

3 Bill Bibby

M: Tell me about your childhood here and how you got into railroads, about the mountain folk or just whatever you feel like.

Bill: Well actually it all started, probably, when I was 5 years old. I lived in a little town called Pottersville which isn't too far from North Creek. My dad had 32 years on the railroad. His job was car inspector repairman. Also at that time the passenger train was running in North Creek and--

M: And so what year would he have started with the railroad?

Bill: Well he started back around 1940-41, I'd say it was then. And he worked for the D&H. And that's how I came to know the D&H by comin' to work with him, over here in North Creek from Pottersville and so my first recollections were the passenger trains that came in here, two a day. And his job was to clean 'em and service 'em with ice and water for the people that traveled from here to Saratoga. So that was really my first introduction and of course along with the passenger train we had the ore train that came and went from here. That picked the ore up at Duhaws.

M: Where did it pick it up from?

Bill: Duhaws or Sanford Lake up here which would be 19 miles north of North Creek and it's an ore mine where they went up, took empty cars to the mines and brought full one

back to North Creek and then in turn went to Schenectady on the same night.

M: What did you do as a kid on the railroad, you got to workin' real--at a young age, didn't you?

Bill: Well yeah, that's it. They put me to work. I came over to look around like any curious kid would do and the next thing you know you've got a broom in your hand and you're sweepin' the station out for the agent and if I wasn't doin' that I was, of course, sweepin' out one of the coaches for my father. And one of the--

M: This the station where Teddy Roosevelt took the train to Macumber?

Bill: Exactly. Course at that time I didn't know who Teddy Roosevelt was. He could have ran the general store in town for all I knew as a kid. But there's a lot of history involved with that station, as you say, right. But I can recall down there, which is kinda unique now would be the telegraph that ticka ticka ticka ticka with the Prince Albert can, Mathias, you know, on the window. That's how they sent messages back and forth from the station to Saratoga, at that time, you know to the agent down there. The agent up here, that's how they--at the time I didn't know the code but I can remember his name was I believe, Jim Parkis was the station agent down there. He'd take the key there and it'd be ticka ticka ticka ticka.

M: You mean Morse Code?

Bill: Morse Code, yeah. Call that the Morse Code.

M: How old were you when you were actually working for the railroad?

Bill: Well when I came to get employment, I graduated from Johnsburg's high school here, 1967 on a Saturday night and the next day, the Sunday night I went to work for the company in Fort Edward. So it wasn't much time between graduatin' and the senior party to get back to work.

M: But were you doin' stuff--you were doin' stuff for the railroad before that or had it been youth--

Bill: Well yeah, during my youth I--which then they were a little more lenient--I got to ride the train a lot. Both legal and illegal. I guess the legal part would be when my mother got a ticket and we rode to Saratoga on the passenger train and I guess the illegal part would be to hop on the freight in the caboose and go to the mines, as I said earlier, up to Tahaws, which they took care of me, all the crew knew how much I loved and enjoyed railroadin' and even some of the officials then knew I was riding it and nobody seemed to care too much. Long as I didn't hop on and off when they were movin'.

M: Now how many hours would you be gone in a trip like that?

Bill: Oh well I'd been known to be gone 12 and 14 a

day. Of course I didn't tell you about skippin' school to do some of this stuff. Our house at that time was across the tracks right where the train went by and usually they'd pull up there, and it didn't take much encouragement for me ta--when they stopped the train the engineer'd say, "Come on Bill, take a ride?" And this was in the morning when they were going to the mines and I'd say, "Don't mind if I do." I always thought that'd be a little more interesting than math and history and it was an education in its own right because of the beauty goin' to the mines along the Boris River and we saw plenty of nature subjects and all in all you got a good education of what railroadin' was all about. And of course this mines where the ore was brought down from was used during the war effort, during--in fact that's why the railroad was put in to the mines, is for the war effort. They used this ore to make steel and of course now more of a paint in steel of course, but it was a very, very important line, if you will.

M: These old railroad tracks kind of take you on as a mascot--not a mascot, but sort of as an understudy almost?

Bill: Well I suppose they--

M: Were they really excited that a young kid was enthused about all that stuff?

Bill: I think so, I think when I think back, there wasn't that many kids hanging around, at least at the North

Creek station. Once in a while they'd come in on a bike and they'd leave. But I seemed to be a part of the place. I seemed like I was there every night and every day, all my free time. And as time went on and I got older into my teenage years I actually helped my dad repair some of the cars, fixing the wheels, whatever needed to be repaired on the car. And of course got a good general application of the mechanical end of it as well as just the romance of looking at it go by you got to learn, you know, what did the trucks do underneath the cars, you know, how did the coupler work. It did come out of the cars, you know, you could take it out and put it in, you always thought, well gee that must be something that's made right in there. When they broke they had to be changed a lot like changin' the radiator in your car. And when they got banged up my dad use to try to straighten 'em up or cut 'em up, whichever the case may be. And they scraped 'em. Then I got to meet the shop, we'd call 'em a hostler down there. A hostler's a man that takes care of locomotives, puts 'em in and out of--

M: How do you spell that?

Bill: That'd be H-O-S-T-L-E-R. Hostler, it's taken from I guess maybe in horses, the hostler of the horses at the stable, whatever. I mean it's got somethin' to do with the hostler. In the old days of steam--when steam did run in the North Creek--he, you know, cleaned the fires, filled

'em with water, sanded 'em. But of course they were long since gone when I came around and they were dieselized as I remember.

M: What some of these--did you meet any really old railway types when you were a kid. I mean even more old time than your father?

Bill: Oh indeed I did. One of the old guys that I'll always remember is a man by the name of Joseph Coates and he was the conductor on the passenger train when I was a young kid. And he was quite a cordial sort of a guy but he always had a big boomin' voice, Mathias, you know. He'd yell or "Get on, get off. What you doin' over there?" And he was always strict, you know, he was always yellin' and hollerin' and I said, "Geezs that's got to be the meanest man in the world."

M: Did he yell like that at passengers or just the other people--

Bill: Sometimes, sometimes he was pretty good with the passengers, but he was a little short in patience, you know what I mean, even with some of his crewmen and stuff, you know, "What the hell you gettin' down there for? Get on, get off at this switch," you know, and geezs he's always boomin' voice I says wow, you know, I mean as a kid, you know, when you're a teenager, 10 or 11 years old figure this guy's pretty, you know, I was thinkin' all the while I was

going to go railroadin'. I says wow if I gotta work for a guy like this forget it, you know. This is gonna be no good at all because he's going to be too mean to work for.

M: Now how long--in what year would he have started railroading?

Bill: Oh about--I think then--well when I hired out in 67, which is what I'm gettin' to, he had 51 years then so you can imagine. I would have to think he hired out back in oh, 20s, late--yeah I'd say 20s, 1920-1921 when it was really tough. I think railroadin' back in those days, for of course, a lot of long hours, and I think it was a lot harder than what we get into today. But when I finally graduated from high school and got my job he was one of the first fellows I got to work for. This Joe Coates.

M: What was your job then?

Bill: I was a brakeman and he was a conductor. And he was like the old salt, the old sea captain. He'd seen 45-50 years then and you sure had a lot of respect for a guy like him. And when he told you to do something you didn't ask him why you just went and did it. And he was the boss of the train, but I come to find out he was real good friends with my dad, which kind of gave me an in too, you know. I know your dad so you're all right. And this happens on the railroad. It's kind of a family affair. If you can be so lucky to have two uncles, two brothers, and it is

traditional that a lot of the guys workin' on the railroad even now have got 4 and 5 generations of family workin' there.

M: And you're second generation?

Bill: I'm only second generation, right. We've got-- together now we've only got 55 year, me and dad, so to speak. But it does, really--there's, you know, the railroad itself is only 150 years old. And I have worked with a couple of guys in particular who's got that whole--they started from the beginning when it was a canal company the D&H. And it's really what it was in Laineborough.

M: Was lumbering over when you joined?

Bill: It's a good question, Mathias, well the logging operation that they had primarily was around Upper Lakes, Saranac Lake area up in the--which I, at that time, knew nothing about until recently I started readin' about it. But what I found happened here in North Creek was that a lot of lumber was shipped out of North Creek in boxcar, flatcar type situations and transported from here. Was brought down by truck, loaded up down here by the station on one of the sidings and shipped out. Almost garnet was a big rail commodity at that time. Garnet was bagged and shipped out and they also put in it in what they called hat boxes, and that's exactly what they were. They were hat boxes, round and sort of tall and maybe 18 and 20 inches tall. And I

remember 'em loading that, and which is--they don't do that anymore, I don't think. But garnet being--we've got the garnet mine here, they used rail transportation for a number of years, from North Creek.

M: Did you see any of those fancy private passenger cars that wealthy people had or was that over with when you joined?

Bill: Well no they had what they called the Car 500, and it was an old car. It was built way back turn of the century, and we, my buddy and I heard about this comin' in through the grapevine, my dad and the rest of them. Suppose to be a special, what we called a special comin' in. Well as you guessed it we were down there long before the special made it. And when it did make it it was a passenger train consist. And this was something that--of course passenger service ended in North Creek, I believe, in 19--I'm tryin' to think. I think it might have been 1954-55 it was pretty much over with. Course with the automobile, that ended that. So when you did get to see a passenger train come in, after those years, when you were a teenager, it was something to behold. And quite a few people, after they knew it was in town, showed up to gawked, I guess as you could call it, at all the bigwigs on the train. This particular Car 500 was a beautiful car. Had brass railings and I got a chance to go in it. And inside of it was

absolutely beautiful. Was all mahogany, very much like the one in the museum at Blue Mountain. And it was very, very expensive lookin' as a kid. And of course cigars and the usual around inside for entertaining. And what they did, I believe, and I'm not positive, but I think that whole train consist went to the ore mine at one time to go up and entertain the so called officials at National Lead, I not positive of that but I think that was--

M: They didn't go anywhere, they'd just sit there and get entertained?

Bill: Yeah, exactly. I mean everybody got on the back platform and enjoyed the spectacular, beautiful scenery coming from Saratoga to North Creek which is beautiful along the river so I admit it was a treat for us and I suppose a treat for them to see us in coming up. And it was kind of a highlight. It used to stay over in North Creek, my dad, of course, would service it with water and ice and I got my chance to get in and look things over. And play President for a while, I guess, on the back platform.

M: Could you tell me something more about yourself and these mountains and some of the, you know, the way things are here in these mountains.

Bill: Well one of my favorite subjects, Mathias, other than railroad would be the Adirondacks. And one time I was known as Adirondacks Own Bill Bibby. A lady put that in her

local North Creek Enterprise and I took that as kinda personal and I loved it. I feel a part of these mountains and I feel the mountains are part of me. And you find me to get--all right, let her go. I find, not only myself, but in other people around here that we have a great sense of individualism. That we do care for others. If you don't you wouldn't survive in these mountains. It's not so much that we are individuals as that we like being individuals. The mountains breed a special quality of people, I feel that up here I call it kind of survival. It's nice in the summer and hell in the winter. I mean the winters up here can be, and are, very tough. And I guess you gotta be rather self-sufficient. We burn wood here. And manys the winters I recall using up 12-14 cord of wood just to keep warm. Well there's other options of course, oil. But the prices being what it was at times people up here had a hard time keepin' the barrel full.

M: How do you get the wood? Do you cut it yourself?

Bill: I've got land right here on property of five acres that has got a pretty good substantial amount a hard wood. But for a long time around here we got it from sawmills. You could actually get it cut up. The slab wood was actually cut up and they delivered it by truck for, you know, 25-30 dollars a load. But most everybody uses wood up here. I don't know, because it's so available or just you

like the heat from it I guess pretty much. It's a warm soothin' heat from it. But oh no, I'm proud to be an Adirondacker, Mathias, and there's different times in the fall of the year when the leaves are blowin' around you wonder what the other side of the world's doin'. It can get lonely and does get lonely, but by and large I wouldn't trade it for any other part of the country, no. I'm pretty happy here. And you're always glad to see somebody like yourself, naturally. You probably find that's true wherever you go, always glad to get company 'cause it's--I find that, due to the lack of jobs in the area, that a lot of the so called Adirondackers are kinda movin' on. If they haven't passed on, they're moving on because there's a great lack of work in the area. I mean, you know, we've got our lumbering and the small crafts and trades and that's about it.

M: So what are your kids going to do, are they going to move out or--

Bill: Well I hope that they aren't going to because they think the Adirondacks are for them too. And naturally I'll always have a home here for 'em. No need of 'em to leave, they'll always have a place to lay their head. But it's a good question and one that many of my classmates have left the country and gone here and gone there. I have driven for 20 years 40 miles and upwards to 75 miles a day to live here. Well some people say you're crazy, and I say

well maybe you are right in one way, but if you lived here you'd know why I drive ta my choice of work moved out. As we talked railroadin' earlier, the station is now closed and boarded up. And once a week we get a train in here which isn't enough to support anybody's payroll so I had to move on with the railroad. But I did stay and I'm not sorry I did.

M: Tell me more about, you mentioned earlier that-- you've been with the railroad now for 20 years. Tomorrow will be your 20th year.

Bill: Yeah, that's true, Mathias. Tomorrow on the 25th I'll have to celebrate my 20th anniversary date with the D&H. And it's been a good 20 years. I'm not sorry that I went to work for 'em. And it's provided myself and my family and paid for this home that we're sitting in so I got to think that I had a good 20 years with it and I've learned a lot.

M: What're you doin' for 'em now?

Bill: Well I--right now I'm a conductor in the yard. They call me yard conductor. I've have been a road conductor too, which is travel up and down the main line. But primarily right now my job consists of a 5 man crew which I'm in charge of and we switch in the yard and sort the cars. A lot like you would the mail. Put a few on this track, a few on that track. Then we travel from there and

do the various industries. _____ and some of the paper mills and like that in the area. But it's been a fun--

M: Is anybody hammering in those railway spikes anymore?

Bill: Oh every once in a while we get into a little situation in the yard where the rail might spread or whatever and of course I never was that big a trackman but the guys that's done it for years can take a spike mall and hit a spike just about every time they take a swing. So I tried it 4 or 5 of the old sectionmen there, I had to give that hand a try and drive a few spikes. And I think I hit it once out of 20 swings, so there is a little bit of knack to that end of the railroad too.

M: Tell me about--I mean now about how you're railroad days are over--I mean you don't have to get into it too deeply, but just tell me sort of what happened--it's all over for you now.

Bill: Well we got taken over by Gilford Industries, who bought the Main Central Boston and Main and D&H Railroads. And we had some trouble between them and the Main Central Railroad and a strike--this was the past two springs ago--they had a strike on the Main Central and it came down to the Boston and Main and into the D&H. Picket lines were formed and, of course, naturally being a union man you're not suppose to go through a picket line, which I

didn't, and consequently in not doing so a lot of our jobs were terminated. In other words, if you don't go through the line you don't work here anymore, which is kind of a tough thing to go through, to surrender your job for the recognition of a picket line. But that's what we're taught to do, it's the union itself, the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, which it was when I started, is as it says--a brotherhood. It was formed for better pay, for better working conditions, more benefits, insurances which would fall into that and it stands for something, a lot like our flag does. For my way of thinkin', the unions do have a place in this country. If they didn't they wouldn't have been formed in the first place. And so bein' as I honor a flag I honor a picket line because not only do I want to, I've been taught to. And I think the end result out of it was does anybody win, I suppose not. I suppose it's an issue of holding the line, so to speak, like we've had to do so many times in this country. I think railroads are on the decline, especially in the northeast because, due to the lack of--probably due to the lack of good maintenance, good relationships between employees and employers getting together talking it out, sharing the work load in both parties. And I think it's a shame in one way but it's such a vital--a vital transportation mode to the people and the commodities. I'm in hopes that I can hang on for a while

longer. One never knows why they do away with jobs almost every day.

M: Basically, nearing your 20th year at work, you have the choice of stickin' to your brother workers or getting fired. And you chose to be loyal to the union and to help out the other workers my not crossing that picket line. Is that what I understood?

Bill: Yeah, that's basically it, Mathias. That when I came to work for the company I had 90 days to join this Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. I always liked that word brotherhood. It showed me--I didn't quite understand what it was all about until such time that we had to acknowledge this so called picket line or stand with your brother. I had no bad feelings towards the company, it was just something I had to do in order to show respect to the craft that represented me for the 20 years that I worked there. In other words, you can't work for the railroad without belonging to a union, so to speak. That was part of the program.

M: So when--I sort of forgot what happened here--but when I listen to the tape. Tell me more, this has been a real way of life for you no matter what happened. You gonna--tell me about your loyalty to the railroad, you know, gettin' back into it again or what's your future with railroads?

Bill: Well since and during the strike I think everybody had a--their heart was in their shoes, I suppose. It was something that shouldn't have happened that we didn't want it to happen, but did happen. So like the all America yankee ingenuity we adjust, and you try to make best of what, what, what is gonna happen. But I think--I think--I don't think anybody can take the love of a train to a railroader out of him. I think that it's in there and it won't out. I think that would be a good word to use, it's just there. And as I was saying to you earlier while the tape was off, I said I could be just gettin' done work and hear a horn blow a different town I was drivin' through and I find myself standin' outside either countin' the cars or just watchin' the train go by. Well that in itself says--

M: When you hear a horn blow it really triggers a lot of stuff.

Bill: It does. I prefer it to be a whistle on a steam engine, but as I say they've long since gone by the wayside. But it's a train, it doesn't matter what it's blowin'. It's a train, it's still-- I like to use the term, Mathias, out where the flange wheel meets the steel rail. That's pretty solid, I like that and I had a picture of a train that said that very thing in my locker, was a kid in high school. And I think that says it. I think that no matter where it is it is a train and it's got its own majestic character to it. I

think of us, be us railroaders or not, like to watch it go by.

M: You were partly working for money, but you also loved it, it was a by of life.

Bill: Oh that's it. I think that came even before the money. I know my wife said to me one time, "You know Bill you married the railroad 'fore you did me." And she's actually right because we did get married in November and I married the railroad in June. And I think along with her saying that is the fact that I was gone a lot, Mathias. I was gone 6 to 7 days a week, 16 hours a day. So I guess that'd be a rightful thing for my wife to say when you stop and think of that. She didn't get too much time. Or we didn't get too much time. But the railroad did get a lot of my time.

M: Tell me, you built a modle railway set in your basement. How many years have you been building that?

Bill: Oh well, that goes back-- You get me going on model railroad and I don't know, we'll probably run out of tape. But that's another subject of mine that I really like to talk about. Model railroading and real railroading. Well what we're trying to do here Mathias, anybody as far as that goes, is to--I guess maybe to, like building a ship model or an airplane model, you're trying to duplicate the real thing, I suppose, in its own right. I find it very

relaxing and again I model an HO gauge and I find this to be very prototypical because I like to build my own, ironic as it is, Adirondack theme, I call it. What with a little bit of ore operation and loggin' operation. I done a mural on the wall down cellar that I guess it's certainly no Van Gogh but it does look like Adirondack mountains. It took me a couple of days to do it but yes I got that in the cellar and I build all my own structures.

M: How many years have you been working on that?

Bill: Oh boy, this one down cellar. I got to think that I got a good 8-10 years in it anyway, off and on.
And--

M: It's always growing?

Bill: It's always growin', yeah. And I'm wonderin' when I get to that last spur line, I might have to put an addition on the house here. And oh, where does it stop before it takes over the cellar. But I--and by the way, I've known guys to do that. Knock holes in the foundation and built on so that they can get the train room a little bit bigger.

M: If you lived in suburbia you'd have it comin' into the other guys house.

Bill: Exactly. That'd be a good way to exchange mail or magazines I would think. Out the window to the next guys house. But here I think, in the Adirondacks we need too

much track for that. Neighbors are a little distant here.

M: Tell me more about your neighbors. You said that-- help deliver mail and be watchin' your neighbors to be make sure they're okay in the winter. _____ special feeling in the Adirondacks.

Bill: Yes it is. My own special rite, one old gal in particular down the road by the name of Mrs. Barrett, was awful good to me when I was a youngster. And I stayed at her house many many times. And seems like she always had the cup of cocoa on the coldest nights after you came in from sledding. Well my way of thinking, when love is given love comes back. As I grew older she grew older, I guess that goes without saying, but she grew older she grew more feeble and her husband passed away, her son moved away, and I course bought just up the road from her. Well she got into her 80s and got--couldn't get around good and couldn't get to the mailbox. And I didn't do it for show, again like you said, everybody up here takes care of their neighbor. And I enjoyed it. I think it's an extension of my life. Not then, as was much--it's every day. I think anytime you find that you lend a hand to your neighbor, be they old or be they young, that there's a tremendous reward behind that. I think it's what God taught us all to do. It just that we need to practice it a little more. It's a good feeling knowing that you've not only pleasin' the good lord but that

you're helping your brother or your sister in times of need. And I think that's what life's about, Mathias, really.

M: It's easy for a liberal to handle mankind, you know, South--South Africa or something. But it's much tougher to help one neighbor, you know.

Bill: I think it starts in North Creek. Maybe I'm bein' partial and personal. But I think it starts here. I think it starts with you and me being friends. I think it starts, like this project you're doin' seems all worthwhile to me when I set back. I say I wonder who this guy is comin' around doin' these interviews, the first thing you think, you know. Well I found he's a real nice guy, he enjoys people, I think the project you're doin' puts people together. We've met, find you to be interesting. I know you've met a lot of interesting people in the Adirondacks. We are characters. I guess everybody's a character. But I think--when I thought about this project you were doin' and the pictures, I says it's _____ as one man to another I thought that the Adirondacks are people, it's not just mountains. We talked earlier, and streams, although they're a part of it. We make the Adirondacks up here, unique I guess, in it's own right. But I think up here, like you were mentioning, helpin' your neighbor, I do right now meal runs. I call 'em the meal runs. We have--

M: Tell me about that.

Bill: Well they got a new building down here called the Senior Citizens Center and it primarily was built for the elderly, which I guess we got to take care of old dogs and old people. I don't know if necessarily in that order but it was primarily set up in taking--put in place for the feeding of the elderly. And most people say, well can't they feed themselves? Well some can, some can't. The building was put there for those that can travel from their home to come to this particular meal site because of the distance between houses, people don't get to see one another. So it's a good gathering place and you get a good meal down there. I've got to say that because my wife's a manager down there. You get the best food in town down here, see? So they have what they call the meal run, as I call it. There's two extensions of it. One goes north and one south through the mountains. They're each about 30 some miles. And what it does is bring hot and cold food and beverages to the people who can't get out, the so called shut in old people. And to qualify you've got to be 60 year olds and over. And they send a nurse around and if you're, you know, extremely feeble, why you a night meal and so on and so forth. But it's a good program because they get good nourishing meals, plus I like it because--

M: What do you do in it?

Bill: Well, I go and pick the meals up like the other

person does that goes north or south. And we take 'em and distribute 'em to these various houses through the community. Up through the mountains, into Johnsbury, Bakers Mills and Iguana. And I got to think before this program was put in place that a lot of these people weren't eatin' properly. And it's very easy to eat a slice of bread and a little bit of butter and maybe wash it down with a glass of water which doesn't qualify as being a good meal. So these are balanced diets and very nutritious for the elderly.

M: This a volunteer thing you do?

Bill: Yeah, its volunteer. You get you gas money. I think it boils down to about \$3 a day.

M: And you use you own car?

Bill: Oh yes, I use my own vehicle. And course money doesn't have, it does pay for your gas and that's about it. But I think what anybody gets out of it is, again, like we talked earlier; we're back to that again, the sharing, the giving and the breaking of bread, if you will, to somebody that needs it, you know. And every time you go in it isn't just set the meal down, hi how are you? I like to give 'em a little more than the dinner. Not hurrah for me, but it seems to happen that way. And they want to talk to you. They haven't seen anybody, they want to share with you. If they're not feelin' well maybe you can get the doctor for them. I've seen places that didn't have a phone. Old

people are scared of dyin'. Some of 'em are happy, some of 'em are sad, some want to pray with you, some wanta cry with ya. And most just want to share with you.

M: How many meals do you distribute each day, each evening?

Bill: Well it runs in about--you get the meals at approximately 10:30 quarter to 11 and oh, upwards to 20 and 25 dinners are distributed throughout the community.

M: I mean how many do you do?

Bill: Me personally? I'd say, I think there's 20 on the Baker's Mills run, that we go up through there, 19 or 20 different--

M: Is that pretty tough in the winter?

Bill: Oh yes. The back roads tend to be--

M: They're individual driveways like these?

Bill: Yeah, yeah, a lot of times you can't make it in you walk it in, you know, you do the best you can. Of course while you're there if they need a path shoveled and ya got a little bit of time, you can clean up the path for 'em or maybe bring their mail in. You try to see their needs without them askin', you know. Because again the old Adirondack pride gets in the way and they'll go without before they'll ask sometimes. You know, you can see the mail buildin' up in the mailbox, you know damn well that somebody hasn't been out to get the mail. So you kind of

grab it on the way by and, you know. Or if the path needs a little shovelin' you try to do that for 'em too.

M: Isn't there also a telephone service around here? Somebody will call up somebody every day to be sure they're okay?

Bill: Yeah, they started that. It does go back. I'd forgotten all about that. Whereas we've still got our line our gas if I call it. Kinda see what's happened, you know. I always say who's checked in at the hotel. Maybe an out of state license plate, you know, kind of thing. But they did--a young lady next, I can't think of her name off hand, but she was a high school student. And I thought it was an excellent idea. She did put this in place and it caught on real well that--especially knowin' the people that were in need of a phone call, you know. That couldn't get out of their house. Kind of "have you taken your medication today, Elsie? Have you gotten your mail? How do you feel? Do you need anything from the store? It was kind of a hot line to the old. Yes, it was a good program, I hope it's still being used. Hope we aren't in too much in a hurry now to be able to do that anymore. That's a good thing to do. Specially up here. Cause we're so sparcely separated, you know. It's a good thing. Good policy.

M: Well 60-Minutes did something on mountain people?

Bill: Yes, they--

M: What did they come up with?

Bill: Well I suppose it was a curiosity thing more than anything. But they came up with--I used it in my terms--they didn't say this--rugged individualism. Like the mountained rugged, I think the people are rugged not physically but also mentally and spiritually. I think you become that way. I think I said that earlier. As you live here longer you live here the more inbred you get with the mountains or the more intimate, I call it, you get with 'em. It's a good feelin'.

M: And you see yourself as a mountainman as well as a railroad man?

Bill: I do indeed. I do think that they go hand in hand, in one way but--

M: Up here anyway, yeah.

Bill: Yeah. And I got ta say this probably be the hardest choice I'd ever make, which would you trade Bill your mountains or your railroads. Well I split the difference and got both because as I said I do drive a long distance to work. But I do love the mountains and the people in the mountains, and I probably wouldn't trade 'em for anything in the world. I think.

M: Is there some way you could keep your railway job, or a job, or get a new one or just your loyalty with the railways--to the railways and work someplace else or

something? I mean or you going to have to do something else like work in a garage or something.

Bill: Well I've always had an interest in, I call it playing with cars, repairin' 'em and being around 'em as a young teenager. That was the hot rodin' years, as I call 'em. That was my other love. I always enjoyed that, always wnated on. In fact I've got one as you saw when you came in the garage there, I'm workin' on. But it's an extensive of my life but could I get another job on the railroad. Could I get another job on the railroad, or would I get another job on the railroad?

M: Your railway--railroad--is your railroad life finished now with this strike and you being fired and--

Bill: Let's just say we're walkin' a pretty thin line as far as they want us--we want them, of course because that's our livelihood--but we like our trains and we want to work their. Well the unfortunately part is that, Mathias, we don't own, naturally. I own the ones in the cellar but they don't pay much. I certainly do want to work for the D&H. It's been a--as I said earlier--a good 20 years. I don't want anything to happen to it. I'd like to see it remain and I'd like to see it be a part of my life for a good many years to come. If it wasn't, well what would I do? Yeah, I'd probably go out and look for another rail somewhere. Maybe a little a drive someplace else. Maybe

I'd have to stay overnight a couple of night. But they'd probably call me back. I'd be back there. I'd try somethin' else but the first I heard a horn, be it on television or down through the valley, I'd be headin' in the general direction of where it came from probably.

M: A way of life whether you like it or not.

Bill: It is. Like it or not, it's become a way of life. It's like the sea. I think I said that to you earlier. It's like there's a callin' behind it. Seems to run through your very soul, you know. It's a good feelin' and it can be a lonely feelin' at times. I think the loneliness comes in when you figure maybe there ain't gonna be a rail out there anymore. We talked earlier, trains in the Adirondacks being quite a line from Utica. Utica to Lake Placid, which they opened back up during the Olympics for about a year there. They refurbished the line and well if anybody's traveling through that area, go up and look at the rust on the rails. It's probably an inch thick by now but--you know, what was once there is gone now. It's--I felt it could still be put in place but due to the maintenance and lack of it--it's long since gone by the wayside. So maybe the tracks will always be there but it doesn't mean the trains will. Takes a long time for a rail to rust, that's for sure. But it's a good question, what would I do without it? I don't know. I guess I'd just keep

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lookin' fer a train. Guess that'd be only answer to ya.