

**Stanley Grizzle:** Interview of Harold J Fowler at Wheels Motor Inn at Chatham, Ontario, on December 29, 1987. Starting at 11:15 AM approximately. Harold, give me your full name.

**Harold James Fowler:** Uh, HJ Fowler or Harold James Fowler.

**Stanley:** Where are you from Harold?

**Harold:** Uh-uh, Dover Township, uh, Kent County, Canada.

**Stanley:** That's near where?

**Harold:** Near the City of Chatham.

**Stanley:** The City of Chatham. Is it in Dresden in there?

**Harold:** No, near the-near the City of Chatham.

**Stanley:** All right. Uh, what-what--

**Harold:** S-six-six miles from the City of Chatham.

**Stanley:** I see. What's your birth date?

**Harold:** August 5th, 1915.

**Stanley:** 19 what?

**Harold:** '15.

**Stanley:** '15, yeah. And, uh, you were born where?

**Harold:** I beg your pardon?

**Stanley:** You were born in Dover Township?

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Oh, yeah, yeah. And, uh, you, um, you became a sleeping car porter for the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, didn't you?

**Harold:** That's right.

**Stanley:** All right. What y-year and date did you become a sleeping car porter?

**Harold:** June the 10th, 1939, I made my first trip.

**Stanley:** To where?

**Harold:** Vancouver.

**Stanley:** Why did you take the job of sleeping car porter? Ho-ho-how come you took the job?

**Harold:** Oh, I had a truck and I was gonna buy a new-- get me and buy a new truck and I wanted to make enough money that summer to-- So I could buy a new-- own a new truck.

**Stanley:** Okay, well, did you see, uh, a notice in the paper that they were hiring porters or how did you come across that?

**Harold:** Somebody told me, I really don't know.

**Stanley:** What other men started with you on the railroad if you can recall, as a porter.

**Harold:** Uh, Percy Nuby, Arthur Alexander, uh, Raymond Robbins, uh, Les Crosby, and Harold Fowler. Is that five?

**Stanley:** Yes, sounds about right. Um, and how long were you a sleeping car porter?

**Harold:** '39 to, uh, '76.

**Stanley:** 1976.

**Harold:** June.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Harold:** Or July.

**Stanley:** Uh, why did you leave the job at '76?

**Harold:** Um, I could say health. I was bothered with arthritis [coughs] in my back.

**Stanley:** How old were you then?

**Harold:** I-I was 61.

**Stanley:** Are you on a pension now?

**Harold:** Oh, yes.

**Stanley:** A disability pension, isn't it?

**Harold:** No, no, I had 37 years.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. So you get a full pension?

**Harold:** Yea.

**Stanley:** Just out of curiosity, what's your pension per month?

**Harold:** Well, I'm not allowed to say.

**Stanley:** You're not?

**Harold:** No.

**Stanley:** There was no pension when you started and there was no pension plan when you started on the road because there wasn't when I started in '40.

**Harold:** Wasn't there?

**Stanley:** No, no pension plan at all.

**Harold:** There was no union, that's for sure.

**Stanley:** So did you want to talk about the pension or--?

**Harold:** Well, I, uh-uh-uh, today, uh, when I retired, the pension, uh, was quite a bit, but it's very stationary that pension, it hasn't went up 10% in 10, 11 years.

**Stanley:** I see, there's no increase in-in according w-with the cost of living, is there?

**Harold:** No.

**Stanley:** I see, but you don't want to tell us the amount.

**Harold:** [coughs] Well, there is no--there is no increase.

**Stanley:** All right. Uh, what I'm trying to do is compare the conditions now and then, but you don't wanna tell me the amount of inc-- Of your pension and that's-

**Harold:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** - that's your personal right. All right, um, when you started as a porter, do you recall a Porters' Welfare Committee?

**Harold:** I beg your pardon.

**Stanley:** Do you recall a Porters' Welfare Committee?

**Harold:** The porters it were, yes.

**Stanley:** They had a welfare committee?

**Harold:** Yes, Ray-Ray Lewis was-- He called it the begging committee.

**Stanley:** The begging committee?

**Harold:** Yes. [laughter] Ray was the guy that ran for Canada in Germany.

**Stanley:** In the Olympic games?

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** It wasn't in Germany, it was in Los Angeles. However, yes.

**Harold:** But how come Hitler didn't want to speak to him and Jesse Owens then?

**Stanley:** No, he wasn't, uh-- I know it wasn't in [unintelligible 00:04:33] around there.

**Harold:** I don't know, he said that it wasn't-- he called and refused to speak to him. That's all I know and he didn't. [laughs]

**Stanley:** Maybe he was there, but he didn't run that year.

**Harold:** Well, he mighta been and he mighta been with the athletes, I don't know.

**Stanley:** Correct, okay, it could have been, yeah, uh, to explore that.

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Uh, but what about the Welfare Committee? Did it--did it-- Wh-wh-what was the function of the Welfare Committee? And you [crosstalk].

**Harold:** What Ray said it was, a begging committee.

**Stanley:** Begging for what?

**Harold:** Well, if you got in a little trouble, you go up there and the boss has got his job, uh, whoever his goal was up for you, so it's a begging committee because it had no power.

**Stanley:** I see, so it looked after the, uh,-

**Harold:** It attempted to.

**Stanley:** - the grievances of the porters-

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** - the sleeping car porters?

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** I see.

**Harold:** They attempted.

**Stanley:** They attempted to, I see. Uh-huh.

**Harold:** I never bothered with it because I could talk better myself. I figured, uh, me and the man, I know what I did or didn't do and, uh--

**Stanley:** But you paid them money at least, any dues?

**Harold:** No. No, we paid \$2 to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters when it came in, uh, it came around 1942, I think.

**Stanley:** Yeah, we'll talk about that in a moment. Uh, do you-- Who else was on the Welfare Committee with Ray Lewis, do you recall?

**Harold:** I don't know, really. I-I ran with Ray quite a bit and he came down to Hamilton and if I seen him down there, I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Oh I'm down here for the begging committee."

**Stanley:** [laughs] You make me laugh. [laughter] I hope you, uh-- Ho-- Did you enjoy the job of sleeping acr porter? Did you enjoy the job?

**Harold:** Yeah, at times, yeah. I-I never had no trouble with the passengers, just them dumb superintendents, the one that led on as they know a lot and didn't know shit. [laughs] You'll have to cut that one out.

**Stanley:** I see.

**Harold:** Okay.

**Stanley:** But, uh, other than the supervisor or superintendents, did you enjoy the tri-- meeting the public?

**Harold:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Stanley:** Um, now you mentioned the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. You became a member of that organization?

**Harold:** Oh, yes, I'm a chartered member.

**Stanley:** What does that mean?

**Harold:** I was there when they started.

**Stanley:** What year was that it began?

**Harold:** 1942, I think.

**Stanley:** Were you ever an officer in the union?

**Harold:** Uh, entertainment, and then I used to-- On the road, I used to be, look all kind like a captain or you know.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Harold:** Guys didn't know, I see 'em out of line, I tried to line them up a little bit, you know.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. What were your dues, your membership dues when you started?

**Harold:** Two dollars, two dollars.

**Stanley:** And the joining fees? What was the joining fees?

**Harold:** I can't really recall, but it would be equivalent with two dollars. Maybe I'd say it was - I don't really know.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Harold:** I-I-- It slips my mind.

**Stanley:** Why did you join the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

**Harold:** Well, I was ready for it a long time before it come. I--

**Stanley:** Why?

**Harold:** Who? Well, I didn't like the attitude the way they could talk to you or keep you waiting around and-and-and somebody else gettin' served in them offices. And the prejudice in the restaurants, the same thing. They camouflaged it, but it was gross.

**Stanley:** What happened to discrimination in the restaurant? What kind of discrimination did you encounter?

**Harold:** Well, uh, in Calgary they didn't service. Serv-service in there with the dirty uniforms in there. I was one of the ones that was in to, uh, disrupting that and I paid for it for three, four years because every time I went to Calgary, they wro-wrote me up for something.

**Stanley:** Is that so?

**Harold:** That's right.

**Stanley:** What was your specific criticism about the service?

**Harold:** They fed us down in with the uniforms, where the porters changed their clothes.

**Stanley:** Was it in a commissary underground?

**Harold:** No, this was just off of the restaurant.

**Stanley:** Were, the surroundings not clean?

**Harold:** Well, how are you gonna be clean in a porters' room, where everybody comes in to change their clothes and-and stuff a-around, you know?

**Stanley:** You mean they brought the food in there to you.

**Harold:** That's right. They didn't serve in the restaurant.

**Stanley:** Oh, yeah.

**Harold:** I didn't even know it. I was served in there and Stan Lag got in a little trouble. And, uh, he was going to hit the chef and I said, "Don't hit the chef, hit the superintendents. I'll

stand in-- Between y-y-you and whoever is coming down there." [coughs] No, why hit the chef? He was doing as he's told.

**Stanley:** So you had to eat-eat your-your food is brought to you in the porters' room, where people, the men changed their clothes.

**Harold:** Oh, you got it and took it in there.

**Stanley:** Was that so?

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Crazy times. All right, were there any other conditions which you-you thought were unreasonable which-- The Brotherhood is-- was responsible for changing?

**Harold:** Well, I-I think so. They-they had the same thing practically in, uh, Winnipeg, but a little more diplomatic, eh? They even had that where you were just over there on one side at the back, you know, and, uh--

**Stanley:** The back of what, the restaurant?

**Harold:** Yeah, you remember where it was along there, don't you?

**Stanley:** No, I don't remember that one, no.

**Harold:** Oh, well, it-it was-- See, I didn't eat in the restaurant, uh-uh, you know. When I was in Winnipeg, I-I was, uh, stationed at Winnipeg, so if you're stationed at a place, you had to eat on your own, you see, and I ate in the Rum Buggy.

**Stanley:** You what?

**Harold:** I ate in the Rum Buggy, a little restaurant. You know the guy-- The lady that-- Blanchette's wife?

**Stanley:** It was Boland.

**Harold:** Yeah. [coughs]

**Stanley:** Yes, oh yes.

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Huh. Now, um, I'm interested in you telling me about other conditions that were-were-we're, uh, on-- in a poorly, you know, w-which we handled, uh, were changed by the Brotherhood.

**Harold:** Well, uh-uh, the hours for one thing.

**Stanley:** Hours of work?

**Harold:** Yeah. I'd say they changed, uh-uh, po-possibly, uh, close to 50%. We used to run to Vancouver and back, uh, twice in a payday. Couldn't have been twice, must have been twice a month, but we-we only got five nights. And when-when we quit, we-we'd run to Winnipeg, we was gettin' five nights. Just did left-left a different time of day. Left earlier in the day.

**Stanley:** What about the pay?

**Harold:** Well, that was, uh-- I was there a long time under a hundred dollars. \$87 I think it was after five years [coughs] unless you run the parlor car.

**Stanley:** The Brotherhood, did that increase?

**Harold:** Oh, yes, but everything was going up a little bit then, but we was way in the late '40s before we got much over \$100 because they-they raised on percentage until that one guy that raised that 9%, we didn't have nothin' to raise on. If we got what everybody else got, we didn't get nothin', uh, because we wasn't-we wasn't-- Didn't have nothing to raise on. But when he raised across the board 9%, it helped us a lot because--

**Stanley:** All right, tell me, who were the chief organizers of the union at the beginning, to your recollection?

**Harold:** You talkin' about elected or-or--?

**Stanley:** Oh, no, before the-before the election of officers, uh, you know.

**Harold:** I don't really know. I think it was kind of generally. I-I was carrying a card. I can't forget who I got it from, but I was carrying a card when it was sort of illegal. You must have too?

**Stanley:** Well, I was in the army.

**Harold:** Oh, oh, I see. This is why-- This explains somethin' because I couldn't figure why some of this stuff you didn't remember, but, uh--

**Stanley:** Some of the stuff I do remember, but-

**Harold:** Yeah, but, uh--

**Stanley:** - [crosstalk] in your own words [crosstalk].

**Harold:** Yeah, and-- But the army, you know, like there's very few guys that, uh-- Ed Brown's about the only guy that went t-to-- See, Lebrun was off two, three years, uh, less. And a lot of the guys were-were in the army.

**Stanley:** You can't see-- You can't recall who the-- the chief organizers were in the beginning? None, no names at all?

**Harold:** Well, I know some of the ones that, uh, they must have been in it-in it, uh, in-in this, because they were some of the first officers was Pat Grave and the Baldwins.



**Stanley:** It was Charlie Baldwin?

**Harold:** Yeah, and, uh, and, uh, and, uh, oh, the guy you said that died or-or you was visitin' him down the states or other last week.

**Stanley:** Laster.

**Harold:** Laster?

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Harold:** And-a-a-and Mase.

**Stanley:** Mason?

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Luther Mason?

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Oh, yeah.

**Harold:** Yeah, and Bob-Bob, uh, Willis and, uh, Bob Willis and, uh, the guy from Hamilton there, Pet-- Uh, oh, God, he's originally from Dresden.

**Stanley:** Bob Harrison?

**Harold:** Bob Harrison. Ray Lewis.

**Stanley:** Is Bob Harrison from Dresden?

**Harold:** Yeah, originally, yeah.

**Stanley:** Oh, I didn't know.

**Harold:** I never noticed till I went on the road. I never, you know. He was railroading and I lived about 18 mile-- 15 miles from Dresden.[coughs]

**Stanley:** It resemble to me, he resembled **[inaudible 00:15:17]**.

**Harold:** Mm. Yeah, yeah. You know, he run the cleanest car on the train lots of times and he's runnin' the tourist car.

**Stanley:** You mean the **[inaudible 00:15:26]**.

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** He was a real housekeeper.

**Harold:** Oh, brother.

**Stanley:** You recall a number of names, but you haven't recalled Harry Gairey? Was he an organizer?

**Harold:** I don't remember Harry a-at first, no. I'm not saying he wasn't, you know.

**Stanley:** Anybody else? Any women? How about the women, were any women involved in the organizing that you recall?

**Harold:** Well, a-after we, uh-- They set up the-- After we was set up, a lot of these names, this is why it come. Ernie Stenson, I don't know whether I mentioned him or not. Hmm?

**Stanley:** You didn't mention him, no.

**Harold:** Yeah, yeah. Well, Ernie was, uh, our entertainment there, and if you got half of what Ernie went for, you had a good due. [laugh] Yeah, you know, when we had them dances downtown in them hotel.

**Stanley:** In the hotels.

**Harold:** Yeah, and all that. The one on Bay Street there too.

**Stanley:** The Sovereign, yeah.

**Harold:** Is that the Sovereign? Yeah. Well, we had one over on York there too. They, and, uh, they, uh--

**Stanley:** What do you mean if you got half of what he got?

**Harold:** Well, he is big-minded, you know.

**Stanley:** Oh.

**Harold:** Yeah, yeah. He, uh-- I worked with him, uh, quite a few years, but, uh, looked like I was gettin' to be a bouncer and they didn't want you to wear a pin to show who you was. So I said that's enough of that.

**Stanley:** A pin?

**Harold:** I wanna show something to say that I wa-- Uh-uh, that I was what-- That I was representin' the Brotherhood.

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Harold:** You know.

**Stanley:** Did you dance and make any money?

**Harold:** Oh, yeah, I think they did, yeah. And the prize, me and Mrs. Walker used to fight over the amount of money going in them prizes, you know.

**Stanley:** Burrita Walker?

**Harold:** Yeah, Walker's first wife.

**Stanley:** Benny Walker's first wife.

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Oh, so Burrita.

**Harold:** Mm.

**Stanley:** Um, getting back to the initial organizing of the union, do you recall if there was any intimidation on the part of Management against the-the-the organizers?

**Harold:** Oh, no. No more than there was before 'cause they-- This was one of the things that was against i-it, you know. This is the-the-- Every little old guy that had a petty job wanted to intimidate you. This is why I didn't like these guys. I don't mind the guy come tell me if he's right, but don't tell me if he doin' what he's talking about and-and-and you know, and expect me to swallow whether I like it or not. I ain't goin'- [chuckles] I ain't goin' for that too much.

**Stanley:** Um, getting back to the improvement of conditions, you didn't mention-- You mentioned the food and, uh, porters' respect as it related to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, which changed the attitude in those areas. How about sleep on the train and the porters' quarters off the trains, were there any changes made there?

**Harold:** Well, there-there weren't too bad before. Uh, some of 'em-- Some of the places was overly strict on the hours you got in and different things,[coughs] uh, but, uh, then we got the-- So you used your key, you know, and, uh, so-- But I think we mighta had it or headin' for that before 'cause I know them school teachers that came down from the States, that came down there every summer. They had a lot to do with, uh, getting that key thing done too. And there weren't guys that stayed out that late.

**Stanley:** Why were they more effective than the local guys?

**Harold:** I didn't say that-- The local guys don't do nothing lots of times, uh, 'cause when Bob Harrison got fired, I was surprised at Calgary, you know. Calgary, and we had the union then too. And Llo-- Me and Lloyd Williams got in 'cause Lloyd was tellin' the guys in Calgary that he wasn't paid up. The man paid for years and he's outta home, uh, protect him anyhow, you know. The-- Uh, there, when it gets to the showdown, they can pay up or back or-or-or something, but Bob paid for years, but Bob lived outta town and something, and I tried to get. In the background I did, was to try to get, um, to take out 2% or something a-a-a-and just pay it into the bank right across the street there. And that'd take away all excuses and anybody outta town could pay, you know.

**Stanley:** Um, [clears throat] but would you like to evaluate, uh, for me the, uh, leadership given by A Philip Randolph, what did you think about his leadership altogether?

**Harold:** Well, I think it was pretty good. I think Benny Smith, I never-- I always thought when Benny got through organizing, it was time for him to move on. [chuckles] That was my-- This was a personal thing, eh. [coughs]

**Stanley:** Feel like-- That's like a personal [crosstalk].

**Harold:** Huh?

**Stanley:** Beyond the personalities, the-- We were talkin' about people who helped the un-- keep the union together.

**Harold:** That's what I'm talking about.

**Stanley:** Yes.

**Harold:** His-his personality was, you know.

**Stanley:** He did the job.

**Harold:** He-he was a-he was a smart organizer, you know. He could make you think you needed that union even if you didn't. Which you did, you know. [chuckles]

**Stanley:** How about Blanchette, what did you think of his leadership?

**Harold:** Well, I think Blanchette was all right. He, uh, he had, uh-- I think what made him-- He was a little better educated than the average guy we had.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Harold:** We had a lot of guys said they had a lot of education, but they didn't seem to never show no papers, see? [coughs] Yeah, like, uh-uh, little whatchamacallit. What's his name? He stayed right there the last or, you know.

**Stanley:** Jimmy, uh,-

**Harold:** Jimmy.

**Stanley:** - Ewing.

**Harold:** Jimmy Ewing, yeah.

**Stanley:** Oh, yes, Yeah. All right, uh,-

**Harold:** [coughs]

**Stanley:** - So over the years, can you give me the names of the individuals in Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Montreal, and Toronto, who you thought or sort of stalwarts, helped to keep the union together over the years?

**Harold:** Well, there-there was the Williamses in Calgary.

**Stanley:** Oh, Roy Williams, oh, yeah.

**Harold:** Yes. There's-there was a couple Williamses.

**Stanley:** Carl-Carl was in Winnipeg, yeah.

**Harold:** Yeah, yeah, Carl was in Winnipeg. Is he? He tried hard to be my father-in-law.  
[laughs]

**Stanley:** [inaudible 00:22:49]

**Harold:** I better be careful then. [laughter]

**Stanley:** You-you-you're-you're-you-you're makin' this job very amusing for me. Keep talking. [laughter]

**Harold:** Oh gosh, sure. Blanchette was one of-- 'Cause they kicked Blanchette. See, they didn't like Blanchette on account of his attitude, you know. Blanchette, uh, wasn't insulting, but he had enough education to wi-wind them guys up and, uh, and make 'em very uncomfortable.

**Stanley:** He was managing them.

**Harold:** Managing.

**Stanley:** There you go.

**Harold:** Yeah, see? But you know what? The-- You-you know his reason? He was ten years getting his seniority. They'd run him out of Vancouver o-o-or he w-would get that job, uh, runnin' out of Vancouver, down in the States there. What would they call that train that ran down to St. Paul?

**Stanley:** [inaudible 00:23:41]

**Harold:** Yeah, and down in there. And then they'd come up with somethin', pull him out of service. And-and the time he got back, he didn't have enough time to get his seniority.

**Stanley:** How did the seniority work in those days?

**Harold:** You had to have so many, uh-uh, months within so many months and you didn't have too much to give, eh.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Harold:** War time it didn't matter, man. You could run, run, run. [chuckles] See, another-another little trick that they pulled was that you didn't get no over-- Your overtime didn't count on seniority. They robbed you of that, you know.

**Stanley:** I see, but you can't give me anymore specifics of how similarly, uh, seniority of the crew, they--

**Harold:** [coughs]

**Stanley:** How you gathered seniority.

**Harold:** Well, this is what, you, in a certain time, you had to, uh, make up so much time. Say-- say in four months you had to make three months, and if you didn't, you di--you didn't get nothin'.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. And, of course, seniority affected rates of paid.

**Harold:** Oh, yeah. Yeah.

**Stanley:** What, um, what-- You have mentioned A Philip Randolph, Benny Smith, and Blanchette as far as evaluating people who have helped you keep the union together, but how about other people in the other districts other than, uh, those men who--who over the years helped to keep the union together? You can't re- ...

**Harold:** Well, I me--I mentioned Williamses.

**Stanley:** In Calgary.

**Harold:** Yeah, and I mentioned Ernie, the guy Vancouver, that lame guy.

**Stanley:** Lawrence? Was it Lawrence?

**Harold:** Yeah, and them three brothers.

**Stanley:** Collins [unintelligible]

**Harold:** Yeah, and, uh, the-- Well, there was several others.

**Stanley:** In Winnipeg?

**Harold:** In--in Winnipeg, uh, a guy named, uh, Williamses, oh, gosh. [clears throat]

**Stanley:** How about Montreal and Toronto?

**Harold:** Well, there was always-- There was a lot of guys, you know, that, uh-- I think, uh--uh, there was a lot of guys that didn't say much then, but they-- Their reaction helped the union, you know, and their courage helped the union too.

**Stanley:** Recall some names for the record here.

**Harold:** Well, I can't. [laughs] I'd--I'd have to go get a book. It wasn't Jones. Yeah, maybe it was Jones. And, uh, what was his Jones' name?

**Stanley:** Ronald?

**Harold:** No, Win-- Uh, you said Montreal.

**Stanley:** Well, Joe Jones.

**Harold:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Oh yeah.

**Harold:** Was that Joe Jones? But there was Jennings and there was, oh, gosh. There, uh, there was a lot of those guys. I got a lot of names o-of those guys

**Stanley:** In Toronto then, Toronto, were you familiar with Toronto leadership?

**Harold:** Well, I went to, uh, about five or six there. When I was talkin' about that other there, Ray Lewis and, uh, and, uh, and--

**Stanley:** And you mentioned Ray Lewis in the context of, uh, the-the Welfare Committee.

**Harold:** [coughs] Well, he was--

**Stanley:** He was also a leader of the committee.

**Harold:** Oh, yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah. You better-- Better believe it, after all that beggin' he'd done. [laughter]

**Stanley:** Okay.

**Harold:** It wasn't his fault, it just didn't mean nothin'. Uh, he-he--

**Stanley:** It wasn't the Cromwells or, uh--

**Harold:** Yeah. Look, there was two Cromwell brother.

**Stanley:** Nickel or Dave Reynolds, any of those guys or-or Webb Mitchell.

**Harold:** I don't-- Oh, yeah. Well, yeah, there-- A lot of those guys is like me. They didn't say a lot, but they was solid, though. There are a lot of guys.

**Stanley:** You didn't mention the-the man you're looking at here.

**Harold:** Who is that? Well, you were-you-you were our representative at one time.

**Stanley:** Yes, I was. All right.

**Harold:** Yeah, and they were, uh-uh, oh, you know, the brown boys, Lebrun, you know.

**Stanley:** [inaudible 00:27:55]

**Harold:** Yeah, a-and, uh, oh gosh, and there was, uh, like there was short-term guys that was good there, but I don't even know whether they were paid 'cause they were just part-time, the Shads and all them All, all-all-all of them guys down there, you'd be surprised how many people out of Kent County went down there.

**Stanley:** Who's Shad?

**Harold:** Eddie Shad and all them guys and Owen Shad and--

**Stanley:** Eddie's still around, isn't he?

**Harold:** Yeah, Eddie's still around. Owen's passed.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh. All right, um--

**Harold:** And Simmons, you remember little Charlie Simmons? He was paid all the time and-- and from, uh, you know, Joe Taylor and all them from Owen Sound. Charles-Charles Deval and another guy too. He was--he was a strong union from out of town. You remember he died of leukemia. A big fat fellow, light. Percy Jewel.

**Stanley:** Oh Percy. Oh yes.

**Harold:** Yeah, o--old Percy. He was-- He would play, but when you got down to business, [chuckles] Percy, he'd go, you know.

**Stanley:** And the Anderson brothers in London?

**Harold:** Oh, my, yes. Yeah. They was always, you know-- Didn't say much maybe, but they was always there. You--you-- If they were counted, they ain't gonna be over there someplace, they'll be where they were counted at.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Now what about the White supporters, did you find that they, uh, supported the Brotherhood?

**Harold:** Some of 'em. Yeah. I thought that was a rough deal. Well, we fire-- fought prejudice so long, and then they bring the same equipment in against us for the, uh, [chuckles] you know, when they brought these White porters in, we-- There wasn't much we could do because we were fighting prejudice.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Harold:** And you can't practice it and fight it at the same time.

**Stanley:** Do you think that the W-White porters were brought in to-to, uh, to weaken the, uh, the union or--?

**Harold:** I think between that, and then--and then the law or somethin' passed against-- W-- when these college boys here wasn't doing nothin', they couldn't bring them American boys in.



**Stanley:** All right. Now, um, do you recall any nicknames of porters? I'm looking to-- For a light side to this book to mention, some humorous things, you know. Can you recall any nicknames which is-- O-of porters, which might be of interest to-to mention in the book, uh, that I'm puttin' together?

**Harold:** I don't know. I-I wasn't much for nicks-- Nicknames, so I didn't call nobody no-no-no nicknames if I knew it. 'Cause I was callin' the brown boys Bub and Bird, I thought that was their name.

**Stanley:** All right.

**Harold:** Till somebody questioned me about how they were feelin' and I said, well, a-and they said, Ed and Les, I didn't know who they was talking about. [chuckles] A-and they said, "You're around them all the time." And I find out they're Bird and Bub. [clears throat]

**Stanley:** All right, um, this will be it. Um, to the-to the end of the interview now. Can you make any concluding comments or observations or both on the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters? Its effect on the you--Community, uh, or any other concluding comment? The good that they, it did in the community.

**Harold:** Oh, I think it-I think it had a great deal on-- Because it raised, lifted the standards of the porters, and as quiet as it's kept, porters did a lot for this-this country. Uh, educational-wise, uh, in the family, through the families and that, and, uh, some of 'em not so much for themselves. They's too busy to take up anything else, you know. But, uh-uh, porters of North Americas did a great, uh, a great deal for, uh-uh-uh, you know, uplifting the race, you know. So, uh, I think the Brotherhood was one of the best things 'cause I don't think I'd ever st-- I wouldn't have lasted, uh, I don't think. See, 'cause I wasn't one to go to the union even. I was-- Would go up there, but see, you still wouldn't-- You went up there on your own. If you don't talk too much, you had the support of the union anyhow, eh. [coughs] You had to support because they know you got backin' eh, and they-they maybe think that you're trying to get something.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh. Can you name any, uh, men who were portering at one time and who went on to greater things, possibly because of the inspiration of the union?

**Harold:** Well, I don't know, uh, the inspiration.

**Stanley:** 'Cause I have-I have in mind one person who was a porter one time and he went on to greater things. Um, Jimmy Watson.

**Harold:** Yeah, but I-I heard-- The story I heard that was his wife. When he went to war, when he came back, his wife gave him every dollar that had been paid to her and told him, "You're all through porterin'."

**Stanley:** Is that right?

**Harold:** That's what I heard. "You're through portering or we're through, you know. Here's your money." And, you know, she worked and looked after herself and--

**Stanley:** Absolutely.

**Harold:** Yeah, and she-- He went down there and he got that job, assistant, and then he ended up sitting as a solicitor from Windsor.

**Stanley:** Right. Can you think of any others who ex-porters who went on to better things for their family?

**Harold:** Well, there was that guy out to Vanc-Vancouver who had them chicken places. Who wa-was his name? He was an ex-porter.

**Stanley:** Oh, Mitchell.

**Harold:** Was he? His name Mitchell?

**Stanley:** I saw him in California.

**Harold:** Did you?

**Stanley:** Yes.

**Harold:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's the one. I wasn't Ray. Ray went out to, uh-uh-uh, in that, uh, some kind of business there. Ray Lewis. Father went out farmin'. [laughs]

**Stanley:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Harold:** Yeah, there-there-- We-we got a lot of-- But I think, uh, this is why I say I don't think that the union shouldn't necessarily take-- They made the opportunity. I'll tell you the biggest thing that the union did, you know. The union made people buy houses more a-and-and maybe take chances on sendin' their kids to school further than any other thing because it gives security. Any time before, the man could fire you and-and-and tell you-tell you it was none of your business what he fired you for. Why, that's-- [chuckles] That don't-that don't help you to, uh, go out and take a chance on somethin' like buyin' a house or, uh, you know.

**Stanley:** Right. Do you-do you think that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters can be faulted for the failure of porters to be promoted to-to the classification of sleeping car conductor without penalty or losing seniority?

**Harold:** Well, uh, I think possibly somewhere around that they should have investigated them applications more, you know. Or fought it more. When those-- JG Smith is one of the guys that fought for the union too. He was a quiet fighter, but a real fighter and JG and a lot of those guys lost their seniority. Who else was some guy? Who was it? For years he--

**Stanley:** Sealey.

**Harold:** Huh?

**Stanley:** Milton Sealey.

**Harold:** Sealey, I think, yeah, yeah. He lost his and [clears throat] no, I-I think that, uh-uh, I-I think that, uh, the-the-the union did-- Now, me and Laverne, when they wanted these in charge things, we were on the blacklist. [laughs] And, uh, they failed less than 15 minutes.

**Stanley:** Why?

**Harold:** They failed Laverne while he was working across Union Station [laughs] and me-me just as fast. I-I-I thought, but my daughter was a honour's student at McMaster University and she told me, she said, "Daddy, ain't no way in the world you could have passed that test." And I said, "What are you talkin' about? What makes you so smart?" She said, well, she said, "I couldn't pass it, that's why I know you couldn't pass it." "If you told me like it was," she said, "You didn't have time. It had nothin' to do, you said, with what you do." I said, "No, it didn't have a word in there about what I do." A-and she said, uh, "How you gonna pass it?" See, what they did was, uh, the guys that had given 'em a little trouble, they were gonna make 'em pay for it, you know? [smacks lips] And, uh, this is what happened in this particular incident.

**Stanley:** Okay, final question. I think this question is meant for you. You have a very keen sense of-- subtle sense of humor. Can you think of any anecdotes or anything of interest that happened to you on the railroad as a porter or in connection with the union? Something that you-you always remember?

**Harold:** Well, I remember some of the people. I-I-I had John Diefenbaker as a passenger, Walter Pidgeon, Lily Pons, uh-uh, what? Marilyn Monroe. Of course, she-she was a little bit, uh, ob-- She had a broken leg at the time, so, a-and, uh, oh, and many, uh, yeah. And Walter Pidgeon, uh, and lots of others.

**Stanley:** Something, nothing memorable happened, with you or otherwise that you can recall?

**Harold:** Oh, well, yeah, I don't-- Uh, there's a lot of things, you know, like a lot of people, some people-- I had a guy one time he was dying with a heart attack. Er, he told me, he said he wouldn't-wouldn't make Toronto, so we got him off of there, but we had to go a hundred and some miles from Kenora down to the-- that pulp mill to get him off of there. But I-I still don't know. They took him off with the ambulance and I don't know what happened, but I had five or six people that-that, you know, you go in and you see him, the way they's breathing and that, and-and you ask him, "Wanna get help?" Because that-- You know, the guy that was so good to Ronnie, the train conductor? I went up and got him one time because the lady said she's gonna go to Hanmer from Sudbury. And I went up and got him, and I said, "You better go check Room 8." Was it Room 8? 'Cause, there's two of 'em. Maybe they had two Room 8s. Anyhow, I-I said, "You better check before you leave Sudbury." And he just went in and looked at the man and then, you know, went out and had an ambulance come and get him. And he told the ambulance-the ambulance-h-he told the ambulance, the doctor, he got a doctor, the doctor told the ambulance guys to take him to intensive care. Yeah.

**Stanley:** I thought you said something about a conductor was so good to Ronnie, what was that about? Ronnie who?

**Harold:** Ronnie Van Dyke. Remember when Ronnie had that heart attack up at, um, Owen Sound?

**Stanley:** Oh, no.

**Harold:** Owen Sound, yeah.

**Stanley:** O-Onudi.

**Harold:** Onudi, yeah.

**Stanley:** What happened?

**Harold:** Well, he was taken off and to the hospital and as conductor, he's a long ways away from Toronto, eh, but closer to Sudbury actually, [coughs] and this guy looked after him like a-- Like his-his little, you know, his best friend.

**Stanley:** Well, how come Owen Sound come into the picture?

**Harold:** Well, I got the wrong place, maybe. Uh, Parry Sound.

**Stanley:** Parry Sound, oh, I see.

**Harold:** Yes. [coughs]

**Stanley:** All right, uh, I guess that the concluding question would be, what did you think of tipping, the practice of tipping?

**Harold:** Well, we couldn't have made it without it.

**Stanley:** Okay.

**Harold:** Huh? There-- No family man could've survived without it. And I think it has a place, I think is this. Not that you shouldn't get paid, but tipping has a place for the guy and people should be very careful, don't tip poor workers. Uh, pay for what you get and let the guy give you some service. This is what I bet on all the time was I-I liked the tourist cars even because I le-- I could-- I had a lot of people to make them quarters off. You know, [chuckles] the-- A local tourist car, man, and you work, you work. That crew would-- You had a lot-- You could-- A-and then a person hear you say a quarter now, they think something's the matter with you, but a quarter was a lot of money then, eh. Buy you a meal, all you could eat. Yeah.

**Stanley:** What's the largest tip you ever received?

**Harold:** Oh, I guess one, um, one but, um, the one outstanding one, once I got from a hundred miles or less out of Toronto, I got \$37 from one guy.

**Stanley:** Is that so?

**Harold:** Yeah. I went in the washroom a-a-and the guy had taken his purse out and laid it on the si-sill and I didn't know, he was in the section. And I didn't know it was him, so I come out and I said, uh, "What did you do with your purse?" and he did-- He said, "Oh my God, I left it in there on that thing." I say, "It could've walked pretty easy." See, but it excited me a little bit and I guess I spoke kind of sharp to him because-- Or I thought this was 'cause his wife got all red in the face and I said, "Oh-oh, I--" And, uh, he said, "Oh my gosh," said, he said, "All the money I had was in that purse." I said, "It's still in there, quite a bit of it." I said, "I didn't look yet." He had \$600 or \$700 'cause his wife told him, he says, "You got \$180 more than that." I s-- She said-- He said, "Why?" She said, "Remember, I gave you my money." [laughs] He didn't say anything. They wouldn't have had anything, so he gave me \$10, I think it was. He gave me \$37 from, uh, Alison comin' in. [chuckles] Our little f--

**Stanley:** That's where he--

**Harold:** Huh?

**Stanley:** That's where he got on the train?

**Harold:** No, he'd been on it all along.

**Stanley:** Oh, oh, oh.

**Harold:** But he was in the afternoon sleeping, you know, and got up and went to the ba--

**Stanley:** Where did he get on?

**Harold:** I imagine Winnipeg or someplace.

**Stanley:** I wondered how long you serviced him to get \$37, that's what I mean.

**Harold:** Oh, yes, but he wasn't going to give me that. He gave me that for [chuckles] finding his purse because I would have said he was, for that section, a two dollar 2 man, maybe \$3.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Harold, you've give me a very interesting interview, you know.

**Harold:** Mm.

**Stanley:** Everybody says something differently.

**Harold:** Oh, yeah.

**Stanley:** Including yourself and, uh, thank you very much.

**Harold:** Oh, thank you.

**Stanley:** Interview of Mr. EE Elsworth Edward Rouse [00:44:27] at his home in Dresden, Ontario, at 454 Davies Avenue West. Give me your full name please, uh. Your full name?

**Elsworth Edward Elsworth Edward Rouse:** Elsworth Edward Rouse.

**Stanley:** Birth?

**Elsworth Edward:** July the 3rd, 1914.

**Stanley:** Where?

**Elsworth Edward:** In Dresden, Ontario.

**Stanley:** And, eh, your-your given names are what? EE, what's that stand for?

**Elsworth Edward:** Elsworth Edward.

**Stanley:** And your nickname, is-is that the nickname, Buster?

**Elsworth Edward:** Buster , yeah, the nickname.

**Stanley:** Where did you get that nickname from?

**Elsworth Edward:** Well, my parents gave it to me when I was a baby.

**Stanley:** I see, I see. Doesn't mean anything?

**Elsworth Edward:** No.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Um--

**Elsworth Edward:** You see, eh, the Elsworth was my mother's maid-maiden name.

**Stanley:** Elsworth Edward ?

**Elsworth Edward:** S-s-see, my mother was-- Name was Teresa Elsworth.

**Stanley:** Oh.

**Elsworth Edward:** So they had-- Naturally, they gave me a nickname or something or else call me Edward.[laughs]

**Stanley:** I see now. Well, w-where was your father born?

**Elsworth Edward:** I think he was born in Buxton.

**Stanley:** And your mother?

**Elsworth Edward:** She-she was born in Dresden there somewhere.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm, I see. And, uh, you were born here.

**Elsworth Edward:** Yes, uh.

**Stanley:** In Dresden?

**Elsworth Edward:** Dresden.

**Stanley:** Right, and, um, you became a sleeping car porter on the Canadian Pacific Railroad, right?

**Elsworth Edward:** That's right.

**Stanley:** Was that your first job?

**Elsworth Edward:** Well, first, uh, steady job.

**Stanley:** I see. And, uh, you say your first steady job, what other jobs had you done before you became a porter?

**Elsworth Edward:** Just, um, just, I guess you'd call it a handyman, uh, yes.

**Stanley:** On a farm or--?

**Elsworth Edward:** A gardener, and so on. No, on the, uh-- For-for a man up the street there.

**Stanley:** Doing what?

**Elsworth Edward:** Well, taking care of lawns and driving for him and he had a small orchard and I took care of that and--

**Stanley:** I see. Well, how did you become a sleeping car porter? Wha-- Th-through an ad you saw or what?

**Elsworth Edward:** Well, Jim Myers was the one that came around, uh,

**Stanley:** Jim Myers?

**Elsworth Edward:** Recru-recruiting.

[pause 00:47:17]