

**Stanley Grizzle:** All right, Brother S. [crosstalk]

**Clarence Nathaniel Est:** As I've stated, the role played by Mr. Dash in trying to organize all the porters in Montreal. He would often meet the porters on paydays, and whenever it was possible to extract from them down- them down payments in order that they became members of the Brotherhood.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Clarence:** Mr. Blanchette played a similar role in the west as Mr. Dash and he was able to organize almost all the brothers, all the members of the west to join the Brotherhood. For his services rendered, he was recognized by the officers of the BMC and he and--

**Stanley:** What's BMC?

**Clarence:** Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

**Stanley:** That's BSC.

**Clarence:** BSC, BSC.

**Stanley:** SCP.

**Clarence:** BSCP.

**Stanley:** Right, right.

**Clarence:** And therefore he was- he was awarded the title of field organizer.

**Stanley:** Right. You felt that he gave good leadership, I suppose.

**Clarence:** He gave very good leadership. He gave courage-- he encour- he encouraged the men. He supported the men whenever they had grievances. He fought management and he was very successful in most of his attempts.

**Stanley:** All right. What did you think of the leadership, uh, provided by A. Philip Randolph, the international president?

**Clarence:** Mr. A. Philip Randolph was a man whom I am not in a position to judge. All I can- I can say of- all I can say of him is that he was a man of unquestioned character. He was honest--

**Stanley:** Hold it, just a minute. All right. He was honest around you.

**Clarence:** You ready?

**Stanley:** Yes.

**Clarence:** All I can say of him, that he was a man with great integrity and sincerity and he espoused to make the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters a force to be recognized.

**Stanley:** How about the leadership provided by Benny Smith, the vice president in Detroit?

**Clarence:** Well, the role of the vice president was one, he came oftentimes to Montreal to encourage the men and gave speeches and talks and lectures, and the men were greatly aroused by his jovial way of expressing himself. He was, uh, a very fine speaker, and, uh, the men believed in him quite a bit.

**Stanley:** Now we had a Ladies' Auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Did you have any relatives in that, uh, body?

**Clarence:** No, I did not.

**Stanley:** What did you think of the idea of having the Ladies' Auxiliary to the Brotherhood?

**Clarence:** Well, the Ladies' Auxiliary was an adjunct to the porter- the porters, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. And they functioned in a very amicable way, in, uh-- by way of entertainment, by way of providing refreshments,-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** -by having little talks with the brothers.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** And they did a lot in encouraging the-the men who did not care to join. Through their influence, many were ex-- joined the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters- Sleeping Car Porters just by the insistence of the women of the Ladies' Auxiliary. I think it was a fine group and most of the ladies to be commended were Mrs. Marcus Dash, Mrs., uh, Braxton. By the way, Mr. Braxton also played an important role in organizing the brothers, and, uh- uh, Mrs. Simmons.

**Stanley:** She was the wife of the Pullman president- Pullman president, right?

**Clarence:** Yes-yes-yes. Mrs. Simmons. Yes. And so many more I cannot recall, but nevertheless, it was a force for good. It was-- it brought great results and achievement to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm, right. Now, there were, uh, White porters working on the main Pacific railway. What was the attitude of, uh, White porters to the-- this Black-led trade union?

**Clarence:** Well, the White porters were simply brought in through the scarcity of Black men to become porters. There was a shortage of Black porters, and in order to get the-the operation carried out, it was necessary that management hire White porters to fill the job.

**Stanley:** So were they supportive of the union? That's what I'm wondering.

**Clarence:** Well, at first, uh, they didn't seem to. I guess they were influenced mostly by the-the- by the-- what do you call, by the-- by the-- by some of the petty officers of the-- the platform inspectors and officers. I guess most of them were told that they did not have to

join the union, but after pressure was brought upon them, many of them joined the union and they became good union men.

**Stanley:** Right, uh hum. Um, do you think that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, uh, contribute anything to the total community, either the total community or the Black community in particular, other than raising wages and improving working conditions?

**Clarence:** No. Yes, it did. It develop-- it, uh, established- it established in the minds of the porters a certain- uh, a certain amount of-of-of, uh, pride. And that was exemplified in a way that porters, knowing that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters were behind them, could fight for justice. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters gave them courage and gave them that right to not to be- not to be downtrodden, to stand up for justice, for truth, and for that, what would benefit the interest most.

**Stanley:** All right. Do you think that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters helped to spawn any other organizations or to give any other organizations in the community added strength?

**Clarence:** Yes, it certainly did because at what-- at one time the Brotherhood-Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was the main organization in Montreal. Anyone wanted counsel and wanted support and sustenance could find it through the means provided by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Uh, um, I want to give this book a little bit of, uh, a slight touch of humour, uh, so I'm gonna ask you a couple of questions in that direction. Can you give me any nicknames of porters?

**Clarence:** Yes. I can recall a few.

**Stanley:** Respectable or non-respectable.

**Clarence:** Well, [clears throat] Yes, uh, for instance, in the west, we had- uh, we had a Porter whose name was **[inaudible 00:09:18]** We- for instance, we had a porter who was very, very, very liked and who wanted to be called--

**Stanley:** Liked?

**Clarence:** Liked. Very, very-- What did I say?

**Stanley:** You said--

**Clarence:** A porter who was very, very bright.

**Stanley:** Oh, bright.

**Clarence:** Bright.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Clarence:** And who wanted to be recognized with a title that fit his characteristics. And his name is Count Duberry. He wanted everybody to know him as a count.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Clarence:** And therefore, he accepted the title as being Count Duberry.

**Stanley:** [unintelligible 00:10:14] uh, royalty, uh.

**Clarence:** Royalty. We also had one Porter who was very restrained, who was a very restrained person, but he thought a lot of himself and he, uh, called himself Good-lookin' Morrison.

**Stanley:** [laughs]

**Clarence:** [laughs] He said, you say I am ugly, but my mother told me I was good-lookin' and therefore, my name is Good-lookin' Morrison.

**Stanley:** [laughs] right.

**Clarence:** [laughs]

**Stanley:** Any others? You didn't mention your friend Thompson. He had a nickname, didn't he?

**Clarence:** Oh, yes. And my good friend, uh, Theophilus Thompson. He was the flashy type. And in those days, Chicago was the leading city for style and then all the good things of life. And he called himself Chicago.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. That's the first time...

**Clarence:** And we had also a gentleman. We had-- Oh.

**Stanley:** Go ahead.

**Clarence:** We also had a porter by the name of-- his name is, uh, Paris, Fred Paris. But he was given the-the-the alias as Fadeaway.

**Stanley:** I see. All right. Thank you. How about-- Do you have any humorous stories, uh, to tell regarding any humorous experience that you went through as a porter or anybody else went through as a Porter, an anecdote, say?

**Clarence:** Anecdote? And as far as humorous jokes are concerned-- were concerned, the porters were always having all kinds of humorous jokes, stories, and anecdotes to tell of passengers and of- and of the experiences with passengers and incidents that happened on the train. And they would visit porters from one car and porters would visit- and porters would visits-- would visit each other and relate their experiences, and more so when we got to the quarters in Vancouver, then all the incidents that happened were related-

**Stanley:** Right.

**Clarence:** -with much excitement.

**Stanley:** Right. All right, now, what is your attitude towards tipping?

**Clarence:** Tipping? Well, I think I-- my-my position in tipping was that we couldn't have existed without receiving tips because the salaries of the company were very, very small, and they also took an account that tipping was-- should be a part of our salary.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** And that is one of the reasons why they kept it at this low rate.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** However, I found that passengers, when the proper service was rendered, were very generous and kind to the porters. Sometimes they made sacrifices to tip the porters and- uh, and, uh, it was- it was really appreciated by the porters. The, uh, tipping, they say is a form of subservience.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Clarence:** And, uh, some people are of the opinion that when you are tipped that they could buy services, they could control you, and they could let you do things that ordinarily would not be right. I have never really, uh, done anything with the hope of receivin' a tip. I did it and if the passengers felt like rewarding me for whatever service I may have rendered, I was always grateful for their contribution where we have a tip- where we have a tip.

**Stanley:** What is the largest tip you ever received?

**Clarence:** The largest tip I received from one individual was \$25.

**Stanley:** And traveling from-from where to where?

**Clarence:** Traveling from Montreal to-to Winnipeg.

**Stanley:** I see. Um, would you care to make any concluding comments before this interview is terminated about, including comments about the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

**Clarence:** Well, my comment would be that I, uh, have to- I have to- uh-uh, I have to congratulate you, Mr. uh--

**Stanley:** Grizzle. [laughs]

**Clarence:** Grizzle-Grizzle. I have to congratulate you, Mr. Grizzle, for having taken this trouble in trying to provide a history of the porters, of the Sleeping Car Porters who worked under the Canadian Pacific Railway.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Thank you.

**Clarence:** I find it very commendable of you to have put in so much time and effort in trying to bring about a historical record of the porters who worked on the Canadian Pacific Railway.

**Stanley:** All right.

**Clarence:** And I want to thank you for having visited me and I-I am sorry that I could not have contributed more of interest to this interview. I thank you.

**Stanley:** And I found this interview very illuminating, enlightening, and interesting.

**Clarence:** Thank you.

**Stanley:** And, um, lemme go further and request if you have any photographs or any memorabilia at all, uh, related to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, this will be about my request that, you know, you share it with me.

**Clarence:** Well, I shall try to comply in the event I should, uh, find anything worthwhile or to mention, I will submit it to you.

**Stanley:** Another- another thing too, I'll be appreciative if you can give me before I leave the city names of any other sisters or brothers who might be able to help me in this project. Okay?

**Clarence:** Yes.

**Stanley [Stanley Grizzle]:** All right. Interview of Joseph Morris Sealy, uh, of Montreal, uh, interviewed at the Ramada Inn, November 22nd, 1987, commencing at 1:30 PM. All right, Joe. What is your full name, please?

**Joseph Morris Sealy:** Joseph Morris Sealy.

**Stanley:** Yes. And, uh, where were you born?

**Joseph:** Halifax, Nova Scotia.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Date of birth?

**Joseph:** Uh, August 7th, 1910.

**Stanley:** Right. And, uh, I understand that you, uh, became a sleeping car porter with the Canadian Pacific Railway company. When was that?

**Joseph:** Uh, 19-- or I should say August 1928.

**Stanley:** Really?

**Joseph:** [laughs]

**Stanley:** With the CPR?

**Joseph:** That's right.

**Stanley:** Oh, I didn't realize you were way back there. Huh. And why did you take the job with the CPR?

**Joseph:** Because there was no o-other jobs available.

**Stanley:** Right. Uh-huh. And how long were you a sleeping car porter with the CPR?

**Joseph:** For 46 years.

**Stanley:** Hmm. Um, did you enjoy the job?

**Joseph:** Well, when one is making a living another, you didn't go there for enjoyment. You go there to work to make a living.

**Stanley:** Well, um, now, um, during the-the time you was-- you-you joined the CPR, was there an organization known as the Porters' Welfare Committee or any other agency which purported to represent the porters?

**Joseph:** Yeah, they had a company representation. Uh, not-- wasn't very good.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. What-what was the name of it?

**Joseph:** Uh, don't know if I can remember that.

**Stanley:** Was it not the Porters' Welfare Committee? No?

**Joseph:** Uh, well, let's put it that way, it was the Porters' Welfare Committee, but I-I don't know it under that name.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Joseph:** As a matter of fact, I can't remember what name-- I know that it strictly represented the, uh, the company, because we had a place called the PMBA that created an insurance-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Joseph:** -to protect the porters.

**Stanley:** What kind of insurance?

**Joseph:** Well, this insurance was a-- many porters died prior to this-- through this, uh, new deal that the company gave to the, uh, this committee and they call it the PMBA. So you—

**Stanley:** I understand that stands for Porters' Mutual Benefit Association?

**Joseph:** Right.

**Stanley:** And was that a company creation?

**Joseph:** That was company-created and they had the last word.

**Stanley:** Oh, so-so, uh, you paid the premium?

**Joseph:** You gotta pay \$2. Every porter paid \$2 per month.

**Stanley:** Oh.

**Joseph:** Whether you want to or not. And the-the reason why it was created, because a lot of porters died. And as you know, those days, money was very, very slack. I think they were working for, uh-- I, when I started at that time it was \$75 a month. And you very seldom ever worked a month, to get that, uh, salary. You got paid only when you worked and if you were on the spare board, carrying the keys, that didn't mean you got paid, you did not.

**Stanley:** Well, did-did they, these-- who were the members of this Porters' Welfare Committee? Can you recall any names or representatives of this committee?

**Joseph:** I know one of the names were Russell, because Russell was the same man who caused the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to come into Canada. 'Cause things got so hot there that he found that he had spoken out of turn and they were out to get him. So when he learned of that, the only way to protect himself is to get a bona fide union here in Canada. So, he was the one who wrote to Mr. Randolph of the brotherhood, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and caused him to come here and meet with us and tell us what we had to do in order to get a union.

**Stanley:** I see. Uh huh. Do you know-- do you recall the names of any other members of that committee besides Russell?

**Joseph:** No. They're long gone and they were of another generation.

**Stanley:** Did they receive any pay for this committee work?

**Joseph:** No-no-no. They did that.

**Stanley:** For how long?

**Joseph:** Well, this guy Jones, Jones, Joe Jones was his name?

**Stanley:** Joe Jones. Oh, yes.

**Joseph:** Yeah. He was with them.

**Stanley:** I see.

**Joseph:** He became the first president.

**Stanley:** When did the organization-- when was it born and when did it die, the PMBA?

**Joseph:** Well, I wouldn't say-- the PMBA, oh.

**Stanley:** Not the PMBA, the- uh, the Porters' Welfare Committee.



**Joseph:** Oh, the welfare committee died the moment the, uh, union came in. And the union came in, uh, 1945.

**Stanley:** That's when the contract was signed.

**Joseph:** That's when the contract was signed. But we met before that, we had, uh, I guess the company would call the clandestine meetings. In order to set up, we had to go to Ottawa and get permission and so forth and so on.

**Stanley:** Who's we?

**Joseph:** Well, and I'm-I'm talking in terms of like Joe Jones, Russell. And there were three or four that formed the committee.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Joseph:** And they--

**Stanley:** Were you- were you on that committee?

**Joseph:** No.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Now when you joined the CPR in 1928, was the Welfare Committee in existence?

**Joseph:** Yeah, the company-- [unintelligible 00:23:12]

**Stanley:** And who was the first president did you say?

**Joseph:** First president was Joe Jones.

**Stanley:** And were you president when you started?

**Joseph:** President of the-- of what?

**Stanley:** Welfare Committee?

**Joseph:** Oh, no. Russell- Russell was president. Oh.

**Stanley:** Oh I see.

**Joseph:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** So, he was the first president of the Welfare Committee. The Welfare Committee was probably set up around the time that you joined the CPR then?

**Joseph:** The Welfare Committee was already set up, you know, operating and, uh, we never believed in the Welfare Committee. I mean, we were not stupid. I mean, I had a run in once with, uh, the platform inspector pertaining to a man going on on our car one night and he had less senior than myself. So the platform man said to me, "If you don't like it, contact your Welfare Committee, let them do something for you." And I told him in these words,

and there was no union then. "The welfare committee can't do nothing for themselves, so how can they do anything for me?"

[laughter]

**Clarence:** I'm lucky the union came in. Otherwise, I don't think I would've been around this long.

**Stanley:** Were the Welfare Committee members elected or appointed?

**Joseph:** Appointed-appointed by a Mr.-- What's the guy named down there? Cooper. Mr. Cooper was the big man. He was like a god, had a special office. You had to make a special appointment to go up to see him.

**Stanley:** What was his title? Was he--

**Joseph:** My general manager or something. He [unintelligible 00:24:35] that's company side, eh?

**Stanley:** Yeah. But was he a manager of the CPR or a manager of Sleeping Car Department?

**Joseph:** Manager of the Sleeping and the Dining Car Department?

**Stanley:** Oh, yes, I see. Uh-huh. Um, was there a joining fee or just monthly dues?

**Joseph:** Uh, no-no. There was no fees to pay.

**Stanley:** Just monthly dues?

**Joseph:** You paid the \$2 for the PMB. That was all you paid.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Joseph:** And you didn't pay it, they took it outta your pay.

**Stanley:** Oh, but they didn't-- but you didn't pay any money for the Welfare Committee then?

**Joseph:** No.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Who paid their expenses to, to ...

**Joseph:** It was all arranged between the company and them.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Joseph:** Uh, they were what you call the-- they were up with the big man. So therefore, they were supposed to be protected.

**Stanley:** Well, uh, I'm trying to make this information as complete as possible. Were they guided by a collective agreement, rules or-or regulations?

**Joseph:** They never had any kind of agreement. Only agreement they had to do was follow the rules laid down by the company.

**Stanley:** I see. It was a company union then, company representation.

**Joseph:** It was a company organization. Absolutely.

**Stanley:** I see. Um, now this organization died, you said, once the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters arrived in the property of the Canadian Pacific Railway company. Um, who were the prime organizers of the- of the union, the BSCP in Montreal?

**Joseph:** The prime organizers was again the same man, Russell.

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Joseph:** Same man. He found out that things were getting warm.

**Stanley:** Yeah. Anybody else involved?

**Joseph:** Yeah. Well, there were other men, there was four other men, which I don't remember their names.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Joseph:** You see, when you're not interested in something you're not interested with these. I never went to them once.

**Stanley:** No-no, I mean the-the-the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters organizing I'm talking about.

**Joseph:** Oh-oh, well that's easy then.

**Stanley:** Yeah, yeah.

**Joseph:** Uh, Sammy Lewis, Joe Jones, Sammy Lewis, Doc Bartholomew, uh, Marcus Dash.

**Stanley:** Oh yeah.

**Joseph:** Uh, how many are that?

**Stanley:** Four.

**Joseph:** Four. Oh, I see another guy too, Simon-- Hold on, hold on.

**Stanley:** Simon Lawrence, you called him[unintelligible 00:26:56]

**Joseph:** Hmm? Well, uh, [unintelligible 00:27:00] could have told you that, huh? Did you ask him that question?

**Stanley:** Yeah, but everybody seems to remember-- seems to forget something. There's some names.

**Joseph:** Yeah-yeah.

**Stanley:** Some name, you may recall names which will fill in the gap. But he mentioned-

**Joseph:** Yeah. There was another man. I can see him, but I can't remember his name.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Do you know who the organizers in Toronto were?

**Joseph:** Uh, well, uh, in a rough guess, yeah. If I can just remember the names of the guy, one guy was very popular. He became secretary for the longest time. You remember his name?

**Stanley:** Leo Chevalier?

**Joseph:** That's the guy. Yeah. Him and, uh, oh, there was another photo too. He used to sell hair stuff.

**Stanley:** Bob Willis.

**Joseph:** Bob Willis was another one. From then on, I-I know I'd have to go down, back in a book and I don't know. I don't- I don't remember names.

**Stanley:** You got a book on this?

**Joseph:** I said I'd have to go back in the book. I don't. No, no.

**Stanley:** Oh, no worries. How about, uh, Charlie Baldwin? Do you remember if he was involved in the organizing?

**Joseph:** Charlie Baldwin? He could be because, I don't-- I never been to any meetings in Toronto.

**Stanley:** I see. How about Harry Gairey? Was he involved in the organizing?

**Joseph:** Harry Gairey. Could have been. Or was he- was he a platform inspector?

**Stanley:** Port instructor.

**Joseph:** Port instructor. Well, he wasn't involved in the union. You can't be on two sides of the track.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. All right. Do you know you remember the names of organizers of Calgary, Winnipeg, or Vancouver? [crosstalk]

**Joseph:** Well, what happened once the, you know, you-- whenever things start, you gotta get one group who start the ball rolling. Here it is, we were sneaking these cards to be signed. So one man in each place, like in Calgary and Winnipeg and so on, and they would then sink the cards to their members, you know.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Joseph:** But, uh, there-there was no concerted group of men that came down and say, well, we started this. No. It seems to start right here in Montreal, right in that Union United Church.

**Stanley:** Is that right?

**Joseph:** That's where the first meetings were.

**Stanley:** Yeah. I see. Um, so you can't recall who the organizers across Canada? I need to ask that question because in those days, you would, porters were traveling across the country.

**Joseph:** Right. Right. Well, Blanchette, as you know, was-was involved very, very, very deeply.

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Joseph:** And I'm sure, you know, he has, uh, some personal friends who were part of that deal, out there in Vancouver. Uh, the Lawrence boy, he was secretary for the longest time when he took sick. Yeah? Now who the president was, I don't know. I don't remember.

**Stanley:** Frank Collins?

**Joseph:** Frank Collins. Well, that's right- that's right. And in Calgary, uh, I know Jimmy Cole, but I can't say he was in any leadership party.

**Stanley:** How about Proctor?

**Joseph:** Proctor. Yeah- yeah- yeah- yeah. Could be. That name was familiar in my mind.

**Stanley:** Bellamy?

**Joseph:** Bellamy? Well, Bellamy was out of Winnipeg, wasn't he?

**Stanley:** Calgary.

**Joseph:** Calgary? Yeah? Well then he could- he could be one. Yeah. Don't know too many, but however--

**Stanley:** Roy Williams?

**Joseph:** Hmm?

**Stanley:** Roy Williams, Calgary.

**Joseph:** Roy Williams, that name sounds familiar, but I wouldn't say that-that for sure.

**Stanley:** Right. Was there, um, any intimidation in the part of the company trying to discourage the union organization? Now, if there was--

**Joseph:** Well, the intimidation was in the very, very inception. That was why they had to go to Ottawa and they had the-- some kind of special order came out of Ottawa. I don't know if

449 or 9 something. I remember some nines were in it, which-which it made it impossible for the company to interfere. 'Cause they sure would've.

**Stanley:** That had to do with the Industrial Disputes and Investigation Act.

**Joseph:** Yeah, yeah.

**Stanley:** Oh, right. Mm-hmm. But, uh, notwithstanding the company was- I understand, was still trying to.

**Joseph:** Oh, yes. Well, they were not used to unions, you know, and they, uh, before they gave in, they didn't give in without a struggle.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Joseph:** But then you see Mr. Randolph came up and he talked in Ottawa, and he talked to the CPR. And they admire. That man talked so smooth that, uh, [chuckles] when he was through talking, they already give in anyway. [laughs] But you see, it took a long time for the platform inspectors, whether it was Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, or Vancouver to really understand and appreciate what a union meant.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Joseph:** So therefore, they broke the rules so many times, and so many times they have been slapped with these infractions.

**Stanley:** Right. Which resulted in claims then.

**Joseph:** Claims. Right. And they had to pay them.

**Stanley:** All right.

**Joseph:** One man was laid out for a fire for a year and they had to pay him all that time. Brotherhood beat 'em.

**Stanley:** Why was he fired?

**Joseph:** Well, it was, uh, alleged that he was, uh, seducing a woman.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Joseph:** But the woman said, "No, he did not." There was no such thing that happened.

**Stanley:** Montreal man, was it?

**Joseph:** No. He was a Toronto man.

**Stanley:** Oh, I know who you're talking about. Right, right. Mm-hmm. Um--

**Joseph:** Well, we've had Toro-- uh, Montreal men too involved, and we've got them off.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh. What were the big changes that took place, uh-uh, in working conditions, hours of work, et cetera, rates of pay once the C-- the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters took over in a collective agreement from-from the CPR?

**Joseph:** Well, when the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters took over, and that was in the year 1945, we were carrying the troops. I don't know whoever used the word Canadian troops to and fro, from Europe, as far as Vancouver, from Vancouver back to Halifax, Nova Scotia. And, uh, we were being paid a very, very lowly scaler. And so the union called upon the CPR, the CPR called upon the government, and the government raised the salary by X number of dollars, was supposed to be, uh, what should I say? Uh, it was a government raise and it held on.

**Stanley:** Cost of living thing.

**Joseph:** Yes. It's out of a cost of living and well, we'd have to say it, compared to what we were getting, \$85 a month, this was like heaven. The doors opened, we were beginning to see the light.

**Stanley:** Were the Brotherhood have anything to do with that raise?

**Joseph:** Oh yes, because they asked for more money.

**Stanley:** Oh yeah.

**Joseph:** And the company, naturally, the company is-is not stupid, you know. The company know-knows how to run its business and it's pointed out to the government all these cars they brought off from the graveyard to carry these troops and, uh, they needed some help. And so the government pitched in this extra money. But, when the-the war was over sometime around the end of '45, was it not?

**Stanley:** Uh, yeah [crosstalk].

**Joseph:** Then the union went in again, not just the Brotherhood, but the, uh, what was that? 110,000 non-ops. And we were part of the non-op, uh, situation. We joined with them. And then we were able to not only hold the amount of money that the government gave, but we received an increase on top of that, that was directly from the company.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Joseph:** And it remained that way.

**Stanley:** All right. So you're speaking of working of one change that took place was a-an increase in the- in the salary.

**Joseph:** Right.

**Stanley:** What about the work conditions and hours of work [inaudible 00:34:28]?

**Joseph:** Yeah, that was fought for by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. We were working 240 hours a month. And that was cut down to-- I don't know [inaudible 00:34:45]

eight hour day. We was cut down. I-I can't, uh, spell it. Uh, in my, uh, in the cases that we fought. It might give you an idea.

**Stanley:** Yeah. Okay. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. But you would say that the hours of work were reduced?

**Joseph:** Reduced.

**Stanley:** Considerably or minimally?

**Joseph:** Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. More realistic because we were going from Montreal to Vancouver, working 21 hours a day.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Joseph:** With only three hours, 21.5, so three hours and a half off.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Joseph:** And that was inhuman, which was pointed out to the company by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

**Stanley:** Right. Mm-hmm. So the result was that we didn't get anymore sleep on the road but we got more layover at home, didn't we?

**Joseph:** That was what the results.

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Joseph:** We got more layover in Vancouver at the end of the line and we received more layover when we arrived back home, to compensate.

**Stanley:** Yeah. Right. Well, how about individual treatment by individual company representatives towards the porters? Was there a-a more [crosstalk]?

**Joseph:** Oh, well, that's something that-that is beautiful for-- to me to explain to you. That was something because when I first started, I never knew what my name was, but soon as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters came in, instead of being called Porter, John, Henry or anything else, I was called JM Sealy, to the end. I knew who I was. I received more respect from the inspectors and from the- and from the- uh-uh, well, what should I say, management?

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Joseph:** As a matter of fact, uh, I became-- I don't wanna travel too fast. Anyway, it wa- it was much better. Everything was much better. It was a pleasure to go to work.

**Stanley:** I seem to recall that, uh, we used to sleep in the smoking room, just-

**Joseph:** Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Yeah.



**Stanley:** -in poor condition.

**Joseph:** Brotherhood, uh, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters changed that. And the smoking room was no place for a porter to sleep because you couldn't get rest without being interrupted by some passenger getting up in the middle of the night and wanting to smoke or whatever. So, we were given an upper berth in the standard sleeper. And if you were on a grand car, you went back to the nearest standard sleeper and you were given an upper berth. That was a great improvement.

**Stanley:** How about, uh, in the dining car? Were any changes as far as food was concerned?

**Joseph:** Well, yeah. We-- uh, the dining car depended, not so much the company, was really your fellow employees. If they were good fellows, you got a decent portion of food for-for the money that you paid. And, uh, if they were not, you just paid your money, but you didn't get very much for it, so therefore there was constant irritation and unhappiness between the two.

**Stanley:** Was it true that, uh, before the-the Brotherhood contract with the CPR that porters more or less got leftovers in the dining car, whereas after they were able to order from-from the, uh, from the, uh, menu?

**Joseph:** No, that's not true.

**Stanley:** That's not true?

**Joseph:** No.

**Stanley:** Somebody mentioned that.

**Joseph:** Like I said, some crew might have done that, but I have never come in contact with any crew who would do that because it was a simple reason, we ate first. We ate first what's on that menu.

**Stanley:** Always [inaudible 00:38:34]?

**Joseph:** Far as I remember, [crosstalk] yeah. But there is something perhaps you'd like to know something about pertaining to whenever we were here, we traveled to say St. John, Halifax, Winnipeg, and different other points. The CPR provided what you would call a berth, a bed. And some were made into-- well, beds were in a bunk house strictly owned by the CPR and they weren't too bad. But there were sometimes 24 men in one room. That's- oh, that wasn't too healthy.

But then when we went to St. John, we were in private homes and those beds and those mattresses were something terrible. And they had cockroaches and bed bugs. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters inspected that. And they had the company change it, to either a hotel or the bunk house.

**Stanley:** Oh I see.

**Joseph:** So, that was a great improvement.

**Stanley:** Um, um, the Brotherhood had the Ladies' Auxiliary.

**Joseph:** Yes.

**Stanley:** Uh, do you recall, uh-- First of all, yeah, do you recall who the organizers of-of-of that auxiliary were in Canada?

**Joseph:** Well, I can't use that term Canada, because it seems to me that in every city they had a Ladies' Auxiliary, but I know that everything pertaining to the Brotherhoods began in Montreal. After that, then the other, uh, provinces that we traveled to had to be contacted and shown how to organize the different, uh, auxiliaries. I believe and I hope I'm right, I believe-- I know Mrs. Braxton was the- uh, was the president of the Ladies' Auxiliary, but I feel that there's somebody else who began. I-I-I believe that maybe, uh, I'd have to guess Mrs. Dash knows, but-but would know about that. And, uh, the first Mrs. Baxton.

**Stanley:** Oh, yes. Mm-hmm. [background noise] All right. Do you think it was a-- do you think it was useful to have a Ladies' Auxiliary?

**Joseph:** Well, yes. I think so. Same as where-- [unintelligible 00:41:23] we have a Ladies, we have chapters who helps the brothers, you know.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Joseph:** Men always will need help.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Joseph:** And they were dynamic, the ladies, especially in the States.

**Stanley:** Right. What did you think of, um, the practice of tipping?

**Joseph:** Well, I don't think that has too much to do with the union, does it?

**Stanley:** No. Well, it's, uh-- it's quite true, but I just wonder what you-you thought about it.

**Joseph:** Well, long before the union come along, that's the-the porters wages was made up of tips. That's why they were working for \$75 a month.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Joseph:** Because the company expected the passengers to, uh, increase their amount of money to take home by these tips. That's why you had to do such thing as shine shoes every night.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Joseph:** Brush them off, is a form of, you might say, begging. Didn't have much dignity to it.

**Stanley:** Did you-- What's the biggest tip you ever received?

**Joseph:** No, I don't-- I've heard [unintelligible 00:42:46] has tell all kind of stories about big tips they have received, but I haven't. Perhaps I wasn't as good a porter as they. [silence]

**Stanley:** I see. What do you think of the, um, leadership that was given to the Brotherhood by, uh, A. Philip- A. Philip Randolph for instance?

**Joseph:** Well, all you can say is, here is a man who impressed the President of the United States. And if he become your leader, you would not be in good, uh, taste to be able to-to say that his leadership was good or bad. I have to say it's good, because he brings along with his leadership prestige.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Joseph:** And he didn't come alone. He had himself, vice president. I think it was five of them. Including one we- one we had here and he was known as the field organizer, Brother Blanchette. And we all feel that Brother Blanchette was a-a born gifted speaker. And once he got up there with the big guns, he was able to digest what they were puttin' down. And when he put it down, you would think it came from him. So, we had good leadership. We had good leadership in the different locals. We had men here who stood out there. I have to compliment Brother Dash. When he got up into the superintendent's office or the manager's office, you would know that when he opened his mouth, he wasn't there as a porter. He was there as a Grievance Committee. He was the secretary-treasurer of the- uh, of the, um, district here in Montreal. And I was the president for 12 years.

**Stanley:** You were president for 12 years fro-- starting, what year?

**Joseph:** Oh, I can't go. I don't remember this really, it's been a very, very long time, but I-I know what the amount of years. It was 12 years and, um, Dash was the secretary-treasurer for more than 12, for more. Oh, yes. Then he ended up as the president. I retired in a '75, and I think '76 Brother Dash became president, until such time as Brother Blanchette died. And then he took over, he was promoted to his position. But at that time, the Brotherhood was breaking up and you see, changes were being made, but I was not in the scene. I was vice president, even then.

**Stanley:** You mean when Dash became president?

**Joseph:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Well, you reverted to the vice presidency?

**Joseph:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Who was the, uh--

**Joseph:** The treasurer was Ferry.

**Stanley:** Ferry, right.

**Joseph:** Secretary-treasurer was Ferry. Jennings was with me.

**Stanley:** Who was the president before you took over?

**Joseph:** George Braxton.

**Stanley:** All right.

**Joseph:** Before him, Coleman.

**Stanley:** Brother Coleman's still in Montreal, isn't he?

**Joseph:** No, no. Brother Coleman's in Ottawa.

**Stanley:** I mean, pardon me. Ottawa, yes. I'm gonna see when I'm done there, I hope. Um--

**Joseph:** Well now, you got everything to work with, right there.

**Stanley:** Well, I'm not sure if they were the, uh, organizers of the la--

**Joseph:** They were the organizers.

**Stanley:** Oh, they were?

**Joseph:** This is the very inception.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Joseph:** 25 years at that time the Brotherhood and this is the book, the-the inception. You got everything there of when they started.

**Stanley:** I see. The Sealy notes that the Ladies' Auxiliary, Montreal, Canada, um, members photograph in the, uh, anniversary, um, 25th anniversary, Silver Jubilee, uh, program, uh, are the original founders of the Ladies' Auxiliary CPR in Montreal.

**[00:47:01] [END OF AUDIO]**