

We would be known as "Spears" for a year or two until we got some experience and seniority. What the term "Spears" meant I never did find out, but it originated with the guard jobs that manned the 1939-40 World's Fair twelve car "snuttles." Guards were needed on those trains to open and close the "air" side doors, as each crew member could only control two cars from his platform at that time.

Later on, in 1947, "Centralized Door Control", (like the Subways had), was introduced enabling one man, usually the Conductor, to control all the side doors in the entire train from his platform position.

The two top floors of Jamaica were devoted to the Railroad Y.M.C.A., presided over by the capable Mr. Showalter. The fourth floor of the sta. building had a fine cafeteria run by "Bill" the cook, and his wife "Ellie" taking care of the serving. It was good wholesome food and the place opened at six a.m. and closed at ten p.m.. There was twenty four hour elevator service as the fifth floor had rooms and a dormitory. Also on the fourth floor we had a bowling alley, pool tables and a large reading room or lounge. Those big overstuffed leather chairs were a pleasure indeed!



Elevated view of Jamaica terminal facilities  
View W from near 150th St. - c. 1938.  
HALL Tower at left

Our "class" was being held in a spare room on the west side of the fifth floor. Good views thru the large open windows were to be had of the six car trains of "Steels", (cars), traveling the Jamaica Avenue El, as well of Morris Park Shops in the west distance with it's ever present pall of smoke.

The first day of class we received our supply of "books", which included Book Of Rules, Employee Timetable, Safety Rules Book, Air Brake Book, and "Electrical Instruction Manual". Along with



LIRR Trainman brass cap badge  
1949-1959 - Archive: Dave Keller

that "armrull" we were given a coach key, switch key, and Trainman's hat with badge. Our "on the job training" was to be over on the Brooklyn Freight Track opposite Sta. track eight. Trains of "MU" cars layed up there between rush hours and we were to learn about them on our second day of "school".



MU connections - 4, 10, & 12 point jumpers  
Photo/Archive: William Mangahas

Mr. Rodgers had us pull the four, ten and twelve point jumpers between two MP54 cars as well as push the two handles in under the steps to shut off the air supply, plus unhook the safety chains. The cars were now ready to be "cut" or separated.

Rodgers was most emphatic about being extra careful with the "four point" as the car cutting lever had to be avoided when pulling or inserting this jumper which carried the 650 volt DC thru the entire train. He told us to always make sure when "cutting MU cars to see that a car on either side of the "cut" had it's contact shoe on the third rail. You were also supposed to open the electrical cabinets on each car and "pull" heat, light and pump switches so they would'nt be pulling juice when you had the "four point" in your Hand.

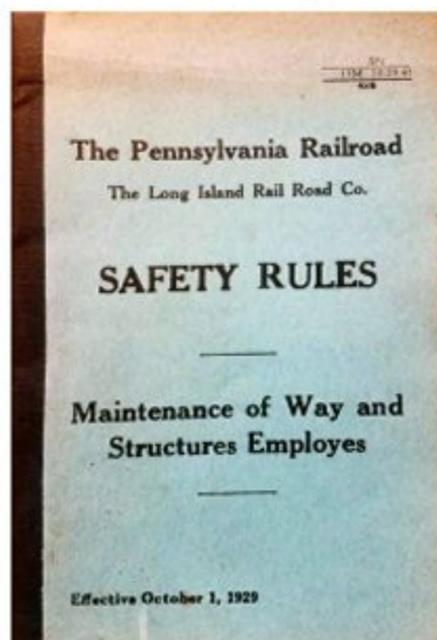


MU connection "four point"  
650 volt DC

Everybody sweated "bullets" pulling the "four Point", (the ten and twelve pointers boasted only battery circuits). We were very suprised when we were walking back to platform "E" to see Rodgers take his own personal padlock with name tag off the "third rail cutoff box" as we passed it. He had "killed" the current on the "Brooklyn Freight" before we arrived on the scene, the cars were "dead", (current-less), we were never in any danger at all !

Unfortunately there no instruction on "steam-hauled Equipment", such as how to couple an air or whistle hose, not to mention steam hoses. I would live to regret this in a week or so ! About the middle of the week we all took a ride to Long Beach to sort of "get the feel of the railroad". While down there Rodgers had us all operate the "air doors" with our coach keys, plus showing<sup>us</sup> the electrical cabinet's innards. We had to practise pulling the "knife" heat switches and then put them back in.

You had to be very careful to "line them up" when inserting them or there would be a flash or flame due to the "arc". Rodgers told us to "pull" them with our hat brim as most of the knife switches were worn and the brass ends many times protruded thru the wooden handles. Some of the men over the years failed to do this and if the "deck" were wet got knocked on their "behind" by the voltage!



Safety Rules MOW and Structures Employes 10/01/1929  
An example of one of the many books to be learned

Most of the classroom periods were spent going over each branch, learning what side the passenger platforms were on and whether or not the platform was "low or high ". We were also learning to read the Book of Rules and famaliarize ourselves with it's many rules. On Friday we all journeyed to Penn. Sta. to attend Walter Cotton's, (the ticket receiver). class on collecting transportation.

We spent a full day learning how to cancel different types of yellow one way tickets, ten trippers and commutations, duplexes, (cash fare receipts), and how to read and understand the big tariff book we were issued. At the end of the day we were issued ticket punches, an accounting dept. no. and drew a pad



LIRR punch - c.1940  
Allen Lane & Scott

of form 178 "steam" stock, form 179 "electric" stock, plus a pad of "form 180s." "Stock" means cash fare receipts, issued to passengers paying a cash fare, while the "180s" were issued to people with Brooklyn commutation tickets going to New York. - Five cents was the additional difference in fare.

When we got back to Jamacia we reported to the Crew Dispatcher and he gave us a slip to give "Gus" in the lamp room. At that time the "lamp room" was at the far end of the sta. concourse, near track eight. "Gus", the attendant, had charge of



Torpedo - Standard Railway Fusee Corp

all the kerosene lanterns and markers, along with "canteens" (which held red flag, torpedos and fusees). The last four items, were supplied to each of us by "Gus" upon receipt of the Crew Dispatcher's "slip".

AND RED & WHITE  
LANTERNS

We were now lacking only uniforms, but would have to wait about two or three weeks as dark blue material was in short supply at this time. Most of us had a "good suit" of suitable dark material we could wear until then. Then, after getting measured by "Morris the Tailor" on the first floor of the sta., for uniforms, we <sup>WENT</sup> to the Crew Dispatchers to tell him we were available for work as Trainman. This established our Seniority Date, and mine was July 23rd, 1943. Retirement age then was 65, so I could figure on forty seven more years on the railroad, or 1990, when I would hit that "magic" age!

After he took our names we went home and waited for the "call to work". The next day was Saturday and the LIRR would be busy indeed!

My "call" came soon after arriving home for a Saturday "extra collectors" job. Here's the way it was read off to me: "2026 N.Y. to Rock. Park, Deadhead to N.Y., 12 N.Y. to Jam., 142 Jam. to Babylon, 64 to Patchogue, 65 to Babylon and 167 to N.Y." Well, at least it was a "day" job, I mused, deadheading in from my home in "Port". I had heard a lot from the "grapevine" about the Rockaway trains on summer Sats. and Sundays, so I was dreading the ten fifteen a.m. departure!

We left off track 18 or 19, and I was to "work to meet" on three cars a lady trainman, or "Wheel" as the men called them. They were hired in 1942 and '43 for the war's duration.



LIRR Women Trainmen "Wheels"  
1943 Photo/Archive: Art Humeke

Originally they were not to be used as flagman, and they never would be eligible for promotion to Conductor.

I was feeling much relieved as we left Penn. Sta. with only twenty five people or so in each car and mostly all had tickets. Could this be "baloney" about the Rockaway trains being so "tough" to work?



Woodside Station at 61st Street  
c.1918 - Archive: Al Ponte

Woodside, and you had to "live this" to appreciate it! We had no sooner stopped when the hordes on the jam-packed platform "beseiged our twelve cars". They came in over the safety chains between the cars and thru the open windows, nearly knocking each other down on the track between the cars as they "poured", (as in pouring sugar), thru the side doors!

Finally we got all the "air" side doors closed so the motorman could get "power" to get us underway. I could only collect fares from the people in the vestibules, by then we were in Rego Park. Not too many here, or Parkside. Then came



MU southbound at Brooklyn Manor 1950  
View S - Photo: Edwards Archive: Keller

Brooklyn Manor, which if anything, was Woodside all over again! Most got left on the sta. platform, as there were so many in the vestibules and car interiors, there was no space for them to squeeze in. In two minutes we were in Ozone Park, we might as well "skipped" the stop, as no one had any chance of boarding, despite their shouts and fist shaking at me and the packed people in the vestibule.



Rockaway Park - 1901  
Photo: Harold B. Fullerton  
Archive: Queens Public Library

In a way I felt sorry for the ones unable to board, they merely wanted a cool day at Rockaway to escape New York's famous humidity in the crowded sections. Next stop was Holland after the pleasant, (but not this trip), over Jamacia Bay. I had cash fare receipts and tickets sticking out of every pocket.

To top it all off we hit the bumping block at Rockaway Park a "little hard", but here the overcrowding paid-off, the people were so packed in they couldn't fall very far! Turned out it was also the motorman's first day and he merely misjudged his stopping distance. There was no damage to our train. I had already concluded that there was some truth about the "tough Rockaway trains"!

I never did meet my "Wheel" co-worker collecting fares on that train. She too was "new" and had to look up all the fares. Many people had kids and they would give you a five or ten dollar bill to cover the "family fare". You had to figure the half-fares for over "five and under twelves" out from the adult fares, not forgetting to add in the new "transportation tax" added in 1942 to discourage people from traveling, (it didn't). It was a "mess" all thru the train trying to collect under those conditions!

The Pennsylvania Railroad theory was that each man could collect two cars. That might have been alright where the stas. were four or five miles apart where most people had tickets, but to apply this rule on the LIRR always seemed to me a bit ridiculous!

Finally the LIRR found a way to get all the fares on those summer "Beach" trains in 1946. No one was allowed up on Woodside, Brooklyn Manor or Ozone Park eastbound platforms on



Station Ozone Park MU train view N 1954  
Photo: W. J. Edwards Archive: Dave Keller

Saturday or Sunday, plus Holidays without buying a ticket first. This was "cancelled" by "Trainmen stationed at stairways leading to the station platforms. Returning beach traffic in late afternoon and evenings were handled the same way at Rockaway Park, Seaside, Playland and Holland stas.

In 1947 the Far Rockaway Branch stas. from Arverne to Far Rockaway were handled the same way for returning crowds. The same summer Long Beach also finally got "crowd control", or "everybody pays"!

"Whats this, a "spear" working a Montauk train?", kidded the usher at Penn sta. track fourteen's gate. He was cranking up the tuscan red with gold lettering signs that read "Montauk Greenport", for train 12-206. The Greenport rear four cars would be cut-off at Manorville, while the forward five went to Montauk via the Manorville Br. Double-headed steam would



DD1 #354 eastbound  
Jamaica - Track 8 4/14/1938

replace the electric class DD1 now on the point as far as Jamaica. Up until last Sept. this was a "name train", (The "Shinnecock Express-Peconic Bay Express" and a year previous the train boasted a dining car, two Pullman parlors and "A.C." PRR P70 coaches at least on the Montauk section. "Greenport" got one Pullman parlor and "mainliner" coaches. Today it was strictly the latter variety of coaches on the entire train.

Conductor Paul Erhardt was in charge and he was speaking to the DDI's engineer as I handed him my timeslip to sign. Electric engines were always so smug and quiet when you walked by them, that is until the air pumps cut-in with a "sing-song". I was told to work the fourth car and compared to my first train that day no. 12 was indeed a "pleasure"! All had tickets except one cash customer to Hampton Bays. Back in June I had rode this train to Montauk so I could ride over the Manorville Br.

At three twenty five I was out of Jamacia bound for Babylon



Rockville Centre View W c.1942

Photo: W. J. Edwards Archive: Dave Keller

on train 142. At this time all platforms from Rockville Center out were "low", or at track level. This line was "new" to me so time flew by between "handling transportation" and seeing the countryside.

Good old "Doc", (Walter S.), Overton greeted me like a kindly old uncle instead of a "grouchy conductor at Babylon where I changed with the passengers to train 64 for Patchogue. (Four "pings" with a E6 of course). "Doc" told me to "take it easy" and get what you collect "right", very good advice! No. 65 coming west out of Patchogue usually got a hundred and fifty



Patchogue Station- Camp Upton Bus  
View NE Summer-194

Photo: T. Bayles Archive: Dave Keller

Camp Upton soldiers on weekend leave so I would be cutting many cash fares. Seems the bus from camp always arrived only a few minutes before 65 was due to leave, resulting in a great many hopping aboard without tickets. They all wanted reduced-rare "furlough round trip tickets", so I went into the depot and drew a pad of form 124 cash rare "duplexes". Nothing was mentioned at "ticket class" about these round trip forms for some reason.

Our engineman was George Sephton, known as "Mickey Mouse" by the men because he was only about five feet tall or so. He had three or four sons in the service. Since 65 carried a RPO car on the rear, a very unusual move was made east of Babylon so the car could be added to train 167's rear, our connection.

About a quarter mile east of Higbie Lane we came to a stop, where the flagman cut-off the RPO. We continued into Babylon sta. with the four "pings". As soon as we went by the switch from the east end of the layup yard to the main track, no. 167 backed out of the yard and coupled onto the RPO. That accomplished, 167 came up the "main" into the sta. and became our connection to New York which would be my "LAST TRAIN" OF THE DAY.



Wantagh Station - view NE  
11/12/1963 Photo: Wm. Lichtenstern  
Archive: Dave Keller

Train 167 was a fairly heavy train, cash-fare wise. Wantagh was "Woodside of the a.m." all over again! It was the Jones Beach crowd going home to N.Y. and Brooklyn all sunburned, tired and hungry of course. At least most had tickets, even if they were "standing on the numbers", (R.R. slang for a extra heavy train). Busses provided transportation between Wantagh sta. and Jones Beach. Early in the thirties there was a proposal of building a railroad spur to Jones Beach, but nothing ever came of it.

So my first day on the LIRR came to an "end" and it would take me a couple of hours to "straighten out" my cash report. My "second day" consisted of six trains and started out of Flatbush Ave sta. about seven thirty on Sunday evening. First round trip was to Hempstead and those Main Line local stas. from



G5s eastbound at Union Hall Street Station  
Summer's early evening light in 1952  
Photo: W. J. Broschart - Archive: Dave Keller

Union Hall St. in Jamaica to Floral Park made "Hempstead" trains extremely busy during most of the day and well into the evening hours.

Gas rationing was in full force, and almost everyone used up their monthly "A" gas ration coupon in a few days. Then it was the "good old LIRR" for the rest of the month. The second round trip was Flatbush Ave. to Valley Stream, west on the Far Rockaway Br. to Hammels and then over the Jamaica Bay route to Ozone Park and Woodhaven, where the Atlantic Br. was traveled west to Flatbush Ave. Trains making runs such as that were known as "going around the horn" Numbers changed at Valley Stream, where train "directions" changed. Luckily a heavy rain about an hour before had emptied the beaches so we had a very light load.

We were back in Brooklyn about eleven thirty p.m. and I had five hours "swing" until my last two trains. This was an early Monday a.m. commuter "around the horn". Another ticket collector with the same six trains as my run had a bright idea! We would bunk over in the "laid-up over the weekend" class MP41 cars on track one or two. The long side seats in both ends of those cars were ideal for "stretching out" for a nap. Your coat and vest made a pretty good pillow too. To insure "quiet" we killed the car's pump switch.

The next thing I remember was waking up to a crowded sta. with morning commuters and the realization that my train was long gone!

My partner never woke me., but "doubled up" and worked my cars, so no harm was done. I was about to call the crew dispatcher and tell him about it. when the train I had "missed" pulled in and the crew knew why I had'nt shown up and had a good laugh over it. The conductor even signed my time slip !

Another night I did a very foolish thing. As a collector on a Hempstead to Brooklyn train I had put my pad of stock, (cash fare receipts), and timetable up over <sup>THE</sup> end vestibule of a trailer "ping" where nobody could see it. We were delayed quite a while for some reason in Jamaica, with the result we would be



Flatbush Ave Station, Brooklyn  
Tracks 1,2 7/17/1916 Keller

arriving too late in Flatbush Ave. for me to make my next train. The conductor told me to get off at Nostrand Ave. sta., go down to the street and up the eastbound platform stairs and I would "make my train."



Nostrand Avenue -View E - c.1920  
Archive: Dave Keller

After the people detrained at Nostrand, I closed the air doors at my "platform" and descended the stairs to the street. About to cross Atlantic Ave., I suddenly remembered my "stuff" over that trailer car door ! Running back up the stairs, I found that the train I had just got off of was still in the station, but all the side doors were closed and door indicator lights out.

Disregarding the danger that the train would have "power" with all the side doors closed and could move any second, I climbed over the safety chains between the cars and grabbed my "stuff" ! Going out again by "keying" the air side door open of course, was a safe move. As soon as I closed the door and hurriedly stepped off, the train started. If it had moved a few seconds before while I was climbing between the cars I could have easily lost my grip and fell down to the tracks, probably losing arms or legs or worse!

That winter Jim Purtill lost both arms in Mineola by a somewhat similiar thing. He was a ticket collector on train 204. It was an extremely cold and damp morning, the kind that will bring any steam leaks out in great clouds, especially if there is no wind. Jim "passed a sign" that his platform was clear and all were off or on at that location. Just as 204 began to move he stepped from Mineola high platform into what he thought was the open vestibule of a coach. With the clouds of escaping steam he stepped between the cars and down he went, the car wheels cutting both of his arms near the elbows !

Luckily the third rail was on the other side, or it could have been worse for Jim! The train went on it's way, the crew being unaware of what had occurred. Passengers on the westbound platform waiting for train 527 spotted him laying there and summoned help.

Along about Wednesday I was "marked up" on a "Guard Job ". At that time there were about twenty of these jobs that earned about four dollars and twenty cents for 10 hours on duty. "Guards" did not collect tickets, they were there on long MU commuter trains to help open and close the "air doors" and take care of "trap doors" in the vestibules. In those days, "low" and "high" platforms were mixed on some lines. My "Guard" job started in Long Beach on Train no. 823, a "high wheeler" as they said in those days when a train made only a few stops enroute or "skipped" Jamaica. Guards also brought up a passenger count to the Conductor on westbound trains going into Brooklyn or N.Y.. He entered these on his cash report.

All the guard jobs "swung" all day until four p.m., when we reported to Horace Morrell, the LIRR stationmaster in N.Y. for our assignments to a particular platform, where we loaded trains and answered questions, plus helped close train side doors at leaving time. If you were assigned to the platform between tracks eighteen and nineteen, you were in charge of the "gap".

This meant waiting for a train to pull in and stop on track eighteen. Then you <sup>would</sup> insert your "switch key" into a



LIRR - Switch Key  
Post 1940's era

control box on a sta. pillar and platform extensions would push out in two different locations on the east end of the curved platform. Otherwise the "gap" between the car vestibule and sta. platform was about two feet wide or so, a very unsafe situation for passengers to step across.

When it was nearly time for the train to leave, you again turned the key in the control box, closing the "gap" extensions so they fitted back into the platform, allowing the train to pass by them. "C" tower could not give a train on track 18 a signal better than absolute "Stop" as long as the "gap" extensions were "out". About six o'clock all the guards left N.Y. on long commuter trains for the terminal they had left from in the morning.

I "had a ball" when I got one of those "Guard" jobs as I could spend about seven hours in Times Square seeing all the "double feature" movies which opened at nine a.m. for twenty five cents ! ( fifty cents after twelve noon). Near the end of the week the crew dispatcher told me I had a "home" job, my first! It turned out to be a Smithtown collector's run, but since I lived in Port Jeff., it was just a twenty five minute ride for me to work the same train from Smithtown.

No. 617 was a heavy commuter train direct to Penn. Sta. The three man crew and myself would each have three cars to



G5s #22 Photo: Frank Zahn  
Archive: Mike Boland

collect on the twelve car train. G5 no. 22 with a "high" tank was the regular engine on this train then, and Walter Seaman was engineman.

Since 617 went to N.Y. there was little "changing at Jamaica". We punched all commutations "twice" and placed seat or "hat" checks in each seat so we knew who we had collected fare



Seat check - 8/10/1942



Cedar Manor Station  
View NW 1937  
Archive: Dave Keller

from. After Jamaica you only had to pick up the "checks", leaving the people undisturbed to read their "Herald Tribune" or "Daily Mirror." Trainman and Collectors were paid about five dollars for ten hours on the job at this time. (50¢/hr = \$9.00 currently)

In the middle of the day a trip "around the horn" kept my punch from rusting. Starting at Cedar Manor it was kids, kids, and more kids heading for Far Rockaway and the stations to Arverne. What a "beach business" the RR had in those days!

Every mid-day train going either way "around the horn" via the Far Rock. Br. had it's Brooklyn connection at Ozone Park. This would be a Rockaway Park train. Both N.Y. and Brooklyn runs



Ozone Park view N ("railroad west")  
7/1958 - Photo/Archive: Art Humeke

exchanged passengers on the long Ozone Park platform. Of course this gave the Rockaway Park train a Penn. Sta. connection as well, and it all worked very smoothly over the years.

That evening going back to Smithtown found me collecting on train 38, a eleven car Speonk train off track no. fourteen, as far as Jamaica. We again "checked everybody thru" going east of Jamaica. People with Brooklyn commutations out of N.Y. were charged five cents for the mileage difference. We issued "form 180" receipts for them. Even with the IND Jamacia subway line open to 169 th st. we still carried a lot of people Penn. Sta. to Jamaica for the twenty two cents fare then.

I got off no.38 at Jamacia and my final train of the day, no. 654, soon came in on track eight. Another "high wheeler", this time hauled by PRR K4 5409, making Hicksville the first stop, Clarence Carter, engineer and Jack Hastings as conductor .We were the longest train at the time on the RR, with fourteen



P54 #316 Builders photo 5/1911  
Archive: ERA, Inc. - Jeff Erlitz

"mainliner" P54 coaches. Since 654 was 99% commuters, we managed to have our collecting done in time to get the doors and "traps" open in time for Hicksville. Since the job made two hours more than a "flat days pay", I was already beginning to feel wealthy !

All of us "Spears" were working Guard or Collecting jobs, but until we worked our first "braking" run, which meant a head-end man or flagman on a "regular" listed job in the "Crew Sheet" book, we were not as yet listed on the Brakeman's Roster. That first "regular run" would be your "seniority date" for the rest of your time on the RR. Bidding for runs, or "trimming" someone junior to you would all be based on that "date". My first "braking" run came on the third Sat. I was employed.

It was two round trips to "PW" or Republic. The other brakeman, N.D. Fagnant was also making his first time as "regular man". To make matters more interesting, the engineer was also making his first "voyage" as a big "E". The first round trip was in daylight and uneventful, but the second rounder around midnite and after was more "stimulating" !

Seems our esteemed conductor had "overdosed on cough medicine" and backing around the "PW" or Pinelawn Wye, neglected to line the switch that forked into the wye "tail track" or the Pinelawn "team track" next to it. As a result we backed our six car train into the "team", coupling to a loaded covered hopper holding seventy tons of bulk cement standing by itself! The coupling was so gentle that no one was aware of the extra car going back to Jamaica except the engineer, who thought the extra weight was the large crowd of second-shift Republic Aviation war workers we had loaded at that place.

I was the "head-end brakeman", so my job was to throw the "divider switch" in front of the engine so I did not see it happen and the flagman was told by the "brains" to stay out "of the way", so he could'nt be blamed either.

When we arrived at Jamaica Sta. a LIRR policeman met our train and told us to report to the Movement Bureau, (known as "204"), as soon as we yarded our train in the Richmond Hill storage yard. Needless to say "204" was not pleased with a consignee's car of cement winding up in the storage yard. The way it was discovered was the various signal towers reported us by "with markers". but on the NEXT to the rear car, a definite "no no" ! I think the "brains" got time off over it.

On Sunday evening the crew dispatcher informed me I was "marked up" on the daily crew board on run 31 in Port Jeff. Monday. Harry Gaynor was the conductor, with "Ike" Smith's job as head end man covered by me and N.B. (Bruce) Hawkins the "flag". Walking over to train 621 next morning I noticed "Bill" Nelson was the hogger and the K4, (5409 again), was already coupled to the RPO car. Behind that were 816, (Syosset club car), and 10 P54 "mainliner" coaches. Gaynor spying me said, "Get the air on this train so we can get a brake test and back out no. one track, and pull up into the sta."

Well, try as I might, I could not get the air and whistle hoses to couple! Gaynor's temper exploded finally and he fairly shouted, "What are you, a brakeman or an office boy?" Finally he realized what the problem was and told me to bend the end of



**REA-RPO #737-Storage Yard  
Richmond Hill 8/03/1958  
Archive: Dave Keller**

the tender hoses up and the ones on the RPO car would fairly "fall" together. So simple, works every time too! Why didn't "instructor" Rodgers give us some instruction on other than MU equipment?....Who knows!

No. 621 ran "express" from Syosset to Jamaica, changing to a DDI electric there, with arrival in N.Y. at nine ten a.m. Usually "steam" equipment arriving in the morning used tracks ranging from six to sixteen, depending on what was "clear" at the time. DDI hauled LIRR trains additionally were listed on the PRR "Incoming Trains" chalk board on the lower level, right "up" there with PRR, NH and LV name trains! Eastbound "steam" jobs leaving in the p.m. hours used tracks 14 to 16 inclusive.

After our RPO was unloaded and all passengers were off, we "killed" the lights except for the rear car. Everybody on the crew collected newspapers left by the passengers. The engine crew always appreciated them too. The engine crew "changed



**F Tower - (PRR) Thompson Ave., LI City  
1925 (Osborne-Keller)**

ends" on the DDI for the "back up move" to "F" tower or "Har-old".

This meant we had to give an "on and off" brake test from the rear car to insure they worked from the opposite end of the DDI. This done, the conductor would use his PRR "triangle-shaped" key inserted in a control box in a platform pillar to notify "JO" tower that we were ready to proceed to L.I. City via "Line 1" East River tunnel.

Backing thru the cool damp, dimly lighted bores we had to place a "lit" white-globed kerosene lantern by the end gate in the rear car vestibule. Hung on the gate was our "back up hose", with it's emergency conductor's valve. The hose also was equipped with a "warning whistle" which we would sound if we spotted any men working in the tunnel. After they climbed up on the bench-wall they would give us a "highball" with their lantern that they were "clear".

After a few seconds your eyes would adjust to the darkness of the tunnels and the signals appeared clearly down the length of the bore. The brief shafts of daylight were at the First Ave, Manhattan and Front St., L.I. City air shafts. Both of these had emergency ladders and stairs to streets on the surface, but in my time on the RR, I never heard of any passengers having to make use of them. Lowest point under the river was about one fourth mile east of the First Ave shaft, and the "dip" was plainly visible, even in the dimness of the tunnels.



**HAROLD Tower - LI City**  
View SE 3/12/1978  
(Madden-Keller)

The move west to L.I. City passenger yard from "F" or "Harold" was usually over Main tracks 1 or 2, but sometimes things would get "out of sequence" in the pass. yard. Tracks one and two would get backed-up with DDI hauled equipment and your train was routed via "F" tower and the "Third St. Running siding" to the pass yard. From a switch on a "loop" track it ran west along Skillman Ave. fence, past Hunters Point Ave. sta. to the connection with Main Line "Two" at a point opposite Third St. (51st. Ave). We used this alternate route this day. Going east "verbal permission" from "F" was required to use this route.



**3rd St. Running Siding wash rack**  
View E 8/10/1983 Archive: Dave Keller

In later years, probably 1947, a car washer was installed on the Third St. Running Sdg., used for washing LIRR equipment at the L.I. City pass. yard, plus PRR trains from Sunnyside Yard that were enroute to or from the "Wheelspur Yard". These were handled by LIRR 0-8-0 switchers working the "Wheelspur Job"

The Maure Sidings that served industries along 51 st. Ave branched off the Third St Running Sdg. under the Hunterspoint Ave. bridge.

After leaving our train in the yard crew's care, we all boarded the DDL to "deadhead" to Jamaica, as our next train was 654, the six eight p.m. to "Port". I had an even better reason to get to Jamaica, my new uniform had arrived at last!

During the next week I managed to work three days out of Patchogue on "Doc" Overton's job. Going over from "Port" was easy, Quinn's Bus Line coach got me to Patchogue with ample time to



PD Tower 3/18/1930 - View E  
Semaphore signals replaced in 1940  
(Osborne-Keller archive)

spare. Waiting up in "PD tower" for our E6 to back down from the "pit", I had a nice chat with Tom Garrney, the day trick man. Tom



Patchogue turntable - View E  
PRR leased E6s #1564  
3/1946 (Weber-Boland)

informed me our five "pings" were on the "Schoolhouse" track. Other tracks were the "fence", (very well named), the "Ringhouse", "Scale", North Siding, and Nos. one and two east of the tower.

PD Interlocking also controlled the single track west to "Y", (end of double track); the E.D.T. switch there being of the "spring switch type". My first train was no. 61 to Babylon, upon leaving there it became no. 261 over the Central Branch and Main Line to Jamaica.

Coming back east, we were train 68, making Bay Shore first stop. It was my "first time", that day over the Central Br., so I stood on the rear platform to get "qualified". Very noticeable at five



Central Branch Wig-wag, and bell  
Broad Hollow Rd., Farmingdale  
View N 12/12/1928 Archive: Art Huneke

different highway crossings were the "Wig-Wag" type warnings for autos. No where else on the LIRR did these appear, but other RRs all over the country used them. No doubt the "Central Br." rebuilding in 1924 resulted in them being installed here.

At several locations on the "branch" were abandoned housing sub divisions, <sup>WITH</sup> street signs, fire plugs and sidewalks, etc.; well populated with years of weeds and baby "pitch pines". A fitting monument to the recent "great depression", if there ever was one!

I sure enjoyed working with "Doc", everything always went so smoothly, I don't think the man had an enemy on the whole RR! Our other two round trips from "PD" to Babylon were four car trains with the same E6, probably no. 737 or 1321, they were here at that time. Arrival at Babylon, meant backing down the "lead" to the layup yard. While we lined up the west leg of the wye, the engine crew took water at the plug. The wye, left in place after the 1925 electrification, ended up in the swamp and held four P54 cars with either an E or G class locomotive. After turning our train we layed on the east end of the wye near Higbie Lane crossing. About fifteen minutes before leaving time, receiving "permission" from PD tower, we would come out on no. 1 track and back all the way to the sta., about a mile.

Getting over to Port Jeff. after finishing up in Patchogue at quarter to one in the morning was impossible unless you wanted to walk it so it was the old "Nichols Hotel" on East Main St. for the night and a bus home in the a.m..

Once in awhile I would be marked up on a "Race Train Extra". At that time the LIRR served four "horse" tracks, namely Aque-



**Belmont Park Station - Entrance to Trains south of Hempstead Turnpike 6/1949 Photos: Ed Hermanns Archive: Dave Keller**

duct on the Rockaway Park Br., Belmont Park on it's own mile long branch, the Jamaica Racetrack at Locust Manor sta., and the Roosevelt Raceway on the Central Extension. The first three were "day racing", while the last was "evening racing", with "sulkys". The first three were strictly jockey and rider.

Mostly I was on the Jamaica Race trains, most of which made an a.m. trip to the track, and then "laid up" during the seven or eight races on the mile-long siding between Springfield Blvd. crossing and Locust Manor sta. Some went to Far Rockaway and laid up in the passenger yard there. One day while "swinging" there I noted a weed grown siding continuing past the wooden freight house. Following it, I crossed Sheridan Blvd. and went on a few blocks more, where the siding terminated in a Texas Oil Co. bulk gasoline plant. Apparently it had not been used in years. At this time all freight sidings were equipped with third rail for the DDIs. The "Rockaway freight", I saw a number of times on this branch. Once it was "in the clear" on the old "water works" siding that went off in the woods between Gibson and Hewlett, and other times it was switching Hewlett Bros. coal and lumber yard siding between Hewlett and Woodmere. There were also coal silos at Lawrence off the "third track".

They were good hours on the "race trains", mostly reporting at Jamaica from nine thirty to eleven thirty in the morning. Finishing time was in N.Y. or Brooklyn between five and six p.m. All used commuter equipment that otherwise would be laying unused around Jamaica all day long. Hardest thing about those jobs was carrying the heavy "four-sided lens" marker lights from one end of the train to the other, everytime the train changed direction! The long "canteen", a red and white kerosene lantern, plus your timetable, etc., all had to be carried at the same time in "those good old days." !



**Woodside-Locust Manor (Race Track) c.1947 GPA: Homer Bannard**

There were also ticket collectors stationed at the Locust Manor westbound high "racing platform" during the afternoon loading hours. Tickets had to be purchased before passing thru gates manned by the trainmen who "cancelled" all tickets and

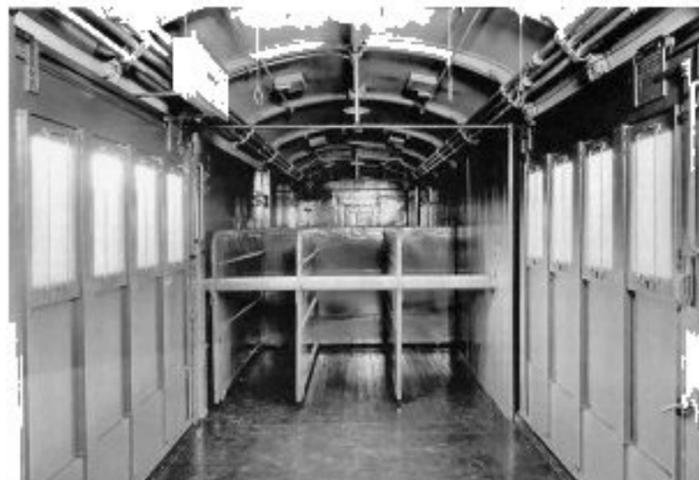
handed them back to the passenger. That way if we were unable to finish collecting on the train before Jamaica, there was no loss in revenue to the RR, the ticket was already "dead" whether we got them or the people kept them.

When that "last race" was over, pity the poor ticket collector at the platform "gate" who wasn't fast with his punch! The "hordes" came at you like a "flood", smoke rose at times from all those fast punches at work!

The "day" races began in mid-April and lasted continuously six days a week, (ex. Sun.), until early November, with the exception of August when the upstate Saratoga track held its annual meet. The "day" races were only held at one track at a time, while Roosevelt Raceway raced continuously all thru its own season, being open every evening except Sunday.



**LIRR #143 class B74a - Hicksville  
Horse Express Pullman 1947**



**PRR #5844 Horse Express car interior  
"Garden State Racing Association"  
Collection: Charles Horan**

All three "day" tracks received and shipped thoroughbred horses in and out during the "racing season" in "horse pullmans" which were mostly PRR "balloon roof", six wheel truck cars. Stalls lined either side of the three doors on each side, <sup>AND</sup> there were also usually end-unloading doors on these cars. Attendants or "grooms" always rode in the cars with the horses, using fresh straw for a mattress.

Jamaica Race Track and Belmont Park had their own "high platform" sidings for the "horse pullmans", while Aqueduct Race Track made use of the nearby Ozone Park freight house platform. Roosevelt Raceway used Westbury "team" yard sidings. These cars were mostly handled in special "moves" of from one to three cars behind DDI engines to the "day" tracks, steam of course pulled the Westbury "moves" with any engine from a G53 to a R9.

One photo I regret not taking was the "ancient", wooden, six wheel truck former baggage car kept at the bumping block on the "southernmost" track at Belmont Park. It was there in 1944-45, resplendent in green paint. They printed "racing program" sheets in it. I seem to recall it was lettered "New York Racing Association", or something like that. Does anyone remember this car?

In late October I "hit" a race train job reporting at Jamaica about ten thirty in the morning. As we were signing the register sheet by the crew dispatchers we were told to deadhead to Ronkonkoma on the ten fifty six out of Jamaica and bring a "Cauliflower Extra" to Yard "A", the crew having "outlawed" at Ronk.

An H10 with about twenty five FGEX "ice" reefers and the hack were waiting for us on the south siding. The train and engine crews had been relieved so the hostler was watching the engine. The



Riverhead - Reefers being iced c.1951  
H10s #108

Photo: John Krause

cars had been iced at Riverhead the previous evening and the water from the melting crushed ice was dripping out of the cars. It was desired to get this train into Yard "A" in L.I. City as fast as possible before the ice was all gone and the cauliflower could start to spoil. After taking water and a brake test we followed train 233's blocks all the way to Hollis. Routed via Holban Yard and over the Montauk Br. west of Jamaica and then the Montauk Cut-Off into yard "A," we arrived there about four o'clock.

Another time when we reported for a "Race Train Extra", we went over to Dunton Shop instead. They wanted us to take two MP 41 cars out to Country Life Press for the "Mitchell Field" shuttle. We were to exchange the MP41s there for two MP54 cars that had been used while our two cars <sup>were</sup> in Dunton Shop for their monthly I.C.C. required inspection. All locomotives and "motor" passenger cars are required to do this. Steam equipment, (cars), and MU trailer cars are exempt. The two MP41s must have been 1100 and 1101 as both had the "air" doors, the only two of that type so equipped. All the rest had manual "armstrong" side doors operated by levers on the vestibule ends.

When the "Races" were over in the fall we "Spears" all expected to be furloughed until recalled in April when racing season resumed. This was a regular practise on the LIRR for years because about forty men would not be needed over the winter. Even the last twenty above the "furloughed ones" could only expect about two or three days work each week!

While expecting this any day after the races were over, (The furlough list came within ten men younger than I in seniority), I answered the phone on the Thursday before Thanksgiving expecting the "axe to fall"! Surprise! - "You're marked up out of Montauk on the "Cannonball" for tomorrow", (Friday), said the crew dispatcher.

Quite a bit of deadheading was in store for me to cover this job. Leaving Port" on no. 631 at 2:39 p.m. for Jamaica, then leaving from there on train 24 at 5:08 for the long ride to Montauk. There was about an hour in Jamaica to eat a good meal, as there was nothing out there to eat near the sta. in those times.



Montauk Station (3rd) and Freight House  
View NE 1942 - Archive: Art Huneke

Going out on no.24, head end man Tommy Healy briefed me where my train would be and where to find a vacant bunk in the bunk-house, as "24's" crew as well as the freight crew slept there on very cold nights. The place was as "warm as ←→ toast" and I picked out a vacant double-deck bunk with a "leather mattress" for the long night ahead. For a blanket I used my uniform overcoat. Along toward morning I felt someone tapping me on the shoulder.

It turned out to be the "Cannonballs" conductor, Harry Vail, who was in place of the regular conductor Paul Erhardt, who was on a "court case" involving the RR that day. Harry explained the "move" to get train 21 into the sta. platform, but not before giving a brake test in the yard.

Going out in the "pitch-black" yard, I spotted a PRR class K2 engine on a short consist of all PRR equipment. Leaking steam from every "minute" leak all along the train didn't make the brake test any easier to do either. Robert Brown was the "hogger" on the engine which turned out to be no.3570. Three P70 coaches and a Pennsy six-wheel truck combine made up our train.

Joe Vanderpool, a veteran on the Montauk runs, was the flagman. He did a lot of "scalloping" in Napague harbor during scallop season and often brought in pints and quarts of "bay scallops" to sell to the west end men. The "Cannonball" was certainly a "pleasure" to work, I don't believe there were more than fifty people east of Patchogue and they all had tickets!

Looking out the window of the warm, comfortable Pennsy car, and hearing "3570's" whistle as we sped along thru Mastic and Brookhaven was a memory that I would always carry with me! The miles have a way of slipping away at times such as that and before long we arrived in Penn.Sta. right on time at nine thirty. We were met by the LIRR stationmaster and a couple of coach cleaners with their ever present broom and dustpans.

The Stationmaster told us to leave our train where it was on track 11, and go over to track 10 where train 281's equipment would give us a ride to L.I. City passenger yard. Train 21's cars, (our train), was needed for the ten twenty a.m. Atlantic City express. Normally we would back our own train out thru the tunnels and then west to the passenger yard. This was a "break" for me as I could get a good breakfast in Manhattan and dead-head to L.I City later on by I.R.T. Subway.

With plenty of time in L.I. City after lunch, I set out to explore that "railians paradise", starting at the float bridges.



Float Bridges  
Photo: LIRRer Nov 1953

where a powerful hoisting crane on a scow was fishing an MDT reefer of bananas out of the East River minus it's trucks, I saw LIRR tugs "Meitowax", (wonder where they got that name?),



LIRR tug Meitowax - LIRR tug Garden City Archive: R. Mcenery

"Cutchogue", "Long Island", and the newer "Garden City". The loop track that curved sharply nearly to the river's edge was my next walk. This loop which connected the pass. yard with the float bridge area must have been built about 1929. It appears on 1932 maps of the area, I never saw a train on it, so I never knew what it was meant to serve.



B.E.D.T. 0-6-0 #11 (older logo)  
Brooklyn - c.1931  
Archive: Dave Keller

Looking south as I crossed Front St. on the "loop", I saw a B.E.D.T. 0-6-0 "steamer" switching cars at the multi-story National Sugar Refining Co. works. This RR had a team yard directly across the street from our pass. yd..but there was no track connection.

Three or four PRR DDIs long out of service, next caught my attention. Every window in all of them had been broken by vandals and all of them still had the "Worlds Fair" striping, though badly faded. They were all on a short track way over in the pass. yard where the former express terminal stood. It just might be those were the final four DDIs the LIRR acquired in December, 1944!



PRR Power Station  
51st Ave., Hunters Point 1910

Steam heat for the yard was supplied by the big "Pennsylvania" four-stacked power house a short ways up Front St. This was built to supply direct current for the LIRR electrification back about 1903-04. Coal came in by coal barges loaded at the South Amboy, N.J. PRR coal dumper. Ashes from the power house were loaded into LIRR MW hopper cars for ballasting track.

That afternoon I bought a couple of sandwiches to take to Montauk, for supper and breakfast Sat. morning. There was a big "iron cookstove" in the bunkhouse with a good collection of "pots and pans.etc.", but I was only "qualified" an opening "Campbells Soups"! We were due to leave the pass. yard at two fifty p.m. for Penn, Sta. Behind the DDI came our Three P70 coaches and PB70 combine, followed by the "Greenport section", (train 286 east of "MR"), which had two P70 coaches, plus a PB70 combine also. All the cars were leased PRR equipment.

The baggage sections of the combines faced each other in the train, that way the train baggageman could sort the closed pouches and parcel post without going thru the passenger sections. He went as far as Southampton where we would meet train 9, getting off there to work that train. Leaving New York at three fifty seven, we would make Jamaica for the change of engines and then Manorville where the last three cars of the "Greenport section" of "The Cannonball" were cut-off for train 286.

Coming out of Penn. Sta. Harry Vail and I collected the Montauk part of train 20, while Joe Vanderpool, the flagman, collected the Greenport cars. We also had a "News Butcher" as far as Jamaica selling candy thru the train, he wore a "Union News Co." uniform and cap. I never saw him on any other train.

Locomotive 3570 gave us a speedy ride out the Main Line to Manorville and we only had one "meet", no. 211 at "SG". We picked



**B Tower, Bethpage Jct. - 5/11/1947**  
**Photo: George Votava**  
**Archive: Dave Keller**

up a form "19" train order covering that at "B" tower. No. 211 of course, took siding as we were the "superior" train because it was "p.m." - Westbounds were "superior" in the a.m..

When we arrived at "MR", the Greenport crew had the Manorville Br. lined up for us. While Conductor Vail got "permission to use the "Branch", I made the "cut" behind our combine. After we left, the Greenport crew who had been waiting on the Main track by the station would back up and couple to the three cars we left. This became train 286 to Greenport. The same crew came out to Ronkonkoma earlier in the afternoon on no. 236. Leaving most of their train there, they ran "extra" to "MR" with the G5 and a "rider" combine.



**Manorville Branch - View NW 1927**  
**Photo: James V. Osborne**  
**Archive: Dave Keller**

As it was dark by this time I saw little of the scenery on the Manorville Branch. Aside from a single farm house about half way to Eastport, it was "all scrub oak and pine trees." Arriving at Eastport we had to get permission to open the switch on to the Montauk Br. This switch was different than most in that you had to throw two levers instead of just one.

While taking water at Speonk I noted a young trainman getting on. Leaving town I got talking to him and discovered he had "trimmed" me for the next day on Trains 21 and 20, "The Cannonball". I felt a little "down" on hearing that, but that was the "way it was", the only thing you could look forward to was getting some "seniority" ! The rest of the run was pleasant enough, even taking K2 3570 around the wye was a "new" ex-

perience, though the small light on the tender and my "oil" hand lamp did not shed much light on things. I wondered what a zero night with a northwest wind would be like out here! The next time I was able to hit a Montauk run was in the "good old summertime" of 1948.

In 1944 the "Cannonball" made it's last run over the Manorville Br., but no. 12, (the former "Shinnecock Express"), on "summer timetable" Saturday afternoons continued to use it until "change of timetable" in the fall of 1946. The branch was abandoned in 1949 and torn up shortly after.

About the middle of January 1944 I bid in and was lucky to get my first run out of Port Jefferson, a "home job" for me. The first trip to Jamaica left "Port" at twelve three p.m. on train no. 627, arriving Jamaica at one thirty five. Then we "swung" in the storage yard until five five when we left there for a round trip to "PW". The last trip left Jamaica at eight twenty five, arriving "Port" at nine fifty six p.m..

This was an except Sunday run and about as near a "day-light" job as I rated with my "pip squeak" seniority. Every winter right after New Years in the thirties and forties a few LIRR men would take a three or four months "leave of absence" and head south for the "sunshine state". They missed seeing all the nice snow season on the RR, a "pity"!

One of these men "owned this run" that I had bid in as a "pick job". When he returned in the early spring, I would lose this job and be back on the "extra list" as before. Some of these LIRR men actually worked the "trainman's extra board" on the Florida East Coast Railway while wintering down in Florida, year after year.

Train 627 was on the "ash pit" track when I reported for the first day on my new job. PRR class K3's were the regular engine on this train and we had all five of them at one time or another. A couple of them sported "lines west" tenders that resembled the ones most of our H10s had then.



K2s #1458 Divide Hicksville 1940  
Photo: T. J. Sommer  
Archive: Dave Keller

It was my opinion that the K2 and K3 PRR locomotives were a very handsome engine with that long straight boiler. Two things that I thought "odd" about them were the wooden pilot beam and the long "stirrup" near the first driving wheel for the engineer to stand on while "oiling around"!

We had six "mainliners" ,five coaches and a combine. Jake,("the snake"),was my conductor.Him and I would collect the first three cars,while Frank Firth,the collector and the flagman,the rear three.As far as Huntington I would get my first experience in handling Uncle Sam's mail. Strictly closed pouches and "special deliveries", all bound for either Jamaica or the General Post Office in Manhattan. A RR "baggage man" off no.616,which we met at Greenlawn,took over my mail duties at Huntington.

The trip to "PW" was a "sweetheart". PW-6,as it was called in our "run sheet",left Jamaica at five five p.m. as a "relief" to no. 214,carrying mainly evening shift "war workers" to Farmingdale and Republic.The usual consist was ten "mainliners" hauled by a PRR K2 or K3..We only carried about a hundred and fifty people.

We turned on the "PW" wye and those engines spun their high drivers plenty trying to back ten cars around the wye's east leg! I'd be riding on the engine pilot as we backed around,getting hot cinders down my neck and at times in my eyes.

Returning to the city we were train 245,strictly for the Grumman "war workers" in the aircraft plant.Every evening when we pulled into Grumman sta. they would be packed by the hundreds on the cinder platform,the wonder is that the "front line" didn't get shoved too close to the locomotive! When we stopped,you wanted to "be out of the way",as they pushed and shoved each other unmercifully trying to get a seat after working ten hours or so making Grumman "Hellcats"!

Once or twice we had "Wheels", (woman trainman), as collectors back near the rear and some of these "hell raisers" once lifted up the lady and put her in the parcel rack,while they took her punch and passed it around the car punching their own tickets! They were a rough crowd,but hard workers.

One winter night going west at Mineola,"Nassau" tower held the home signal on us.We were to pull into the sta, and unload our Mineola people,then back over to Country Life Press via the



**DD1 #358 Freight Brakeman flagging Cathedral Avenue, West Hempstead View NE 9/28/1947 - Photo: Ed Hermanns Archive: Dave Keller**

West Hempstead branch.All the crossings had to be "flagged" as there was no other than "diamond signs" for crossing protection. When we got to Washington St. on the Central Extension,we would head west again on that line to "Garden" block sta.,where we would join the Hempstead Br. for the journey to Floral Park.



Stewart Manor Station- View NE  
7/23/1918 (LIRR Valuation-Keller)

We stopped at Stewart Manor to let off the New Hyde Park people as those two places are only a half mile apart. I'm pretty sure this was the only time a PRR "K class" engine ever traveled over the Hempstead Br. The reason for the detour was a grade crossing accident in New Hyde Park on the Main Line which had torn up a lot of third rail on both tracks not to long before we were due at Mineola. We also made regular stops at Floral Park and Queens Village five nights a week.

One fine April afternoon in 1944 we were suprised to see a Pennsy K4, no. 5375, on our train to "PW" as we walked down to the Richmond Hill cleaning yard. She was the very first stoker-equipped engine to ever run on the LIRR and this was her first train! Road Foreman of Engines Larry Stewart was in the cab to instruct the engine crew as to stoker operation, etc.

K4 5375 had a "cast solid pilot" with retractible coupler, but otherwise the soon to be "facelift" had not altered her handsome K4 face!. The next afternoon we played host to K4 5072, also with stoker and a like "front end". After those two days of "fame" we never again had a K4 as long as I was on that job.

While I had a "home" job Mon. to Sat. inclusive, it didn't apply to Sundays. Anyone who didn't rate "off" on that day according to their seniority had to work a job somewhere on the RR for Sunday. About mid-summer I finally "hit" a collectors job that made two round trips to Oyster Bay, a branch I had never worked as yet. My dad and I had made our "first" rides to "the Bay" in the summer of 1941. Considerable ballasting to the track with crushed rock was in progress all the way up there then. The remaining lower-quadrant semaphores were being replaced with "position light type" signals also at that time.



Oyster Bay Station 10/1903  
Photo: Harold B. Fullerton  
Collection: Queens Library

At Oyster Bay the long covered shed over the station platform from the express house to the telephone box was still in use, but would be torn down within a year. That day I saw <sup>K4 537</sup> my sight of G5s with "low" tenders. Going east from Mineola engine 20 led our train, while on the engine lay up tracks at Oyster Bay we noted Nos. 24 and 25, also sporting "low tanks". Coming west we had PRR E3sd 3148. Oyster Bay and Glen Street depots even had fully-stocked Union News Co. newspaper and candy booths at that time!

In September 1944 the LIRR experienced it's second bad Hurricane, only six years after the 1938 one. This one left the "east end" realitivity untouched, but the Island's north shore from Bayside to Wading River at least really got hit! The storm started in mid-afternoon and by the time we left Jamaica at five-five for "PW" the rain was coming down in "sheets" and the howling wind in the wires hinted at a long evening of miserable weather ahead for us all.



Grumman Station - View W 8/1943  
(Weber-Morrison)

Just as we passed the Grumman sta. "shelter shed", which was about twenty five feet long and probably weighed at least a ton or so, it was bowled over by the savage wind out of the southwest. It rolled over and over and came to a "splintery halt" in a nearby potato field. I guess our train protected it while our ten cars passed and as soon as the rear car went by the gusting wind caught the hapless building broadside, it was quite a sight to see!



K4 #5406 washout 9/14/1944  
Photo: Don Boslet, Syosset postmaster  
Archive: Richard Glueck

We were a few hours late going east to "Port" that evening on our last train on the run. Seems train no. 647 hit a washout about a mile east of Syosset near South Woods Road. K4 no. 5406 derailed herself and tender, but her train stayed on the track luckily, as they were going slowly. Before we could pass by on no. two track they had to "shore it up" so it would hold us as we were the first eastbound since the washout. By this time the storm was long over and the starry skies looked down on a greatly damaged waterfront, especially in Port Jefferson and other north shore waterfront towns!

By this time the crew dispatcher tried to give me a job out of "Port", Ronkonkoma or Patchogue, if there was an opening. Gas rationing was in full force and no one was able to buy a "reliable" auto. Extra list men living on the "West end" were reluctant to go out the night before and sleep in the coaches to cover a job the following morning. By the same conditions if they covered an afternoon run, they would get done too late to catch a train back to the city, meaning another night of "coach napping" waiting for a a.m. train home.

Every Sunday I would be "marked up" on a Ronkonkoma evening run leaving there at seven and returning via Camp Upton the following morning around three thirty. Absolutely no one wanted to work this job, including me. Ronkonkoma in those days had no place to even get a cup of "Java", let alone food!

Almost every night during the winter the six cars would be "frozen up" and we would go half way to the city before they "thawed out" and steam heat came all the way thru the train.



LIRR #46 "Ping Pong"  
Ronkonkoma c.1949 (Ziel-Boland)

There is nothing colder than a "ping pong" with no heat on a bitter ten above zero night! (It's warmer outside!).

Coming east we left Jamaica at twelve thirty six a.m. off platform "C", the former "Brooklyn local" used one until 1939. Ten "pings" with a G5, we were more "troop train" than passenger one, as only the head two were open to the public. The eight remaining cars were reserved for hundreds of "GIs" going back to Camp Upton for Monday's five a.m. reveille after a weekend leave in the "Big Apple" and it's suburbs.

About five Army "MPs" patrolled the last eight cars. Usually one would stand in the back of the coach while you went thru collecting the return portion of their Patchogue bought "furlough tickets. The RR auditing dept. authorized their use to Camp Upton, even though it was further east in mileage than Patchogue. Their use was restricted to this Sunday night train no, 222 only. Those "MPs" were all "business" and the GIs knew it, we never had any problem with would be "free riders" losing their tickets, etc..

We would "head" up into the Camp and unload once there on the "west" warehouse track, We sure "unloaded" in a hurry, guess the men wanted to get in some "sack time" before the "bugle" sounded, as it was already two ten when we pulled in!

Backing out in the frigid darkness thru the low pine trees we would shine our electric lanterns ahead and quite often "pairs of eyes" would stare back and then bound away into the woods. They were small herds of deer foraging for moss under the snow cover. We backed out the east leg of the wye and then ran "extra" back to Ronkonkoma. This was train 225 for Monday a.m., and the car cleaner had ten cars of "seats" all turned for him!



Holtsville Station - View east 3/1952.  
Photo: Robert M. Emery  
Archive: SUNY-Stony Brook

One night there was an "unscheduled stop" at Holtsville going back. We had a big AT&SF "horse express" car next to the engine to set off there. There were about a dozen "milk" cows with an attendant in that car, At that time there was a cattle-unloading ramp on the east end of the team track, and as soon as we spotted the car, men from the nearby dairy farm quickly herded the cows off and headed them for the warm barn on the south side of the RR.

Believe it or not, covering that job took me nearly twenty four hours, even though "Port" and Ronkonkoma were only about twenty minutes apart by auyomobile! I hitchhiked to Medford about nine thirty on Sunday a.m., as people going to various churches at that time of day nearly always picked you up, and I guess the uniform cap, etc, helped too. Train 4206 to Greenport left Medford about ten twenty, always with a K4. I rode this to Greenport, arriving about eleven thirty. This way I could get a good Sunday dinner of "bay scallops" at Mitchnell's Restuarant,

I could leave my "gear" on the train and attend a matinee in the movie nearby as 4211 did not leave until five five p.m. If I didn't care for the movie I could always catch a nap on



Greenport Dock and Station  
View NW c.1910

4211's equipment out on the railroad dock. Once the hostler had coaled, watered and cleaned the fire of the K4 it was coupled to the train to keep the cars heated. Those PRR coaches were quite comfortable to stretch out in, as most had the "high-back" reclining seats.

About four thirty I would procure from the Park Diner a sandwich and pound cake to eat on the way to Ronkonkoma on no. 4211. We arrived there at six thirty, just in time for my Sunday evening job. Sounds like a lot of unnecessary riding doesn't it? Well, most would agree, at least those that didn't enjoy riding behind a Pennsy K4 with all the "sound effects thrown in"!

Getting back to "Port" next morning wasn't so much fun. After putting our "Camp Upton Special" away in Ronkonkoma, I would try to sleep in train 223's cars for an hour or two. If there was no heat on it I went up in the G5's cab where it was at least warmer than "outside", but seatboxes were not designed for comfort!

Train 223's arrival in Hicksville only gave a few minutes to run across to the eastbound platform to board train 604 for "Port". Talk about "slow trains", 604 went in passing sidings at five different places for westbound commuter jobs, taking two and a half hours to go. thirty two miles! We were due in "Port" at eight thirty a.m., twenty three hours since I had left the previous day!

By fall of 1944 the train and engine crews finally got their "one week vacation with pay", something all other departments of the RR had been enjoying for years.

You had to pick your vacation according to seniority and I wound up with the second week in December, not exactly "beach weather", but nevertheless better than no vacation at all. About mid-week I decided to "revisit" the abandoned Wading River Br. east of "Port". Taking a lunch and my trusty "616 Brownie", I hitch-hiked out state route "Twenty five A" to Wading River.



Wading River Station  
View NE - 9/06/1937  
(Votava-Keller)

Starting my eleven mile walk opposite the "Judge's Inn", I could find no trace of Wading River depot, not even a foundation. The right of way was plainly visible, although starting to fill in with baby pitch pines and wild cherry saplings. The wye was traceable in the oak woods, even though it had been taken up in 1929.

I took a photo of milepost sixty eight which was still marking the distance from L.I. City. A lot of old rotten ties that were too far gone to be removed in 1939's track removal were in all the way to "Port". Shoreham sta., although missing more than seventy five percent of its boards to people's fireplaces, was still standing. The well-built overpass over the road to Shoreham village had been left standing and is still there today as I write this.



Rocky Point Station-View W  
1930 - (Osborne-Keller)

Rocky Point sta. was now part of Thurber Lumber Co's office, and had been moved south of the right of way about a hundred feet. Going on west, the old RCA siding still lay intact although with trees about three inches thick growing thru the middle of it. The reason that siding was not removed in 1939 was because it was RCA property, not the RRs.

Miller Place cinder platform was still visible, along with a path where the main track had been. Sini Bros. had established a small coal yard at the end of the track in "Port", which was about a thousand feet east of milepost fifty eight. After 1939 the former main track east of the wye was called the "old main" and used to layup coaches over night and Sundays. I had enjoyed the long walk on that cloudy, cold but windless day and still had three unused "frames" on my roll of film!

Christmas Eve was a tragic one. Going out to "Port" on train 668 with a K3 pulling us, the brakes went into the "big hole" at Elwood Road crossing west of Northport. After getting stopped we ran up to the front end of the train. Engineer Wakerfield was trying to see if any one was left alive in the wreckage of a Ford model "A" that had run into the side of the locomotive at Elwood Road.