hundreds. Now, there was another engine that they, that Seventy-one

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Hundred was a compound Mallie to start with. They took the big cylinders off the front, you know what I mean? And they put two simple cylinders on the front, which made the firebox way small. And they--Boy, you fought them from one end of the railroad to the other. Even if the flues was clean and everything was in good shape, you had to fight them engines to keep them hot. But they would haul. They would really haul the train. Once you got it up and got it moving, if you could keep it moving, you was okay. But if you got down on a drag, then the fire'd get dirty quick and everything else because you had to crowd it, crowd the coal in there more than what it was capable of taking. So these was a few bad features of what the B & O done. But then they had other engines that they rebuilt and made some magnificent engines out of. Like their Fifty-three Hundreds they made out of Forty Hundreds or Forty-two Hundreds and put extension front ends on them and made Fifty-three and Fifty-five Hundreds on them.

MNK: What year was that?

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GR: Well, when they done it, I'm not sure. But they was Forty-two and Forty Hundreds that they was, wasn't satisfied with. So they just made a longer boiler on them and made a bigger engine out of them. Well, they mostly used them on passenger trains and real fast freight, which they would handle the job there, good. And they already had a pretty good size firebox on them, the Forty Hundred did, or Forty-two Hundred. So you had no problem keeping them hot or nothing. And where the last one that I remember was the one that was on Fifty-nine. It used to go to Cleveland. That was a Fifty-five Hundred, made out of a Forty Hundred. And boy, that thing was sharp, you know. And it would run. And over there when they get next to Cleveland, they run pretty fast. Oh, I was

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probably up seventy, you know, on passenger. And then they used them a lot. When they got success out of

them, they used them a lot out of Pittsburgh to Chicago where they really run fast. When you leave Pittsburgh, it's nothing to go up to ninety miles an hour right now, you know, and beat that thing right into New York. There's where they used a lot of Fifty-three and Fifty-five Hundreds that they rebuilt, which I thought was really nice engines, you know. And they hadn't been rebuilt too long that the flues and everything was good in them, and they didn't leak hardly. And they really held up. And you could put in a pretty easy day on one of them. So, I'll think of something else here that you might want to hear.

MNK: I asked you about the first Mallie you ever fired and--What, what year was that?

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GR: Nineteen--Let's see. Nineteen forty-one, I believe. Yeah, yeah. No, I take it back, it was when I, after I come back out of the service. It had to be in about 1944.

MNK: Was Mallies new then?

GR: Oh, no. The Mallies was built back in 1917.

MNK: Okay.

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GR: Okay. Your Seventy-one Hundreds--The only new engines that they had was your Seventy-six Hundreds, which they built thirty of. And they was only around here, what, fifteen years, wasn't they?

???: They--

GR: Was looking the other day.

???: They were built, I think, '44 or '45.

GR: Yeah.

???: Nineteen-

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GR: The Seventy-six Hundred Mallies. Them was the best engines. They was roller bearing. They was--

???: That was the ...

GR: Yeah. Them was really the perfect Mallie that the B & O wanted. But we had too crooked a track around here for them, but we did run them. And we had not too much trouble with them really considering as many as we run. And--Like I say, you had to keep the speed down on them or they would upset. They was top heavy. And you couldn't carry much water in them because that made them more top heavy, you know. But I never liked a lot of water in a locomotive any time. I always kept it down, you know, pretty well in the bottom of the glass.

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A lot of fellows, I don't know, they carried too much water. They was afraid of blowing the engine up or something. It wasn't going to blow it up as long as you could find water in there someplace. And I always liked to keep the water down, the engine rode better. And you wasn't taking near as much chance as upsetting as you was with a lot of water in it, you know. So, they--But the Seventy-one Hundreds, the compound Mallies, they was built back in 1917. And they still had the plate on them when they cut them up in 1917. They still belonged to the insurance company, I suppose, or they'd have took them plates off out on the spoke box. They still had a plate, 1917. So they run them all that, them years, and most of them was still

in pretty good shape, mechanically, you know. Well, you kept a Mallie up or it just wouldn't do the job, that was all. It's

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not like a small engine. You could get by with it. But a Mallie, when it got down, it just quit, that was it. It didn't--You didn't get as much out of it as you did the little engine, you know, because it just wouldn't do the job. You had to be steaming good. The flues had to be good in it. And everything like that, you know. So-- But I just--Like I say, the more you got with the big engines, the less you liked the little ones, or I did. And I used to always stay on jobs where they had the Mallies. In the pool and--Oh, I run a lot of--Like I say, I knew so much track that it made it bad for me. And if I had it to do over again, I wouldn't have learned all that track because they just called me for everything. When my turn didn't work that day for some reason, they'd make sure that I was on something else. Well, this made a bad feature. Then when I come back in, I'd go

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back out on my own turn. And that kept me working sixteen hours every day, you know. And so, I knew all the track to Clarksburg, to Grafton, to Fairmont, to Parkersburg, to Huntington. And up and down the river here. All these plants inside. You had to know the track in them plants just the same as you knew everything else because they'd tell you to take these cars and put them over there in ten. Okay, where's ten. You have to know, you know. And so--I just learned too much track, that was all. But it's--And you know I never passed on hardly any of it. You're supposed to--They was supposed to ride over it, ride over it. Then the road foreman would have you up, and he'd sit down and he'd start asking you about it. Where all the switches was, where the sidings was, where the bridges was. You had to know the number of every bridge, milepost,

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telephone poles along the track. Sidings, how many cars a siding would hold. All of that. You had to know every bit of that. Well, one day they wanted me to go to Clarksburg, and I said, "I can't go to Clarksburg, I'd never been to Clarksburg." Never run an engine to Clarksburg. They said, "Didn't you fire over there a couple times?" I said, "Well, yes, a good while back." They said, "You're qualified." That's all I ever got out of them. So they called me; I went to Clarksburg. But I did know the road, you know, but not like I should really. And the railroad to Parkersburg. Farrell, the guy got sick one morning. He had to have an operation pretty bad about the time they wanted the turn to go to work. And they called me and wanted me to go to Parkersburg. And I said, "Well, I don't know the railroad to Parkersburg. I never run an engine to Parkersburg." I said, "In fact, I only run, fired a few engines to Parkersburg," which I did. Now, down on the west end I fired, but not up here between

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Brooklyn and Parkersburg, or New Martinsville. We call it Brooklyn, that's the railroad Brooklyn. And New Martinsville's the same name. Brooklyn is the south side that the railroad used for a name of New Martinsville. And New Martinsville's still the same name. But anyhow, he asked me, he said--I said, "I can't run an engine down there." I said, "I didn't pass on the road." "Farrell said he'd ride with you." Well, I said okay if he was going to ride with me and show me the road, why it would be fine. He got on the engine, I run the engine to Parkersburg. Next morning I went out to get the engine to come back, you know. I said,

“Where’s Farrell?” “Oh,” he said, “Hell, he qualified you last night and went home.” And that’s all the qualification I got on that piece of

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railroad! But most of them fellows, hell’s fire, they’d have them up for three or four days passing on the road, you know. So I said, “Either I just got shafted into it”--I don’t know really what happened. But I know too much railroad, you know. And that’s what kept me working too much all the time. But I enjoyed it. You either enjoyed the railroad or you didn’t stay. Because you didn’t have no home if you worked on the railroad. There’s no way you had a family or no home. You lived on the railroad. You was either coming or going. And that’s the way it was. And they’d hire a hundred men up to Benwood. I can remember they’d hire a hundred men in two months. At the end of that month, there might be one man left. They’d all quit after the first trip. Some of them

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wouldn’t even make a full trip. They’d just get off the engine and walk away. Just leave her sit where she’s at, the fireman would. They’d have to take a guy down in a taxi to work it. So--Like I say, they’d hire a hundred men up there, and at the end of a couple months, there’d be one or two maybe. They had--It seemed like if their people worked there and they knew what it was all about, them fellows when they come there, they’d stay because they already knew what their dad was going through. But if their people didn’t and they didn’t know what it was about, they didn’t last only a couple days. That was it. And then some of them that did stay, if you come up for promotion and couldn’t pass promotion, they canned you anyhow, you know.

You had to pass promotion after I went there. Years before it was different. If they need an engineer--

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Although that was back quite a, even before my time. If they need an engineer and they knew that he could do the job, they’d just say you’re promoted. But when I passed promotion, you had to pass under the law, the federal government. You see, once I was promoted I can go any, any place in the United States and run an engine. Not just on the B & O, but any railroad in the United States or Alaska I can go run an engine because I passed under the law here. We had the air car. We had the three years of machinery. We had the book of rules for the B & O. And if I go to another railroad, I don’t have to pass promotion again. They got, they got a thing out now, I don’t know whether you read it or heard about it, but--My brother cut out a piece out of the paper the other day and brought it up to me. If you’re promoted on the railroad, you go back if

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you want to. Did you know that? I’m seventy years old, but I can go over here on the grand trunk and they’ll put me to work tomorrow if I can pass the physical. Well, beside my back and this leg, which don’t--I don’t have to pick up nothing or lift nothing no more on the diesel. I can go over there, and they’ll put me back to work till I’m eighty years old making forty-two hundred dollars a month. They double the road every day. Although they run ninety miles an hour over there on that grand trunk. But the, the paper also said that they wasn’t the only ones that was looking for engineers. Anybody that retired, anybody that was promoted and running engine, just come on out and we’ll put you back to work. They got so much freight over there laying in sidings

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that they don't know what to do with. All this piggy back stuff. Your highways is gone. The trucks has tore up the highways. Now, they're going back to the railroad, but they went all these years and never promoted no engineers. So where they going to get the engineers. The law says you ... So for a while they tried sending fellows to school. You can't send a man to school and make an engineer out of him. He might learn about the diesel, but he ain't going to learn about the railroad out here and how to run an engine. No way. So, they dropped that idea quick. It was costing them a fortune, and they was getting maybe one out of a thousand to run an engine. So, they said no, we'll just take back these guys. As long as they can pass the physical, we'll take them back till they're eighty years old. So I could back ... for ten years if I could pass promotion. You know, I did have the idea of just going over because there's nothing else physically wrong with me except this hip. I had a notion to go over and just

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take a--Oh, oh, excuse--I had a notion just to go over and take a ride on one of them trains just for the fun of it because I want to. I always said--Here about four or five years ago I was telling my brother, I said, "You know, before I die, I'd just like to go someplace and get on a good train and, and ride the engine before I die." Well, now I got the chance. All I got to do is go over there, and they said, 'Come on over and we'll let you do what you can do.' And they'll even pay you for learning. They'd pay your expenses. Well, I think there's about eight railroads now that wants all the engineers they can get if you can pass promotion, or physical. So, I think maybe in a month or two I'm just going to go over there--Even if I don't stay--Oh, darn it. Even if I don't stay just to take a ride on one, you know. To me, that would be something after a good while. It's

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been a good while since I was on there. But I could--You don't forget how to run an engine. I run the diesels. I run the Two Hundreds. I run the Thirteen Hundreds. I run the Twelve Hundreds. The B & O never had nothing that I never run. The Seventy-ones, the compound, you know. Forty-ones, Forty-twos, Forty-fours, Forty-sixes. So, you really don't ever forget. And I run all the diesels they had. The Alcoes, the General Motors, the Baldwins. So--And they all operate about the same. You got a throttle on the brake. And an engine brake. In fact, I can probably take--Either one of you guys never been on an engine? And put you up on an engine. And two hours you could run that engine around in the yards without any problem and know exactly what to look for. How to start and stop it, and this and that. Now, you wouldn't know nothing to amount

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to anything about the motor, but I don't either. I know where the, if it trips the ground or this or that, for to take care of that stuff. Which you don't really have to know that. It don't happen that often. But as far as just sitting there running the engine, either one of you fellows could do it. Now, you wouldn't know the railroad. Like me, if I went over there and they give me a job on that railroad, the one thing that I'd have to be satisfied up here in my own mind is know this railroad like the back of your hand. Know where them lights are. Know where you can see them lights from. How far back you can see them. How much distance you got between the lights. See, all that's centralized traffic control now. It's not train orders like we worked

under. We--