

MP: Now, let me see if I've got this clear? You talk about these "hobo" cars. This hobo car pulled out of the Arcade . . .

RIDGE: Arcade, yeah.

MP: . . . which was at 8th and Wabash.

RIDGE: Yep.

MP: It was an empty car.

RIDGE: Yeah.

MP: And it made the run that took you streetcar employees . . .

RIDGE: To the car barn.

MP: . . . to the car barns on East Wabash.

RIDGE: Yep.

MP: So, from the car barns on East Wabash you all what? Got your streetcars?

RIDGE: We went out there to the barn and got our streetcars and took 'em out. They was . . .

MP: You began your run then?

RIDGE: Yeah, began to run right there.

MP: From there?

RIDGE: Yep. Yep.

MP: What . . . you talked about South 7th a couple of times. What were the heavily travelled streetcar routes?

RIDGE: Well, that was the heaviest streetcar route we had then.

MP: South 7th?

RIDGE: South 7th, yeah. You see it just run then down

- RIDGE: there . . . that there lumberyard. /It/ used to be Fromme's. Fromme had a lumberyard down there at the railroad crossing. /August Fromme & Sons lumberyard was located on the east side of 7th Street at Hulman Street./
- MP: Now it's Powell-Stephenson lumberyard. /This is incorrect. Fromme lumberyard was several blocks north of the present Powell-Stephenson lumberyard./
- RIDGE: Yeah. That's Powell-Stephenson.
- MP: And that was the end of the line? /Present location of Powell-Stephenson lumberyard was the end of the line./
- RIDGE: That was the end of the line then. Yeah, that's as far as we went. Only, of course, the interurban went ahead. That interurban track went ahead down to Sullivan, but that was . . . streetcars never went . . .
- MP: But that was a heavily travelled route -- South 7th Street?
- RIDGE: Oh, yes.
- MP: What about North 7th?
- RIDGE: Huh?
- MP: What about North 7th?
- RIDGE: No. North 7th wasn't travelled so much.
- MP: Was East Wabash a heavily travelled route?
- RIDGE: Yeah, East Wabash was pretty heavily travelled.
- MP: How far did the car run on East Wabash? Do you know?
- RIDGE: Yeah, it run right out there to Highland Lawn, right on top of the hill there, just past where you . . . when you go into the graveyard.
- MP: Um hm.
What was the main downtown streetcar stop?

RIDGE: Seventh and Wabash.

MP: Seventh and Wabash.

RIDGE: Yeah.

END OF SIDE 1

TAPE 1-SIDE 2

MP: Mr. Ridge, 7th and Wabash was the main downtown streetcar stop. That must have been a busy place.

RIDGE: It was busy. There was always a bunch of people standing out there waiting for different streetcars to come. You see North 13th and East Wabash, South 17th and South 7th, all come by there going out on their routes.

MP: I understand that 7th and Wabash during that period of time became known as the "Crossroads of the World."

RIDGE: That's right. Yep.

MP: What was downtown Terre Haute like in those days?

RIDGE: Oh, it was busy. There were people on the streets all the time and cars. You could see 'em coming in and out of them stores. Them stores were busy then. There was a lot of Jew stores there on the north side from 6th and Wabash on west, that they done a lot of business, too.

MP: With all those streetcars running downtown I take it there was some motor traffic cars and trucks. Was it pretty congested?

RIDGE: Yeah, it was. Yeah, you had to watch your business. Yeah, you could have an accident awfully easy if you didn't watch it.

MP: And during that period of time, I understand they had special policemen at 6th and Wabash and 7th . . .

RIDGE: Seventh and Wabash.

MP: What'd they do there -- direct traffic?

- RIDGE: Yeah, directed traffic. That's what they did. Used to have one down there at 6th and Wabash -- ol' Bill Gleason. He used to always like for me to work down on that corner when I was inspector. We used to have to go down there and call these routes in the evening when the heaviest traffic was out there. Why, we'd . . . a man'd stand at 7th and Wabash and one at 6th and Wabash, and these cars would be coming pulling in. Why he'd call like "West Terre Haute," "North 6th Street," "South 3rd" car. And the people knowed what car they was gettin' on.
- MP: The streetcars ran for a number of years in Terre Haute. I believe the last streetcar pulled into the old car barns in June of 1939.
- RIDGE: Yeah.
- MP: What were the heyday years? The peak years of the streetcars in Terre Haute, do you remember?
- RIDGE: No. Back along in there they was busy all the time, and they used to ride, too. There used to be loads of 'em on the streetcars that'd go by the Arcade out there /on/ East Wabash just as full as they could be packed with people standin' up in the aisle.
- MP: And how long did you work for the streetcar company?
- RIDGE: Forty-five years.
- MP: Well, actually the streetcars as such.
- RIDGE: Oh, the streetcar. Well, I expect I worked between 10 and 15 years on the streetcars before I started workin' interurbans.
- MP: All right. Now let's go from the streetcars. We've talked about the streetcars. Let's go now to the interurbans. How were they different from the streetcars?
- RIDGE: Well, of course, they were bigger stuff; and they were an altogether different made car. They used to have a train . . . Well, we had two stock car trains. Two big motors that pulled the stock car.

RIDGE: Now, we got our heavy stock at Paris, Illinois. They always had a lot of stock from there. We'd pull out three and four cars out of Paris for Indianapolis. And Sullivan, we used to get some from Sullivan once in a while. We'd . . . that passenger car down there, if there was something on Sullivan line that needed to come to Terre Haute, why that passenger car would just couple on to it and bring it to Terre Haute like a load of stock or two loads of stock or . . .

MP: When you say, "stock" what are you . . .

RIDGE: That was cows, hogs, sheep . . . that was all that . . .

MP: These were special cars that these animals rode in?

RIDGE: Yeah. Made especial that . . . it had slats on the side about that wide between the slats and they could allow the air to get in there. You had to because they'd smother to death the way we used to load 'em up. But they had slats on each side of them.

MP: But they were then pulled by another interurban?

RIDGE: No, they was pulled by a motor. It was an inter-urban, yeah. But it wasn't built like an interurban. It was a big motor on that car there, and it was altogether a motor. Nothing but a . . . this car didn't have nothing on it but a motor. No passengers rode on it, only the conductor.

MP: So they had different types of interurbans. They had the stock car, what other kind?

RIDGE: Well, they had stock cars and they had the passenger cars.

MP: Freight?

RIDGE: Yeah, we had freight cars, too.

MP: And I take it you had a special car that pulled maintenance?

RIDGE: Oh yeah. Yeah.

- MP: Let's talk about those passenger interurbans. How big were they, those cars, compared to the old streetcars?
- RIDGE: Oh, they was a lot bigger than the streetcars. They was longer, had more seats in 'em, hauled more passengers.
- MP: How many interurban lines out of Terre Haute?
- RIDGE: Well, there was Indianapolis, Clinton, Paris, and Sullivan. That's all of them I guess.
- MP: Four of them.
- RIDGE: Yeah. Indianapolis.
- MP: Which was the heavily traveled line?
- RIDGE: Oh, that Indianapolis line was heavy travel, but you take, now, that Clinton route was a heavy route, too, because that was a coal miner town up through there. You come down through there from Clinton, you generally always had a big, standing load a-coming in from Clinton.
- MP: Now, you worked on the interurbans then for, oh, 20, 30, how many years?
- RIDGE: Oh, about 20 years.
- MP: And what'd you do on the interurbans?
- RIDGE: Well, I was conductor and I was a motorman both. But most of the time I was a conductor. I never pulled the front end too much on interurbans.
- MP: So one of the differences between the old streetcars and the interurbans was the size. The interurbans . . .
- RIDGE: Oh, yeah.
- MP: . . . carried more. What were some other differences?
- RIDGE: Well, they was more powerful. Them interurbans were more powerful in voltage than the streetcars was.

MP: Did they operate on the same principle -- a trolley line and tracks?

RIDGE: Yeah. They acted on the same principle, but their motors, the interurbans' motors, had more power in the motor.

MP: How fast did those cars run?

RIDGE: Oh . . . (chuckles) They'd get out, pick 'em up and set 'em down. We used to have a Highlander that run from Indianapolis to Terre Haute, backwards and forwards. And it run from Terre Haute to Indianapolis in 50 minutes. The time it left Terre Haute 'til it got to Indianapolis was 50 minutes.

MP: Non-stop?

RIDGE: No, didn't have very many stops. About, oh, about three stops from here to Indianapolis.

MP: That's moving pretty fast.

RIDGE: That's rollin' 'em.

MP: That's . . . that would even be a fast trip for today's car.

RIDGE: I know it, but it done it all right.

MP: What problems did you have with the interurbans out there on those streets?

RIDGE: Well, once in a while you'd have a wreck, but that'd be all.

Old George Jones was workin' /the/ Paris inter-urban and an old streetcar man It was on that single track over there from where that Y is in there going to West Terre Haute (there used to be a single track from that on over to West Terre Haute). Of course, it went over that old route then, and 'ol . . . this old streetcar man, he pulled out . . . he didn't see Now these lights . . . there was lights there where you pulled out, showed you whether it'd be red or green. If it was green, why you had the through way to go; if it was red, there was some-
thin' a-coming. And old man Muggs got over there,

RIDGE: and he said the light was green. And he pulled up on that single track, and old George Jones was a-comin' in over there with an interurban. And he got about half-way out there, why old George hit him /and/ killed him. Mashed him right up in that front end of that That was one of them green bugs -- the streetcar was -- and he was sittin' there, and it just mashed the front end right in on 'em. They got over there and got him out. But he told me when we was getting him out of there . . . we had to do a little cutting on that front -- that tin stuff -- to get it off of him because he was sitting right here in a seat like I'm a-sittin' and it just mashed right back on 'im. So, he told me when we was gettin' him out, he said, "Bill, I'm killed." I said, "Oh, no. You're gonna get along all right, Mugg." But he didn't. He died.

MP: And there were other accidents on the interurbans as well, I take it?

RIDGE: Oh, yeah. We had one over there one time at the stock farm over east. There was one interurban going out and they used to have a dispatcher out there, and you took orders from that dispatcher, and you just run where the dispatcher told you to go and you stopped. You just sat there until the other car come. But some-way or other these guys got their orders mixed up. And they had a corpse in this car going from Terre Haute to Indianapolis, and they had another coming from Indianapolis run into it. And knocked the door open and this corpse fell out the side The coffin went out the side and turned over out there in the That cost the traction company a bunch of money, boy.

MP: Where'd that happen?

RIDGE: What?

MP: Where'd that happen?

RIDGE: Aaaah, about . . . over there on the other side of Seelyville, between Seelyville and Indianapolis /at/ the stock farm. The stock farm was about, oh, 10 mile, 15 mile on the other side of Seelyville over there.

MP: Do you remember when it happened? What year?

RIDGE: No, I couldn't remember that.

MP: Mr. Ridge, were there transfers on the interurbans like there was on the old streetcars?

RIDGE: Yeah. Yeah, they had transfers.

MP: If a person went from Terre Haute to Sullivan, could he go further south?

RIDGE: No. No. Not . . . just had transfers here in your city transmission. Otherwise, if you wanted . . . if you was getting off an interurban and wanted to ride a streetcar down South 7th or South 3rd or West Terre Haute, why he'd give you a transfer (the interurban would) and you'd get on there for nothing. Ride it free.

MP: But after you got to Sullivan, you could take another interurban, I take it, and go to Evansville or somewhere else?

RIDGE: Not our outfit. Now Indianapolis, they had other interurbans run in there from different places that would take you places but there was nothin' running out from Sullivan or Clinton or Paris.

MP: What'd it cost to ride an interurban?

RIDGE: Well, I don't remember just . . . the fare that . . . at West Terre Haute . . . from town here to West Terre Haute if you got on an interurban, it'd cost you . . . used to cost you . . . back in them days /it/ used to cost you 15 cents to go . . . if you was on an interurban. And it cost you a nickel on a streetcar.

MP: It would be cheaper to ride the streetcar, wouldn't it?

RIDGE: Well, yeah.

MP: But the way the interurbans ran in the city of Terre Haute. For example, the interurban that ran from downtown Terre Haute to Indianapolis and to Sullivan and to Clinton and to Paris . . .

RIDGE: Yeah?

- MP: Actually, there was kind of dual transportation in a way, was there not? If you didn't want to ride the streetcar or missed a streetcar, you hopped on the interurban. And would it stop? Let's say, for example, on South 7th Street. Would it stop at various places or once you got on the South 7th . . .
- RIDGE: No. No. No, you didn't stop here in the city. If you got on an interurban -- a Sullivan interurban -- you'd ride out of the city down /to/ some of them stops down there out in the country route that they'd let off.
- MP: But not in the city of Terre Haute?
- RIDGE: No. No. They didn't.
- MP: The interurban that ran to Clinton, according to a book written by Red Howell called Along the Line . . . this is the interurban to Clinton . . .
- RIDGE: Yeah.
- MP: . . . from 13th and Lafayette to the city of Clinton there were 42 stops, and the stops were numbered.
- RIDGE: Yeah.
- MP: Stop 10, Stop 11, 12 -- do you remember that?
- RIDGE: Yeah, 13, 14 . . .
- MP: That was a lot of stops.
- RIDGE: A lot of stops. Yeah.
- MP: Where were the . . . the interurban station was located at the Arcade, was it not?
- RIDGE: Arcade. Yep.
- MP: And where was the maintenance done? Was it out at the old car barns, too?
- RIDGE: You mean the one . . .
- MP: The maintenance of the interurbans.
- RIDGE: The ones that worked on 'em?