My Life On Mountain Railroads

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there on the deck trying to soak up a little of the heat that radiated out from the open firebox door.

What a study in the scale of humanity he made as he stood with his back against the storm curtain, his features outlined in the flickering glow from the firebox: his watery pale blue eyes, the white stubble of beard, and the dirty grey hair that peeped out from beneath the rim of a ragged cap.

"Where was he going?" The engineer asked that often-asked question. He received that many-timed answer.

He didn’t know—just on the go—or maybe to that mythical temporary job somewhere further on. Maybe he was going to meet a friend—or a long neglected relative. Anyway the grass must be greener on the other side of the mountain!

A few ragged shreds on the bottom of the overcoat swept back and forth over the deck as the wind shrieked in. The old man shivered miserably.

The engineer casually remarked. "You’re pretty old to be looking for a job. What could you do?"

There was no definite answer, just an evasive muttering.

"You would have to have other clothes," the engineer persisted unfeelingly. "No one would hire you in those rags. What have you worked at?"

Receiving no answer the engineer, with a smirk, turned away.

Except for the moaning of the dying wind, and the doleful whine of the engine dynamo, there was only silence in the engine cab—that cold, lonely, silence that comes in the sleepy hours of the night. The old fellow kept his bleary eyes focused on the lazy flames in the firebox.

The engineer stamped his feet on the floor boards and started to sing in undertone to keep away the approach of sleep. His efforts ceased, and he turned abruptly to the old man. The slight grimace of a smile played around his mouth.

"Can you sing, Dad?" he asked of the old fellow.

"I could sing ... and I have sung a lot ... when I was younger. I can’t sing now... but," and his eyes glittered in the fire’s glow, "I can recite poetry."

The engineer smiled across the cab at me. "Well, let’s have something," he commanded.

The old fellow stepped a little closer to the open fire door. He glanced down at the snow filming in over the deck—the curtain rattled behind him. He produced a rag from somewhere in the folds of the long overcoat and asthmatically blew his nose. Then after coughing a time or two, he started.

Have you ever heard or read that poetical gem that was written by that Hoosier poet, James Whitcomb Riley, and labeled "That Old Sweetheart of Mine"?

If you have, I wonder if you heard it under more incongruous conditions and surroundings than I was privileged to hear it from the faltering lips of
that wreck of a man as he shivered there on the cold deck of our locomotive. At times his voice sank almost to inaudibility. Again it rose to an emotional pitch that seemed incredible from such an unbelievable source!

After he had started, he had, except for the wind and the mournful whine of the dynamo, a completely silent audience.

*An old sweetheart of mine,*
*Is this her presence here with me?*
*Or but the vain creation*
*Of a lover’s memory?*
*A fair elusive vision*
*That would vanish into air.*
*Dared I even touch the silence,*
*With the whisper of a prayer?*

I must say I learned to love that piece of poetry after hearing it recited by that shambling shivering wreck of humanity, there on the cold deck of a locomotive. I have read it over countless times since.

*As one who comes of evening*
*Or’e an album all alone,*
*And muses on the faces*
*Of the friends that he has known.*
*So I turn the leaves of fancy*
*’Til in shadowy design,*
*I find the smiling features*
*Of an old sweetheart of mine.*

Could this old fellow at one time in the distant past have called someone “Sweetheart”? If so, where and what had come of it? With eyes that appeared tear-washed and in a voice that sometimes seemed choked down, he struggled on!

*Tho’ I hear beneath my study*
*Like a fluttering of wings,*
*The voices of my children*
*And their mother as she sings.*
*I feel no twinge of conscience*
*To deny me any theme,*
*When care has cast her anchor,*
*In the harbor of a dream.*

I am here quoting only a few lines of that beautiful poem:

*In fact to speak in earnest,*
*I believe it adds a charm,*
*To spice the good a trifle,*
With a little dust of harm.
For I find an extra flavor
in memory's mellow wine,
To make me drink the deeper
To that old sweetheart of mine.

Yes, I concluded that even he must have had a sweetheart at one time or he couldn't put so much passion in his reciting. And the tears were starting to stream down his seamy cheeks.

With eyes half closed in clouds
That ooze from lips that taste as well,
The peppermint and cinnamon,
I hear the old school bell.
And from Recess I romp in again
From Blackman's broken line,
To smile behind my lesson,
At that old sweetheart of mine.

Along about here the old fellow hesitated momentarily, and I wondered if that could be the finish. It didn't seem right that it should end that way. The engineer turned to look at him, too, but there was no ridicule in his glance, only respect.

A face of lily beauty
With a form of airy grace,
Floats out of my tobacco,
As the Genie from the vase.
And I thrill beneath the glances
Of a pair of azure eyes,
As glowing as the summer
And as tender as the skies.

To continue this narrative would only be to quote the poem to the end as it was recited by our guest:

I can see the pink sunbonnet,
The brightly checkered dress;
She wore when first I kissed her
And she answered the caress;
With a written declaration that
As surely as the vine
Grew 'round the stump she loved me,
That old sweetheart of mine!

Again I found myself wondering if anyone such as he could have had a sweetheart. Did this beautiful classic have special significance for him?
Did it bring back fond memories of a distant past when he as a young gallant courted a maid such as he was describing? I vainly tried to picture him as a young man.

Although the tears streamed down his cheeks, and although the shrieks of the wind and the whine of the dynamo tried to drown out his efforts, he continued to the end:

_But Ah! My dream is broken_
_By a step upon the stair,_
_And the door is softly opened_
_And my wife is standing there._
_Yet with eagerness and rapture_
_All my visions I resign,_
_To greet the living presence,_
_Of that old sweetheart of mine!_

Surely he must have had a sweetheart at one time. But what had happened to put him in the condition and circumstance he now found himself? We can only guess.

All this happened when I was a very young man. So whatever it was that separated them, by now they must be together again. He must be with his old sweetheart now.
The town of Tucker imprinted itself deeply in my memory, although I only actually worked out of there not more than one week. It was a station on the pioneer Utah and Pleasant Valley narrow gauge railroad that ran from Provo to the coal fields in and around what later came to be known as Scofield. At Tucker the primitive tracks followed the South Fork of the canyon and through a series of switchbacks crossed the spine of the Wasatch somewhat south of Soldier Summit.

When the Rio Grande came through in the eighties they purchased this early railroad and incorporated the trackage from Tucker to Provo. That part of the line that went up the South Fork was abandoned and a new line built up the North Fork to cross the range at what is now Soldier Summit. This put Tucker at the foot of a seven mile stretch of line that was something just over four percent in grade. This presented a very difficult operating problem.

To get trains over this grade required many of the little engines of that day. It was at Tucker that several helpers, in addition to the one usually picked up at Thistle, were coupled on to the passenger trains and some “hot shot freights” for the last assault on the treacherous grade. It was also
here that the slower “drag freights” were broken into more manageable shorter segments.

The mainline crews with helpers pushing and pulling would take the first cut of cars on up the hill. The remaining segments were worked up the grade by what came to be called hill crews working out of Tucker. At Summit these segments were reassembled into normal length trains to be taken by the mainline crews on down the Price River canyon to Helper. The hill crews would then return to Tucker to repeat the process.

These hill crews were a society unto themselves. They lived and worked at Tucker, making many trips just up that seven mile stretch of heavy grade. They contented themselves with the lonely and somewhat primitive living conditions of their town, which had some of the atmosphere of the Old West. The hillsides of the several canyon spurs extending out from the center of railroad operations at Tucker were lined with shanties haphazardly built. Some were no more than dugouts in the sides of the mountain. The amenities of life were few.

It was there, early in my railroad career, that I first witnessed violent action. I was making one of my first trips as a fireman. I don’t remember who the engineer was, but the conductor of our train was a man named Tom Gleason. We had arrived at Tucker and were on the eastbound track spotted at the coal chute taking on coal. Number 3, for some reason that I can’t now recall, came down into town over the eastbound track.

Taking coal in those days was not the simple operation it developed into later. It was cumbersome and time consuming. On this occasion we were clearly in no. 3’s path, and we were holding them up—“laying them out,” in the parlance of the railroad.

Our conductor, Tom Gleason, was doing all he could to hurry the operation up after no. 3, contrary to the usual practice, came down the eastbound mainline. The conductor of no. 3, Mr. Moss, came down resplendent in his passenger conductor’s uniform. He was a large man, really too big for his own good. Our conductor, Gleason, was just of ordinary size and stature.

Moss came forward from the coaches to see what was holding up his train. He promptly became abusive and got into an argument with Gleason. Tom told him that we were getting out of the way as quickly as we could. That didn’t satisfy Moss. He continued to heap loud verbal abuse on our conductor. He started to say, “you sons of ———,” but got no further. Gleason flashed out a straight left that landed directly on the chin of Conductor Moss. He went down like a bull hit in the head with a spike maul. I later learned that Conductor Gleason was a part-time professional wrestler.
Conductor Gleason was a little fearful of being fired for this stunt. We tied up at Colton on this trip. He learned that I had just lifted the coal apron into place and from my ringside seat was looking directly at them when the action had taken place. He wanted me to testify in his favor at the investigation if there was one. Of course his only defense was the abusive language of Conductor Moss.

I assured him that I had heard and seen all that went on and would testify to it at the investigation. Curiously, there was never an investigation called, and I never worked on the same crew with Gleason again. He took a hill crew job, and I worked on the mainline.

Sometimes unusual incidents will have a strange aftermath. It was about a year after the above incident took place that I was boxing a preliminary to one of the professional fights being held in Salt Lake. After the fight a well-dressed man stepped up to me and said:

“Gould. You are Gould, aren’t you?”

There was reason to question my identity, since I boxed under the name of Johnny Gilbert. I said, yes, my real name was Gould.

He said, “Well, I just wanted to ask you a question. Did you copy that straight left you used tonight from the one you saw me land on Moss that night at Tucker?”

To my surprise it was Conductor Gleason. I had not seen him in street clothes before. That was why I had failed to recognize him. We laughed heartily over a fervent handshake.

Very early in my railroad career I was working out of Tucker with a bridge and building gang. We had a little Rome engine, the 37, afterwards renumbered as the 544. We had a pile driver in the outfit and were replacing old piles in the bridges between Thistle and Tucker. Every night we tied up at Tucker. I think we had worked about five days on this job.

Those little Rome engines were ten-wheelers. They were the second series of ten-wheelers built for the Rio Grande Western after the line was converted to standard gauge. Their driving wheels were a scant 57 to 60 inches, depending on the thickness of the tires. They had a long narrow firebox set on the frame between the driving wheels. They had been built for mainline passenger service in the nineties. With the coming of the T-29 class ten-wheelers in 1909 they were downgraded to other duties. This is why we had one at Tucker on the bridge and building work train.

One night while we were asleep there came a call boy into the room who rudely awakened us. It developed that a few minutes earlier the hostler, in backing an engine out of the roundhouse, had run over a young fireman named Russell and a hostler helper. The fireman’s legs were cut off just
A Rome ten-wheeler. This Rio Grande Western 54 became the Denver & Rio Grande 506. Photo from the W. J. G. Gould collection, photographer unknown.

above the knee. The hostler helper was somewhat luckier. His right leg was cut off between the ankle and the knee.

They hurriedly loaded these two injured men into a little four-wheeled caboose normally used by one of the hill crews and called us to take them to the hospital at Salt Lake.

The engineer I was working with was a man by the name of Delany. He was a new man, a boomer, and had not been employed by the railroad as long as I had. Consequently he didn’t know the road. Our conductor was an old head, but had always worked on the hill crews, and he was likewise unfamiliar with the mainline east of Summit or west of Tucker. I recall he had a large black handlebar moustache and looked fierce like an old time pirate. But his looks belied him. He was a very fine man. I had occasion to work with him quite a bit in after years. However, at that moment of excitement and fear I didn’t know which presented the rougher picture, the conductor or the boomer engineer.

We left Tucker with rights over all trains from Tucker to Thistle. I knew the stations in succeeding order, and that was about all. Delany depended on me to keep him informed as to our whereabouts. When we passed a station I would tell him what it was. If I happened to be down on the deck he would call out, and I would tell him what station it was.
At Thistle the “stop board” was out, and we stopped for orders. Our conductor came over and advised the engineer to go faster. We dropped down to Provo pretty fast and spotted for water. A doctor with a nurse climbed into that four-wheeled caboose. Again the conductor told the engineer he wasn’t going fast enough. This seemed to make Delany angry. He told me to watch the stations and always tell him where we were.

We left Provo and Delany hooked that rattling Johnson bar very close to center. He gave her plenty of throttle, and we bounced along right smart. Those little Romes could sure kick back the miles when they had a train they could handle. That one little four-wheeled caboose was just like we were running light engine. After leaving town I had my work to do. Not a little of it was trying to stand up on that bouncing quarter deck.

From Tucker to Provo, being all down grade, I had very little to do in the way of stoking the fire. But after we left Provo I had to keep up the steam pressure. This kept me down on the deck most of the time. When we went by a station Delany would yell and I would call back the name. I had plenty of trouble trying to keep my feet and shovel coal into that roaring firebox. I think about half of the coal I aimed at the fire door went in. The other half spewed all over the deck. I was wading in coal ankle deep when the conductor pulled the air and stopped us at Murray. It seemed like we had just left Provo. After he stopped us the conductor called Delany down to the ground. They walked slowly around the engine conversing.

The conductor told Delany that there was no rush now. The fireman had just died. The nurse was in tears. The doctor was down on his knees praying. All on account of the high speed. The conductor’s words didn’t seem to pacify Delany. When he climbed back on the engine he told me to watch out, and not let him run by that Pedro crossing at Ninth South.

It seemed to me that we had no more than got nicely underway again, and I was bouncing around on the deck like a rubber ball trying to get a little coal in the firebox, when he yelled, “What’s this light we’re coming to?”

I was thinking of the distant signal light for the Pedro crossing. I said to myself, you’re not there yet.

But I dropped the scoop and straightened up to see. Delany was just going under that distant signal! I could hardly believe it! I told him he’d better shut off and start getting under control. About that time we caught the home signal, and it showed green. We zoomed over Ninth South without hesitation. We then drifted through the yards under control to the depot at Second South between Fifth and Sixth West.

When we had stopped Delany looked at his watch. It had been just forty-two minutes since we had left Provo. That included the several
minutes that we were stopped at Murray. Now how is that for fast running with those comparatively low driving wheels on that little old Rome? They don’t do any better than that today with all the fancy power they have in the newer engines!

In the spring of 1911 business took a nose dive. I couldn’t hold a job on the mainline, so another fireman named Bill Fullmer and I gathered a roll of bedding and went to Welby. Welby was a terminal on the Bingham Branch five miles west up the grade from Midvale.

Welby was quite a place before the Bingham and Garfield Railroad was built. There was a twelve stall roundhouse and a large coal chute. There was a large hotel, an eating house, a pool hall, a general store, and about twenty-five or thirty dwellings. There were also a dozen or more shacks built by and batched in by employees who lived at Midvale and worked out of Welby.

All the small mallets worked out of Welby, besides a few eleven hundreds and a couple of little hogs that handled the “ping pong” jobs. “Ping pong” was the name given the short trains that plied the track between Midvale and Welby. They worked night and day, moving loads or empties up and down, to and from Midvale. Anyone working for the railroad could ride these trains without a pass. In addition to other traffic there was a commuter’s special to accommodate employees who lived at Midvale and worked at Welby.

While I worked at Welby a new general superintendent was installed at Salt Lake. None of us had seen him up to that point. I was quite a fancy dresser in those days. I had on a nice brown suit and a grey vest, with a watch chain strung across the front, hooked to a watch on each end. Sometimes I also wore a lady’s little gold watch in my upper left coat pocket. I had what seemed to be about a yard of thin gold chain threaded through the hole in my coat lapel to secure that watch. It wasn’t everyone who wore low cut dress shoes at that time, but I did.

One night I came out of Salt Lake on the street car. The ping pong was standing by the depot at Midvale ready to take off for Welby. The engineer was leaning out of the cab window, half asleep. I walked by the cab without saying a word. I climbed on the caboose, and as I was about to enter the door I heard the hoghead say to someone below the cab on the ground:

“Was that the new superintendent?”

My fancy clothes got me in bad at another time. I was firing out of Welby when an engineer named Jappy Bar turned an eleven-hundred class engine over at the switch at Ritter. Ritter was about nine or ten miles from Welby on the way to Garfield. That wreck tied up the railroad for a while.
The wrecker came out from Salt Lake on its way to Ritter. We all knew it was coming. I got all dressed up in my best and had a Kodak hanging on a strap from my shoulder. When the wrecker arrived I climbed on to ride out to the wreck—Kodak and all.

When we got out there, the old 1192 was lying peacefully on her side. I approached the wreck and started to unlimber my Kodak. The branch superintendent came up and said in what I thought was quite a friendly manner, “Hello there!” I returned the salutation.

He then said, “What are your intentions?”

I said, “I’m going to get a picture.”

He said rather nonchalantly, “Oh, what are you going to get a picture of?”

“I’m going to get a picture of that engine,” I replied. His cordial manner changed instantly.

“No you’re not!” He said rather belligerently. “If you want a nice picture you can take one of that old jackass standing over there on the other side of the fence. You fold up that thing and get the h— off the right of way.”

I folded up my camera and beat it back to Welby on foot. I hadn’t learned at that time that railroad companies are rather touchy about having pictures taken of accidents on their properties.

A few days later I went into the telegraph office to see if there was any mail for me. Alongside the wall were pigeon holes in alphabetical order for the placing of mail. There was a door leading into the superintendent’s office from the hallway. The door was wide open. Leaning back against the wall, relaxing in a chair, was the superintendent. He eyed me up and down closely. I had just got off the engine and was in my greasy overalls. I was about to walk out, when he called to me.

“Come in here a minute,” he said.

I walked into his office, wondering, what now?

He said, “Stand over there.”

I did while he looked me over. Finally he said, “The next time you doll up out here kid, I’m going to give you twenty ‘brownies.’ Out there at the wreck the other day I thought that you were some d—— smart alec reporter. Why didn’t you speak up? If I had known who you were you could have had your picture.” Brownies were demerit marks.

While I was working at Welby, I was firing an eleven hundred engine one day for an engineer named Ben Bailey. We had made a help to Cuprum. That was just over Bingham on the left mountain. At Cuprum there was quite a lot of yard tracks. After leaving the yard going down the grade there
was a short tunnel. Coming out of the tunnel on the downhill side there was a derail.

This day we were following a train of loads down the mountain. Ben came out of the telegraph office with his orders just as the loads were leaving. I heard him yell at the conductor to let the derail go. He meant to leave the derail off the rail because we were following him closely and would replace the derail after we got over it.

Instead of following him right away, Ben got his oil can and proceeded to oil around. By the time we got out of the tunnel the loads were out of sight. That derail was on a curve on my side.

Ben hollered, “How’s the derail?”

The target was staring me in the face as plain as day. It was in the derailing position. But I hollered back, “Okay.”

I was confused after hearing Ben tell that conductor to let the derail go. I likened it to leaving the switch lined for the passing track as we did under similar conditions on the mainline. Too late I realized that this was different.

I screamed out, “It’s wrong! It’s wrong!”

But Ben had let go his brakes, and we were beginning to roll. He did everything he could to get stopped, but it was too late. We stopped with all four drivers over the derail and on the ground. I never felt chagrin so much in my life. It was my fault entirely. Old Ben was pretty mad.

We had a meet with a train of empties at a station called Midas, two miles down the grade. Ben and I decided that I should run down and get that train to come back up and help us get back on the rail. My roommate, Bill Fullmer, was firing the 1057, a mallet, and after about two hours of sweating and swearing we pulled the eleven hundred engine over the last rerailing frog and were back on the rails. We backed up to Cuprum and the 1057 followed us in.

We then proceeded down again. I didn’t let that derail fool me again. Not much I didn’t!

Came the winter of 1916–1917. I was by that time promoted and running out of the Salt Lake pool. It was a bad winter—lots of snow. Every morning for a week or so a train was called out of Salt Lake to go to Cuprum. This train consisted of about four coaches of snow shovelers. They would shovel snow all day at Cuprum and return to Salt Lake at night. One morning I was called as the “hoghead” for this special.

I got those snow shovelers up to Cuprum all right. The train and engine crews then loafed around all day. Toward night we got ready to return to Salt Lake. On the way up that morning I had missed seeing the
derail below the tunnel. I afterward found out they had moved it and placed it in the lead connecting the yard to the mainline.

When we were ready to leave we headed down through a clear track in the yard. Bill Fullmer, my old room mate, had also been promoted and was running the Cuprum switch engine. As I started to leave he hollered at me.

“You know there is a derail down there!”

I thought he was kidding me about the time I had put Ben Bailey on the ground.

I hollered back at him, “I know all about that derail!”

But I didn’t! I went down through that yard track, out on the lead, and too late I saw the derail! I frantically tried to stop, but I managed to go over the derail. When that little monkey (ten-wheeler locomotives of the T-29 class, called “monkeys” because of the “monkey motion” valve gear), the 783, finally stopped, I had the “pony truck” and the “first driver” parts of my engine on the ground. Was my face red!

We had to get Bill and his switch engine to pull us back on the rail. You can bet I took a lot of kidding over that performance.

In the first instance, when I left Welby to go back to the mainline I took with me on my record the twenty brownies given me by Joe Stevenson, the traveling engineer, for my responsibility in putting Ben Bailey over that derail. Six years later when I put myself over a derail, it went by unnoticed by officialdom. It was wartime and too much was happening to worry about anything so trivial as a derail.

It would be hard to name an eleven hundred class engine that I preferred over others. Those eleven hundred engines out of Salt Lake were in pooled service as long as I was on the Rio Grande. No one had a regular eleven hundred except at a few outside points. The first engine of this class that I regularly fired was in my early days as a fireman, for an engineer named Dave Gibson in helping service out of Helper. This was during the machinist and boilermaker’s strike that started in 1908 and dragged along for a good many months. All the engines at the time were in poor condition due to this strike.

Toby Sheldahl had the 1160 in hill service at Tucker. He was forever telling me what a wonderful engine the 1160 was. I afterward fired this engine regularly for an engineer named Olaf Johnson on the Midvale-Scofield tramp job. Even then it was a mighty good engine—a testimonial to the wonderful care of Toby Sheldahl.

The Rio Grande 2–10–2s came to the Rio Grande about 1916. I didn’t see one on the west end until about 1920. They were a little heavier
than our 2–10–2s, but not nearly as nice an engine to handle as ours were. They were not as comfortable in the cab.

When I started firing in 1908 all the eleven hundreds had Stevenson link valve gear and used saturated steam; that is, all except the 1151. The 1151 used saturated steam but had Walschaerts valve gear. It was used in passenger helping service out of Tucker.

The 1142 was the first engine to be superheated and equipped with Walschaerts gear in the Salt Lake shops, and I was called to fire her on her test run. My engineer was a young runner named Palmer DeLong. He was only a few years older than I was. We had been schoolmates a few years previously at Eureka.

We had most of the motive power officials in, on, and around that 1142 when we left Salt Lake. We went caboose bounce to Springville. At Springville we turned the engine and picked up loads of ore. We went west to Provo and filled out to twenty-six or twenty-seven hundred tons.

Before superheating, those eleven hundreds were rated not over twenty-two hundred and fifty tons west of Provo. When we received orders to fill to twenty-six hundred tons, no one on the crew figured we would get them out of the yard. How wrong we were! We had a little difficulty starting, but after we got them rolling that old 1142 handled them like an ordinary passenger train. She seemed to pick up speed at every turn of the wheels.

After stopping at the UP crossing just west of Lakota, it was the usual thing to start making the run for the American Fork hill. This was necessary if you had a full tonnage train with one of those “soaks,” as we called the
eleven hundreds before they were superheated. If you didn’t take every advantage to get your train rolling as fast as you could turn a wheel down through the sag at Geneva you were in danger of stalling and then having to double the hill into American Fork.

DeLong ran his engine as though he was afraid of doubling the hill. As soon as he got them rolling he began hooking that Johnson bar up toward center, one nick at a time, with the throttle wide open—pointing back toward the tank.

Very soon we were really moving. Long before we hit the bottom of the sag Palmer had eased off considerably on the throttle. Still our speed increased. I had never before ridden a freight train so fast down through Geneva, and that old 1142 steamed like a house afire, as we used to say.

My one worry was not whether we would double into American Fork; it was whether or not the 1142 would hold the rail around the curve at the lower, or west end, of Geneva. We were certainly stepping along. We sailed up into American Fork seemingly with hardly any effort.

The officials were all happy with the test. They finally raised the tonnage west of Provo to thirty-three hundred tons on those superheated eleven hundreds. As fast as they could be put through the shops those engines were all superheated and equipped with either Walschaerts or Baker valve gear. Everyone seemed happy with the result, except the engine and train men. They could see less work as the result of the increased pulling capacity of those engines.
In the spring of 1911 when Bill Fullmer and I rolled our bedding and landed at Welby, we little knew that we were invading enemy territory. But that turned out to be the case. Those train and engine crews at that point of time had all been recruited from Midvale and the surrounding towns. They were in a class and a society somewhat apart from the rest of the railroad. Most of them had never been over the mainline at all, and they looked upon us as interlopers. We had come out to take the bread and butter out of the mouths of the rightful owners of those jobs, as they thought of themselves.

As far as my situation was concerned I was all right. I landed on a job with an engineer who had worked at different points on the railroad before settling down at Welby. He understood the rules regarding seniority. The engineer that I landed with was named Bill Parker. He was a man who had done all of his firing on the mainline. He had bumped onto jobs and had in turn been bumped off of jobs.

With my pardner, Bill Fullmer, it was different. He landed on a job with a man named Billy Maycroft. Maycroft had done all his work right there on the Bingham Branch, and would remain there until it began to fade. Only then would he come to Salt Lake to work on the mainline. Meanwhile that branch was private territory to him and to others like him.

He was reported to have made the remark that they would make those mainline men wish they were back on the mainline. And, according to Fullmer, he tried to make that threat a reality. He would do everything he could to make it disagreeable for Bill.

The favorite way that any engineer had of discouraging a fireman was to rap an engine unnecessarily. By this is meant to work an engine at a longer stroke of the valve with the Johnson bar, or reverse lever, too far down on the quadrant. “Working it in the corner,” it was called. In this way of operation, more steam was admitted to the cylinder than was necessary (the valve stroke being longer) and therefore the engine burned more coal than was needed. That kept the fireman down on the deck shoveling coal. “Down at the rat hole,” as the saying goes.

An engineman who worked an engine in this manner was known as a “rapper.” There were lots of rappers on the road in those days of hand-tamped engines, but most of them only practiced this when they wanted to make it miserable for the fireman. Some of those, like Old Head Conners and several more I could mention, could sure make a poor fireman wish he had never been born.

Old Art Campbell was in this class, but I don’t think he did it with malice. I think he did it sort of unintentionally and unknowingly. That
little old 768 that I fired for him could sure burn plenty of coal, and it always did with him at the throttle.

One night the traveling fireman rode with us, and there was all the difference in the world in the way he handled that engine. She didn’t burn nearly the coal she was used to burning because Art paid close attention to where she was working and had the Johnson bar hooked up several notches higher than usual. I could “blow the dome off” of her, to use a popular expression of the day—meaning to raise the pop valves.

Another time we had a trainmaster riding with us. On those eastbound passenger trains, after leaving Springville, the coal would be so far back in the tank that the fireman was kept very busy. Between fires, when he was not shoveling coal into the firebox and when he should be resting, he would be back in the tank shoveling the coal up ahead where he could reach it.

This night that the trainmaster was on the engine I was very much surprised to see Art scurry back into the tank and go through the motions of shovelling coal ahead into my reach. I almost felt like telling him to get back up on his seat box and tend to running the engine.

But to get back to Bill Fullmer and the 1057: Bill said that Maycroft really rapped that engine. Of course on that little mallet he couldn’t hurt a young buck like Bill on a slow job like those runs on the Bingham Branch. But, according to Fullmer, he sure tried.

One day after arriving at Cuprum, Maycroft got down to oil around while waiting for the conductor to appear with the orders. Fullmer got a piece of wood, took out his pocket knife and sharpened it on the end. He watched for Maycroft’s appearance in the cab. When that happened Bill was down on his knees with the sharp pointed stick of wood cleaning the grease and dirt out of the notches in the front of the Johnson bar quadrant.

Maycroft wanted to know what he was doing down there. Old Bill was a slow, droll talker. He spoke very distinctly as he answered.

“Why ... I’m ... just ... trying ... to ... clean ... out ... the ... notches ... in ... front ... here ... so ... that ... you ... can ... work ... her ... a ... little.”

Bill said that Maycroft had no comment to make on that one, but that from then on things began to get better.

When business started to pick up on the mainline early in July we both left Welby and went back to the Salt Lake pool. On the eleventh of July I went back out to Welby to get my paycheck. (I know it was the eleventh of July because I had just been married the day before, the tenth of July, 1911. A memorable day!)

While I was there getting my check, Billy Maycroft came into town on his 1057. He saw me come out of the office, and hollered at me.