Judy Ellinghausen: This is an interview with Mr. Godfrey Johnson at his home in Great Falls, Montana September 11, 1994. Mr. Johnson is now 88 years old. Why don't you begin by telling me a little bit about your early background?

Godfrey Johnson: I left home when I was 15. I went up in northern Minnesota working in the logging camp through the spring. When spring came, I came down to Chisholm, Minnesota. That was back in the early twenties. Things were moving in those days. The mines were working full blast. I talked to people uptown. They said I could get a job with the (unintelligible) gang laying track for the shovel where they were loading up ore that they had gotten in the winter. I had 16th birthday in the logging camp. So I went out there and some guy asked me how old I was. I told him I was 16. He said, "I can't hire you." So I went back to town. Funny thing, I happened to know some bootleggers. I went and talked to them and told them. This good friend of mine Marco, he said, "Go on up again and tell them you're 18." So I did, I went out there the next morning to tell them I was 18. He said, "Okay." And he hired me.

JE: The same man?

GJ: Same guy, same foreman, yes. So I went to work there until there was a good harvest time in North Dakota. So I quit and we went out to the harvest. After the harvest was over, we were pretty close to a place where they were mining coal. They were mining coal there one time. I guess there still is. I just went and got a job in the coal mine. I worked there all through the winter and the next summer, I went back to Canada again. I got a job on a ranch there. I stayed there until—I was in North Dakota and then Canada. I had friends in North Dakota. So I used to come back there.

That's when I had the blacksmith shop, you know. Then I didn't get home until I was 21. The guy that hired me up on the Iron Range wrote me a letter. I told him where I was at because I saw him. I was up on the Iron Range before I went home and I went in to stop and talk to him, visit him. Then the funny thing was, they had a daughter that was just about my age. She liked me and I liked her. So when I left there, I don't know why I left—I had a good job there. Like their sons... (unintelligible) It was kind of a sad departure because she cried. I left. Anyway.. (unintelligible) I was only about 25 miles from the line to turn into Montana, so I walked.

JE: From Canada?
GJ: Yes, from Canada. There was just a port of entry. I never reported in or reported out. I was talking to the customs officer there and I said, "I've got to get down to the railroad to catch a train down there." He said, "I know." They know who you are. So he said, "Hang around there at that gas station and when you see someone that's going that way, just talk to them." So someone finally came by and they gave me a ride down to Malta. Then from Malta I came to Havre. I worked in Havre for a gentleman (?) dealer that fall and part of the winter. I did all the jobs around. The next spring, they were building a racetrack there at Havre. I worked there for a few months. Then I came down to Great Falls. I headed west.

JE: So you didn't come here for a job on the railroad?

GJ: No, but when I was in Havre, we worked for the railroad, a callboy for about three or four months I was there. Then the harvest was gone, and the trains moving. So I was callboy there for about three or four months.

JE: A call boy?

GJ: Yes, you know, to call (?)

JE: You were the alarm clock?

GJ: More or less. So we worked all through the yard. I was on call so I'd have to go over to town and call these guys and tell them it was time to get up and get out.

JE: You went to their homes and woke them up?

GJ: Yes I went to their homes. I would wake them up and tell them that if they wanted the next train out at a certain time, to be out there. They rode around. The switcher and the brake man would go to the yard outfit. That's what I did.

JE: So you started out as a callboy?

GJ: Yes, that's what I did.

JE: How old were you then?

GJ: I was about 21. After that, I think I headed west. I came to Great Falls. It was probably around '28 or '29. So I headed west. There was construction out there, building roads along the river.

JE: You helped build the railroads?

GJ: No it wasn't a railroad, it was a highway.
JE: Oh, I see.

GJ: I worked there until I had to, I had an ulcer on there (?), before you know I had to quit (unintelligible) until I got well. Then I just bummed around and came to California on the freight train.

JE: Oh, so you were a real hobo?

GJ: Yes, I was a real hobo.

JE: You actually jumped on the trains and rode them?

GJ: Yes. They'd stop the train and the bulls would run you off. You'd have to lie around in the jungles until the next train came by and try to catch it in the dark.

JE: What were the jungles like?

GJ: It would be a bunch of guys hanging around and they'd bring food there to eat. You could bum uptown.

JE: How did you go about bumping?

GJ: I never bummed. I always had money. You don't tell the bums that you have money, of course.

JE: I don't think so.

GJ: I always bummed around and worked.

JE: So you were more of a hobo, you worked for a living?

GJ: Yes.

JE: Did you have any near misses with the railroad bulls?

GJ: I think it was in Salem, Oregon, he took some of us to jail. So we stayed there until the next day. We stayed over night. He turned us loose and told us to get out of town. How could we get out of town? I had a little money. I could have gotten out, but the rest of them were broke. So we went down to the jungles and waited for a train again. He left us alone.

JE: You just had to learn to be sneaky?

GJ: Yes.
JE: Was this during the Depression when there were a lot of people out looking for work?

GJ: Oh yes. The freight trains were full. There were women with kids too.

JE: Really? How did they manage?

GJ: They bummed their ways and would go some place where they would serve.

JE: They caught the trains too?

GJ: Oh yes. They rode freight trains.

JE: The kids too?

GJ: Yes little kids.

JE: How did they ever run to get on the trains?

GJ: Sometimes it would be the whole family. Sometimes it would be only a woman and a kid or two. Sometimes the whole family would be going.

JE: Were the women treated pretty well by the other hobos?

GJ: Yes they treated her good. Nobody bothered them.

JE: Were you like a big family? You looked out for each other?

GJ: More or less, yes.

JE: So that's how you came back to Montana is you rode in on the trains?

GJ: Yes I came from California. I traveled east through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and came back north to Billings and Great Falls. It was about spring then. After Great Falls, I got a job down at Stanford to be chief of a ranch. So I worked there. (unintelligible) and then I went harvesting again. So I went back to Canada again. I was acquainted up there, you know. Then (unintelligible). When I came up from the south, Kansas City, I came in right through Minneapolis. I worked there for a rich guy. I had to take care of his ponies. He played polo on horses.

JE: You've done a little bit of everything.

GJ: I took care of his ponies. Have you heard of Forrest Dunning?

JE: I think so.
GJ: Well he was across the river from Forrest Dunning. I took him across the bridge, that Forrest Dunning. (unintelligible) country club to the polo grounds. Then I'd stay there until the evening and I'd take the horses back. I wouldn't want to do that now because of all the traffic.

JE: Now they probably ride in horse carriages.

GJ: I just led them across.

JE: That must have been quite a sight.

GJ: Yes. Of course I was around Butte. I met Alice. Of course I met Alice when I was back riding (unintelligible) and she was riding too. I told you about how we met and what happened.

JE: You came to Great Falls with your bride?

GJ: Yes. I had a job at Glendive working on the bridge there (unintelligible). After we got married, we were sitting around talking and I got to thinking, "What am I going to do with that job when it's out?"

JE: And you had a responsibility.

GJ: She wanted to know. She was agreeable to go to Great Falls. She never had been to Great Falls. She said, "I'll go to Great Falls." So we went there and one Sunday afternoon (unintelligible).

JE: Was this about the early Thirties?

GJ: We were married then. So a guy was hiring a lot of people on the railroad. He said, "Why don't you get a job on the railroad? It would pay more money." So that's when I went to fire.

JE: You were a fireman?

GJ: Yes.

JE: For which railroad?

GJ: I went to work in the Roundhouse. I worked half a day and right after we had our lunch, we were going back to work and we had our shovels.

JE: Was this the Great Northern?
GJ: Yes. So someone took my shovel and said, "You're going firing." I said, "I don't know nothing about firing." He said, "You'll learn." So I said, "What should I do? What's firing?"

They called the switch engine the goat.

JE: They'd call them the goat?

GJ: Yes.

JE: Do you know why they got that name?

GJ: I don't know, because it's small I guess. I did that for a few days. They had to have a fireman go to Havre. So they called on me. That was me being called on by the callboy.

JE: You were working your way up the ladder?

GJ: Yes. I got ready and went to the yard office. The good thing about that truck was I had a good engineer. He helped me. I said, "I don't know anything about firing. I've only been firing goats." He said, "You'll do all right." (unintelligible) stop on the side and build up the fire.

JE: He didn't blame you?

GJ: No. He showed me how to do it. You had a big fire box you know, in the corner over there. You could have fire here and fire there. You had to know how to throw that coal. It took me quite a while to do that. I was hitting the side of the fire box and I split a shovel.

JE: You split a shovel?

GJ: Yes. I hit it so hard trying to get the coal going to where I wanted it, I split the shovel.

JE: You were trying to make a good impression?

GJ: I wasn't supposed to hit the side. I was supposed to hit the bottom of the door and then it bounces and you turn it the same way. I tried to hit the side to make the coal bounce. I hit the shovel. Lucky enough, they had another shovel there. I just threw the old shovel off the tracks and went on. I got by. I did a little bit better coming back. You didn't have to stop ahead to put the fire out.

JE: You were getting the hang of it?

GJ: Yes. I learned a little bit about it. The switch breaker was pretty good. Sometimes he would shovel it. You have to have a good crew where you're all right. (unintelligible) they'd growl at you.

JE: Did you have any bad experiences with bad engineers?
GJ: Oh he would just let the steam out on me.

JE: They do that on purpose?

GJ: Yes just to make the fireman work harder. The other fireman told me the same thing that they did it to him before they did it to me. So I knew what he was doing. (unintelligible). So we just sat there. He’d watch me shovel and sweat. That was the end of (unintelligible).

JE: You said that once you got one engineer that you played a trick on him?

GJ: He made me so mad that I just didn’t care what happened. I shoveled more coal for him. When he would whistle the steam- that would be different. He wasted the steam on me. Then I came back to Great Falls and I went down to the master mechanic's office. He looked at me and said, "What happened to you?" I said, "You know what happened. You heard about it."

JE: What did happen?

GJ: He just said, "Did you really throw the shovel in the fire box?" He said that but he smiled a little bit. He had some complaints about the engineer from other firemen. So he was kind of (unintelligible). He said, "I'll tell you what you can do, you can go down to the freight house and see McCormick." He was a freight agent there. "If you have any questions, you'll have to tell him to call me." I told McCormick, "I don't (unintelligible) depot." I said, "That's all right, I'll go over there." So I went over there.

JE: So how long were you a fireman?

GJ: Oh maybe about 16 months.

JE: So your fireman career ended when you threw the shovel in the firebox?

GJ: That was the end of it.

JE: Enough, right?

GJ: I didn't like the job anyway.

JE: Was it pretty hard work?

GJ: It was hard work being a fireman. It isn't now. Now you've got the electric and diesel engines. Then you had a shovel. That was hard work.

JE: How many hours did you have to work?

GJ: It depended on how long the run was. If you went to Havre, it probably was six hours.
JE: Six hours?

GJ: Yes. If you went down to Billings or Laurel it took eight or nine hours to go there.

JE: And you had to shovel most of that time?

GJ: Yes.

JE: To keep the steam up?

GJ: Yes.

JE: Did you have to stop for water very often?

GJ: Yes we stopped down below Stanford (unintelligible). Have you ever heard of that town?

JE: I did.

GJ: Yes we stopped there to get water. So we get to a town. We just run the engine up over the road and then the yard crew takes over. We'd all get out as a group and we had a hotel or a place to eat. We'd eat and then we'd go to bed.

JE: Is that how you'd get yourselves entertained when you were in other towns?

GJ: You'd just go to bed. You'd only get eight hours of sleep and maybe not even that. So you'd tell the night clerk to wake you up when the yard officer calls into the hotel. He knows where you at. He'd keep the crew ready. They didn't have a callboy there. The night clerk would get you up and call you to tell you that your train would be ready at a certain time. Then you'd have to get up and go to eat. Anyway, that would be one trip. We'd come back and (unintelligible).

JE: Burned out a what?

GJ: A joiner(?). It was like an axle. It broke off in the middle (unintelligible). We had to stop in the [unintelligible]. We stayed there about a day. We got in there at about six o'clock in the morning. I think we stayed there all day until about eight o'clock at night until a passenger train took us into Great Falls. We had to leave the train. Then the night crew came down to pick up the train. So we came in on the passenger train.

JE: So there were trains that you worked on carried freight?

GJ: Yes they were freight trains.

JE: Were there very many accidents on the train?
GJ: No.

JE: Some of the jobs like the brakeman's job were very dangerous. Do you remember any accidents?

GJ: Yes there were accidents. One brakeman who worked up around Carter and (unintelligible). He got a leg cut off. A couple of guys (unintelligible) not too long ago got between the trains and smashed. There was nobody that got hurt that I know of while I was on the train running. There was only a fireman and an engineer and a head brakeman, and a conductor. There were only five of us on the train.

JE: What kind of safety regulations did they have?

GJ: Well I never knew too much about the safety regulations.

JE: It's probably nothing like it is nowadays.

GJ: I don't think it was talked about too much. You had to wear hard toed shoes and hardhats. They never talked about anything like that. There were no safety pants or anything.

JE: Did you hope to become an engineer when you started being a fireman? Was that kind of your goal?

GJ: Well if I stayed with it, I probably would have been engineer. That's where engineers come from is the fireman. I probably would have. After I got started being fireman, I knew I wouldn't last very long there anyway. The (unintelligible) didn't like me being fireman.

JE: Were you gone a lot from home?

GJ: Yes every trip you go out there, you're gone at least one night.

JE: So you liked it better in the office?

GJ: Well in the depot, not in the office.

JE: What type of work did you do in the depot?

GJ: I was a baggage holder. I would check baggage and unload the mail. I would load the mail and (unintelligible) clerk.

JE: Was that pretty interesting?

GJ: I didn't like it.
JE: You didn't like it? You didn't meet interesting people?

GJ: I'm not clerk. It was a race to be out moving around.

JE: Is that what you got to do eventually was be out and move around?

GJ: Yes. When you weren't working (unintelligible) go down to the park one time and sat. The train master came by and he turned me in. So I was asked about it in the office. (unintelligible).

JE: You just got a scolding. You kept your job?

GJ: Yes. A lot of time I would run over to the freight house and talk to the guys over there. They had a loudspeaker. They'd say, "Officer Johnson, you're wanted."

JE: They knew where to find you though?

GJ: Yes. Then I went checking cars on the east side of the river. (unintelligible).

JE: Maybe you were good. Maybe they could rely on you.

GJ: I just did what I could. So when he was gone, I would have to go check cars on the side of the river. They would call me the east side yard master.

JE: What did checking cars consist of? Did you look for hobos?

GJ: No, the numbers. You see, all of the cars up here at the elevators that are sitting up there, you have to go get their numbers and turn them into the yard officer so they know where the cars are at. (unintelligible) and all around town wherever the car was spotted.

JE: Oh, so you went all over town?

GJ: Yes wherever there was a car spotted. Then you went over to the (unintelligible) and checked the cars over there. They ran me around.

JE: And you were well suited for that?

GJ: Yes. Cars (unintelligible) at 24 hours, they want to know if it's over 24 hours so they could pay a (unintelligible) on it. I never...

JE: You never turned anybody in?

GJ: No. Here's an old trick that the car check used to do: there would be a little (unintelligible). I forget what they used to call it now. If a car came in for (unintelligible) or someone else, even
Ryan if they had too many cars over there, they can't have any cars sitting otherwise they'd have to pay the fee. So we sent them down to this little siding and stored them down there. When they wanted the car, they'd just tell the yard master (unintelligible). When he came up to pick that car, he would bring it in. I did some of that too.

JE: You got to run the engines and go pick up the cars?

GJ: Yes. (unintelligible) coming in from Lewistown.

JE: Why didn't you care for that job?

GJ: It was too much running around.

JE: Oh.

GJ: Anyone could get after you for not turning in (unintelligible). I never did and they were (unintelligible). Even the train master said, "You never did it once." (unintelligible). He told me to turn them in.

JE: You didn't have any meanness about you? Of all the jobs that you did on the railroad, what was your favorite?

GJ: My favorite was working in the baggage room. I didn't like being (unintelligible). You can't go anywhere.

JE: Did you work in the baggage room during the war? Do you remember a lot of military equipment?

GJ: Oh yes.

JE: What type of baggage did you get a lot of during the war?

GJ: There were a lot of corpses coming in.

JE: Corpses?

GJ: Yes during the war. Most of them were from Korea.

JE: What was that like to have to deal with?

GJ: You'd put them on the cart and you'd call the undertakers and have them come get them.

JE: So they were in caskets?
GJ: Yes. They were in wooden boxes.

JE: Was that kind of hard to deal with?

GJ: No. you'd (unintelligible) and pull it right down on the cart. I got a kick one time when someone came over and saw me do that. He said, "You shouldn't handle them that rough. You're going to bruise the corpse." I said, "You can't bruise the corpse, they're dead. They don't bruise."

JE: Did you have any other interesting baggage that you had to deal with?

GJ: In the baggage room?

JE: Yes.

GJ: No. I always used to send a guy down from the post office to check on the (unintelligible) in Havre or somebody would call up and they were supposed to get a stack of money and it didn't show up. He'd come down and look around. What I would do at night, I would hide it. There was a place in the basement where there were cubby holes. Before I would go home, I would take it down there and hide them down there.

JE: You'd bag them up?

GJ: Yes.

JE: You had quite a sense of humor?

GJ: We’d be loading the car up and the train was going to Havre, there was mail here and other stuff there. (unintelligible) turn the money in and (unintelligible). They'd see the money and they wouldn't know how it got there.

JE: They never figured it out?

GJ: Nope.

JE: You must have been fun to work with. Was it pretty fun to be on the job? Did you get along well with the people you worked with?

GJ: Oh yes. We were all friends.

JE: They stayed with the job for a long time?

GJ: Yes. It was dirty work. (unintelligible) on the railroad every day. It was 30 years.
JE: Did you have to join a union?

GJ: Oh yes.

JE: Was it a pretty strong union? Did you get involved?

GJ: Well I don't know.

JE: I know how much you like politics.

GJ: It depends on (unintelligible) our division chairman. He’d always have meetings. I was a (unintelligible) officer from the baggage room. We’d have meetings and (unintelligible). They’d go into the freight houses and they'd say it was fine. The yard office had one and the store house had one. There were four or five of us guys at the meeting. Most of them were uptown (unintelligible). We’d just go in the back room there and have our meetings. We’d have coffee. They’d bring a bottle of whiskey and we’d always empty it while we were sitting back there. There was a meeting about it and they didn't mind it.

JE: The union wasn't serious business then?

GJ: No. (unintelligible) headquarters to see if everything is fine.

JE: So you had pretty good working conditions at the railroad then?

GJ: Oh yes.

JE: Good benefits?

GJ: When I first started, we just got a week vacation. Then I got two weeks vacation. Then we got four weeks vacation. Then now you get five weeks vacation.

JE: That is pretty good.

GJ: If somebody died in your family, blood relation it would have to be, you got about five days off your pay.

JE: That's real good.

GJ: You'd get double time for overtime. You'd get double time for holidays. It wasn't bad.

JE: Were there any women working for the railroads? What kind of jobs did they do?

GJ: The women were in the office mostly. During the war there were a lot of women working in the freight house pushing a hand truck. There were quite a few of them.
JE: Did they do a pretty good job?

GJ: Yes. Some of them were kind of lazy. Some of them worked pretty good.

JE: That was just during the war?

GJ: When the war was over, they kind of lessened. Some of them opened the front office and worked in the front office.

JE: What type of work did they do there?

GJ: Book work. It was ordinary stuff.

JE: There weren't any women engineers or firemen?

GJ: No not at that time. There were some women that came afterwards that worked as switchmen. They didn't last long.

JE: The men gave them a bad time?

GJ: You worked to be a switchman. (unintelligible) switching cars in there and hook up the two cars. You have to hook up the air. It's not a woman's work. They didn't last long there. One or two who were smart, they probably got in the yard office. If they needed somebody, they'd put them on.

JE: What were some of the biggest changes that you've noticed in the railroad when you first started until you retired?

GJ: I don't think there are many changes.

JE: Really? When did you retire?

GJ: In '71.

JE: So were they still using steam locomotives then?

GJ: Well they had mostly diesel and (unintelligible). I ran on a stoker. If you ran on a stoker, you could get in a lot of trouble. You had to grab a shovel. You'd open (unintelligible) when you have to keep the steam up. Sometimes the air would get down and they'd try to open it. They'd choke up. They were used to bad coal. It was the (unintelligible) coal they'd call it. It was bad coal for stokers.

JE: Why was it bad coal?
GJ: It was lignite, like hard coal. It was hard coal. It wouldn't break up. The air had to force it into the furnace. It wasn't air, but steam.

JE: So the types of coal made a big difference?

GJ: Oh yes. That coal was no good for stokers.

JE: How did you have to break it up? Did you take a shovel?

GJ: You'd break it up.

JE: You had to put a shovel into the fire box?

GJ: Well if the stoker didn't work, then you'd have to shovel. You'd have to shovel to keep the fire up. You had the stoker going, but you don't get the stoker going on the road. You'd have to get it going in the roundhouse. They would work on it at some point. The electric diesel engines work best. You go through and check the gages.

JE: Did you do much of that?

GJ: No I didn't work on diesel too much. I worked on a few of them. Sometimes you'd get an engineer- the first thing that they do when they go into the roundhouse.

[SIDE B]

JE: Oops.

GJ: Is it on?

JE: It's on.

GJ: I called a guy this morning. He kind of looks after the union. He's retiring. So I said, "I want to be questioned by the historical society." I said, "What do you know about the railroad that I could tell?" He said, "You probably know more than I do." Remember when we were talking about Morgan? (unintelligible). He said, "Just do the best you can."

JE: You've done real well. You've given us a lot of information.

GJ: What I was going to say, we were talking about the engineers when they go into the roundhouse and the clerk in the office, that came over there. They pointed to the (unintelligible) growled. They wanted to see who the fireman was.

JE: The firemen didn't have a good reputation?
GJ: No they never gave them a good reputation. The firemen, they worked their heart out.

JE: They thought they were superior?

GJ: Yes. The guy in the office knows that he doesn't like the young firemen. (unintelligible).

JE: Did most of the engineers start out as firemen?

GJ: Oh yes, all of them.

JE: And they just kind of forgot what it was like?

GJ: Yes they forgot. They worked harder than we did in those days. They just didn't like the firemen.

JE: They felt like they had to break them in?

GJ: Yes more or less. (unintelligible) coming back the fire went out. We had to stop and get the (unintelligible) get the fire going again. That's what happens with the new firemen.

JE: You weren't the fireman that time?

GJ: No I was the fireman. He didn't get mad. (unintelligible).

JE: What do the clinkers do?

GJ: They were coal lumped together.

JE: I didn't know it did that.

GJ: It was the (unintelligible) coal. They did that all the time.

JE: It ha the lignite in it?

GJ: Yes. You shoveled and (unintelligible). You shovel and you pull. When you would see a clinker in there, you'd get it out. You'd pull it out.

JE: How big did these clinkers get?

GJ: Some pretty big.

JE: Two feet?
GJ: Yes pretty big.

JE: Wow.

GJ: Sometimes you’d have a hard time getting it through the fire door. You’d have to keep them out.

JE: A lot of different things you had to watch for. Do you have problems with cinders starting fires?

GJ: I don’t know about cinders. I know that when I was a fireman, during the war the trains would run up on the old hill there. They’d stop up there. (unintelligible). I made several trips up there and sometimes the (unintelligible) would cause fires in the grass. You could see the flames.

JE: So you'd have to stop the train and put out the fires?

GJ: If you stopped and they pulled the (unintelligible) out, you’d have holes there. You’d spray it on the ground. When you’re running and you throw them outside, I don’t know what happens.

JE: You threw these hot clinkers out right out the train?

GJ: Yes.

JE: What did they look like then when they cooled, just a piece of coal?

GJ: They welded together (unintelligible).

JE: I think I get the idea. I bet you got pretty tired shoveling coal for that many hours.

GJ: Yes it was hard work.

JE: Did some men do that for years?

GJ: They would get to engineer. You’d have to put in if you thought you qualified. You’d make a request if you wanted to be an engineer. When you go to work, you work on seniority. Some firemen would pick their engineers that they wanted to work with. So they worked together. So when the engineer goes out, he’d go with him. Some nobody wanted to work with or be their partners. That’s why they got the young engineers. You’d have to go with them.

JE: The engineers were already taken? The good ones were taken?

GJ: Yes. With the fireman, they wanted to go with them. With the fire, they’d just pick an engineer that they wanted to work with.
JE: Did a lot of the young fireman do like you did, just get upset?

GJ: No they didn't. nobody got upset. They'd complain, but they'd do nothing about it.

JE: Did the fireman have much authority?

GJ: They could complain, but it was pretty hard to complain about an engineer. He didn't work long after that. I don't think you even worked at all. He would retire. (unintelligible) get up in the engine.

JE: The engineers?

GJ: Yes. (unintelligible) back and forth.

JE: Was it the fireman that did the real work?

GJ: Yes the firemen did all the work. Some of them would fall asleep. Scotty fell asleep a few times at the handle. You could tell by the (unintelligible) whether he hit the grade or not.

JE: Would he wake up when they came to a hill?

GJ: No he could feel the sound of the engine and the fire. He would never let go of that (unintelligible). I would do it too if I didn't see it.

JE: I bet they couldn't do that nowadays.

GJ: Oh no. They changed so much.

JE: Now they run the trains by computer.

GJ: You go to work in the freight house or even in the baggage room, you have seniority. If you should be working midnights, and some guy quits in a day shift, then you put in your request for that job. If you're the one with the most seniority, then you get that job. That's the way it worked with seniority. It was the same way in the baggage room. If you're just a baggage handler and you're working an afternoon shift and you want to work a day shift, you make that request and you work on the day shift. (unintelligible) or something, then you mark up and give that job (unintelligible) that pays a little bit more money. You can do that. You could stay as a baggage agent. You could make a request.

JE: Is that what you did? You worked your way up until you got the job you wanted?

GJ: I was baggage agent when I retired, the day shift. (unintelligible) checker on the day shift. I was baggage handler.
JE: You did a little bit of everything.

GJ: Yes. (unintelligible) depot down about '60. I had to go to the freight house when they closed
the depot down. I worked there four years in the freight house before I retired. That would be
around '57 I guess. I went to the freight house then. (unintelligible) so I'd been on the job at the
freight house at midnights. So I finally got on the dayshift. Someone either quit or something. I
kept my title as baggage agent. That was my last job there in the depot.

JE: Why did they close the depot?

GJ: They cut the trains off. They closed the depot.

JE: After that they didn't carry any more passengers?

GJ: No they didn't do anything at the depot.

JE: Was that a sad day for you to see that era end?

GJ: It was sad. Nobody thought it would ever happen. You can see they'd do it over night.

JE: Did you get much warning that this was happening?

GJ: We knew it was going to happen. (unintelligible). I don't think I worked long before they
closed. When they closed, we didn't have any jobs. You had no place to go. So I just went to the
freight house as long as there was a job open there.

JE: Well I don't seem to have any more questions. I thank you very much for your time. It's been
very interesting. Thank you.