

The Doak Family and PX5444

BY GEORGE FOSTER DOAK, JR.

Unless otherwise stated, all photos are from the author's collection.

All families have stories that are passed down from generation to generation. These give us a sense of our place in the world. Also, we often overlook the achievements of the more humble among us. So it is with my family, and this is one such story, one of humble people celebrating both achievements and sorrows.

Due to the fog of many years and an increasingly dim memory, I beg the

reader's indulgence. All opinions expressed belong to members of my family, and any factual errors are my responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

In September 1950 the "Spirit of St. Louis" rammed a stalled PRR troop train (PX5444 West) at speed. The wreck took place on the double mains just east of West Lafayette, Ohio.

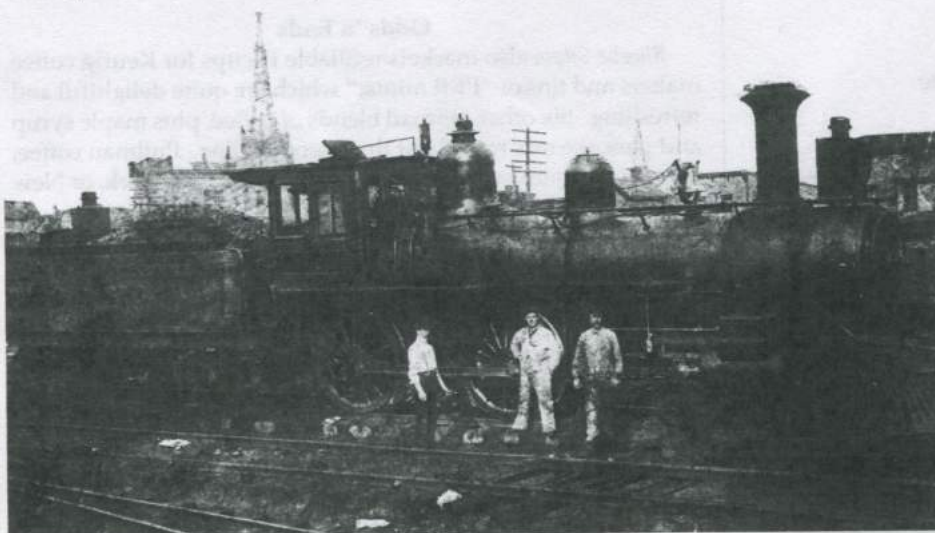
Thirty-two troopers were instantly killed, and nearly a hundred more were maimed or crippled. One of the seriously injured was the head conductor of the troop train. His name was Edward Dewey Doak. My name is George Foster Doak, Jr., and "E.D. Doak was my grandfather

BACKGROUND

I suppose some family background is in order. I was born in the Chartiers Valley of Pennsylvania and reared in a railroad culture, which included both sides of my family. My mother, Annah Margaret Cole Doak, was the product of a Hodgson/Cole marriage. Early in the 19th century, the Hodgson and Cole clans were among the founding families in the Chartiers Valley along with the Nevilles. At the time Carnegie, Pa. was known as Marquette field. In Carnegie today, there are three streets named after the Hodgson girls: Sarah, Jane, and Lydia. H. Frick, Andrew Mellon and Tom Scott purchased the family farms to erect the steel mill and provide rail service.



Home at Carothers Ave., Glendale, Carnegie, Pa., built on property acquired in 1883 and built by my great-grandparents (William McGinnis Cole and Maggie Janet Cole). Great-grandfather is standing on the front porch. (Annah Cole Doak collection)



The man on the left of PCC&StL #62 is my great-grandfather, William M. Cole. (Annah Cole Doak collection)



Great-grandfather William McGinnis Cole as a young man. (Frank Criley & Co., photographer; Annah Cole Doak collection)

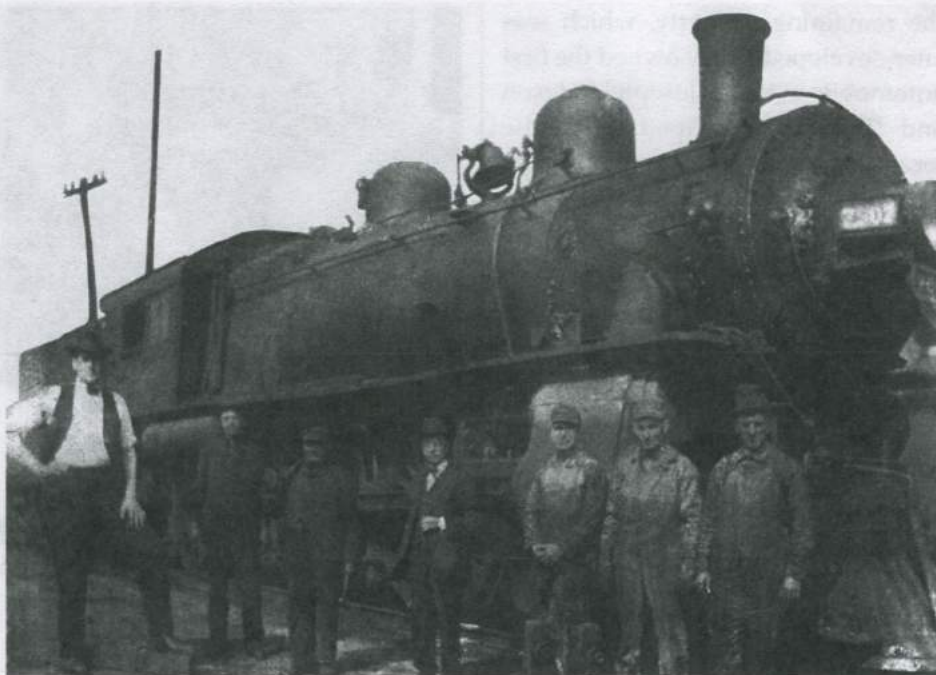
The man in the middle next to #7907 is my great-grandfather William M. Cole; the man at the extreme left is "Big Bob" Keenan, the tallest Shrinker in the world at that time. Circa 1927.

(Annah Cole Doak collection)

Joseph Hodgson stipulated that PRR provide a safe crossing for people and kids going into Carnegie. PRR had three main crossings out of Carnegie: Harding Crossing (which is still there), Cubbage Hill (farther down the line), and Hodgson's Crossing (which no longer exists). When I was a kid, all the crossings were still there, each with a watchman's shanty, where he hung his lanterns outside the door. The construction of I-79 finally removed the last vestiges of the Hodgson farm. After the buyout, the Hodgson/Cole family purchased another large farm at #1 Carothers Avenue. That farmhouse is still there today, as is the large hen house in the side yard. As a child, my mother, gathering eggs from the coop one afternoon, was blown off the front porch by a bolt of lightning, being struck dumb for a number of minutes.

From that farm Tom Scott and Andrew Mellon negotiated the purchase of the bottomland and night pasture, where PRR erected the Carnegie yards and stations. They are all gone now. After the sale of tillable fields, my great grandfather, "Billy" Cole, spent the rest of his life on PRR as a fireman, engineman, and finally, engine foreman. From the sale of the property, they became a prominent family in Carnegie. The Coles eventually sold

Laying out building lots of land that comprised the former Hodgson/Cole farm, owned by my great-grandmother. Left to right are: Chris Keisling (Carnegie Police Chief), my great-grandfather, Ben Love (contractor), and great-grandmother (behind her is Jim Duff, later to be governor of Pennsylvania). Next is a young boy, my uncle (Samuel Hodgson Cole). The lady with her hand on my brother's shoulder is my grandmother, Josephine Willis Cole. The lady in white is my great-aunt, Annah Cole Black. The man next to Jim Duff is unidentified. Circa 1926-28.



The first auto in Carnegie, 1907, owned by my great-grandmother. My great aunt, Annah Cole and great-grandmother are in the back seat. The half-hidden boy with the cap is my grandfather, Dr. Joseph H. Cole. In the front seat are my great uncle, J.J. Feicht and Carl Feicht. My aunt, Jean Cole Feicht, is standing. (Annah Cole Doak collection)



the remaining property, which was later developed. They owned the first automobile in town. Joseph Hodgson and "Billy" Cole helped found the local Masonic Lodge, as well as the Methodist Church that still stands on Washington Avenue. Both sides of my family worshiped there. It was the only church I ever knew.

These are two photos here of Nelson Love, the first African-American hired on the Panhandle. My great-grandfather hired him.

The next photos were uncomfortable for my mother's family. From the porch of the farmhouse, looking down into Carnegie, you will see the Carothers Ave. arch and the PRR trestle, both of which span Chartiers Creek. The trestle remains standing today. My grandfather, Dr. Joseph Hodgson Cole, had a brother named Isaac. One afternoon, he and Ike were playing on the trestle when the train came. My grandfather dove off the trestle into the water, but Ike was run over and killed. Hearing the whistle shrieking, my great-grandmother ran down the steps to the foot of Carothers Ave. She was grabbed by a trainman, who said, "Oh, Mrs. Cole, you don't want to go down there."

Ike is buried, along with the rest of



Left to right: ?, my great-grandmother (Maggie/Margaret Jane McElherron Cole), my grandmother (Josephine W. Cole), and my great-aunt (Annah Cole Black).

(Annah Cole Doak collection)

the Coles and Hodgsons, in Chartiers Cemetery. You can see Ike's marble obelisk through the iron fence that surrounds the cemetery. It is located right behind the Steen family mausoleum and across the road from the old Rook roundhouse. Rook wasn't PRR, but my grandfather knew the roundhouse foreman and took me there to watch them turn the engines.

When "Billy" Cole retired, he and great-grandmother traveled around the country on PRR courtesy passes, checking on his investments in oil and

Florida real estate. They proved to be unwise investments during the Depression.

The Doaks and Fosters constitute my father's side of the family. They were pioneers who first came to America in 1801, Scotch-Irish to the bone and Methodist to the core. They migrated through the Cumberland and settled on the western slopes of the Alleghenies in Pennsylvania and Virginia. At the onset of the Civil War, they had little social sympathy for the Southern Piedmont and Tidewater ruling classes. Additionally, as Methodists, they found slavery morally repugnant. The Civil War split that Church with a schism that didn't heal until 1957. Eventually, petitions were made to the Lincoln administration, whereupon Congress admitted West Virginia as a "free" state. That area contains many of the Doak family branches to this day.

My grandfather Doak, born in 1895, was abandoned by his father. My great-grandfather was a railroader and scoundrel. He abandoned his family, leaving behind a wife and seven children, and financial ruin. In order to escape, granddad, semi-literate, and with only a third grade education, ran away from home at age 13. He ended up sitting on the curb in Carnegie, alongside the PRR spur that



Great-grandfather standing with a team of horses and coal wagon at the Carnegie PRR station. The driver is Nelson Love, believed to be the first black man (hired by my great-grandfather) employed by PRR on the Panhandle Division.



Isaac Earl Cole, son of William M. and Maggie Jane Cole, brother of Dr. Joseph H. Cole, killed by a train in his 17th year, in October 1904. (Annah Cole Doak collection)



▲ February 1914 views from the front yard of the original Cole/Hodgson (grandmother Cole's) farmhouse on Carother's Ave., looking down at the bridge over Chartiers Creek where Isaac Earl Cole met his death by a locomotive inbound to Carnegie. Carnegie is to the left; Carrothers Ave. is in the foreground. The trestle, shown in the close-up, is scheduled for demolition this spring. (Author's photos) ▼

THE PENNSYLVANIA NEWS DECEMBER 1924

ROLL OF HONOR

HAVING reached the age of three score years and ten, and with nine months more than half a century of continuous service, William M. Cole, enginehouse foreman, Panhandle division, retires from active duty today.



W. M. COLE

Mr. Cole was born at Mt. Jackson, a small town near New Castle, Pa., Sept. 6, 1854, the son of a prominent farmer and stock dealer of that community. After leaving the public schools, he worked with his father and made frequent trips to Pittsburgh with stock. He liked the city exceedingly and desired to move there.

In the latter part of the year 1873, Mr. Cole paid a visit to his older brother, Scott, who was employed on the Panhandle at Carnegie, Pa., as an engineer, and who died recently. While there he was offered a job as engine watchman, which he accepted, his date of employment being January 6, 1874. He never left the service after that time and was transferred to fireman on May 1, 1874, and was promoted to engine-man four years later.

Mr. Cole was appointed enginehouse foreman at Carnegie, August 1, 1887, and served very satisfactorily in that capacity at that place until the house was closed a few months ago, since which time he has been on special work in the Scully district.

Mr. Cole is numbered among the most substantial and highly respected citizens of Carnegie, with which place he has grown up during the past 50 years. He and Mrs. Cole reside on Carothers avenue at that place, both being in fair health and in position to enjoy the well-earned rest now before them. They will make frequent trips to the South, where Mr. Cole has extensive oil interests.

Their family consists of two sons and two daughters, E. W. Cole, who is chief engineer of the City of Salisbury, N. C.; Dr. J. H. Cole, a dentist of Pittsburgh, Pa.; Mrs. J. J. Feicht, whose husband is a business man in Cleveland, O., and Mrs. S. M. Black, whose husband is a physician in Pittsburgh.

Mr. Cole is a member of the Methodist Episcopal church of Carnegie, and is one of the oldest living members of Centennial Lodge, F. & A. M. The congratulations of all his friends on the division are extended to him.

Great-grandfather (William Cole)'s notice of retirement, as published in PRR's *Pennsylvania News*, December 1924.

Vol. 47, No. 2



runs parallel to Chartiers Creek. The old right-of-way is still there today at the bridge on what used to be Main Street (now Mansfield Blvd.), but the signalman's tower is long gone. When I was a little kid, my dad would sneak me up the tower to talk to the operator.

It grew cold and dark as my grandfather ate his turnip and began to cry. He told me it was the worst day of his life. Fortuitously, two spinster schoolmarm's took notice of him from their apartment window and took him in. Lying about his true age, they got him

a job winding armatures at a PRR subsidiary. Due to his energy, work habits, and a strong written recommendation from his current employer, he was hired at a freight brakeman and began his life on the PRR in 1917. My grandfather was a large, energetic man, gifted with native intelligence and a willingness to work, but hampered by his lack of education. At one point, there was some trouble when PRR apparently discovered his true age. Mercifully, by then it was too late, and they let it pass.

My grandfather proudly spent the

Pennsylvania Railroad System

Central Region

Pittsburgh, Pa., December 6, 1924.

H. W. CLEMENT
General Manager
J. E. McCULLOUGH,
W. L. BLAIR
Assistant General Managers

Mr. William M. Cole,
1 Carothers Avenue,
Carnegie, Pa.

My dear Billie:

I have just recently seen a notice of your retirement from active service with the Railroad Company and want to offer you congratulations that you have reached this time in life in good health and with prospects of many years in which to enjoy your vacation after so many years of strenuous work.

It comes to but few men in railroad life to reach the age of retirement in vigorous health after serving a half century, as you have, but we who have been associated with you all these years know that this is largely due to the high moral plane on which you have lived.

It should be a satisfaction to you, and no doubt is, that you are being placed on the Railroad's Honor Roll with the respect of all the officers and employees with whom you have been associated. In consideration of these circumstances I offer you my hearty felicitations on the event. If I can in any way add to your happiness or comfort, I hope you will call upon me.

With the Season's Greetings and Best Wishes, I am,

Sincerely,

W. M. Cole

rest of his life on the PRR, which he regularly referred to as "the greatest railroad in the world." He never had a single black mark on his service record, with one near exception. One late night the dispatcher called him to take the Carnegie wrecker down to Little Washington or Canonsburg. There was a raging snowstorm, a frozen switch, and a freight derailment that blocked the mains. The wreck crew put the cars right, repaired the switch, and re-spiked some track. It was still dark when he got to the call box for orders and was told to get the wrecker off the mains, as traffic was backed up. Snow was blowing like the devil, everyone was anxious to get home, and after throwing the switch, he signaled the wrecker to come out on the main. The engine let out a few blasts when he saw the big headlight rock back and forth and realized what he had done. He had forgotten the derailler. The pilot wheels and the first set of drivers went on the ground, but the engine wasn't damaged and was soon set back on the tracks.

The next day he filled out the accident forms and reported to the Division Superintendent, fully expecting time off, or

◀ PRR letter with retirement congratulations for William M. Cole, December 6, 1924.

The Peninsular & Occidental Steamship Company

TRIP PASS
No. L 2814
(Subject to conditions on back)

Pass Mr. William Cole, --
ACCOUNT Penn'd Enginehouse Foreman
FROM Havana, Cuba TO Key West
RESIDENCE Carnegie, Pa.
DATE Nov. 4, 1932
ISSUED Nov. 4, 1932
VALID WHEN COUNTERSIGNED BY MYSELF, G. D. U. WILDER.
COUNTERSIGNED BY *G. D. U. Wilder*

Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad Co.

TRIP PASS
No. L 2814
(Subject to conditions on back)

Pass William Cole --
ACCOUNT Pensioned Enginehouse Foreman, PRR.
FROM Richmond TO Washington
RESIDENCE Carnegie, Pa.
REQUESTED BY Jfd
ISSUED Nov. 4, 1932
GOOD UNTIL Dec. 31, 1932
VALID WHEN COUNTERSIGNED BY W. P. TERRY, JR. U.S. VOGH
COUNTERSIGNED BY *W. P. Terry, Jr.*

ATLANTIC COAST LINE

TRIP PASS
No. C 44580
(Subject to conditions on back)

Pass William Cole --
ACCOUNT PARR - Penn Foreman
FROM Tampa Fla TO Richmond Va
RESIDENCE Carnegie Pa
REQUESTED BY JFD
DATE Nov 4 1932
ISSUED Nov 4 1932
GOOD FOR ONE TRIP ONLY UNTIL Feb 4 1933
VALID WHEN COUNTERSIGNED BY R. H. MARSHALL.
COUNTERSIGNED BY *R. H. Marshall*

MISSOURI-KANSAS-TEXAS LINES

TRIP PASS
No. C 2031
(Not Good on Trains 71, 72, 87 and 88)

Pass William Cole and wife --
ACCOUNT Retired Enginehouse Foreman
FROM Wichita Falls, Texas TO Dallas, Texas
RESIDENCE Carnegie, Pa.
DATE November 11 1924
REQUESTED BY B. McKeen
VALID WHEN COUNTERSIGNED BY G. D. BRENNER
COUNTERSIGNED BY *G. D. Brenner*

THE TEXAS & PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY

Exchange Trip Pass
No. E 9501
(Subject to conditions on back)

Pass --William Cole and wife--
ACCOUNT Pensioned Enginehouse Foreman
and wife, Pa. System.
FROM Longview, Tex FROM Dallas, Texas.
TO Nov. 12, 1932
REQUESTED BY B. McKeen
VALID WHEN COUNTERSIGNED BY A. L. LITTLEJOHN, JR. B. JOHNSON ON
COUNTERSIGNED BY *A. L. Littlejohn, Jr.*

SEABOARD

EXCHANGE TRIP PASS
No. H 66120
(Subject to conditions on back)

Pass Pensioned Enginehouse Foreman-Penna. Railroad
Carnegie, Pa.
FROM Tampa, Fla. TO Miami, Fla.
JFD
ISSUED 11-5-32
EXPIRES 1-30-33
COUNTERSIGNED BY *J. P. Powers*

FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY COMPANY

EXCHANGE TRIP PASS
No. 1376
(Not Good on Trains 71, 72, 87 and 88)

Pass Mr. William Cole --
ACCOUNT Retired Enginehouse Foreman-Pennsy
TO Miami FROM Key West
GOOD FOR ONE TRIP ONLY UNTIL January 31,
RESIDENCE Carnegie, Pa. REQUESTED BY JFD.
VALID ONLY WHEN COUNTERSIGNED BY EITHER OF US, W. M. COLE
COUNTERSIGNED BY *W. M. Cole*

1917 Pennsylvania Lines West of Pittsburgh

BAGGAGE PERMIT
No. 1008

These Lines will transport free in baggage service personal family supplies weighing not more than thirty (30) pounds in one or more packages.

FOR Mr. W. M. Cole,
ACCOUNT Foreman - Pittsburgh Division,
BETWEEN Pittsburgh, Pa. and Columbus, O.
UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 1917, UNLESS OTHERWISE ORDERED. SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK HEREOF. VALID ONLY WHEN COUNTERSIGNED BY G. W. CONRAD, S. C. COMSTOCK, OR MYSELF.
COUNTERSIGNED BY *G. W. Conrad*

INTERNATIONAL - GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD COMPANY

TRIP PASS
No. F 15374
(Subject to conditions on back)

Pass Retired Foreman-Penna. Lines & Wife Class 1
FROM Jacksonville TO Longview Jet.
v. 12, 1924
GOOD FOR ONE TRIP ONLY UNTIL Jan. 31, 1925
REQUESTED BY B. McKeen
COUNTERSIGNED BY *B. McKeen*

Reciprocal railroad employee train passes, various railroads.

Pittsburgh Railways Company,

J. A. ROSAN, M. M.
HOMEWOOD OFFICE.

Pittsburgh, Pa. Nov. 4, 1912.

To Whom It May Concern:-

This is to certify that the bearer, Mr. Dewey Doak has worked at The Homewood Shops of the Pittsburgh Railways Company as Field Coil Winder since June 2nd, 1910,

This young man has proven himself to be an honest upright and reliable workman in every respect and we can cheerfully recommendation to anyone in need of his services.

Signed:

John Morgan.
MASTER MECHANIC.

R/D

I was 17 years, 9 months & 2 day old when I was given this job. Worked 3 years - 5 months and 2 days. Was then boss over 17 young boys (men) when I quit. Winding field coils - armature coils for armatures. (was 17 years & 11 days old.) Was employed as freight brakeman on Nov 8-1912. Was promoted to Pass Conductor effective June 16-1943. I was retired on disability May 25-1953.



▲ Location of Rosslyn Station, looking under the parkway toward Wagner Tower, February 2014. (Author's photo)

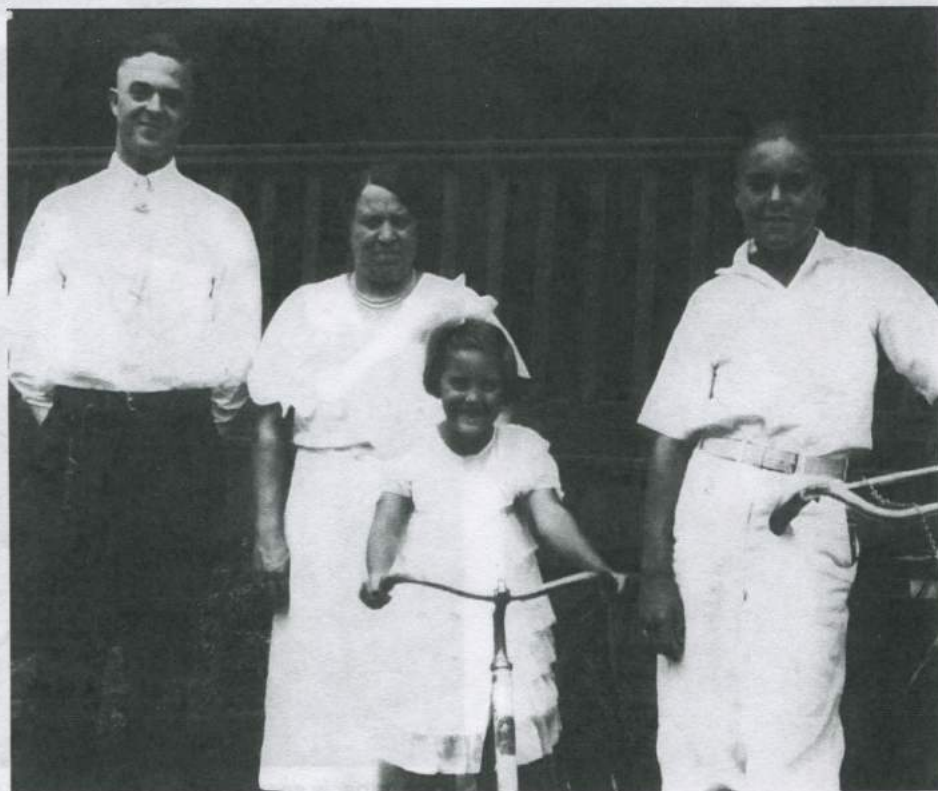
◀ Character endorsement for Dewey Doak, from Pittsburgh Railways, November 4, 1912. Besides being a traction company, Pittsburgh Railways wound armatures for the PRR. Grandfather's writing appears at the bottom. He kept this letter, as it was the first time he received a testimonial to his good character.

worse. To his astonishment, the superintendent took his report and put it aside. He then produced a letter of which my grandfather was totally unaware; it had been sent to the president of the PRR, and forwarded on to the Division Superintendent. It was written by a doughboy whose legs were injured in WWI. Many years before, while boarding a PRR train, he had shown my grandfather his prosthetic attachments and his crutches. My grandfather lifted him from the platform to the coach, and put his wheelchair aboard. During the trip, he also helped him several times. That forgotten doughboy wrote the thank you letter to the president of the PRR, referring to my grandfather by name. Thus, the incident with the derailler was forgotten. The Superintendent said, "Eddie, do be more careful with railroad equipment," and let it go at that. That one instance of kindness for a crippled veteran saved him from a black mark on his PRR record. I wish I had a copy of that letter.

It was within this railroad sub-culture that I was raised. One's life revolved around the steel mills, the Bell family owned/operated mines, or the

railroads: P&LE, B&O, or PRR. The PRR was sort of the elite, with their work fraternity, their unique vernacular, and social activities. To the extent that I paid attention, I was part of that sub-culture.

Throughout my somewhat mis-spent youth, my grandfather, a strong but gentle man, and his railroad acquaintances, suffered my presence and questions with forbearance and kindness. I was allowed to address

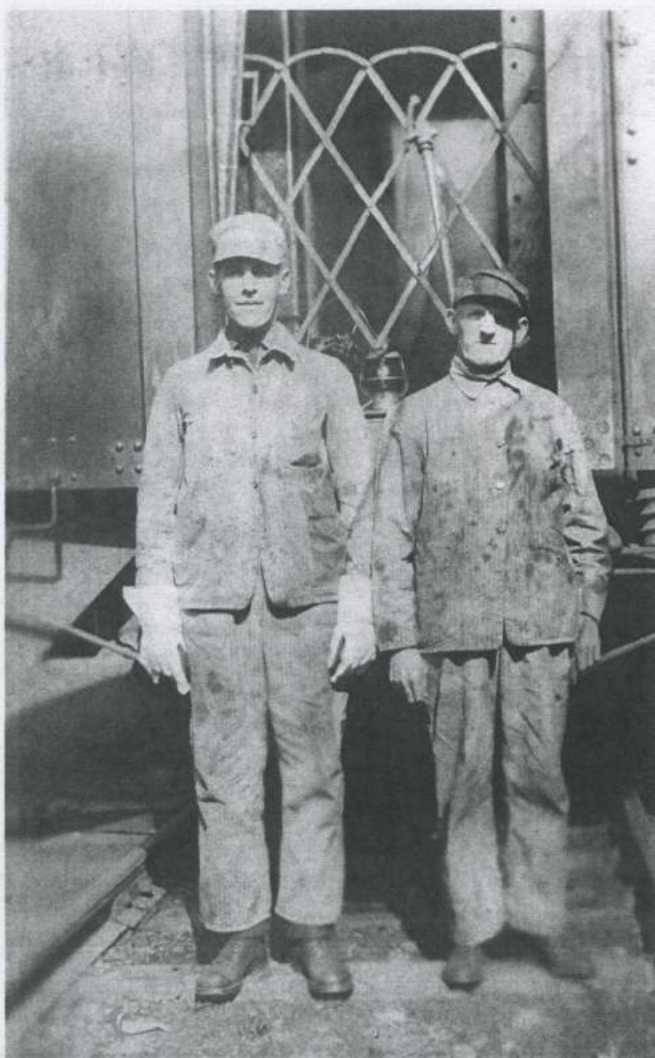


Left to right: grandfather ("Big E.D." Doak), grandmother, aunt (Helen Doak Wilson) and father, George Foster Doak, Sr., in front of their home at 321 Knox Ave., Carnegie.

them by their railroad names. There was "Eddie," "Red," "O.D.," "Bus," and many others. I went around "The Curve" on PRR excursion trains. I remember Pap telling me to listen for the flat section that J.E. Thompson put on the grade half way around so that the locomotives could build up a little momentum to make the rest of the climb. As a kid, I never heard nor felt it.

As a child I was always quizzed about lantern and whistle signals and so on. I have one picture in which I am outfitted with an engineman's uniform, cap, and watch, which was the source of some amusement.

Late one night, I rode one of the last yard engines on the B&O down in Glenwood. At the time, my father, an ex-Marine, was a B&O policeman assigned to the Glenwood Yards. B&O was replacing steam with little diesels at a rapid rate. My dad took a picture of one of them; it may have been the first in the yard. I remember it being dark when dad lifted me up the ladder while the switcher was taking on water. It was a terrifying experience. I was encouraged to step on the treadle and try to shovel some coal, all of which provoked much merriment in the cab. I spilled coal all over the deck, and being humiliated, finally threw some in the firebox. I remember little else except for crying and clinging to my father's leg. The firebox was hot, and it scared me to death. I also remember the fireman "sanding the flue" through a little door on the backhead. My dad said they had to do it because of the "bad" coal.



Grandfather's engineman and fireman at the station in Carnegie, circa 1930s.



Grandfather ("Big E.D." Doak), early 1930s.



Grandfather is second from the right, back row, Cecil, Pa., c.1930. The engineman is at the bottom, right. This photo was taken while their train was on a siding, awaiting assistance. The crew is exchanging caps for the photographer.

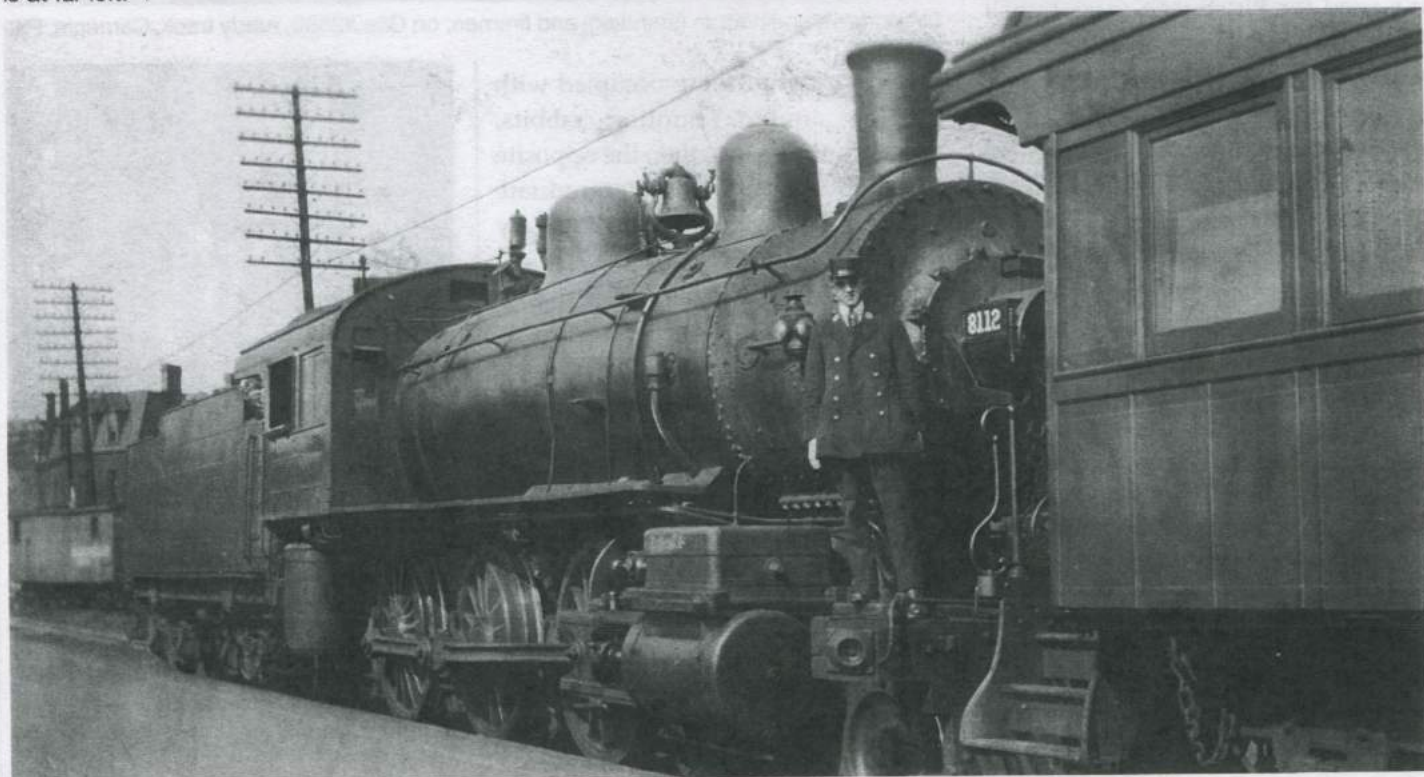
My grandfather could go on for hours about superheaters, dwarf lights, cuttin' off, takin' out the slack, ridin' in the doghouse, all for my education, even if I was unaware of it at the time. I know where Scully is, Conway, Crestline, and the roundhouse up at Rook. What used to be called the Rook Yards are still there, but the roundhouse is long gone. Chartier's Cemetery is across the road; many of my relatives are buried there.

I spent many evenings with my dad and the operator in Wagner Tower. It was at the bottom of the hill from my parents' home in Rosslyn Farms. I watched the operator throw the US&S levers, and hand up orders with the hoop. Most of all, I remember being fascinated by the big,



Bridgeville-Washington, Pa. local. To the left is Nelson Love; to the right is my grandfather.

Granddad Doak at Carnegie station, circa 1924, on the pilot of G4A #8112. The PCC&StL loco was built as #112 in Feb. 1900, renumbered 8112 in Oct. 1902 and sold for scrap in May 1926. It's shown here on a commuter local that ran tender first to its destination, then ran around the train to return. An old tool car is at far left. ▼



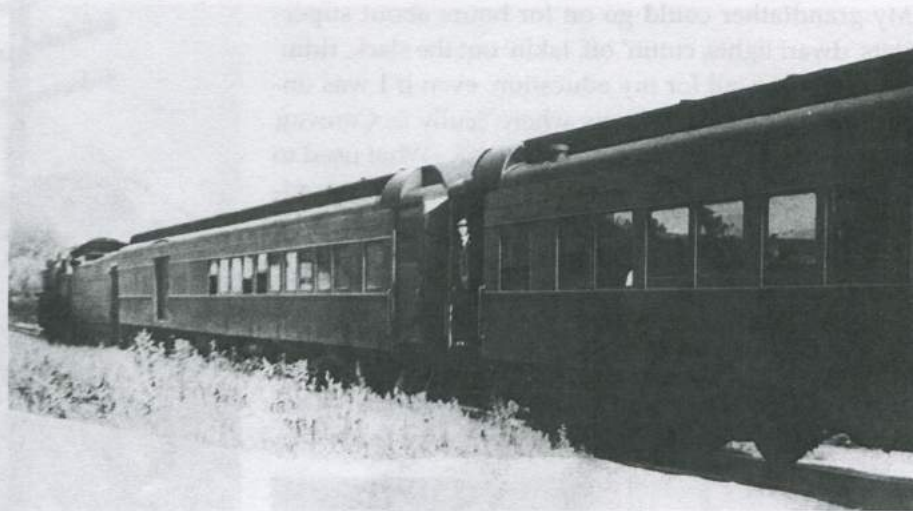


Granddad at left, "O.D." Watson, a close friend and railroader, at right.

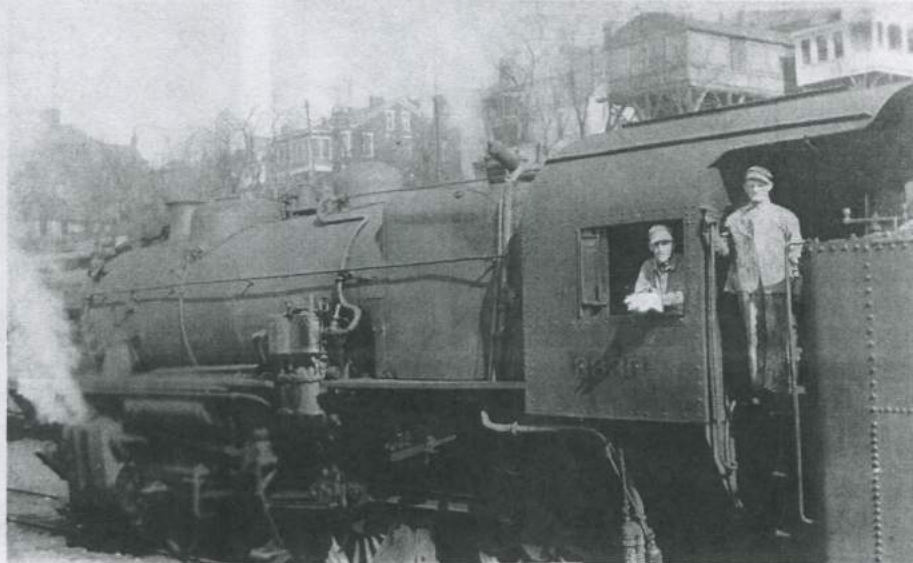
colorful traffic board, and the rows of levers behind the operator's desk, one of which had a big red metal guard on it. I was strictly admonished to NEVER talk when the operator reached out for the phone on his panel or was writing in his log. The PRR right-of-way is still there, but I think it's used for Pittsburgh mass transit buses. Wagner Tower is long gone. I walked over there a few years ago, and even the foundation has vanished, along with the big signal bridge down at the curve. I walked across that bridge many times.

My dad knew the stationmaster in Pittsburgh and, when we went in to get his PRR watch serviced by Mr. Beck, I was once allowed to put the key in the light switch and send a passenger train off to wherever. Now that station is a dirty bus terminal. What a shame; it was a beautiful piece of architecture.

This was the era in which I grew up. It was the twilight of the great railroads. I did not appreciate the value of that upbringing for many years because I was an independent, sometimes foolish, and occasionally



Granddad Doak, on the "Bridgeville Bummer," Cecil, Pa., c.1918.



Granddad's engineman (standing) and firemen, on G5s #2830, ready track, Carnegie, Pa.

recalcitrant youth, pre-occupied with goofing around, hunting rabbits, sports, automobiles, then the opposite sex, and eventually undergraduate school. Then some fool gave me my first taste of brown liquor. We all have a few childhood regrets. I certainly have mine.

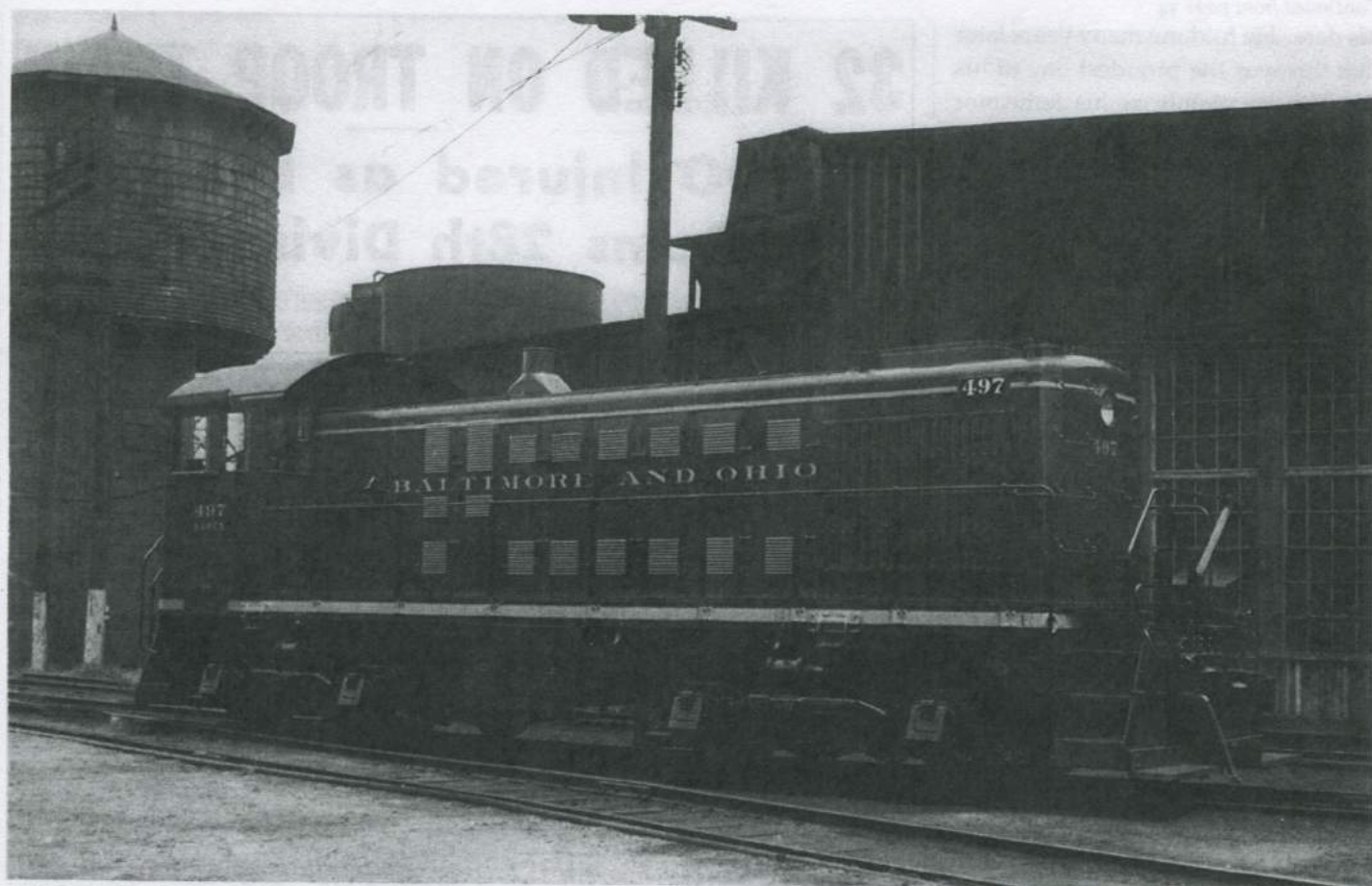
PRELUDE TO THE WRECK

Eventually granddad became eligible to bid as a passenger service conductor; I believe it was in 1943. However, being burdened as he was by his lack of education, he was deathly afraid of written examinations. His solution was to memorize the Rule Book, Passenger Operations, etc. He passed his exams and made

Continued on page 36



The author playing dress-up, much to his embarrassment, Rosslyn Farms, Pa., early 1950s.



B&OCT #497, Glenwood, Pa. B&O Yard, c.1950. (Father's photo)

CONDUCTORS:

The following men will report at Room 719 Pennsylvania Station, Pittsburgh, at 8:30 A.M. Tuesday, June 15, 1943, for examination and instructions by Accounting Department for promotion to Passenger Conductor.

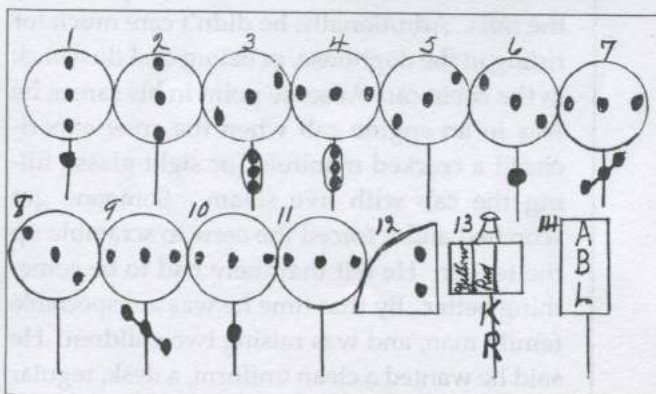
G. E. Marsh
J. C. King
C. B. Yaw
F. C. Miller
William Flinner
E. S. McCue
L. S. McCue
John W. Brown

Any of the above men who do not desire to consider promotion to Passenger Conductor will notify the undersigned by June 12, 1943.

Come prepared to stay June 15th and 16th. You may secure Conductors' Manual from the Ticket Receiver at Pittsburgh.

F. H. Wisegarver
Train Master

▲ Trainmaster F.H. Wisegarver's memo setting time for the exam for promotion to Passenger Conductor.



PANHANDLE DIVISION

Pittsburgh, Pa., July 3, 1943.

Mr. E. D. Doak,
Mr. B. C. Mitchell,
Passenger Brakemen.
Mr. D. J. Malis,
Mr. R. N. Carson,
Mr. G. P. Mowry,
Mr. C. R. Tow,
Mr. F. C. Miller,
Freight Conductors.

It is with pleasure I inform you that you have satisfactorily passed the examination for promotion to Passenger Conductor which was conducted by the Auditor of Passenger Traffic at Pittsburgh, Pa., June 15 and 16, 1943, and you may consider yourself appointed as a Passenger Conductor effective June 16, 1943.

A. E. Munson,
Passenger Train Master.

Trainmaster A.E. Munson's memo to E.D. Doak and others congratulating them on passing the Passenger Conductor's exam, July 3, 1943.

E.D. Doak's study sheet for learning the signals, 1943.

No	1. Clear - Speed in yard Block	13. Block Limit
2.	Clear - Speed in yard Block	14. Approach - Block Limit
3.	Approach - Medium	① Medium Speed - 1/2 authorized speed for pass. Not more than 31 M.
4.	Medium - Clear	② Reduced Speed - Stop short of train or obstruction
5.	Approach	③ Slow Speed - Not exceeding 15 M
6.	Caution	④ Restricting Speed - Not more than 15 M
7.	Slow Approach	⑤ Restricting Speed - Not more than 15 M
8.	Restricting	⑥ Restricting Speed - Not more than 15 M
9.	Restricting - Speed at Restricting speed. Speed at Restricting speed. Speed at Restricting speed.	⑦ Restricting Speed - Not more than 15 M
10.	Stop - proceed	⑧ Restricting Speed - Not more than 15 M
11.	Stop	⑨ Restricting Speed - Not more than 15 M
12.	Slow Clear - Slow in yard block	⑩ Restricting Speed - Not more than 15 M

Continued from page 34

his date. He told me many years later that this was the proudest day of his life. You can plainly see his demeanor in a few of the photographs. His study notes on position lights and his confirmation letter all appear in this article.

As a youngster, I was always disappointed that he wasn't an engineer, since it was my idea of prestige and power. (As a kid, I always dreamed of becoming an engineer, a big league shortstop, or a fighter pilot.) I asked him why he didn't put in for engineer. His response was that he wanted to stay off the engines. He had several reasons. Having fired as an "extra" early on in his career, he said the locomotives were getting so

32 KILLED ON TROOP TRAIN

100 Injured as Express Rams 28th Division Cars



WHERE 32 SOLDIERS DIED—Here is an aerial view of the wreckage left when a four passenger train on the Pennsylvania Railroad plowed into the rear of a troop train carrying 500 members of the 28th Division to Camp Atterbury for intensive training. Later court shows 32 survivors.

District Troops Arrive at Camp Safely

Passed Train Crash Scene Hours Before

Pittsburgh district troops of the 28th Infantry Division passed the scene of the collision of the 28th Division troop train and the passenger train before the crash, Pennsylvania Railroad officials said today.

Pa. Guardsmen En Route to Training Camp

By BRUNSON BERRY, Pittsburgh Press Staff Writer

COBOSCHTON, O., Sept. 11—At least 32 soldiers of Pennsylvania's 28th Infantry Division were killed in a disastrous head-on collision with a passenger train in a three-mile stretch of track between Coboschton and Jewettstown, Pa., today.

Crash on Straight Stretch

The crash occurred on a straight stretch of track between Coboschton and Jewettstown, Pa., today.

The direct locomotive of the passenger train, backed into the tracks, rolled down an embankment.

Railroad officials said that none of the passengers on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were injured or hurt badly.

None of the casualties was from Pittsburgh.

The last four coaches of the troop train, carrying members of the 28th Infantry Division, were involved in a head-on collision with the passenger train.

The direct locomotive of the passenger train, backed into the tracks, rolled down an embankment.

Railroad officials said that none of the passengers on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were injured or hurt badly.

None of the casualties was from Pittsburgh.

The last four coaches of the troop train, carrying members of the 28th Infantry Division, were involved in a head-on collision with the passenger train.

The direct locomotive of the passenger train, backed into the tracks, rolled down an embankment.

Railroad officials said that none of the passengers on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were injured or hurt badly.

None of the casualties was from Pittsburgh.

The last four coaches of the troop train, carrying members of the 28th Infantry Division, were involved in a head-on collision with the passenger train.

The direct locomotive of the passenger train, backed into the tracks, rolled down an embankment.

Railroad officials said that none of the passengers on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were injured or hurt badly.

None of the casualties was from Pittsburgh.

The last four coaches of the troop train, carrying members of the 28th Infantry Division, were involved in a head-on collision with the passenger train.

The direct locomotive of the passenger train, backed into the tracks, rolled down an embankment.

Railroad officials said that none of the passengers on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were injured or hurt badly.

None of the casualties was from Pittsburgh.

The last four coaches of the troop train, carrying members of the 28th Infantry Division, were involved in a head-on collision with the passenger train.

The direct locomotive of the passenger train, backed into the tracks, rolled down an embankment.

Railroad officials said that none of the passengers on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were injured or hurt badly.

None of the casualties was from Pittsburgh.

The last four coaches of the troop train, carrying members of the 28th Infantry Division, were involved in a head-on collision with the passenger train.

The direct locomotive of the passenger train, backed into the tracks, rolled down an embankment.

Railroad officials said that none of the passengers on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were injured or hurt badly.

None of the casualties was from Pittsburgh.

The last four coaches of the troop train, carrying members of the 28th Infantry Division, were involved in a head-on collision with the passenger train.

The direct locomotive of the passenger train, backed into the tracks, rolled down an embankment.

Railroad officials said that none of the passengers on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were injured or hurt badly.

None of the casualties was from Pittsburgh.

The last four coaches of the troop train, carrying members of the 28th Infantry Division, were involved in a head-on collision with the passenger train.

The direct locomotive of the passenger train, backed into the tracks, rolled down an embankment.

Railroad officials said that none of the passengers on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were injured or hurt badly.

None of the casualties was from Pittsburgh.

The last four coaches of the troop train, carrying members of the 28th Infantry Division, were involved in a head-on collision with the passenger train.

The direct locomotive of the passenger train, backed into the tracks, rolled down an embankment.

Railroad officials said that none of the passengers on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were injured or hurt badly.

None of the casualties was from Pittsburgh.

The last four coaches of the troop train, carrying members of the 28th Infantry Division, were involved in a head-on collision with the passenger train.

The direct locomotive of the passenger train, backed into the tracks, rolled down an embankment.

Railroad officials said that none of the passengers on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were injured or hurt badly.

None of the casualties was from Pittsburgh.

The last four coaches of the troop train, carrying members of the 28th Infantry Division, were involved in a head-on collision with the passenger train.

32 Guardsmen Killed in Train Wreck

Flyer Plows Into Stalled Cars Carrying 28th Division Members; At Least 79 Known To Be Injured

(Continued from Page 1)

"We saw it about a mile away," related Lieutenant Colonel Frank Townsend, of Ballas, Pa., commander of the troop train. "We thought it would surely see the fares and lanterns stop."

"Although it did not stop, we shouted and waved our arms until we could see there was going to be a crash," he said. One officer ran frantically through the rear cars, shouting to awaken the men, to get them on the floor. Colonel Townsend and a group of crewmen jumped down an embankment.

Then came the crash. Then there was a horrible moment as those in the cars heard the mazing crash a second. Then the grinding, rumbling crash as the Diesel ripped through the inert coaches.

Guardsmen from Battery B and the Service Battery were in the last two cars. The first Diesel unit crashed into the rear car, severing the coach and raising one end high in the air. As the first Diesel was derailed, the second came hurtling behind, hit the next to last troop coach,

District Men Injured in Crash

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

For families who only realize that the men were in the crash, the men were in the crash.



This is where troop train was hit.

where all sleeping when it happened," he said. "I don't know why, but everyone stayed in place until we could figure out what to do. We found four of our men pinned in the rear and we used guns and tools to cut them out from their seats."

Awakened by Crash

Recruit John Burecki and Private Frank Patis were sleeping slumped in a seat side by side.

"We were pounding our ears," Patis said, "and all of a sudden we woke up to find the wall of the coach was gone. Serge took over and we got out our men who were trapped. We then left the train to help rescue the guys in the cars behind."

The Pittsburgh district crewmen boarded the troop train at 2:37 a. m. when it stopped at the Pennsylvania Station, there briefly. The 20 coaches were pulled by two steam locomotives.

The "Spirit of St. Louis" westbound from New York, stopped in Pittsburgh at 3:06 a. m. where a relief crewman took over. Their run was to Columbus, O.

The wreck occurred on a straight stretch of track in level country. However, the tracks are on a raised embankment. It is about one-quarter mile from Route 36 and visible from that highway. The news of the wreck spread like lightning

and ambulances from all nearby towns were summoned.

Temporary Morgue Set Up

Local police, state police and Ohio National Guardsmen arrived on the scene, and the dead and injured were taken to the Coboschton Hospital and the less seriously hurt to private physicians.

Many of the dead were taken to the Ohio National Guard Armory here, where a temporary morgue was set up. Newsman were barred from the armory and the hospital.

As each section of the crushed coaches was carefully moved by railroad crew, military police moved in to search, taking out the bodies and the effects which would help in their identification.

The train roster was being compared with those unharmed to identify the dead and injured.

Under strict military discipline, the guardsmen, who were sworn into the Federal service last week, went back into the undamaged cars to retrieve personal and National Guard property. A relief train was backed in about 3 p. m. and the uninjured but deeply shocked soldiers continued their trip to Camp Atterbury.

Stricker Reaches Scene

PRR officials reported that apparently no passengers were injured on the "Spirit of St. Louis." It was backed up later and reloaded to continue its journey.

Major General Daniel B. Stricker, commanding the Twenty-eighth, arrived at the wreck scene about 11 a. m.

He and his staff will continue to Atterbury, near Indianapolis, after the wreckage is removed.

Duff Asks Homage For Wreck Victims

HARRISBURG, Sept. 11 (AP)—Governor James H. Duff today directed that flags on all state county and local government buildings be flown at half mast for 10 days in honor of Pennsylvania soldiers killed in the Coboschton (O.) train wreck.

The governor made the announcement at the conclusion of a radio address here tonight.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

He said that the men who were in the crash, the men were in the crash.

Four District Trainmen Hurt

Four Pittsburgh district men, all civilian railroaders, were among the injured in yesterday's troop-passenger train collision at Coboschton, O. Three other district residents in the two railroad crews were uninjured.

Injured crew members aboard the passenger "Spirit of St. Louis" were:

M. J. McCaffrey, 58, conductor, of 333 Seventh Avenue, Carnegie.

Fractured ribs.

W. E. Miller, 65, engineer, of 402 Martin Street, Midway, shock.

E. J. Kearns, 50, fireman, of 12 South Grandview Avenue, Carnegie, shock.

Injured on the troop train was:

E. D. Doak, 55, conductor, of 221 Knox Avenue, Carnegie, fractured hip.

21 of Train Victims Named

(Continued from Page 1)

Recruit Hugh L. Fergus, Plymouth; (Mrs. Mary Jones, mother).

Private First Class Donald C. Zieker, Wilkes-Barre; (Mrs. Dorothy Zieker, mother, Hightstown).

Recruit Charles Norton, Kingston; (Mrs. Marie Norton, wife).

Recruit Richard A. Royer, Wilkes-Barre; (Mrs. John Royer, mother).

Service Battery, One Hundred South First Artillery Battalion: Captain Arthur J. Thomas, Kingston; (Mrs. Sally Thomas, wife).

Warrent Officer James F. McGhee, Exeter; (Mrs. James F. McGhee, wife).

Corporal Joseph Wilkes-Barre; (Mrs. Marion Fletcher, mother).

Corporal Thomas M. Ostrawski, Wilkes-Barre; (no next of kin listed).

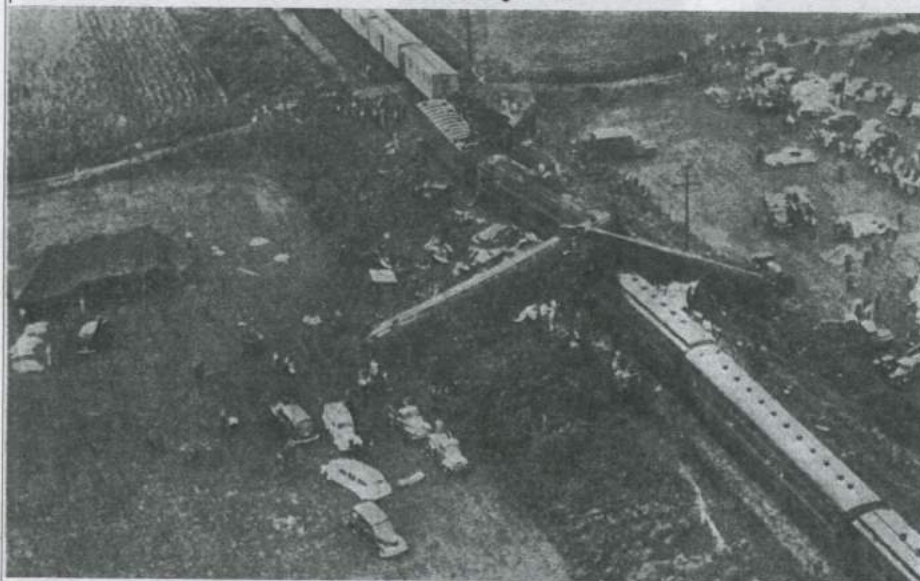
Private First Class Edward W. Gallagher, West Wyoming; (Mrs. E. W. Gallagher, wife).

Private William F. Tierney, Wilkes-Barre; (no next of kin listed).

◀ ▲ Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's headlines and copy about the collision of "Spirit of St. Louis" and PX5444 West, September 12, 1950. ▶

big and heavy that one man could barely keep steam. I assume this was before stokers. Additionally, he said those engines were freezing in the winter, hotter than blazes in the summer, full of dust and grease, some would shake your teeth loose, and a few had a tendency to climb the rails. Additionally, he didn't care much for riding in the doghouse, or eating coal dust back in the cabin car. At some point in his career, he was in an engine cab when the crew experienced a cracked manifold (or sight glass), filling the cab with live steam. Someone got scorched and it forced the crew to scramble up the tender. He felt that there had to be something better. By that time there was a respectable family man, and was raising two children. He said he wanted a clean uniform, a desk, regular

Air View of Wrecked Keystone Division Train



CARNAGE—In this wreckage of a troop train and a PRR passenger train, more than a score of soldiers from the Twenty-eighth Division died yesterday near Cosho-

ton, O. The three cars at right and the car lying on the far side are from the troop train. On the left side of the embankment lies one of the passenger Diesel engines. A work train is on the

track at the top of the picture. On the far left are the blanket-covered bodies of some of the victims who died as the passenger train plowed into the rear of the stalled troop train en route to camp.



ASKEW—Lying on its side is the first unit of the Diesel-powered passenger train. The flattened debris of the next to last car of the troop train, is on the left of engine on top

of the embankment. In that car were most of the soldiers who met death. The end of the Diesel engine lies across the rear of the third car from the end while the last coach juts up into the air where it

was thrown by the tremendous impact of the speeding train which hurtled through the fog into the rear of the troop train which had stopped for a few minutes so that a coupling could be repaired.

THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY



This Certifies that Edward D. Doak
Passenger Brakeman *Pennsylvania Division*
has been relieved of Active Duty after 40 1/2 years of Service
and that his name is enrolled on

THE ROLL OF HONOR.

Philadelphia the 25th day of May 1953

W. B. Taft
President

runs, good pay, and yes, the prestige of running a passenger train on the Pennsylvania Railroad.

One of his first regular runs as a passenger conductor was on a local called the "Bridgeville Bummer." I believe that the "Bummer" ran between Washington, Pa. and Pittsburgh. I still remember the stations. We used to take "bike hikes" out through there and swim in the abandoned quarries: Presto, Cuddy, Cecil, Bridgeville, Rosslyn, Crafton, Ingram, then across the river to Pittsburgh. As his seniority increased, one of his more regular runs was on Train 66, running from Pittsburgh to Columbus, Ohio.

THE WRECK

In 1950 my grandfather was dispatched to take a troop train from Pittsburgh to Columbus. He had handled many troop trains during the War. This one was PX5444 WEST, double-headed with a K4s and a T1. From the Grif Teller calendars, I thought the T1 was the sleekest thing on wheels, so why was it humping along on the head end of an old troop train? His explanation was that many of the K4s's were getting long in the tooth, some having been around since WWI, and many of them were really worn out after WWII, as was a lot of PRR equipment. Additionally, it was a heavy consist.

As an aside, I know that there remains controversy surrounding the T1. I can tell you that my grandfather thought they were great locomotives, when they weren't in the engine-house. He also said that the scariest locomotive ride he ever had in his life was late one night behind a T1. For some reason he had timed out (or maybe "outlawed") in Ohio. He had some days coming, so he marked off and deadheaded home. He knew the conductor, and threw his bag up in the

◀ Edward Doak was happy that he received an Honor Roll certificate from PRR upon his retirement, but was miffed that he was identified as "Passenger Brakeman," not "Passenger Conductor."



IN KINGSTON ARMOY, ACROSS THE SUSQUEHANNA RIVER FROM WILKES-BARR, PASSENGERS VIEW 22 FLAG-SHAPED COFFINS SOME ON WEAPONS CARRIAGE

FAREWELL AND RETURN

Pennsylvania GIs die in wreck of troop train



ENGINEER Elmer notices that his left hand approach signal warning

On one foggy morning last week a troop train from Wilkes-Barre, Pa., to a stop in Ohio, between Newcomersville and West Lafayette. In the rear coaches, which brakemen found a broken air hose, men of the 109th Field Artillery Battalion starved from an uncomfortable sleep, thinking of the rugged training that lay ahead of them at Camp Artillery, Ind. Members of the 28th National Guard Division, federalized as part of the country's mobilization, they were in an outfit whose history went back to the Revolution. Behind their train, running late, was the Pennsylvania Railroad's Spirit of St. Louis. In the cab of its two diesel locomotives Engineer William Elmer, 66, ran through two warning signals and then, as the flagman of the stalled train frantically waved a lighted lance at his windshield, jammed on his emergency brake. His engine (sped) through three coaches of the troop train, and 53 soldiers were killed as effectively as if the train had been bombed. Three days later they were taken home. The 109th's Battery B, which had lost only one man in all of World War II, had lost 21 before it even got into this one.

PART OF BIG CROWD OF BLIND THAT WATCHED VICTIMS' HOMECOMING—>



AT FAREWELL DINNER on the eve of the last-taken's departure from Wilkes-Barre, Battery B of the 109th had this group picture taken just after sitting down in O'Connell's Kingston House, a local restaurant. In the picture, identified by numbers,

are 16 of the 21 men of the battery who were shortly to die in the troop train wreck. 1 Sgt. William C. Edwards; 2 Russell Hugh L. Varner; 3 Pfc. Leonard E. Smith; 4 Pfc. Harold Harshbarger; 5 Pfc. Donald L. Zink; 6 Russell William J. Ruggert; 7 Gerald

Larry Lunsdale; 8 Pfc. Raymond Pullank; 9 Russell Paul C. Hartman; 10 Pfc. Clyde P. Hartman; 11 Russell Richard A. Boyer; 12 Russell William F. Solters; 13 Russell Charles Hartman; 14 Sgt. Lester Koshel; 15 Sgt. John W. Cox; 16 Pfc. Martin Harshbarger.



AT WRECK catastrophe cluster broke track. Impact doubled back forward end of Spirit's diesel locomotive, crumpled last troop car into air and splintered track. The diesel plowed last men in last car, left-hand locomotive cautions there.



IN CRASHED COACH a soldier bore his head in pain (left) as wreckage tried to free his eyes, pictured in the wall of the car. Sgt. Joseph Warfield of Kingston, Pa., grabbed his camera and ran from middle of train to take the picture.

◀ ▲ Life magazine's coverage of the Spirit/PX5444 wreck, issue of September 25, 1950, pp.42-43.



▲ Left to right, brother (Dennis Cole Doak), the author, father (George Foster Doak, Sr.) and grandfather (Edward Dewey Doak), c. 1962.

The 75-years of service pin awarded my grandfather by the United Transportation Union. The UTU, headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, is a broad-based transportation labor union, representing about 125,000 active and retired railroad, airline, bus, and mass transit workers. Membership is drawn primarily from railroad operating crafts, and includes conductors, brakemen, switchmen, ground service personnel, locomotive engineers, hostlers and workers in associated crafts.



▲ Left to right: my future grandmother, grandfather and great-aunt Elizabeth Foster in front of Carnegie Library, Beechwood Ave. c.1917.



Pittsburgh, Pa., December 3, 1951

The Pennsylvania Railroad Company

Philadelphia, Pa.

Gentlemen:

I have today received \$24,500.00 in settlement of my claim for personal injuries received by me at West Lafayette, Ohio on September 11, 1950 and have signed a release of my claim. For the purpose of the Railroad Retirement and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Acts and the Railroad Retirement Tax Act, I hereby agree that of the \$24,500.00 received by me the amount of \$3,000.00 is in payment for time lost by me from work because of my injuries between October 1, 1950 and July 31, 1951, and that the balance, amounting to \$21,500.00 is payment for other damages I suffered as a result of my injuries.

Very truly yours

SS# XXX-XX-XXXX



▲ Settlement letter.

◀ My grandfather, during his 91st birthday celebration at the home of Ted Kildow (grandfather's youngest brother), September 1, 1986.

car, planning on resting. When he asked the conductor why the delay, the conductor said, "Eddie, you'd better hang onto your hat." A special company car was attached which was carrying an official with a family medical emergency. The conductor said they were cleared all the way to Steubenville. They got up to speed and then he heard the exhaust really starting to bark as the engineman pulled it all the way out. He got his watch out and started to time the train with the poles. As a kid of course, I was wide-eyed and I asked, "Granddad, how fast were you goin'?" He said when they hit 100 mph he closed his eyes and prayed. He said the T1 was the fastest locomotive on rails, but they were doomed by maintenance and diesel power.

PX5444 left Pittsburgh on time, and experienced a steam pipe break soon after crossing into Ohio. The dispatcher made a fatal decision by not issuing new train orders. They stalled again just outside West Lafayette, when the steam pipe fell off, puncturing the brake lines. My grandfather said that much of the equipment was in a state of disrepair after the War.

When they completely lost air, my granddad and another crewman, along with the officer in charge, were between the last two coaches, attempting to repair the brake line. Someone on the head end went for the call box, and

"Lank" was already protecting the rear of the train with fusees and torpedoes. All were cognizant of the "*Spirit of St. Louis*," which was behind them. After a few minutes, looking back east, they saw the big headlamp glowing through the fog, and heard the Baldwins growling mightily. "Lank" was swinging his flare, but the *Spirit* kept on coming, red sparks flying as he ran over the fusee and the torpedoes. "Lank" jumped off the tracks and threw his flare at the window of the lead diesel as it passed. "Buck" Eller was the engineman on the *Spirit* and Kearns was the fireman.

The rest was a slow-motion nightmare. All he remembered was that big headlamp boring down through the fog, and thinking, "why is he running against the block?" Then... boom! The lights went out.

Granddad said Eller and Kearns never dynamited the brakes until the fusee bounced off the cab. My grandfather thinks he was hit in the hip by a piece of broken truck or axle. Whatever it was, it knocked him over the embankment into a cornfield. He came to, tried to claw his way up the embankment, but blacked out. I've driven past the wreck site many times. I remember the towns: Dennison, West Lafayette, Coshocton, and Newcomerstown. The right-of-way is still there on top of the embankment, carrying a single rusted track.

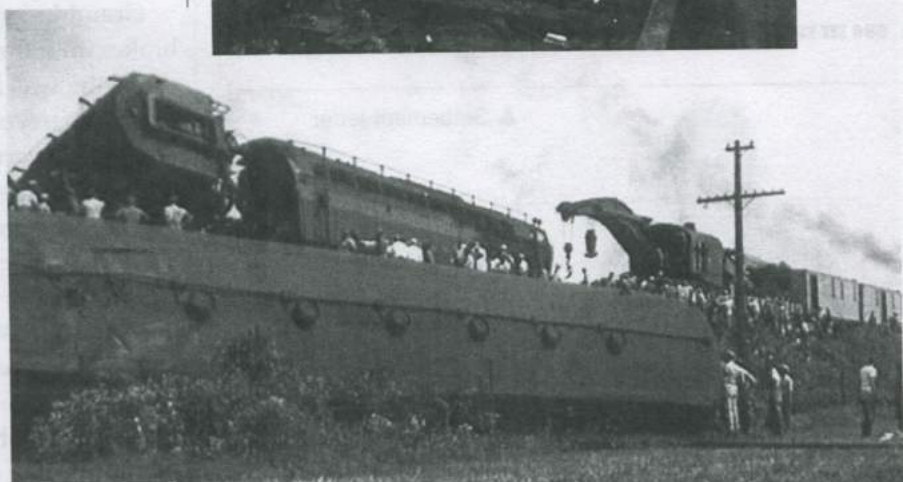
My father received a desperate call from the Carnegie Dispatcher. He said, "Your dad's train just got rear-ended, they can't find him, and it's real bad." Driving the old 1940 Plymouth like crazy, we arrived several hours later, and could only get close to the actual site. It was chaos, with emergency lights, police, etc. My father, a B&O railroad policeman at the time, showed his badge to a cop, who directed us to a temporary morgue, I believe in Newcomerstown.

Granddad was eventually found in the cornfield and taken to the hospital with grave injuries. I never got out of the car, but do remember seeing the jackknifed units and the coaches lying cockeyed across the tracks. It was a bad



The wreck scene, as recorded by various news agencies.

(Chuck Blardone collection)



The wreck scene, as recorded by various news agencies.
(Chuck Biardone collection)

day for my family. As a decorated Marine veteran, my father was no stranger to bloodshed and mayhem, but he was visibly upset. I remember being scared, not fully cognizant of what was going on, but acutely aware that something very terrible had occurred.

My grandfather sustained a fractured pelvis and crushed hip socket. The doctors were unable to figure out why he swelled up so badly, remaining in agony, even under sedation. Eventually, they realized that it had nothing to do with the injuries. He had been knocked into a

poison ivy patch and so was covered with blisters. Eventually, he had an artificial ball and socket implanted at a Pittsburgh hospital. He attempted to return to PRR service after lengthy therapy, and medical review boards, but he later admitted that the leg and hip would never fully recover, and he was forced to take a disability retirement. I think he officially left the PRR in 1957. He was left with one leg about $\frac{1}{2}$ " shorter than the other, and wore an orthopedic shoe for the rest of his life. He never walked again without his cane or a limp.

THE HIDDEN TRAGEDY

The Autumn 1988 issue of *The Keystone* contained a fine article by Richard C. Jacobs and David Apple concerning this wreck, but reading it again rekindled painful memories for me. My parents saved some of the newspaper clippings. Many of the crewmen on both trains were neighbors and friends, and therein lay the deeper tragedy. Hours before the wreck, some of those same crewmen deadheaded together from Carnegie to Pittsburgh to receive their assignments. Longstreth, the engineman on Granddad's train, lived in Oakdale. Kearns, the fireman on the *Spirit*, lived on Grandview Ave. in Carnegie. "Lank" was also a Carnegie neighbor. "Buck" Eller was driving the *Spirit*; he lived in Midway. Sadly, both Eller and Kearns and their families endured a lifetime of anguish. Within the PRR fraternity, as well as the community at large, these two former colleagues remained isolated from their fraternal brotherhood. It was all very sad, the subject always provoking much emotion if brought up in conversation. My grandfather said that only once, many years later, did he try to approach one of the crewmen of the *Spirit*. He was silently turned away.

On several occasions in later years, both my father and I asked granddad, "What went wrong?" He said that Eller and Kearns must have been "asleep at the switch." I can't tell you whether he was being figurative or literal. They



ran against two blocks, had cab signals, and the investigation revealed that the signals were working and displaying correctly. He said Eller was running a little behind, was known as a crack hog-driver, and was working the Baldwins hard. (Years before, I believe my grandfather had actually fired as an "extra" for Buck Eller at some point and thought him an experienced engineman.) The *Spirit* ran over torpedoes, the fusees, (Lank was putting more out when the *Spirit* got to him), went against the signals, but never put the brakes into the "big hole" until "Lank" bounced the flare off the cab window. PRR investigators and the Transportation Safety Board uncovered no malfunctions in signaling, trackage, or equipment, nor were there any rulebook infractions by the crew of the troop train.

The ICC report is painfully straightforward: "It is found that this accident was caused by failure to operate the following train in accordance with signal indications." (ICC, ex-parte #173, decided October 4, 1950.) The engineman and fireman were subsequently dismissed.

Granddad took his opinions to the grave. He said the new diesels had closed cabs, warm heaters, defrosters, rode pretty well, happily thrummed along, all of which was conducive to lethargy and inattention. He couldn't believe that two crewmen could become that distracted in the cab of a belching steam locomotive. He was also angry that the dispatcher didn't order them on to a siding the first time they stopped to repair the dragging steam pipe.

Thus ends the tragic story of PX5444.

POSTSCRIPT NOTES

Many railroaders played poker and checkers, but on the Panhandle, it seemed to be dominoes, and they played it fast and furious, for money, and occasionally, blood. I learned to play, but never mastered the complicated game that they called "Spider."

Recently, my little grandson, Andrew Foster Ekstrom, was trying very hard to run his train under the Christmas tree. I made the mistake of saying "You're sort of spinnin' your drivers there, aren't you? Would you like Pappy to help?" He looked up at me with a blank stare. My daughter (or my wife), standing nearby, shook her head, and said, "Dad, he has no idea what you're talking about." She was correct of course; he didn't, and maybe he never will.

My grandfather lived through a joyless childhood that affected him in his later life. He once told me that he was never given a present as a child, and it still causes me sorrow. He was a large, gentle, handsome man, who taught me many things. He never took a hand to me, although he probably should have once or twice. I remain awed by the achievements of a humble man who overcame many obstacles. He was my friend.

