

Speaker 1 [Holmes?]: You know when, uh, Jack and Junior were-were working out of Winnipeg, I was working out of Calgary and I used to run to Regina on that Regina car-

Speaker 2: Oh yeah?

Speaker 1: -and, um, and I'd always-- the change of car, see, well, I'd always run with Jack and Junior. See I was senior enough to, uh, to hold this Regina car. So I'd always run with Jack and Junior. And so I'd come in and Moffat would say to me, "When do you wanna go out?" I said, "Well, I'm not sure yet," I said, "I'm gonna wait until my brother comes in town and I'm going out with him." So, that went on for about four or five cars, you see, so Moffat, he was tired of it. He wanted to deprive me of that right, see? So we go-- I go off one day, and so he tells me, "So, well, you're not gonna be able to do that anymore Holmes," I said, "Why?" "Well, according to the rule book, uh, now, you-you-- that's not allowed," so I said, "Well you ain't readin' the right rule, what rule are you reading?" so he said, "Such and such rule," I said, "You read such and such rule." So Bill McLaughlin was sitting in the back of the room, you know, it's about seven o'clock in the evening, he's sitting in the back of the room. "He's right." I said, "No, he's not right," "Oh yes he's right, because he says I tried to do it, and they wouldn't let me do it." I said, "Well if you didn't-if you didn't do it, you see, you a damn fool." [laughs]

[laughter]

Speaker 1: "You mean-I mean, you mean to tell me you got your name in the book and then you don't know that what the hell you put in there, what's in there," and Moffatt, laughing about it. So Bill went on back and said, "Uh, don't worry about that, he gone-he gone [inaudible 00:02:13], he gone help [inaudible 00:02:14], see, don't tell him either." They wouldn't let him do it.

Speaker 2: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Speaker 1: And then so they went out, told him, um, said, "You a damn fool, you [inaudible 00:02:20], sat down." And so then-

Speaker 2: She went down with us [inaudible 00:02:24], in-in Ottawa.

Speaker 1: -when time [crosstalk] [inaudible 00:02:26]. Sure, that's what I said to Turner-

Speaker 2: And another factor is--

Speaker 1: -this is what the rule says, I can pick and choose my days. If I wanna lose time, you don't-you don't pay me anything, so you can't stop me from--

Speaker 3: You remember when we had that run out of Cal-- from Calgary to Vancouver, seven men, you know, seven men on each car. And, uh, so according to your seniority, you could pick your days. He said-- I went up there and I said, "I wanna go out every Sunday night," "Oh you-you gotta go up-- you-- we've got you down here for Wednesday," I says, "I don't care what you got me," [chuckles] I said, "I'm going out on Sunday night."

"Oh you can't do that," I says, "I can do that," I said, "My seniority told me, go for the day I want." I said, "Send some of the junior men out," I said, "I'm not going out on Sunday." So old Houston, oh man, he hated that, but he couldn't do nothing about it. [chuckles]

Stanley Grizzle: Oh yeah.

Speaker 3: Houston always wanted you to do what he wanted you to do, never mind if it was right or wrong.

Speaker 1: And Riddle?

Speaker 3: Riddle always-- one armed Riddle.

Speaker 4: Old warden was no good.

Speaker 1: Yeah old warded was no good.

Speaker 3: That Riddle was an awful liar.

Speaker 1: Well, the warden we had here was no good either.

Speaker 3: And Houston was worse.

Speaker 1: Well the warden we had here was no good too.

Speaker 3: No-- oh you mean, he was a conductor?

Speaker 1: Well, yeah, but he got into be to be a platform man.

Speaker 2: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Speaker 4: No good.

Speaker 3: But that warden that you had here was stealing. He got caught stealing.

Speaker 1: Well-they all were bloody crooks-

Speaker 2: Yeah, but he got caught.

Speaker 1: -you take, uh, what was it uh-

Stanley: Who got caught?

Speaker 2: Oh, uh, sleeping car conductor-

Speaker 1: Elmer Ward was his name?

Speaker 4: Something like that.

Speaker 1: Then there was uh-- what was that guy's name, Pat, uh-- he was a platform inspector here too. Yeah that boy from Toronto, forgotten what his-- Hamilton, did you have a Hamilton in Toronto once, Cam Hamilton?

Stanley: Cam Hamilton, yeah, yeah.

Speaker 3: And I think Cam Hamilton from Toronto.

Speaker 1: He come in down there and he had a couple of drinks and he wasn't drunk. Stallard, is it Stallard? No, was it Stallard? Pat somebody, and uh he pulled 'em off for being drunk and got the guy in a whole lot of trouble. We got him—finally got him back to work but he wasn't that, you know-- he wasn't intoxicated by no means, they'd probably had a drink. About two weeks later, I come down there and this old platform man was as drunk as a skunk.

Speaker 5: Oh yeah, that's--

Speaker 1: Come telling me, then he said that, uh, "Well, listen between you and I Frank," I said, "Oh yeah, me and you, and the world."

[laughter]

Speaker 2: Oh, wow.

Speaker 3: They did everything they could do and we-- but the porter he was--

Speaker 1: Yeah, he was nobody. He-he knew nothing.

Speaker 3: You should have heard him when we got a grievance committee and argued with him [inaudible 00:05:02] on everything.

Speaker 4: Broke their heart.

Speaker 1: Oh man they hated that.

Stanley: And you guys in Calgary--

Speaker 4: Broke their heart.

Stanley: -I found down here you guys in Calgary, you softened old Kira? up for us in Vancouver, we done all right with him because he-he turned out to be a real good guy, [crosstalk] real good guy.

Speaker 2: Yeah, real good guy. He moves out here man, he couldn't do enough for us.

Stanley: Yeah, he was nice.

Speaker 4: But I made old-old [Kira?] face turn as red as that-that, uh-- one of them things there.

Speaker 2: What happened?

Stanley: But he was broke in, in Calgary.

Speaker 2: But what happened, see, is, uh, uh-uh, Reggie Brake. Reggie Brake and I are running together from Calgary to Vancouver on a tourist and a sleepers. Okay, Christmas Eve comes up, and we're gonna have extra cars, so we're gonna have a sleeping car conductor. That sleeping car conductor's got on-- what was his name? I used to know his name. [crosstalk] He was so drunk he couldn't have hit the ground with his hat. He was that drunk, you know. So okay, he was on there and he was drunk, uh, he was drunk. So, uh, [crosstalk] went on down the line and we're getting' close to Vancouver, he's still drunk, and we sat him up. I told Gash, I says Gash, "This guy is drunk," I says, "Get him some coffee, maybe it'll sober him up," and he [inaudible 00:06:15] closed up. Okay, Gash said, "I understand," so okay. So, we straightened the guy up and got him all straightened up, and when I looked around again-- the guy he must've had some liquor in his bag because when I looked around again he was asleep on the table and I had the tickets, and [inaudible 00:06:30].

So I woke him up, I said, "Look," I says, "We're-we're getting close to Mission," I says, "I still got time to do your tickets." I says, "You want your tickets done?" "[inaudible 00:06:40]." I said, "Okay, okay." So I forgot him. Oh, what was his name? He-- oh that was just about his last trip. [chuckles] So, he went out, we went on in to Vancouver and forgot him. Well on the way out Kira's there. See me, he says, "Hey, what the hell happened when you guys come in?" I says, "Happened? What do you mean happened?" I says, "We had some big [inaudible 00:07:06] top to bottom all the way. We even had people there, didn't have no space, uh, they had tickets." And, uh, he says, "Well-" He says, "-was that sleeping car conductor drunk?" I said, not that I noticed. So he says, " You didn't notice him being drunk," I said, "No I didn't notice him being drunk." So, he takes off down the car and on outside, so I take off inside, see, and I go through and I say, "Hey Reggie," I says, "Kiersten come up here," I says, "You tell him that you don't know nothing about the conductor being drunk." So okay. So, I took off, went back before Kira could see me. Now Reggie told him the same story, see. So okay. So, uh, a couple of weeks went by and I come back into the Vancouver and Kiersten come down to see me. He says, "Well," He says, "We had to fire that guy," I says, "You did," He says, "Yeah, we had to fire him." He says, "There was people coming up here with tickets that had never been lifted," he says, "People never-- their tickets-- he didn't even lift the tickets." He says, "Everything's all messed up," and he says, "We had to fire him." So he looked me right in the eye and he says, "And he admitted that he was drunk," and I says, "He did?" I says, "Well that son of a gun." I says, "He sure fooled me." And Kiersten turned red [chuckles], cause I got him good! He expected me to say, "Yeah, he was so drunk," but I didn't. I said, "He did?" [chuckles] I said, "That son of a gun," I said, "He sure fooled me man." [laughs] Because I didn't wanna go sayin' that the man was drunk, what do I care, I don't care whether he's drunk or sober.

Speaker 1: Well, there was a sense of loyalty anyhow there [crosstalk] [inaudible 00:08:46] though you-- maybe you didn't like what the fellow was doing but he was in the same boat you were in, so he--

Speaker 2: He wasn't a bad guy. Except he got drunk, that's all, he just happened to get drunk.

Speaker 1: It wasn't-it wasn't Riley was it?

Speaker 2: No, his name wasn't Riley.

Speaker 1: That Jack-- Jack Riley was a holy terror [inaudible 00:09:04] in Calgary.

[crosstalk]

Speaker 2: You know what that Riley told the inspector? The inspector says, "Hey Ri-" he says, "You've been drinking haven't you?" Riley says, "Yes I've been drinking and I'm gonna drink some more." [laughs] I don't know how he kept his job.

Stanley: He was uh-he was-- somebody told me-

Speaker 3: Number one hockey player.

Stanley: Yeah, he was a hockey player, but then, seemed to me he-- his wife was uh-- was way up with-- some CPR executives daughter, niece or something. He shouldn't have played on that.

Speaker 2: He was a good guy but he was a mess.

Speaker 3: He was-he was-he was such a good guy that he'd make it tough on anybody.

Speaker 2: Oh yeah.

Stanley: You-you-you weren't safe running with him, [inaudible 00:09:54]. But he was [inaudible 00:09:54] guy and-- but he's just making it rough on everybody.

Speaker 4: Seemed to me, those that was in there tried to grab him to get [inaudible 00:10:01].

Speaker 1: Then he got-he-he got so that he can hold at Kettle Valley. So you know, we said two cars had been taken and one car to Nelson. So they put sleeping car back in that car.

Speaker 2: Well, I'm telling you, I'd go out and I'd catch, Dick and Dave, and they'd go to-- they would be going to, uh Penticton.

Speaker 3: Well, I bought one of-one of-- my first house I bought in Calgary-

[chuckling]

Speaker 1: When we come back, come in from Dawson and we come down the hill from Nelson [crosstalk] so I picked up the [crosstalk] two cars. So, he'd made up two cars [crosstalk], collected all the tickets. Of course [inaudible 00:10:46] [crosstalk].

[laughter]

Speaker 4: Now you [inaudible 00:10:55] move out of there, you know they call us the [inaudible 00:10:58].

[laughter]

Speaker 1: Bryce. That was that, uh-- Bryce. He-he didn't last long. He never make anymore trips after that one. [crosstalk] When I [inaudible 00:11:12] for a quite a while before, but he got drunk this time, Christmas time you know, he got drunk [inaudible 00:11:18] oh man. And I think he-I think he had a bag full of whiskey because [chuckles] he-he never did get sober. I sure fooled old Kier. Old Kier thought I was gonna say, "Yeah, he was so drunk," but I said, "He wasn't," I said, "That son of a gun!" I said, "He done-he sure fooled me," [laughs]

Speaker 3: And I was running round that-that old one and two [inaudible 00:11:42]. Kier [inaudible 00:11:45] the conductor you see?

Speaker 2: Did you see this Frank? Remember this?

Speaker 1: What was that there? Damn, it getting harder and harder to get up out of that chair. When I get down, I can't get up.

Stanley: End of dialogue between Will-Willard Richardson, Odello Holmes and, uh, Frank Collins, and Roy Williams. On the evening of October 25th 1-9-8-7, at the home of Roy Williams.

Interview of Roy Williams by Stanley G Grizzle on October 26th 1987 at his home at 8:35 AM.

Stanley: Plug out.

Stanley: Roy Williams, uh, give me your full name Roy?

Roy: Roy Williams, that's my full name.

Stanley: No second name?

Roy: No second name, no.

Stanley: Couldn't afford it eh?

Roy: They be shortening names, so many of us here, they run short eh. [chuckles]

Stanley: You're one of a family of how many?

Roy: Uh, 12.

Stanley: 12 children?

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: Where do you fit in?

Roy: I'm the, uh-- let's see, Charles, June, [inaudible 00:13:16], I'm the fifth.

Stanley: Fifth, uh-huh.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: And, uh, where were you born?

Roy: I was born in, uh, Texas.

Stanley: Oh, where?

Roy: Waco, Texas.

Stanley: Waco, Texas. All right. And, uh, how long have you lived in Canada?

Roy: Uh, from 1910 to 1987.

Stanley: You came to Canada, 1910?

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: So, you've been here till '87. That's, uh se-se-77 years.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: Uh-huh, what date were you born, when's your birthday?

Roy: October the 7th.

Stanley: What year?

Roy: 1903.

Stanley: Oh all right. Why did you come to Canada?

Roy: Well, uh, my dad-- at that time there was an immigration on, uh-on, uh, Blacks coming to Canada, and my dad, uh, immigrated up here, an immigrant.

Stanley: What do you mean there was an--there was an immigration of Blacks?

Roy: Well, at that time there seemed to be, um, an urge on at that time out of, uh, Okla-out of Oklahoma. See my dad came from Oklahoma and then we were in to Texas, and, uh, there seemed to be an urge for people to leave the-the South and, uh, he was one of them that was eager to leave, I guess, and for the betterment of the family and conditions. Ah, once they lived at that time it wasn't--wasn't too good, so I think his idea-- he needed-- I never had a discussion with Dad on that, but I think his idea was for the betterment of the family future.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: I see.

Roy: Cuz he could see no future for the family at that time there, and I think he had an idea of bringin' us up North. He heard that was free and that, and more, uh, opportunities for the Blacks in Canada.

Stanley: Right, mm-hmm. Did he come here specific-specifically to work on the railroad, or what?

Roy: No, no. He was a-- he was a-- just a general labourer. General labourer. Yeah.

Stanley: And, uh, you went to school where?

Roy: I went to school in, um, North Battleford, Saskatchewan, and then in on the homestead, at Hillside, Saskatchewan where we were-- where we were-- well, after that homestead we moved, uh North Valley, to Hillside. And, uh, that was a homestead, Hillside. And when we moved out then, I went to school out there. That's where I finished school, out there. At Hillside, Saskatchewan.

Stanley: High school, post school?

Roy: No, public school. I never did go to high school.

Stanley: When did you move from, uh, Saskatchewan, when?

Roy: Uh, we left Saskatchewan-- I left Saskatchewan in, uh, 19-1927, 20-1920, 1927 I left Saskatchewan.

Stanley: Mm-hmm, I see. Why?

Roy: Well, it was, um, for better opportunities, because mostly around Saskatchewan, all I could get was-- there, was farm work, farm labour, just seasonal, you know, and I couldn't, uh, couldn't see myself makin' any progress. So I left the farm and, uh, went to, uh, to, uh, Saskatoon and worked. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and worked in the city there, it's construction work, and, uh, which was better. And we worked at that un-until, uh, 19-- until the Depression, which was 1932, '31.

Stanley: All right.

Roy: And then I went, um-- started railroading in 1936. There was no un--there was no employment at that time, so it was very, very depressing. So we-- uh, I thought I'd start railroading.

Stanley: Oh, I see. What year did you, uh, start to railroad?

Roy: 1936.

Stanley: Uh, which railroad?

Roy: CPR.

Stanley: That's C-Canadian Pacific Railroad.

Roy: Canadian Pacific Railroad, yeah.

Stanley: On, uh, what district?

Roy: Uh, I started in Winnipeg-

Stanley: I see.

Roy: -Winnipeg, Manitoba. And, uh, I-I-I only worked the first year out of there, well, and then I transferred to Calgary in 1937.

Stanley: In those days were there any-- were all the porters Black or there were some White porters?

Roy: No, all Black. No-no such thing as Black porters -- uh, White porters.

Stanley: Right, um, so you were-- and how long did you work as a porter? If, just answer that.

Roy: 33 years.

Stanley: 33 years?

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: Did you enjoy the job?

Roy: At times I enjoyed it because, um, my aims and object was to try to, uh, be productive, to, uh-- for the betterment of myself and my family. And, uh, I enjoyed it at times, and, uh, one thing, it gave me an opportunity to meet people and to go places that otherwise I wouldn't have--wouldn't have had. In other words, I was then able to travel across Canada, back and forth, and, uh-- which, I never would have had the privilege of doing that, had I not been on the railroad. And I enjoyed some parts of it.

Stanley: Were you married then?

Roy: No, no.

Stanley: When did you get married?

Roy: Uh, got married 1940, 1940.

Stanley: Um, did you have a, um, an organization which looked after the-the grievances of the porters at that time?

Roy: Yeah, there was-it was-it was-it was a company, uh, what they call the, uh--

Stanley: Porters' Welfare?

Roy: Porters' Welfare Committee.

Stanley: Right.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: I see.

Roy: Made up of three men.

Stanley: Porters?

Roy: Porters yeah.

Stanley: And you said something about the company, with-with-what about the company's relationship to this committee?

Roy: The, uh, company's relationship just gotten the-- well, um, it-it-it was a company outfit and they dominated. They-they-- the porters had very little room to say-

Stanley: Right.

Roy: -and they-- it wasn't, uh-- whatever they said, it wasn't, uh, considered very important as far as the company is concerned. In other words, the company ruled with an iron hand, and, uh, it was most, uh, when a grievance arose why it was, um, done by the local superintendent platform inspector, and they had the final decision.

Stanley: Oh, I see.

Roy: And many times they, uh, the rulings that they handed down, it was very unfair to the- to the porters involved, and it was many-- of the men were dealt unjustly through this company-

Stanley: Mm-hmm, right.

Roy: -committee.

Stanley: Um, so, um, that committee, uh, handled the affairs and-and grievances of the porters until when?

Roy: Until 19, uh, 40-1940-1943.

Stanley: Tell us what happened then.

Roy: Well, when, uh, Brother Randolph, uh, came to the picture, and, uh, we, um, set up, uh, committees across Canada, he-he started negotiating with the company, although we didn't have a contract, but they-we were-we were on our- we-we had the privilege of negotiating, and, uh, and our grievances with porters elected by each division, each-each division elected their-their Grievance Committee.

Stanley: Uh-- yeah. Before we get into that, tell me about the organizing of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Were you involved in the organizing of it?

Roy: Yes, I was, um-- I took part in the organizing-- the-the porters, when-when-when we got the word that, um-- from the delegation, um, from Montreal, that, uh, brother Randolph was coming to organize in Canada well, um-- And they-they-they advised us to-to set up our committees and start collectin' dues for this-- uh, for his, uh, appearance in Montreal with the-with the committee there and we, um-- I was elected to, uh, collect dues in Calgary, one of the first to be collecting dues in Calgary for the men, which was \$2 a man.

Stanley: Did this movement start in Montreal, or where did it start moving to o-o-organize the porters into the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

Roy: Well, it started in Montreal.

Stanley: Oh yeah, what-what-what men were involved?

Roy: Uh, Russell, was the, uh, the man's name is Russell, I don't know his initial but it's Russell anyway-

Stanley: Right.

Roy: -with his committee, and I didn't-I didn't know he's been the only men that I can identify as setting up this committee-- as being one of the men that set up to the committee was, uh, Russell.

Stanley: Russell?

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: Yeah. And, uh, I think he was-- he contacted Brother Randolph in 1939-

Stanley: I see.

Roy: -and, uh, it went on from there, and then, uh-- but Brother Randolph when we first, uh, contacted Brother Randolph in 19, uh, 1942, when he first come to Montreal.

Stanley: I see. I've been told that, um, Charlie Baldwin of Toronto was the first person to go to New York and invite Randolph here, you know, do you know anything about that?

Roy: No, I don't know really, all I know, only-the only recollection that I have is, um, I was, uh, informed that, uh, Russell had, uh, negotiated with brother Randolph to come to Canada to set up an organization here for the porters, a union. I didn't have any knowledge of, uh, Baldwin.

Stanley: Did you know Charlie Baldwin?

Roy: I knew him, yes. I met him, yeah.

Stanley: Because he told me he cr-he crossed Canada with Blanchette in the early days of the organizing.

Roy: Oh yeah. But I didn't, uh, I didn't-

Stanley: Yeah.

Roy: -uh, have any recollection of him going to Montreal-- I mean, New York to contact Brother Randolph. The only one I knew was Russell.

Stanley: Do you remember Charlie Baldwin coming across the country with-with Blanchette-

Roy: No.

Stanley: -at anytime?

Roy: No, never.

Stanley: Uh-huh, I see.

Roy: Never met him. Blanchette did not come across the country until Brother Randolph came.

Stanley: Yeah.

Roy: There was no such thing as-as that.

Stanley: All right. So you were at-- I remember you-you were portering out of Calgary?

Roy: That's right, yeah.

Stanley: And who were the other pioneers of organizing union in Calgary?

Roy: Well, there was PT Clay-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: -and, uh, Dick Bellamy, and, uh, um, Willis Richardson.

Stanley: Rich--

Roy: Willis Richardson and, uh, Bob McLellan.

Stanley: Bob who?

Roy: Robert McLellan.

Stanley: McLellan?

Roy: Rob McLellan, and, um, see, I can't remember their name now, I'd-I'd-- oh, yeah, see, um-- and M. Crump, Melvin Crump-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: -and, uh, Sping Jones.

Stanley: Okay. Is he still alive?

Roy: Yeah-yeah.

Stanley: Where?

Roy: He lives-he lives in Vancouver now-now. He's in bad shape, he's, uh, crippled up with arthritis.

Stanley: And is he?

Roy: -a heart condition, he had two, three heart attacks.

Stanley: Mm-hmm, I see.

Roy: Yeah-yeah.

Stanley: All right then, now you-you talk about the pioneers, uh, of, uh, organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters which we'll from here on refer to as the BSCP. Do you know of, uh, any of the pioneers, uh, in-in the other districts such as Vancouver, Winnipeg, um, Toronto?

Roy: Winnipeg, um, Bob Jamerson, AR Blanchette, and, uh, Joe Hudson-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: -and, uh, Carl Williams-

Stanley: All right.

Roy: -and TL Williams-

Stanley: Okay.

Roy: -and, uh, QT Turner-

Stanley: Right.

Roy: -and, uh, W. Simmons, and, uh, [tapping noise] "Let me see, Simmons, Simmons, Simmons, Simmons, Simmons, Simmons, Simmons. Guys, I shouldn't--

[silence]

Roy: QT Turner. That's all I can think of now.

Stanley: Right. And how about in-in Vancouver, do you know who the pioneers were, and organizers of the union?

Roy: The organizers of the union in Vancouver, uh, Frank Collins and, uh, William-- Bill McLaughlin, and Ernie Lawrence, and, uh, I guess that's all I can remember, that was staunch uh members.

Stanley: I thought Bill McLaughlin was, uh, Porter Instructor?

Roy: Well, he, uh, he got to be a Porter Instructor after-

Stanley: Oh.

Roy: -this was-- we were organized-

Stanley: I see.

Roy: -a year later.

Stanley: Yeah.

Roy: Bill McLaughlin was on--was on the--on the--on the, uh, o--on the first committee set up in Montreal to meet with Brother Randolph.

Stanley: I see.

Roy: Yeah, Bill McLaughlin.

Stanley: Who else was on that committee?

Roy: There was, uh, PT Clay from Calgary, Bill McLaughlin, Vancouver, PT Clay Calgary, and Blanchette Winnipeg, and, um, Toronto was, uh, Petgrave and, uh, and Montreal, there was Coward and a- [snaps fingers] a gentleman you named there, was--

Stanley: Who--who was that?

Roy: Sammy Lewis.

Stanley: Sammy Lewis.

Roy: Sammy Lewis, yeah.

Stanley: All right--all right--all right--all right.

Roy: And that was the representatives of Montreal.

Stanley: Yeah.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: Okay. All right, uh, and what was that-- that was the f--first meeting with the CPR?

Roy: First meeting with the CPR porters, with Brother Randolph as a--as a group.

Stanley: [crosstalk] I see-I see.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: You know [crosstalk]?

Roy: And there's a representative from every district.

Stanley: What year was that?

Roy: That was '42.

Stanley: '42?

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: You don't know what month and what date?

Roy: I would say it was around November.

Stanley: I see. Okay. Now, I think we've-we've covered the pioneers, uh-uh, organizing these union in all the districts except Toronto, who was the key initial o-uh, organizers in Toronto?

Roy: Oh, I can't remember, the only-the only one that I can remember then at that time was Petgrave, Petgrave, and, uh, Stinson-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: -and, uh—Petgrave, Stinson and, uh-- Yeah, that's as far as I can go.

Stanley: How about Chevalier?

Roy: Chevalier, yes, Chevalier and, uh, those brothers, um, [snaps fingers]

Stanley: Cromwell?

Roy: The Cromwells, Les and, uh, Frank.

Stanley: Okay.

Roy: Yeah. Les and Frank Cromwell, yeah. They were-they were very ins-instrumental in setting up there.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: How about Dave Reynolds and, uh, and-and-and Carleton McNichol. Do you remember them?

Roy: I don't remember them.

Stanley: I see.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: All right, that's fine. Um, you, um-- why did you join--why did you join the union?

Roy: Well, uh, it was, um, I felt that we needed something for the betterment of-of-of-of-- to-to improve our conditions. And I'd been working with the, um, the Pullman then, running from St. Paul to Vancouver, they come through here and-and-and wo-working with them and see how smooth they were working, and talking to them and seeing-- telling me the condition that-- how the conditions have improved, since they'd been organized-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: -then I could see the need for us to be involved with a-with an organization that could better our conditions, better our working condition.

Stanley: Well, tell me about the conditions that you-that, uh, you want bettered.

Roy: Well, uh, the condition we bettered was, uh, we were-we were never safe-we were never safe, we never saw-- we didn't know-- in other words, I didn't know when I was gonna to get fired, you know. I-I could be fired from the-from the **[inaudible 00:30:35]** of a platform inspector or some employee, maybe, that wasn't connected with **[inaudible 00:30:41]**. And then my-my word didn't-- wasn't very much. In other words, I was on a low key. I was kind of a-a boyish. You know, I-I couldn't-I didn't have the privilege to speak up when-- knowing that I was right. And I-I took a lot-a lot of abuse and I was tired of taking abuse. In other words, I-I couldn't talk back to defend myself when I know I was in the right. I was more or less like, uh, you know, like a boy. And I wanted to-- I didn't-I didn't feel safe because I felt that it was-it was, as I said before, it was up to the superintendent and the-and the-and the local platform inspector, whether I worked or not. And if they felt like I was okay to-- if I kept my mouth shut and I was good boy, yeah, I-I could continue on working, but otherwise I could be fired and I-I wasn't safe. And I felt that with the union, I have-I had protection and I could have a hearing and have a proper hearing as other employees, which we did not have with this, uh, company committee. And I felt- I, oh, I needed, I felt we needed a change to better our conditions.

Stanley: What did a sleeping car porter do, what kind of work, could you describe it?

Roy: Well, he took care of the cars, the sleeping cars. He was-he was-he was the main, uh, main mechanic you know. He-he looked after the big sleeper that we worked there. He, uh, well, he had to be a Jack-- most likely, a Jack of all trades looking after the lights and light-- and them boxes and whatnot, looking after the cars and then looking at the patch and more or less looking after the safety of the passengers. But he had quite a-quite a chore to perform during the his-his, uh, courses and-and trips, you know, from time to time across Canada. He had-- he was, uh, he was required to do many things.

Stanley: He made beds, shine shoes--

Roy: He made beds, shine shoes, look after the passengers and, uh, and, uh--

Stanley: You bagged linen and-

Roy: Bag linen and-

Stanley: -counted the linen-

Roy: -counted the linen and-

Stanley: -kept the car clean.

Roy: -kept the car clean and uh--

Stanley: And answered all the passengers' questions and requests.

Roy: All passengers' questions and everything, was kind of a custodian, Jack of all trades. Yeah.

Stanley: How many hours a month did you work before the union?

Roy: Well, the-the-the-the hours wasn't counted, we just worked that's all, uh, 24 hours a day was, um-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: -when we were on-on duty, we-we could be called on any-any hour. There was no- there was no time limit.

Stanley: I see.

Roy: It was full-time day.

Stanley: And that changed after the union?

Roy: That changed after union.

Stanley: How?

Roy: We were working a, 240 hours a month. When-when the union first came in. 240 hours.

Stanley: Compared to how many hours before?

Roy: Well, that's-that's, uh, [laughs] that's hard to say because when we were-when we were called, and went on duty, we could be called any 24 hours, we had no rest period, no-no rest period was specified.

Stanley: Oh, yeah.

Roy: And we could be called any-anytime. And I imagine we would-we would-we would say, uh, 300, 400 hours a month, there was no-there was no limit on the hours, when we before.

Stanley: Yeah. Um, what were the joining fees, the-what were the joining fee, the monthly dues of the-of the union?

Roy: Uh, it was \$10 to join and \$2 a month-

Stanley: I see.

Roy: -for monthly dues.

Stanley: And, uh, at that time, uh, was there a check-off system or a--

Roy: No check-off system at that time.

Stanley: So you-you--

Roy: We didn't get to check off till '45.

Stanley: So it meant that you have to go around pick up the dues?

Roy: We had to go round collect dues and get--

Stanley: Every month?

Roy: Every month, yeah. Well, you would get, I would--

Stanley: [crosstalk] [inaudible 00:34:29]--

Roy: Which was a difficult job. That was my job of collecting dues and get to send them fine but although I must give the men credit in our district, you know, at least, they cooperated very good. Of course you know there's always the odd one dragging his heel, but we had a 90% financial men in Calgary.

Stanley: How many men did you have?

Roy: Well, we had around, uh, fif-- Well, during the war we had about 60 to 65 men working out of Calgary.

Stanley: So the way you speak, it sounds to me as if you had an official position with the union. What was your position?

Roy: Well, I was Secretary-Treasurer.

Stanley: Of?

Roy: -rather, sleeping car porters.

Stanley: Which District?

Roy: Calgary District.

Stanley: Right.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: How long were you Secretary-Treasurer, how many years?

Roy: Well, from 1940, wait a minute, 1944-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: -to 1960.

Stanley: 1960, right.

Roy: I was Secretary-Treasurer.

Stanley: Did the-- you were Secretary-Treasurer get paid for the job?

Roy: We got, uh, 2% of the dues we were collecting.

Stanley: Is that right?

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: Oh, okay.

Roy: 2% of the dues that we collected, yeah.

Stanley: Um, did that-- did that obtain throughout the years or was that just for a period of time?

Roy: No, that was-- that was throughout the year until I-- until 1940, uh-- 1960.

Stanley: Oh, I see.

Roy: Yeah.

[silence]

Stanley: Well, um, uh, was there a-a Ladies' Auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

Roy: There was, yes. But it didn't, um-- as far as I know, it didn't, uh, function very well in Calgary, we said, Brother Randolph set up a Ladies' Auxiliary there, and we had a visitation from Mrs. Wilson, which was the Head of the Ladies' Auxiliary in the United States--

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: -and, uh, she visited our district and, uh, the--the women seemed to be very enthused and they did, uh, fairly good, but they'd run into a little trouble, there's, I don't know, personality difficulties. And they didn't, uh, it didn't prove out to be very good in Calgary.

Stanley: Is that so?

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: Did they-- well, members of the Ladies' Auxiliary have to pay dues?

Roy: Their dues I-- They did, but just what they were now, I don't know. I forget now. I didn't, uh--

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: The-the activities at the Ladies' Auxiliary in Calgary was, uh, at a minimum, they wouldn't-- they didn't get really going.

Stanley: Really?

Roy: So I didn't, uh-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: I don't know just what their dues were.

Stanley: Do you remember who the officers-first officers were of these ladies?

Roy: The first officer Mrs. Sneed, Mrs. Willard Sneed was the first President of the Ladies' Auxiliary in Calgary.

Stanley: Oh, I see.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: And-and who were the other officers?

Roy: Uh, Cardi Williams and May Richardson and-and, um--

Stanley: Cardi Williams, was she the wife of a porter?

Roy: Yes.

Stanley: Which porter?

Roy: Roy Williams.

Stanley: I see.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: And, uh, and Wendy Richardson-

Roy: And--

Stanley: Wendy Richardson, and, um-

Stanley: What was her husband?

Roy: -Mrs. Braithwaite was President. Mrs. Willow was Vice President and Mrs. Braithwaite was President of the Ladies' Auxiliary when they first set up. That was it-

Stanley: Oh.

Roy: -I get it straight now.

Stanley: Oh, I see.

Roy: Yeah, I've kind of forgot about this.

Stanley: Mrs. Braithwaite, was her husband a porter?

Roy: He was a porter, yes.

Stanley: What was his name?

Roy: Uh, Sinclair Braithwaite.

Stanley: Oh, I see.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: So the wo-the women--

Roy: But he-but he had passed on at that time, he wasn't with us.

Stanley: Oh-oh, I see. So the Ladies' Auxiliary members were relatives with porters?

Roy: Relatives of porters, all relatives of porters, yeah.

Stanley: Wives and daughters?

Roy: Wives and daughters, yeah-

Stanley: Oh, I see.

Roy: -yeah, all relatives of porters.

Stanley: [inaudible 00:38:47].

Roy: Yeah-yeah-yeah.

Stanley: Do you think having a Ladies' Auxiliary was a good idea?

Roy: Very good idea, if they could have got it functioning properly, it was very good.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: Very good.

Stanley: Right. In joining-- in organizing the union. Was there any intimidation on the part of the company to discourage the organizing?

Roy: Oh, very much. They'd, um, they'd, uh-- the platform inspectors always had a-a dig or some slur or some derogatory remarks regarding our union.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: They never-- they knew the organizations was coming up-

Stanley: Oh, I see.

Roy: -but they never thought at that-- I don't think-- the attitude they'd taken, they didn't think that the-- we were going to be successful in organizing and they just took it more or less as a joke.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: And, uh-- because they didn't realize, they didn't think that we were going to be successful and the Brotherhood was gonna to be successful and organized.

Stanley: All right.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: Did anybody get fired for-- doing the organizing campaign that you know of?

Roy: No, I don't remember anyone getting fired because we were on a-on a lower profile, we kinda kept quiet because, uh, we didn't know just what was in the making.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: And, uh, we didn't have too much to say until we were officially organized, we were, you know--

Stanley: Right.

Roy: Because, uh-- and-and many of the older porters didn't-didn't join at first, they were very reluctant because previous years, in 19, uh, 1919 and 1921 many of the CPR porters was fired for trying to organize. They brought in, uh--

Stanley: What year?

Roy: It was 1919 and 1921.

Stanley: Right.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: But that wasn't-- uh, that was another union?

Roy: That was another union.

Stanley: Oh.

Roy: Yeah, yeah. They-they tried to join a union there, and then, uh, CPR brought in porters from the United States and fired them all.

Stanley: Is that so?

Roy: Yeah, they were all fired.

Stanley: Who headed that union that they were trying to organize?

Roy: I think it was, uh, VVRT or CLC.

Stanley: Oh I see, it was a--

Roy: Yeah. It was a Canadian union, that they were trying to join.

Stanley: I see.

Roy: And, uh, the CPR got wind of it and, uh, got rid of 'em.

Stanley: All right.

Roy: That'd be in 1919 or 1920.

Stanley: I see, was that called the Order of Sleeping Car Porters, I think I've heard it referred to?

Roy: Well I don't know, I don't remember the name, but-but I know they were-they were trying to join in with this Canadian Congress of Labour.

Stanley: Well would they have been part of the CNR porters if-if they hadn't been [inaudible 00:41:35].

Roy: They would have been part of the CNR Porters.

Stanley: Oh, I see.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: A part of the CNR Porters' Union-

Roy: That's right.

Stanley: -at the time.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: I see.

Roy: Yeah, yeah.

Stanley: Uh, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, uh, just for the record, uh was it all Black-led union?

Roy: All Black-led union at that time.

Stanley: And then when the organization was finally set up in Canada, all the officers across Canada were Black, weren't they?

[silence]

Roy: Yes, in the beginning.

Stanley: That's right.

Roy: Yes, it was, when-when it was set up across Canada they were all Black, yeah. All Black.

Stanley: Yeah.

Roy: Yeah, because there was no white porters, yeah, yeah.

Stanley: The railway didn't hire W-White porters until, what year, would you say?

Roy: Oh, let's see, I got, that-that-that, you-you'd find that in-in-in the records, in-in-in my minutes.

Stanley: Oh, I see.

Roy: Yeah.

Stanley: All right, fine.

Roy: But I don't, can't remember just what year it was, but it was uh-

Stanley: Oh right.

Roy: -during the war years, in the 40s.

Stanley: Yeah, I-I-I-I think, we'll check that, then.

Roy: Yeah, yeah.

Stanley: All right, um.

[silence]

Stanley: So would you say the Sleeping-- Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters helped to improve the working conditions and the, uh, pay and, uh, the respect that porters received?

Roy: Most definitely.

Stanley: Uh-huh.

Roy: Definitely.

Stanley: Okay. What did you think of-- you wanted to comment on-on-on the big change that you saw which took place once the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters arrived on the property of the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company?

Roy: Well, uh-- once-once we were organized, you mean?

Stanley: Yes.

Roy: Well, we, um-- it was, uh, it was a lift. We just-- we felt like we were men, we we-we-we had some protection and we-we-we-we took more-- the lectures that Brother Randolph gave us, we-we took more pride in our work because we felt like we were, uh, recognized as employees with CPR, and, uh, it was a great inspiration for us to realize that we were organized, and could have representation as all CPR employees. Without being in fear of, uh, loss of a job, intimidation or anything. It was uh-- I can't describe it but it was, uh, it was a great, uh, lift in spirit-

Stanley: Right.

Roy: -to know that we were recognized as men.

Stanley: Right. But your pay improved substantially, didn't it?

Roy: Very much so.

Stanley: Mm-hmm. Will you give us an idea in what way?

Roy: Well, um, when-when we were, when-when before we were organized, we were, whenever the company would, uh, give increases to other employees, we were always the bottom of the pole. We-- they-they didn't consider us, we always got less pay than other employees. Less pay. We had no say in the nego-negotiations, they'd just-

Stanley: Right.

Roy: -tell us what we were gonna get, and that-that was it.

Stanley: Right.

Roy: But when Brother Randolph, uh, come in the picture and organized us, we, uh, we got uh immediately, and I-I-I-I could see his point, I wondered at the time why he was interested in getting amalgamated with Canadian unions. Because when they got a raise, we got the same raise of pay as other employees. But before we were separated. But when we come amalgamated with the Canadian unions, CLC and-and-and AFL and, uh, and uh-

Stanley: CLC is the Canadian Labour Congress.

Roy: Canadian Labour Congress, yeah.

Stanley: And the AFL is-

Roy: Is American.

Stanley: -The American Federation of Labor.

Roy: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And, uh, and we-we-we were amalgamated with-with what they call the Non-Ops, and he, uh, amalgamated with-with the Non-Ops.

Stanley: [crosstalk] The None-Ops were the employees who did not operate the trains, like engineers.

Roy: Operate the trains, some engineers, that's right, that's right. Yeah.

Stanley: I see.

Roy: But it was a great move on his part-

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: -in bringing us into that organization, 'cause the company had no alternatives, but to give us the same working conditions, the same pay as they did others.

Stanley: Right. Do you want to make some final comments, uh, about the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, as leaders, uh. Well, before we get to that, who would-would you say helped to maintain the union over the years? Who were the strong supporters of the union after the initial organization, and the older founders passed on, who were the strong persons who helped to carry the union across Canada, would you say?

Roy: Well, uh, yeah, Blanchette was our representative.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: He was a field representative for Canada, and, um, there were many-- I mean, in-in, uh, Winnipeg with, uh, they had some good representatives there uh.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: JW Simmons was, uh, very strong in Winnipeg, and, uh, [papers shuffle] Vancouver was, uh, Frank Collins, he was a mainstay here in Vancouver.

Stanley: Mm-hmm.

Roy: And, uh, Ernie Lawrence, and, uh, in Calgary there was uh-

Stanley: Ernie Lawrence became-- he was the Secretary-Treasurer?

Roy: Secretary-Treasurer-

Stanley: For a long time.

Roy: -for a long time, many years. Yeah, and then-- [sound cut]

[00:47:50] [END OF AUDIO]