

Hudson River Valley Institute  
Walkway Over the Hudson Oral Histories  
Tony Marano

**Date:** Thursday, August 14, 2008  
**Length:** Approximately 71 minutes

**Interviewer (Paul Contarino):** Could you please state your name for the camera?

**Tony Marano:** My name is Tony Marano. M-A-R-A-N-O

**Interviewer:** How long have you lived the Hudson Valley?

**Marano:** 83 1/2 years. [Laughs]

**Interviewer:** As a resident of the Hudson Valley, what thing interests you the most about it?

**Marano:** I don't know, the beauty of it first thing and it is-the whole area, west and east of the Hudson River is a beautiful, beautiful sceneries; seems like a lot of nice people too and a lot of historic things about it, you know settled during the 1600s with the Dutch coming this way, and the Indian stories as you've heard of the Hudson Valley.

**Interviewer 2 (Jason Schaaf):** So what was the first thing that brought your family up into the Hudson Valley, you mentioned that your family as recent immigrants, they had moved up with you I believe?

**Marano:** There are a lot of Italian immigrants in Maybrook, there were others, if you weren't Italian in Maybrook when I was a young boy or a kid, you were an American. I didn't know the difference between the Irish and English, or whatever else, but they didn't dib down amongst us, they had their own section. There was discrimination in Maybrook, the Ku Kulxers used to come here, burn the cross from Walden and I know my mother told me stories about it and they were scared, the didn't what-why burn the cross up on the high hill outside of Maybrook, why until 1924, that they did stop [clears throat]

**Interviewer 2:** What part of Italy is your family originally from?

**Marano:** Well really they were peasants they came from southern Italy-southern Italy just above the in-step it's called Calabria. When I tell anybody that I'm Calabrese descent, right away they say oh [cabatose??] which means thick-heads or hard heads that's what they're known as but they were peasants. I wanted to bring my father back to Italy he wouldn't go, back in 1946. He said, "no way, I left poverty and peasants for work," he said, "I don't want to go back," to see his few relations that he had; stayed right here.

**Interviewer:** So where did you go to school?

**Marano:** Maybrook High School that was-well it's before consolidation which is Valley Central now but Maybrook had their own high school, Walden, Montgomery. Maybrook never centralized, so it was really small. When I graduated in '43 there was only 12 graduates but it was a high school.

**Interviewer 2:** How did the- going back to the Italians, how did the Italian students get along with the American students was there discrimination on that level.

**Marano:** We'd get along with most of them but there was a few, should I say bigots? I thought ginny was my middle name when I was a kid or a whop or something like by some of the people and others I got along good, really good especially on down where my father worked, down in the engine houses where he worked as a fire cleaner and they were well, well liked. I used to go down there awhile to visit him, ride on the steam engines, to the turntable and back, go around, but I used to bring his lunch down to work. Sometimes maybe a gallon of wine and give it way and sell it to them people. So-but they got along well.

**Interviewer 2:** Now did the Italians form up their own community, did they keep traditions, did they form a church-

**Marano:** No they went to the Catholic Church or there was a few Protestant Italians but most of them were Catholics. They went to the Catholic Church, never had an Italian priest here, but they'd go, they'd pray in their own way; hear whispering their prayers in Italian, especially eight o'clock mass early in the morning, that's when they generally went. As a whole, the village people got along good. There was some discrimination but not much but you hear it.

**Interviewer 2:** You mentioned that you went to visit your father and you used to bring him lunch, I get the impression that railroads were part of your life early on as well as before and later on, could you talk about your early memories and its relationship with the railroad.

**Marano:** Well living about 150 feet from the railroad, down the center of the village, we'd hear the work trains down there and of course we'd hear other trains but we were-we drifted down to the railroad area especially if they had the work train working. There'd be the big hook which re-railed cars and train wrecks but there's machinery that had to be transferred from one car to another, sometimes kind of a bad order car which meant it had to be repaired. It might take a few days so they'd transfer this stuff. We'd hear them and down we'd go because they always had a dining car there. We were offered food which we were always hungry, you know and they'd give us apple pies or a pork chop or whatever they were cooking in the diner. Once in awhile an engineer, if we knew him, he would invite us up into the switcher, up in the steam engine, which we were all of course overwhelmed to be up there, you know the fire in the fire box, the smell of oil, grease, it's always slippery up there but which I wanted to be an engineer but, you know my thoughts of being an engineer someday- but I got passed over. So I became a freight man, you know worked in the yard and then I finally went out on the road in 1953. That is the only big industry that was here. We had a mayor here that DuPont wanted to come in this area and turned them down cause they needed the men, the personnel to work on the railroad. So DuPont settled in Newburgh back in the early '30s, instead of coming to Maybrook because if DuPont came in, it would have taken some of the personnel from the people working on the railroad but anyway, it was something I wanted. I was away from the railroad several different times and the opportunity came back to go back, I went back to [Tirano???) and that's where I finally retired from, but it's something I liked.

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**Interviewer:** What memories do you have of the railroad bridge?

**Marano:** What was that?

**Interviewer:** The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge, what memories do you have of that?

**Marano:** When I start going across the bridge around October 8<sup>th</sup>, my first trip across, I went to Danbury and back and New York State had a law that you had to have an extra brakeman on the job, the road jobs. That was my first trip across and then of course I came back and then I worked in Poughkeepsie, you had to get like five [signers], five different jobs. On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, I left Maybrook to make a trip to New Haven but they had to go by way of Bridgeport, it was a job that went to Bridgeport first and then to New Haven but it would have the- the business for Poughkeepsie set off, cars for Poughkeepsie, picked up at Poughkeepsie, Hopewell Junction, Danbury, and the final destination was Bridgeport. They didn't tie up there, they got the cabooses and the diesel at the New Haven. Well that morning of October 3<sup>rd</sup>, they had the bad derailment of East Walden where 56 cars spilled. Of course that shut down the line. So now I want to get back home. So I got on a train, I went as far as Danbury on a train called N07 which comes to Danbury and at Danbury a place called Berkshire Junction, they had set off a bunch of cars which had to come to Maybrook. So that job had to go to Berkshire Junction, pick-up that train and go by to Pittsfield up to Berkshire, fly into Pittsfield, then down to Kingston to Campbell Hall into Maybrook a long about route. Anyway, I got as far as Danbury and there was another train called N09 came along about seven or eight, well about seven o'clock at night, six-thirty. I got on that train, got far as Poughkeepsie, but I couldn't go no further. So I called up home and my wife came into Highland to pick me up. Now I'm walking across that bridge with my lantern and once and a while the boards would move a little bit and I tell you I was walking with the lantern down by-onto the boards, make sure I was doing okay and I got to Highland. In the middle of the bridge I threw over some tie plates, it seemed forever before they hit the water, you could hear them splash and you know this like nine o'clock at night. When you hear them splash it takes several seconds for that to drop 212 feet but that was my first experience of walking across it. It was kind of scary for me you know, dark, rainy-it was rainy, that's when they had that big wreck, it was a rainy rainy morning, rainy day really.

**Interviewer 2:** Could you tell us a little bit about that wreck?

**Marano:** Huh?

**Interviewer 2:** Could you tell us a little about that wreck?

**Marano:** Yeah, there was a train leaving Maybrook about a mile and a half or two miles, three miles out of Maybrook called East Walden. The east bound train with a lot of loads on it and there was a train coming westbound and that's when they still had double tracks and the front trucks of a tank car in the middle of the trains somewhere was off the front trucks coming west and it was in the six foot between the tracks and the next trail, next track and the diesels hit it and it spilled 56 cars on both trains. One fella by the name of Frank Kindler, who was a fireman he was back in the other diesel truck checking the amperage on the diesels, to see if they were working right, and he got killed. It did spill three diesels, went off the track out in the field. Our

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pictures, you can see that but they re-railed them, they had trains, wrecking crews come from New Haven with a big hook, our hook from Maybrook which wasn't as big as the one from New Haven, they got displaced by – a big crane from Weehawken off the New York Central. The main thing is to clear the cars off the track, to get a right of way going again; it took like about two and a half days before they really got freight trains running again. Then they went home and cleared up the mess eventually, but that happened October, early in the morning October 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1953.

**Interviewer 2:** So what was it like working on the trains, young age, obviously this has been a love of your life-[Laughs] I can assume.

**Marano:** I enjoyed it; it's all according to how you felt about the railroad. You know there's nothing like going through life working on a job that you dislike. I liked it, so I made it enjoyable, had a lot of fond memories of enjoyment and of course some disappointments but-oh on the freight trains, the only thing I didn't like is the layover. We had a train here leave like in the morning called 0B6, to get to New Haven maybe about 11, now you're there 'til 10 o'clock the next day, it was a big layover. Another train called 0B4 that left here like four o'clock in the afternoon, you didn't come out of New Haven 'til the following night, midnight be on a train called B01. B01 is a Boston train that came from Boston with loads, a lot of loads, all kinds of merchandise from the factories in, up through New England, from Worcester, which would all connected, Providence, fish-fast moving stuff and then they'd might have picked up some fast movement in New Haven but it was a highball train out of Boston, Providence, and New Haven. It didn't do no other work on the way in to Maybrook. It would get here like five-thirty, six o'clock at night- in the morning, those cars were switched out very fast, you know inspected and switched to make connections with the Erie and the L&H. They're the ones who hauled most of the produce, even some for the O&W but they were a little bit later but the Erie and the L&H, they'd wait for that train to be switched out for the fast-fast freight stuff, especially the fish. They always had carloads of fish in them trains, in refrigerator cars.

**Interviewer 2:** Could you smell the fish?

**Marano:** Oh, once and a while you'd get an odor but it was in there.

**Interviewer 2:** Could you walk me through like what your average day would have been like on the train, in terms of what your duties would be-

**Marano:** This is on the road or in the yards?

**Interviewer 2:** Well let's do both, let's talk about the roads first?

**Marano:** When you worked the road, you had some trains that did work on the way in, like leaving Maybrook, the night train leaving here, it would stop at Poughkeepsie, set maybe off 20 30 cars for Poughkeepsie, whatever and pick up any loads that were going east-that had to go east, were empties, they weren't many but there were some switched out. In Hopewell Junction, the same thing, on Hopewell Junction, we'd get cars off the New York Central and it was one of the cars that were really hot, was the Fleishmann's whiskies which were still down on this side of

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White Plains they had distributor up by Fleishmann's and they'd-those cars were protected you would see a railroad- well we call them bulls, but they were railroad bulls protecting that car. We'd bring it up on a switcher from Poughkeepsie; I mean from Beacon to Hopewell, there'd be somebody watching that car. Sometimes the bull would follow that train all the way to Danbury. Then after that he'd highball, the only way he'd stop after that, was either for a red signal or at a place called [Debans??] where he'd come out on the fore irons. They brought it to New Haven, but they followed that car, sometimes there were two or three cars, not every night but at least a couple times a week they had these whiskey cars, they were hot cars. Then I worked Hopewell-Poughkeepsie, Hopewell, and Danbury then you'd continue to New Haven. Sometimes in Danbury you'd pick-up 50 60 cars because it was a connection that came from Pittsfield and State Line they called it, come off the B&A Railroad which came into Danbury. Sometimes we'd have to wait in Danbury or outside of Danbury with your train before they'd let you down to the yard, 'til they got that train switched. They'd make a big pick-up and they'd set off 30 or 40 cars into Danbury, load some plus some empties for Danbury and its surrounding areas. Then there were trains that just highballed, in others words didn't stop. We had a train here leave in the morning, 0B6. If he had a hot car for somebody, he would stop by and drop it off and meat cars or something that was delayed somewhere but other than that, he would highball through to New Haven a 127 miles. Then the next train out of here would be an advanced 0B2, he had nothing but merchandise and fast freight produce, and meat cars, cause they had to make the connection in Providence and Boston by the next morning. So they highballed it out of here and the next trains were the same way. They had working trains en route then they had the piggy back trains they didn't get them made at all, they just came in, they were inspected and out they'd go and plus some of them were extras, automobiles trains, solid automobiles they'd just highballed it. Of course the automobile trains had to go to Harford because of the high clearance, couldn't go underneath the electric wires into New Haven. Most of them trains went to Hartford and then over the route to Boston, out of Springfield to Framingham. That's where they unloaded mostly General Motors cars, but Ford Motor-[cut off by Schaaf].

**Interviewer 2:** General Motors cars or-?

**Marano:** General Motors automobiles.

**Interviewer 2:** Did automobile cars go over the railroad bridge?

**Marano:** Everything went over that bridge.

**Interviewer 2:** Everything went over that bridge.

**Marano:** Everything went over that bridge, we had coal trains go over that bridge, solid coal a 100 cars, they go to Middletown and Connecticut, they had a big station there, steam station to make electricity, Bridgeport and somewhere else but they were 100 car trains. They were 10,000 tons with five diesels pulling them over that bridge. When that train went over the bridge, or any trains went over that bridge, that bridge would sink and you could see the whirlpools on the sides, the muck and mud that would come up, you know looking down. The bridge would sink to a certain extent, I don't know how much but you can tell but that heavy train of 10,000 tons

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that was-you could really see it swirling under there, whirlpools right under the bridge. It was quite a feat to see you know.

**Interviewer 2:** Did the bridge shake and move and all that?

**Marano:** It vibrated; I'll tell you a story. I was out there, oh it had to be in the 50's early 60s, I was a conductor on a work train and we were working over the land on the east side end river in that area where it caught fire really, in that area. This was on a Monday and the bridging builders- we were placing new ties, the ties were about fifteen inches thick or maybe more than they had cut-outs in to fit over the girders so they wouldn't move you know. So they-on the work train-we had the little [deaky??] derricks that lift up the ties you know and put them in the condoles and get rid of them a certain distance, this went on all week. Then you had the men that worked on the bridge, seven, eight, or nine of them fellas plus those bridging builders would come from Maybrook and Danbury to work on that bridge, to do this work. Anyway, it was a Monday morning now they got all those ties out and they had fellas chipping some of the rust out and then they had this one fella with the broom sweeping and he was going across the other side and said, "I'll follow him." Well I walked out there about seven or eight paces and I looked down and the water's moving. I stopped, I backed up nice and slowly, I couldn't do it, it's quite a height you know but the water rippling maybe, I don't know. So now-then they would paint, put black paint on it or red lead or whatever, then they'd put the ties back together and the rails. The train that's supposed to be out of there like in the morning, I mean the 10 o'clock train out of here, he got set back a couple of hours and now it was my duty to give him permission to come across about one o'clock. Well the first day I come across, I was in between the piers and we had a cockeyed engineer by the name of Rudy Fredericks. He looked that way, and he looked that way, and it's called cockeyed, he was a good engineer but fast, he was fast. When he'd come across with the diesels, you know a nice 12 miles an hour. Now when he got off the bridge, he opened it up and away he went and that bridge vibrated, in between the piers, scared the daylight out of me. Wednesday, when I knew he was coming; now he went to New Haven and now he'd come back. Now Wednesday is his turn to come back again. I headed for a pier, it wasn't as bad there but that bridge vibrated, you know the pipes and everything rattling, it was kind of scary.

I worked out on the bridge, other times with the work train, but replacing water in the fall of the year when they shut down the water on the bridge, the pipes. They have a work train leave Maybrook with a couple tanks full of water, a couple of box cars full of 50 gallon drums and pales and sand, and calcium chloride cars. They would mix it somehow or other, calcium chloride with the water and put the 50 gallon drums out on the bridge. The drums were there but if they were in bad shape, they would-if they leaked or something, they'd place new ones in there and they put so many pales of calcium chloride in with the water in case of fire. Penn Central come a long and did away with all that, the calcium chloride trains, the water on the bridge, the guys the- 24 hours they had a bridge walker go back and forth, fire watch with the clock, you know punching the key clock or whatever it is, to Highland back and forth of course Penn Central did away with all those things. Eventually, the bridge caught on fire with no protection. Well it was too late, that was the end of it May 8<sup>th</sup>, of 1974, that was the end of the bridge that was the end of the traffic for Maybrook. Eventually Maybrook shut down.

So- let me tell you another incident, I wasn't working here then, I think I was working out of New Haven, but they were changing pins, pins are where the girders connect each other,

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they have pins that connect them and they weren't matching up. They had an engineer by the name of Burt Bacon, a young fella, a daredevil looking guy. The way I understand it is, they gave him 40 cars, hopper cars, now whether they were loaded or not, I don't know, but he was to go out on the bridge with this train, I don't know the speed and put in emergency and it would shift the bridge, and that's where they got these pins-I think it was on the Highland side. The pins wouldn't match with the holes, to get the pins in and you know to lock them in there. He's the one that rushed out on the bridge with a train with 40 cars behind him and threw it into emergency and it would shift the bridge and they got the pins in that way. I don't know how big the pins were but they were pins that had to go in between the connection, I don't know if-you probably see them down there where- some place where they connect steel to steel, underneath the bridge. They had to shift the bridge to get those pins in but he was all alone, nobody was with him.

**Interviewer 2:** Did he run?

**Marano:** But he did move the bridge to get the pins in. I think this was around 1950, in the upper 50s. I was working out in New Haven at the time I was cut out of Maybrook so my seniority- maybe around 1960; I went to New Haven and worked over there.

**Interviewer 2:** With Penn Central, what do you think their lack of interest was with the bridge? Why did the bridge start falling into disrepair?

**Marano:** When Penn Central took over the New Haven in November of '68, they did not want Maybrook, Maybrook wasn't in their plans. The Penn Central which was first Pennsylvania and New York Central I think it was February of '68, that they merged or early spring. They wanted to ship the business, now they're together, the New York Central and Pennsylvania; they wanted all their business to go on their tracks. In other words, the trains that would come into Maybrook, that were connected with the Pennsylvania which was the L&H Railroad that brought in a lot of Pennsylvania business, coal trains, solid coal trains and a lot of soft coal and merchandise that came off the B&O and the Reading and the Pennsylvania coming into Maybrook. They didn't want the L&H; they wanted to smother the L&H. So they shipped it out of Moorestown was one of the connective places up in the Pennsylvania. They shipped the work to Weehawken up the west shore to Selkirk then over to the New England. They took I think about six or seven regular-six or seven regular trains that came to Maybrook right off the bat, maybe five, took them right off and wiped them right out. The L&H would come in with a few cars that they probably got out of Allentown, that connected with the Reading, and the Lehigh Valley but no Pennsylvania business came this way no more, or Jersey Central stuff that came out of Jersey. All that business over on the west shore to Selkirk then to New England, it was a longer route but it was on their tracks. I don't know why, but the west shore couldn't handle it, you know what goes under the Poughkeepsie Bridge, they had wrecks galore back in there, all over the place, the track was bad and they-Maybrook wasn't in their perspective to be in their business. Everything had to go to Selkirk which was a new yard.

**Interviewer 2:** Do you think the matter of ownership, perhaps since they didn't own the Maybrook tracks, they didn't want-[cut off by Marano]

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**Marano:** They didn't want to give no business to the L&H. The L&H was always in the blue, that's all they were, a connecting train- I mean a connecting railroad that connected out of Port Morse with the L&W until they emerged with the Erie, then that fell out of the way. The L&H went to Allentown, they were going to Allentown, Easton, Philipsburg, they get their business out of there, Franklin, New Jersey and down that way. They'd get a lot of business of their own but they were a connecting railroad for the Pennsylvania, the Jersey Central and out of Allentown, they got the Reading business, Lehigh Valley business, some of the B&O business. They had a train come in here with three and four diesels that weighed about 66,000 tons and had nothing but heavy merchandise- not merchandise, heavy machinery, and reels of steel, all kinds of steel and coal. They brought in-the L&H also brought in extra cars which made extra trains out of Maybrook. If the harbor was full of fog down in New York Harbor, they couldn't float cars to Bayridge or over to Oak Point yards, they would be diverted and come through Maybrook and then they were known as extras to New Haven.

**Interviewer 2:** So the fire takes place, what happens to Maybrook?

**Marano:** Maybrook eventually was wiped out all together, they pulled up all the tracks, but they did have for about eight or nine months, Maybrook did service the business to Highland, Clintondale, Modena, East Walden, cause they were getting cars of feed in Clintondale, they were getting lumber in Highland, the meat business disappeared, coal would go to Highland they get cars of glass bottles for a juice making outfit called Lincoln Juices or something in Highland. Clintondale would get a lot of feed plus bottles for the cider, they made a lot of cider in Modena and it was shipped out and they'd get a lot of bottles, they'd get the rice hulls for straining the cider, I don't know how it worked but they used bags and bags of rice hulls, each hull would get machinery and stuff for Central Hudson and there was lumber. They serviced Central Hudson to a- they had a big yard in this side Lloyd and Clintondale, I forget them name of the place. After about eight or nine months, that was the end of that. They'd get a lot of onion cars for Clintondale, they would unload them for some warehouses I don't know who'd get them, potatoes [cuts off].

**Interviewer 2:** You as a railroad worker, now that Maybrook is starting to slow down, what happened, where did you go?

**Marano:** With my seniority I went to, where I could hold a job, I went to Weehawken, worked out of there for three or four months-three months. Then they had the bad bad storm in 1969-1970, where the west shore couldn't handle the business on account of their wrecks and everything. So they're diverting-they called me back to Maybrook, because business was coming through Maybrook again and that only lasted until the snow melted and then back to Weehawken for a year. Then I worked out of Danbury, I worked out of New Haven, I worked out of Bay Ridge, you know I had seniority in Bay Ridge; commute every other day to Bay Bridge which was from Bay Bridge to New Haven. Then I made the New Haven my terminal and then from there I would get a lot of work in Beacon or Poughkeepsie until they shut that line down. Then I worked out of-down at the Poughkeepsie Railroad Station after Penn Central took over, the terminal was down in Poughkeepsie Yard, below Marist College they had the yard. They started to shut down the Smith Street Yard. They did have a few [consignees??] up there but the main business was down in Poughkeepsie Yard because Poughkeepsie couldn't get the



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cars to be set off like we used to do prior to the bridge catching on fire but Poughkeepsie was busy-oh until 1987. Then I retired there. They had a huge amount of lumber that would come into Poughkeepsie for the Dutton underneath the bridge there. They had lumber from Myron Lumber treating plants where they made the lumber with their chemicals and everything, they cook them and heated them and made them permanent lumber business plus Dutton would get cars for different [consignees??] up and down the line, they'd come and unload the cars and then they'd come and pick up the lumber with their trucks. It was busy, busy over there.

**Interviewer 2:** What about-most of the railroad workers in Maybrook, did they also have to start switching over to other yards far away or just go into other careers?

**Marano:** You mean if they got laid off?

**Interviewer 2:** After the fire, the Maybrook Line, or the Maybrook terminal

**Marano:** Oh, they came out of-they did- Maybrook was being shut down when that bridge caught fire, it only had one train leave Maybrook and most of those cars came off the Erie and then they'd bring back cars for the Erie, a few cars for the L&H, two trains coming into Maybrook, that's what it was down to, from the west. Them two trains probably had a 100 a 120 cars at the tops, go to New Haven and back so there weren't many left in the yard itself maybe it might have been one switcher, that was during the daytime. The fellas that worked in the yard, some took their pensions, some were bought off, gave them severance pay and get out and some did go to New Haven like I did, running trains from New Haven to Beacon to Selkirk to tie up there for 10 or 12 hours and then go back to New Haven, then come home. They'd be like your home maybe 24 hours, then you'd have to go back and cover your job; there were three legged jobs they called them. A lot of the fellas just took their severance or displaced somebody who was younger. I got displaced at Poughkeepsie there for awhile, until they- there were a lot of old guys in the yard, older fellas, they had seniority and they finally got pensioned.

**Interviewer 2:** In your opinion, of a lot of the people you were working with at the time of the bridge fire as to why it happened, how it happened, the causes of it?

**Marano:** Well they say it was from the sparks of putting the brakes on which could happen and it has happened. There were always-when we went across that bridge, in the caboose, was a conductor most of the time and a flagmen. The flagmen had to go out on the back platform and look for fires; you know keep your eye open, see if there's something that might ignite from a spark from them having hot brakes or something. Now whether this flagman went back there and looked, he was a yardman, he wasn't too well qualified on the road that might have happened, he wasn't out there observing his work you know [obscured??] his duties but they blame it on the sparks. I am not going to elaborate my thoughts, I don't think-well I'll tell what, frankly I thought it was torched but they blame it on the sparks and it has happened before and they did catch it. You know Albert Alexander was on a job and like 10 years prior, the same thing happened, sparks form the train, they said they had water out there, the sand, hoses, whatever they needed but the fire didn't get out of hand but you always reported it to some-during the daytime, they always had men working on that bridge five days a week.

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### **Tony Marano Interview Part II**

**Marano:** The Maybrook they sold a lot of the land, Maybrook had a lot of land a lot of acreage aside from where just the railroad bed was. They owned the swamps across the way, all the way to at least three-quarters of a mile on the other side was all land which the MTA bought, eventually most of it so- but they smothered the Erie too, the Penn Central. The Erie would bring in trains and the Eri-New Haven- the business that came out of New Haven and New England for the Erie went by the way of Springfield to Selkirk west. They had trains out of Pittsfield that came down to Danbury, especially the high stuff out of General Electric big transformers. The Erie had high clearance and so the New Haven and all that summer eight cars ten cars a week would come out of that Pittsfield factory up there, of transformers coming to Maybrook, huge things; weighed a 140, not a 140, 300-400 hundred tons on each car, a car with about 18 wheels under it. Them cars did not come to Danbury no more, they went west on New York Central; the B&A to the New York Central to Buffalo and out that way. So they did smother out the Erie too on the west business, but the Erie did bring in a lot of east business but they lost a lot of it too from connections with the Pennsylvania and out of Buffalo where they had a lot of connections, Pennsylvania took over the Reading business, away from the Erie, and the Lehigh Valley, some of the Lehigh Valley. So the Erie was smothered out too. Conrail picked them up again.

**Interviewer 2:** Pretty cut throat.

**Marano:** Huh?

**Interviewer 2:** Pretty cut throat.

**Marano:** Oh, yeah.

**Interviewer 2:** Could you tell us about some of the-I know you mentioned a lot of the names could you tell us about some of the eccentric characters, people you've known over the course of your time working on the railroads, something colorful, maybe some anecdotes, some stories?

**Marano:** Well I know when I worked the railroad; I tried to make the job enjoyable. Sometimes I get grouchy but I made it enjoyable. There were different people there. Some people were afraid of the speed. We picked up a car one time, we had a fella by the name of Clint Eckert, he was a conductor. We were coming-we took an extra to New Haven, now we're coming back with just the caboose with three or four diesels, an engineer by the name of Michael [Jardin???], and anyway we had a caboose but in Danbury we had to pick up a scale test car. That's a little car, weighs about 40 tons, used to measure the scales, make sure their-every so often the scales had to be checked, balanced, they had stuff underneath the floor boards, underneath the big scale cars, move around, make sure it weighed 40 tons, there's a little dinky thing with two wheels, the trucks they have on the freight cars. Anyway, the engineer was-we'd pick-up at Danbury, now we're coming down through-before we hit Brewster a place called Saddam, where Saddam Lake is, the scale test car broke away, slipped the knuckles of course now we go in emergency and this Clint Eckert- I said, "Jesus Clint," I said, "we've flipped the test scale car right into the lake," he said, "we did,?" "yep," I said, "it flipped right over." Well he got all nervous, he says, "no, no we didn't here it comes." Now we're almost stopped or we

had stopped you know, the caboose and the train right over into Brewster there. Well the test scale car didn't have very good brakes you know only two wheels and now it's coming and I said, "Clint here it comes" I said, brace yourself," he put his feet up on the ceiling and I said, "brace yourself it's going to come right through the caboose!" and bamb it did hit but anyway we got the air back in and away we went. In the mean time, he told this Jardin, "slow down a little bit." So now we get to a place called Towners and Clint Eckert put the emergency brake on, went up and told him, "now you slow this train down," because we had to send it off in Poughkeepsie, "you slow this train down," he said, "I'm telling you." So he did go slow and he was bullheaded. He was supposed to go like 20 miles an hour; I think he was doing 15. I thought we'd never get home 'til we got to Danbu- to Poughkeepsie and we finally sent the thing off, but he was afraid of speed.

Another time, we flipped the caboose; de-railed at a place called Maples, this side of Shelton Dam before you get to Derby Junction. I remember we had a 92 car train and the last 30 cars were coal and I just finished telling Clint Eckert, I said, "you know there's a bad spot on the down track here," because I experienced it a couple nights prior, coming east." No sooner I got the words out of my mouth and the caboose derailed, there was a lot of snow on the ground but we got derailed for some reason or another in that spot. I am saying, "Clint we're going to flip over!" and he's hanging on for dear life. He kept saying, "put in emergency, we're still connected, put in emergency!" You know pull-there's lever in the caboose you can throw and the train goes into emergency. Well I'm jumping around, I finally got to the valve and I flipped it. Well we went into emergency, and now we hit the railroad-highway crossing or little crossing and the caboose separated. Well the train kept going with the heavy load, we'd come to a stop, slammed over. So we got out of the caboose, he started heading towards Danbury, I said, "we're you going Clint?" he said, "I'm going to the phone back there." I said, "no the phone's down this way." It was a cold bitter night, I said, "head for the diesel, down that way there's phone there somewhere." We told the dispatch what happened and he says, "okay get your train and proceed to New Haven and leave the caboose." We had to leave the caboose and come re-rail it with a big hook. Should I tell him the story about Alexander? I locked him in the toilet. [Marano speaking to Isaksen]

**Susan Isaksen:** It's a funny story.

**Marano:** We had a fella, he was neighbor of mine, name of Alexander Albert, had a lot of experiences with him. Anyway, we had a train from Maybrook to New Haven him and we got to Mill Plains. He had to go to the bathroom, in the caboose there's a bathroom but it's just a place where you can sit and open to the ground you know using water, a gallon jug of water to flush it but everything fell out. So he had to go to the bathroom and I knew he went in there. He had to back in and shut the door, so I put the hasp on So now we're heading down into Danbury, he's in that little roomette you know, it couldn't be over a foot- and a- half or two foot square in there. When you get through Danbury you're going over cross-overs, switch points, railroad crossing- I mean high way crossings and the caboose does jangle and jangle around. The train is supposed to be 35 miles an hour through Danbury but after the engineer with the diesel gets by (Wilder???) Street that's the last crossing, he opens it up you know, now he's going up a hill, down a hill but must be doing at least 40-45 and I of course, the flagmen or the conductor is supposed to be in the end of the caboose getting highballs as they call it, that the train is okay, no sticky brakes, no wheel sliding, no fires in the [journals???]. Albert Alexander is still in that

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little room. We get to Berkshire Junction, I come in, he's banging away. He said, "what did you lock me here in for?" "Geez Albert; I thought you were up on the [cuberlo??] sleeping. I didn't know you were in there." It must have been some ride through there in that little cubicle rocking around at 40-45 miles an hour. Another day, he was sleeping up on the top, I'm the flagman we're at Shelton waiting for a butt car to go to Waterbury. So I'm out there with the flag and down by the Housatonic River was a black Styrofoam. I got that piece of Styrofoam and I brought in the caboose. Albert's up there in the [cubical??] and lit it. So I'm out there minding my own business waiting and finally he come out saying, "you lousy monkeys, you're trying to kill the conductor!" The black smoke is coming out of the caboose and on and on he went, he says, "you're not coming in the caboose anymore, you're going to ride in the platform," we got away with it. Different times I'd torment him but not just him. I tormented a lot of fellas and got away with it, you know but a lot of them took it with a grain of salt it's all according to who the person was. Some were happy and jovial and you know some especially the older fellas, were grouchy, didn't like us young fellas. So they stood clear of them fellas.

In Poughkeepsie Yard we made it enjoyable. We had a job in Poughkeepsie on a Monday, we'd get overtime if we got 5 hours and 20 minutes overtime, equivalent to a another day's pay. They had a lot of business on Monday, we had a crew if we hurried up and got done you still got paid for eight hours. So we satisfied all the (consignees??) within four-five hours at the most, get the cars, peddle them out to the (consignees??), the (consignees??) that we had, picked up their empties set loads, brought them up on the main line for pick-ups west bound east bound pick-ups and then we went home. There were some days we were home at 12:30, start at seven, some days at noon but everybody was happy, short day, pay for eight and away we go home. So we had a crew like that and there were other crews that, not when I was a conductor, but there were some people that just wanted overtime. We had a fellow engineer in Danbury who couldn't wait for me to bid the job in cause we had a job, that every other day we-to place, called Stevenson Dam and back and we were done in there, four, five hours then and we would go home. In another job, had to go from Danbury to Brewster to Dover Plains up near Chatham, that was a 12 hour day. So some days we got the overtime. We couldn't do it no faster on account of the passenger trains. Went up there to the (consignees??) and sometimes we'd wait two-three hours for the passenger trains to clear up and then we'd go back to Danbury. So you made money one day and the next day you got a straight day. If I got off the job, this other fellow from Waterbury, he'd walk like a little old man and he wanted overtime and this Pete McLachlan, God bless him, a good engineer, he's a member here, he would jump up and down, "Tony bid the job back in."

Then when we were waiting up there in Dover Plains, we'd cook, we had good food we had salads, swordfish steaks, and steaks and everything and we had our own way of cooking in the caboose. Everything you cooked in the caboose was delicious not matter if it was raw or not. We had this one conductor by the name of Bob Mays, weighed about 250-280 pounds. I bid the job in. Myself and another fellow bid the job in and this worked out of Poughkeepsie. The job would go to Clintondale and Modena, some days if they had business, the Green Haven Prison to Beacon and back. You didn't make that trip everyday but it did go to Hopewell and Beacon back every day. So I showed up for work and he says, "who's the flagman?" being that I had the more seniority I said, "I am." He said, "Tony your job is to do nothing but cook and don't come out on the ground." For nine months, I cooked but once in a while I would get on the ground and help switch. He said, "if you spoil our dinner Tony, I'm gonna kill you, you know." We ate good, we ate exceptionally well on that job. I'd have breakfast in the morning and lunch and

dinner at night and we ate good. Bob Mays was a hunter and he was a butcher by trade before he come on the railroad prior to the war and he would mix-they went to Maine hunting and they'd comeback with a moose. Well he had moose burgers and they were delicious, taste just like beef, it isn't like eating deer or any of them wild game, this did not taste gamy at all. We had moose burgers. We ate pork chops; I'd buy 10 pork chops whenever we had pork chops. I'd bring stuff from home like the sauce and the meatballs, big pots of it; we'd reheat that, cook the spaghetti in the caboose; we used the stove plus the Coleman burners. We ate hardy, hardy, we ate good.

**Interviewer 2:** Here's a question for you, about hobos, we always here about these hobos who would be on the trains, hanging around on trains, did you have to deal with them all that much?

**Marano:** Well very seldom when I hired out. The hoboies were around during the '30s. The hoboies would come into Maybrook, let's say on the Erie train or the O&W train, and they'd bail off west of Maybrook Yard. They had a hobo camp west of Maybrook; of course us kids used to get down into it and steal their pots and pans especially the aluminum ones cause we'd sell it for a penny a pound or two pennies a pound, this is during the '30s, before I hired out and but they were down and out people. I don't know if you've ever seen the movie *Grapes of Wrath*, they were down and out people. They'd come down and they'd walk along the railroad track, not down in the yards but along the railroad they had paths or down through the Italian section. They're always looking for something to eat, they we hungry. Well they stopped at our house and my mother would give them 10 or 12 eggs, no bacon of course we didn't have it, Italian bread, we had a toaster as kids, we gave them toast, we didn't have American bread to be toasted, they would heat it up in the stove. If they were there later during the day, my mother would cook up spaghetti or macaroni and give them chicken, which we had a lot of chickens in the backyard, wild animals like a woodchuck or squirrel for meat. They were happy. They wanted to work; my father wouldn't let them do no work at all. They'd walk to the east end of the departure yards and there they would hop their freights and go up to New England or to wherever they were going but they were going back and forth but they were down and out people. Once and a while I would take them, somebody wanted to go to Pittsfield or New Haven or something I'd let them ride in the caboose, if I was in the caboose, if I was the conductor. I'd tell them go up there and go to sleep, while we're moving don't get off that seat because you can get thrown around especially in emergency, you don't know where you're going to land up when a train goes in emergency. I've seen it where the stove tipped over in the caboose. I've seen-heard of stories where the stoves have tipped-you know set a caboose on fire when there were in emergency or somebody get knocked out or something like that. When you go to emergency, it's a dangerous, dangerous situation; the doors even fly off.

**Interviewer 2:** In the emergency, is when you hit the brakes?

**Marano:** When the brakes go out all at once, you know a hose could break or a train come apart or something, that's your emergency. They had a drunken engineer leave Maybrook, he wasn't a good engineer he got like seven or eight knuckles out on the Poughkeepsie Bridge cause [he didn't know how to handle a brake.???] They went into emergency, seven knuckles they had to bring out there to get the train off the bridge, to split apart. When you get a draw bar, then the whole guts come out of the train, that's when it's bad, you got to get rid of that car somehow or

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other, sometimes you have derailment. Getting back to the hoboes, they were as I say they were down and out people. I bring- I would let them ride in the caboose, if I was the conductor, if I wasn't conductor, it's up to the guys to let them ride, but there weren't many of them. They weren't called hoboes during the '50s and '60s no more. They were just down and out person maybe trying to get to their destination, somehow or other, but there was a lot of during the '30s, that I remember, a lot of them.

**Interviewer:** At what age did you actually start working on the railroad?

**Marano:** What's that?

**Interviewer:** At what age what age did you start?

**Marano:** I started after I came out of the service at age 22. I started off on the transfer platform, unloading cars that had mixed freight and you would put the merchandise or whatever it was going to Boston, you'd put it in the Boston car, stuff going to Waterbury would go in Waterbury car, they had about 30 or 35 destinations, Fall River, New Britain and all them. That was hard work and dirty when the Boston car got filled let's say or the New Haven car got filled, then they would start another car but they would call it LCL- business, less car load. The car load you opened up had all kinds of, I would say 30 cars-30 cartons going to Newbury, 5 and 10 Christmas ornaments. Sometimes, you'd get a straight load of Campbell soups. Well half of the car would go to Boston, maybe the other half would partial go to Waterbury and part would go to Bridgeport. We took that stuff out and left the heavy stuff in there and that would be another Boston car until they got 35 or 40 tons or until it was full. Then I started off as switch tender and switchman in Maybrook Yard, in January of '47. I quit the transfer for a month, got married and then come back and hired out as a switchman in the yard, as switch tender and switchman and I didn't go out on the road until 1953, a choice.

**Interviewer 2:** Growing up in the area during World War II, how did World War II effect train travel through Maybrook and the Poughkeepsie Bridge.

**Marano:** World War II, I remember in 1943, as when I went away in the navy, in June or July, after I graduated but prior to that, they had trains come in here, solid trains of railroad equipment on flat cars and gondolas which consisted of cannons I guess and tanks, you know the armored jeeps and everything, solid. They had solid trains of liquid tanks that carried liquid oils and gasoline, they were all destined for the harbors up in New England to be shipped-in '43 it was just before the North African, I mean there was the North African campaign going, invading Sicily in 1943, in August. Then they had troop trains come through with army personnel or marine personnel or whatever they were, coaches 10-12, 15 coaches to go to New England to be shipped overseas. It had prisoner of war trains, so most of them coaches come back empty but once and awhile they prisoner of wars going west and in 1943 we go down to the yards near them cause all the girls would be on the embankment and want to bring the cigarettes to that handsome looking fella they could see or donuts, you know. Anyway, we were down there watching the trains and there would be German prisoners, couldn't been over 15 or 16 years old with little short haircuts, handsome little young German prisoners with the blue eyes of course we didn't get too near them, close, maybe a couple of tracks away down. They were really

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young that they were using over in Europe campaign. Italian prisoners they'd go out west for the factories and the farms. They had as many as 24 trains a day coming through here, plus the coaches several times a week full of men. Every hour, sometimes every 40 minutes, within 40 minutes another train would come and a way it would go. Of course they had steam in them days, they had steam, would pull 4,500 tons out of here, to help one you had to have a pusher on a rope helping them out and another steam engine to get them over the mountain. Maybrook could handle them; they handled as many as 1,500 cars a day through here, each direction and more. I remember 1,500 even when I was working, not all the time but certainly it would be a 1,000-1,100, 900-1,200 but as many as 1,500 come through eastbound and westbound but the war really put New Haven back on its feet again. The New Haven was sort of bankrupt prior back in the '30s, still had a lot of business but they were going bankrupt and that they pulled them out and they went bankrupt again, started in the 50s, late '50s that's when Penn Central took over. There's an awful lot of business through here, from the west, with the merchandise going or with the merchandise going to New England for the war effort. The New Haven could handle it; they had enough power and man power to handle it. Of course they hired a lot of extra people, they hired everything during the war, people from out of- you know out of the area, farmers and anybody, as long as they passed some sort of a physical and of course there were a lot of the fellas who were physically able had to go into the service, [you know in this day they were four fs???] they weren't allowed to be colored blind; half of them couldn't see very well. Some were farmers; they didn't want to farm no more I guess but-[cuts off]

**Interviewer 2:** Why was Maybrook chosen in the first place, what made this area special was it like the terminals?

**Marano:** What made it that way?

**Interviewer 2:** What was the attraction to Maybrook?

**Marano:** Prior to Maybrook, really it was the Industrial Revolution I guess up in through New England, they needed coal up there for these factories cause they all had their own power steam driven plants all, all them big factories all had a high smoke stack which you don't see any more cause electricity drives all of- what few are left of textiles. They needed coal, the coal was shipped on the O&W, went to Kingston, floated across some and went down the river to New York some was floated across on barges and reloaded in Rhinebeck-Rhinebeck?, one of them places across from Kingston and up through New England. Maybrook prior to building the bridge did have a junction here, they'd come in, the trains off the L&H and go west again off the Erie somehow or other. It was really the Pennsylvania and the Reading Railroad they had the coal business and they'd said, the coal was going to go through Maybrook, wanted to come into Maybrook built the bridge. The bridge was really, you know back in 1970- they proposed the bridge and somebody had died and that was the end of that for awhile. In 19-1888 is when they built the bridge and they wanted to do away with the floats out of Newburgh which had the Erie floated across in Newburgh and they floated across up at [clears throat] Kingston to Rhinecliff to Rhinebeck, I don't know which one, they had a connection there and of course through Hartford into New England. It was really the Pennsylvania and the Reading that wanted Maybrook and they did in 1888, start moving business through here and eventually, they told the New Haven

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come into view, and they said to the-we want the business to come through Maybrook to get to New Haven and then they did away with the floats in Newburgh off the Erie.

The Erie come in and the Pennsylvania brought their stuff in and the western railroads. The Erie would bring in a lot of produce, meat, and merchandise, fast moving merchandise, shoes, clothing whatever was made out west. It was fast freight. Then of course it would come with the coal and lumber, a lot of lumber business, feed and all that was slower freight but that Erie would come here in the morning with fast, fast, freight called Erie 74. The whole yard would merge on that train. The clerks and the inspectors would merge on that train to get it out of here to make their destination by a certain time, it was all about fast. They had the ice house here in Maybrook; they had to re-ice the meat cars about 20 or 25 of the (times???) would fit underneath these docks. They'd put the crushed ice for the produce, block ice-I mean crushed ice for the meat with salt and make it colder for the meat cars and produce cars got block ice on each end of the bunkers before mechanical reapers but everything moved fast on this one train to make their destination by a certain time the next morning. The Erie would bring in the heavy stuff so would the L&H, until they merged. The L&H had a job called Port Morse 30, the Erie had the 74. I seen the Erie come in with 182 cars one morning and I had to cut down here, make a cut cause the track would only hold 125 cars. They pulled right into the icehouse; switcher had to go back and pull the rest of them in and get them serviced. Port Morse was competition, they did not have as big as trains but they'd have 55-60 cars in the morning, but the Erie had a 100 or better every morning come in. They did move with Maybrook even if it was (mechanic???) even the humps, they were all-each hump had-east bound hump which had loads mostly there are all ridden to cars ahead of them so they wouldn't hit hard, or else they had big damage once in awhile you'd lose brakes and you did have damage. The west bound hump, you rode some loads all according to the what tracks but a lot of them were empties and they just went to a couple on by itself, they'd come on top of the hump they'd cut them down low and they would drift in.

**Interviewer:** Who helped to establish the Maybrook Railroad Historical Society and Museum, who helped to organize it?

**Marano:** We had a mayor by the name of Robert Brown who thought we should have a historical railroad museum. He was mayor at the time in the village oh-maybe around 1987-1988 they start talking about it. A fellow by the name of Danny Sarcino was trustee I think at the time, Ronny Decker and they got some of the railroaders enthused about it and that's how I think it was organized, [DVD skips] fellows were charter members and we thought it was a good idea and that's how we started it. The village being the mayor, he got us this little room we petitioned it off, we wanted the whole thing but the village says no that's how we got this little room. We wanted the other area too, it was a library but I think with this mayor Robert Brown he did work the railroad, his father worked the railroad, his grandfather worked the railroad and he's the one who really got us that's what I say, enthused in having this museum here. Glad we have it, we could have more stuff in here but we don't have the room and we did get the caboose too down at the other end. The caboose was up here and an outfit from Kingston come down and unloaded it and brought it up here and nobody could see it, so we decided to move the caboose down where it is now. I don't know if you seen it coming in and we did that with heavy cranes that you know we used for trucking business and the flatbed truck that was donated to us from the lumber yard and we put the caboose down there and we reassembled it on the truck and on the tracks and that's why it's down there. I've been blamed with this Robert Brown, Ronny



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Decker, and Danny Sarcino we really started talking it up, and then myself, my brother Jim, and Christy-Ann, oh- several others Bruce Holeman they all wanted to have a museum that's why we have it. Some days we get a lot of people in here, some days we're getting none. You know on the weekends we are open. Sometimes we get three or four; we've had as many as have eight or ten, then when they have those tours. What do we have 65? [Talks to Isaksen in background] in April?

**Isaksen:** Easily.

**Marano:** I'm glad Suzanne come and helped us but they enjoyed it.

**Interviewer:** The reaction overall has been positive?

**Marano:** Huh?

**Interviewer:** The reaction has been overall positive?

**Marano:** I think so, see anybody could join, you know it's a different regime the Maybrook yards haven't been here now for 34 years. Yellow Freight has helped us a little bit, you know not because they're competitors of the railroad, but they've donated some stuff to us.

**Interviewer 2:** Alright, thank you very much, very good. It's a pleasure Tony- [Marano talks over Schaaf].

**Marano:** Well I'm glad.

**Interviewer 2:** You gave some really good information, didn't mean to wear you out.

[End of interview]

**Transcribed by Paul Contarino**