

Archer Park Rail Museum: Lynn Zelmer interviewing Blair Jamieson and Bill Head, 29 Oct 2008.

LZ: Today must be the 29th of October 2008, at Archer Park with

BILL: Bill

BLAIR: and Blair.

LZ: OK Amy's having a bit of trouble keeping your voices separate, but not too much. OK. What I was going to ask to start off with was whether you had any thoughts on how you lived when you were apprenticeships; what were your living conditions like; what were your quarters, hours of work, some of those kinds of things. I think people would be interested in that because it's very, very different from what an apprenticeship is these days.

BILL: I made a note of one particular...

LZ: Go ahead...

BILL: I was often asked in the job, towards the latter time in me job. I'd have younger relieving fellows who would come out to Lakes Creek, filling in a little bit of time while waiting for another job. And they'd ask me about my earlier days in the job compared to the conditions they had now, what it was like compared to conditions in my time.

Well now I started off on the relieving staff back in 1949. Things were far different then to what they were in later years, because in later years if they went to relieve at various places, wherever there was a motel or a hotel, they were booked into that. Well now, when I started you used to relieve at various places where there wouldn't be a hotel, there wouldn't even be a boarding house -- and you'd have to rig up yourself.

When you went on the relieving staff we all had a little black box. We had a kerosene primus, a hurricane lamp, a few cooking utensils, and you had a wire mattress that had legs on it for your bed. We had fibre mattresses in those days. You'd roll up, put it in a chaff bag or something like that. That was your equipment and wherever you went, wherever you were consigned, that went with you.

Well now, there was lots of times -- I remember I relieved out of a place called Wietalaba, out on the Monto line. They opened it up as a temporary staff station. Every year there was about three or four trainloads of livestock went out there.

Anyhow, I reported to the relieve office in Rockhampton and he said, "out to Wietalaba", he said." Go down to Gladstone on the Brisbane Mail today and catch the Monto train from Gladstone tonight. "There's a shed out there", he said. "They tell me it's quite comfortable. The gang has rigged everything up. There's a big container of water for you and that'll be your accommodation. They tell me it's quite good, so that's alright."

So I get down to Gladstone. We left Gladstone about 7 o'clock at night, rainy night it was, hit this Wietalaba about one o'clock in the morning. So the guard said, "That'll be the hut there that you've got to camp in." So I got out -- pitch dark, rummaged around in the box and got me hurricane lamp lighted up.

Well the shed was there alright. I don't know how long it had been used. The bottom half of the door -- it had one of those double doors -- the bottom half was missing and there was no glass in the windows. Just to add a little bit of excitement to it, the storm broke about four o'clock in the morning. Well, I juggled around as best I could and shifted things to get out of this rain

blowing through the windows. Well that was the accommodation at Wietalaba I had. And that was quite common.

Other places, I relieved then another time up here at Kunwarara. There was no hotel there. You had to rig up your bed and you slept in the goods shed. And I ended up there, it was July in 1950. And over the times, we hadn't had them for a few years, you'll see these cold westerly winds, and Cumawarra is pretty open country. I was up there for a fortnight; I did midnight to eight for the full fortnight. I was glad when it was midnight and I came to go to work. It was like an ice box in that ice chest because the cracks in the floorboard were about a half inch apart, and ventilation over the top; there was about a foot space between the top of the wall and the roof, and the wind blowing there all night. As I was saying, I was glad to get up and go to work at midnight because at least we had a little pot bellied stove, that at least you could light up. Well, it kept you warm, but in this old goods shed... well I struck it in a few places. Berajondo was another place where I used the goods shed. In the summer time it wasn't quite so bad, but if you stayed in the winter and it was a windy night, oh it was unbearable.

But we accepted it because well there was no alternative. There was no motels in those places or anything like that, so, when you were on the relieving staff that's what you got. And you couldn't do much about it.

So it wasn't... take the accommodation... I believe in other places... I remember I relieved at Moongan had to stay at the hotel in Mount Morgan, that was a bit better. We got good meals provided and everything but in some hotels in those days there was no such thing as hot and cold running water in those little country pubs, and I relieved up there; it was in June, pretty cold weather. And there was only one bathroom; that was downstairs and it was a shower room, and the water came out of a rainwater tank. And it was just timber planks all around with about a foot space over the top, and this was just built underneath the tank stand itself. Well, if you wanted a shower -- there was no bath -- if you wanted a shower you had to brave it and have it out of this cold water tank, and I tell you, you got in and out pretty quick.

That was the accommodation in lots of places we had. Well, as I say in the late forties, lots of places hot and cold running water didn't apply.

In 1949 I relieved the porter-in-charge when I very first went down to Yandaran just north of Bundaberg. The hotel there, there was no shower room there, and there was no electric light. The lighting we had, we had a candle in the room; and an enamel basin and a big enamel jug of water. And that was what you got when you got up in the morning to have a wash, the cold water in the enamel jug and the enamel basin. And it was also night-time. You didn't do much reading because the light was candle.

So they were a bit primitive, no doubt, when you look back on it now but we didn't really think that much of it then because, I guess, in lots of places that was the norm. And that's what we had to put up with.

LZ: How would that compare with the quarters that police, or the nurses or the teachers would have in similar kinds of communities?

BILL: Well, there would be a little bit of a difference probably. Put it this way -- if you were a policeman and a policeman went to relieve another policeman, they'd be a little bit bigger town. There might possibly be a hotel there. But in our job in the railway, relieving night officer or relieving station master, there was a lot of little country places like Kunwarara up here. There was no hope, no hotel or boarding house. All the buildings that were there was four fettlers' houses, the station master's residence, and the goods shed.

So you had to live in the goods shed and you'd go -- there was quite a few places their only purpose was for crossing trains. There was no accommodation so that you had to make do with any little shed that was around the place. Whereas I say, the policeman probably went to relieve at a place... the policeman was stationed at a reasonable size and the chances of having a hotel to

stay at would have been better than our particular job, because a lot of our places were just little country stations, hardly any town or anything there, so consequently there was no hotel or anything like that. That was one of the differences between the particular job that I had when you went out relieving night officers and the station masters because a lot of those places were just little tiny country towns where the facilities of hotels weren't there.

LZ: Would there be shops in the towns. Anything else... .

BILL: Oh, some places weren't too bad. I relieved in Ogmoo back in 1949; well now that was a different place altogether because there was a policeman there; the coal mine was operating at the time; a couple of grocery shops. There was a butcher and there was a baker and a hotel, so that conditions were a lot better there because it was a little town, but unfortunately some of the places that we had to relieve at didn't have anything like that. I relieved at Tryphonia, at the early days there was nothing there; you had to camp in the station building there. Rig up your bed at one end of the little office. A lot of the little places, as I say, there was no accommodation at all.

LZ: And food?

BILL: Well, you had to look after yourself. You had to utilise a reasonable amount of (in your box) of tinned meats and things like that. And, best you could, you might get one of the train crew or something to fetch you in a loaf of bread from the nearest place where the bakery shop is. But we got by alright. We accepted it; that was the lifestyle then; you couldn't do much about it. But, of course those days, that's all gone. There's no such relieving jobs out in the countryside now. The system that the railway is now, all those jobs, the places that we used to relieve in, they don't exist any more; they're all gone.

LZ: And how old were you?

BILL: I was 18 when I went out

LZ: And single, obviously.

BILL: Yes,

BLAIR: And still.

BILL: Still!

I often tell, I don't know if I mentioned before, but the things we did in our younger days. When I was on the dining car back in 1946, we got a big coal strike in 1946 and they reduced the passenger service. There was one train went north a week, and one went south. And during that time they took the dining cars off the trains so that they could put an extra passenger coach on, because back in those times, Blair, 13 vehicles was the limit of a passenger train.

So for the first fortnight I got stood down, stood down without pay. Didn't get anything like that in those days, and then they placed me in the Rocky refreshment rooms, and we had, unfortunately, the chap who was looking after the place was one of the inspectors. The permanent manager of the Rocky refreshment rooms was sent on loan to the West Australia Railways to restore the refreshment rooms back to government control. Apparently during the war years the Western Australia government leased out all of the refreshment rooms during the war. And then when the war was finished they decided they would take them all back again.

So they got on loan the manager from our refreshment rooms and he was replaced by of all people, a refreshment room inspector. Well, he was one of those fellows who, if I sat down for two minutes with nothing to do, he'd of had a heart attack. We had to be on the move all the time.

So he racked his brains and he got the idea, he reckoned the walls of the dining room -- it was a big building -- it's still down there, the Railway Institute hall now. He reckoned that the walls could do with a bit of a cleanup -- see. So he got me a step ladder, a bucket, some sandsoap and a few rags and the water. And I had to scrub all these walls, the whole the four walls.

It took me the best part of a day and a half, you can imagine what it was like: you put the stepladder up and you climbed up it, scrub half of the top of that wall, then you get down and shift the ladder away so you could get the next half, push the ladder along about another couple of feet, climb up. I did the whole four walls of that refreshment room down there and scrubbed the whole lot of them. Back in 1946, from the ceiling down to the floor, and that was another job I had to do. Well he had to find something for us to do. As I say, for all people we had to get to relieve, it had to be an inspector. He wanted his pound of flesh and more.

But they were the times you didn't argue the point or anything -- you done what you were told. You didn't backchat.

LZ: You didn't have to do the ceiling.

BILL: Didn't have to do the ceiling. Fortunate you know, obviously he hadn't worked a way out that I could get up to do that.

LZ: Yes, things have changed.

BILL: They certainly have, yes. I don't know -- but when I look back on it and had the years in front of you again and I had the youth again, I guess if I had the option and there was no other option and it said, "Would you do that again, and scrub the walls too?" I guess I'd say yes, that I'd do it all over again.

LZ: Did you ever get cleaning in the kitchen, or just... .

BILL: Ah well, I can tell you a bit of a story about, I learnt in my younger days (I suppose it still applies now I suppose) that if you're pretty conscientious and done a good job, the chances are you got more work to do.

And I always remember, in the dining room (this was while I was stood down from the dining car while it was off the road) there was two big copper urns in the kitchen that had to be polished every morning, and that was my job. And I took a pride in those, you know. It took three or four rags to do them -- the first one would come off dirty and you polish until the next one till it was clean. They used to come up beautifully. And there was also, out in the milk bar on the platform was a beautiful big copper sink and that had to be polished every morning too. But I didn't do that one; there was another lad there, that was his job.

So anyhow, I went out to the milk bar occasionally, might take some fruit out for them to put on the shelves... anyhow, the head waitress out in the milk bar, she said, "Mr O'Sullivan was out here this morning and he said from tomorrow, that we've got to get you to do the copper sink in the milk bar, here. See."

Well, I didn't query it because I though "While I'm doing that I'm only doing one job at a time. So that's alright. So I did the ones in the kitchen and then did the ones in the milkbar. After about four or five days the head waitress said to me, this lady here as a matter of fact [referring to the photo in the Archer Park Refreshment Room], "Do you know why you're doing the sink in the milkbar here?"

"No" I said, "it's got to be done." "Well, " she said, "I'll tell you." she said, "Mr O'Sullivan was out here the other day and he had a look at the copper sink after this chap had done it", she said", and then apparently he went into the kitchen and he asked the chef 'who polishes the copper urns in the kitchen here?'. And the chef said, like 'Bill does, see.' and he said 'Thanks for that'."

So he worked it out that if the copper urns in the kitchen can be polished like that, there's no reason why the sink in the milkbar can't be, so he reckoned that this other fellow wasn't making a good enough job of them, so that was my job then. So I polished all such copperware until such time as the dining car went back on the road again. And the chappie that didn't do a good job (he was a lazy little sod.) didn't do a good job in the milkbar see, he was rewarded. He sat in the fruit room there and he sorted the specks out of the apples and pears. That's the job he got while I polished his copper sink.

So I learnt then, in lots of cases, if you're extra good at your work and do a good job, the chances are you'll get more to do, because they'll say, "It's no use giving it to Joe Blow because he'll only make a muck of it. Give it to so-and-so, he'll do it properly".

LZ: Yes, things don't change much, do they.

BILL: No, not really.

LZ: What about your living conditions, Blair?

BLAIR: Well, mine were completely different to Bill because he started as a porter and went out relieving, but I started as an apprentice -- electrical-mechanic in the telegraph engineer's section at Roma Street, so I boarded privately in Brisbane with a family.

So I used to go to work every morning on the seven o'clock train. We started at 7.30 -- walked through the Roma railway yards to the little machine shop and we finished at five o'clock. We had three-quarters of an hour for lunch four days a week, and half an hour for lunch on Friday, and that made up, I think, the 44 hours for the week. And it wasn't long then when the 40 hour week came in; then we started at 7.30 and finished at 4.15. So I spent two years in the machine shop in the same place every day to work.

It was very interesting, in fact some of those skills I learned there, I'm still using them here, now every Thursday at a friend's place where he's got some machines. Then I spent time on what we call the 'outside section' with the electricians around the suburban areas of Brisbane. We did so much time in the control room at Roma Street and around the switch boards, and the exchange and communications, around the telegraph office, on morse equipment.

And we would spend so much time at Mayne Junction. At Mayne they had a special signal cabin at Mayne, they had little, tiny levers. The points were operated by 45 pounds of air and about 20 volts. We spent six months there; I spent six months at South Brisbane, at Park Road. We came back to Mayne Junction before we went over to the south side. We used to walk every morning. We walked from Mayne Junction to Northgate, Mayne to Albion, to Eagle Junction, Tumbul to Northgate, and checked the voltages on the tracks for safety reasons. Then we'd catch the train back.

I remember one summer time, we must have gone out on the train and we walked back. I remember we got up to the Albion. The fellow I was working with, Harry Hunt, and another chap that was older, I was only about 18 at the time. So they decided to go up to the Albion Hotel for a beer -- it was hot. The Albion Hotel was right next to the railway line and only a few shops away from the station. So we went up there to have a drink, walked in and ordered, then looked up and on the other side of the counter was our chief engineer, a fellow by the name of Willie and his assistant, Wilkes. And they were having a beer.

So the three of us on this side of the bar had a drink, and I had a lemonade because I was underage and shouldn't have been in there anyway. And the electrician who was with me, his name was Harry Hunt, he was a much older fellow, I suppose at the time he would have been 55 years of age and he just waved to the two chiefs over across the bar and said hello to them. And they said hello and we had a drink and we all walked out. And I thought we were going to be in bother and he said 'no -- we won't hear a word about this'.

We never did. It was like a gentleman's thing that existed in those days. So, we used to walk out there every day and when I lived in South Brisbane, I was stationed at Park Road, we used to walk to South Brisbane. They had a different type of signaling over there and next day we would walk out to Yeerongpilly, along the track. It was an entertaining sort of thing, really, but you learnt quite a bit.

And then for another few months of the year you would go around all the pumps, because of the steam trains and we had electric pumps all over the place and we'd go to one place every day. We'd go to Caboolture, Palmwoods, Yandina on the north side; and then we'd go to Beenleigh on the south side. We'd go to Esk and we'd go to Helidon.

It was a good job to get around about October because you sit in the train for a few hours and you could do a bit of studying to catch up, because the jacarandas were in bloom it was always exam times at the uni and for us. If you got that job at that time of the year it was great because you'd get a bit of time to do a bit of study.

Around the control rooms in Roma Street on Friday nights in 1949 when I was going to some extra lectures, I couldn't catch my train home. I used to go home to Gympie every weekend, and, incidentally, when I started work, the apprentices started on about 17 and sixpence a week -- what's that \$1.75 a week. And I was paid 2 pounds, 18 and tuppence a week because I was living away from home and that was 60% of the basic wage.

And out of that I had to pay board because I boarded privately. And I stayed there from Monday to Friday. On Fridays, every Friday night, there's be a whole group of us from Gympie, we'd go home to Gympie on the six o'clock train and we'd go back on Sunday afternoon. And then for this year I was doing these extra courses... Advanced Electrical Principles and Applied Electricity, I think it was... I couldn't catch my six o'clock train home and the next one I could get was at 9.30, the Rockhampton Mail, called 21A.

So I devised this plan -- I'd get on the pride of the fleet, the Sunshine Mail, eight o'clock out of Roma Street. Well, if I got on the train itself, I couldn't book a seat; they wouldn't let you book a seat on a free passage. You couldn't book a seat to Gympie, so I devised this plan that I'd get on the engine. My father had been a driver in Gympie, but he'd done a silly thing, he'd passed away in 1947 with a heart attack, so I devised this plan that I'd get on the engine.

I worked around the Roma Street control room so that I could look at the charts in the control room and see who the drivers and who the crew were that were driving and crewing on the train on that night... so that I knew who was a Gympie crew or a Brisbane crew. If it was a Gympie crew I knew I'd be right, and if it was a Brisbane crew, well there was a little bit of doubt.

I recall particularly one night, the lecturer who had the course where I was doing it at the uni in Brisbane, he used to look at me about 20 to eight and I'd made arrangements with him. He'd nod and I'd take off. I'd give my books to the chap next door to me -- his name was Jack Hammond -- and I had left my bag with my things in with the porter at the gate, at the luggage barrier at Roma Street and his name was Bennie Pearl... I'd worked around there so I knew them all.

This night I was running a bit late and I took off from the old uni buildings on George Street. I ran all the way up George Street, and I could... probably because I was a pretty good runner -- just the same it was a fair way. And I ran all the way this night. Two reasons I used to run all the way: one was I could beat the bus and the tram, and the other was I couldn't afford the fare.

So I used to run. And this night I ran right up to Roma Street and I ran through the barrier and grabbed my bag, and this fellow Bennie Pearl said, "Blair, you'll have to hurry, he's just leaving", and the train was just pulling out, just moving.

When the Sunshine Mail went out of Roma Street it headed through to Normanby and a very sharp curve, so it went very slowly pulling out. So I raced down the platform; it was a Brisbane

crew and I heard the fireman say to the driver, "He's coming now, " and the driver shut the regulator and the train just drifted.

I jumped onto the engine and I was panting like a foxy dog and I took me port under driver's seat, and I said to the driver, "Can I get to Gympie with you please driver?" And the fireman looked at me; he said, "We've been waiting for you."

It was a Brisbane crew and the driver said, "You're Larry's boy!" I said, "Yeah, that's right." Yes he said, "All Mayne junction knows that you're on Friday night, so you're right".

Well, they taught me to fire it, they taught me to drive it. It would burn four ton of coal in four and a half hours between Brisbane and Gympie. Eight clock out of Roma Street, twelve twenty-nine into Gympie.

They taught me to fire it, and they taught me to drive it, and many a night there would have been 250 passengers 365 tons I think it was, and this nineteen-year-old -- eighteen-year-old fellow up the front pushing it along. This is part of what happened way back in 1949.

So that was part of my life, but I boarded privately; it was very nice too. And other aspects of the job -- we did a lot of construction work. I built morse tables. I built the only control table that had been built in Queensland Railways in 20 years. Two other fellows and I, one bloke made all the amplifiers and I wired the table and fitted the table and the other fellow that was virtually in charge of the whole show by the name of Trevor Eckersley. I still see him; he's still alive; he's well over 80 now. We still meet up once a year at his home in Maroochydore.

We built this first control table. It was installed here in Rockhampton in 1950 and it was here for years and years and years. It was the south control table.

These were a few of the things that happened. I was transferred here in 1950 and was here for 18 months and then back to the south to Nambour. But when we relieved, we didn't have to do it rough as Bill did because we only had to relieve in places like Maryborough, Gympie, Toowoomba. We only had to relieve in places where electricians might be on holidays.

I can recall, I wasn't out of my time, and we came here in 1950, came here to Rockhampton. The boss asked me would I like to do a job in the country. I said, "oh, yes, " I said "where", he said "in Rockhampton". I said, "What are we doing there?" He said, "I want you to put in six number one block instruments."

I came here with another chap somewhere around 1950; just the two of us came and we were here for about three weeks. We had a real good time. We put in the Number 1 block instruments; two of them are now in the old signal cabin in Archer Park. They're two that I installed years ago, but when they withdrew them from service someone by the name of Blair Jamieson who's speaking to you now -- he stole the lot of them. He was the foreman at the time and he stole the lot -- hid them and there's two of them put back here and the other four found good homes in restored condition. A couple of telephones we've got here are what I've returned and the morse code table that I built... they're the sort of things that we did in those days.

I was paid, probably about eleven months of my last year of my apprenticeship, we were paid as tradesmen. They were so short of tradesmen; it was the transition period after the war, from wartime to peacetime, they were short of tradesmen.

And I served my time with some people who were nearly 70 years of age because they didn't retire in 1940 at sixty-five. They kept them on, and I started in 1945, so some of those chaps that I served my time with were nearly 70 years of age. In fact one fellow that I served my time with, he taught me to use this big lathe, and he got the carpenters to make a box for me to stand on because I was a bit tiny. He had worked in the gold mines in Gympie with my grandfather and his sister taught me at school. That's all fifty years ago -- sixty years ago now. It's nice to have

an opportunity to record it and our thanks go to Lynn Zelmer for offering us this opportunity to record all this for posterity.

LZ: Well, we'll make you famous, I'm sure.

BILL: Talking about things that happened like that -- I always remember when I worked on the dining car in early 1947; the ALP held a meeting -- it must have been in Townsville, it was in the north anyhow, and the inspector wanted B car, the car that I was on, we had to be on the train... it was a special train, see.

I still remember the scare that I got... it was all cooked in the kitchen in Stanley Street, and then I carted it across -- all the trays and the hot joints and that onto the dining car because there was more room in the kitchen rather than the dining car itself.

Anyhow, the train's all being put together, it arrived, put the dining car on, and I'd been flat out pushing, putting the various things into the ice box. We didn't have refrigeration, it was all ice then; and the chef's checking through the thing and he -- I can still hear his voice -- he said to me, "Right oh son, where's the wine trifle?" I said, "What wine trifle?" "What wine trifle d'you think I'm talking about," he said.

"Here," I said, "you didn't tell me you were making a wine trifle." "Never mind arguing the point whether I told you or not," he said, "get on your feet, and get over there and get it." And you don't think I didn't go hell for leather, because the train was about ready to leave. And here I am tearing up the platform with this great big tray of wine trifle on me shoulder. Never forget that -- I don't know what would have happened if I'd left it behind.

Of course, and it still is for that matter. I learnt in me time in the refreshment rooms, a chef's word is law in the kitchen. You don't argue the point; you don't even look sideways at him. If the chef says, you go. You don't argue the point. I'll never forget that as long as I live. -- nearly left the wine trifle behind.

BLAIR: I must add in retrospect, the people I worked with were great. I made some great friendships and the fellows who were our bosses -- I can't recall anyone who wasn't a real good boss. But then, again, there's an old saying, an expression I learned later in life, that a boss is a tough as you make him. And they were all very good and very considerate. They were older men... they expected things to be done; but that was fair enough,

BILL: It was funny in the refreshment rooms. A bloke can say it now because it's all history now. There was three positions in the big cold room in Stanley Street.

We all had our own allotments -- our own eggs, our own ham and all that, you know, because each one had to show certain percentages. So the Stanley Street Rocky ref rooms had their section, A car was the other dining car and B car was ours. And I always looked after Ronnie -- he was our chef, and I was pretty vigilant. And I remember my bedroom, my accommodation was the room I had to walk past the tea bar to get in to mine, where they were cutting up all the sandwiches.

And I got out there one morning and here -- they'd got our ham. One of the hams we had just started -- I knew it was ours; they were making their sandwiches out of B car's ham, see. So I used to keep a careful check -- I'd be given an order, see, so many -- seven dozen eggs, I'd have to out to put in the dining car order list, and I used to keep a careful check on it.

So that particular day I didn't worry that they'd pinched our ham. All the sandwiches for the tea bar, that was part of the Stanley Street, so just politely I swiped one of their full hams. So they didn't knock our percentages down because I looked after us. And when I was getting our eggs, just as a good measure, when I might have to get seven dozen eggs, well I'd get five and a half of ours and I'd take 18 of theirs because I'm sure they used to pilfer some of ours. So I reckoned they weren't getting' in front.

I was talking away to the chef I worked for, sometime after I'd left the refreshment rooms, I don't know how we got onto the subject, we were talking about it, "Yes, " Ronnie said, "I know you used to do that for us, " he said, and Norm, he was the chef at Stanley Street, Ronnie was telling him after I'd gone about what I used to do, and Norm said, "Yes, I had me suspicions about him", he said, "but", he said, "I could never catch him. He was too young and too clever to be caught."

I always made sure that our percentages didn't go down at the expense of ours being stolen. I always looked after Ronnie; I always took a bit of theirs to make sure.

BILL: He's still alive too, Ronnie Lange

BLAIR: He's still alive; I believe he's in a nursing home, him and his wife. Yeah. They were great old days. Those sort of things don't happen now.

LZ: I'm sure the comparable things do.

BILL: Ah yes, I'm sure they do. In fifty years' time people will be talking about what they did.

BLAIR: I might have stolen some of their stuff, but my intentions were good and my motives were good. I had to look after us.

BILL: The end justifies the means...

LZ: That's what he's saying, that's what he's saying. I'm sure that the tilt train staff who'll filch a carton of whatever from the station staff...

BLAIR: No, there's no food at the station now; there's no refreshment rooms.

LZ: But their stuff comes from the same warehousing in Brisbane.

BILL: There's probably some firm had a contract, I suppose, would they.

BLAIR: I think the railway are making their own sandwiches and things now.

BILL: They are, are they?

BILL: No. great old memories they are.

Another one of our jobs when I was in the refreshment rooms... in the kitchen, down at Stanley; the kitchen had a concrete floor -- it was a big kitchen too. The big range was about in the middle and, of course, one half from the stove to the tables, where the chef cut all his meat and that up, it used to get greasy; the fat dropped down and all of that.

Well, every afternoon about two o'clock, meself and the cook's assistant we had to scrub the whole of that floor. The area would have been from this wall here right to the end of the building here; it was a big area. Get down on our hands and knees with our rubber mat and sandsoap and scrub bucket. We had to scrub on our hands and knees -- that's what I had to do in my early days.

And we struck a happy arrangement. One half was usually fairly clean and the other half was fairly dirty and greasy. You had to use a little bit more elbow grease. So I did the dirty half today and she did the clean half and tomorrow she did the dirty half and I did the clean half.

Yeah, that was on every day, five days, Monday to Friday... Saturday you didn't have to do it unless... Yeah, Sunday was the only day we didn't have to do it. So consequently if, even now,

I've got to get down and scrub a floor or anything, it's nothing new to me because I had to do a lot of it in me young days.

BLAIR: One of the silly things we used to do. When you were on that job on the pumps ,when you were out on the trains and that. In those days the fettlers all stood pretty close to the trains and always be wanting the paper... so we'd throw them out our papers... so we used to get the paper and roll it up and tie it on a string. And we'd throw it out, and just as they go to catch it you'd pull it back in, just about. These are the silly things we used to do.

Then if we were going a certain way, we'd get half a dozen papers, three or four papers or a few from last week, and roll them up; give them some old papers.

BILL: Yes, it was a common thing in the days of the old wooden trains; all that sort of thing went by the board when the air conditioned trains came in. Before they came into service all along the line there'd be people out yelling, "Paper", you know.

LZ: Some passengers would pass out the paper.

BILL: Yes, I know even before I joined the job, when we were down at Benaraby, when the Sunshine Mail went through about half past five in the afternoon. We used to get out and stand on the rocks in the trolley shed and yell out "paper". Well, you might get the Morning Bulletin; it might be the Mackay Valley Mercury, and they'd throw them out, but after the train had shot through you'd spend half an hour and walk half a mile putting the papers together again.

But all that sort of thing, as I say, when air conditioned trains came in, that all went by the board then. All along the line you'd hear people, kids and that, fettlers' lads or something, yell out "paper" as you went through. You'd never miss out. There's always be somebody on the train that'd toss the paper out. As I say, at Benaraby, we might get the Townsville paper they had; they'd just toss it out.

LZ: OK, maybe we'll call it quits for today.

Additional note added later:

BILL: When I relieved at Moongan I had to stay ay the hotel in Mt Morgan due to no hotel at Moongan. I rode in the two rack engines to Moongan at commencement of the shift and when the loading was worked up to Moongan from Moonmera I rode on the rack engines which returned with the loading to Mt Morgan.

ENDS