Interviewer: Continuation of interview of, uh, **[unintelligible 00:00:18]** Coward King, November 24, '87. Can you en-enlighten me as to what was the philosophy of the brotherhood having a-a Ladies' Auxiliary to the Brotherhood?

Mrs. Coward King: It was felt that, uh, many of-- I believe that many of men at the beginning had to be coerced into joining the brotherhood and to continue to pay their dues and to have an interest. And also, um, I do have, the ladies have some sympathy with the men, uh, and in what they were doing, and also to realize how much better off they would be. Uh, they would be with the men earning so much more money because very often people fell behind, the men fell behind. They didn't get to the meeting. It was the woman who was the back, uh, backbone in the house of the family. And, um, got the men out to the meetings and kept their interests up.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: They, uh, they would support them in this respect and see that they, uh-- And also the fact that, uh, the woman, for the most part didn't know what labor unions was. It was an education for-for them, and the men the Mrs. elves when they joined all they knew, uh, about it was the fact that it was giving them an additional amount of money, which they didn't have considering, uh, that, and when they would come home, um, they're very tired. And they, you know, they-- the, uh, when they had a wife who would, um, be able to tell them how far they had gone and how much they had gained by being in the brotherhood and-and, uh, sympathized with them and know about-- something about labour economics, because by means of, uh, going to many of the meetings, they had speakers that came in and talked to them about economics and how to use the-- uh, and how to better spend that additional dollar that they had to make it go further. So, um, because of that dollar that they received, uh, the mothers was able to work I believe better-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: -through the Auxiliary to help their kids continue their, uh, you know, go in for their education.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: We have many of the, uh, uh, many of the children who went on and, um, uh, got degrees and, uh, you know, they were encouraged because the-the mother's vision where the mother might not have had a vision before, if it wasn't for the Auxiliary pressing, helping to press them-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: -to do things and, uh, encouraging the family.

Interviewer: Do you feel the Ladies' Auxiliary provided a support to the--

Mrs. King: A stimulus- a stimulus within the family and a cementing of the family constellation.

Interviewer: Alright. Okay. You-you've-you've given us the philosophy, uh, of having a-- behind having an aux- an Auxiliary to the Brotherhood. Do you think the Auxiliary provided the support it envisaged to the leaders?

Mrs. King: Yes. Uh, yes, I think so.

Interviewer: Alright. Mm-hmm. Have you any idea how many Auxiliary members there- there were in Canada at the peak?

Mrs. King: No, I-I couldn't tell you that. I don't know.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: I don't remember. We probably knew at the time, because certainly the International knew, um, perhaps, uh, if you, uh, could write to Mrs. Rosina Tucker, who was, [laughs] um, still alive and 105 years old who has still a very fertile brain. [laughs] She might be able to quote you a figure of the peak because she can tell you how it was through her that the Brotherhood got started and the men kept going.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: You-you hear her on the- on the TV telling her story. And the- and the Brotherhood do acknowledge that it was through Mrs. Rosina Tucker, who was the international secretary, uh, leader of the Ladies' Auxiliary. They acknowledged that freely.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: Mr. Randolph always did. So, um, I- I think that maybe, um, if you could-

Interviewer: Alright.

Mrs. King: -contact her that might give you that type of statistical information.

Interviewer: All right. Uh, were there many White members in-in the Ladies' Auxiliary.

Mrs. King: The only White ladies that, no, you might find would be the ladies who were married to, um, our men.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: So, and these were not many in, you know, quantity at the time.

Interviewer: There were some White members, weren't there?

Mrs. King: Some but very few.

Interviewer: Did they ever hold office or anything?

Mrs. King: No, not to mind, not-- it just so happened. No.

Interviewer: Mm. Mm-hmm. You mentioned earlier about, uh-

Mrs. King: No.

Interviewer: -young, uh, the-the-- what do you call them? The-the good porters and the union- the union providing a-a-an education for their young people. Can you, um, name some of the, uh, professional and business Blacks who came out of, uh, Brotherhood families?

Mrs. King: I would rather not name, there are families because people don't always want you to. They are well known in the community-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: -but I wonder if they want to, if they would want you to quote their name without their permission.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: I mean, everybody knows, um, the, uh, Lord Boy, he came out of there. From that-- our family whose father worked on the railroad, uh, his sister, Gwen Lord, who was the principal of Northbound High School and, uh, has done a tremendous job. He's in some-- he's in immigration. Um, I believe you have Ivan Livingston, professional. Um, that was from the thing, you have all kinds. You had Ivy Lawrence, you had Mr. Lawrence, who was a- was a CPR Porter. Who was, uh, the first Black lawyer you had. Um, she's not-- I don't know, whatever her married name. She believe-- I believe she lives in Toronto.

Interviewer: Yes, I visited her, yeah.

Mrs. King: Yeah-yeah. And then you had the Blackwood girl who lives in Toronto. Um, she-- her father, I don't know what, uh, you know, there are- there are many-many, um, others, but I don't think that, uh, you know, you can't quote people's names. They may not want to know-- people to know their beginnings unless you get permission.

Interviewer: That's not quite true though-though, because every Black person I'm-- Every once in a while I'll be writing, in fact I've cut a bunch out in my file.

Mrs. King: Yeah. And my father worked on the railroad and I got a degree. [laughs] I worked on the railroad and was a teacher. So, um--

Interviewer: What did you teach?

Mrs. King: Um, I taught for 20, uh, altogether it's 28 years, but 15 years at the Mackay School for Deaf and Crippled.

Interviewer: Oh, did you?

Mrs. King: Yes. And worked for the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal.

Interviewer: All right. What grade did you teach?

Mrs. King: Six-- First I-I started off with grade six and when I finished up, I was doing secondary five.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mrs. King: That's right.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: [laughs] So and I-

Interviewer: Alright.

Mrs. King: -when I, when I finished-- after I finished there, I was-- I've got a plaque downstairs that said I was the best teacher. [laughs] Best commercial teacher. So, um, so-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: -um, then-

Interviewer: When was this?

Mrs. King: -you know, and then we-- uh, oh, no, she didn't work on the railroad. Um, I mean, I don't know if, um, their father didn't. Um, you have lots of, you know, there are people, um, that you can, uh.

Interviewer: Right. Every once in a while I'd be reading the papers. So and so- so and so family father was a porter such as Oscar Peterson.

Mrs. King: No doubt.

Interviewer: But he won't appear in my- in my Porter's file, you know.

Mrs. King: Yeah, like that.

Interviewer: I've been doing this for years. Yeah.

Mrs. King: But port, uh, well, Oscar Peterson, I don't- I don't think he worked for the--

Interviewer: His father did.

Mrs. King: Uh, not for CPR though. I think he was CNR. Wasn't he?

Interviewer: No, he was CP, 'cause I knew him.

Mrs. King: Oh, was he? He was CP?

Interviewer: His brother too.

Mrs. King: Oh yeah. There-there you have. Well now Daisy is Dr- Dr. Sweeney. Um.

Interviewer: She's a doctor now?

Mrs. King: Yes.

Interviewer: Doctor of what?

Mrs. King: Eh.

Interviewer: Music.

Mrs. King: Music-music.

Interviewer: I didn't know she had a doctorate.

Mrs. King: There are lots of things you don't know, you have to keep in the- in the scene.

Interviewer: That's why I'm asking the questions.

[laughs]

Mrs. King: I mean, I'm telling you, she got it from Laurentian, uh, University this year.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mrs. King: [unintelligible 00:09:40]

Interviewer: That's why I'm asking questions. Not giving the answers. I didn't know that.

Mrs. King: But, um, I believe it was an honorary doctorate, I think, you know?

Interviewer: Oh yes. That's-- well, that's, uh--

Mrs. King: Uh, but she had to earn it to get it-

Interviewer: Earn it.

Mrs. King: -but she did have-- she had a degree anyway from McGill. So apart from that a music bachelor, whatever, some other degree, you know- you know.

Interviewer: Where-where'd she get the honorary from, McGill?

Mrs. King: Laurentian University.

Interviewer: Oh, Laurentian. Okay.

Mrs. King: Laurentian. I don't know where Laurentian, Laurentian's in Ontario, isn't it? I don't know where Laurentian is.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: I think it's Ontario.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. I see.

Mrs. King: 'Cause I read about it in the newspaper, they had a big write-up about it 'cause she's very well known.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. She's taught many outstanding pianists.

Mrs. King: Many outstanding.

Interviewer: Many, even Oliver Jones, she taught him.

Mrs. King: Yes, yes. That's right.

Interviewer: Oscar Peterson.

Mrs. King: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

Mrs. King: Oh, yeah, alright.

Interviewer: All right, um, the final question I believe will be, um, anything you want to say about the Brotherhood, but in particular I'd like to zero in on your assessment of the Brotherhood's contribution to the Canadian society in general and the Black communities in particular across Canada.

Mrs. King: Well, I think that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Port-Porters was, um, the greatest thing at the time for the Black population of Canada because the salaries were atrocious before the Brotherhood came in. Um, they earned under $100 a month in the salary sword, cause I know my father's salary was under $100 a month and the salary sword. So they had better, uh, better living, uh, capacity, you know. Their families were able to, uh, have a better education all around the whole con-- economic things. It made the, um, it were as if you were a young child and you suddenly put on your long pants you became men, uh, that made people respect you more. Even the railroad companies respected you because before they, uh, you know, they-they didn't dare call you anymore just Joe.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: Before they were call [sound cut] anything else.

Interviewer: Well, now it's working. Yes. All right.

Mrs. King: Yes. Once you had a union to represent you and to speak for you, they knew that they couldn't treat you as dirt.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: They then had someone to speak for you.

Interviewer: Right.

Mrs. King: Before that, they could do anything they want, they could fire you on the spot. There was no representation. And now you, uh, you-you definitely could not be taken advantage-- unfair advantage of you.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: Um--

Interviewer: All right. Nothing else you'd like to say?

Mrs. King: No, I think that, uh, happened to, um, the Black people in Montreal, it started a trend.

Interviewer: And then throughout-- not only Montreal or.

Mrs. King: In Montreal.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mrs. King: And throughout Canada.

Interviewer: Right.

Mrs. King: Because the Brotherhood was not just, uh, in Montreal, it was in Toronto and right across Canada.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. King: And--

Interviewer: All right. Thanks very much, uh, we appreciate the, uh, this opportunity to talk with you about the Brotherhood. Interview of, uh, Clyde Livingston Arthur of Montreal at his home on the 25th of November, uh, 1987 commencing at approximately, uh-

Clyde Livingston Arthur: 10:20.

Interviewer: -uh, 10:20 am. All right. What is your full name, please?

Clyde: My full name is Clyde Livingston Arthur.

Interviewer: All right. And you were born where sir?

Clyde: Barbados.

Interviewer: All right. What-what-what's your birth date?

Clyde: March the 4th, 1914.

Interviewer: Right. And you, uh, why did you come to Canada?

Clyde: Well, that's a good question. Uh--

Interviewer: Or when did you come to Canada?

Clyde: Oh, uh, May-- the 22nd of May, 1948.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. And what brought you here?

Clyde: Well, I met a friend in Barbados, uh, who decided I should- I should travel.

Interviewer: I see.

Clyde: A lady from the States. She-she wanted to go with me to the States.

Interviewer: I see.

Clyde: But she couldn't get me there so easily. So she asked me, "Do you have any relatives in Canada?" I said, "Yeah."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Clyde: I got a sister here, McGibbons from 7826.

Interviewer: McGibbons?

Clyde: Se, uh, uh, Seth Gibbons' wife. Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Yeah, I know her. And, uh, so you were attracted here for-- to come here because of a particular job or just because of-of opportunity in general?

Clyde: Opportunity in general, that's right?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. I see.

Clyde: Yeah.

Interviewer: And, uh, how old were you when you came here?

Clyde: 33.

Interviewer: I see. Did you get a job on arrival?

Clyde: The next day.

Interviewer: Did you, where?

Clyde: CPR.

Interviewer: Oh, Canadian Pacific Railway, right.

Clyde: That's right.

Interviewer: What day was that?

Clyde: The 25th of May 1948.

Interviewer: I see. What did-- kind of work did they hire you for?

Clyde: As a porter.

Interviewer: A sleeping car porter?

Clyde: A sleeping car porter. Yes.

Interviewer: I see. Mm-hmm. And how long were you a sleeping car porter?

Clyde: 31 years.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. All right. And uh, did you enjoy the job?

Clyde: I certainly did.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What runs did you hold?

Clyde: Various runs, Montreal and Winnipeg mostly. Montreal, Vancouver, and the out- the outset. Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy the job? Oh, I asked you that.

Clyde: I certainly did enjoy the job. Yes

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Clyde: There's nothing better than working with people.

Interviewer: Right. Um, did you become a member of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

Clyde: Uh, about a month after or so.

Interviewer: I see. Uh, it didn't take long to convince you to join, eh?

Clyde: No, I-I-I made a down payment, but, uh, it was $25 to join, eh-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Clyde: -I paid 5. But I then paid the balance in November.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. And, uh, who signed you up?

Clyde: M.D. Dash.

Interviewer: I see. And what were the monthly dues at that time?

Clyde: Uh, $3 a month, I think.

Interviewer: I see. Mm-hmm. Uh, do you think it was a good investment?

Clyde: I think it was, certainly.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Why would you say that?

Clyde: Well, it's a union, eh, and if- and if they came a long way from $3, uh, from the-the wage- the wage, at that time was 112 a month for 60 hours, uh, to work 40 hours.

Interviewer: Yeah. All right.

Clyde: Yeah. So I-I thought the union was pretty good.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Any other benefits you can think of?

Clyde: Well, all the benefits that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters fought for we got and I was quite happy with it. I-I just-- I think so. Sev-severance pay, and, uh, some like building thing, you know, the-the death insurance, all that thing, and the pay was quite good.

Interviewer: So Marcus Dash was the secretary-treasurer when you joined?

Clyde: That's right.

Interviewer: Who was the president when you joined?

Clyde: Oh, you got me there. The president, uh, oh, that has so many presidents, eh? But Marcus, it was Sam Lawrence. La-Lawrence.

Interviewer: Sandy Lawrence.

Clyde: Sandy Lawrence.

Interviewer: Oh yes. Mm-hmm.

Clyde: Yes.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Who were the other officers, do you remember the names of any other officers?

Clyde: The same George Farry there.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Clyde: And.

Interviewer: What-what position did he hold?

Clyde: I don't know. I can't remember off-off the bat. Pat-Patsy Wade. And there was a Doc, Doc what is his name now?

Interviewer: Bartholomew.

Clyde: Bartholomew.

Interviewer: Oh yes.

Clyde: David Clark.

Interviewer: They-they were officers, eh?

Clyde: Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Uh, did you attend meetings?

Clyde: Occasionally, when there was time. Excuse me.

Interviewer: Why didn't you attend more often?

Clyde: Well, I worked for the railroad, you know.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. So you were [crosstalk].

Clyde: In and out. Yeah.

Interviewer: I see. Was your wife active in the Auxiliary?

Clyde: No.

Interviewer: No? I see. How many children do you have?

Clyde: None.

Interviewer: None. Oh, I see. Um, as you look back, can you tell me who, uh, who were the people who held the union together, uh, I don't want you to repeat. The ones you've named already. Would you say they were?

Clyde: Well, Blanchette was one.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Clyde: Well, Dash was one, those two.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Clyde: Especially Blanchette.

Interviewer: Right. Any others?

Clyde: Oh, all them ship and the bit you know, Sandy Lawrence.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Clyde: And a guy you mentioned there that married Marshalls White's sister. Marshall.

Interviewer: Oh, Braxton.

Clyde: Braxton. George Braxton. Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. I forgot.

Clyde: Yes.

Interviewer: Right. Um, what about the Toronto division? Do have you any idea who the B-B-Brotherhood men who were-- worked to hold the Brotherhood together there?

Clyde: No. I don't know much about that. No.

Interviewer: You don't know.

Clyde: I don't know.

Interviewer: Do you know anything about any other divisions?

Clyde: No. I may know a guy from like Calgary and Vancouver, so, but, uh, I didn't.

Interviewer: Have you-- do you have any idea who the Ladies' Auxiliary workers [crosstalk].

Clyde: Here. Yes. Here in Montreal-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Clyde: -it was Marcus Dash's wife. And there was another lady there. I was just trying to recall her name now, her husband that-- was a good friend of mine. Oh, you got me there. She's- she's alive now. Uh.

Interviewer: Coward?

Clyde: Coward. That's correct.

Interviewer: Victor Coward?

Clyde: Victor Coward. Uh, yes.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. All right. Any others?

Clyde: I can't remember offhand.

Interviewer: Um, what did you think of the, um, practice of tipping, receiving tips? Did that bother you at all?

Clyde: It didn't bother me.

Interviewer: No?

Clyde: No. Oh, well, th-th-that the people can sit [crosstalk].

Interviewer: Well, it did bother you. [laughs]

Clyde: The people can- the people felt-felt-- uh, the passengers felt that, uh, porters were very low paid.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Clyde: So in each journe-journey we get a tip. Yes. The first tip I got was $7 for-for-- a-a gentleman gave me $7.

Interviewer: Traveling from where to where?

Clyde: From Halifax to Montreal.

Interviewer: What's the largest tip you ever received?

Clyde: Oh, uh.

Interviewer: Don't take too long your wife- your wife might hear you.

Clyde: No, she-she'll never hear, she's gone-- she's just gone to the store. [laughs] Um, sure, I would say I received $20.

Interviewer: I see. From where to where?

Clyde: Montreal to Winnipeg. More than that-- it was a- it was on-one-- It was a crew of people, of 10 engineers traveling.

Interviewer: Really? What kind of engineer, railway engineers?

Clyde: No, I don't know where-- they were engineers, bu-but I don't where.

Interviewer: I see.

Clyde: Mm.

Interviewer: Uh-huh, uh, there were some White porters. Did you work with any White porters?

Clyde: Yes, Fisher. He was a nice guy, and-a-a-and another porters guy that I can't recall his name. Oh dear, my name-- I'm very-- getting bad for names, but they were pretty good guys.

Interviewer: What was their attitude toward-towards the-the union, since it was a Black led-led union?

Clyde: Well, uh, uh, I-I wasn't around if they said anything disrespectful to the union. They paid their dues.

Interviewer: They were supportive of it?

Clyde: Yes.

Interviewer: That's what I'm getting at.

Clyde: Yes.

Interviewer: I see. Um, I'm looking to add some, uh, all right. The Brotherhoods-- did you think that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters can be criticized or faulted for the failure of Black porters to be promoted-- to have been promoted to conductors?

Clyde: Yeah. They didn't work that, no. They-they-they never did that. The-the-- that started with the CNR, I think.

Interviewer: No, but what I mean, can-can the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, should they be criticized for not having been able to negotiate that?

Clyde: Well, probably they couldn't see that far. Uh, no, everything takes time, I don't know that they were ready for that yet. I think we have a spot right there of that, but they work when the, uh, that's my faul-- I'm- I'm bad at naming-- remembering names. I don't know if the-the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters assisted the porters to be promoted. I don't know.

Interviewer: Well, I was involved in that.

Clyde: Yeah.

Interviewer: I was helping to push it.

Clyde: From Toronto's side. Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: Um, do you know any interesting stories you can tell me, uh, of-of a humorous vein, of things that happened to you on the railroad? Anything?

Clyde: Oh, yes. I was a steward in those days working the bar, and the old lady--

Interviewer: You were a what?

Clyde: I was a steward.

Interviewer: Steward. Oh, yes. On which car?

Clyde: The park car.

Interviewer: Where was it? The rear-end car, right?

Clyde: Yes. And she called for a drink. This drink contained angostura bitters.

Interviewer: Bi-bitters?

Clyde: Uh, this drink, uh, recipe called angostura bitters. So she's an old lady and I figure she would sit between 70 years old. So you-you-you-- I made the drink and gave a dash of bitters, eh, and the car fly up, flew-- flat-- fell out. And a lot of bitters went in the drink, but in those days, I didn't know that I could have a deduction for that drink. You know, it was charged to me, you see? So I said to myself, "Oh, she's old. She's no longer taking bitters, eh. So I serve her the drink. So she's tasted it. She says, "George, do you have any more bitters?" I say, "Yes, ma'am." I said, "I thought you put it all in here." [laughs] That was funny. [laughs]

Interviewer: Did she- did she drink it?

Clyde: She-- yeah.

Interviewer: The drink?

Clyde: Yeah.

Interviewer: How much bitters then, half a bottle?

Clyde: No. A little bit of teaspoon, but that's quite a lot, you know?

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Clyde: Mm.

Interviewer: Yeah, it is. Well, they found a man come up there, people dead in Toronto drinking that stuff, you know.

Clyde: Yeah. Are you serious?

Interviewer: Oh yeah. The last year. Yeah.

Clyde: It was ver-- it's good you talk to the doctor. It's a Trinidad-- It's from Trinidad.

Interviewer: Is it?

Clyde: Yeah, man. Trinidad. [**Unintelligible**]

Interviewer: Do you know any-- any nicknames of porters? Porters were great at giving each-- one another nicknames. And I was wondering if you could think of any nicknames other than Legs Arthur.

Clyde: Well, that was given to me in Barbados.

Interviewer: Oh, is that so?

Clyde: Yeah.

Interviewer: Why'd they call you Legs?

Clyde: Well, I-I went to work- went to work when I was 14 for a White man named Gibbs. He had a so- he had a son named Arthur. So he asked me, "What's your name?" I said, "Arthur." He says, "You're Legs, we're gonna call your Legs." And it stuck, my school friends started to call your Legs.

Interviewer: Because you have long legs?

Clyde: That's right. And, uh, short pants, you see?

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Clyde: In those days.

Interviewer: Were you a good trackman?

Clyde: No, I never-- I didn't- I didn't do all sports, no. [laughs]

Interviewer: But-but is there any porters that you-- who have nicknames that you- that you can recall?

Clyde: Not that I could say, uh.

Interviewer: Was Chicago Thompson **[inaudible 00:25:15]**

Clyde: Yeah. Well, eh, if they were, uh, but he was, uh, mo-most senior to-- for me, senior to me. Well, I can't remember on it anyway.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. How would you evaluate the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, uh, summarizing? You think that they contributed to the uplifting of Black people?

Clyde: Very much so. Very much so. Yes. I should say that. Yes, they did qu-quite a lot. The conventions here with Philip Randolph, he came- he came and made some beautiful speeches as you know, eh? And, uh, and Blanchette was the man responsible for the dignity, as far as I'm concerned, for Sleeping Car Porters. He made us proud of ourselves. Oh yeah, Blanchette. And this was in this division here.

Interviewer: Right. All right. Uh, I don't think I have any more questions to ask unless you wanna make a concluding statement about the union. I don't have any more questions.

Clyde: Well, I believed in the union because I was against fellows who didn't- who didn't pay the union dues.

Interviewer: Right.

Clyde: So I was glad when they make the checkoff dues.

Interviewer: Right.

Clyde: The scabs would have to pay.

Interviewer: Right.

Clyde: But was the only thing why I objected to the red dues- the red dues usually too quickly from a 3 it went- it went to 16 in no time. They gave them, uh, we gave them- gave them the power to deduct dues, but we didn't feel-- I didn't feel too comfortable where the-the-the-the speed and travel of taking the dues out, a bunch of those already.

Interviewer: Do you know, uh, of any professional or Black people, uh, porters or children of porters who, uh, used to say the union was-was responsible for them moving up in society?

Clyde: Yes. Like Gibbons-Gibbons, my-my sister's husband was named Gibbons. She has three children, two boys, and a girl. And they're-- well, one's a-- both are accountants.

Interviewer: Accountants, right.

Clyde: Yeah. Yeah. But I-- let me tell you something, a sleeping car porter job is as good as any, in my estimation, it isn't what you do. It's what you do with what you get.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Clyde: Uh-huh. Oh, yes.

Interviewer: Well, I'm sure that's philosophy. [laughs] All right. Thanks very much, uh-

Clyde: Yeah. Is that all, uh?

Interviewer: -for the interview-interview with Clyde.

Clyde: Yeah.

Interviewer: And, uh, as I say to others, uh, everybody can contribute and you've contributed. Geor-George Forray on the 25th of November 87 at his home, uh, commencing about, uh, 20 minutes before 1:00 PM. Uh, your full name please? Uh, George.

George Forray: George W. Forray.

Interviewer: Right. And, uh, where were you born?

George: Born in Montreal.

Interviewer: And what date?

George: Oh, born back in, uh, uh, 1911.

Interviewer: And, uh, where were your parents born?

George: Uh, well, the parents now, let me see, uh, there, that's going quite a ways back now. Well, my father was a man born in Grenada.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. And your mother?

George: And my mother was a Caribbean from Guadalupe.

Interviewer: I see. And, uh, you went to school in Montreal?

George: Oh, yes, yes. Yes.

Interviewer: Right. And, uh, what was your first job?

George: Oh, my goodness sakes. Any job that I could really refer to. I remember, no, I can go back to one of my youths in my school days. There was old colored gentleman here in Montreal, umpteen years ago, he had a tailor shop. He was a valet service sort of.

Interviewer: Right.

George: And he was about one of the original Black men in Montreal then. He was down in the Chinese and Jewish district.

Interviewer: Yeah.

George: In Chinatown more or less. That's where his shop was located on Vitré Street.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

George: And that's right down there on the corner, almost down the corner of Vitré and the Main. And, uh, I went down there and I learned quite a bit from him. I recall as a young fellow there, that's when I learned how to make pant cuffs. That was one of the things he taught me.

Interviewer: When did you start this, uh, on the road?

George: Oh, I started back in 1937.

Interviewer: With Sleeping Car Porters?

George: Yes.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

George: Yes. I was at the time-- At that time, I was going down to school there. I had enrolled at Mount Allison University then. And, uh, during the summer months I happened to be coming through. And, uh, I was taking the train to come back on my holidays there, my summer vacation, the breaks.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: And, uh, I was approached by the superintendent down there who was a Mr. Eid.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: And, uh, he asked me if I would like to work back for the CPR. That's how I got involved with the railroad in a sense.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: And I was just a young chap then, about 19 years old, I think I was then. And, uh, I, um, hey, I said, "Why, surely?" And I took the ride and I took-- well, I was riding up on the train anyhow. And he asked me to-- it was during their rushes or one of their, I don't know what it was a peak period of the month. And they put an extra car on the-- at the-- on the train at St. John. They had nobody to work it. So me being a Black boy. So he asked me where to-- gave me a white coat. And I worked in my own clothes. Just put a white coat on me and told me, go ahead, you work the car back. And he got some of the other older fellas on the train to help me make it-- make the beds, and, uh, came into Montreal. And that's how I got en-e-e-enrolled on the CPR more or less.

Interviewer: Came into Montreal from where?

George: St. John, New Brunswick. Yeah.

Interviewer: That was your first trip?

George: That was my first trip on there.

Interviewer: What were you doing in St. John, New Brunswick?

George: Well, I was on my way back to Montreal, as I said, from my school break.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

George: You see, I was studying in a university down there then-

Interviewer: Mm. Mm-hmm.

George: -and, uh, this was my school break and that's how I got on there.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. So why did you agree to-to-to take-take the job? Did it-it sound good to you?

George: Well, he said he's gonna pay me. And this was Depression years and a dollar was a dollar in them days. So I said, well, instead of me paying my way up on the train, I'm gonna get a free ride back and then I'm gonna be paid for it. That's the way I look at it.

Interviewer: Did you, uh, how long did you work as a Sleeping Car Porter? How many years?

George: Oh, I would say totally I averaged 40 years.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy the job?

George: Well, I found it quite an education. I found it an education which I couldn't have got at no university. An education in, uh, all the, uh, practically that we can say the facts of life all through and something I couldn't have bought or earned or been taught, except when I went experienced it myself.

Interviewer: Mm

George: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Did you, uh, uh, was there a porters's organization-- uh, a porter representing the organ- the-- an organization representing the porters at that time, kind of unto a union?

George: Well, uh, it was something like that. They had a sort of a Porters'-Porters', uh, Grievance Committee. They used to call it something along that line.

Interviewer: Wasn't it the porters' welfare committee?

George: Well, that's what it is. Yes. Welfare Committee, the-- yes. That's what it was. And it was just some of the older porters in the service, like a Mr. Russell, who was one of the main and, uh, main ones involved, they're deceased also. And he was one of the leading representatives of that Welfare Committee. There was also a Mr. Huggins, I believe who was involved in that. And, uh, let me think back now, Huggins, Russell, uh, golly, I don't know, the names just don't come back to me now. I can see the faces, but the names aren't coming back too sharply.

Interviewer: Were those persons that you have named on this-- Who were members of this welfare committee, were they elected or appointed?

George: Well, I'll tell you the truth, I don't really know how they got to be there, but I found them there. So whether they were elected or what, I don't know, because I wasn't there that long then. I was more or less a rookie in the service when I found out about them.

Interviewer: But that Welfare Committee continued for a number of years after you worked.

George: Uh, i-i-in a sense, yes, because you see though I went-- made that trip. You see, I didn't actually become a regular porter on the roster of porters with the CPR, because this was just more or less like a summer-time job.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. So when did you become a permanent Porter?

George: Well, not till the war declared.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

George: And then due to the shortage of staff and men, and, uh, I was able, you see, because then you had to work steadily for six months before you could become a permanent member-

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: -a permanent, uh, porter on the roster.

Interviewer: So what year did you start to work on the- on the road? What time-- what year did you become available full-time?

George: Oh, well, uh, I became a full-time member on the seniority list, as we will say, I made the seniority list in 19, oh, late 39, 40.

Interviewer: I see.

George: Going into '40. All that time prior to that, I was just more or less a part-time man, which was hired on for the summer months, we'd say.

Interviewer: When did you go to school?

George: Uh, just about that time. Just about that time. Yes.

Interviewer: You paid dues into this Welfare Committee?

George: No, I didn't pay any dues at that time. No. Mm-mm. Mm-mm.

Interviewer: Now, uh, tell us about the, um, how the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters came on the scene.

George: Oh, well now, when the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters came in, everything was so hush, hush. Actually, nobody knew what was being transpired, excepting like the men who was on this Welfare Committee, because they were the ones that were approached naturally by the BSCP. The BSCP sent their scouts here beforehand and, uh, they were the ones who canvased the different members and the welfare group at the time was more or less the voice, we'd say, of the porters. And, uh, although half the porters I imagine weren't even aware of this thing going on.

Interviewer: Okay.

George: But the ones who were involved, everything was very hush hush because of the fear of, uh, what we'd say reverberations on the part of the company. And, uh, at that time, unions was not recognized in Canada, per se. And, uh, it was more or less during-- after the-- well, when the war got going in full swing, then the different laws were enacted by the government and, uh, made it where it was, uh, uh, it had to be accepted by the various large organizations that employed over and above a certain number of employees. So they couldn't actually turn them down, but there was a lot of reverberations besides a lot of, uh, backlash we could say from that.

Interviewer: Right.

George: And, uh, so the men had to be careful because they had nobody to protect them. The welfare group was there, but, uh, they couldn't actually help a brother if he was in dire probleMrs. with the company.

Interviewer: Right.

George: They could only intercede in minor cases. You know, it's just to say, like, you have a representative, somebody speaking for you, to back you up because the men in those days, you must remember, they were very timid. They were very timid and bulldozed by the company. And all men were treated like little boys by whoever that was White and

represented, uh, the company. I mean, they could bulldoze a-a porter 'cause you were just part of the-the, uh, equipment. That's what they used to call us, part of the equipment. As long as the cars rolled, we rolled. No rights.

Interviewer: Was there much intimidation against the-- by the company against this union activity?

George: Uh, yes, there was some intimidation, but yet they couldn't come out with it out and out because I recall when Dash, Marcus Dash was going around trying to, uh, well, I would say practically use the same words, intimidate the men into joining this Brotherhood. And, uh, of course, there was secret meetings held, uh, at different places. And, uh, even we as porters, couldn't-- we weren't even allowed to know what was going on because there was always a fear of somebody blabbing or talking outta side of the mouth.

So therefore what they used to do, then they used to have their meetings. And then Dash was one of the forerunners in this thing. I gotta give that man credit. He really worked and, uh, tried to get the men buffaloed into this thing, you know, to join. And, uh, I don't recall what the joining fee then I think it, well, I don't recall what the price was. It's quite a ways back now and I don't remember those things really off and on, but, uh, there was a slight joining fee, but as we say in those days, a dollar was a dollar. So, I mean, before you put out a dollar on something like that, you kind of thought twice because I mean that dollar could go towards your family.

And, uh, we didn't put out money that easily in those days. And you know, in those days, the salary prior to the war like that in those Depression years was $75 a month. That's what we worked for. So we-we more or less existed on tips, but, uh, still $75 in those days were $75 and it went a long way. It guaranteed your rent, it guaranteed your light bill, and it guaranteed you something to eat. And I-I would say, I would hazard to say really that the average railroad porter who was holding a steady run and working steadily was well off in those days compared to the average man on the street. Oh yes. And, uh, I don't think any porter ever suffered when he worked on the railroad-- railway, as long as he was really interested in his job. And of course, I don't want to say that, uh, he didn't suffer. I should say I was talking about, uh, financially, but, uh, he suffered because if he endured, he had to have the stamina and the guts to be able to take all the different, uh, uh-- well, today we'd call them insults. And in fact, if this thing existed in this day and age, I mean, the CPR would be up in court all the time.

Interviewer: Mm. Mm-hmm. Who were the chief organizers of the brotherhood in-in-in Montreal? Do you remember?

George: In Montreal? Well, we had the old men that was very dedicated, such as, uh, uh, Dash, to begin with, and, uh, SR Lewis, another very dedicated man. And, uh, we had a man by the name of Sandy Lawrence. Sandy was a nickname of course, and, uh, Sandy Lawrence. And, uh, I can- I can recall, I mean, dedicated men who really backed it up. Oh, we had Harry Dyer. We had, uh, let me see, uh, fan, you know, over the years, you know, the names get away from me. I can see the men, but I can't recall the names right off the bat. But, uh, we had quite a few dedicated men in those days.

Interviewer: Do you recall who the organizers of the union were in Toronto?

George: In Toronto now? Well, oh, I know a lot of the names, but my golly to try and think of the names. I remember men in Toronto, such as, uh, Gairey, Harry Gairey, and, uh, there was another, a man there who used to be quite around quite often there. He was in the insurance business. I can't call his name now. If I hear it I'll know it.

Interviewer: Oh.

George: Uh, he was in the insurance business at the time. 'Cause he used to-- he traveled between Toronto and Montreal and he used to sell insurance to the men. Uh, sickness, insurance and the likes, I-I forget what they used to call that.

Interviewer: Garraway you mean?

George: Garraway, Percy Garraway that's one of the fellas. Yes. And, uh, and what the devil was the name of that insurance company he represented?

Interviewer: The Travelers.

George: Travelers is right. That's it. That's it, Travelers. Yeah. Yeah. We used to get policies there.

Interviewer: He was- he was selling these-these--

George: Yes. Selling these insurance. [crosstalk] Not to the brotherhood of the union to individual porters that he met.

Interviewer: I asked you who are the organizers of-of the union in Toronto and you named him.

George: Well, I figured he was in there talking. No, well, he wasn't more or less an organizer of the Brotherhood. He was selling insurance, but he was a porter also, I believe. I think he did some portering there.

Interviewer: My question is who were the union organizers in Toronto?

George: Oh, well, organizers. Well then no-- he just came to me like that. When we were talking, I just got-- well, he was not an organizer per se. No. No, he had nothing to do with the BSCP-

Interviewer: Oh, oh.

George: -no, but it is just-- his name happened to come up and I saw him right there in a flash. No, he was not an organizer. Let me see who else I can think of there. Oh, gee whiz, it's so hard to remember names now?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: Uh--

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

George: Uh, gee whiz is it that I can't think of names offhand in Toronto. Otherwise I--

Interviewer: How about organizers of the union out west? Do you know anybody in Winnipeg, Calgary, and Vancouver who were organizing?

George: Oh, in Winnipeg, I knew one man there. That was, uh, chap-- What was his name now? Well, he represented the company, but he also didn't discourage the men from joining the Brotherhood. Well, of course, Arthur Blanchette was one of the real organizers. The founders out in Winnipeg. And besides him, I can offhandedly say there was another chap there by the name of Blackman. He represented the porters in a sense. He was their supervisor there in Winnipeg. He was one of the first, uh, uh, Black men, I believe, that the CPR had as a, uh, company representative.

Interviewer: Was he a porter instructor?

George: Yes, that's right. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Oh, I see.

George: Yeah.

Interviewer: But he was encouraging the porters to join?

George: Well, he encouraged in a sense. He told 'em if they knew what was good for them, they might as well join because this thing was good.

Interviewer: Yeah.

George: Yeah. And then we had men also that, uh-- well referring back to the Montreal men, I recall this, myself that, uh, the organizers that came to Montreal, they tried to get the men on the CNR to join the Brotherhood.

Interviewer: Yeah.

George: And, uh, I don't know, the CNR men just couldn't see the light, or whoever represented them, discouraged them from becoming members of the BSCP. Because I believe that was the initial thought of the BSCP, to get all the Black porters on the railways in Canada, in Montreal, anyhow, to become members of the BSCP.

Interviewer: Right.

George: And had that occurred, I believe it would have been quite, uh, quite a-a, um, an organization-

Interviewer: Right.

George: -to contend with. But, uh, I don't know, the men over on the CNR were of a different caliber.

Interviewer: Right.

George: They didn't see things the way that they was trying to show it. And, uh, furthermore, they-they received little grants from the CNR when they were working that we didn't have on the CP.

Interviewer: Right, I see.

George: You see, they used to get free meals to begin with. So that was one of the things they looked at. And most of them paid for a half rate for their uniforMrs.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: And so they all thought these were little gratuities in a sense that, uh, they didn't want to give up. And then besides that, they listened to word of mouth from the, well, what you'd call the-the breaker uppers of the union that was around. But they couldn't see no further. They couldn't see the benefits. But where I'm concerned, I think the Brotherhood made men out of the CPR men.

Interviewer: Mm. Mm-hmm.

George: And I mean, it, uh, gained them recogni--

[sound cut]

[pause 00:47:00]

[00:49:49] [END OF AUDIO]