Herbert Crockett (HC) Interview Transcript

HC: The train would keep on running and we’d catch the pouch and we’d sort the mail out. If we had any mail for the next town, we’d put it off and pick up their mail. We kept the mail moving, you know. We could get mail across the United States in three days, all the way to California, you know. In three days time, back in the Railway Postal Service we could do it 'bout as good as they do now, you know. And it was really good, a good thing. In fact, I think it would be good now, to have a system like that. But it was a good thing, I thought. I hate to see 'em take it off. I stayed just as long as I could. I was, I went in Chattanooga Post Office in 1967, and the last train right out of Chattanooga was post cars only.

JG: Was it hard to get used to at first?

HC: Well, it was a little bit hard at first. At first, I would get a little bit motion sickness, sorting mail on the trains like that, you know. I would get a little motion sickness at first, but then I got adjusted to it.

JG: Did you have family at the time?

HC: Oh yes, yes.

JG: Was it hard for them when you were away?

HC: Oh yes. We had to study a lot. The first year you had to learn about 2,000 post offices, I believe it was, in the first year that you were in the service. So you had to study about all the time during the first year. Then after that you didn’t have to study as much but you did have to keep up on the, how they route the mail. It was before the zip codes came into effect, and you had to remember what routes to send this mail on. And the zip codes really helped us a lot, when they had zip codes, you could route the mail with that, see, but before that we had to just figure out the best way to send the mail, you know. We had what they call schemes that had all that information and tell about what trains went where and all that. And I still got some of that stuff up in my attic. The schemes and things, you know. I’ve got one of those things where you practice, with the cards, you know. When you’re studying, I’ve still got one of those up in my attic. With the little pigeon holes in it.

JG: Did you like working with all the crews on the trains?

HC: Oh yeah, we had a good relationship, out there, it was, some of the crews just had like two men on it and then some of 'em had 12, 14, so... One of the good runs to Cincinnati we had two long 60 foot postal cars on that and they were about 12 men on it I believe, something like that. But it was, it was kinda fun in a way, you know. What we would do, most of the crew worked together to get the mail caught up. It was sort of a disgrace to not get all your mail sorted you know, at the end of your run, so we’d always try to be sure we got everything worked out if possible. But everybody just pitched in a helped the other people, and that sort of thing, you know. Even though we had our own jobs assigned, but when you got through your job you pitched in helped other people, whoever needed help, you know.