Interviewer: Continuation of interview with George Forray. Yes. Now we're ta-- we're talking about the organizers of the west.

George Farri: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: [crosstalk] with that, are you?

George: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: You can't think of any other organizers?

George: Offhand, no.

Interviewer: All right. Now, um, you've touched on this already but, uh, perhaps you-you can elaborate on further on what improvements the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters made for, uh, the porters.

George: Well, basically this I must say the Brotherhood, when it became recognized and acknowledged by the CPR, it was a complete turn about in the system, because all of their so-called scouts that they had and the inspectors and conductors and whatnot on the trains were a little more careful in their approach to the porter.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: They didn't come along and bulldoze you like you were just a part of the chattel. I mean, and, uh, because in those days, I mean, I've seen it and it used to disgust me no end to see a porter of 30, well, 25 years service on up on the train, doing his chores in his u-usual manner. And then the company used to hire these White fellows who were students, didn't know nothing, which I know I had the same experience, and had to teach them how to pick up a ticket, a transportation ticket, teach them how to write out the reports. And they-- because they wore the blue uniform with the brass buttons, they would come along and actually bulldoze, uh, an old timer I would call and, uh, make him feel like a little boy.

Interviewer: Are you suggesting the porters-- the Black porters, uh, knew how to cut the tickets-- ho to cut the tickets [crosstalk]?

George: Oh, certainly they learned this because, uh, some of them had to have the experience by running in charge.

Interviewer: In charge.

George: And they were used by the company on various occasions.

Interviewer: What is running in charge mean?

George: Well, running in charge, you're doing the same duties as a-- and they gave us, of course, uh, a-an additional, in the salary. Well, I mean, it was flags compared to what the actual conductor made, and it was, uh, an increase in our monthly check for doing this in-charge work. But we were issued the same equipment as a conductor was issued. We had the punch, we had the rat trap, which was-was a name we used for the cash fair receipts

things, which we had to issue out to passengers when we sold sleeping car space or parlor car space, or, uh, whatever.

Interviewer: When did the porters become, uh, an in-charge porter? Uh, how many cars would you-- would be your, uh, uh, would you be in charge [crosstalk]?

George: Well, he-- anytime there was over two cars. Oh, yes, he was running in charge, but he was running in charge of his own personal car. It depended on the run he was on.

Interviewer: I thought- I thought they put a conductor on it after more than two cars.

George: Well, more than two cars they did. But as I say, it depended if there was a conductor available, you see. If there was no conductor available, then the porter assumed that, the senior porter on the train, you see, and sometimes, uh, it might have been a run where there was no conductor assigned to it at all. This was a just a strictly in-charge run they called it.

Interviewer: Oh, no, let's leave that for a moment. I think-

George: I see.

Interviewer: -you've covered that adequately.

George: I see.

Interviewer: Any other conditions, uh, improved or--?

George: Well, yes, the active general attitude of the staff concerning the porter.

Interviewer: Okay. You've covered that up.

George: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Right. Now, um, what, uh, good do you think the Welfare Committee served?

George: Well, in my time, I didn't see wherein it did much good as far as I could see. I was a young fellow then and I didn't have it to heart as seriously as the old timers did, maybe they saw it better than I did.

Interviewer: Right.

George: They had a different outlook.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What did you think of the, uh, practice of tipping?

George: What did I think of the practice?

Interviewer: Did it offend you in any way or did you like receiving tips or--?

George: Oh, I wouldn't say it was offensive. I thought, well-- in my estimation at the time, I thought, well, it encouraged the porter to bend over backwards, especially depending on

the person involved, like everything else. I guess this comes right down to today. Sometimes you put your best foot forward and do your utmost to please a passenger or whatever, which was part of the job, of course. But sometimes you bent over backwards and did little extras. So naturally you-- it was an encouragement in order to do good.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. So, uh, do you know of-of a porter, a former porter by name of Charles Baldwin, Charlie Baldwin, out of Toronto?

George: Uh, the name rings a bell faintly. Yes, but I don't-- Is there anything particular that associated his name with any special?

Interviewer: Well, the re-- the reason I'm asking is because I-I've heard it said that he was one of the key organizers of the union.

George: In Toronto?

Interviewer: In-in Toronto, yes.

George: Well, that's a possibility. I wouldn't be able to say because, you see at the time, I wasn't down into Toronto or around Toronto that much.

Interviewer: Right.

George: So I wouldn't be able to say.

Interviewer: All right.

George: But the name rings a bell.

Interviewer: Now what about the, uh, Ladies' Auxiliary? The Brotherhood had a Ladies' Auxiliary.

George: Oh, yes, yes.

Interviewer: Did you have any relatives served in that **[inaudible 00:06:06]**?

George: Uh, let me see. Yes, I have a sister-in-law who was in there because--

Interviewer: Who's that?

George: Uh, she's a Mrs. Forray also. She was my brother's wife.

Interviewer: Oh.

George: And she, uh, served in the Ladies' Auxiliary because my brother, he worked, uh, quite a few years. I mean, this is since the war, after his return, he was a veteran. And when he came back, he went to work for the Pullman Company that's before the Pullman Company became extinct.

Interviewer: All right.

George: And you see the Pullman company, they had this Ladies' Auxiliary which was running very, very strong. And, uh, in fact that made them somewhat superior to all porters in the system, Pullman men.

Interviewer: Yeah.

George: You see.

Interviewer: All right. So what, uh--

George: And she worked as a-- she was one of the daughters of the Ladies' Auxiliary.

Interviewer: Do you think having a Ladies' Auxiliary was a good idea, did any good?

George: Well, for what I can see of it I mean, maybe individually, the men whose wives were involved possibly it would make a change in their attitude, I suppose, because they would be more in contact with it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: But like me as my wife was not involved in that and, uh, as far as I could see, the Ladies' Auxiliary was just another-- Although of course, they did do some good things. They used to hold teas and dances and social events, roundabout town, you know, and they gathered funds all in the name of the BSCP of course, Ladies' Auxiliary of the BSCP and-

Interviewer: All right.

George: -they kept them going.

Interviewer: Uh, the Brotherhood, uh, there were some White porters working on the railroad winter.

George: Oh yes. This came about, uh, I would say midway through the war and after the war years, they are-- quite a few of them tried to get on there. They got involved with the CPR and some of them who was in even that were hired in the dining car department. And when they saw that the porters was doing so well and they could work steadier as a porter, so a lot of them became interested and was-- and did get on the job as porters.

Interviewer: Were they good supporters of the union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

George: Well, I'll tell you, there was one thing with the union in those days, we didn't canvas them too steadily because it was a new innovation, we'd say.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

George: And, uh, as such, we didn't know how long this thing was going to last. So I would say practically, it was somewhat like the Jim Crow situation in reverse. We didn't encourage them to join.

Interviewer: [chuckles] But once the-- oh, look, we're after-- we got past the hurdle where-where they-they did join, I assume some did join?

George: Well. Uh, yes. Yes. Oh, yes. In fact, when we saw they was on there for a year or more-

Interviewer: Yeah.

George: -uh, well, naturally we went after their money too, just like we did any other porter.

Interviewer: Did they- did they show any antipathy a-a-against the union because it was Black leadership?

George: No, I don't think they thought that far. No.

Interviewer: All right. Um, when were an officer of the Brotherhood…

George: Yes.

Interviewer: What offices did you hold?

George: Uh, secretary-treasurer of the Montreal local.

Interviewer: Went from when to when?

George: Oh my gosh. Now to tell you the truth, I do know that, uh-- I don't remember. I started in the la-- I was elected in the late '60s.

Interviewer: In what position?

George: To su-- post of secretary-treasurer. Yes. Well, I had my choice at the time. I was nominated for the presidency and the secretary-treasurer.

Interviewer: [unintelligible 00:09:50]?

George: Oh, Dash in the meantime had gone on to other things.

Interviewer: Oh, he was a field organizer.

George: Yes, yes, yes.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. All right.

George: Yes. Yeah, because we'd had various ones holding the post in between.

Interviewer: So-so who was your secretary-treasurer after you were secretary-treasurer?

George: Uh, none. I was the last- the last secretary-trea-- I was there from the late '60s until, well, when I retired in '77.

Interviewer: All right. Mm-hmm. Any-- did you hold any other office?

George: Oh, yes. I was a member of the Entertainment Committee. We had an Entertainment Committee. We used to organize dances and socials and the likes.

Interviewer: How did you entertain?

George: Uh, by holding dances.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. You didn't do entertaining yourself?

George: No, no, no, no. I wasn't…

Interviewer: You're a tap dancer.

George: No, no, I wasn't. No, not quite. I didn't quite make that field. No, not exactly. No.

Interviewer: I see. Okay. All right. So, uh, did you enjoy your relationship with the Brotherhood?

George: Oh, I thought it very-- I thought very highly of it and very much of it. And, uh, I truthfully can say that, uh, I had the wholehearted support and backing of, uh, brother, uh, Blanchette, because he thought highly of me anyhow. And the two of us got along famously. And many of the afternoons, I used to go up to his office and we'd sit down and chitchat, particularly from his, uh, his, uh, island of birth wherein I was familiar with the place. I mean he had a lot of friends and relatives and family there who I had met. So whenever I used to visit--

Interviewer: What island is that?

George: Uh, the Island of Saint Kitts.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

George: Yeah. So as I had a lot of friends there too, I used to visit very often. So every time I came back, I used to bring some homeward, uh, home titbits to him.

Interviewer: Right.

George: And he enjoyed that. We used to sit and, in fact, I used to go to his home and so forth. After our meetings, I would drive him home and we'd have a lot of little, uh, familiar chitchats together on that basis.

Interviewer: What did you think of his leadership?

George: Oh, I thought he was very, very good until the later years, of course, in his, uh, shall we say, closing years which is something that I imagine we all have to go through and that is when the brain begins to slow down.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: It's like a car that has been neglected. And then, after a few years, then it starts to require a lot of servicing and, uh, you start out, but you never know if you're gonna make the end of the line.

Interviewer: No, but, um, assessing his leadership though.

George: Oh, but his leadership during the years was extraordinary, extraordinary. He took a man of his character that traveled and went about and took a lot of, uh, uh-- how shall I put it now? He took a lot of, uh, slaps, I would say, from the International also.

Interviewer: But you're suggesting as you said by your former remarks that he-he's-he became ill, uh, in the latter stages of his--

George: Yes, yes, yes. Very forgetful, became very forgetful and couldn't actually-- and his speech was blurred, and he couldn't expound or as he used to do, and it was very noticeable of course.

Interviewer: How about the leadership that the Randolph provided? He used **[inaudible 00:13:17]**

George: Well, uh, the only thing I can say about Randolph's leadership, I gotta go along with it because he'd been in the thing for God knows how long, before he came to Canada.

Interviewer: Right.

George: So naturally, I had the occasion to meet him personally. And, uh, I would say the man was, uh, really-really a personage.

Interviewer: Right.

George: If you met him, I mean, you couldn't forget him.

Interviewer: Right.

George: And, uh--

Interviewer: How about Bennie Smith?

George: Bennie Smith somewhat the same, but he didn't impress me as much as, uh, the chief.

Interviewer: Right.

George: Oh no.

Interviewer: Um, would you, uh, tell me-- would you think that the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters, uh, could be-- should be criticized for the failure of porters to be promoted to conductors, sleeping car conductor positions?

George: If they could be criticized? For not, uh-- I don't get your question exactly now, how you mean.

Interviewer: Should the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters be faulted because there was no provision in the contract for promoting conductors-- uh, porters to conductor position?

George: Well--

Interviewer: What are your kinds of views on this?

George: Oh, I see. Well, I don't know. It all depends on how an individual looks at this thing. I mean, there wasn't no provisions for that in the charter or the constitution of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. To my knowledge, it never existed. So, I mean, unless there was a provision for that and they lacked or failed to carry it through, then I would say they should be faulted, but I can't see wherein they should be faulted. But one thing I will say for them is they really encouraged the porter to be a porter and to be outstanding in what he did no matter how menial his task. And, uh, that's one thing they encourage you to gain respect for yourself and your position. And in there at that-- in that point there, I will say they were very, uh, I mean, very-very-very-- how can I put it? Well, they were very exuberant in their, uh, speeches and meetings, and it was always really impressed and forced upon you to remember that.

Interviewer: All right. Now, uh, coming through the **[unintelligible 00:15:59]** I was wondering if you think that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters contributed, uh, in any way to the public community or to the Black community?

George: Immeasurably, immeasurably, because one thing I will say for the Brotherhood, and I would say that might be the demise of the porters' position today because it encouraged a raise in salary and living conditions for the Black man. And it made his life much more livable and enjoyable than what it was in the Depression years and prior.

Interviewer: I'm talking about how did this affect the total people, outside the porter family. Did the porter union was recognized as a leader in the total Black and White community, you know, getting away from the--?

George: Well, I don't know how the White community would look at it, but I was-- I would say, in the entourage of a porter, shall we say his immediate neighbors and so forth, if they were White, it had no meaning to them because they didn't know what it would've consisted or what was about except when they fraternize. If they fraternize, they went to our advances, social affairs and so forth. Well then, the-the outstanding word was always the Brotherhood. And when the Brotherhood organized an affair, it really was attended by all and sundry because it was recognized and, uh, I would say it definitely enhanced. It definitely enhanced the-the-the Black communities, it's got to.

Interviewer: The Brotherhood, uh, was it responsible for-for giving-- adding strength to any other organizations in the city?

George: Well, to tell you the truth, I couldn't answer that outright because I'm not [crosstalk]--

Interviewer: What I had in mind- what I had in mind is the fact that the porters' wages were increased, was he able to support other organizations better, if it's the lodges or any other organizations?

George: Oh, I have no doubt about that. I-I would say yes. I would say yes, because it put him in a better position, financially and otherwise. And so, I mean, apart from, uh, the time, maybe he could not contribute time because, as you know, a porter, you know, he had only a limited time in town, of course, until things got better, but he was in and out all the time. So I don't see how he could contribute or know a lot-- a whole lot to other organizations, except financially and, uh, when he was available.

Interviewer: Have you any really interesting anecdotes or humorous, uh, or experiences you had as a- as a porter you'd like to-to relate?

George: Well--

Interviewer: Or was it all dull? [chuckles]

George: Well, no, I can't say that being a porter was a dull- was a dull adventure. No way because, uh, all those [crosstalk]--

Interviewer: Can you tell me a story, an anecdotal, a humorous experience?

George: No, I guess I can say there was quite a few, but I mean to actually pinpoint one offhandedly now, I mean, I'm not prepared and I hadn't given much thought to it since the years I've been away from it. I guess these things get away from us all.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, tell me, can you think of any professional or a Black business, uh, business people who came out of porter, of Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter families? I've already said that-- for instance, Oscar Peterson was the son of a porter [crosstalk]--

George: Oh, yes. I see what you mean. Yes, yes. Yes, Oscar Peterson was the son of, uh-- in fact, I worked with his father. I knew his father personally. Yes.

Interviewer: Any other famous or [crosstalk]--

George: Well, we--

Interviewer: [inaudible 00:19:49] people come out the porter family?

George: Well, yes. Uh, the family of Mr. Lord, Bobby Lord. He has a son who was quite a man. He was quite a held quite an official position here with the Expo Board of Governors here.

Interviewer: I met him the other day.

George: Yes. Uh, it was Bobby Lord Jr. Yes. And he-he's quite a successful young man.

Interviewer: [unintelligible 00:20:13] man.

George: Yes, likewise. He's been involved in that also. Yes, he's held various positions. He's been-- actually, he was also the leader of the Liberal Young People's Party. I think they call it the Young, the Young Liberals-

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

George: -in Quebec here.

Interviewer: I see. Any other--

George: He was their spokesman. Oh yes. And, uh--

Interviewer: Anyone else?

George: Uh, well, uh, another one was, uh, another man was, let me see, Grant. We had a Mr. Grant from Verdun. His son became quite, uh, an electrical contractor per se.

Interviewer: Yeah.

George: He was one. I would say that was successful. Oh, I guess there's immeasurable amounts of, uh, of, uh, people that you could put in various categories, not only successful in business, but also in the limelight. For instance, brother Dash's daughter, who was the first Black girl ever elected to the position of, uh-- well, she was a campus co-ed at the time, I guess, but she was the first beauty queen elected in Montreal, the first Black girl from McGill University.

Interviewer: Right.

George: That was something, that's in a different vein altogether.

Interviewer: All right.

George: Yes.

Interviewer: Uh, I think I have come to the conclusion of the interview, except for one more question. Can you think of any nicknames of porters? I've heard some humorous nicknames? Did you, uh--?

George: Oh, yes, yes. We had quite a few nicknames there.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: Yes. Well, we had one fellow there, he's called good-looking Morrison. That was one. Good-looking was a nickname because actually he looked like King Kong in factuality, but he was called good-looking and he didn't- he didn't object to that at all. Then we had another fellow named Griffith. They called him King Kong.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: Because of his walk and his stance. His arms used to hang way low. And he used to walk in a crouched position as a gorilla walk. That's why he called King Kong.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

George: Yes, that was Griffith. Then we had, uh, uh-- what-what else can I think of offhand? That's in the old-timers that I knew we had. Oh, well, we had one fellow, Dewberry from out west that we used to call him The Count.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

George: He was always sharp, always walked with his cane.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

George: Oh yes.

Interviewer: He dressed sharp.

George: He dressed sharp, and looked sharp. And he always wore his diamonds. Oh yes. Whenever he wore them, he was out strutting. He had his cane and he was called a Count. Yes. He was the Western Count in Winnipeg, half hand. Let me see, who else I can think of. Well, we had virus and nicknames for different fellow. Uh, gee whiz, we had somebody we used to call The Preacher. Oh, gee whiz, he always walked with a Bible, that was old man husbands.

Interviewer: Oh.

George: Yes. From Verdun. And uh, he always had his Bible and he liked to preach.

Interviewer: Like Carl's father?

George: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Husband.

Interviewer: The questions that I'm asking you, are they similar to the ones Mrs.-- Ms. Kalith asked you, Professor Kalith?

George: Oh, well, I didn't know. I didn't go into that with her like in that the same way. She just asked me to relate some experiences and adventures and, uh, uh, the operation of the brotherhood mainly, how we operated, and she wanted various forms. I never got around to it.

Interviewer: You said you got a letter from her. I'll like to see that letter, see what kind of information she's looking for. Do you mind?

George: No, not at all. I'd be glad to show it to you.

Interviewer: Yeah. Interview of Mrs. Vincent Elaine Russell Padmore at her home on November, 25th, 1987 at approximately 3:45 PM.

Elaine Russell Padmore: All right. I was going to mention that, um, as a child, I remember hearing my father perhaps discuss briefly with my mother, some of the cases that were worrying him as respect to the, uh, Welfare Committee. And he was-- would give one the impression that he was a lawyer. Some-some of the anecdotes I've heard when he'd have to go up and represent a, um, it's not a client, but one of this, uh, workers who had run into trouble or had received demerit marks or something like that. And he would have to go up and, uh, some of the cases, fight for them to get their job back. Some of them were, um, fired because they may have been thought to have been carrying-carrying contraband or something like that during the-the prohibition days. And I remember him saying one time that, um, one of the, um, members of the company that he was speaking with saying that, well, you know, Russell, that's not-- that isn't true, as if to say, well, really he's fighting hard to get this chap off. But they didn't have all the proof and perhaps they would have to eventually let him go because, you know, that isn't the truth. And my mother used to say at a different time, perhaps a different place, he probably could have been a lawyer because these men, the others that worked with him, this is what they had to do. And at that time, apparently, uh, the porters could be fired for the smallest misdemeanors or, if perhaps a customer, uh, paying customer didn't particularly like them or they could, uh, write them up and get them into trouble. And I've had cases, I've heard of cases where people were written up and it was found-- matter of fact, it happened to my father one time. And then it turned out to be brief, that the story was not even-- not only it wasn't true, he was supposed to have, uh, not been, uh, helpful to a-a traveling passenger and her youngster. And, uh, when it all came out in the wash, it was someone that was in the same car, sitting close by that decided to write about, write him up. And she wasn't involved at all.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Elaine And when they were able to contact the, uh, mother with the child, she said she had no problem, but, you know. So those were the type of things they had to be up against in those days, you know? 'Cause they were out of their job. I can vaguely remember a friend of theirs, uh, who didn't know where he was going to turn. And, my father, there were so many people, he worked, uh, hard at it and there-- you know, whether a person would get back on or not. I don't know what the failures were, but I know that, uh, there were quite a few people that were-- and some of them were eternally grateful that they were able to get back to their-- get back their jobs. There were others, of course, who, um, after they got their jobs back, that was another thing, they didn't, you know, particularly care.

Interviewer: One thing I--

Elaine Go on.

Interviewer: Uh, did your father and other members of this committee, were they elected by the porters or the appoint-- uh, or how was the--?

Elaine: Gee, you've got me there. Um, the Welfare Committee. Now, the PMBA members were-- uh, and-and president and officers were elected by the, uh, by the, uh, members or the-the members of the Porters Mutual Benefit Association. The Welfare Committee sprung from that, I imagine, but to say how it came about-- now, my father was president for years. I don't think there was any time he-- There was a short time that he was-- that he-he wasn't

president. I think one election that he didn't win, but all those other years I know of that he was always president. Um, they must have been responsible for forming the committee to a Grievance Committee, it was called actually, a Grievance Committee to help the men with their problems with management. Um, course, even before your time, probably, a man was expected to go to work. Um, suppose he left Montreal to go to Toronto, he wasn't allowed to take a nap. You could- you could get-- you could get a demerit mark for that. You had to remain, you know about that I guess.

Interviewer: [unintelligible 00:29:40] yeah.

Elaine Yeah, we're still there. Okay. So that's nothing new. And, um, they were at the mercy of the company. They could always be—what'd they call that now? They could come in and be sent back out, uh

Interviewer: Double out?

Elaine Double, yeah. Double out, yeah. If-- now, the men with seniority really didn't have that happen to them, but the guy that was down the lower edge of the scale as far as seniority was concerned could have to double out. And, um, things were pretty rough for the men because what happened after the- after the union came in, my father lived to see and to hear of different times, the-they had just-- they really didn't have very many holidays. You must have known yourself. They didn't get really holidays. I think they started giving a very few days a-a month, but after the union was entrenched, they got holidays.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Elaine And they got, uh, they didn't-- they weren't-- they were allowed to rest, uh, on the jo- job and things like that. They wouldn't get fired because they, uh, do-- you couldn't even doze off, you know. Um, you couldn't doze off, you would be in trouble unless you had a-a-a conductor that was, you know, pretty decent and would-would understand, but they had some rough times.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Elaine So that was the reason for the need of the union.

Interviewer: I can tell that you come from a porter's home and not many women can talk in the terms that you're speaking. You speaking in railroad-railroad terms.

Elaine Is that right?

Interviewer: Oh yes. [laughs]

Elaine Well, I guess, you know me. I guess we grew up with it.

Interviewer: [crosstalk] this stuff in for years.

Elaine Oh, yes. Breath it. My father took-took the plight of the porters very, very seriously. Not only for himself, for the other porters. And I would hear the discussions going on and

the things that happened, you know? And, um, I guess as you say, yeah, I was quite aware of it.

Yes. I'm saying that, um, as far as, uh, workers on the rail-- oh yeah. As far as workers on the railroad were concerned, if they were sick, if any member was sick, a por-- a porter or whatever, he wouldn't get, uh, any time-- any payment for the time he was off. Not only did he not get holidays, he didn't get paid for the time he was off. So if anyone was sick for-- with a lengthy illness, they were in a lot of trouble financially because there was nothing coming in. They didn't have to pay them.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Elaine No matter how long they, uh, worked. Also, another thing was that many of the-- well, this came off. Many of the, um, men or porters. Yeah. Um, not-- they didn't get paid for holidays. They didn't get paid for time when they were sick, and I would also hear my father say the wages were so small that they relied very, very heavily on, uh, remu- remunerations from the-the clients, you know, tips in other words, because that was what subsidized the, um, their salaries. The salaries, apparently, when they first started were very, very low and the railroad would give them-- well, it wasn't anything as a minimum salary, but they gave them very little and they figured that they would subsist on what they got as tips. So, uh, if-if-if-if, um, a po-porter went out to work and had a very, um, poor trip as far as, uh, tips were concerned, he would be very, very short of money, because the salaries was a pittance really, for the amount of work they had to put in. They put in a lot of work, uh-- do you wanna turn that off or you want me to carry on? They-they put a lot of work. I remember my father when I was a child would-- he would go to work in the afternoon, probably on a- on a night that he was going to go out to work, and he would go to work and make down as they called it. And, uh--

Interviewer: You're beautiful. Make down, right?

Elaine Yeah. I couldn't think of it at first, but it came to me. Yeah. He did it so many times, go down and he'd make down. He used to go up to the Glen and he would get his car all in condition. And so that he could spend time with, uh, his wife and the children. Then he would come back after the bed, it was all done. And then perhaps he would leave maybe, as I said earlier, he would leave in the afternoon, come back. Maybe what time? I can't remember actually what time, maybe get back around four o'clock or something and he'd have supper. And then he'd go back to work and-and stand by because they had to be on the- on the platform to stand by at a very, uh, early time too, quite a few hours before the train was, uh, scheduled to leave.

Interviewer: Right. You have all the terms down, stand by, make down. [laughs]

Elaine: Yeah. I was just-- I haven't used that one for a long time. It just came to me. I figured what was it? I know it's something he did. Yeah. Make down. Right.

Interviewer: What school did you go to?

Elaine School? I went to, uh, well, besides the elementary school, I went to, um, Royal Arthur which is pulled down now. And, uh, I went to Girls' High School which is part of the

Montreal High School, which was a very good school in those days, uh, natural like everything else is changed and it's almost-- i-i-it's up still, but, uh, it was up in, um, on, uh, university, right across-- almost across from McGill University. At that time, you know, it was a nice school and, um, there weren't that many high schools.

Interviewer: Did you specialize in any field, in school?

Elaine Uh, in school? Well, I took science academic in school, but when I came outta school, see, I didn't go to university. I, uh, went to Sir George Williams Business College.

Interviewer: Do you have any *Black Workers* newspapers?

Elaine Black papers?

Interviewer: The-the union's newspaper was called *The Black Worker*.

Elaine Oh, *The Black Worker*. Yeah. Oh, gee.

Interviewer: Or convention proceedings? No?

Elaine You know, we've done a lot of, uh, changes—David…

Interviewer: Interview of Clarence Coleman of Ottawa, formally of Montreal on the 15th of December 1987 at the Town House Motor Hotel in Ottawa. Uh, Clarence, give me your full name, please.

Clarence Coleman: My name is Clarence Coleman.

Interviewer: And, uh, what's your present address, Clarence?

Clarence: 289 King George.

Interviewer: Oh, and that is?

Clarence: Ottawa.

Interviewer: When did you come to Canada, Clarence?

Clarence: May 20.

Interviewer: What year?

Clarence: May 29th 1946.

Interviewer: And why did you come to Canada?

Clarence: Well, I came to Canada to work for the Canadian Pacific. I met Mr. Simpson.

Interviewer: You were-were recruited to work for the CPR, where?

Clarence: From Tennessee. I was wo-- I was working in Tennessee and attending the National Baptist Theological Seminary and-and studying theology.

Interviewer: I see. Which-which part of Tennessee?

Clarence: Nashville.

Interviewer: Nashville. I see. And, uh, how many years had you completed?

Clarence: Oh, just the second.

Interviewer: Second year.

Clarence: Yeah.

Interviewer: And, uh, so you came up for-for-for a summer job I suppose?

Clarence: I came up to stay three months. Mr. Simpson from Winnipeg was down there, hired me to come up here, to work for the Canadian Pacific Railroad.

Interviewer: Right.

Clarence: See, at that time, I think the reason they was coming south to get the porters is because the porters in the south was more domesticated and he-- they was trying to keep the railroad on the same order of George Pullman. The George Pullman was had all Black porters and I think the Canadian Pacific wanted all Black porters. So they decided to come south to get their men. They could have gotten them from the west, any of other places, but the-the-the Southern Blacks was more domesticated. And I think that's what they was after.

Interviewer: So how long were you a sleeping car porter?

Clarence: Eh, I was a sleeping car porter for 15 years.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy the job?

Clarence: Just loved it.

Interviewer: What did you like about it?

Clarence: Well, I liked it because of traveling and meeting people.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Um, did you hold office? Did you join the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

Clarence: Well, I joined the Brotherhood of Sleeping. Yes, I did.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. How long after you started to work with CPR, or did you join?

Clarence: Uh, the-the second year I was working with the Canadian—well, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters wasn't really in full operation when I came here.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Clarence: 1946. They wasn't really in full operation. They had- they had the contract, but they wasn't fully organized because, uh, they hadn't-- they was-- they hadn't started checking it off at that time because the union dues was being collected, while Marcus Dash was collecting the union dues when I first came here. And it was Marcus that en-en-encouraged me to get into the union.

Interviewer: Now, did you hold office with the union?

Clarence: Oh, yes. I was chairman of the Entertainment Committee and President and of Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, chairman of the Grievance Committee.

Interviewer: Getting back to joining of the brotherhood, do you remember the-- what the joining fee was and the dues?

Clarence: I don't know if we had to pay $3 or $5, but we had to pay $2 a month anyway, $2.50 a month.

Interviewer: Well, do you remember, uh, what years you held office?

Clarence: Uh, let's see. It was 1956, '57 and I resigned in '58.

Interviewer: What office was that? Do you know?

Clarence: Pardon? I resigned-- the brother-- I resigned the railroad.

Interviewer: I'm asking you, which office, do you remember what year you were president and--

Clarence: Uh, it was '56, '57, or '58, or let's see. We was in-in St. Louis in '56, was it? I think it was 1956 in St. Louis convention.

Interviewer: And, uh, so you were president '56, '57?

Clarence: Yes.

Interviewer: And what-what are other-other offices did you hold?

Clarence: Well-well, before I was president, I was just chairman of Entertainment Committee.

Interviewer: I see. But as president, you were also, um, automatically chairman of the Grievance Committee, right?

Clarence: Chairman of the Grievance Committee.

Interviewer: And who were the members of the Grievances Committee with you at the time you served?

Clarence: Uh, I don't know. It's hard for me to **[unintelligible 00:42:13]** the ones, what was with me was-- what-- whether it Preston Jenins in there. I think it was, uh, Marcus Dash and, uh, I don't know, if it was Milton Hog, I think. I had Milton Hog on the- on the Grievance Committee. Uh, Joseph Sealey and, uh, I think that's that-- I think that was all that I can remember now.

Interviewer: Now, as you indicated already, the-the organizing was still going on when you joined.

Clarence: Well, they-they had- they had the contract, but they were still-- they hadn't started checking off the-the union dues at that time.

Interviewer: That's right. So who were the chief organizers in Montreal district?

Clarence: Well, the chief organizers there was-- and-and that was-was Marcus Dash, Sandy Lawrence, and, uh, Samuel Louis. There was a chief at that time, along with, uh-- well, that would-- should that-- well, Blanchette hadn't come in yet. Blanchette was still in Winnipeg.

Interviewer: Was there women active in organizing, do you know, in Montreal?

Clarence: Well, during-during the time that I-I was president, we got to be pretty active.

Interviewer: And the women?

Clarence: Yeah, the women was-was-was growing, you know, because-because of the cooperation.

Interviewer: What women are you referring to?

Clarence: Well, I'm referring to Grace Coward, while she was Grace Chase. Uh, Gertrude Daniels. Uh, Evelyn Marshall, she was at that time. Later, Evelyn Braxton.

Interviewer: Well, what kind of activity were they involved in? Were they involved in organizing the men or the women or were they just putting on--?

Clarence: Well, they-they would just put on social affairs and, uh, and-and-and-and-and-and, uh, help out on the entertainment, uh, make-make contribution to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters whenever they put on anything like a dance, any-any entertainment.

Interviewer: Do you remember what their dues were, the women's membership dues?

Clarence: No, I don't. It was uh-- well, the-the-the women didn't really belong to the union, you know, they just belonged to the organization.

Interviewer: I know, they, uh, they had some dues structure to it.

Clarence: Well, they had a due structure, what it cost then.

Interviewer: Were you married then?

Clarence: I wasn't- I-I wasn't married when I first became-- I was-- yes, I was married 'cause I was married in 1951. I was married during that time, but when I first came here, I wasn't married. I was single.

Interviewer: Was your wife active with the auxiliary?

Clarence: No, no, no.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you know much about the working conditions, which, uh, the porters endured before the Brotherhood arrived on the property of the CPR?

Clarence: Well, only what I heard and, uh, they didn't have no union, but, uh, apparently, the-the porters had something. The only thing that the porters missed after they got the union was their free meals. 'Cause the brotherhood, they had-- they paid for their meals and they had-- I guess they paid for the meals and I got more salary because they didn't-- they-they refused-- the Brotherhood refused to accept free meals in order to get more salary for the men. That's when the salaries, uh, went up, so much per hour. I don't know what it is right now. At that time, I can't remember back then.

Interviewer: Do you know anything about the leadership of the union in the other areas of Canada outside of Montreal, whether it was Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver? Can you- can you name the le-- the leaders at the movement of-- in those areas?

Clarence: Well, the only one I was really fa-familiar with, uh, was, uh, one of the leaders was Stanley Grizzle.

Interviewer: Um, can you evaluate the leadership provided by A. Philip Randolph?

Clarence: Well, his leadership was, well, not just for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, but it was invaluable. It was just so valuable to le-- we-we can't hardly explan…

[00:47:09] [END OF AUDIO]