

# A Boy's Unexpected Cab Ride

True Personal Experience

By

Dave Bunge\*

Back around 1948 during the spring, the Pennsylvania Railroad was renewing the rail on the old Cleveland Akron & Columbus Railroad (CA&C) from the Joyce Avenue Tower in Columbus, Ohio north through the suburb of Linden to Westerville, Ohio. I remember coming home from school to find a work train at the foot of my street in Linden unloading rail. Naturally, a nine year old boy would forget his home work and go down to watch that work train with its I1 steam locomotive, gondolas load with rail, flat car with a crane to do the unloading, and finally the N-6B caboose.

After watching the operation for an hour or so, and talking to the fireman up in his cab, he and the engineer invited me to climb up to look around. For the next hour or so as the train moved up and down the siding, the fireman showed me the workings of the stoker and the engineer showed me the workings of the throttle, the screw reverse, and the brake valves.

With my friends looking on from down below, I got to ring the air operated bell, blow the whistle as we moved up and down a siding. In our area there was one siding on each side of the main track.

Eventually the crew was ordered to move north of Linden to drop off something. The engine crew asked if I wanted to go along. They also told me that they would be back shortly. That was a stupid question; of course I wanted to go along. Since my parents weren't home from work yet, they didn't know anything about my proposed cab ride.

Well northbound we went, and the crew completed their work. The Dispatcher then ordered us to continue north to Westerville the next open station and siding. "My" work train got stuck in that siding to let several freights by. Then we found out that we had to wait for #604, the southbound local passenger train, a self propelled motor car, which was running late on its way from Akron to Columbus.

After the passenger train finally went by, we were turned loose to go back to Columbus. We finally got back to Linden around 9:00pm and the engineer stopped on the main line so I could get off. I knew I was in trouble with my parents. I later found that when my parents got home and started looking for me, my friends told them that I had gotten on a train. My parents thought that I had been kidnapped. The brakeman on the work train walked me home, and explained the situation to my parents.

After the brakeman left, and the work train left to pull into the yards, I had to face my mad parents. Well as you can imagine, my rear end got a good tanning for going on my escapade. Today, though it is fifty years later, the CA&C has been torn up and in many places the right-of-way has been obliterated and used for other purposes. I have gotten married, have two grown sons, my hair has turned gray and I've moved away from Columbus. However, I can tell you that the tanning I got was worth it because of that afternoon and early evening thirty mile cab ride on the work train.

\*Dave Bunge was a long time resident of Columbus, Ohio and active at the Ohio Railway Museum. He is now retired and living in Las Vegas, NV. He is an excellent railroad photographer who comes to his love of railroading naturally as both his grandfather and uncles worked at the Pennsylvania Railroad's Twentieth Street shops. His uncle, Ray Bennett was the last PRR boilermaker in Columbus.