

who was he?

I am Jack Trainum. I am talking to Mr. Ray Seiffert; *this is* April 14, 1975. We are discussing the Depression in Evansville and his remembrance of that for Indiana History.

Q.-To start off with you worked for the L & N Railroad.

You are retired from the railroad. Basically what are some of the things that happened to you during the Depression?

A.-Well, we fill-up the jobs that were eliminated during the Depression. We had to double up, we called it. The business was no as good as it had been or has been since too.

Q.-You mentioned earlier about some of the railroads going bankrupt.

A.-The L & N as I understand it or remember it only had one month it was in the red during the Depression. All of the other times they were in the black month after month, quite a few times they were well above even.

Q.-I think you mentioned before that many people were cut from their jobs. How did you luck out?

A.-I was able to hold on all through the Depression as for as the job itself and regular wage, but we had what they called "Hover Days." The L & N was one of the railroads that permitted the employees to go two days a month without pay. Some of the departments permitted their employees to work on these days without pay. To that extent many of the men were glad

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to do it. The "Hoover Days" permitted their employees to work on these days without pay. To that extent many of the men were glad they had a job and were glad to do it. The "Hoover Days" were permitted to be taken almost any day they saw fit to take them. If you had some other activity to do you could ask off and they would call that you "Hoover Day."

Q.-Was that a common practice?

A.-No, I don't think so, your other places, your retail stores and so on just eliminated employment. As far as I know of. The railroads throughout the country were in bad shape and some of them went bankrupt. One I can recall is the Missouri Pacific. They stayed bankrupt for about five years. Finally they went into hands of receivers. It was finally cleared up and they got back on their feet again.

Q.-Was the L & N unionized when you worked there?

A.-Some of the departments were, but ours was not at that time.

Q.-Did the unions play a major role?

A.-They couldn't do it in the early days. In the operations and train crews there were employees that had twenty-five years of service that were without jobs or on the extra board and the extra-board was not too busy. Operators with twenty-years service on this extra-board. That is unheard of these days.

Q.-What was the Bank Moritorium?

A.-The bank closed up. I don't think there was any one bank that stayed open all during the Depression in this area. Likewise the saving and loan places were also closed. So the public couln't make a run on a certain type of bank and cause it to be out of order.

Q.-You mentioned your parents house was bought from the bank.

A.-Yes they advertised in the paper that some houses were being held by the bank and my dad got it and up till then he had never owned one Before.

Q.-you said that alot of people tllk in boarders or members of the family.

A.-Yes that is right. At one house usually whoever was work-ine took in someone. Usually a relative or a friend. That was usually the middle or lower class people.

Q.-What do you know about the N.R.A., the National Recovery Act?

A.-It was government backed, loaning the banks large sums of money. To clear up the morages they had gotten, to be released to the home owner of that kind of property H. O. L. C. was also in there. It was Home Owners Loan Corporation.

My own house went through the H. O. L. C. I was an individual transaction through Lamasco Bank to H. O. L. C. office which was located on Second Street across from the old Post Office. We paid our monthly payments, it was a cheaper rate of interest. The payments were prorated both the interest and the principle. In my opinion my instance, the payments ran fifty dollars a month, but through H. O. L. C. it ran about half that amount. That help me quite a bit.

Q.-What did wages run back then?

A.-Primarily some of your officials ran about one hundred fifty dollars a month.

Q.-You know anything about the W. P. A. ?

A.- Only what I have seen the results of. I thought it was tremendous. They done a great job with the projects they did with the city. Main street was one of the projects they worked on. Everything they done in general, had a lasting quality. Everything they done took time. Many had their hearts in it because they had a job. They made the streets a whole lot different then the regular construction company. They took some brick and dirt streets and made them concrete. Road hard concrete, I call it, it stood-up real well.

Q.-Did the W. P. A. and the P. W. A. did they work together?

A.-They were separate organizations backgrounded by the government, but the one was primary local while the other county or state background of employment.

Q.-What was your job at the railroad?

A.-I was a rate adjustment clerk. We worked up information for freight rates. Kept the rate out of rate tariffs. We also compared out rates to other railroads. Later on I was a regular rate clerk. We quoted to other stations under our jurisdiction. Between Evansville and St. Louis and Evansville and Nashville. The station would call in and ask for a price for an item to transport and I would give the destination prices. At one time we had around 3,000 publications dealing with rates in our office. We didn't have as many as the general office in Louisville. We had one of the biggest files in the divisional freight offices. We didn't double check everything, but quite a bit in a days time. Answered the phone, helped with other office details such as trace clerk, claim work. Tried to fill in. In those days we didn't have the union with us. We could help each other in lower or higher jobs. I filled in several times in the chief clerk job. It was educational for me to do the higher jobs, as well as giving me the experience.

Q.-When did the railroad lay off people?

A.-When the instructions come in from the central station it was up to the office in Evansville to find out which job they could do away with best. In our department, two employees were cut off. One was the messenger which paid about 60 a

-month. The other was the file clerk, he got about 100 a month. Those fellows had to leave and they were not even put on the extra board. They had to find a new job. One went to S. I. G. and E. The other one went to work at Igelhart. Those kinds of things continued in the L. and N. passenger service. To the extent of the number of telegraph operators that were cut off. They didn't see anyway clear to get their jobs back. They went to other types of work if possible. Those are the things I think are important to present day people even though the times are different. There seemed to be a whole lot more people eager to work live above board. It was a sort of a big family affair in most of the industries. That is part of a good life in today's world.