

The operation of the locks—you gotta go see it to believe it. It's an unbelievable thing. It works like clockwork, it does. It's so neat. I could go on for hours talking about the locks because they are a fantastic place. My first day of my apprenticeship, I walked in there and I went—and I had seen the locks all my life, but I'd never been down in the bowels of them before. And I walked in there and took me down in the tunnels. I didn't know those tunnels were—I knew they were there, but I didn't know what they looked like or what they did. And I walked in and I went, I can't believe all this, man. And then they took me up in the control house where they operated and opened all the gates and everything like that. And my jaw dropped. I don't think I could ever do this job. This is complicated. I was just as much in the state of awe the day I retired as I was the day I went there because that place just never failed to amaze me. It worked like clockwork. Just so neat. As long as things went fine, they went fine. Of course, when they didn't go fine, things went haywire. You know, you slam a gate, bend a strut arm, or something like that. Then, you gotta take this chamber out of service, take the whole lane out of service, while you repair that strut arm. Put a new one in, all that stuff. You gotta equalize the water so you could move the gates. It's a lot of things. I did it. I was at work in overhauls. I had to drain the chamber many times. I had to fill the chamber back up from scratch, which is very delicate. When the chamber is empty—totally empty—you can't just open the valve helter skelter. You gotta open it just a couple inches because you've got thousands and thousands and thousands of pounds of pressure coming through there. And if you let it all go through at one time, it'll blow the bottom right out of the locks. It really will. So, you gotta let it go in until you get enough water in there to put some weight on that floor. Then, you can open it some more and get some more weight on it. Finally, you get it where you can open up all the valves. And so, you can do that. It's technical. You gotta know what you're doing. When you're a control house operator, that's when you learn that stuff. To be there, I had to be an electrician first and fix all the equipment. Then you ultimately become a leader. I'm working on the locomotives as well. Then, if I fix it I get put in the control house as an operator. And then from there, you go to a lockmaster junior, then senior control house, senior lockmaster, and you're in charge of the locks during the daytime or the nighttime. Weekends, nights you're in charge. And it's a lot of responsibility. But it's a neat place to work. Oh, it's a fantastic place.