Interview Transcript

INTERVIEW: What made you decide to work for the Railway Mail Service?
CP: Well I had three opportunities for a job when I got out of the service. I could either go back to the GPO, Government Printing Office, stay in service, or take a new job, which was the Railway Mail Service.

INTERVIEW: Can you tell me about your schedule on the trains?
CP: Yeah I was on about 20 different railway lines out of Chicago.
INTERVIEW: So it changed a lot, then?
CP: Right. You see, I was on, as a substitute I was on different lines. As a permanent I ran from Chicago to Pittsburgh, that’s what I was on after they downsized.

INTERVIEW: Was it a lifestyle that was particularly difficult to get used to?
CP: No, best job in the world.

INTERVIEW: Did you get along well with all the crews that you worked with?
CP: Excellent.

INTERVIEW: Did you get tested often? Did you have to study for exams in your off time?
CP: We got tested for schemes and firearms, often.

INTERVIEW: Was there anything you didn’t’ like about the Railway Mail Service?
CP: When they curtailed the Railway Mail Service, I was one of the first ones to go, that’s why I’m still here, you follow me? I was only out there 10 years. And I would’ve been out there today.

INTERVIEW: Did you ever run into any dangerous situations?
CP: Not too often. We hit a truck down near Greencastle, Indiana one time; we came off the tracks one time. Not any catastrophes.

INTERVIEW: So no injuries, then?
CP: No.

INTERVIEW: Then, do you have any stories or memories from the rail service?
CP: A lot of em.

INTERVIEW: Any that you’d like to share?
CP: I have a lot of ’em, you have to ask questions on that [laughs].

INTERVIEW: Okay, do you remember anything funny, like maybe the funniest thing that happened?
CP: One of the funny things that happened, we put a Coke bottle in between the railway cars and the engine, and it stayed there ’til we got to Chicago, I can prove that [laughs].

INTERVIEW: Did you ever transport anything unusual?
CP: Nothing unusual, we transported chickens, and you know, stuff like that. Chickens, you know different breeds, from Virginia to Chicago, different things like that.

INTERVIEW: Do you have maybe a proudest moment for the Railway Mail Service?
CP: Proudest moment? Just being out there. Now, one of the proudest moments, the Broadway, I worked on the Broadway, and it made 2 runs in 79 miles in four hours and twelve minutes from Chicago to Crestline, Ohio. That was fast.

INTERVIEW: Did you ever work the nonstop on the fly mail, did you ever see any problems?
CP: I did, I did a lot of that.

INTERVIEW: Yeah. Did you see anyone ever make a mistake with an exchange?
CP: I did a lot of that. A lot of times we couldn’t even get the door open, because the door would be frozen between the stops. And normally we would put some salt, you know, between the doors, so we could open them. Sometimes we couldn’t get it open.

INTERVIEW: So you couldn’t even catch the mail?
CP: We used latches and so forth, because we had to open the door, didn’t make any difference about the snow or wind. We opened ’em.

INTERVIEW: Did you ever see anyone lose a pouch of mail, or throw it under the train?
CP: We did that a lot of times, you throw it out and the wind blew it, it’d go right under the train. We cut up some mail, some, you know, not much.

INTERVIEW: Any other memories in particular, anything else funny or unusual that happened?
CP: Not off hand, you know, as I think, you know. We have a dog buried down in, I have a picture of that, down in, dog used to meet the train down in Crestline, Ohio, and I have a picture of the monument, they made a monument
at the spot. You know what you could do, you could incorporate a lot of different things concerning the postal service and make a slick book. And make some money off of it, for the postal service. I have, I bought another book concerning the postal service. There’s a lot of prints out there. And another thing about the postal service that happens at the end of, you may be familiar with this, at the end of January, concerning the Pony Express. Coming from Holbrook, Arizona to Scottsdale. And what they do is pass the pouches along, until they get to Scottsdale and then they put, put your letter right in the mainstream, to where it’s going. Now that’s exciting. Are you familiar with that?
INTERVIEW: I didn’t know that they still did it every once in a while...
CP: It’s a reenactment, okay, and this year I think was the 51st year that they have been doing that.