



City of Alexandria  
Office of Historic Alexandria  
*Alexandria Legacies*  
**Oral History Program**



**Project Name:** *Alexandria Legacies—Potomac Yard Railroad Oral History Project*

**Title:** *Interview with Jack McGinley*

**Date of Interview:** *April 14, 2007*

**Location of Interview:** *Alexandria Archaeology Museum*

**Interviewer:** *Jen Hembree*

**Transcriber:** *Valerie Davison*

**Abstract:** *Jack McGinley arrived in Alexandria in 1965 upon accepting a position with the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac (RF&P) Railroad to supervise special projects, specifically projects at Potomac Yard. Well respected as an engineer and circuit designer, Mr. McGinley was appointed superintendent (chief operating officer) of Potomac Yard shortly thereafter, in 1968. Mr. McGinley describes the implementation of automation processes that he assisted with during his tenure at the Yard (he retired in 1992), as well as railroad industry changes, worker culture, and his continuing activity with the Yard (via membership in the Potomac Yard Retired Employees Association) today.*

**This transcript has been edited by the interviewee and may not reflect the audio-recording exactly.**

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**Jack McGinley April 14, 2007**

*(Credit Jen Hembree for Alexandria Archaeology)*

**Introductions**

Jen Hembree:	I'm going to start with an introduction.
Jack McGinley:	Okay.
J.H.:	My name is Jen Hembree. I'm a volunteer with Alexandria Legacies Oral History program. Today is April 14, 2007, and I'm here at the Alexandria Archaeology Museum with Mr. Jack McGinley. We're here to discuss his memories of working at the Potomac Railroad Yard. Mr. McGinley, do I have permission to record this interview?
Jack McGinley:	Yes, Ma'am.
J.H.:	Can you please state your name, for the record?
Jack McGinley:	John F. McGinley, Sr.
J.H.:	Thank you...can you tell me where and when you were born?
Jack McGinley:	I was born in a place called Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania, August 17, 1928.

**Move to Alexandria**

J.H.:	When did you find yourself in Alexandria, or that general region?
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Jack McGinley:	I came to Alexandria in October of 1965.
J.H.:	What brought you here?
Jack McGinley:	I had worked previously, for fifteen years, in the engineering department of the Central Railroad of New Jersey. I was invited by the RF&P [Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac] Railroad to come to Alexandria, specifically the Potomac Yard, to supervise the installation of special projects.
J.H.:	You were working for fifteen years, prior, for a New Jersey railroad?
Jack McGinley:	Yes.
J.H.:	How did you find yourself in that job?
Jack McGinley:	Originally?
J.H.:	Yes.
Jack McGinley:	After having been separated from the United States Navy, I was seeking employment in an environment that was rather difficult. My father suggested that the railroad was hiring some people to dig ditches, for ten weeks, and I took that assignment and retired from the railroad forty-two years later.
<b>Railroad Work</b>	
J.H.:	What was it like, digging ditches? Was this for building tracks? What was it for?
Jack McGinley:	It was for burying cable. It's no fun, but it was an opportunity, as time went on, to get into more significant engineering work.
J.H.:	Do you have any other family members who had worked for a railroad, in the past?
Jack McGinley:	My father had worked for the railroad, and I had many uncles and cousins who had worked in the railroad.
J.H.:	So it was possibly a family tradition?
Jack McGinley:	More or less.
J.H.:	When you started working for the New Jersey railroad, I'm assuming you were able to move up the ladder, so to speak?

Jack McGinley:	Yes.
J.H.:	And how did that process occur? Did they provide training? Did you suddenly get promoted? Or did you have to ask for it?
J.H.:	To be fair...I had studied engineering at Pennsylvania State University, so after my early experience I came to realize that this aspect of what was called "Signals and Communications," in the application of railroads, was, at the time, pretty sophisticated. After what I'll call on-the-job-learning, a lot of it, I worked in maintenance and construction for a number of years. Then I became a circuit design engineer, and spent about six years designing electrical circuits. From there I became a supervisor, with responsibility for that kind of operation, in Elizabethport, New Jersey. It was from there that I was invited to come down to the RF&P Railroad.
J.H.:	So they were inviting you from afar. Were you well-known in the railroad industry?
Jack McGinley:	I was relatively well-known as a circuit designer, and also I had supervised a considerable amount of construction in that kind of business. The RF&P had a need at the time to increase the automation of processes here, at the Potomac Yard, and I was invited to do that job.
J.H.:	What did that job actually involve, once you arrived?
Jack McGinley:	<p>Well, it kind of gets complicated. To understand Potomac Yard, and what Potomac Yard was...the location where there were five railroads, north and south, that delivered cars on the average....At Potomac Yard they had 6,000 railroad cars a day, and these cars, as they arrived, had to be reclassified to go to a variety of different destinations, on a variety of different railroads. This was accomplished by a system that, on the railroad, was referred to "humping" the cars, where the cars were shoved over an elevated hill, if you will, and permitted to roll down into any one of, let's say, forty-eight tracks. Each track was assigned a specific classification or destination. In the early years, going back to the early 1900s, all of this was done with a lot of manual labor, where men actually rode these cars down this hill, into the tracks, and applied brakes, and so forth.</p> <p>Throughout the years, there were systems that were designed and installed to provide for devices we called "car retarders," that would control the speed of the cars as they went down this hill by gravity, into the tracks. Again, over the years, the use of the car retarders in the switching process gradually became more and more sophisticated, to the point where, by the 1960s, we were using radar for speed control,</p>

	and computers to control both the switching...and the speed control, so there was a whole lot less manual labor involved in the process. But, in addition, the accuracy of the classification process increased, and there was a dramatic reduction in the damage to equipment, in the process.
<b>Automation</b>	
J.H.:	So when you arrived, you were assisting in the implementing of the automation.
Jack McGinley:	Yes. When I arrived, one of my responsibilities was the upgrade, the process control, of doing these functions. In addition, at the time, we were installing what, in that era, was a rather sophisticated radio communication system, using portable radios on thirty-four different radio frequencies. Virtually every individual in the yard became equipped with a portable radio, so as to consolidate communications from central control and supervision. Each function, or each group, had a distinct operating frequency on which to communicate, so as to be not interfering with other activity that may be on the communications system.
J.H.:	Like a mechanical department or transportation would have separate frequencies?
Jack McGinley:	Yes. The mechanical department had its frequency. Every yard locomotive and the crew that worked with it would have a distinct frequency for that particular crew and that job. Of course, we had our own police department at the yard, and they had their own frequency. Each department would function on its own frequency.
J.H.:	Which frequency were you on? Or were you on all of them?
Jack McGinley:	Let me say that in my office I had a monitor, where I could monitor all the frequencies.
J.H.:	Another question related to that. What were some of the codes, phrases that people would use frequently, when speaking to team members?
Jack McGinley:	The type of operation you have on the railroad, of course, requires a maximum emphasis on safety. People are dealing with moving equipment, continuously; therefore, even radio communications required a certain discipline in order to preserve the safety of the communication.
J.H.:	Does that mean that there was a certain vocabulary, so you weren't just "wasting" the airwaves?

Jack McGinley:	Absolutely. The vocabulary followed what would have been historically used in military operations. There was not a lot of unnecessary voice communication.
J.H.:	When you arrived at the RF&P, how did you work your way through the ranking system, or the management levels at Potomac Yard?
<b>Advancement</b>	
Jack McGinley:	The project responsibility that I had, that brought me to the RF&P, was a project that lasted, to completion, for about two years. With that, I then had responsibility for other kinds of engineering functions, including what we called the main line of the RF&P, between here and Richmond, for the control of signals and communications. In September of 1968, I was appointed the superintendent of Potomac Yard. I functioned as the chief operating officer of that facility—of Potomac Yard.
J.H.:	And what exactly did that entail (besides monitoring the radio waves)?
Jack McGinley:	I mentioned earlier that Potomac Yard was actually operated in the interest of five different railroads. It was owned by the RF&P Railroad, but the operation of Potomac Yard was responsible to all five railroads. There was a board of managers that consisted of an officer of each of the participating railroads, who had the overall responsibility for this operation. The superintendent of Potomac Yard reported to this board of managers for everything that was relevant to the operation, including the planning, the management of people, and a budget of approximately one million dollars per month.
<b>Typical Day</b>	
J.H.:	What was a typical day of work for you?
Jack McGinley:	One thing that you learn, working in a place like Potomac Yard...and something you had to pass on to those who worked for you...supervisors...was that every day will be different, and bring a different challenge.
J.H.:	Do you want to describe some of the challenges to us? Or one in particular?
Jack McGinley:	You have this continuous movement of railroad traffic, as I indicated, roughly 6,000 cars a day, in and out, which meant that you had to make certain that there was going to be room to receive 3,000 cars a day. And, in order to do that, you had to make certain you were going to move out 3,000 cars a day. In that process, incidents could occur that

	<p>were not anticipated and required remedies. In addition to moving the rail cars in and out, we started in a big way, in the early 1970s, to move a lot of highway trailers on flatcars. So we opened up our own facility, at Potomac Yard, called a piggyback facility, where we put trailers on and off flatcars. There, again, that got up to the point where we handled between 5,000 and 10,000 trailers a month, on and off flatcars. That became a very big part of our business, and it was a business that required on-time performance. There was a lot of pressure for on-time. One of our biggest customers at the time was United Parcel Service, which demanded real, on-time performance. So timely operation was always critical in the railroad business.</p> <p>The other challenges, of course, were the weather....snow storms, ice storms...all those kinds of interesting things. Even a few hurricanes over the years had an impact, and some flooding and so forth. Then, throughout the 1970s we were deeply involved in what was called the Four Mile Run Flood-Control Project. Have you heard of that?</p>
J.H.:	I haven't heard of it, no.
Jack McGinley:	<p>You haven't? Oh, that's an important part of recent Alexandria history. In the course of that project we had to coordinate with the construction of bridges over Four Mile Run—railroad bridges—and a major rearrangement—relocation—of tracks and so forth. That project was started in about 1972, and it didn't finish until about 1978.</p> <p>So trying to maintain our operation, on time and efficiently, at the same time as all this construction was taking place, was an interesting and extra challenge. Then, while the Four Mile Run project was being completed, we also had to deal with the construction of the Metro system coming into Alexandria. That had its impact, also, on our operations because, from the [Washington National] airport to Braddock Road, it was 100% on what had been our property. So it had its impact.</p>
J.H.:	Regarding the Four Mile Run Project...I have a map here. I think it's from the early [19]70s. I'm just curious whether you could indicate where tracks were changed, or where the bridges came in.
Jack McGinley:	No. Unfortunately, you don't have enough map. Up in here is where the bridges were built.
J.H.:	Okay. That helps.
Jack McGinley:	If you need, I could provide for you better maps of that.
J.H.:	We got this from a railroad book. <i>1973: The Richmond-Washington</i>

	<i>Line, and Related Railroads.</i>
Jack McGinley:	But that is an older layout. In that book I gave you, there may be...there might be a more modern one. They used one similar to what you have. No, I'd have to get you one that you...if you need it; if you don't have it.
J.H.:	That would be great. How long was your typical day? What hours were you, as superintendent, required to work?
Jack McGinley:	Since every day was somewhat different, and dealing with some of the complexities of labor agreements—the majority of our folks were unionized; consequently, we had a variety of labor agreements we had to comply with. Recognizing that, each morning, prior to 6:00 a.m., I had to call the control tower and get the performance record of the prior shifts. Based on what we looked like that particular day, I would adjust what we called the transportation forces. We may need more locomotives. We may need less. We may need more people to operate them. That was the first thing we'd do, before breakfast.
J.H.:	Would you be doing that from your house, or did you—
Jack McGinley:	Yes. From home. Then I'd get into the office by about 7:30, and generally leave the office about 6:00 p.m., or 6:15 p.m.
J.H.:	Where was your office on the Yard? I don't know if it shows offices on here, in this building.
Jack McGinley:	It really doesn't show...
J.H.:	[Inaudible]
Jack McGinley:	This is an older-type photograph. I see where that says "Machine Shop." It really was right in that area. That machine shop was done away with many years ago. It was right in that area; right in the center of the yard.
J.H.:	Did you spend most of your actual day in the office, or were you roaming the yard, to the other departments?
Jack McGinley:	I certainly spent much time in the office. I was the first one there in the morning, ordinarily, and always in the last hours of the evening, when a lot of paperwork had to be accomplished. In between, I could get outside, periodically, but also, if there was any sort of a crisis...snow, or whatever...then I'd be where the source of the problem was.
J.H.:	Who were your main underlings, the staff persons you had directly

	under you. How did they help you?
<b>Staff</b>	
Jack McGinley:	<p>We had, throughout most of my time, forty-two supervisors at various sites, with various types of responsibility. I know you've interviewed Mr. Morris, who was our master mechanic. He had a force of about 150 people, in the mechanical operation; and, certainly, they needed the supervision. Mechanical supervisors reported to him. I don't remember exact numbers anymore, but I would say he probably had twenty people or so, who were foremen and assistant foreman and so forth.</p> <p>Then, in transportation, I had an assistant superintendent by the name of Mr. Barksdale. And I know you've interviewed Mr. Victor Parker, who was the train master. Now in railroading, the train master has the responsibility for the actual, physical movement of locomotives and cars. We had a number of assistant train masters, because you had to have somebody on duty who was responsible, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Everybody had to have a day off.</p> <p>Then, in addition, in the process of moving railroad cars, each car is an individual, and it has to have paperwork; it has to have a record on where it came from, where it's going, and other important information.</p> <p>So the handling of paper work and information, when you're dealing with railroad cars in that situation, is a lot similar to a bank handling accounts. It requires a lot of what, in today's world, would be called data input and data output. So another major aspect of our effort was to maintain the clerical force necessary to keep all the records of all the cars moving in, all the cars moving out, and making certain they got to the right destination. We continued, throughout the years, to increase the application of up-to-date computer equipment to this function.</p>
J.H.:	I was going to ask you about that.
Jack McGinley:	<p>In the clerical operation, we had about ninety or ninety-five people involved, during my time. Now prior to that, because the systems had not been quite as automated, there were many more clerical people.</p> <p>There again, to go back to your question, we had supervision, separate supervision, for clerical workers; separate supervision for the piggyback operation, for the trailers and the off-track, flatcars.</p>
<b>Computers</b>	
J.H.:	Were the computers already in use when you arrived? Or some fashion of the computer?
Jack McGinley:	In the earlier period, and at the time I arrived, the process for handling

	<p>data had been in use for a number of years, and it involved something that was also done in banking operations, that was called a punch-card operation, where data was punched into cards, then these cards were run through a variety of machines, called various names, from which the data then went to printers. It was printed out on big statistical sheets.</p> <p>With the progress in computers, by the early [19]70s, we were able to put a lot of these functions onto mainframe computers [Begin Side 2], which became more and more sophisticated, to the point where our mainframe received and sent data directly by communicating with computers at all of the five railroads we dealt with, and would receive data from those railroads, and transmit data to those railroads, which reduced a lot of the manual effort that was previously required to keep information moving.</p>
<p>J.H.:</p>	<p>And that information was about the cars coming in, and what their status was...?</p>
<p>Jack McGinley:</p>	<p>Every car has its own identity; its own origination; the commodity it contains; and where it goes. Now the basis for this, of course, is that every railroad car has a unique and distinct number to identify it, so that all of the data flow relates to that number, just as it would your bank account and your name. Right? And I don't think, even in the railroad operation today...I don't think there's much identity-theft of railroad cars!</p>
<p><b>Missing Cars, Safety, and Security</b></p>	
<p>J.H.:</p>	<p>...Do cars go missing, ever? And what would happen if one did?</p>
<p>Jack McGinley:</p>	<p>There were occasions in my career, going way back, where the records were lost, and, yes, the car was missing, or unidentified. It still had its number, of course, but its history or presence...You had to do a lot of research to find out where it was located at a specific time.</p>
<p>J.H.:</p>	<p>You mentioned earlier the importance of safety at the yard. What were the particular safety rules and standards you oversaw? I'm sure there were a lot.</p>
<p>Jack McGinley:</p>	<p>There were a lot, and the rules were all published in safety manuals, safety books. Every employee, depending, again, upon his craft, was issued a booklet of safety rules. They also had to attend periodic classes. We had many programs, a lot of programs that supported safety, reminders, if you will. We'd pass out hats and jackets and so forth, to reinforce the concept of safety. The other important thing, as related to safety, was keeping the areas as clean as possible. You didn't want to have a lot of debris and this and that around anyplace,</p>

	because that in itself resulted in accidents and incidents. Also, by keeping it clean, and by keeping the environment adequate, the employee had a better sense of safety that came with it.
J.H.:	Was the Potomac Yard fenced off, to prevent strangers and the public from hanging around and getting in the way?
Jack McGinley:	Yes. I don't know whether...I can't remember if there's any remnant of the fence left, but there was a wrought-iron fence that, years ago, surrounded the entire property that was Potomac Yard. Over the years, for various reasons...the building of roads and other structures...the fence would have been largely eliminated. I'm not certain whether there's any left because, as it was being taken down, I was getting a lot of requests from people who wanted to use that fence for various purposes. I remember one request I got from a church out in...I think it was around Warrenton [Virginia]. They wanted to put it around their cemetery, because it was a period fence. Yes, at one time it was fenced in, but the fence was no longer needed, in later years.
J.H.:	There was also the police force that would patrol, which was an added security measure?
Jack McGinley:	Yes. We had a supervisor and eight policemen who worked on shifts around the clock. Among other things, they kept trespassers off the property. But they had numerous functions, really. As with everybody else, we were vulnerable to theft, and our police checked rail cars containing valuable commodities.
<b>Maintenance and Worker Culture</b>	
J.H.:	Then in terms of making sure the site was clean and free of debris, was there a maintenance staff that was in charge of cleaning...?
Jack McGinley:	There were various departments. Our engineering department, which included the people who maintain the tracks...they had a responsibility for certain types of cleanup. The mechanical department, where they maintained cars and locomotives, they had some responsibility for cleaning up. It was pretty much accomplished that way...there was no force that was specifically hired to clean up.
J.H.:	Do you think the railroad workers were a close-knit group, in terms of camaraderie?
Jack McGinley:	Very close-knit at Potomac Yard. When Potomac Yard was built in 1906, and for most of the years after, Potomac Yard was the largest single employer in Alexandria. The majority of the workers at Potomac Yard, for many years, lived in the Del Ray section or the

	Rosemont section of Alexandria. There were several generations of the same family that would end up working at Potomac Yard. So, by virtue of their common experience as employees at Potomac Yard, in addition to the fact that so many of them lived in the same neighborhoods, they had a bonding experience, and they were very close. Many still are.
J.H.:	What neighborhood did you live in at the time? What neighborhood did you live in?
Jack McGinley:	Oh, well, see, I didn't. See, I came from...I was the Yankee.
J.H.:	You came from elsewhere. [Laughter]
Jack McGinley:	When I came down to Virginia, Alexandria was still kind of a small community. I lived in what was then a relatively new suburb called Springfield, a little old development out there called Springfield.
J.H.:	Did you commute by car, or was there public transportation?
Jack McGinley:	I commuted by car, and from Springfield at that time, it would only take me about ten minutes to get into Potomac Yard.
J.H.:	Was that through Route 1 that you would have done that? What would be?...Was it the Parkway?
Jack McGinley:	No. I learned my lesson. When I was working in New Jersey...when you work on the railroad, particularly if you're in supervision, you know you're going to have to get to work, frequently, under the worst conditions of weather and traffic problems. So when I picked the location where I was going to live, I first looked to see that I would have four or five alternative routes, to be able to get to work and get home. At the time I moved there, we had what was called the Shirley Highway. It wasn't quite [Route] 395 then. You could come in here quickly. I had several alternatives to come and go.
J.H.:	We were talking about camaraderie. What kind of functions did Potomac Yard offer?...Were there picnics or things of that nature that you might have attended?
Jack McGinley:	Yes. Once each year we had something called Family Night. In the late [19]60s and early [19]70s we'd take employees and families from Alexandria on a train to Richmond, and at Richmond we'd have various types of entertainment, in a rented hall. We'd have a buffet dinner and some social activity, and then bring them back by train. Circumstances changed in the early [19]70s. The railroads no longer

	<p>operated their own passenger services....This government corporation called Amtrak was created, and Amtrak took over the operation of passenger trains. So it was not as convenient for us to take people to and from Richmond for Family Night, and we started to have our own Family Nights right here. I remember many nights we used Hayfield High School, which was the only one big enough at that time to handle the number of people we had, for food services and entertainment....So we'd have Family Nights there.</p> <p>In addition, we had bowling leagues, and once a year we'd have a bowling banquet someplace in the area, again involving a lot of people. We had golf tournaments, and they went on, year after year, until we shut down, really, even after that for several years. So there was a lot of socializing among the employees.</p>
<p>J.H.:</p>	<p>That sounds like fun. [Laughter]. I know we've discussed some of the changes over time...computers and the piggyback operations. Are there other changes that we have missed, that should be recorded, that you noticed over time?</p>
<p><b>Industry Changes</b></p>	
<p>Jack McGinley:</p>	<p>There were so many things that took place, because in the years from the late 1960s through the early [19]90s (the period that I was superintendent) there were a lot of changes taking place in the railroad industry. Also, we had to react to...a lot of mergers of big railroads, just, all-in-all, different changes in operations. I mentioned to you the piggyback operation; trailers and flatcars have become a major part of the railroad business today. Coordinating with what was happening in and around Alexandria, including something as big as the Four Mile Run project, or the building of the Metro, there was much involvement with the community in that sense. Because we were a big presence in Alexandria and we had much interaction with the City administration.</p> <p>Another major involvement of ours, at the railroad, had been the building of Crystal City. The major portion of Crystal City has been built on what was RF&amp;P Railroad property. So, from a railroad-operating standpoint, we had to make various adjustments in our railroad operations to accommodate the construction of the buildings for Crystal City. So that also would take our efforts to coordinate with that activity.</p>
<p><b>City Involvement</b></p>	
<p>J.H.:</p>	<p>As superintendent, were you then on various city committees, involved in a council or what not, because of the large presence in the Yard?</p>

Jack McGinley:	I was involved in a lot of interesting things in Alexandria. I had always been, or our company was, a member of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, and I served on the board of directors. In 1979 I was president of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce. I've been (and still am) a member of the Alexandria Kiwanis Club, and through that have been involved in many different activities. I served six years on the board of directors of the Alexandria Hospital. I had been chairman of a group called the Friends of the Alexandria Residential Care Home. I don't know whether you're familiar with the home that was created for senior citizens. I also served on many other community committees.
J.H.:	[Inaudible]
Jack McGinley:	I think the name may have changed.
J.H.:	Maybe it's Goodwin, or something like that?
Jack McGinley:	I was very much involved in several of those activities.
J.H.:	How do you think your position as superintendent helped you, or influenced your involvement and your knowledge of Alexandria?
Jack McGinley:	Well, as I say, we were a big presence in Alexandria, not only geographically, but as an employer. As a taxpayer, we were consistently number-two, at least, and sometimes number one, in Alexandria. And we had a lot of interface with the governing people and the agencies in Alexandria, because of our presence.
J.H.:	What are some of the positive projects or influences that you think Potomac Yard had on Alexandria, while you were superintendent, besides being a large employer?
Jack McGinley:	<p>I think an operation like Potomac Yard required a lot of supplies of various types and services. So, certainly, we were a major customer of various businesses in Alexandria. ...One example that comes to mind immediately...We had these locomotives that ran on diesel fuel. We also had a power plant that burned diesel fuel, for heating and so forth. T.J. Fannon was one of our fuel suppliers. We got a lot of fuel from them...not to say that we didn't have other suppliers, but I think of T.J. as being one of them.</p> <p>There were all kinds of things that we would purchase from business people into town. A good friend of mine just passed away last week, a man by the name of Paul Katz. I don't know whether you're familiar with him, but his family had a—</p>

J.H.:	No.
Jack McGinley:	—business downtown. His father [Morris Katz & Sons] had a radio and communication shop and sold a lot of other things. We dealt with most everybody, including banks. We certainly maintained accounts in various banks in town. Gaines Hardware, and Cockrell's Hardware...I don't know whether you're familiar with these names. We did a lot of business with them, particularly when it snowed and we needed snow shovels and brooms.
J.H.:	Do you have a really memorable day working at the Yard, that stands out for you? A memorable day of working at the Yard?
Jack McGinley:	A particular day?
J.H.:	Yes.
Jack McGinley:	I think I've got to say they were all memorable, because there were interesting challenges and opportunities every day.
J.H.:	What about a humorous day, or a funny incident?
Jack McGinley:	I'm sure there were. I'd have to think about that. Yes, there were many funny incidents, because, among other things, railroad employees could be a colorful group. Yes, there were many fun and interesting days.
<b>Retirement</b>	
J.H.:	So when did you retire, or stop working at the Yard?
Jack McGinley:	Well, the RF&P Railroad was sold in 1991, and the railroad part of its property was sold to CSX Corporation, a big railroad in the South. Much of...the land and the development interests the company had...were put into something separate called RF&P Corporation, which was strictly a real-estate management activity, which, at a later date, was sold to other companies that currently are developing the property. So, at that point...what occurred was called change-of-control...and I exercised the option in my contract to retire.
J.H.:	So that was in 1991?
Jack McGinley:	No, 1992.
J.H.:	And how did you, or do you, feel about the Yard's closure?
Jack McGinley:	I mentioned to you earlier that throughout the [19]70s and [19]80s,

	<p>there were a lot of changes in the railroad industry, particularly mergers of big railroads. This changed the pattern of routing, the pattern of how things were done, coupled with the fact that, as equipment evolved...locomotives, for example...the distance a train could go, from origin to destination, increased dramatically. So the location of Potomac Yard, that from 1906, into the 1970s, had been a very critical location in the interests of north and south movement of trains was no longer the ideal position that it had been for many years, because of this capability of trains to travel greater distances...coupled with the fact that the merger of railroads permitted railroads to move continuously in a territory, where they may not previously been able to do so. So, in essence, Potomac Yard had outused its usefulness as a railroad facility. But if you go out there today, you will see that it has great utilization for other purposes.</p>
J.H.:	Right.
<b>General Thoughts</b>	
J.H.:	What do you think about Potomac...I guess it's called Potomac Yard, right, still today?
Jack McGinley:	It's still Potomac Yard.
J.H.:	But it has a different meaning....In general, what are your feelings about working at Potomac Yard, and working for RF&P? What are your general thoughts about it?
Jack McGinley:	It was a great life, a great life. I had one of the best jobs in the country, and certainly the best railroad job in the country. It was one interesting and challenging career.
J.H.:	And today you're still a member of the Potomac Yard Retired Employees Association? Is that correct?
Jack McGinley:	I happen to be president of the Potomac Yard Retired Employees Association.
J.H.:	What does the Association do?
<b>Potomac Yard Retired Employees Association</b>	
Jack McGinley:	Well, you're back to an earlier part of our conversation. There was a great deal of camaraderie among the employees at Potomac Yard. As people were retiring—there were quite a few people retiring in the 1980s. These were people who had gone to work at Potomac Yard, probably in the early 1940s or early [19]50s, and were reaching the age of retirement in the early [19]80s. It became apparent to us that

	<p>after people retired, they'd come back and visit occasionally, and they would still be expressing interest in their fellow employees: "How is he? Where is he?" and so on and so forth.</p> <p>So there was a group that got together and decided to create an organization in which retired folks could communicate with one another and socialize with one another. The Association has been active now for twenty years. It meets at least eight or nine times a year, and has an annual picnic, and a big Christmas event. The Association meets at a variety of places...here in Alexandria, Woodbridge, down at Colonial Beach, down at Fredericksburg, because, as people retire, they spread out. The Association also produces a newsletter that includes minutes of the meetings, but also information on the status of fellow employees, whether it's illness or things more positive. This is mailed to members, even though there is a percentage of members who now are scattered all over, not only in the state of Virginia, but some here and there. So it's a method of communicating with other retired people.</p>
J.H.:	As president, what do you do for the Association?
Jack McGinley:	To be honest with you, I don't do an awful lot of anything. We have a secretary and a treasurer who do most of the work. [Laughter]
J.H.:	You get to do the speaking, right? So during your career...I think I remember hearing about some award ceremonies that were held every year? Or recognition ceremonies for Potomac Yard employees?
Jack McGinley:	Well, yes. We had a variety of things. We mentioned—we talked earlier about safety. We had occasions where we'd present awards for safety. That kind of thing. I also mentioned to you, you know, in the competitive sense, or the socializing sense, the bowling league. We always had champions there, and trophies, and so on. And in the golf activities...we had champions there.
<b>Recognition</b>	
J.H.:	As superintendent, did you receive some recognition from the RF&P? Or did your employees give you little recognition ceremonies, or thanks for being their superintendent?
Jack McGinley:	I don't know exactly how to answer that, from a personal standpoint, but I'll mention this, while we talk about recognition. We consistently had get-togethers, to recognize people. For example, we used to have a dinner where we recognized people who had forty or more years of service. We usually had some sort of get-together, at dinner, to recognize the retirement of supervisors and so forth. So there was a

	certain amount of that activity.
<b>Summary</b>	
J.H.:	My last question is, essentially, what else should I know about your experiences as superintendent or about the Yard in general?
Jack McGinley:	Well, of course, there's a lot of history to the Yard, and you've been exposed to some of that. The pamphlet I gave you includes some history, but much more is available in libraries. [Begin Tape 2]
J.H.:	So do you think, were you to be offered the job again, would you take it?
Jack McGinley:	[Laughs] Well, given my age, it would be short-term. [Laughter] Yes, I certainly would. It was a great job...a lot of stress, a lot of pressure and so on, but it was a very enjoyable job. And the people, both at Potomac Yard and the people at other railroads, were just great to work with. In order to keep this operation going, we had an average of about 300 people a day who came in from other territories, who brought trains in, and took trains out. We had a lot of interplay with a lot of people who were not employees of Potomac Yard, but had that job of coming into and out of Potomac Yard from other states.
J.H.:	Anything else you want to add?
Jack McGinley:	All I can say is, it was great.
J.H.:	That's a great way to end the interview. [End]