

[Pause 00:00:00]

Stanley Grizzle: Continuation of interview with EE Buster Rouse. The man who recruited you, uh, you say it was uh, Jim Myers?

Elsworth Edward Buster Elsworth Edward: Yes.

Stanley: And he was a sleeping car porter at the CPR as well?

Elsworth Edward: Yes, for years.

Stanley: So I guess the CPR had him to do- to do the hire- the recruiting here. Is that it?

Elsworth Edward: Yes.

Stanley: And who else did he uh, recruit besides yourself at that time?

Elsworth Edward: W-well there was- there was 18 of us went down together.

Stanley: Oh, was that so? Can you remember some of the names?

Elsworth Edward: There was Goy Lad and Stan Lad, Raymond Robbins, William Archie Robbins, and Stanton Robbins, Cecil and Shirley Roux. There-there was, [swallows] Dwight Britton and James Levi.

Stanley: Great. Do you know- remember what date that was you started?

Elsworth Edward: June the 12th, 1941.

Stanley: That's the date you were hired by the CPR?

Elsworth Edward: Yes.

Stanley: Uh, huh--

Elsworth Edward: AB Smith himself came down.

Stanley: Down where?

Elsworth Edward: We met him in Chatham, and he came down and met us.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. He was the superintendent at the time-

Elsworth Edward: Yes.

Stanley: -of Sleeping Car division?

Elsworth Edward: Yes.

Stanley: Superintendent, Sleeping Car Department, Toronto area?

Elsworth Edward: Yes.

Stanley: And, um, and how long were you a sleeping car porter, or how many years did you put into as a sleeping car porter?

Elsworth Edward: Lacked one month of having 35 years.

Stanley: Is that so? And, uh, you retired at 65?

Elsworth Edward: No, I retired at 62.

Stanley: Oh, you took an early retirement?

Elsworth Edward: Retired in May '62, and I was 63 in June- in July.

Stanley: Do you mind telling me what your pension is, or is it too private?

Elsworth Edward: Well-- [silence]

Stanley: You don't have to- you don't have to answer it if you don't want to. Some people are very sensitive about that, so I don't--

Elsworth Edward: It was- it was about \$550, \$550.

Stanley: A month?

Elsworth Edward: A month.

Stanley: Yeah. And, um, I meant to ask the question, because I'm trying to show how these conditions have improved from before the union days. There was no pension plan back in the 1930s?

Elsworth Edward: No.

Stanley: That's-that's what I'm trying to show, how the union helped to improve conditions. Um, now uh, did you- did you join the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

Elsworth Edward: Yes.

Stanley: Was there any, uh, union- any representation before then, before the Welfare Committee? Do you you know anything about that?

Elsworth Edward: No, I don't know. I-I was in the army at the time.

Stanley: Oh, I see. So when you joined the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, what was the reason for you joining? Were you compelled to join, or you felt that you should join?

Elsworth Edward: I joined because I thought they needed one.

Stanley: Oh I see. What was the joining fee?

Elsworth Edward: I-I don't remember now. [chuckles]

Stanley: Or the- or the dues, the monthly dues, do you remember that?

Elsworth Edward: No, I can't remember what the dues were.

Stanley: Did you ever hold office with the union?

Elsworth Edward: No, I never.

Stanley: And, uh, how long were you a member of the union?

Elsworth Edward: Until I retired.

Stanley: Do you remember who the men, chief organizers for the union were?

Elsworth Edward: No, not right now.

Stanley: Alright. Did you ever collect dues on behalf of the union?

Elsworth Edward: No, I never.

Stanley: Can you describe for me the working conditions under which the porters worked before the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters arrived to the property of the CPR?

Elsworth Edward: Well there was a lot of long hours, and never rest.

Stanley: Oh I see, that's to put it in a nutshell, hey? [laughs] You can't-- Can you recall any specific conditions that-that took place, uh, a specific change in the conditions which took place after the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters became the official bargaining agent of the porters? Can you recall any specific changes?

Elsworth Edward: Oh, well I started working less hours but-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Elsworth Edward: -but as our pay rose, they-they cut our hours anyway, so there wasn't really a raise. [laughs]

Stanley: Who do you think were the-the persons who did the- much to hold the union together? Can you name some people who were the pillars of the union, in Canada?

[pause 00:06:25]

Elsworth Edward: Well, they all done a good job.

Stanley: Yeah, but can you recall the names of who you- of who you think were the leaders in uh, who held the union together?

Elsworth Edward: Oh memory now ain't what it used to be, so let me think a while. [sound cut] He was the first one I remember.

Stanley: Oh Petgrave, yes, uh-huh, [unintelligible 00:07:07]. No?

Elsworth Edward: And Mr. Stan Grazzle.

Stanley: Oh I have heard of him, yeah.

Elsworth Edward: Huh?

Stanley: I've heard of him.

Elsworth Edward: I think you have.

Stanley: [laughs]

Elsworth Edward: Those were the two main ones.

Stanley: How about Charles Baldwin? You remember him being involved?

Elsworth Edward: No I don't. I remember him, but I don't remember him being involved.

Stanley: How about Harry Gairey?

Elsworth Edward: Well, Harry Gairey was this the instructor and he- but he was a good one.

Stanley: Great.

Elsworth Edward: He got along with the men good, and--

Stanley: There were White porters on the railroad. Do you know if they were supportive of the union or against the union in any way?

Elsworth Edward: I don't know whether they had anything to do with it or not.

Stanley: In summary, would you say that the union contributed in any way towards uh, giving Black porters and their families pride?

Elsworth Edward: Yes, I think they did.

Stanley: You don't care- you don't care to make any comments about what you think the- the effect of the presence of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters had on the community?

Elsworth Edward: Well I-I spent most of my time- my spare time at home here. So, I--

Stanley: I see. Can you recall any interesting things that have happened to you as a Porter, anything humorous, or anything memorable that you'd like to mention?

Elsworth Edward: No, I can't think of anything.

Stanley: What do you think of the practice of tipping, receiving tips, people are giving you a tip? Did you-- Were you offended by that in any way, or did you feel it was a-a good thing or--?

Elsworth Edward: Well I thought it was all a part of the job.

Stanley: Well, a part of the job? [chuckles] It didn't offend you in any way, or did you look forward to receiving tips?

Elsworth Edward: No.

Stanley: Pardon?

Elsworth Edward: No, I took no offense from it.

Stanley: Regarding the porters for being promoted to conductors. What did you think about that move?

Elsworth Edward: I thought it was a good move.

Stanley: Did you think the Brotherhood in any way failed to represent the porters properly in that- in that uh, situation?

Elsworth Edward: No. I don't think they did. I was asked if I wanted to be one, but I refused.

Stanley: Oh, why?

Elsworth Edward: Because starting out new as a conductor, I wouldn't be able to come home when I-- My mother was living then, and uh, I-I came home after each trip.

Stanley: Oh, yes. Yes. All right. Thanks very much, Buster. [sound cut] Interview of Mr. J-- J L Robbins of uh, North Buxton, Ontario at his home. On the uh, 29th of December, 1987. Commencing at approximately 9:45 PM. Full name please? Uh, Laverne

Laverne: James Laverne, Robbins.

Stanley: Uh, and your address?

Laverne: RR6 Merlin, Ontario.

Stanley: Right. And your birthplace.

Laverne: North Buxton, Ontario.

Stanley: When is your date of birth?

Laverne: February the 14th, 1919.

Stanley: Where were your parents born Laverne?

Laverne: North Buxton, Ontario.

Stanley: Both mother and father?

Laverne: Mm-hmm.

Stanley: Right. Now, um, you became a sleeping car porter on Canadian Pacific Railroad, uh, railway company, right?

Laverne: Right.

Stanley: What date?

Laverne: June the 28th, 1940.

Stanley: And how did you become a sleeping car porter? Was there a uh, uh, uh, an ad in the paper or how did it come about?

Laverne: How did it come about? CA Johnson was looking for porters to work there in the summertime for the summertime help.

Stanley: Oh yeah. Was it Reverend Johnson?

Laverne: Yeah. Reverend CA Johnson.

Stanley: What denomination was he with?

Laverne: Methodist? British Methodist Episcopal Church.

Stanley: Oh yes. He was a sleeping car porter. Was he?

Laverne: Yeah.

Stanley: Was he an official of the company?

Laverne: No.

Stanley: Oh. And--

Laverne: He did this in the summertime. Mostly he'd come down here, but he was the one that invented the Johnson Bed. Loose bed.

Stanley: Mm. And who uh, did he uh, recruit to work for the CPR besides yourself? Do you remember any of the others?

Laverne: Oh, there was, I think on that train, there was 18 of us went down, Gory Lad.

Stanley: Was Roy uh, Rouse with you there?

Laverne: No, Gory Lad. Oh, Lord. Hubert Curry.

Stanley: Oh yeah.

Laverne: And oh there's so many. I can't remember. I remember Goy, and the guy that used to shoot pool quite a bit. That's all I can remember of that gang. There's a couple Jacksons too. Mi-Mitts Jackson, he went down. That was his nickname.

Stanley: And how long were you a sleeping car porter?

Laverne: I had um, I quit there in 1979.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: But I had uh, put near five-four and a half years army service.

Laverne: I see. Uh-huh.

Stanley: Now um, did you enjoy the job of sleeping car porter?

Laverne: No.

Stanley: At no stage?

Laverne: I enjoyed the companionship of the porters themselves, but actually working there, it was just a job to get by, so I could raise my family, and Black men couldn't get a job no place else. Hardly.

Stanley: So the traveling across the country didn't excite you at all?

Laverne: At first, the trip did.

Stanley: And uh, where did you run uh, oh, during the years? What about-- From what terminal to what terminal?

Laverne: I ran to, when I first started with, I started off in, got my training in Toronto by Woods.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: He was a Porter Instructor, and then they sent me to um, Winnipeg. Winnipeg sent me to Vancouver and Vancouver sent me back to Moose Jaw. So I didn't know where I was.

Stanley: When you started as a porter, was there such a thing as a Porter's Welfare Committee? Do you recall that?

Laverne: Welfare Committee?

Stanley: Local welfare committee? I believe it uh, a Ray Lewis was a--

Laverne: I think that started after me. I can't remember. I remember there was a group there, like that had uh, some syndicate it had uh, but I can't remember no uh, Welfare Committee, nobody approached me, but I think there was uh, gotten Lawrence and three or four other, they had an apartment building or something.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. All right. Um, so, um, did you ever become an officer of the union?

Laverne: No.

Stanley: Why did you join the union?

Laverne: Why did I join? Well, just had to join for better conditions.

Stanley: Do you recall what the joining fee was? And the monthly dues?

Laverne: I think the joining fee was \$20. And the monthly dues uh, \$3. It got to be \$3, but I cannot actually remember what that journ- uh, monthly dues was, might be in that book I've got here, because I've got my first book here with me. Yeah.

Stanley: In there?

Laverne: But it might-- [sound cut]

Stanley: When were you a member of the Brotherhood?

Laverne: Remember I joined in, I think I was in Van- in Winnipeg when I. Probably 19-- First, I just worked there in the summertime, and I'd come home in October, and I went back down to work in that would be '40. I went back down there to work for the Christmas season. And while I was there, I must have joined in '41.

Stanley: And you maintained your membership throughout your service at the CPR?

Laverne: That's right. Yeah.

Stanley: Right. All right. Um, do you recall who were the chief organizers of the union?

Laverne: Chief organizers of the union?

Stanley: When you were on then? Actually with me.

Laverne: When, uh-- Oh, you mean in Toronto or--?

Stanley: Any and everywhere? Anywhere--

Laverne: Oh, I remember um, Ben, uh, Phillip A Randolph.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: Benny Smith.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: Blanchette.

Stanley: Local.

Laverne: Local. I was, um, there was Bob Bullus, and there was uh, Cliff Laughter, Pet Gray. And um, what was the guy he used to put on the--? Big guy. I can't remember his name.

Stanley: Frank Cromwell.

Laverne: Frank Cromwell, and then uh, he used to be master of ceremony quite a bit.

Stanley: Stinson.

Laverne: Stinson. Ernie Stinson. Yeah. There was somebody else too.

Stanley: You didn't mention Charlie Baldwin, was he on there--

Laverne: Yeah. Charlie Baldwin was definitely there then. Yeah. Harry Gairey. But, uh, he was sort of behind the scene man or less, but he uh, I, the guys that I really remember was people like Charlie Baldwin, he was-- And Pet Gray, but there was somebody else that I remember.

Stanley: All the name comes to us no later on. Describe the working conditions for-- Uh, under which the- under which the porters work before the arrival of the Brotherhood on the CPR property.

Laverne: You-- if you was an extra man, you just took what they gave you. And if you had enough seniority to-- It looked like to me, when you first started, if you didn't know uh, wasn't in good with the platform office, you had to take the leavings all the time. And then with the Porter Instructor, Cyril Woods, he had a lot to do with you gettin' in and out. He had this as long as you played uh, checkers and things with him, well you got out faster that way.

Stanley: It was the favoritism in the assisted?

Laverne: Yes, there was definitely.

Stanley: He had family.

Laverne: Yeah.

Stanley: I see. Other than that, what about meals, and the porters' quarters, and other things? Uh, but, uh--

Laverne: Well, at first when I was running to Vancouver, you got the free lunches there at uh, in Vancouver, you'd go down there, but you was there so long, they had to give you somethin' or you didn't get out enough as extra man to make enough money to keep you. **[unintelligible 00:19:34]** there, and you go down to the station and eat in there. Winnipeg, they had a restaurant there for you to go. The same way at every terminal it is, in and out. I remember Joe Lockhart there in Winnipeg.

Stanley: Oh. Was there any, do you know if there's any intimidation of the part of the company against the porters or for organizing the union? Do you know?

Laverne: Uh, I'm quite sure there was, but, uh, when the union, they used to what has put like looked like spotters out, when you was going into Winnipeg, they had ruled harder and inspectors and everything. The least little thing they'd have you up in the office there.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: I think AB-not AB Smith, but Norm Smith, and Anderson those was two of the worst that I ever-- There was some of them very, very sneaky.

Stanley: So would you say that the conditions uh, improved, conditions of work improved after the uh, Brotherhood arrived?

Laverne: Oh, definitely.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: Yeah. In fact, I think, uh, they looked up to-to the Brotherhood, because you could go into the dining cars and that, and they'd tell the dining car boys in there uh, not to treat us right.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: And yet they're havin', when they went in for negotiation, they had to take-accept what the porters got usually.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: They never got their contract signed until after us, but yet they wouldn't join up with us.

Stanley: Who, the dining car?

Laverne: The dining car. I remember hearin' Frank Hainz one time. He wanted to have Philip A Randolph to come over and speak to the dining car boys. And they wouldn't, didn't wanna go for it.

Stanley: [chuckles]

Laverne: Wouldn't have no part. And I remember hearing when I walked in the dining car one day, and I heard the, I think it-it was James made the crack when he was talk-- I was comin' up by the kitchen there in the dining car, and James was in there talking, and I just happened to go around the corner, and we was getting ready to go into lunch. And I heard him make the crack, "Don't give them porters no more than what they put on their meal checks, 'cause they're giving us hell."

Stanley: Is that right?

Laverne: Yes. And James was Superintendent in Toronto at the time.

Stanley: I didn't know he was sup-Superintendent in Toronto. James was TP James?

Laverne: TP James, yeah. He was smiling. He was- he was-- Yeah.

Stanley: Um, what did you think of the practice of tipping?

Laverne: What did I, well, if it hadn't have been for tipping, well, the wages wasn't strong enough for you to make it.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: But--

Stanley: It didn't-didn't offend you in any way? You didn't feel it was undignified to accept?

Laverne: No, it was an accepted fact at the time you, uh, couldn't lower yourself to that. You, you know, it was a thing-

Stanley: All right.

Laverne: -you was on there, and-and I think this was some of Phillip A's-- He wanted you to do your job, and that was your job when you first went there. But one thing about it when you went up to be defended by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, they didn't want to take you upstairs, because nine times out of ten, they had their cases, and you'd done your job, right, they was was beatin' the CPR.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. What did you think of the leadership provided by Philip Randolph?

Laverne: Oh, I loved it, I think he was the greatest. He had a great delivery. He could, wasn't no foolishness with him. I remember once hearin' somebody say that Phillip A, when they went to him about inviting, uh, superintendents and that officers of CPR to our dances and things that they used to put on-

Stanley: Yeah.

Laverne: -and Philip Hayes made the statement and he said, "No, don't do that. Anytime that you start dancing with management, management's gonna come out on top."
[laughter]

Stanley: How about Benny Smith?

Laverne: Oh, Benny Smith is a good guy, but he was a jokester to me. He was the one that kept you laughing when he went around and done. He'd get you in shape to listen to the seriousness of Philip A.

Stanley: But he was a big union man though, wasn't he?

Laverne: He was a dedicated union man. But uh, the power to be was-- We had a good union man here in Blanchette I figure.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. That was my next question.

Laverne: Yeah. He was a good union man.

Stanley: Right. Um, who were the persons, other than the ones you've met, was there any other men or women who uh, who you thought uh, helped to keep the union together in Canada?

Laverne: Oh, there's several-several. One was old Grizzle, Stanley.

Stanley: Old Grizzle?

Laverne: Yeah, old Grizzle yeah, he went on to be somebody, a labour man and everything else. And then there was a Wilson in uh, Winnipeg that I--

Stanley: Oh, Jack Wilson.

Laverne: Jack Wilson. Yes. I-I-I think he had a lot to do-

Stanley: Mm.

Laverne: -and Dick Bellamy, and uh, and then there was a Holmes-

Stanley: Old Bill, Bill, I saw him, yes.

Laverne: -and then there was, uh-- Mm, a lot of, he's been here to the house a couple times, and I can't think of his name right now.

Stanley: Where'd he work work?

Laverne: He worked out of Calgary, and then they moved to, uh-

Stanley: Roy Williams?

Laverne: -Roy Williams, yes.

Stanley: Has he been here?

Laverne: Yes. He's been here twice.

Stanley: Oh, I stayed with him out there.

Laverne: Oh.

Stanley: A couple days.

Laverne: Yeah.

Stanley: [unintelligible 00:26:17].

Laverne: There's somebody in-in Vancouver that I-

Stanley: Collins?

Laverne: Yes

Stanley: Mm-hmm. You haven't mentioned somebody in Montreal or Toronto, that you saw?

Laverne: Oh, well it-we had lots in Toronto.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: Like you had Pet Grave, and Bob Willis, and Cliff Laster, Brett Sloman. You had lots in Toronto.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. In Montreal, do you know who the leaders were there?

Laverne: Uh, other than Dash-- And I can't, I never, can't remember that many out of, but a Black [unintelligible 00:26:58] was in Montreal. I guess this is a reason, mostly for me cause that's where his headquarters, he stayed in Montreal after, when he first was organizing, he was in Winnipeg, and then the big guy out of um, racehorse guy. He liked to play the horses, out of these boys, out of Winnipeg.

Stanley: Mm-hmm, Gil Barry?

Laverne: Gil Barry was one, but there was another, he had a mustache too.

Stanley: All right.

Laverne: And uh, the old guy., he's still living there. I can't think of--

Stanley: Jameson.

Laverne: Yeah.

Stanley: Bob Jamerson?

Laverne: Bob Jamerson. Yeah. But there was a fellow that was president there for quite a while. Had a, right after, I think Blanchette left there. Him and Blanchette was-

Stanley: Simmons?

Laverne: -Simmons. Big Simmons. Yeah.

Stanley: Oh yeah.

Laverne: Trotsky wanted to be, but Trotsky I think he'd done the union more harm. Then there was Brisco. Yeah.

Stanley: Do you think the Ladies' Auxiliary was a good idea with the Brotherhood?

Laverne: I never had uh, living out of town. I never had that much- I'd uh, dealings being, 'cause I come back from Florida all the time, but actually I-- In-in some of the cities, I think it was better than others.

Stanley: Right?

Laverne: Yeah.

Stanley: Mm-hmm

Laverne: It was more dedicated.

Stanley: Do you know who the leaders of the Auxiliary was?

Laverne: I can't re-recall.

Stanley: All right. Now, um, there were White porters. Were they, did you find them supportive of the union?

Laverne: No I didn't.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: No.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: No, no. Uh, at first I thought that they was carrying news back upstairs, and I think they were getting better treatment, and going to some of our meetings when, after they became you could-- Uh, you had the feeling that this is what happened, and then you could tell it, because when they'd go into the dining cars, I hate to name some of the names, but I - You-you could tell and uh, because I got in an argument about it two or three times [unintelligible 00:29:19] that is carrying news upstairs.

Stanley: Is that so? All right. Now, uh, do you recall uh, this fight for sleeping car conductors, Black sleeping car-car conductors?

Laverne: Well at first to-to me, I think uh, I remember when um, Cease Chambers first come out-out of the service. He'd been fighting, and uh, they had um, he told me, he says he was gonna go for a sleeping car conductor then, or an inspector, and I think he put in for that job. And Ceasel had been, he had a pretty good education, but he didn't get anywhere, and he got bit real bitter about it.

Stanley: Well, the question I was coming from--

Laverne: Yeah. But the thing of it was, when they first started for sleeping car porter, uh, conductors, they approached several. In fact, they approached me. They wanted the light uh, uh, porters, 'cause I know there was-

Stanley: What do you mean?

Laverne: -light-skinned porters to become-- Because then they asked me to go and I had the kids and, then they was going- they was going to um, school.

Stanley: Oh yeah.

Laverne: Trying to better their education. And I asked they-they wouldn't let you uh, carry your seniority over on there. You had to, you went in as a lower rate of pay, and no seniority, and you wasn't guaranteed no steady job. And you was gonna lose your seniority on the porter's list. And as it was, I was getting the top pay there, it was a lot more than what I was making as a conductor. And I was getting my tips too. And I was making- my kids was going to school, and I meetin' my obligation as before. And they fought it tooth and nail to keep you away from there. Even the sleeping car conductors' union didn't, they fought against you from joining them.

Stanley: Right? Well, the question I was gonna ask you, do you think the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters can be faulted any way uh, for not uh, for not uh, regarding promotion of uh, uh, porters to conductors?

Laverne: In some way, I think they should be, but uh-- Uh, there--there was a feeling there that uh, something was wrong, but I do believe the sleeping car porters could've done more if they would've wanted to--to help them guys that was goin' for promotion. It just looked like there'd been more unity in the Black race right then--

Stanley: Um--

Laverne: --because we can see what happened with Williams there and uh, Winnipeg that was working for the CN at the time, I think was-- he was one of the big fighters out there for that.

Stanley: Do you recall any--any an incident or anecdote uh, that you'd-- which you'd like to relate, um, that took place in your service as a porter or in the union? Anything interesting or humourous or whatever? What since [unintelligible 00:32:39].

Laverne: No, I think-- I remember one night when I hired on you as the Stan, that was the president. And uh, I forget porter's name, that he was-- that he was defending. And I think Graham was a superintendent, and Stan was due out that night. And uh, I don't know what the conversation was on the other end, but I remember Stan Grizzle saying, "Mr. Graham, I am not a porter. Now I'm the President of the union. I don't have to take that kind of language." And he hung up on him. I do remember that. And I, but--but I--I think uh, they--they had to re-- They never want--they never wanted any um, porter to come up there with the union man. They wanted him to come up in the office by themselves. And when you went in to see the superintendent, there was never refusing, any cards, they never, he was never in there by himself. He always had somebody to back him up.

Stanley: Oh yeah.

Laverne: But uh, uh, union--union, they didn't want you to. In fact, I think I might have that book around here somewhere now, the rules of how to write out a grievance or something, and told you not to go up to the office without, or sign a statement, or anything without having the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters with, one of his brotherhoods, a representative of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters with you.

Stanley: Well, I wasn't thinking of that. I-I was thinking of, you know, this book's gonna be pretty heavy, and I wanted something light, humorous, in a way of an anecdote of your experience with a passenger, or anything that happened on the train? You could--

Laverne: [unintelligible 00:34:21]. I remember one night uh, uh, I was, well a porter always had upper 12-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: -and uh, I remember two uh, three girls got on the train, and they had section 12, and uh, lower 11, or one of the vice versa or something. And they got on at Chapleau, and is coming to Toronto. And like the porter, I only had three, or three and a half hours sleep at night, and I just fell off to sleep. And uh, they was making a lot of noise down below there, and I hollered out and tell them, "Shut up. I-there was people in this car wanna sleep." And one of the girls said she's having a miscarriage [chuckles] so I said, "Miscarriage?" She said, "Yeah." So I jumped out of the bed, and I remember there-there was a nurse in my car. I went and woke her up, and she went down to this girl and I said, told me to get some sheets and towels. And I remember that my drawing-room was open. So I just said, "Well, lay her in here." And I throwed uh, the sheets and the towels and everything. And she had the miscarriage between Chapleau and Toronto. I remember that's one thing.

Stanley: Is that so?

Laverne: Yeah.

Stanley: [unintelligible 00:35:46]. Well she got all the experience.

Laverne: Yeah.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: And I went in and shook people that was dead, and I've carried uh, lot of movie stars on the train.

Stanley: Such as?

Laverne: Oh, Charles Lotton, Marino Sullivan.

Stanley: All right.

Laverne: I had James Cagney, and I had um, not Ronald Cole. What is his name? I-I forget his name, him and his wife.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: Most of them, quite a few of 'em come on disguised.

Stanley: Would you like to make a c-concluding comment about the uh, uh, about the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and its effect on the-the economic life of the Blacks in Canada, and uh, any other effect on this?

Laverne: I-I really don't, I believe it, that it's, most of the porters wanted to see their kids when they, e-especially the ones that started around the 1935s, or little bit maybe that-that era-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Laverne: -up until, um, for the war. They wanted to see their kids have a better education than what they had, and wanted to go on to school.

Stanley: Right.

Laverne: And around 19- after the war was over, was when it was on- that's the only time that uh, things started to open up for Blacks here in Canada. Before that it was hard for a Black to get a job any place else. You had to be uh, working for the railroad, because actually they was getting more pay, and people recognized the porters, because they always dressed good and--

Stanley: Do you think the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters helped to spawn any other organizations, or uh, strengthen any other organizations in the community? Churches or any cultural groups?

Laverne: I think uh, well, I'm quite sure of this because uh, they used to give- I'm quite sure they was giving away um, scholarships and things, because most of the sponsors and-and the human rights thing, they was behind that. So the porters was usually what- they were- knew, what the life was all about. Trying to get ahead. Most porters was tryin' to get ahead.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. All right--

Laverne: There's quite a few of them left and for better jobs, like Sam Grizzle, he went on-- Fred Slowman and that, he went- quit and went to the railroad.

Stanley: To the post office.

Laverne: Post office, yes, mm-hmm, and there's two or three others that went there.

Stanley: Okay JL, I don't think you have any more questions for you. Thank you so much.

Laverne: You're so welcome Stan.

[00:38:45] [END OF AUDIO]