

**Stanley G. Grizzle:** Interview conducted by Stanley G. Grizzle of Ted King of, uh, Vancouver, formerly of Calgary. Date of interview, 27th of October, 1987. Commencing at 10, uh, 18 AM. All right. Your name is?

**Theodore Stanley King:** Ted.

**Stanley:** Your full name.

**Theodore:** Yeah. Theodore Stanley King.

**Stanley:** And your, uh, birthplace, Ted?

**Theodore:** I was born in Calgary in 1947.

**Stanley:** All right.

**Stanley:** I mean, sorry, 1925.

**Stanley:** And, uh, you're-you're, uh-- For the purpose of expediting time, I'll lead some evidence- some evidence. I'll-I'll put some, uh, information before you. Your father was a CPR porter?

**Theodore:** That's right.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Theodore:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** And, um, he, um, became a porter, you know what year?

**Theodore:** Uh, I think he was a-- became a porter in about 1928, something like that, I believe.

**Stanley:** What was your father's name?

**Theodore:** Uh, John Randolph King.

**Stanley:** And when did he- uh, when did he, uh, come to-to- uh, to Calgary?

**Theodore:** Uh, he came to Calgary in 19, uh, 25.

**Stanley:** From?

**Theodore:** From Edmonton.

**Stanley:** Was he born there?

**Theodore:** No, no. From-- He was actually born in Dallas, Texas.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see. Right.

**Theodore:** But they, uh, came up here-- Uh, a group of people came up to Canada on a chartered train in 1911.

**Stanley:** Were they invit-- Were they invited up here?

**Theodore:** Uh, well they had sent, uh, someone out to look the area over. And, uh, they were all taking advantage of the land grant that the Canadian government was offering. So they-- a group of 'em got together and came out to, um, Edmonton in 1911. They were preceded by my mother and a group of her relatives who came out in-in 1908.

**Stanley:** From?

**Theodore:** From Kansas, Missouri.

**Stanley:** Okay. Mm-hmm. You've, uh, ultimately became a sleeping car porter on the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Will you tell us about-about how you became a porter?

**Theodore:** Well, I got out of school in 1942 and, uh, made a trip out here to Vancouver. Had- um, had been out here before, I always liked it. Worked out here for a year, went back home to visit my folks and, uh, for, uh, lack of, uh, a job even though I had at that time completed, uh, grade 12 matriculation, um, couldn't seem to find anything. Decided I would try to get on the railway. Um, the superintendent then, Mr. McFarland, um, was doing everything he could, uh, to keep me from getting on because, uh-uh, he knew that, uh, my dad, uh, was a strong union supporter and, uh, I kinda thought he didn't feel that he wanted two Kings to have to deal with.

**Stanley:** [chuckles]

**Theodore:** Uh, and, uh, consequently, I never got on the-the railway then.

**Stanley:** I see.

**Theodore:** But, um, in 1944 I was in the Canadian army and I went overseas. And when I came back in 1946 and finally got out, uh, I- uh, I applied for the CPR again. And I must say that, uh, thanks to the initiative of Brother Roy Williams, uh, he went straight up to the re-un-- the, uh, superintendent and told him that, uh, um, you know, how did he- how did he expect, uh, to keep me from getting on the rail now as I was, uh-- went and fought for my country-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Theodore:** -uh, and there's no reason why he couldn't accept me. And of course, that was the case. So I got on the railway about June of 1947.

**Stanley:** I see. Mm-hmm. Did you, um— But why did you take-- decide to take that job?

**Theodore:** Well, to me it was just a job, you know, I mean, uh, in those days, uh, uh, nobody was fussy about workin'. You-you-you-you took whatever job came up first and when that one ran out, you went on to another one. Nobody really pick and chose or-or waited around for something else to show up. If you-- Uh, you went to work and if you, uh, didn't like it,

you'd keep working on that job until something better came up, and then you would leave it. You never- uh-uh, you never were choosy. Nobody-- None of the people I knew were ever choosy about where they worked.

**Stanley:** Or was it as easy get-- to get other jobs as it was to get a sleeping car porter's job?

**Theodore:** Not on the, uh-- Not after the war was over. During the war, there were all kinds of jobs available. After the war, uh, servicemen coming back home, uh, jobs were scarce.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Theodore:** So, um, I- uh, I had worked at two or three jobs prior to getting on the railway.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Theodore:** But, uh, they needed men, especially during the summer. When I, uh, reported, there always were a lot of American college people coming up here for the summer working, uh, to help put themselves through university. So if they were hiring Americans, uh, as Brother Williams told 'em, they could hire a Canadian.

**Stanley:** Did you enjoy the job of sleeping car porter?

**Theodore:** Uh, in many respects I did. There was, uh, a lot a person could learn. I think there's a lot people can learn on any job that you work at and, uh, sleeping car porters, uh, um, was one of them. You-you-you met a lot of nice people from-- You got a chance to see the country and, uh, you learned how to deal with the public, which is probably the biggest thing of all.

**Stanley:** Uh, did you become a member of the union?

**Theodore:** Oh, yeah. I became a member of the union the moment I joined the railway.

**Stanley:** Which union was that?

**Theodore:** Uh, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. They- um, they had started in 1942 or 1943, so they were already in existence when I got on the railroad, although they were still in their infancy.

**Stanley:** Do you recall what the monthly dues were when you joined and the membership joining fee?

**Theodore:** No, I don't. No, I really don't. It wasn't much, I know that.

**Stanley:** 'Cause your father was very active there again.

**Theodore:** Oh, yeah. Very active. He was not only an active, uh, member of the union but, uh, he, uh, well along with Brother Williams and Odell Holmes and Dick Bellamy were very, very strong, uh, grievance committee representatives.

**Stanley:** Um. Mm-hmm. Yes, Ted, did-- can you tell me who you recognized as being strong Brotherhood of Sleeping Car supporters not only in Calgary but in the other districts?

**Theodore:** Well, I know, uh, Frank Collins, um, who has always lived in Vancouver was a very, very strong and outspoken, uh, union member. I believe Luther Rogers in Winnipeg was one too, I believe. And of course, uh-uh, Brother Blanchette in Montreal was, uh- was, uh, the over, uh, all-Canada representative, uh-uh, between us and the, uh, major, um, heads of, uh, this, uh, organization of Brother A. Philip Randolph and Benny Smith from the States.

**Stanley:** I realize that you weren't on the- on the railroad before the advent of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters on the property of the CPR. But, uh, can you gimme what you-- what good you think that union did for the porters in Canada and-and the CPR?

**Theodore:** Well, uh, one thing it did for sure is it-it gave the fellows some respect. I think, uh, in every case, the porter was considered to be the lowest man on the totem pole. He was considered to be that. He was lower than the news agent on the train. Uh, he had no voice, and, uh, nobody wanted to listen to anything he had to say. And everybody in the whole train seemed to think that they were over him. Didn't matter whether they worked for the Sleeping and Dining Car Department or not. Uh, they all thought that, um, they were, uh-- position was higher than the sleeping car porter. And, uh, they had good reason to think that because the Sleeping and Dining Car Officials, uh, treated 'em just that way. So the union, uh, along with the strong member-members that we had representing us, uh, didn't back down from the contract and they made, uh, the railway live up to it. They lived up to every single agreement that we finally got. Uh, they forced 'em to live up to it. And, uh, so it did a lot of good as far as us dealing with the railway. It also did us a lot of good with regards to the- uh, the porters themselves. Um, they had to understand that it was okay to, uh-- for grievance committee members to-to fight for their behalf. But it meant that they also had to toe the line, which a lot of them in a good many circumstances didn't do.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Theodore:** So they understood that there was a penalty to pay and our representatives never failed to tell us that, uh, you know, we got a job and we gotta do the job right. There were certain rules that, uh, were there for everybody's benefit, including ours. And so a business of reporting late, drinking on the job, uh, which are problems that everybody has, uh, that we should, uh, make sure that, uh, we eliminate those. And so it improved the-the stature of the people. And I think that we felt a little bit more proud of ourselves, uh, because of the union.

**Stanley:** Now you were active in the union, you held some positions in the union. What positions did you hold?

**Theodore:** Well, I-- the only position I really held in the union was the Chairman of the Entertainment Committee. I was Chairman of the Entertainment Committee for a good many years.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Theodore:** Uh, but I-I believe that I put my share of input in, um, at the meetings because I was in regular attendance at all of the meetings that I was in town for.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Theodore:** Uh, I could bring a little different perspective to- uh, to the meetings also because, uh, there were a lot of people on the, uh, on, um, that were ahead of me in terms of seniority. And Calgary, uh, carried a huge spare board. So there were always a lot of employees that, uh, were there. And-and again, this is another thing that I admired about the people in Calgary. Everybody worked hard and everybody shared, and the fact that one or two people who were senior and could possibly have gotten more work, uh, didn't, uh, stop them from, uh-uh, allowing all us younger guys to work, you know. There was some discussion at one point of maybe going to the, um, management and asking them to cut down the spare board-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Theodore:** -because not everybody was getting enough work.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Theodore:** But I can remember, uh, Brother Naps Neid in particular getting up and saying that, uh, he would've, uh, certainly, uh-uh, be willing to share what work there was out there if it would keep everybody workin'.

**Stanley:** Right. Your father had held a position with the union, did he? I'm not sure if it's in the record already. What position did he hold?

**Theodore:** Well, I know he was on the Grievance Committee. I don't know- I don't know that he was an officer in particular. I think, uh, as I recall, the, uh, officers, I think the President was Odell Holmes and the Secreta-Secretary was, uh, Roy Williams.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Theodore:** And the only office that I think my dad held was-was on the Grievance Committee.

**Stanley:** Now, there was a Ladies' auxiliary to the porters' union, to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. It was your mother?

**Theodore:** No-no-no. My uh, my mother was never involved in the-

**Stanley:** I see.

**Theodore:** -in the porters.

**Stanley:** How long did you work as a sleeping car porter?

**Theodore:** Uh, I worked there for, uh, about nine years. I was officially on record as nine years, but actually, I took a six months leave of absence and, uh, went, uh, on another job

and found out that I liked it. And so I-I quit in- uh, in, uh, June of, uh, 1956, but in fact, I hadn't worked there since the end of December in, uh, 1955.

**Stanley:** And, uh, so you took a job, uh, doing what?

**Theodore:** Uh, bookkeeping. I had-- bookkeeping had been one of my good subjects in school and my sister, uh, younger sister, who was a lawyer encouraged me to, uh, apply for a job that she knew was available.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Theodore:** And so I applied for it and I got it.

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

**Theodore:** Well, uh, I have to be honest, I liked it. [laughter] I, uh-uh, I felt that, uh, it was the, you know, it was- it was a custom. It was a long-engrained custom. I-I'm sure people these days would say, uh-uh, well, if-if you could get, uh, a fairer wage for what you do, uh, tipping wouldn't be necessary. But, uh-uh, the fact of the matter is that, uh-uh, tipping- uh, tipping helped us out quite a bit. I have--

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm. It didn't bother you at all.

**Theodore:** Didn't bother me at all.

**Stanley:** I see. Um, can you recall, uh, um, the names of-- uh, nicknames of any porters?

**Theodore:** Uh, nicknames? Well, I remember there was this, there was a Speed Gardener. There was a, um--

**Stanley:** Why was he called Speed?

**Theodore:** I-I don't, I have no idea. They-- All these guys were much older than me. There was, uh-- Oh, you've thrown this at me kind of sudden. I-I can't remember a lot of people by their nicknames, but I know that there were-were a lot of people with nicknames.

**Stanley:** Can you think of any anecdotes, anything humorous that you could relate to the porter's job that happened to you or someone else?

**Theodore:** Well, uh, yeah, I have one that's really funny. Uh, you know, whether you want to use these names or not, I don't know but they're true names. Uh, I was leaving Vancouver here one day, and, uh, one of the representatives came down to the station, made us all sign this form to acknowledge that we were aware that Mr. Austin Taylor was on and his daughter were on the train. And it so happened that they were in my car. Uh, Mr. Taylor's, uh, mother had passed away and they were transporting her body from Vancouver to, uh, Toronto. And of course, you're well aware of Mr. EP Taylor as a big, uh, industrialist in Toronto. Anyway, um, he was in my drawing room and his daughter was, uh, in a, um, what I used to call 'em SOSs is that what they, you know, when they had those upper, she had the lower, but the upper was, nobody could get in. I forget what they used to call those single-occupancy sections, SOS.

**Stanley:** Oh, yeah, yeah. That's right.

**Theodore:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** That's right. Yeah.

**Theodore:** And so she had a single, but all during the day, I would never see them; they'd be in this drawing room. And they'd, uh-- he'd call me first thing in the morning, tell me he was going down for breakfast. I could go in and clean up his room and make his bed down, push the berth up, and then I'd never see them all day long. I was really curious about what they did in there. When we got to Sudbury, uh, he, um, asked me if I could send a telegram, to let his brother know what time he was gonna be in, which I did. And when he got off the train, uh, I went in the drawing room, and here, the whole time, he and his daughter had been playing Monopoly. And I thought this was kind of funny 'cause they left the Monopoly board there. And here's a guy who's, the family is known to be multi, ulti millionaires and, uh, their game was Monopoly.

**Stanley:** [laughs] Interesting. Very good. Is there anything you'd like to say in conclusion as we come to the end? We're at the end of the interview now, Ted. You may wanna make some comments about the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters or Randolph or Smith or Blanchette or to summarize your feelings of about the union.

**Theodore:** Well, I don't think any story would be complete unless you said something about Brother Randolph. I can remember when he came up in the early years that I met him and that would be in the '40s. Even then, he was talking about how we had to help Africa get out of its- out of its problems. The man was so far ahead of his day, it was unbelievable. And uh, a lot of the things that he was saying there, you still see today. In fact, I was just looking, uh, when you asked me, Stan, to see, to bring you whatever material I had, I was reading an article in there where Brother Randolph was talking about how we had to help out South Africa and how we had to, um, start sanctions against 'em if we were gonna do anything. Now, that's 40 years ago. That's 40 years ago. And then we get people like Margaret Thatcher saying that, uh-uh, sanctions, uh, are no good and we shouldn't be doing it. And yet we're still givin' lip service to the Africans. 40 year-- Canadian government's still givin' lip service to the Africans. This is 40 years ago.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Theodore:** And uh, he was to be commended because only someone like Philip Randolph who was not an argumentative person. He was a quiet, intelligent, and very articulate. And he soothed the ill feelings between porters, the Ladies' Auxiliary, you name it. He seemed to be able to smooth everybody's ruffled feathers and get them workin'-

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Theodore:** -for what was most important. And every year he came up, was a real joy to see him. And he seemed to be able to resolve all problems in two or three days. And, uh, and he'll no doubt be sorely missed. And I was glad that when they had that March in Washington, that he was right up there in the forefront, 'cause he-he certainly deserved the recognition. Now there were others, you know, Canadians who did real--

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Theodore:** --who were really strong. Uh, I was quite proud of my dad. I thought he was an extremely forceful person representing the union. And Brother Roy Williams also, they were very, very strong out here in Vancouver. Frank Collins was a strong, uh, representative. And I think it took those people because, uh, those are the kind of people that they had to have a A1 record themselves and make and keep it so, and then, uh-uh, represent us, uh, in our best interest so, I like it.

**Stanley:** Um, we're just about finished here. Ted, uh, what a really beautiful summary by the way, if I may observe. Uh, now, I guess we can use your family as a sort of, uh, of, uh, as an example of what can come out of a porter's family. Your father was a porter and what are you working at today?

**Theodore:** Well, I have my own real estate agency, Galaxy Realty. I had my own accounting business.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Theodore:** Uh, my sister Vie, she was the first Black Canadian woman lawyer in Canada.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Theodore:** And, uh, my sister went on to get, uh, very good education and she's, uh, became a, uh, sales rep and, uh, married and went to Los Angeles and was a sales rep for the telephone company for, uh, oh, 27, 28 years. What's her name?

**Theodore:** Uh, Lucille. She just recently retired.

**Stanley:** Oh, is that so?

**Theodore:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Good. Thank you so much.

**Theodore:** Uh, also, um, you know, I was on the road, my dad was on the road. He was responsible for what we did. And-and of course everybody wants their families to get a better education. My daughter has been a school teacher for fifteen years in Penticton and my sons are in the insurance business. So, we're quite happy with the way that the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has-has been a definite asset and a help to our family.

**Stanley:** What are your sons' names?

**Theodore:** Uh, Brian and Richard.

**Stanley:** And how old are they?

**Theodore:** Uh, Linda's 37, Brian's 35 and-- 34, and Richard's 32.

**Stanley:** Linda's a school teacher?



**Theodore:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Good.

**King:** Yeah.

**Stanley:** Thanks so much. End of interview with Ted King of Vancouver in British Columbia. Interview of Melvin Crump of Calgary, in Calgary on the 1st of November, 1987 at, uh, 2:36 PM. Okay. Your name, sir, is?

**Melvin Crump:** [clears throat] Melvin Crump is my name, uh, Stan.

**Stanley:** And Mel, where were you born?

**Melvin:** I was born in Edmonton year of 19 and 16, Edmonton, Alberta.

**Stanley:** And month?

**Melvin:** Uh, month of August 31st.

**Stanley:** Great. And, uh, where did your, uh, your family come from?

**Melvin:** My family, mom and dad they're from, uh-uh, Clearview, Oklahoma. That's where they're from, originally, and they immigrated into Canada year of that-- During that big immigration to Canada from the United States, year of 19, uh, 1911, 1910 and 1911-

**Stanley:** All right.

**Melvin:** -on arrival with a number of other, uh, Black i-immigrants.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Melvin:** Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** Were they called homesteaders?

**Melvin:** Homesteaders, yes.

**Stanley:** Oh yeah.

**Melvin:** Yeah. And they settled in a place called, uh, uh, uh, Key-Keystone, Keystone, Alberta, and some of them settled in a place called, uh, Amber Valley and, uh, Athabasca, all, all in the province of Alberta, scattered throughout Alberta, farmland.

**Stanley:** Did your parents work?

**Melvin:** Uh, my parents, they-they worked on the farm for quite some time. And then when things got too-too rough out there for-- to make a living for my dad and family, and then he came to the city and was offered a job at Swift's Canadian Packing Plant. And he worked there for, oh, a number of years trying to support his family. Yeah.

**Stanley:** What was your-your first job?

**Melvin:** My first job was working for a farmer named Mr. Harvey up at a place called Radway, Alberta. Um, working for \$5 a month, uh-uh, looking after the cows and the chickens and feedin' hogs and-and plowing the ground and planting grain. And I was also- uh, [clears throat] I was also stooking grain and driving tractors at the age of 15 years of age, at 15.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Melvin:** Milk-milking cows. And-and I also-- Uh, he taught me how to castrate, uh-uh, pigs. I-I became a castrator of pigs and I-- The only reason I didn't castrate a-a-a steer or a cow-- a bull was because I was scared of the bull going to kick me and I never did. [chuckles] I never did undertake that experience.

**Stanley:** What a cruel profession.

**Melvin:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Stanley:** Um, I understand that you became a sleeping car porter.

**Melvin:** Uh, yes. Um, during the hard times, or during the hard years, um, we didn't have-- there weren't any jobs around that we could depend on. And so the-- an opening came, whereas, um-um, the, um, Black generation was called on. The male, uh, was called on to support and, uh, back up the CPR and getting-getting, uh, manpower for-- to man their trains. And at the time that this was taking place was during the time-- the reason for the-- the shortage of manpower was during the time that the war was breaking out. And so, um, I hear-hearing about this, uh, move, I-I put my name in and I was-- Um, there was a fellow named Bob Weir that was, uh, scouting Alberta looking for, uh, Black, uh, porters, uh, to, um, uh, to-to come to the rescue of our Canadian Pacific Railway employment, uh, situation. And I put my name in. At the time that I put my name in, I told, uh, Mr. Weir that, uh, "How old do you have to be?" And he says, "Well, you have to be at least 21." And so I said, "It's fate, I just turned 21." I just turned-- At the time I was 19. [chuckles] And so, I needed the job so bad that I said I was 21. And he looked at me, but he-he-- They needed the manpower. And so he said, "How tall are you?" I said, "How tall you have to be?" He said, "Well, you gotta be at least five foot six." And so I says, "I'm five foot seven." I says, "I just so happened to be five foot seven." And so he understood what I told him, he practically told me what's necessary. That's how I got my job.

**Stanley:** So, how tall were you actually?

**Melvin:** Five foot five and a half.

**Stanley:** You're taller now, are you?

**Melvin:** [laughter] Yeah.

**Stanley:** Okay. So, uh, and how long were you a sleeping car porter?

**Melvin:** I was with the CPR for some 20, 21 years.

**Stanley:** Running out of what?

**Melvin:** Out of Calgary District.

**Stanley:** Tell us about the conditions, uh, under which you had to work.

**Melvin:** Well, uh, the conditions under which we had to work, I-I had never been through thi-this type of- uh, of a condition on a job in-in all the days of my life. Um, we had to more or less, we were put under somewhat of a very strenuous, uh, obligation to hold your job on the CPR. Meaning that, um, as an- as-as an example, uh, when you got finished making down your night-- your beds during the night for your passengers to retire, um, and you had somewhat of 27 beds to make down, you had to- you had to go to work now and shine each and every of one of your passengers that had shoes to shine. You had to shine these shoes, all these shoes up. And then- uh, and then after this, you-you cleaned up your washrooms the most, both at the men's end and at the women's end. You're takin' all the soiled towels and you bag them and put them away. And you put out-- After cleaning your sinks, et. cetera, you then put out clean towels and-and soap for the next morning for your customers. Now you're not finished yet and this now must be somewhere around one o'clock in the morning. And, uh, you're getting awfully tired because you start at seven o'clock in the morning, previous morning. Now you're getting awfully tired and you're not allowed to go to bed until such time or lie down to have a rest until such time that your time period came up. And-and with some of us, our time period came up at 12:00, some came up at 1:00, but if you- if you- if your time was to go down at twelve o'clock to have a rest, you had to be up again in about two and a half hours, two and a half hours sleep, so that you would be back on watch again. Now, the watch, everybody's sleeping but you, and so you had to watch to see that nobody got up during the night or to cause any, uh, disturbance among the passengers that were sleeping, or anyone from the other cars that's coming through that would cause any disturbance. It-it was your job to see that this- that this didn't happen. Even if you were practically asleep on your feet walking through your car checking and testing, you were half asleep doing this, but there was not too much that, uh, you could do about that, because that was part of your duties and part of your job.

But me, I was different than a lot of porters. When I fell asleep, I went to sleep and I-I got, um-- I would sleep somewhere on an average of four to five hours a night, which was contrary to the rule, but I couldn't keep my eyes open. There was no way I could keep my eyes open. So I went to sleep. And I got written up during the course of the twenty-one years that I had on the railroad. I must have been written up for, uh-uh-uh, refraining to do my duties, um, at least- at least fifteen to eighteen times. And any of the other porters would've ordinarily been fired after-after twice writing-writing up. But my Superintendent, God bless his heart and bless his soul, he understood my situation and he-he understood, uh-uh, exactly what-- How I felt. And he never did- he never did fire me, but he would draw me and pull me into the company. And he says, "Oh, Mel, I see you're back again. Now, what did you do this time?" I said, "Sleeping." I said, "Getting my rest. In order for me to do my duties and perform my job as the-- I knew the company would appreciate the type of performing that I will do." I says, "I had to get my rest. Without rest, there was no way that I could do my job the way I knew the company would appreciate me." So, I would get my

rest, the next morning I would be fresh and ready to go. And I says, "Each and every one of my passengers was well satisfied with the service that I gave them, each and every one of them." But I says, "We have inspectors out there who sleep- [clears throat] who sleep, uh-uh, during the day to catch the train, uh, at night while-while we're awake." We don't have a chance to sleep during the course of the day because there's kiddies running around through the cars. And I says, "Then there's no way that we could sleep during the day. If we're going to get any sleep, it would have to be after each and every one of the passengers were asleep at night. That's the only time that we would have a chance to get any sleep." I said, "But I'm one that-- and I'm the one that got one of them, that got my sleep," but there's so many other porters that didn't get their sleep.

**Stanley:** How did you get your sleep, in a bed or sitting up?

**Melvin:** No, in the smoking room on the- uh, on the- on the seat, you know, the long seat in the smoker.

**Stanley:** Oh, I see.

**Melvin:** I would get a pillow. There would be an extra pillow.

**Stanley:** I see.

**Melvin:** I'd get this pillow and I'd snatch myself about five hours sleep.

**Stanley:** What discipline did you get oversleeping?

**Melvin:** Beg your pardon?

**Stanley:** What discipline did you get?

**Melvin:** Well, uh, for the first discipline that I got was 3 demerit marks, and you're allowed 15 demerit marks.

**Stanley:** Before dismissal?

**Melvin:** Uh, before dismissal. And my first, the first time I got-- the first time I was written up for sleeping on the job was I got three. And then, uh, after that, uh, it would be about two weeks after that I got written up again. I got three more, that's six. And when they got up to about thirteen and I had that, I had two more demerits to go before I would be automatically fired, they stopped. It was stopped. [laughs] They didn't give me any more demerit marks, but they told me to try to keep my eyes open.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Melvin:** But then I got written up, oh, about, oh, I would say [laughs] about eighteen times after that, but they never did fire me.

**Stanley:** You must have been a good porter otherwise?

**Melvin:** This is the reason they never fired me-

**Stanley:** Mm.

**Melvin:** -because good porters were scarce. Good porters.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Melvin:** I was among- I was among, uh, um, Calgary's top, uh-uh, appreciated porters in-in our district. I was among that top. These were men that was ahead of me, senior to me by- by fifteen years, eighteen years seniority, senior to me, uh, they chose me when a special train came up. I was chosen. I was chosen right along with our top senior men to-to fill up the necessary porters required to man that particular train.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Melvin:** They-they chose me. There was one time that, uh, we-we had a-a private party come up from Hawaii that wanted to see the Dionne-Di-Dionne, uh, twin-- quintuplets down at Callander, Ontario. And, um, this was a special party. I was chosen to go along with that- that special party to man those trains to-to look after our customers going down. I was among that for the five porters.

**Stanley:** Is that right?

**Melvin:** And that's the only way that I would've had a chance, by the way, to see the Dionne twin-- the-the-the-the quintuplets. The-the-- Some of those are passed on now, I understand.

**Stanley:** Two of them, I think are dead.

**Melvin:** There's two of them have passed on.

**Stanley:** I'm sorry.

**Melvin:** Oh, yeah. Well, that was one wonderful site. The doctor for that was, uh, Dr. Defoe, was he? Dr.--

**Stanley:** Dr. Defoe, right.

**Melvin:** Dr. Defoe. I met him. I met Dr. Defoe, yes. Yeah. Wonderful. That was a very good experience of mine.

**Stanley:** Could-could you co-comment on any other experiences or [inaudible 00:33:02]?

**Melvin:** Oh, yes. There's-- Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed. [clears throat] I, uh, I, uh, had the experiences on-on the trains as a porter that I don't think that there's no other job that one could go on to have the same type of experience. What I mean by that is that the treatment that you received from your officials, not all of your offici- your officials, but, uh, a number of your officials. I'm mo-mostly referring to now is your inspectors. The inspectors, they expected you to perform the im-impossible. There was no way that the-- that a-a porter in his normal mind could function- could function on those trains under the- under the strain put on them by some of the- of the company's inspectors, not all of them, but some of

them. Uh, some of the- uh, some of the inspectors over-overstep their- overstep their authority by putting extra, extra pressures on the porters. And this, and-and by so doing it made it very, very, very, very, uh-uh-uh, complicated for the performers to perform their job, to do justice to their jobs. And it was an-- and it was by this type of treatment was why a number of- uh, of, uh, the customers they left the trains with a nasty taste in their mouth on account of the porters not giving them the type of service that they felt that they were entitled to.

**Stanley:** Mm.

**Melvin:** That was because the porter had a very foul disposition. You see? He was- he was very, very, uh-- he had a foul disposition from the treatment that he would- he would receive from his inspectors and from some of the conductors, because the conductors, in some cases, the conductors and the- and the inspectors got their heads together and gave the particular, uh-uh, porter that they didn't like, they would give him a bad time. They would team up on him and give him a bad time. Consequently, the porter then in turn would take that ill feeling out on the customer, which was wrong. That wasn't- that wasn't the-the-the customer's fault. So, he shouldn't have did that,-

**Stanley:** Mm.

**Melvin:** -but it's all because of our inspect- our, uh, our inspectors and our-our conductors teaming up on him.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Melvin:** You see? But me, the reason why I didn't, I- uh, I- uh, I- uh, I got written up so many times is because I ignored that of the inspectors and I ignored that of a con-- a number of the-- of conductors who abused me, or ha-- or attempted to abuse me. I ignored this. Consequently for doing so, they written me up to my superintendent. My superintendent once again called me into the office and he shut the door and he told me, "Mel, I see you're in it again."

**Stanley:** Well, did you ever have the-the-- any of the, uh, members of the Porters' Welfare Committee represent you at a hearing?

**Melvin:** No, not at that time. We didn't have no such-- We didn't have any union at that time. We had no unions or no representatives.

**Stanley:** No, but there was a Porters' Welfare Committee though?

**Melvin:** Oh, yeah, no, no, no. Not where-- not in our district that I know of.

**Stanley:** Yeah. Mr. Cobble and Mr. Armstead.

**Melvin:** Oh, that was before my time.

**Stanley:** Mm-hmm.

**Melvin:** Oh, yeah. That must have been before my time. 'Cause I had no- I had no-- no, we didn't have no such thing as representative, no.

**Stanley:** I'm understanding that each district had a Porters' Welfare Committee.

**Melvin:** Well, that would be before my time.

**Stanley:** Is that so?

**Melvin:** Well, when we had- when we had our indifferences, we had no one to represent us and no one approached me with the fact that Mel, do you want representation if you gotta go up to the office, do you want representation? No one approached me in that manner. No. We- uh, we porters had to more or less-- When my-- during my-my experiences and my time, we had to more or less stand on our own feet and speak up for ourselves.

Now, there was, uh, several porters that had the same attitude as myself. Now, some of them were released because they were what you may term as, um, uh, the type that was very bitter, very bitter. Well, I wasn't bitter at the world. When I- when I was brought in for rep-rep- for reprimand-reprimand, I was- um, I was more or less relaxed and I was prepared to accept whatever-whatever punishment that my company had in plan-- had planned for me. But when I went back on the road, I didn't take my, uh, feelings out on my customers. I- I-I still accepted my-my customers, the company's customers, as one should, acc-- address and-and accept their customers. And it was for this reason that I never was released, was because there were so many customers written in, uh-uh, letters of what a wonderful trip they had during the- during their trip across Canada with Porter M. Crump as their porter, and they hopefully hope that the day when they return, that they would be fortunate enough to get the same porter back again. And this is the reason why after all the write-ups that I got, uh-uh, from the conductors and the inspectors, this is the reason why that I wasn't released from service.

**Stanley:** Uh-huh. What about, um, the, um, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

**Melvin:** The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters--

**Stanley:** Were you a member of that?

**Melvin:** Uh, yes. Oh, definitely. Definitely. I was, uh, I was 100% strong for the- for the, for the- um, the putting together of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Why? Because then we would, uh, for the first time get recognition as-as being men, for the first time. And, uh, when that came into existence, then it was accepted by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Um, things did change considerably and it changed for the betterment of both the company and the company's employees, the porters. Then we- uh, then we-we started to give the company what the company was rightfully entitled to. And then we had set times for us all to have a-a decent rest instead of having to steal-steal an hour here and steal an hour there to rest. We had a set time due the-- due to the company once again. Uh, AP Philip Randolph, he, uh, the President of the company, he-he-he consulted with all the top officials in Montreal headquarters and had them to realize that if you want the men to perform the duties that you expect of them and that the traveling public expect, then you've gotta give the men a chance to get their-- a decent rest. And with this, they'll have a-a pleasant

disposition ne-next morning to do and to perform their performances that's-that's necessary for this type of job.

**Stanley:** Well, did the rest period increase with the coming--

**Melvin:** Mm-hmm. Oh, yes, yes. The rest period increased. And then you-- there was a-- there was a bed assigned to you. You didn't had, no longer have to sleep on the smoking room on a- on-on a- on a- on a flat piece of leather. You then had the- had the opportunity of sleeping in a bed that- the bed that was assigned to you, the same as your customers, the same as the passenger. And you could take your clothing off and relax and sleep the way, uh, an-anyone else, a normal person would wanna sleep. And then when you got up the next morning, you-you're awakened with a-a very rested body that you could start then to perform your duties as-as expected of you with a-a very pleasant disposition.

**Stanley:** Who were the key organizers of the-- on behalf of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters that you remember?

**Melvin:** Uh-uh, you mean the general organizers? That would be, uh, AP Philip Randolph was the big man. He was the man. And then there was this, uh, Benny-Benny Smith. Benny Smith, uh, followed him. And then there was a-a-a Blanchette in Winnipeg. He played a very, very important role, uh, in the- um, in the, uh, putting together of the union. And then there was, um, in our district, we had such man as Dick Bellamy. Dick Bellamy, he, uh, was one of the key figures in Calgary, uh, that helped to put it together. There was Roy Williams, he was a key figure. And there was Odell Holmes. And I'm speaking of Calgary. He-- They were-- those-those three men were key men in the putting together of the, uh, of the Brotherhood in Calgary district.

**Stanley:** Right.

**Melvin:** I, myself, I was- uh, I was, um, put up for the President of the- of the Brotherhood, but at the time I was so terribly busy in other fields and departments that I-I had to withdraw my nomination. But I did accept the- uh, the, uh, nomination of being the chairman of the Safety-Safety, uh, Committee. I was, uh, for the employees here in the Calgary. And I was, uh, one of the ones responsible for a number of changes that was- that was dangerous to the porters, uh, in the performing of their duties. And then, and the defects that was brought to my attention that I in turn taken to-to management and management changed it to make it safer for the employees to- uh, to operate their duties.

**Stanley:** Do you know what the joining fee was, how the dues were-were you doing at the BSCP?

**Melvin:** Uh, let's see. Now the-the-the dues. The dues were, um, if I can remember right, I think they were somewhere around the \$15, uh-uh, bracket. Maybe I should ask Dick on that question.

**Stanley:** No-no-no-no-no-no.

**Melvin:** No? Okay. I think it was in that area. I'm not for sure offhand.



**Stanley:** I see.

**Melvin:** Yeah. 18 to 20, in that- in that area. I cannot--

**Stanley:** I'm not talkin' about joining fee, I'm talkin' about the monthly dues.

**Melvin:** The monthly dues. Oh, no-no, not offhand, not offhand, Stan. This-this has been so long ago. I-I don't--

**Stanley:** I've been told that joining fee was \$15, monthly dues were \$2 [inaudible 00:42:39]

**Melvin:** \$2. I-I can't recall, but I know it wasn't very much because we weren't making too much money. So I know it couldn't have been too much money. No. So you-you could be- you could be about on track.

**Stanley:** How long were you a member of the union?

**Melvin:** How long was I in the Brotherhood? I was in the Brotherhood, uh-uh, from the beginning till the end of my time as an employee at the Canadian Pacific Railway. And that would be for, uh-uh, I-I-- Now, when did that union come into existence? Whatever- whatever date, I can't rem-remember that either, but whatever date it came into existence, I joined immediately and I stayed with them until the conclusion of-of my time as a porter.

**Stanley:** But what year did you join?

**Melvin:** I joined in 1936, but we didn't have a union at that time.

**Stanley:** And when did you leave the railroad?

**Melvin:** I left- I left the railroad in, I think it was '59, mm-hmm. It was '50-- I think it was '59 I left the railroad. Oh, '59. Oh, it was before that, um, '36, uh, 18 years. 18 years after-after-after--

**Stanley:** '54.

**Melvin:** '36. '54? All right then, that's when I left.

**Stanley:** Why'd you leave?

**Melvin:** Well, I left because we were all informed that, uh, due to automation, there were going to be some drastic changes made. And what I mean by that, they were gettin' ready to take off the steam engines and put in- and put in diesel. Consequently, they didn't need as many sleepers as-as they were carrying because the time was shortened due to the speed-up of our trains. So they didn't need a number of the porters that they had at the time. So each and every district across Canada, they-they'd taken out so many of the- of the porters because they didn't need them. And I was among the bunch that they'd taken out of Calgary. And not only did they- did they cut down on the porters, they also cut down on the dining car staff. They-they eliminated a-a number of the news agents. They didn't need them. So we, in general, there was 500 men in the- in the District of Calgary that was cut out. And I was- I was told about this two to three months before the time, the deadline on

the QT by-by one of the officials that had a great-great respect for me. And during that- during that time that I had left, I went to work and I started looking around for other employment. And it just so happened that I was, uh, in the good books of at that time, one of the- one of the members without portfolio to our- to our-our, uh, in our- in our city. And I mentioned that to him, that I was about to lose my job in about three months. So he says, "Well, Melvin, a man of your caliber, you don't have to work. You don't have to worry about a job and work. You come and see me and I'll have a job for you when you get finished with the railroad."

**Stanley:** So did he?

**Melvin:** Yeah, that's when I started working for this millionaire, uh, Mr. Eric Harvey.

**Stanley:** Doing what?

**Melvin:** I was his- uh, I was his personal chauffeur plus the fact I then was transferred after that to the- to the, uh, mail, to the mail department. And I had one, two, three, four, four employees under me after they trained-- had-- After I'd taken my-my training for this, I had four men and we handled all the company's mail, both in-incoming and outgoing, both Canadian, national, and international. That was my responsibility.

**Stanley:** Which company was it?

**Melvin:** That was the Glenbow Alberta Government Institute, Glenbow Foundation Alberta Government Institute. Mm-hmm.

**Stanley:** You mentioned earlier that, uh, 500 employees were released.

**Melvin:** Released, yes. This is not only the porters though.

**Stanley:** [inaudible 00:46:25] porter?

**Melvin:** This is-- No. Yeah, no, this is the Dining Car Department, all departments was cut. Though the excess employees that wasn't needed, uh, after they- after they finalized what would be needed to operate the district, all others then they cut off, and the porters was among- and the porters was among this cutoff. And I was one of the porters.

**Stanley:** Getting-getting back to the organizing of the porters' union, do you recall if there- there was any intimidation on the part of the-- of CPR management?

**Melvin:** Uh, yes. The-the management, they-they weren't in favour. They weren't in favour at all, from- uh, from what I gathered from, uh, the-- from- uh, from various sources, uh, management did everything possible to block- to block, uh-uh, the organizing of the union. Well, they didn't--

[00:47:23] [END OF AUDIO]