

Auto-Railer, Electric Line, and W&OD

SM: Probably, when I was really small, on Halloween. We had what was called the auto-railer. The station was right at the railroad tracks and Church Street. The auto-railer looked like a little bus. It would pull up the train wheels and put down tires and drive off and then turn around and drive up to Fairfax. Well one Halloween some of the older guys around Vienna greased the tracks. The auto-railer went right on off on its train wheels. What they didn't think of wasn't worth thinking of.

AS: And then what happened?

SM: Well I guess they put the bus wheels down and pulled up the train and turned right around and went back on. It cleaned off the grease!

AS: So it's a prank that didn't hurt anybody.

SM: No, it didn't. It didn't really do any damage. It could've! If there had been anybody there or a car there, yeah, it could've done some damage. But it didn't, thank goodness.

AS: Did you use the electric line a lot?

SM: Yeah. You could go down to State, a theater down in Falls Church, for 10 cents. We'd go down on a Saturday afternoon for a matinee and come back for 20 cents. 10 there, 10 back.

AS: Did you ever go to—where did it go?

SM: It went to Rosslyn.

AS: Did you ever go to Rosslyn on it?

SM: Yeah, and then we'd catch a bus or a streetcar, usually a streetcar, over into DC.

AS: Do you know any people who commuted that way?

SM: Yeah, a lot of people did. It was great. I wish they had never gotten rid of it. After the war, when people had more transportation, well, they had more cars. Before then, I don't know, but evidently things were slowing down and they decided to just do away with it. They pulled the tracks up and everything.

AS: Do you remember peoples' reactions?

SM: They didn't like it but there wasn't much we could do about it.

VH: How long did it take to get to DC on the bus?

SM: It wasn't long but if you went on the W&OD, the Old Dominion, that was slow. And that was loud.

AS: That's a real train.

SM: It was awful. I used to ride that sometimes from Rosslyn when I worked there. I hated to think of all the people that had to go to Herndon on that.

AS: But you could've taken the electric line instead?

SM: I'm trying to remember.

AS: Oh, it was gone by then!

SM: That's right, I think it was! It was a much quicker ride and a much smoother ride and a much quieter ride on the little one.

AS: You called the electric line the 'Jitney'. Was that what people called it?

SM: Well, that's what I always called it. I don't know that anybody else called it that but I did.

AS: We'll find out!