

[pause 00:00:00]

**Jesse Jesse Hobson:** We started at the salary.

**Stanley Grizzle:** Continuation of interview with Jesse Samuel Hobson. Um, did your tips ever equal \$80 a month?

**Jesse:** No.

**Stanley:** Did the White porters, uh, voice or-or, uh, express in any other way, any objections to being a member of, uh, the union, which had, ah, Black leadership?

**Jesse:** Well, some did. Was a resentment, but they had to join due to the contract. You had to pay union dues anyway, whether you-

**Stanley:** There's also the provision that they didn't have to be members. They had to pay dues, but they didn't have to be members. But what I-

**Jesse:** No

**Stanley:** -wanna know is that how-- what percentage of them did become members?

**Jesse:** The biggest majority.

**Stanley:** Really? I see. Did any of the White members become officers of the local union?

**Jesse:** Uh, some of the-- we had one on a Grievance Committee, I think. I think. I'm not sure.

**Stanley:** I see. When you were on the committee?

**Jesse:** Yeah, I was on the committee. Was nothing then.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Before- before you were out.

**Jesse:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** I see.

**Jesse:** And during my reign as President, it was not. We had one guy on the Grievance Committee.

**Stanley:** I see. How long was he on there?

**Jesse:** Until, uh, disbandment.

**Stanley:** How- how many years was he on, or months?

**Jesse:** Well, that one was when VIA took over.

**Stanley:** How long was he on the Grievance Committee?

**Jesse:** Couple of years.

**Stanley:** A couple years, I guess.

**Jesse:** I'd say I'm not sure. I have to go back through my files, yet, and see what-what I can find at home.

**Stanley:** Alright. Thanks, Brother Hobson. End of interview with, uh, Jesse Samuel Hobson. Alright, just for the record, uh, give me your name, please.

**Laura Elizabeth Gilberry:** My name? Laura Elizabeth Gilberry.

**Stanley:** Right. And Mrs. Gilberry, when were you- when were you born? When?

**Laura:** When? Way back.

**Stanley:** Way back?

**Laura:** Way back, 1907.

**Stanley:** Is that so?

**Laura:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** What date?

**Laura:** 13th of February.

**Stanley:** Where? Were you born?

**Laura:** Winnipeg.

**Stanley:** Oh, you were born in Winnipeg?

**Laura:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Where did your parents come from?

**Laura:** Well, my mother was a, uh-- originally, they had a-- were farmers here in Winnipeg. I don't know anything about my dad because he died when I was quite young. He was drowned, so I-I don't know a thing about him.

**Stanley:** What was the family name back then?

**Laura:** Henderson.

**Stanley:** Henderson?

**Laura:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Laura:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** And, um, did you know the girl who married Fowler? Her name was Grace. She was from this area.

**Laura:** I've heard of her.

**Stanley:** Fowler, Fowler.

**Laura:** I couldn't say no.

**Stanley:** And your husband was born where?

**Laura:** In Philadelphia.

**Stanley:** He was born in Philadelphia?

**Laura:** Yes.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Laura:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** And when did he come here?

**Laura:** Oh, heavens either 25 or 26 around that area. I'm not quite sure.

**Stanley:** And he started-- he came-- he'd be, uh-- and you got married when?

**Laura:** 21st of February. Let's see what year was that. I've forgotten now. I-I have to look on my-

**Stanley:** I see it--

**Laura:** -paper there and see-

**Stanley:** --certificate signed by the prime minister.

**Laura:** Yes.

**Stanley:** Married.

**Laura:** 50 years married. Yes, I'll. Um.

**Stanley:** All right. Uh, do you recall when your husband started to work as a sleeping car porter?

**Laura:** Well, he was working for the railroad when I met him.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Laura:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** That was when? Approximately, when?

**Laura:** I think between '25 and '26, as near as I can remember.

**Stanley:** Did you tell me what year he came here? Do you remember?

**Laura:** I'm not quite sure, no.

**Stanley:** All right. Uh, now, uh, he held a-- an office with the- with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, didn't he?

**Laura:** Yes.

**Stanley:** He was the?

**Laura:** Well, he was helping Arthur Blanchette with, uh, his, uh, work. He was collecting, uh, the men's, um, what do you call it? Union dues and things like that.

**Stanley:** Right. He did become Secretary-Treasurer of the Winnipeg CPR Division, didn't he?

**Laura:** Yes, he did.

**Stanley:** I wonder how long he was in that office. Do you recall?

**Laura:** Not too long. No.

**Stanley:** Well, I thought he was in a long time.

**Laura:** What Secretary--

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Laura:** -for, um-- no, I don't think it was. I'm not quite sure. It's as I say, it's been a long time.

**Stanley:** You were a member of the Ladies' Auxiliary.

**Laura:** For a short time. Yes.

**Stanley:** You were one of the founding members, original members?

**Laura:** Yes.

**Stanley:** That's right.

**Laura:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** You don't remember what year that was you joined?

**Laura:** No, I can't remember everything's so far back.

**Stanley:** And do you remember what the la- ladies paid in-in-in, um, joining fee and in dues?

**Laura:** I can't remember that, no.

**Stanley:** Do you remember who the other members of the Auxiliary were or the officers were?

**Laura:** I can't. [chuckles] I think, um, no, I'm not quite sure if Mabel Brown was, uh, one of the members or not, but, uh, there was a few ladies there and then Mrs. Uh, Sumter, and-- but I-I really can't recall. Uh--

**Stanley:** You don't remember Helen Williams? Helen, uh--?

**Laura:** Helen, uh, was-was Helen with us at that time or not? I'm not quite sure.

**Stanley:** Oh, she was the first president. Roy's sister, Helen Bailey.

**Laura:** Helen Bailey? Yes.

**Stanley:** She was-- she wasn't married then I don't think.

**Laura:** No. Oh, well.

**Stanley:** Um, uh, why did you join the Ladies' Auxiliary, do you know?

**Laura:** Oh, because my husband was interested in, uh, the union and things like that. So, I thought I'd join.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Do you think it was a good organization?

**Laura:** It was for a while. Mm-hmm, but I sort of lost interest after because I was working at the time and, uh, I found it hard to come home and get out, you know, after working all day and get out to the meetings and things.

**Stanley:** Do you think that the union helped to improve the working conditions and the-

**Laura:** Oh, I think so.

**Stanley:** -reported it?

**Laura:** Mm-hmm, yes. They, you know, like Randolph told the men that, uh, that the CPR would eventually get rid of most of the coloured boys as they retired and, uh, employ other people. Or if they didn't like them, if somebody in the CPR didn't like the looks of a person, they would, um, they could fire them then, you know, do anything good, unless they had something to protect them. So that's why they wanted to get this union together.

**Stanley:** All right. Do you recall, uh, the name of Mrs. Sumter?

**Laura:** Yes. It's Kathy Sumter.

**Stanley:** Oh, do you know where she lives?

**Laura:** Yes, she's on, um, let's see. She lives on-- I'm just trying to think of the number. 627, I think, it is, Cathedral.

**Stanley:** She was a member of the Ladies' Auxiliary too, wasn't she?

**Laura:** Yes.

**Stanley:** Is she well today, do you know? Is she in good health?

**Laura:** As far as I know, she's in pretty good health. Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** I'm thinking about contacting her, that's why I'm asking.

**Laura:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** You didn't have her phone number?

**Laura:** Yes, I have.

**Stanley:** I'll get that from you after.

**Laura:** Okay.

**Stanley:** Um, what did you think of the leadership Uh, that the Blanc- Mr. Blanchette provided?

**Laura:** I thought it was good.

**Stanley:** How about Mr. Randolph?

**Laura:** Oh, he was wonderful. We used to love to go and listen to him.

**Stanley:** And Mr. Benny Smith?

**Laura:** Yes.

**Stanley:** In the early days, the porters had to rely on tipping, on tips.

**Laura:** They certainly did.

**Stanley:** What did you think of the practice of tipping? Do you think it was offensive or--?

**Laura:** Well, I really don't know because things were kind of tough then. I guess they were kind of glad to get a few tips at that time.

**Stanley:** Alright, uh. Would you like to make a-a concluding comment or a statement about, or an observation about, uh, the good that you think that the union did for the porters and the community?

**Laura:** Oh, I think they helped the community a great deal.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Alright. In what way?

**Laura:** Well, uh, they, um, helped, um, improve working conditions, I think.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. I see. Um, do you know a lady by the name of, um-- Oh, a gentleman by the name of Mr. OD Taylor?

**Laura:** Yes. I've met him a few times, but, um, you know, I don't know him that well.

**Stanley:** He's still living here?

**Laura:** Yes.

**Stanley:** You don't have his address, do you?

**Laura:** No, I haven't. No. Those are my husband's associates.

**Stanley:** Alright. Uh, you don't know how long you were a member of the Ladies' Auxiliary? How many years?

**Laura:** I couldn't tell you. No.

**Stanley:** What kind of functions did the Ladies' Auxiliary give?

**Laura:** Oh, they had their socials and they had their-- Like I remember having a fish fry, and things like that to try and get a little money together.

**Stanley:** Why did they need money?

**Laura:** Well, I guess in every organization, they need money.

**Stanley:** But you don't know how the money was actually spent?

**Laura:** No, I couldn't say.

**Stanley:** All right. Uh, I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to interview you. Thank you so much.

**Laura:** You're welcome.

**Stanley:** This is the conclusion of the interview with Mrs. Gilberry on this fifth day of November 1987. On the same day, commencing at about, uh, five minutes to 3:00, I interviewed Mr. Um, Bob Jamerson at his home, 153 MacFarland Avenue. What, what is your name, Mr? What is your name?

**Robert Jamerson:** Uh, what you mean, my first name?

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Robert:** Robert.

**Stanley:** Yes.

**Robert:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Robert?

**Robert:** Jameson.

**Stanley:** Jamerson. J-A-M-E-R-S-O-N. Right?

**Robert:** Ah, you see that- that ain't the right way to spell Jamerson.

**Stanley:** No.

**Robert:** J-A-M-I-E-S-O-N.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** But uh, my father changed that because where we lived, there was so many Jamerson and I may was getting mixed up with theirs. So, he took the 'I' out and put the 'R' in there. See, right way to spell Jameison is J-A-M-E-I-S-O-N.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Robert:** If you find it somewhere, 'cause the people was tellin' us we didn't have our name on the phone- in the phone book.

**Stanley:** Where were you born?

**Robert:** Texas.

**Stanley:** Whereabouts?

**Robert:** Tennessee Colony.

**Stanley:** Tennessee Colony? Uh, when were you born? What's your birthday?

**Robert:** Uh, February 7th, 9- 1894.

**Stanley:** And, uh, when did you come to Canada?

**Robert:** 1910.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh. And, uh, when you came to Canada, where did you first live?

**Robert:** Uh, Athabasca.

**Stanley:** Athabasca?

**Robert:** Yeah, Alberta.



**Stanley:** With your parents?

**Robert:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Where were your- Where was your mother? Born?

**Robert:** Texas.

**Stanley:** And your father?

**Robert:** Texas

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

**Robert:** I don't know what- what part of Texas. I just know they was born in Texas.

**Stanley:** Yeah. And, uh, when did you come to Winnipeg?

**Robert:** When I come to Winnipeg? I think the nearest I can tell you was 1931. I started to work on the CPR.

**Stanley:** Why did you come to work on the CPR? Did-

**Robert:** Uh, they- they are was lookin' for sleeping car porters.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Robert:** And so, me, uh, I come down here and, uh, hired on with CPR.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Robert:** And I worked, I think two or three months that year, 1931 and '32, I only worked two months. And in '33, I didn't work at all.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. And when did you get your first full year of work?

**Robert:** Hmm, full year of work? I- I can't tell you that.

**Stanley:** I see. And how long--

**Robert:** 'Cause- 'cause you see, it was part-time. You see some years you get a couple of months, I mean two or three months, and then some years you'd get six months and like that till you finally, you worked a whole year.

**Stanley:** I see. Um, how long did you work as a sleeping car porter?

**Robert:** Uh, 27 years.

**Stanley:** You were wo-, with the Canadian Pacific Railroad? Right. So how old were you when you started? You must have been, uh-- How old were you when you started?

**Robert:** Mm, I don't know.

**Stanley:** I see. Yeah. Um, did you, um-- Did you, uh, like the job?

**Robert:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** You did?

**Robert:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Why did you like the job?

**Robert:** Because, uh, if you treated your passengers right-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** -they treated you the same.

**Stanley:** Right. Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** And, uh, it was a job that you never had to go to work with money. The peoples gived you money, enough to carry you on the job and, and back to-to home.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** Tips.

**Stanley:** Right. So, tips were pretty good in those days?

**Robert:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Right. What was your starting salary? What did you make?

**Robert:** Mm?

**Stanley:** What was your starting salary? Your starting wage?

**Robert:** I couldn't tell you that. I- I don't remember.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Was it \$80 a month or less?

**Robert:** Less.

**Stanley:** Less. Mm-hmm. Um--

**Robert:** It was, uh, some kind of percentage, like 20% or somethin' like that. Some kind of percentage we got.

**Stanley:** Percentage of what?

**Robert:** Like, you know, per hour, like 20% an hour or something like that.

**Stanley:** 20 cents an hour?

**Robert:** Yeah. Something like that.

**Stanley:** And how many hours would you work?

**Robert:** Well, that was, that's a hard thing to doin' you-- Just like I went from here at Vancouver, I worked all the way, you see? And, uh, and, uh, uh, it might be 7, might be 8 or 10 hours, getting' there.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** And like that.

**Stanley:** Right. Um, um, what were the working conditions like when you started to work on the CPR?

**Robert:** Well, it wasn't no- it wasn't no picnic.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** You see, some of the bosses was good and some of 'em was rotten.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Robert:** We had a guy named Bill Warren and he was a pain.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm

**Robert:** He was a platform man.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Robert:** See, he sent us- sent us out and received us when we'd comed in.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh.

**Robert:** I used to run from here to Vancouver on 85 and 86th car.

**Stanley:** Oh yeah? Um, did you have, uh, what was known as a Porters' Welfare Committee, at that time?

**Robert:** huh?

**Stanley:** Was there a Porters' Welfare Committee at that time?

**Robert:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Who was the representative?

**Robert:** I Couldn't tell you. I don't remember.

**Stanley:** Well, did you, uh, ever have occasion to- to, uh, to pay dues into that organization?

**Robert:** What organization?

**Stanley:** The Porters' Welfare Committee?

**Robert:** No, there wasn't no dues to pay.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Robert:** It was, uh, oh yeah, dues to pay. Uh, that was, uh, uh, when the porters was organized, you see. When they was organized, sleeping car porters, that book tells you. When we-- When we was organized, we- we started paying dues, so much. I don't remember now how much the dues were.

**Stanley:** But, um, what-what- what, did you help to organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

**Robert:** Hmm?

**Stanley:** Did you help to organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

**Robert:** I helped- I helped to organize the-the, uh, uh, the-the-the- the, uh, uh, branch here.

**Stanley:** In Winnipeg?

**Robert:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** Do you see my name on the book.

**Stanley:** That's right.

**Robert:** I was President.

**Stanley:** Oh yes. Who else- who else was organized and who else was helping you to organize?

**Robert:** In that book there some in, uh, Washington and different ones. They all in that book.

**Stanley:** How many years did it take to organize, before you got a contract?

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** How many years?

**Robert:** How many years have we got a contract?

**Stanley:** Before you got contract after you organized?

**Robert:** Oh, it wasn't long. 'Cause, uh, I organized AP Randolph was a smart man.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** And he didn't take long to put the thing in cheap.

**Stanley:** Well, now I'm told by Frank Collins in Vancouver that their local was set up in 1939. And the contract wasn't signed until 1945.

**Robert:** What?

**Stanley:** Frank Collins in Vancouver.

**Robert:** He was- he was, uh, uh, is.

**Stanley:** The Vancouver Division...

**Robert:** Oh, but you see, I was-- Is on that book.

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Robert:** You see what that book says?

**Stanley:** Yeah, 1942.

**Robert:** That's it.

**Stanley:** Yeah, but the contract wasn't signed until '45.

**Robert:** What contract?

**Stanley:** With the CPR.

**Robert:** We was-- We were signed up with that-that book- that book tells you the 10th anniversary, uh, that tells you all about the-the, uh, the, uh, signing up for the- of the- of the organization 'cause we had CPR men, they met the, uh, they met with Brother Randolph, and Brother Benny Smith. And, uh, they-they, uh, went through the organ-organizing of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** Brother Randolph and-and, uh, she, uh, McBain and-and, and McBain was a head man of the CPR, uh, Sleepin' and Dinin' Car Division. You see that there wasn't no porters' organization here until the Brotherhood set up. You see before it was Sleepin' and Dinin' Car Department. And-and that man that, uh, like Bill Warmington, he was a platform man. And-and-and-and McBain, he was, uh, no, another fellow, I forget his name. He was, uh, the General Manager of the Winnipeg portion of the CP. And the Head Manager of the Sleepin' in Dinin' Car Department was in-in, uh, uh, in Montreal.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** That was, uh, I forget his name now, but I think it's might be in that book.

**Stanley:** Well, tell me, did the company try to discourage the porters from organizing?

**Robert:** Yes. Uh, AB Smith said we wasn't goin' to organize.

**Stanley:** Who was- who was AB Smith?

**Robert:** AB Smith was the top man in the CPR, wasn't top man, but he was one of the CPR official. And he says, he was in Toronto, that's where AB Smith's office was. And he told the company, he says, "We don't have to worry about no union." He says, "Them porters gotta stripe down the back is as wide as my arm is long." And so-so when we got organized, the-the head, the-the, uh, CPR, uh, uh, head official of the Sleepin' and Dinin' Car Department told AB Smith, said, "Now, you come on down here in the Montreal, you said the porters wasn't going organize. They had a stripe down the-the back as wide as your arm, as long now you come on down here and manage it." So AB Smith had to go to Montreal.

**Stanley:** Did you have any trouble organizing the men? Did any men refuse to join?

**Robert:** Mm?

**Stanley:** Did the--

**Robert:** No. No. The men was glad, you see, because before they didn't have no—They'd fire a man before and you couldn't do nothin' about it. You didn't have nothin' to vote on. If somethin' come up and, uh, the like inspector brang up a report against you. And, uh, the-the- the official seen fit to fire ya, the that's fire you, away you go. It wasn't gonna help until we got Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter, then we had something to go on. And just like me, you see, I wasn't educated. I didn't have no education. And when I got to be President, uh, Simmons and Washington said, "Oh, Bob, can't go up against a McBain and-and- and [unintelligible 00:25:38]. He ain't got no education." Well, you see, I know'd what to do. See, I know'd what to do. You see, I didn't need no education. Blanchette was the head man here. And if anything come up that I couldn't handle, I go to Blanchette and Blanchette take it over to Benny Smith and-and-and-and look after it. I told 'em, I said, "I don't need to be." I said, "I got men over me to go to this. If anything come up that I can't handle." I said, "I go to Blanchette and he takes it to the- to the head official of the union. So, you see, so it, I was tellin' older Thomas, I don't remember, you mighta have, uh, heard, but, uh, the man that come here, I forget his name, now, he come here. He was got to be the head man of the Sleeping Dining Car Department. And he come out here he was in-in Montreal then. And he come out here to-to, uh, you know, to go over some of the works of the CPR. And I was on the train going back and he come along through my car and I was cleanin' up and-and I said, and uh I spoke to him. I says, "I go?" And he just barely spoke. And, uh, after he got a little ways away from me, I said, "Oh, you don't know me?" 'Cause he used to be the head office man here.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** He said, he turned around and come back and pointed his finger right in my face. He says, "I don't know you?" He says. "You are Mr. Jamerson. The-the head man of the

Grievance Committee." He said, "You were the man that turns on the heat!" That's what he told me [chuckles]. He comes back and face me and pointed his finger right in my face and told me I was the man who turned on the heat. You see, I was the guy that-that, uh, didn't try to do things that I probably couldn't do. I'd go to my officials. You see, and that's [unintelligible 00:28:21] they was scared of me. He says, "Bob will take this to Randolph. I'll take this to Blanchette, Blanchette to Benny Smith, and Benny Smith to Randolph." He says, "This when you- when you get mix and messin' with Bob, you going to have to come up to the head official of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters [unintelligible 00:28:44]. That's with me, I didn't need no education. 'Cause I had men in there that I could go to and tell them what was what, and they would take it on to a head official.

**Stanley:** Now you were the first president of this division?

**Robert:** No, no. Jack, uh, Jack Wilson was the first.

**Stanley:** How long was he President?

**Robert:** He was, I don't know. He was President quite a while. And, uh, I wouldn't have been President when I did get to be President, but Jack Wilson had, uh, resigned several times and Blanchette got tired of Jack Wilson resigning. And uh, when we organized, I-I become the Third Vice President and, uh, and the Second Vice President was Joe Hudson and Joe Hudson quit the railroad and went to California. That told me to be Second Vice President. And uh, I forget now who else was first. And the First Vice President, he-he, uh, moved, somewhere and got off the railroad and, and, uh, that told me to be First Vice President.

**Stanley:** Who was the Secretary-Treasurer, the first Secretary-Treasurer.

**Robert:** The Secretary-Treasurer? I don't, know. I don't know.

**Stanley:** Did it Blanchette have a position then?

**Robert:** Look in that book, it'll tell you.

**Stanley:** No, but I'm asking you. [chuckles]

**Robert:** Huh? Blanchette woulda had a man here. I'll tell you. That's who I-I took my grievance. If I couldn't handle 'em to Blanchette. Blanchette was the, uh, the, uh—it'll tell you in that book for you.

**Stanley:** He was a Field Organizer.

**Robert:** Huh? Yeah, a Field Organizer.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh. I see. But you-- the first Secretary-Treasurer was it- was it to Washington or was it? I thought Blanchette had a local position, too.

**Robert:** Hmm.

**Stanley:** I thought Blanchette was an officer of the local union at the same time.

**Robert:** He coulda been.

**Stanley:** You don't remember? Huh? Mm-hmm. Well, you said that there was some intimidation from the CPR. Uh, they tried to discourage the porters from organizing.

**Robert:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** But did anybody get threatened or by the company? Did the company threaten anybody?

**Robert:** Sure.

**Stanley:** How?

**Robert:** Threatened to get fired. They- they threatened to fire me.

**Stanley:** Did they fire anybody?

**Robert:** No, I don't think they couldn't fire me, and I told them- I told them in the office. Yeah. I told the man. I said- they said, "Oh, we was, uh, in the- in the office, you know, the platform office and getting'-- I was signed up for one thing or another." And so- so he said, oh-- somebody said, "Well, they was didn't want me to—". I was hotheaded anyway. And I was- was talking to put a rapid and- and the fella behind me, Carl Williams, Tommy's brother, he was pushin' me on didn't want me to, uh, uh, he says, uh, "I don't want you to get fired." So- so this-this platform man said, "No, nobody don't want to get fired." I said, "Listen, I ain't been fired once in my life." And I said, "I just wanna make that an even number." Carl kept on pushin' me.

**Stanley:** Okay. When you started on the CPR, was there a pension plan?

**Robert:** I don't know.

**Stanley:** You don't know.

**Robert:** I guess there was but I couldn't tell you what it was or not.

**Stanley:** Well, what changes took place, uh, in working conditions after the Brotherhood arrived on the CPR's property?

**Robert:** You mean after we was overnight?

**Stanley:** Yeah. Any improvements?

**Robert:** Oh, lots.

**Stanley:** Of. Well, tell me what-- tell me some of them.

**Robert:** Well, the-- some improvements, you didn't have to worry about getting fired for nothin'. And, uh, when you was out on the road and you-- and some passengers maybe had



some kind of, uh- uh, trouble, uh, you had people to go to when you come in. It was just like a, uh, a fellow named Oddly.

**Stanley:** That's the man I'm trying to think of, Oddly.

**Robert:** John Oddly?

**Stanley:** Yes.

**Robert:** Yeah. And he went out and- and he was talkin' with a woman on his car. He wanted to get into the- the-- what's that game, uh, card game they play? Uh, not the chess- not chess where it- it was a club. So anyway, he wanted to get in this thing and he was talkin' to a woman and the woman said that, uh, he- he-- I mean, somebody said that he threatened a woman or something of, and he said, "No, I was just wantin' to find out how I could get in the- in the-- in this card organization." But, uh, he got fired. You know why?

**Stanley:** Why?

**Robert:** He didn't-- he- he-he did-- He wasn't- he wasn't, uh- uh, you know, he- he- he wasn't- wasn't well, the dues wasn't paid up.

**Stanley:** Oh, yes.

**Robert:** I tried to get him when he went out. I said, Oddly, you let me pay your dues and you can pay me when you come back. Oh, no, it's all right. When I come back, I'm gonna pay my- my uh- uh, Brotherhood dues and- and my [inaudible] dues, too.

**Stanley:** Where is he now?

**Robert:** Oddly? Dead, maybe. The last time I heard of him he was in California.

**Stanley:** Is he the fellow who played the saxophone?

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** Did he play a saxophone?

**Robert:** No, I don't think so. It was somebody in that period that played a saxophone, and I [inaudible], I- I'm tryin' to think of his name. Uh, seemed like me it was Willis or somethin' was this fella's name. He played saxophone.

**Stanley:** Willis.

**Robert:** Seemed like his name. Will I wouldn't say- [crosstalk]

**Stanley:** Bob Willis?

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** Bob Willis?

**Robert:** No, it wasn't Bob Willis. Bob Willis was that man that made that hot sauce.

**Stanley:** Yeah. [Laughs] That's right.

**Robert:** Did you see his name in that book?

**Stanley:** No-- Yes- yes-yes. Yeah.

**Robert:** His hot sauce up there?

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Right.

**Robert:** Yeah, but Willis, he was a Toronto man. You ought to know him.

**Stanley:** Oh, yes.

**Robert:** Bob Willis.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm

**Robert:** Did you know Martin out of Toronto?

**Stanley:** Martin?

**Robert:** Martin? Yeah.

**Stanley:** Oh, that's a long time ago,

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** Yeah. His wife's name was Maddy.

**Robert:** Huh? Maddy. You know-you know what Simmons called Washington? I mean, uh, called Martin? Pain-ass Martin.

**Stanley:** [Laughs]

**Robert:** Me and Martin run together, you see, I, they used to pick up my car, yeah, on three.

**Stanley:** Oh, yeah.

**Robert:** I run on three and four, you see. And I'd pick up my car here and uh, Martin always would get in. He'd get to gambling or one thing or another and he'd lose his money.

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Robert:** And when he would come out, he didn't have nothin', no money.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Robert:** And see, he always tell me, he said, "Save me \$2." And- and when he- when he'd go for breakfast, I [laughs] would give him that \$2, so he could pay for his meal and he'd pay, gimme \$2 back before I'd get to Winnipeg.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Robert:** Washington called him pain-ass Martin. He was nice fellow. I mean, he was alright guy to me, Martin.

**Stanley:** So, do you know who the, uh, tell me what Toronto men-- or helped to organize the Union?

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** What Toronto men helped to organize the union?

**Robert:** What, the other?

**Stanley:** Toronto men? The men from Toronto who helped to organize the union?

**Robert:** I didn't know.

**Stanley:** Didn't know?

**Robert:** No.

**Stanley:** Did Charlie Baldwin?

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** Was Charlie Baldwin one of the organizers?

**Robert:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Pardon?

**Robert:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Was Harry Gairey?

**Robert:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** And there was another man in there. I forget his name. He helped to organize.

**Stanley:** What was that?

**Robert:** They was organizers in all of these towns, just like there was in Winnipeg.

**Stanley:** Yeah. Right.

**Stanley:** How much organizing did Charlie Baldwin do?

**Robert:** Charlie Baldwin? He would, did lots.

**Stanley:** Did he?

**Robert:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Did he come out here with, uh, Blanchette?

**Robert:** I don't-- I think so. I- I couldn't tell you.

**Stanley:** Did Harry Gairey do a lot of organizing,

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** Harry Gairey. Did he do a lot of organizing?

**Robert:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Did Frank Cromwell?

**Robert:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. Who were the- who were the ladies as the, uh, the leaders of the Ladies' Auxiliary here in Winnipeg?

**Robert:** I don't know. You'd have to look in that book.

**Stanley:** I see. Do you think having a Ladies' Auxiliary was a good idea?

**Robert:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Why?

**Robert:** 'Cause ladies did a lot of work in the world, organizing and they happened and they carried on with the business.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** My- my, uh, common-law wife was a member of the- of the Ladies' Auxiliary.

**Stanley:** What's her name?

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** What was her name?

**Robert:** Olly.

**Stanley:** Olly. What?

**Robert:** Whitley.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Where is she now?

**Robert:** Dead.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Robert:** Been dead.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Were- were there any White porters on the road at the time of the organizing?

**Robert:** No, no.

**Stanley:** No. White porters then?

**Robert:** No, White porters. White porters come on after. See the White porters found out something.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** You see a fellow named Uh, uh, what is his name now? Uh, Ruffins. He, uh--

**Stanley:** He was a CNR man.

**Robert:** Yeah. He-- I don't know whether he CNR man now, but Ruffins is all I know.

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Robert:** Ruffins told them that he made \$500 a month, tips. That's what Ruffins told. And, uh, they all got mad at Ruffins and said that the—"Ruffins are lyin' and he goin'—well that's lie he put out goin' to make us have to pay income tax." So, you see, before I call somebody a liar, I wanta make sure that he is lyin'. So, I got rid of the book, put it in my pocket and I put all my tips-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** -in one pocket.

**Stanley:** Right

**Robert:** I put my tips in this pocket, my right-hand pocket.

**Stanley:** That that's your left.

**Robert:** I mean, my left.

**Stanley:** [laughter]

**Robert:** I put all my tips in there. When I got to Vancouver, I took my tips out and counted and put it in a book.

**Stanley:** Yeah.

**Robert:** And you know how much I made the first month, I checked?

**Stanley:** What?

**Robert:** I made \$565.

**Stanley:** Did you?

**Robert:** So, I told him, I said, "Ruffins wasn't lyin'." He said, "How you know he wasn't lyin'." I said, "Here," I showed him my book. He said, "Well, you checked on him." I said- I said, "Boy, before you call somebody liar." I said, "Check on him!" And that's why when I come off the road, I had some money saved up. I started savin' them tips.

**Stanley:** And did you tell the income tax man about it?

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** Did you report it to the income tax man?

**Robert:** No. They didn't come out with no income tax about- about that. They didn't pay-- the company didn't pay, uh- uh, what's the name [unintelligible 00:43:09] you see, that was a gift. That wasn't no wages. That was a gift. The- the passengers gived that money. They couldn't charge 'cause, 'cause it wasn't wages. They couldn't charge no income on that, income tax.

**Stanley:** Right. Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** So, I- I see-- I have some money when I come off the road. I saved them tips. I made 500-- the first check I made \$565. The first month. I told him, I said, --

**Stanley:** What year was that?

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** What year was that?

**Robert:** I couldn't say. I don't know. See --

**Stanley:** That was after Ruffin wrote that story in the magazine. It was in *McLean's* magazine, wasn't it?

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** Wasn't that story in *McLean* magazine?

**Robert:** I think so.

**Stanley:** I think so. Yeah.

**Robert:** I think Ruffin, didn't he work for CNR?

**Stanley:** Yeah,

**Robert:** Sure as hell, uh--

**Stanley:** What did you think of the practice of tipping? Do you think it was offensive or did you, did- did you mind receiving tips?

**Robert:** Huh?

**Stanley:** Did you mind receiving tips?

**Robert:** No. Tips was the best thing that- that happened to the porter, because you never had to go on the road with money.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** When you left somebody-- even it'd be people puttin' their folks on the train and just like a man puttin' his wife on train, he says, "Here porter," give me a couple of dollars or somethin'. He says "My wife is in row so and so, look after her."

**Stanley:** Right.

**Robert:** You see, when you left town, most of the time when you left town, somebody would be done to givin' you some money. When you went to get your meal, you had money to pay for it. You didn't have to take no money away from home.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Robert:** Tippin' was the best thing that, uh, happened to the porter.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Robert:** And if you treat your passenger right, most of 'em would turn out was just like, I was comin' from ah, uh, ah Vancouver and the man come down and brought his friend, and put him on train. And he was in my car, in the drawing room. And uh, so when the train pulled out, [clears throat] for the train, pull out this man, he says, "Uh, that was my friend". He says, "You look after him and he'll look after you." Well, I thought this guy was just P-getting down, putting down somethin' for me to do a lot of work for this man and get nothin'. So, I just had some kind of rules. Okay. And when I- when I got on the train, this man was sittin' down in the drawing room and I passed the door and he said to me, he said, "Are you the porter on this car?" I said, "Yeah--" I just said, "Yes," I didn't speak up. You know, like I should of.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert:** I said, "Yeah." And so, he says, "Yeah, I got somethin' to give you." And I walked in the drawin' room and he handed me \$10. A \$10 bill. I said, "Listen--" I said, "When you want somethin', you see that button [laughs]?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Just lay on it!" I said, "Lay on it!" [laughs] He-- He said, "Alright. And you know, when he got to Winnipeg, he gave me another 10 bucks. He got off at Winnipeg.

**Stanley:** Was that the biggest tip you ever got?

**Robert:** No.

**Stanley:** What's the biggest tip you ever got?

**Robert:** \$40.

**Stanley:** I see.

**Robert:** There was a woman and a daughter, uh, uh, in my drawin' room and they gave me \$20 when they got on and \$20 when they got off.

**Stanley:** Is that right?

[00:47:22] [END OF AUDIO]