

Harry Gairey Sr: Vancouver that I worked all the way through. It takes us four nights, three days. We leave here at 10.30 at a time and we get in Vancouver on the fourth morning at around 8.30. And, um, uh, my first job out there I'd worked before. I always worked, but if I didn't have a wife and a child, [laughs] when I got to Fort Williams, I would've turned back. I would have got right off.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: Because I thought it was the hardest job that I ever done.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Harry Gairey Sr: But, uh, coming outta depression was the first job, and the depression, I says, "Well, I have a wife and a young child to support. And I promised that I would do my endeavor best to keep them going. And I take on fresh, a fresh start from Fort William on, and I said again, if other people had done it such as Mr. Sam Knowles, Mr. Bill Cocker, and, uh, Fred William would call him, uh, and we'd nickname him State Street. If they had done it, then I certainly could do it. But it was--

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Were these men older than you then?

Harry Gairey Sr: Hmm?

Interviewer: Uh, were--were these men older than you? Is it--?

Harry Gairey Sr: Oh yeah, they were all in the service, and I, oh, they were older men than I was, uh, but they have done it for years. And, uh, you're going on the Prairie, you get to Winnipeg, and it's just a massive desk in the train. At that time, it had no air condition. You had screen in the window, you had to fight him to get him down. And, oh, it was a tremendous job, but I got to Vancouver. And I was so tired when I got there, that I paid a guy \$5 to check my linen. A linen that I accumulate taking on and putting off. And because you had to have those linen straight, if you had them, and have any miscount or missing shortly of linen you'd get demerit marks for it. And I had just joined the service. I didn't want to get, I did not want to get demerit mark. So, I couldn't check the linen because every time I-I checked, I count a dozen towels and 11 towels and would--

Interviewer: You say something in there? Mr. Just-just-just go ahead and talk is no-

Harry Gairey Sr: Testing testing.

Interviewer: 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2

Harry Gairey Sr: One time the next time I checked.

Interviewer: Was registering, registering. Go ahead. We're just doing- we're just doing-

Harry Gairey Sr: This guy took \$5 and he checked it for me. And I went to the quarters right there, okay, and I slept, I got to the quarters at about one o'clock and I slept until one o'clock the other day. I take a bath. They had beautiful quarters for you in Vancouver. And I slept until one o'clock the other day. And then coming back, it was hard. And for the next

three months, it was very, very difficult for me, but I stammered it through and then I stayed through until I retired.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: And I get to like it, because you meet various type of people and, uh, you meet some 95% of the people. I would say 98 I'll go farther, are nice people to deal with.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: And, uh, you meet the average one or whatever that are hard to get along with, but, uh, you get him on and he probably gets off at Winnipeg and he's gone, you says, "Well, he's always just, uh, got probably get up on the wrong side of where he has problem at home. And he takes it in, out on the porters. [laughs]

Interviewer: Right.

Harry Gairey Sr: And uh, so, but 95% of people that you're meeting, uh, in the Rail [unintelligible 00:04:26] are very, very fine people.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Harry Gairey Sr: They treat you humanly, they sympathize with your problem as it was. It says, porter your work, very, very hard trying to keep us going across the-the land. And, uh, it- it-it was just terrific. I enjoyed every, and then the men that you're working with, you worked with them very, very fine men. Uh, men, as I mentioned, such as, uh, think Mr. Crowley, he was with a different road, of course, he was with the Pullman and I was with Canadian Pacific Railway. But we meet quite often as such men, fine men. Finest in the country. Uh, men like Sam Knowles is deceased now, and I think Mr. Coker. You know Raymond Coker?

Interviewer: Yes, I've talked to him.

Harry Gairey Sr: His father, uh, wonderful man. Uh, Dudley Marshall of the CNR, George Alice who's deceased. Oh, finest people that I ever associated with in life. They were real, real men.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: They help you starting out as a new man. They do go out of their way to give you all the necessary, encouragement and help that, uh, a young recruit joining the company would need, you know.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: I remember [unintelligible 00:05:45] tell me a story and later I used it, uh, they used to, we are only getting \$87.50 per month at the time and you have to work every day to get that. To get overtime you would have to work on now we said, take an example. Okay. Your train due in here at, uh, seven o'clock in the morning coming from Vancouver, and it doesn't get in until twelve o'clock or six o'clock.

Interviewer: It's running late.

Harry Gairey Sr: Yeah. Late. You doesn't get any pay for that. You'd have to go 24 hours before you would get a day's pay. You see, and [background noise] to feed you, like, if you're a deadheading, take a car, like from here to Winnipeg, often time to deadhead a Porter. It doesn't do any work. Well, you were in the car. See that all the equipment is safeguard. You're responsible for the car, but you have no passengers. That's what they call deadheading. And the company would give you vouchers and you'd get off at a restaurant for meals. And, uh, when I went in the service, George told me, he says, "Always accept those meals, get them because if you lose it, it's hard to get back." And he says now that we have them, I find it very, very now, while I was in the- in the Union Station as a porter instructor, I was getting three meals a day and I always accept them.

Interviewer: I want you to say that again. You got yourself.

Harry Gairey Sr: I was an instructor and I had to get these special men. I'd pick these men to man this train to Winnipeg.

Interviewer: This was the new train.

Harry Gairey Sr: That's the new train. Oh, it was fascinating. I got to, I got my, uh, I-I'll show you the picture of them. That was, uh, Leon Chapman, uh, Laverne Robbins, you know him? He's from up, uh, Chatham way. There is, uh, uh, Joe Giddings. There was, uh [background noise]

Interviewer: All they, uh, port, really make the trip for him. If a porter, they put their trust in a porter and their trip? Is [crosstalk]?

Harry Gairey Sr: Yes, yes. Uh, because you take, uh, like now a lot of the uh, the kids, they're like you take the, uh, uh, a pastor will come around, says to you, Porter, "My daughter is going to Vancouver. Will you take care of her for me?" And he says she arrives safely, and yes, and also we get a lot of these, uh, parents that bring their children down there, but going to school in Vancouver or vice versa. Vancouver to Toronto, had come to Toronto school. And, uh, they will entrust those children into our care. And our job is to look off those children and see that they arrive safely, and not molested by anyone. Sometime we had to take them to the dining car and, um, they give us money.

If it's small children, they'll-they'll give us money to pay for their meals, and et cetera. Now that was our job. And, um, I know one, on one occasion I was coming out of, uh, Ottawa, Toronto, was ranked Ottawa at the time, and, uh, [laughs] this is very extreme. Uh, funny. I had a reservation for Smith Falls. To picked up a pastor at Smith Falls. When I got to Smith Fall, I got out, wiped the hand rail as we're supposed to do, so that the passenger coming in will not get their hands soiled from the dust. And, uh, put my step and backs down, waiting for the passenger. He doesn't come. Haven't seen. And I went back into the car and then I went back out again and there was this man, the passenger. And he came on the car and he had an upper, I think he had upper eight. Uh, and I took his bag, put his bag in upper eight, and, um, show him the smoking room, that if he wants to wash the men's room, that he could wash or have a smoke. So the conductor was up ahead and, uh, I says, uh, "Ready to go to bed, sir?" He says, "No, I'm waiting until the conductor come." And, uh, he says,

Porter, he says, "I never sleep in an upper in my life. Have you got a lower?" And I says, "Yes, we have got lowers, but it-it will have to raise, what we call raising your fair. You have to pay me money." Maybe probably the upper would be, we said \$4 and the-the lower will be maybe \$6, just an example, I'm not sure. And he says, uh, "I never sleep in an upper in my life." I repeat the word. So I says, "Why are you not have a why, why, what's the trouble? Why haven't you got a lower?" He says, "Well, to be frank about it I'm broke." Well, I says to him, [coughs] excuse me. I says to him, uh, "Well, what's the difference? Uh, I said, "If you want a lower, you will get a lower," I says, "I can give you the difference. Maybe a dollar, a dollar and a half different." I said, "Surely a dollar and a half wouldn't make much difference to me. And it would make you very comfortable. I'm sure you make you very satisfied." He says, "Do you really mean that?" I said, "Surely I do mean that." And I says, "If I never see you again, sir, it's only a dollar and a half, but I'm sure some of my fellow porter will derive some benefit from it in later years."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: He said, "Do you?" I says, "I do." He says, "Why can't the conductor do that?" I said, "Well, no, that's a different question altogether. The conductor's in charge and he's responsible to the Canadian purse for all money transact. Now he can't do it with ever and everyone. With me, this problem is an isolated-isolated case."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: And he says, "Well, you are truly, they call you fellows, investors of Goodwill." He says, "You are truly ambassador of Goodwill." And I says, "I'll write a letter to your superintendent," but he says, "I tell you, I'm going to give you a check." And he gave me a check for \$10 when they get [inaudible 00:13:13], well, those are the only thing that we does. And then you-you find people comes on and they want to find out about your work, what pays you get, what are your layover compensation and so forth and so on. And, uh, I find it- it was a source of education because, uh, take an example.

You're going across the country and, uh, and you have a car crowded with, uh, now we having, we're speaking about the air conditioner. Uh, uh, we have a group of, uh, 24 people in the car, and you have some elderly people. You have some young people, and you'll set the thermostat at would say 72 or 75. And elderly people would sit in the corner and they'd be cold. And then you walk down the aisle in the car and you see some young people, college kids, and they said, "Porter, oh, this car is so warm. So, yeah. So warm. Could we get it cooled down for me a bit?" She says, "Okay" you never tell them no, says, "Okay, we'll do that for you."

You go back to the panel, and you click it back and forth. And hear, they hear the noise. The valves are all around the car and make a noise. And about 15 minutes to go back and ask the elderly person, "How is it now?" "Oh, it's fine, Porter." You go back and ask the younger people. "How is it?" "Oh, it's beautiful." And you never do a thing to it. You just click it and put it back where it was. [laughs] Those-those are the little things that, uh, that make it happy across.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: And then we always try our best to, uh, to, uh, because the Canadian Pacific Company was very, I find it to be because I knew what I had to do and, uh, I'd done. And it was quite a company to work for. Of course, in those days, all company was exploiting people because we had no union.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm..

Harry Gairey Sr: And when the union come along, we derived great benefit. And, uh, it, uh, I enjoy every moment of it. One of the, uh, I-I never did like the job as a job, but.

Interviewer: Didn't, what didn't you like about the job?

Harry Gairey Sr: Well, one of the things that I didn't like about job, when I first went on, I never did that type of work before.

Interviewer: Okay. [crosstalk]

Harry Gairey Sr: Because it was-was only a glorifying maid, a chambermaid. It just was really supporter was really, uh, to my way of thinking, because you have to make beds, you have to, uh, clean the cars. You have to do everything that a maid possibly would do.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: You have to check soiled linen, you have to clean the men's room. You got to have to clean the ladies' room. You have to clean windows and doors. So I really didn't like it, but I-I did my best by it because it's the only thing that I could get at the time.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: And I found myself that I got the job, and I going to make a go of it. And I put my very, very best effort into it. And I said, "Now, if I put effort into it, I'll get something out of it. If I put nothing into it, I get nothing out of it." And I find it that I-I got something out of it because after being there for about nine years. I was, um, I made an instructor for the new portrait that was coming in. Now I hesitate to take the job because I felt that older men was in the [unintelligible 00:17:07] than I were. And-and I was, and they were probably more qualified to do the job than I do. But the-the then superintendent, Mr. Anderson says, now, Mr. Woods, the former instructor was going and he says, "We check your record, uh, Gairey, and we find it to be very, very good, exceptionally good."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: And he went to call his chief clerk. And, uh, he brought all these letters that people write in about the service that I rendered them and help them. In one instant, they met the shoe salesman who want the lower, he wrote a letter in, and, uh, in another instant, there was a lady from London, England. She wrote a letter, uh, and on this occasion was going into Montreal. And, uh, she had a little child and we get in Montreal, Windsor Station, and we put our passenger off. Well, the train doesn't take long to go back-back to the Glen Yard. And this woman, she was a poor person. She, she didn't have much money. And red caps, our porter can always detect a person. They can tell as soon as you walk up,

they can tell whether you're a good tipper or not. Well, in this instance, we're in Montreal, Windsor Station and I put everybody off. Everybody's gone. And I saw this lady with a little child, about five years old, left there. Now I would have to go from about, um, 40 yards to get to the main stations. And I looked around, the engine was on the train, ready to pull out to the Glen Yard. I looked around and saw the lady, everybody's gone and left her. I says, "No, I can't do that." I says, "I couldn't do that." And I says, "Oh no, no." So I picked up her baggage and take her down to the Windsor main waiting room and deposit her there and believe me, Kay, when she got to England, she wrote one of the fondest letter that I ever had to the company thanking me, the porter of the serve- Now, I didn't get anything. She didn't give me a penny.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: But that was the point. I-I thought that I was doing a human service and money wasn't involved, money didn't count to me. Because I had to back down on lost time and take another train, my train had pulled out of the Glen Yard and I lost about two hours to get back to the Glen Yard because my train had gone. And I had picked up another back on what we call a background at Glen Yard. But, uh, I-I-I see that she got off and she was satisfied and it was help, that you're helping somebody.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: And-and-and that what I was there for to help if I can. And I could in this context and I help it, no order red cap, the red caps to take off. [laughs]

Interviewer: Now, you say you can tell a good tipper. What indicates a good tipper?

Harry Gairey Sr: Uh, well, you s- now first you take a man comes on the car and he goes in the smoking room and he sit around there and he is in the smoking-room. And he says to you, he says, uh, "Porter." Uh, he says, uh, he have a full car, that means quite a, maybe 24 people or 18 or 20 people. [phone rings] Now you have quite a bunch of passenger on and, uh, he'll figure it out. It says now, "What amounts, uh? How did they pay you? What-what are your salary?" Of course, you will not gonna tell him. You'll give him some excuse. I says, "How much- how many days layover you get? When you get back, when you get to Vancouver? Did it, the company give you meals," or blah, blah, blah, you know, and something like that. And you will tell him, "No." Well, invariably a fella like that he'll gets off, and he'll probably give you maybe a quarter or a dime. Now, a person that comes on that say very little to you, you'll give him a, the necessary service that to give them always, try to see that they're comfortable. Uh, you may ask them if they want a newspaper, you take a paper and give them. Or if they want a book to read, or you could talk to them.

And, uh, if they want a cup of tea from the diner or anything of that sort, you'll get it for them. And a person like those, they will get off and give you a reasonable tip. And you can almost see them coming because they don't say much. They may be businessmen. And, uh, they go in their room or into their space and they ask you for a table. You're gonna give them a table to write on. You-you ask them if they want writing paper, pad, or stuff like that. [silence]

Interviewer: Are they the landscape to them?

Harry Gairey Sr: Yes, we do point out like, uh, like a very, uh, intriguing spot to me is, uh, is, um, in Ontario is going around Jackfish Bay and Lake Superior. It's like going through the mountains. You no, another part of it. You know, it's this is, uh, another part of the thing is going down, like from, uh, Fields to Banff to Banff to Fields. It's-it's one of the most fascinating you've never been through, Kay, and-

Interviewer: [inaudible 00:22:44] It's kind--

Harry Gairey Sr: Uh, after you leave Calgary, uh, Alberta, you're climbing the foothills. Now there's three-three mountainous region in the, in-in British, in the Rock, in the British Columbia. First, you get the Rockies, and then, uh, you get the Rocky Mountain that's from, uh, Banff going up. Then you get the-the coast, the Selkirks, that's the second mountains. And then you get the coastal range. Uh, now going from Calgary up, you're climbing the foothills. You're getting up to the Three Sisters Mountain, and then you go up and up and then you get to Banff Springs, a great Canadian Pacific resort, tremendous lot of tourists come through there and Lake Louise [chuckles]. Now what I'm I have to tell you this one, this one is funny. Before I went to the west, the west, I read of the Great Divide. My impression of the Great Divide was a great big stream of water.

Interviewer: Oh.

Harry Gairey Sr: How I realize, well, it must be a division. One would be going one way, and one would be going the other way. So my dear Kay, okay, I get to this Great Divide and I never was so- I oftentimes tell this story surprise, and I say, "This is the Great Divide." It's just simple. The water is trickling down from the mountain and is, uh, they made a, uh, out of log, a Great Divide. And one part of the little stream is just a wee bit of stream, one going into the Kicking Horse River, and eventually, goes out into the Columbia, the Kicking Horse down to the Columbia. And the other part goes into the, to the, um, to the, um, mm, Bow River, and that's goes to the Bow River through Calgary. And then it goes down to the Atlantic. One goes to the Pacific and the water- the river water empty into the Pacific, and one goes into-- And that is the Great Divide.

Interviewer: All right.

Harry Gairey Sr: I thought it was a great big construction, uh, bridge or something of that sort, you know, but anyway, it's-it's very fascinating. Then we point out these point of interest such as the, um, the Devil Gate and, uh-uh, Fields, and then the Spiral Tunnel, which the Spiral Tunnel is one of the greatest engineering feats, I think of the 10th, 20th century, you're going down from Echter [?], going down to Fields and you make a drop of from in about 25 minutes, you make a drop of about, oh, about a goodly 300 feet going down in the mountain. And it form completely a figure eight. Now that means if you are, you can see you are in the tail end of the train, set a train of eight cars. The engine will be out there and you'll still be looking. You'll still be in the tunnel and it form a complete circle, a complete figure eight. And-and it's ah I marvel, every time I go there, I had to look at, see how, uh, ingenious men are to devise engineering, particularly, to devise such a, to get through that those rocks. And I can see the train over there and still I'm not into the tunnels yet.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: And it just-it's just tremendous. And I-I would beseech you if you haven't gone through there on train, you must take a trip.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: If you can take the children with you so they can enjoy it, or you prob- I don't think it would be, it-it would be better if you take the train. Uh, I don't think you'll get the same, uh, the same reaction in cars.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: I think the train is wonderful and-and it's just pretty, uh, I often time [unintelligible 00:26:39] told me, says, "You know, they're coming from Europe." He says, "Now you see a lot of people goes to Switzerland to-to-to see the Alps, the great Alps." But he says, "We have one of the most beautiful spot in earth is in the British Columbia Rockies."

Interviewer: People from Europe have [crosstalk]

Harry Gairey Sr: From Europe, make those assertions to, as it says, "It's fantastic." Uh, he says, "We've never seen it like it, seen these Rocky Mountain." And then it goes into the Selkirk Mountains and then you go into the coastal range. And, uh, I-I guess you didn't know this, you probably can look this up into the library. Uh, at one time Kamloops, BC, it was a Black man who was a mayor of that, uh, that City. You look it up, I can't think of his name.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: But, uh, I-I think it was Smith. He came up from the states and acquired a lot of land in Kamloops.

Interviewer: A-About what time would this been?

Harry Gairey Sr: That what should be around in the early 20s.

Interviewer: Mm. Did you get to meet him?

Harry Gairey Sr: No, but I [clears throat] I-I met his-his daughter, usually comes up on train. Uh, she lives in Kamloops and, uh, she lives in, married in Vancouver, live in Vancouver. I think there was Smith. I used to carry her as a passenger over, um, because it was a short run and we have much time as you get onto Van- at eleven o'clock and they get in Van- 11:30 at night, and you get into Vancouver in the morning. So they get on there and they'll go right to bed. You see, they don't have a chance to say much to them, but her father was, uh, the mayor of Kamloops. One of the-

Interviewer: Mm. What about the-

Harry Gairey Sr: -DC.

Interviewer: -The tragedies that might have happened on the train or the railway at that particular time?

Harry Gairey Sr: The, uh, the what?

Interviewer: [unintelligible 00:28:29]

Harry Gairey Sr: Oh, I never, uh, I have people get sick on the train. I have taken sick people that, uh, I had to look after like a nurse for a matter of fact, you have to play all that. You have to be a nurse, you have to be a doctor. And, uh, I have people that I take over that I couldn't do for themselves, and I had to help them in every respect.

Interviewer: To the toilets and [crosstalk].

Harry Gairey Sr: That's right. That's right.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: I had to do that. I know I take, it was [unintelligible 00:28:56] part of a young man. He was a student here and he was going to Moose Jaw. And, uh, people like those, that really should not send alone. There should be a nurse or a doctor with them. But anyway, in this case, they didn't send a doctor. And, uh, I had to take him to the-- He had a drawing room or splinter room. So whenever he wants to go to the restroom, I had to take him. He couldn't do a thing for himself. I had to do everything for him. I had to feed him. Uh, I had to clean him, but I didn't mind because it was a job and he was sick.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Harry Gairey Sr: And he was helpless. And if I'm strong and held it, then I should be human enough to apply that help, that's needed. This one, uh, a young man from Guelph brought his mother, going to Vancouver. She have to buy Room B, straight through the Vancouver and it-it tips me very well. And, uh, but, uh, his mother was very, very old. She was almost helpless, almost, not quite, and, uh, [sound cut]. [silence]