

[Page 21 - Harry Albert Bulley: Accidents Averted](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 37](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1984/8/1

Harry Albert Bulley: Accidents Averted Harry Albert Bulley is my name. I was born in the States--Washington. I was born in 1897. My father was working there. My father was born between North Sydney and Sydney Mines, a place they call Centreville. He was a contractor; he used to build homes and stuff up there. But I never took up his job. I came to Sydney when I was a very young fellow. I'd say I was about 5 years old. I went on the C.N.R. in 1915. I always liked railroading. When I was a young fellow, I used to get engines (toys)--light them up, you know, stuff like that. I got a great kick out of it. I always liked railroading. I worked at the roundhouse for quite a while. I got my experience there, the first year. That was in 1915. We had to work, lighting the fires, getting the engines ready, express engines. We'd have to call those drivers that time. No telephone calls after a certain hour. We'd have to go give them two hours, and we'd have to go up where they were, their homes. We'd go, and we'd tap on the door, and we'd be sure he'd get up and answer us, eh? Then we'd come back and report that we'd given the call. We'd have to be sure that he'd hear the call. 'Cause all kinds of nights, you know, all hours of the morning. They were pretty sleepy sometimes, the fellows. One week we'd have to clean the engines. Oh, we had to clean it good. They gave us the oil, and the waste. And even the wheels. We'd have to go underneath to clean all, you know, anything that was in there. They had very particular fellows, the drivers. We'd always polish her. And the next week we'd be on the turntable. I worked in the roundhouse pretty near two years. I got out when I was 21 years old-- firing on the road. This fireman took sick, and they got me out of the roundhouse, and I went on the engine. And I made a good run out on them. And I got my turn from that time on. (What do you mean you made a good run?) That means you kept her hot for the driver, stuff like that. You kept the steam up. You knew your work hand-firing, see. You had a shovel there. And when you put a fire in the engine, you turned your shovel upside down. That would fan the flames, and that would show you where to put your coal. That would show you where the holes were in your firebox. And then, if you wouldn't get the right smoke out of your stack, you didn't have the right fire in her. There's something wrong. You would have to get nice black smoke out of her stack, to have a good fire. 'Cause you had different kinds of coal. This Sydney coal, it was very easy to fire her. But the Inverness coal was very hard to fire. It clinkered a lot. And I'll tell you: I was called a first-class fireman. I was no better than the others. But I'll tell you how. We'd leave before supper with this Inverness coal, and go to Grand Narrows. And half the way, it'd be clinkered. When I'd get to Iona, I'd go to work and clean my fire. They used to transfer mail at Iona. Well, I had time then to shake my grates; I'd clean my fire. And going over the Grand Narrows bridge, I'd get my engine pretty hot. When I'd get to Grand Narrows, I'd go to work. I'd get up on top of the tender and fill my tender full of water. And the driver'd empty out the ashes out of the ash pan. I'd have a real good fire in there. And they'd wonder how I was always making up my time. The others that'd come to work, they wouldn't bother cleaning their fire at Iona. They'd come to Grand



Narrows, they'd lose time. That was my secret. I had my fire all clean, all ready. Lose no time there at all. I'm the only guy living today, in our own division, that fired that big engine by hand. I couldn't tell you how much coal was on, but we often cleaned off that ten? der. On the run. My run then was from here (Sydney) to Point Tupper, 102 miles. (Would you be shovelling all the way?) .If you were a pretty good fireman, you wouldn't have to kill yourself. But if you were careless, you didn't know how to fire