8. Railroad Hazards and Wrecks

Published by

Gould, William.
My Life On Mountain Railroads.
Utah State University Press, 1995.
Project MUSE. https://muse.jhu.edu/book/12452.

The Rio Grande fired Bill for this offence. He made no effort toward reinstatement. The reason became apparent after awhile. Bill Haymond's brother went to the B & G Railroad as general manager. When the B & G started operations Bill went to that railroad as the number one engineer on the blue print, the seniority list. I could have gone with him as the number one fireman. Bill got off the B & G business car to ask me to join him as we were standing in the Welby yards. He was riding over the road with his brother at the time.

Several times in my life I have wondered what would have been my lot if I had taken the well-meant advice of others. When it later became known to the Rio Grande officials that Jack Johnson and I were set on leaving to go to the Utah Railway we were told that they had made other plans regarding us. I wonder what they were, and what course my life might have taken if I had listened.

The B & G, after trying unsuccessfully to get the Rio Grande to double track their mainline between Cuprum and Garfield, finally built their own road on the other side of the mountain and forced the Rio Grande out of the territory.

I have told so many times of how I kept an engine hot where others failed. I am now going to tell of occasions when I wasn't so lucky.

There was a time when I was firing freight out of Salt Lake. It was Christmas, and I was laying off for a trip. I knew I would not have to go out, so we were doing a little celebrating. All morning I had been nibbling fruit cake and sipping wine.

About three o'clock in the afternoon the telephone rang. It was the call boy; he started to call me up for no. 2. Number 2 at that time was made up at Salt Lake with interchange off the Western Pacific connection. I interrupted to inform him that I had permission to lay off.

He just laughed over the phone, "Don't make any difference. This is an emergency and you're it."

The more I tried to beg off the more determined he was that I was going. At last I gave up. That's just one of the nettlesome aspects of railroading in those days. If an emergency arose, and you were elected, you went—or you went looking for another job.

Grumbling, I climbed into my work clothes and trudged up to the passenger depot. The 783 was sizzling on an off-track. The engineer was giving her a final looking over. He turned to grin at me.

"They got you too?" he inquired.

Big Ed Rhienhardt was the engineer. He too had been laying off from his freight job. Ed was a big Swede. He stood about six-foot-four. To some

he appeared taciturn and morose, but he and I usually got along. I could even make him laugh where others failed.

I was still feeling a little light headed from my morning's imbibing when I climbed on the 783. But when I opened the firedoor to look at my fire, all my insides seemed to run down into my head and overbalance me. That firedoor looked about the size of a silver dollar. However, I managed to orient myself after a fashion.

We took off bravely, and soon we were stepping through the dew right smart, as the saying went. But not for long. The hand on the steam gauge seemed to have all the starch taken out of it. Instead of standing straight up like a good soldier, it wanted to recline more and more. Big Ed kept glancing at the steam gauge and then at me. His anxiety increased as the hand on the gauge slanted more and more to a horizontal position. We were losing time on the Scenic Limited. We arrived at Provo way off our schedule.

All the while we were standing at the depot the blower was rasping loudly, trying to bring up the steam pressure and proclaiming the humiliation of the fireman. Nothing that I can think of is more humiliating to a fireman than to stand up on back of the tank taking water near a passenger station and listening to the loud buzz of the blower telling the world that you're short on steam. We did pick up a little more pressure while standing there, but only while we were not moving. As soon as Ed laid his heavy hand on her she started to wilt again.

In freight service, if a fireman gets his fire clinkered up he can always find time to do a little cleaning while standing in a passing track or even stopped in yard limits. Not so on passenger! As long as you have enough steam to move the train you've got to keep going. But when you can't go any further, you have no choice. You must stop, and like a plodding freight, take time to blow up.

This happened to us that Christmas afternoon at a point where the railroad slants away from Spanish Fork to enter that deep cut on its eastward grind before entering the canyon. We managed to come into Thistle about thirty minutes late. At that place a large mallet was attached to the point. Still that humiliating sound of the blower announced our condition. With that mallet on the sharp end we made Soldier Summit about forty-five minutes late. Of course we made a little of it back on the downgrade into Helper.

I expected to hear about this from the authorities, but they contacted the engineer instead. Ed told me about it later on. He said that Joe Stevenson called him on the phone a day or two later.

He inquired, "Ed, you lost forty minutes on no. 2 yesterday."

"Yes, we did," answered Ed.

"What was the trouble?"

Ed said to me later, "I didn't know just what to do; there was nothing I could say except that we had no steam."

"No steam?" cut in Joe. "Who was the fireman?"

"I told him it was Gould."

"Gould? And you had no steam?"

"Yeah."

After a moment or two of silence, Joe had said, "Well, there must have been something wrong." And he hung up the phone.

How right he was; there sure was something wrong, only he never found out just what it was. I didn't hear a word about it, only what Ed told me.

I can remember several other times when I didn't do so well.

I came out of Salt Lake one night on the 1184. Charley Showacre was the engineer. We had a hot shot fruit train. The 1184 was a good steamer. If she hadn't been, she wouldn't have been on the sharp end of that fruit train. I had never in the past had any trouble in keeping her hot.

We left Salt Lake this night, and try as hard as I might, I couldn't get that gauge hand up against the peg. Those fruit and bullion trains were heavy, and they had to be put over the road. After zooming through Midvale I managed to regain a few pounds on the steam gauge. Still I was having trouble. That hand just wouldn't stand up as it should.

About a quarter of a mile before reaching Riverton there is a slight letup in the grade. At that point I was sweating desperately, trying to get that gauge hand up against the peg. When we hit that letup in the grade, Showacre hooked the Johnson bar back a nick. Before we had gone a dozen car lengths, that pop let go with a loud bang. I walked over and tapped Charley on the shoulder.

"There she is, Charley. Use her!"

He laughed loudly as he turned to me. "What's the matter Gouldie? Did you get off on the wrong foot?" He went on, "I've been watching you ever since we left Salt Lake. I knew you would catch up after a while."

That remark about getting off on the wrong foot was standard. Whenever a person experienced trouble from the start, he was getting off on the wrong foot. I got off on the wrong foot more than once in my career.

I recall one time when we came up out of Helper on no. 5. I was firing the 768 for Art Campbell. I had trouble trying to keep my old pet hot. We had an eleven hundred on the point as a helper. Joe Stevenson was riding

that helper engine. He could tell by the weakness of the bark of old 768's exhaust that we were not doing our stuff. I knew that as soon as we stopped at Soldier Summit he would drop back to see what was the matter. That fire was all clinkered up, but I must not let him know it. Just before Art shut off at the Summit, I bounced about a half dozen scoops of coal right in front of the fire door.

Sure enough, as soon as we stopped Joe climbed up on the 768. He grabbed the scoop and opened the firedoor. He placed the scoop on the fire ring and looked over it at my fire. Of course he couldn't size up that fire because the coal that I had dropped just in front of the door was in full flame now.

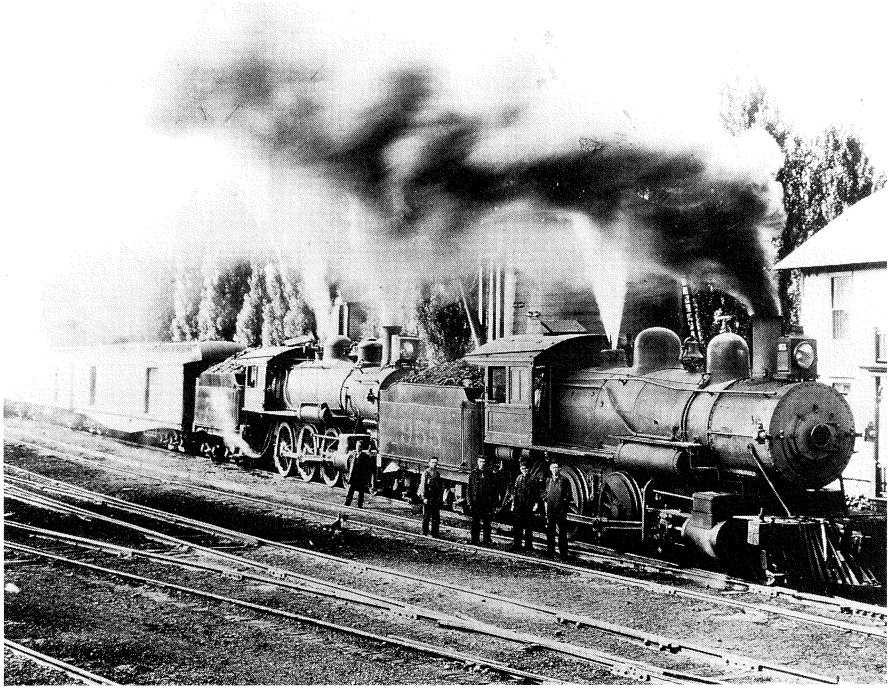
He turned to me and said, "I can never see your fire, Gouldie."

With that he got off the engine and we left town. On the long descent down into Provo, I had plenty of time to straighten out my fire.

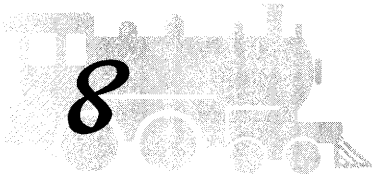
On several other occasions I didn't do too well, but I think I was a pretty good fireman, anyway. When a man goes running and sees other firemen perform, he gets an idea of how good he was. I once got a letter from Billy Cook, the general road foreman of equipment. It made me feel so good I learned it by heart. I can still repeat it word for word:

> Mr. W. G. Gould, Fireman:
>
> In looking over the Traveling Fireman's report I notice he shows your service as a fireman as excellent. It pleases me greatly to get such reports, and it certainly should be a credit to you.
>
> Signed,
> W. B. Cook
> General Road Foreman of Equipment. Burnham, Colo.

I wish I had kept that letter. It would sure bring back the warm glow of pleasant memories.



Two engines, the Denver & Rio Grande 955 and a seven hundred, “blowing the dome” to show off. Photo from the W. J. G. Gould collection, photographer unknown.



8

Railroad Hazards and Wrecks

When I look back through the years, I truly believe someone up there must have been guiding me. Someone up there must have been watching over me and directing my movements. When I think of the many slight incidents or variations in timing or setting that have meant the difference of life or death to me, I sometimes marvel!

There was the time when I was a very young fireman and was firing an eastbound drag. We were in two reverse curves between Mill Fork and Tucker. It was in the small hours of the morning and Goose Neck Johnson, my engineer, was half asleep over on his seat box. We were beginning to come out of a left-hand curve that circled the low foothills. I was keeping a watch ahead as best I could between fires.

Just as we were about to enter the long tangent, I thought I detected a flicker of light dancing along on the polished inside of the rail. I waited a moment. Then, as we straightened out on that single tracked mainline, sure enough, there was a pale oil headlight dancing along down the track against us. I awakened Goose Neck, and he lost no time bringing our train to a halt. We watched that headlight getting closer. We knew instinctively that someone was trying awfully hard to get that train stopped.

When only a few car lengths separated us we heard that engineer reverse his engine and start to work steam in the back motion. We could hear the roar of the exhaust as the drivers started to spin frantically in the opposite direction. That headlight seemed to shiver and shudder crazily. Only a few feet separated us when the other headlight came to a stop.

After stopping, that other engineer wasted no time. He quickly jerked three blasts from his whistle, and to our astonishment he started backing up to Tucker at a very fast speed. He was a Thistle helper engine returning light. We followed cautiously.

Just into the clear of the mainline on the pass at lower Tucker we caught up with him. He had covered his headlight and was out in the center of our track waving us down with a red fusee. He climbed on our engine and crossed over to the right side to speak to Goose Neck.

I heard Johnson say, "Sure, sure!"

The other engineer started to get off. I was sitting on the left hand seat box. He pressed down on my knee and said, "Don't say anything about this, will you?"

I told him I wouldn't, although, as I was a young fireman, I didn't really know just what there was to say about it. Later when we had plenty of time, my engineer told me how it all came about.

Kid Needham was the engineer on that helper engine. He was returning light to Thistle after making a help to Soldier Summit. He got an order at Lower Tucker to take the siding and meet us at that point. He failed either to read his orders correctly or at all. He just climbed on his engine, a large consolidation, and started for Thistle. He was well on his way when he saw our headlight circling the foothill. It then suddenly dawned upon him that he was supposed to meet an eastbound extra at Tucker. He was making pretty good time down that straight track and he was quite busy getting stopped.

It seems like when a man grows older he analyzes previous incidents more carefully than he did when he was younger. At the time I thought little about it, but in later years I have often thought what little difference there is between life and death situations.

Just think what could have happened if Needham had been about thirty seconds earlier—or if we had been about thirty seconds later. We would have met in those two reverse curves where there would have been no chance to see each other until it was too late. It could have been disastrous, because those light engines returning from making a help on the hill lost no time between Tucker and Thistle on their way home. They literally just fell down that canyon.

A few years later I was firing for this man Needham. He had come to Salt Lake to work in the pool. We were going up past the Dog Ranch just before entering those reverse curves. All the way up from Thistle, Needham had been telling me of his experiences. The old head telling the new.

I walked over to him and said, "Needham, did you ever come down that straight track up ahead and see a headlight coming around this mountain?"

He looked at me kind of foolishly and said, "Yes, but who told you about it?"

I told him I was firing for Goose Neck Johnson that night. He fell into silence and didn't tell me anymore of his experiences for a few trips.

Goose Neck Johnson met an awful death. He was going west on 61 with an eleven hundred engine. The fog was so thick he could only see a few car lengths ahead. At a point about a mile and a half east of Midvale, a westbound work train was dogging along trying to find the switch to head in on the pass. They failed to get out a flag or even a fusee. Goose Neck came bowling along through the fog on the sharp end of 61, a carded fast freight. I don't believe he ever knew what happened to him. I don't think he had time to even see that work train before he hit it. His head brakeman died with him.

The rear brakeman on the work train was pinned in the wreckage of that burning caboose. They couldn't get to him to release him. As the flames grew closer he begged for a gun. No one gave him one. I am not sure anyone around had one to give. It was not an item normally carried by railroaders. The poor fellow died in awful agony.

To use a dramatic, or more properly, a morbid phrase, death was rampant on the rails in those days! I wonder if I could go through it again; maybe—if I were younger. I'm content now to sit at home and wait here for the grim reaper.

When the mainline was a single track between Provo and Thistle, two miles below Castilla there was a piece of straight rail about three-quarters of a mile long. At the west end of this tangent was a house where the attendant of a dam on the river lived. This place had a few lights around it all night. One of these lights was right in line with the end of this straight track.

In those days of the old oil headlights on locomotives, a crew coming west down this tangent could easily be fooled by this light. It was just about the height of a headlight and just about the same brilliancy. Many times I nervously watched that light, wondering if it was what I thought it was or if it was a headlight coming up against us. Things like that could sure bring out the goose pimples. However, no one would ever admit to being scared.

I was working in the pool out of Salt Lake firing freight. Henry Hanagan, an engineer I had worked with for some time on the Bingham Branch, came to Salt Lake to take a mainline job. I was firing for him on his first trip out of the Salt Lake pool. We had made the eastbound trip with no trouble due to my coaching. On the return trip leaving Provo, Henry asked me how far we should go for no. 2. We had a train that was not too heavy, so I told him we could make Geneva. If our train had been of the usual tonnage I would have said Lakota. No one would head in at Geneva going west with a heavy train. If he did, he would not be able to get them rolling fast enough to make American Fork without doubling the hill.

So we started out from Provo, intending to go to Geneva for no. 2, an eastbound passenger train. Somewhere around Lakota it started to snow quite heavily. Henry and I hadn't exchanged a word since I had told him he could make Geneva. After we passed Lakota, the snow really began to fall.

About two miles east of Geneva, Henry became panicky. He shut off steam and began to set the air brakes. I asked him what he was doing. I could tell by his voice that he was going to pieces. He said he was going to cut off the engine and run ahead and flag no. 2 as we didn't have time to make it into clear with the train. This was the usual procedure in case you were caught on short time to make a station for a timed train. You would cut off the engine, run ahead with the engine to the place you intended to meet that opposing train, leave a man to flag, and then go back and get your train.

When I realized Henry's intention I started to take stock of my flagging equipment. I didn't have a red lantern. I didn't have any torpedoes. I had just one red fusee and a white lantern.

When we got to the east switch at Geneva I told Henry to let me off and go back and get the train. He did just that. When I hit the ground it was really snowing with a brisk wind whipping it in every direction. The first thing that happened to me was the light in my white lantern went out. There was no chance to relight it in that weather.

Henry started back for the train, and I opened the switch so that he would be able to head in on his return without stopping. I then started running down the track to meet and flag no. 2. In exasperation I threw the useless lantern as far as I could off the right of way.

I was running down the mainline in a wild snow storm to flag no. 2, and all I had to do it with was one red fusee. It was snowing and blowing so hard you couldn't see twenty feet into the storm. I stopped running for an instant to listen for no. 2. All I could hear was the shrieking of the wind. I kept on running and praying that no. 2 would be a little late.

I could fancy what would happen if no. 2 got by me. I could hear the shattering of glass and the sound of that terrible impact when that passenger train collided with Henry at top speed. I wondered if that fusee would really light up when I needed it. I had no way of knowing. I could only wait until I could hear the rumbling of a passenger locomotive or catch the glow of a headlight. Then I hoped that fusee would blaze long enough to flag no. 2.

By this time, I knew no. 2 was off schedule. I hoped he would be a little later still. Pretty soon I heard the sound of an engine. I couldn't tell if it was Henry or the passenger train, and I couldn't see a headlight in either direction on account of the storm. If that was no. 2 I could hear I had better be cracking that fusee. I held off a little longer. I still could not tell from which direction that sound was coming. My mind was in a terrible state. If I was sure of that fusee lighting everything would be okay. If it didn't? Much as I hated to, I couldn't help picturing the result.

I had now arrived at the west switch of the passing track. The wind and snow seemed to be dying down. Soon it quit snowing and I could see the faint glow of a headlight to the east and discern an engine rumbling slowly toward me. I was sure that our train would soon be into clear on the pass. It suddenly quit snowing altogether and paradoxically the moon, a big, round moon, lighted up the countryside.

I was still holding tightly to that damp sodden fusee when I heard Henry call me in with those five blasts of the whistle. I knew then that he was into clear on the passing track. I saw his headlight go out. What a relief! Number 2 could come anytime now. I looked to the west. Under that bright moon shining on the snow I could see almost to American Fork. And I could not see any sign of that passenger train. I contemplated the fusee in my hand. Then to ease my mind, I tried lighting it. After all that worry the fusee blazed out the first try!

I was firing for Kid Needham one night. We were going east on a fruit train. We had a good old eleven hundred—220 class—engine. The best of the power at hand was saved for the fruit and preferred runs. There were no better engines anywhere than those 220 class consolidations when they were in good shape.

We were rolling furiously down the long tangent track east out of American Fork to a meet with a westbound coal drag at Geneva. We had superior train order rights, so he had to take the siding for us at that point.

At the west end of Geneva the mainline makes a slight curve to the right if you are going east. If you are going west the track turns to the left. An engineer going east can see down into and for quite a distance east of

Geneva. An engineer coming west cannot see past the west switch due to this curve.

As I was saying, we were rolling east on that long down grade out of American Fork. Two miles west of Geneva Needham called to me.

"Come here," he said looking straight ahead.

I went over to the right side to see what was holding his attention. The night was very dark. About a mile east of Geneva we could see an oil headlight shivering along the mainline toward us. We knew the fireman was down on the deck spading the coal. He was flashing the door. When he opened the door to put in coal the sky would light up around the engine. We could almost distinguish the engine cab and the clouds of smoke mingling with the steam sizzling around the pop valve and rolling back over the train.

Knowing, as we did, what all this meant, it was a chilling and frightening sight. They had no idea of heading in to meet us at Geneva, according to orders. We could see them coming, but they couldn't see us. That engineer couldn't see us due to the curving track. The fireman was down on the deck shoveling coal into that blinding firebox. If the head brakeman was on the engine, he must surely be asleep, which was not unusual. Already my engineer had shut off what little throttle he was working on the long slight downgrade.

On came that trembling headlight. Intermittently the sky would light up and then darken as the fireman continued to flash the firedoor. We knew now that they were intent on making the run for the American Fork hill, for they had already passed the east switch where they should have headed in for us. The engineer and I both prepared to leave our perilous positions on the engine. We were still rolling along about twenty miles an hour. Needham had made a heavy application of the brakes. There was nothing more that could be done. I got down on the steps on the left side. I could see that headlight just straightening out onto the tangent. There was no sense in waiting any longer. I stepped off the engine.

When I hit the ground I was soon aware that I hadn't improved my position. About three feet from the right of way was a large swamp, a deep pool of stagnant water choked with growing cattails. I had to line up beside those towering boxcars. I couldn't get away on account of the swamp. I wondered if on the pending impact those cars would turn over on me. I looked ahead at the approaching headlight. It was now facing us on the straight track. Behind it I could see the wheels of the train still on the curve. Every wheel, as far as I could see, was a round circle of fire thrown out as the brake shoes bit deeply into the revolving surface of the wheels.

Our train had already stopped, and I knew from those fire-encircled wheels of the other train that somebody was trying desperately to stop. Would that stop be made in time? That headlight was getting closer, although its approach was considerably slower. I began to feel a little better about my chances. If those engines did come together, It wouldn't be hard enough now to topple a boxcar over on top of me.

At last there was much loud screeching of brakes—then absolute silence except for the panting and wheezing of the air pumps. Both trains had come to a stop. I moved ahead as fast as I could along that narrow path between the swamp and the cars. When I got to the engine on the left side Needham was coming up on the right side. We both arrived about the same time. There was a space of three car lengths between the two engines!

Needham went up to the other engine. The engineer was a man named McCall. He was a little old man, as I remember, with a little gray Charlie Chaplin mustache. He had been on the Rio Grande about four years. He had come as a boomer and had stayed.

Although he was very bright and intelligent he was always getting himself into some trouble of his own making. I never talked to a man so well informed on air brake operation as he was. He could diagnose any trouble in the air brake system. But when it came to handling it expertly, he just couldn't do it. He could talk air brakes all day, but he couldn't handle them very well.

His excuse in this case was that he had misread the orders. He read the name Gravan instead of Geneva. Gravan was a little side track down in the bottom of the Jordan Narrows used mostly for storing cars. I never heard of anyone getting a positive train order meet at the place. A railroad company tries to have the names of its stations differ as much as possible in order to prevent any mistake in the reading of train orders.

The conductor, it developed, had pulled the air when he saw that the head end was intent on going up into American Fork. That's what stopped their train.

This case was covered up, as we would say. It was never reported. If it had been maybe that engine crew would have had to attend an investigation and would very likely have been fired.

As those names did, in a way, look a little alike, in the hurried reading of train orders, it could very well be that he spoke the truth when he said he read the order Gravan instead of Geneva. I had a bad experience once myself, after I was running an engine, when I misread a train order.

We had another harrowing experience on this eastward trip. Coming into Provo from the west is a long sweeping curve into town. It is also on

a slight downgrade. The yard limit board is about a mile west of the depot. This curve that I speak of is to the left. The engineer must depend on the fireman to inform him of any obstruction. All trains, except first-class (passenger) trains must come into town through yard limits prepared to stop in the distance that they can see. There is no flag protection in yard limits except against first-class trains. That means that if you are on anything but a first-class train, you must travel through these yard limits prepared to stop anywhere.

This night we were rambling into Provo right smart, to use a favored expression. I think Needham had something on his mind. Maybe he was still thinking of that experience a few miles back at Geneva. I had never seen him come into town that fast before. I was staring fearfully ahead from my side of the cab. We had traveled almost the full distance of that curve when I saw a glint of red on the inside rail. A moment later I saw a red fusee burning on the rear platform of a caboose.

I hollered to Needham, "That will do!"

We had a heavy fruit train and Needham set the air in an emergency application. Without looking across the cab I heard the slam of his brake valve into the big hole. As those brakes started to take hold and slow us down, I watched that caboose get closer and closer. Soon I saw that it was moving ahead. Our brakes were doing a good job of slowing us down. We got up to almost a car length of that caboose before it started pulling away from us. Then we stopped.

I then turned around to face Needham with a deep sigh of relief. He wasn't in the cab. I looked up on the coal pile. He was no where in sight. I wondered what had happened to him. In a moment or two he climbed sheepishly up the right hand gangway.

I said, "Where have you been?"

He answered, "I got down on the steps to see if the drivers were sliding."

I remarked that the gangway steps were a poor place to be if the drivers were sliding. He turned aside without another word. The truth of the matter was that in approaching Provo he must not have realized exactly where he was. He was probably preoccupied with other thoughts. If he had been he wouldn't have been coming into town so fast in the first place.

As I hollered, "That will do!" he normally would have waited for me to set the example before he got off, because the reason for stopping was in my vision. But in his preoccupation or nervousness he big holed the train and unloaded, as the expression goes. That experience at Geneva was apparently still with him.

Another time I was firing for another Swede, Ollie Johnson. We came out of Salt Lake on the house drag. This train set out loaded cars at different points along the line. On arrival at Thistle what was left of the train usually went down the Marysvale branch. So the house drag crew was usually turned around and sent back to Salt Lake or was assigned to some other service.

As it happened that morning, we were told to turn our engine, take our caboose, and back up to Gilluly. We were to get a westbound train of coal and take it on into Salt Lake. We backed up as ordered, put our caboose on the rear end of about sixty-five cars of coal, came around, and backed our engine onto the head end.

Those eleven hundreds had only one eleven-inch air pump on them in those days, and as it was a cold morning in the middle of winter, we were quite some time pumping up—"charging"—that train with air. Before we started, if we had been living up to the rules, we should have made an air brake test. This, my engineer failed to do.

We had been standing there quite a while pumping that train line up to pressure. We knew from the way the pump was working that the train was getting the air, but even at that Ollie should have tried his brake valve before starting the train. He didn't do it.

We took off from Gilluly and started rolling down the grade. When the speed reached about twenty-five miles an hour Ollie started to make his first application of the brakes. I heard him bring his brake valve around to the service position. I then heard the preliminary exhaust port open—and that was all. There was no corresponding sound from the train line exhaust as there should have been. Ollie moved his brake valve to the service position again. And again there was only the sound of the preliminary exhaust. We were now sliding down that grade pretty fast, and I was all ears and eyes. Something was wrong! Ollie brought his brake valve again to the service position and left it there. Still only the sound of the exhaust from the preliminary port (equalizing reservoir) was heard!

I jumped across the cab and looked up at the air gauge. Both hands on the gauge were falling together! Ordinarily the hand representing the train line—or brake pipe, as moderns term it—should have lagged behind the preliminary exhaust. As it was, the condition shown by the hands on the gauge would indicate that we had a very short train line. Not more than one or two cars. Behind us were sixty-five cars loaded with coal that were not responding to the braking system.

By now we were really rolling! There was nothing I could do. On the big curve just above old Tucker I decided to leave, and got down on the

tender step. I looked back along the train. Two car lengths back of the engine the head brakeman was already down on the stirrup step of the car. He was holding on with both hands, and standing with one leg on the bottom rung. He was tentatively and fearfully feeling with the other foot for the ground sliding by him so swiftly.

I turned away and made a careful jump. I lit over against the outside eastbound rail. Half stunned, I grabbed hold and slid along on that rail for about two car lengths before I could stop myself. When I did stop there was quite a weight on top of me. It was the head brakeman, Bobby Davis. When he saw me let go he had waited no longer. He had let go, too. We ended up together in one lump, and in one lump we slid along together on that eastbound rail.

The train went by us with a rush. We picked ourselves up and watched that caboose rolling along around the curves and out of sight. Already it had held the rail longer than we expected it to do. Then, the last look we had, it was still rolling swiftly along, but didn't seem to be rolling any faster. We started walking down the track. My right elbow was giving me quite a bit of pain, but you don't notice that too much when you are young.

Bobby Davis and I continued on down the track. When we got to Detour, to our great surprise, we could see that caboose standing right side up about a half-mile away.

That train had been giving the original engine crew trouble right out of Soldier Summit. At Gilluly the engineer, Toddy Magee, had complained about it being a hard train to hold. He had told the brakeman to get the conductor up to the head end. He wanted to talk to him.

The conductor, Lew Combs, had come out of the caboose and walked up to the engine in the cold of that early winter's morning. That could not have been helpful to his Welsh disposition. When Toddy started to tell him of his having trouble holding that train, he interrupted to tell the engineer that the only trouble was on the right hand seat box of that engine. That did it! A Welsh-Irish argument was in full swing.

Finally Lew had threatened to cut Toddy and his engine off the train and send them to Thistle light.

Toddy said, "Go ahead. Cut me off!"

Lew said he would.

"Go Ahead," said Toddy again. "Cut me off!"

If it weren't so comical it would have been ridiculous. Both of these hot tempered little game cocks were trying to bluff the other into making a move. But Lew had deliberately strode to the back of the tank and closed both angle cocks. He gave Toddy a highball signal with his lantern. Toddy

called his bluff, whistled two short blasts, and took off. He didn't stop until he got to Thistle. I often wondered what Lew thought when he saw that engine fade away around the curve and head for Thistle on his highball.

That was the reason for our crew having to back up to Gilluly to get that train off the mainline.

When Bobby and I got back to the train, we were subjected to a lot of good natured censure and ridicule for having left the train. I know though that the reason that some of the others didn't get off was their fear of the result. That ground was really rushing by when we let go.

You may wonder how that train finally did stop. I can explain that. I have observed conditions several times in later years when it was possible to get air into the train line and charge it up, but very difficult to get it out to set the brakes. The pressure in the train line after charging must be reduced to set the brakes.

If the inner lining of an air hose is ruptured the air may flow past the rupture or flap into the train line if that rupture is near the head end of the train. However, that rupture or flap of lining will choke off the flow of air in the opposite direction when an attempt is made to reduce the pressure through the automatic brake valve.

Or, if a chunk of ice forms in an air hose it will, due to the flow of air in the two different directions, roll itself into a ball until it gets big enough to choke off the passage, usually up against a metal fitting of reduced diameter in the train line. This will act as a check valve, allowing air to flow into the train line, charging it up; but the ice will not allow it to flow out to reduce the pressure as is necessary to set the brakes.

There is no question that one of these two conditions was operating with this train that morning. It was probably a little marble of ice. If Ollie Johnson had made the required air brake test before starting, this condition would have been detected immediately. No doubt Toddy Magee suspected it when he was having the original trouble, but apparently he couldn't get Lew Combs to inspect the train. As it was, that train line was fully charged with air when we left town, but due to the ice plug near the head car that pressure could not be reduced through the engineer's brake valve.

However, with the engineer's brake valve in negative position no additional air was getting into that train line. There are always a few leaks in a long train line. Those leaks reduced the train line pressure slowly. By the time the train had run three or four miles those leaks would have reduced the pressure and gradually set the brakes, and by the time that train had reached the flat rail below Detour those brakes had set hard enough to stop the train.

If this incident did nothing else, it taught me the importance of making an air brake test before starting after standing around for any great length of time.

I had one experience in my days on the rail that would be hard to forget. That was the time we ran away down the old Soldier Summit grade.

At the Summit in those days there was a long snow shed. If the wind was blowing or if the weather was bad, trains would be pulled into the shed for inspection. The inspection was rigorous and exacting. The train line, that is the brake pipe, and all connections, including triple valves, auxiliary reservoirs, and such, would be gone over thoroughly in quest of leaks after the pressure had been pumped up to eighty pounds. This was very important, as the pumping capacity of those engines wasn't what it was in later years.

The largest pumps on the road were the eleven-inch pumps on the eleven hundred class engines. All other engines, including those in passenger service, were equipped with nine and one-half-inch pumps. The size in inches referred to the size of the air cylinder bore. The eight and one-half-inch cross-compound pump, later standard equipment on almost all engines, had a capacity two and a half times greater than the eleven-inch pump. When the Utah Railway engines appeared they were the wonder of the road, for they had two eight and one-half-inch cross-compound pumps on each engine. All the pumping capacity in the world!

We had the little old 951 that night we ran away. She had one nine and one-half-inch pump. It was necessary that all leaks be taken up before attempting the descent of that heavy grade. After charging the train line and reservoirs to eighty pounds pressure, the car men would go over every joint and connection with a flaring torch. If the flame on the torch wavered when held against a joint that proved that there was a leak at that point. This had to be made tight. That was the leakage test.

After that the brakes would be set with the retainers in holding position. Any piston travel over seven inches would have to be shortened. The brakes were then released, and the holding condition of the retainers was noted. All this information had to be conveyed to the engineer before he started down the grade.

The usual comment would be like this: "You've got one a little long and one not holding," meaning that on one car the piston travel was over seven inches, and that one retainer was not retaining. This was the maximum deviation from perfection allowed in any one train.

If the engineer decided it was a safe train he would whistle off, put his brake valve in full release, and gently ease his train out onto the grade. With

the brake valve in release position instead of running position, twenty pounds more air would be pumped into the train line. So before he got ready to brake the train he should have one hundred pounds in the brake system.

Some engineers, a little overly confident, would neglect to return the brake valve to release position. This would cut down the braking pressure from one hundred to eighty pounds. If the train was a good holding one this would work all right. If not, then eighty pounds would not be enough. The events of the night of this story proved that eighty pounds was indeed not enough.

This night we had an engineer by the name of Bill Boucher. He was a very capable engineer and a very fine man. I liked him a great deal. After going through the ritual described above, we started down the hill. The first application of the brakes took hold okay. However, instead of returning his brake valve to release position to get that extra twenty pounds pressure, Bill elected to stop at the running position. When he next made a brake application it had little effect, and by this time we were rolling merrily along.

He made several more reductions of air with no appreciable effect. As things were he didn't dare release to get more air and he couldn't get more air pressure until he did go to the release position. Too late he cut in his driver brake. That is the brake on the driving wheels. We were by this time indeed rolling too fast, much too fast.

Although he hadn't said a word to me, somehow I knew we were running away. When I saw him fumbling along the inside of the cab for the driver brake cutout, I jabbed the torch into the firebox for a light and held it so that he could find the valve.

We were now rolling along right smart. Finally Bill reached for the whistle cord and one long appealing moan split the night air. It was the ultimate in the drama of a railroad runaway—that urgent call for brakes. The call that would send the trainmen out on the tops of the cars, out on the "hurricane deck," to tie down the brakes by hand and brake club. The driving wheels on the little old 951 were now turning faster with every revolution.

In my short career as a mountain rail I had often pictured such a condition. I had often wondered how it would feel to be running away down this steep grade. I don't know if those thoughts had prepared me for this occasion, but I will say, more truly from pride than braggadocio, I was cool and in full command of my actions. This was it, I thought. This is a situation that I have been wondering about. Would I now end up in a hospital, the morgue, or would I live to tell about it? The very next few moments would tell. I seemed to glory in it!

I walked the gangway, first from one side and then to the other. Bill Boucher didn't say a word to me. He again sent that appealing moan from the whistle out onto the night air. The sound seemed to fill the canyon. He was again calling for brakes. If that whistle could be translated into words it would say:

"Tie 'em down, boys, Tie 'em down!"

"I've done all I can do now!"

And those brakemen riding out on top of those rocking cars with their brake clubs would try to get one more nick, one more notch, in the brake staff ratchet. One more nick just might do the trick!

During the early seconds of our roaring descent I had walked from one side of the engine to the other. The thought had been in my mind: I can still get off. I can still jump. I would look at the engineer for direction. He weighed about sixty-five pounds more than I did, and he was about twenty-five years older. If he could stay with the engine and take a chance, then why couldn't I do likewise?

Now as I looked down at the ground swirling by the thought came to me: you've waited too long! You can't get off, now! You've missed your chance!

Three and a half miles below Soldier Summit a derailing spur took off from the mainline and led up the mountain side. The switch to this spur was always lined for the mountain. An elderly woman and two grown daughters tended this switch twenty-four hours a day. A stop board a quarter of a mile above the switch commanded all trains to stop. After a full stop was made, four loud blasts from the whistle brought one of this trio of women out to line the switch for the mainline.

The train could then proceed on its way. But only if the train came to a full stop would that switch be lined for the mainline. Immediately after the train had passed, the switch would again be lined for the derailing spur. Where this spur ended against the mountainside was a pile of wood. It was the remains of shattered slats from the wooden pilots in use in those days. That pile of wood was a grim reminder of others who before us had smashed up against that mountain.

I was now standing in the right gangway as we flashed by that stop board. I thought, it won't be long now!

In those last few seconds of our flashing descent Bill Boucher had cut out his driver brakes. Opening his cylinder cocks he managed to get the Johnson bar over into the back motion. Now he cautiously fed steam into those cylinders. The wheels turned hesitatingly backwards, slipping on the sanded rail, but to no avail.

Just before we entered the spur Bill stepped down onto the deck. I was standing in the right gangway watching the crazy world fly by me. He then spoke his first words to me since leaving Soldier Summit: "You better get off now, Kid, before she turns over."

Reluctantly with my foot I felt for the gangway step. I wanted to wait a little longer. I thought that when that train felt the upslant of that spur the speed would decrease slightly, and I would be able to get off with less danger. I could look across the deck and see my engineer duplicating my position and actions on the left side. Oh, how I wished that train would slow down just a trifle!

We had just entered the derailing spur. It was early in November, and there was a light snow on the small rail. The engine was in the back motion, the cylinder cocks were open, and she was working against her own forward motion. Then she hit the snow-covered rail, and those high driving wheels started to spin crazily backwards.

I thought she was on the ground. It was now or never! I couldn't wait any longer. I leaned into the breeze and let go. I never made a more careful jump in my life, but that hard snow-covered ground didn't wait for me. The earth flew up to meet me. It hit me a dazing blow in the forehead, and head over heels I went. Vainly I spread my arms in an attempt to stop my pinwheeling gyrations. At last I came to a stop about thirty feet off the right-of-way.

Funny what thoughts pass through a person's mind in moments of stress. As I was doing cartwheels over the snow my thoughts were: I wonder if anyone is watching me? I'll bet I'm a strange sight rolling around in this snow.

When I left that engine I made a trail in the snow. The head brakeman was riding the first car. When he saw me make that jump he let go too. The trails we left in the snow paralleled each other for about thirty feet away from the track. I had hardly gotten to my feet when the caboose lurched to a noisy crashing stop just a few car lengths from us.

What a contrast was the absolute silence that then prevailed for a few moments. Suddenly I heard hysterical chattering and quavering laughter from the region of the caboose. We all converged there sizing each other up, trying to find out what injuries we had sustained.

Bill Boucher limped painfully up over the bank. The rear brakeman and the conductor rode the caboose to a stop and were in good condition except for hysterics. The head brakeman had a few bruises but no broken bones. Bill had a badly sprained knee and some back injuries. And me—I was sure a bloody sight, but luckily no broken bones.

It developed that the engine had stuck her nose up against the mountain, and it appeared that she had tried to climb it. If she had gone another car length I believe she would have laid over against the first car. As it was she needed only a little help to get back on her feet, minus her cowcatcher.

We all considered ourselves lucky. If I had any assurance that I wouldn't sustain injuries I wouldn't mind going through it again. It was for a few moments a thrill never to be forgotten.

There is no sound in all the world quite like that appealing moan from the whistle when you know it's a call for brakes—a monster in distress, calling, pleading despairingly for help and for sympathy. He who has heard that appeal ring out on the winter's night air will never forget the sound of it or fail to feel the utter helplessness it conveys. He will waken from a troubled sleep to hear it again and again.

While we were standing there five helper engines running light back down to Tucker came down the hill in succession and stopped behind us. We let one of them go on down the mainline and stop just clear of the spur switch. The rest of them got behind the caboose and yanked us out onto the mainline. The one that had cleared the spur then backed up and coupled onto the head end. After going through those tests again we proceeded down into Tucker. The little old 951 needed a little work. Then we proceeded to Salt Lake with the train we had. There was no filling out to normal tonnage at Tucker that night.

We were all out of service when we got to Salt Lake. After four days' delay we were ordered to attend an investigation. At this investigation the only member of the crew that could be censured was the engineer, although I got a big bawling out from the master mechanic.

Old Honest Bill Boucher might have saved his job if he had been willing to tell a couple of small lies. But he told me before the investigation, "I wouldn't lie to save my job." That was the way he was. The instruction in handling trains on that grade was to put the brake valve in the full release position between applications of the brakes so as to charge the brake pipe to the higher pressure. Also the driver brakes must be cut out and the water brake used on the engine. Bill had violated both instructions and admitted that he did. There was no possible way that they could have checked on him if he had wanted to lie. He knew it, and he also knew what the penalty was to be. Still he refused to lie about it.

I had fired for old Bill quite a bit prior to this time, and I liked him a great deal. He was as honest a man as you would find in railway service.

At that time I had been firing an engine about two and a half years. I was not looking for promotion until I had at least four years of service.

Consequently I was not as well posted on air brakes as I would like to have been. When it came my turn for questioning the Master Mechanic posed a few routine questions, then asked pointedly, "Do you know how much main reservoir pressure your engineer had?"

I answered, "No, Sir."

He went on, "How much train line pressure did your engineer have?"

I said, "I don't know."

He was beginning to get angry. "Do you know how much excess pressure your engineer had?"

I said, "No, Sir."

He leaned over and looked me full in the eye. "Do you know your engineer was on that engine?" he shouted. I was getting angry too and my cockiness was showing.

"Yes, Sir!" I shouted back.

"Oh! You do know that, do you?"

Then he began tapping on the table with the end of his pencil. "Young man, this railroad does not want just coal shovelers. It wants bright, intelligent young men. Young men who can become engineers, and don't you forget it."

He made several more remarks that were not flattering to me, then he said, "You go back and mark up on the board, and don't forget I'll be watching you."

They fired old Bill for those two violations. Notwithstanding his own misfortune, he did his best to console me.

"Don't mind what he said, Kid. Just let it pass. If you had tried to answer his questions he would have tangled you up. So what!"

I thought that was pretty decent of him. He waited around for several months in the hopes of reinstatement, which was refused him. After about six months, the Bingham and Garfield Railroad was just about to go into operation. The superintendent had held that same position at Welby on the Bingham Branch of the Rio Grande. He was more than glad to hire Bill Boucher as an engineer.

When the Rio Grande heard of it, they offered to reinstate Bill. He simply and directly told them to go to Hell!

There is never a time when I travel up the old grade to Soldier Summit in an automobile that I don't look over when we pass the former location of Media and size up the markings of that runaway spur leading off the mainline. I see the distortion that marks the culvert location under the track. In recent years it has begun to fill up. But you can still put an X there and say, "X marks the spot where Gilbert Gould took his chance! Where he made that jump!"

Yes, give me back my youth and health, and I'd like to do it again! It's one event I shall never forget!

I did go back on the board, and I did take notice of myself. I obtained some books on air brakes. I took a course in locomotive running with the International Correspondence Schools. I studied diligently, and when I did take the engineer's examination I was glad to see Master Mechanic Bennett sit in and listen. He listened for about an hour. Then without a word he took his departure.

One day I was firing an eastbound drag of empties. There was a preferred job (a hot shot) coming along behind us. We headed into the pass at Gilluly to let him by. This preferred job was a train of bullion out of Midvale. We both pulled up and stopped at the upper water tank about the same time. We, being the inferior train, let the engine on the bullion job take water first. We sometimes showed a little courtesy—especially when the rules demanded it.

I was on the ground ready to swing the spout over to our tank when they released it. Their head brakeman stepped down beside me to stretch his legs. We entered into a friendly conversation. He was a boomer. I had never seen him before, although he had worked on the Rio Grande at several previous times, in both the capacity of a brakeman and a fireman. He had a very pleasing and friendly personality. I took quite a liking to him during our brief gabfest there at the tank spout.

When their tank was filled, and they were about to leave town he climbed aboard. The engineer blasted two ear-splitting blasts from the whistle. Like a long, delayed echo came the same sounds from the helper engine back in the train. They took off on up the hill.

My new-found friend waved at me from the gangway as the train started to move. "I'll see you at Helper," he shouted.

Well, I saw him at Helper alright, but I don't think he saw me. He was lying on a slab in one of the lower unused rooms at the railroad YMCA. He was killed at Castle Gate a couple of hours after his promise to me.

At that time all bullion trains had to stop at Castle Gate ten minutes to cool the wheels and to give the brakemen a chance to look over the train. It was there, either in stopping or starting, that this happy, carefree, boomer brakeman got his among those jostling cars. It was never known exactly in what way.

There used to be a big arc light at Castle Gate just above the coal tipple from the mine. It was at this point that the heavily loaded eastbound trains stopped for inspection and to cool the wheels. There was a slight curve to the left at this place.

One night I was firing an eastbound bullion train for Ole Johnson. Coming down out of Royal I felt a slight jerk on the engine. Ole looked inquiringly across the cab at me. Neither of us spoke. We continued on our way. At Castle Gate the usual stop was made for inspection.

It was a warm summer night. I listened a moment to the sizzling sound of the electrode and carbon in that arc light off to my side. For a moment I contemplated it. Then my gaze wandered back along our train. What I expected to see was a long line of box cars over their smoking wheels, maybe also the brakeman's lantern moving alongside. What I actually saw was just one box car behind the engine!

It developed that when we felt that little jerk in the sag at Royal, the train had broken in two. That is, a drawbar had pulled out of its connections to the car. The automatic brakes had stopped the rear portion of the train. With the brake on only one car, we had drifted down into Castle Gate to stop with the straight air at the inspection point. The head brakeman was still getting his rest on the back of the tank. We got him up and very cautiously backed up to Royal for the rest of our train. Anything can happen on a railroad!

Let me talk a little bit about the state of mind that we frequently observed where a man was afraid of being afraid.

I was firing a little Rome one day on the eastbound local. We were just leaving Salt Lake, and I noticed a wash-out plug sizzling down where the deck rubbed up against it. I called the engineer's attention to it. Reluctantly he glanced down and took a look.

"Oh, that's all right," was his verdict.

But I didn't think so. I was very careful when I got off the seat box to put in a fire. I knew that in spite of what the engineer said he too was more than a little worried. He kept glancing down at the plug. I got up on the seat box as far away as I could after every fire.

All at once the engineer started to holler, "Look out! Look out!"

That plug started to spew out scalding water and steam. I was glad that I wasn't down putting in a fire when it let go. We both got as far out the window as we could get. That wash-out plug was actually jiggling under the stress of a hundred and sixty pounds of steam. After we stopped (we had both injectors going by that time), we got down on the ground and let her gradually die. That engineer was afraid of that plug on the first look, but he would not admit it. He was afraid of being afraid.

I believe the best example of this condition of mind that I ever saw took place on the branch that ran from Provo to Heber Valley. It was in the early spring of 1915. I had not yet been promoted. Business was very

slow on the Rio Grande. I couldn't hold a regular job anywhere, so I was working on the extra board out of Salt Lake. There was a snow slide up around Vivian Park on the Heber Branch.

I was called off the extra board to fire the rotary snowplow. We went up the Provo Canyon with two little hogs pushing us. Al Baxter was operating the rotary. On the first pass we made at the slide we knocked out a cylinder head on one of the rotary's engines. It could be that I had too much water in the boiler or Al Baxter didn't have his cylinders clear before he gave her the gun.

We disconnected the damaged engine just as you would disconnect one side of a locomotive that blew a cylinder head. We then proceeded to operate with only one side connected. As you would expect, there was excessive vibration when the rotary was operating on just that one side.

We would get the rotary wheel turning as fast as we could with only one engine. Then Al would give two toots on the whistle. The two little hogs would then ease us into the snowslide. As long as the wheel kept turning those hogs would keep shoving us further into the snow. When the wheel stopped, Al would whistle three toots and the hogs would drag us out. After several hours, we had cut a neat square slot into the snow on the mountainside. It towered way up over the rotary. We would look up at it fearfully, especially when the rotary was vibrating vigorously.

High up the mountain on the other side of the canyon a man heavily clothed and armed with binoculars and a shotgun watched the snow up over our heads. If the snow started to move he was to fire the shotgun. We would then get the hell out of there. At least that was the idea.

That snow on the mountainside was high and heavy. If it did come down with us in the slot it would bury us. We all knew that, but we kept on working. Time after time those little hogs would push us into the snow with the rotary blades spinning and vibrating. Then when those blades quit turning they would drag us out until they started spinning again. The snow thrown by the rotary up on the bank of the slot grew higher and higher. No one gave voice to his thoughts. Everyone was silent. The tension was great, and we were all scared, but no one would admit it.

I know what my thoughts were. I was greatly relieved every time we were dragged out into the open. Each time we went in I thought, this is it! This is the last time. We will never come out again! That snow can't hang up there any longer.

I remember looking back at the fireman on one of the little hogs. His face was expressionless. He shook his head slowly and held up his hand with his fingers crossed. I believe everyone on that crew felt as I did. If one man

had said, "I'm not going in there again," that slide would not have been cleared as soon as it was. We were just all afraid to say we that we were afraid.

So we kept on. In we would go! We pressed up against the snow as long as the rotary blades turned, then we were out again. We finally made it through and the snow still stood, sheer up on the mountainside.

In a way this illustrates a paradoxical outlook on life. You will hear men say after relating some dangerous experience that they lived through safely, "I would never do that again!" Maybe they would and maybe they wouldn't. It's hard to tell. But just put them up against the gun and the odds are they would do it all over again!

I sometimes wonder when I think of some of my experiences if I could go through them again. I just don't know—maybe yes, and again, maybe no.

Curley Dyet, the engineer who first took an interest in me, was originally an engineer on the Park City road when it was an independent narrow gauge outfit.

He used to tell me about bucking snow on that road. He said that you couldn't get one of those little hogs stuck in the snow if you used your head. The idea was that when you rammed into a snow bank as far as you could go and were dead stopped, the first thing to do was to swing the Johnson bar over into the back motion. If you delayed doing this the snow would settle down in the links and you would be unable to move.

I saw this demonstrated several times, once very clearly on the Eureka Branch. We had come out of Salt Lake on the "house drag," all the freight loaded during the day for near points. It was always called for around midnight. After setting out the eastbound consist of our train at Thistle we had been ordered to take a little hog engine and the flanger and go down to Springville and flange out the Eureka Branch ahead of the mixed run. We had the flanger between the little hog and the caboose.

Whoever ordered this operation was surely not correctly informed of the situation. A flanger is for use against a moderate fall of snow. It is useless when up against deep, snow-filled cuts such as we encountered.

We left Springville ahead of the mixed job and were progressing nicely until we got to within about a mile and a half of the top of the hill above Eureka. It was there we ran into those cuts. What we needed was a rotary or at least a wedge plow, and ahead of, not behind, the engine. We made very little progress after that.

We would lunge at the snow, and as soon as we got stuck we would back out for a fresh start. Fifteen car lengths down the grade, we would stop and stand still. At that time a half a dozen section men, who were riding