It's not fruitful man can boast he's outlasted a building, especially a building where he spent most of his working years.

Yet Elwood "Barney" Price, 65, could do that last night at his retirement party. Barney, a former porter for the New York Central Railroad, has worked longer, and probably harder, than Worcester's aging landmark, Union Station.

Of course Barney isn't the kind of man who would boast about anything. He was still trying to figure out why his friends at Worcester County National Bank were throwing him a party at Pleasant Valley Country Club, Sutton.

"I really appreciate this," he said softly. "I mean for me ... I wasn't the president or even the vice president of the bank."

30 Grandchildren

But that didn't seem to matter to his friends, or his wife or his nine children or his 30 grandchildren. They all love Barney. Maybe even more than the bank's president and vice president.

What did Barney do anyway that made him so loved? He was "just a porter" and only a customer service man, he says. His job at the bank wasn't that difficult — he stood at the front door and gave customers directions to different departments.

Although he guesses he helped a lot of people, is that any reason to throw him a party? And come to think of it, Barney's not even sure why people came to him for help.

"A lot of people would come and ask me what would I do about this or what would I do about that," he said. "I don't know why ... I'm not a rich man, I never had any money."

Barney was interrupted by William Bedord, assistant vice president at the bank.

"Remember I used to tell you, 'Wait until you retire,'" he said as he shook Barney's hand and kissed his proud wife.

Bedord turned away from Barney and tried to explain a few things about him.

**Walking Encyclopedia**

He said Barney was a friend of the elderly customers. He was a fixture in the bank's old building, always ready to converse with the customers, as they did their daily business.

Bedord said Barney knew the building and its departments inside out. He called him a walking encyclopedia of Worcester, an inside directory of the bank. Customers would look forward to his greetings as they entered the doors of the main office.

Then Bedord was interrupted by other well-wishers. Everyone wanted to say congratulations and "You look so dapper in your new suit." Many of them asked, "What are you going to do now?"

But Barney isn't really sure what he's going to do next. Every morning of his life for 45 years he woke up and went to work. Those years were filled with interesting stories about some pretty important people.

He said everyone rode the trains in those days and many liked to walk around the palatial Union Station, built to be the showcase of the country. There was Shirley Temple — Barney remembers her as a little girl. There was Chrysler — he can't remember his first name — but he used to park his car at the station before he rode the train down to Newport, R.I., every summer.

John Wayne passed through Worcester too. But the event...