



Part-time Jobs

One of the things about summer time in my home town when I was growing up was that it always represented an opportunity to get some part-time jobs. Of course, if a guy had a part-time job and had some money coming in, there was always the chance that he could do something special during the summer. Something special to me would be like going to the Bedford Fair for 2-3 days and having enough money to spend on anything I wanted. That would be something very special for me. So by the time I was 13 or 14 I was always looking for summer jobs.

One of the summer jobs I got was cutting the grass in what was called the Parkway in Saxton. The Parkway is that strip of like grassy park that runs for two blocks from the traffic light in the middle of town back toward Tussey Mountain Farm at the edge of town where the sign says, "Entering Saxton". Although it was two blocks long, it was a narrow strip of grass. It would take probably eight hours of continuous mowing with just a push mower. Now in those days they didn't have motors on the mower. It was just a real tight mower with a push, and you walked behind and cut the grass. I would do that whole two blocks in about eight hours over a two day period. The pay for that was 62!/20 an hour, so if it took me eight hours that meant I got \$5.00 every time I cut that whole piece of grass. So I took it on myself to keep that pretty nice looking down through there, and I loved making the \$5.00 every time I cut it, which was probably every other week. But that was one of my summer jobs. And when I got paid \$5.00, why usually I'd spend \$1.00 and I'd save \$4.00, put it somewhere where I would have it for the Bedford Fair or some other special event.

Another summer job that I enjoyed doing was outside of town, pretty near the Tussey Mountain Farm, there was a place called Happy Hollow. And Happy Hollow back in the 1940s had a swimming pool. It was a big concrete swimming pool and it was open to the public, and they used to charge like 250 for a kid to swim there all day and 500 for an adult. There was a stand

nearby where they sold soft drinks and candy bars and potato chips and things like that. Well the couple that owned Happy Hollow was an older couple~I thought they were older-they might have been 50 or 60~and their names were Vi and Charlie Troutman.

Vi was a great big heavy woman with an infectious laugh and she giggled and laughed and she'd been in the restaurant business and the catering business her whole life and she knew how to treat people and make them feel well. Her husband Charles was sort of a ne'er-do-well. He was not very ambitious. He didn't work very hard. Vi had to push Charlie pretty hard to make him do the work around the swimming, like cleaning up, picking up candy wrappers, making sure the locker rooms were clean, hosing down the concrete pad, mowing the grass, and frequently they had to drain all the water out of the pool and scrub the walls and clean the pool and refill it with fresh water because in those days they didn't have filtration systems like today.

Well, I went out to the pool a few times swimming and pretty soon I realized that Charlie wasn't gonna get his work done if he didn't hire a couple young guys to help him out. So I talked to him and also talked to Vi, and pretty soon I found out that they would welcome me to come out and do certain jobs around the pool. I found myself picking up the trash, mowing the grass, cleaning out the locker rooms. And every two weeks on Monday they would drain all the water out of the pool, and with great big push brooms/brushes we would scrub down the walls of the pool and the floor or the bottom of the pool and get all that slimy green yuck off of it and hose it down and clean it all

up and the refill the pool. Now the pool was refilled right out of the same spring that comes down through Allie and Nankey's farm. That stream runs right down through our farm, crosses underneath the highway and goes over to where Happy Hollow was, so it was the same water that the cows drank out of and everything else. It was totally unfiltered.

Consequently, after about two weeks of sitting in the swimming pool it would become a little bit green and slimy and slippery and warm and had to be changed. But for me, that meant work. What Charlie and Vi did was they gave me all the free swimming privileges I wanted, and I could have a sandwich, ice cream bar, soft drink, and snacks. As long as I didn't overdo it, I could pretty much get what I wanted to eat there. So it was a nice deal for me, and they really didn't pay me any money, but they treated me almost like one of their kids. Now that swimming

pool was three miles away from my house, which meant for me to go out there and either work or go out there to enjoy a free swim required that I get out there somehow.

Most of the time what we did was we walked-three miles out and three miles back. Now that was interesting because there was a short-cut (we called it a short-cut--! don't know if it was really any shorter), but from Saxton to behind the swimming pool there was a railroad track that went the whole way, and we could walk on that railroad track. That was sort of nice, you know. You could walk on the railroad track, you didn't have to worry about automobile traffic, you were sure no one was gonna stop and pick you up and give you a ride like along the highway, but at the same time you could throw rocks and you could look at the scenery and occasionally you'd see a few snakes. It was a good walk and we believed it was a short-cut.

The only thing about that trip from Saxton to Happy Hollow on what we called the railroad short-cut was you had to cross a railroad bridge. Now the railroad bridge was a bridge that crossed over a river on the edge of Saxton in Stonerstown, and the railroad bridge was very high up off the water. It was a narrow bridge just wide enough for a train to pass over, and then there was like a wooden sidewalk beside where the train went, and that wooden sidewalk was about four feet wide, and then at the edge of the sidewalk there was like an iron pipe or a railing that one could hold on to if he felt the need to balance himself walking across that bridge. That bridge seemed to be a half mile long. I don't know if it was that long. Maybe it was a quarter mile. But once an individual walked out on that bridge and started to cross the river walking way high on the bridge above the river, there was always the fear that around the corner would come the train and it would come roaring across the bridge while you were standing on it and you had to get over real close to that iron pipe and stay away from the train as it went barrelling by you on the bridge.

Now if you were near the edge of the bridge you might run for the end of it and try to get off before the train got on, because that was very, very frightening to be on that wooden bridge whenever the train came by. Well, we tried all sorts of tricks, you know.

Before we'd get on the bridge we'd lean down and put our ear on the railroad track and try to listen to see if a train was coming. We never knew when a train was coming, even though they

were supposed to be predictable. The reason the trains came were to haul coal cars out of the Broad Top area. So sometimes the train would be called for to send an engine and a caboose up to Broad Top from Huntingdon, pick up as many coal cars as possible in Dudley and Robertsdale and take them down to Huntingdon, where they would be hooked onto a Pennsylvania Railroad car and taken to Harrisburg or Philadelphia or Pittsburgh. So they weren't always predictable and scheduled. But anyhow we would walk the railroad bridge on the back road at the Happy Hollow.

I think the first time I was ever on that bridge that a train came by I was probably more frightened than at any other time of my life up until then because I guess there was another fellow or two with me, and as we walked across the bridge the other guy said, "Holy Smokes, Allie, here comes a train!" Well, I thought he was kidding and I said, "Where?". He said, "You can see the smoke over the hill." And the trains burned coal and there was like black smoke puppin, puppin, puppin, puppin from around side of the hill. And sure enough we're in the middle of the bridge and I said, "What'll we do?" And he said, "We'll run for it." Well, like dopes, we ran toward the train instead of away from the train, which said that we were going to meet the train quicker than if we would have ran away. We started running for the edge of the bridge and, of course, the train came whipping around the corner behind the hill and straight across the bridge. He laid down on the wooden sidewalk and I did the same thing and grabbed that iron pipe. That train went by and it seemed like it was going 60 miles an hour. It made the loudest noise and the scariest noise, and the guy driving it blew the whistle, and I'm telling you I was terrorized being on that bridge! All I could do was look down through the cracks. I closed my eyes, but I peeked down through the cracks in the bridge and I could see the river down below, and I thought, "Oh, how I wish I was down in that water away from this awful screaming train up here on this bridge."

But anyhow within three minutes the train had passed. We rose up off our bellies, which were all dirty by then laying on those wooden boards, and we looked back at that train going and I thought, "Boy, that train's never gonna catch me on this bridge again." And we proceeded to go on out to Happy Hollow and go for a swim that day. But that was a time I really thought my goodness I could die right up there on that railroad tressle. It was a scary situation.

Probably over the balance of my lifetime I was on that bridge a half a dozen other times when the train went by, and I really don't think it was nearly as frightening as it was that very first time as I crossed the bridge with one or two of my friends.

It was about this same time in my growing up that a new car dealer opened in Saxton, a man named Sam Garner. Sam Garner lived over in Martinsburg, and for some reason he decided to open a Chevrolet business in Saxton. He had Bill Putt, the contractor, build a very nice new garage on the edge of town. I went down there to see the new cars back in 1947 or 48 or 49, whenever it was. I got talking to Mr. Garner, and Sam took a liking to me. He asked what I did for a living, and being about 15, 16, 17 years old I didn't know what to say, and I said, "Not much." And he said, "Would you like a job washing cars for me?" And I said, "Sure." He said, "How would you get to work?" And I said that I'd walk to work because it was only 4-5 blocks. And he gave me a job washing used cars.

So if someone brought a car into his garage and traded it in and bought a new car, Sam would call me or have someone call me and I'd come down and take the used car that was traded in and I would wash it and clean it and wax it and make it look as good as possible so he could put it out on his lot and sell it. And that was a job that Sam allowed me to have working for him for quite awhile. I really enjoyed that. He paid me \$1.00 an hour, and he had all the chamois and the sponges and the soaps and the waxes. He liked my work, and he would always stop back and see how I was doing back there as far as sprucing up the used cars. For years and years Sam remained a very, very good friend of mine.

I can remember whenever Allie was graduating from college, Juniata College, and Nankey had gone down to some type of a ceremony with me my senior year, and on the way back from college—I guess Allie was 24 and Nankey was about 21 or 22—and she and I stopped to have dinner at a place called Kelly's Corner in Huntingdon, and Sam Garner came in and he said, "What are you two doing down here?" And we said that we were celebrating that Allie had finished college. And he congratulated me and shook my hand and left us. When the evening ended and Nankey and I went to leave the restaurant, we went over to pay our bill and the guy at the cash register said, "Don't worry about your bill...Sam Garner took care of it for you. He said, 'Congratulations!'"

But that's the kind of guy Sam was. He was always very generous with Allie and gave me opportunities to do work as a teenage boy that probably I wouldn't have had much chance of doing otherwise. So Allie really enjoyed his summer works and the different jobs he got to do as a kid growing up. It was fun because it meant I was never without money, I could go to the fair and when I was old enough to date girls I always had a couple dollars to take him to a movie or to go to a dance or go out somewhere for a sandwich or a drink. It was sort of a nice time growing up back in those days in the 1940s and 50s.

One of the strangest summer jobs I ever had was one that came upon me without any planning on my part. I was in eighth grade and, at that time, was probably of average size for an eighth grader. There were kids in eighth grade bigger than me, but many of them were older and were held back in school. By the time I was in eighth grade in the spring a strange thing happened in the area outside of Saxton.

A forest fire broke out that spring time on the side of a mountain. No one ever knew the cause, but it raged out of control for several days. The forest fire warden was very short of help. There weren't enough men available, or for some reason they didn't have high school and the grade school and ask that the larger boys or the stronger boys be permitted to come and help fight the forest fire—that they wouldn't be put in danger, but they were needed as extra hands in the fight to try to contain this raging forest fire on the edge of town.

Well, it was enough equipment, and at one point the forest fire warden was allowed to come to the like an adventure to me. I wanted to participate. So I went to the meeting and I heard about it. We had to have permission from our parents to do this. So I went home and I talked to my mother. And she said, "Honey, I don't think you should...I think it's too dangerous." I pleaded with her. I told her I'd be in good hands and I'd be working with men that would look after me and that it was the proper thing to do, it was citizenship, and I made all sorts of appeal. Finally she succumbed and she signed this permission note that would let me go out and fight the forest fire. I went with several of my friends. Some of my friends weren't permitted. Their parents wouldn't let them or for other reasons they weren't allowed to participate. But I went out and was assigned to a group. And this crew or group was about 10 people—5 men and 5 boys—and what we did was we would get in a truck and they would take

us out in a woodsy area near the fire, and with rakes and shovels and hoes, we were to scratch and rake and clean up like a pathway in the woods. They were called fire breaks. Those fire breaks were intended to be a point where, when the fire reached the fire break or the path, the fire would burn out rather than jump across this cleaned up piece of ground. And we worked hard out there for several days. We'd come back in the evening, get food, get a bath, sleep at night, and then the next morning go back out. We were excused from school the whole time to do this. And I probably did that for eight consecutive days. It was hard work. It was hot work. It was dirty. And sometimes it was frightening. But we were always to stay within sight or voice communication with our crew leader. And it was quite an adventure. Once the forest fire was finally put out, the fire warden came around and paid each of us kids \$25.00 for helping to put out the fire, and I felt like a very, very rich young man.