

This left the two ex UP, two ex E-L and the ex B&O cars as the sole remaining "lightweight - second-hand equipment" for the "straw hat limiteds". Five cars was hardly enough to equip all the trains for the summer, so Morris Park started in the fall of 1975 to convert ex MU cars of the 2600 series to "Push-pull" parlor cars with forty two seats. By late spring of 1976, there were eleven cars of this type. At the same time, four "bar-generator cars" were also created from ex MU coaches. They would supply power for lights, heat and "AC" on "push-pull" trains when there were not enough "power packs", (PC-6), units to go around, such as summer Friday afternoons and evenings.

Starting on July twenty eighth, I became the conductor on one of the shortest jobs on the RR. It left Ronkonkoma at six thirty nine a.m. and arrived at Hunterspoint about eight twenty. Train 229 had twelve cars, all 2900s except the ex "R&M" bar car in mid-train. There were no stops in Nassau County as we



**ex-B&M #2907 bar car  
Ronkonkoma yard  
Photo/Archive: Paul Strubeck**

made Wyandanch-Jamaica, On top of all these "goodies", we were off Sat., Sun. and Holidays. Some of the card-playing regular commuters in the head car called train 229 "The Flagship", I suppose because it was the train making the least stops on the way into the city in the morning.

The long autumn afternoons off gave me time to work on fulfilling my ambition of walking the ocean beach from Brooklyn to Montauk. One particular day I walked the eighteen miles from Amagansett to Southampton. One thing, I can back up anyone who says that Long Island has one of the world's best sandy beaches, -----miles and miles of it!

As the new year of 1976 rolled along, everyday, or almost everyday, when I deadheaded back to "KO" on various trains, someone would ask, "How many more



**Ronkonkoma yard  
9/17/1966 - "KO" signals  
(Smith-Morrison)**

days"?. They knew I was planning on retiring before the summer was over and just said it either to make me "feel good" or because they wanted the nice job I had on the "Flagship"!

On February second, a day that I and about eleven hundred commuters on the "Flagship" would rather forget, we were six hours late getting into Hunterspoint Ave on train 229! When I left home in "Port" at five thirty a.m., a pouring rain was coming down and the temperature was forty degrees. By the time I was driving thru Lake Grove it had changed to a mixture of rain and snow and when I neared Ronkonkoma yard the snow was heavy and the biting northwest wind was driving it in "sheets" across the road. When we left the sta., the snow had stopped, but the freezing wind had dropped the temperature by a good fifteen degrees, with a sheet of ice over the meager snow cover.

It was impossible to close the side doors in the car vestibule after Wyandanch, as they were frozen solid into the door panels. Up to that point we were "right on time", but from "B" tower west we were getting "stop and

proceed" indications on the wayside signals, indicating train 227, which had left "KO " about twenty minutes before we did, was having problems, I smelled trouble! Finally we pulled up behind them, as 227 was laying at "Divide's" home signal. I went up on our engine to call the tower on the radio, but Joe Sokol the engineer had already beat me to it. Joe relayed the news to me that "Divide's" interlocking was all tied up due to frozen switches and no trains were moving thru Hicksville at this time. I was to inform our passengers that there would be an indefinite delay, etc..

I went back and with the rest of the crew, told the passengers of the "good news". By the time I got back to the engine, the steam heat boiler on our Alco "C-420" had quit and Joe could'nt start it up again. Now we would



**C420 #214 - 4/08/1974**  
**Riverhead Station**  
**(Erlitz - Keller)**

have no train heat, just to make it more "fun" for everybody. It would not take very long for those cars to cool off, with that biting northwest wind and our train up on the raised embankment!

Noting that steam was escaping out of the rear car of train 227, which was only about two hundred feet ahead of our engine, I had an idea. Calling "Divide" on the radio, I told the towerman I wanted to couple up to 227 with our train and run steam thru the hoses, by passing our engine, to our own train. That way at least we would get a little heat, hopefully! "204", (the movement bureau), said, "O.K., go ahead and couple up, but before you do, inform 227's crew what you're going to do."-----Fine, so far.

Well, the "head-brake" and I made the "hitch" and coupled up the steam hoses and the steam from 227's engine was just starting to warm our train, when 227's boiler also broke down! Now both trains were heatless and at the mercy of the famous "wind chill factor". By this time the a.m. "coffee cars" had long been discontinued, we sure could have used one!

There was no way to get the people off the train, as the embankment was too slippery with frozen snow to climb down, and walking the tracks to the Hicksville sta. was out of the question too. That would have been almost a mile walk on icy ties and rock ballast, and there was always a chance of a train movement of some kind. Sometime in mid-morning a "coffee truck" got into the LILCO property opposite 227's train and an attempt was made to get coffee, etc., up the embankment to that train. It didn't work, as no one could get a foothold to get up the slope!

Around noon, they had thawed-out enough switches to get our combined trains thru the interlocking and into the sta., where about half the passengers got off to see about getting a lift back home, they "had had it"! "204" wanted our two trains to remain coupled, at least to Jamaica sta., for what reason I do not know. We had a total of twenty two coaches, which meant making "double stops" at Hicksville and Jamaica, more delays!

We lost almost everybody at Jamaica, the "Flagship" was sinking fast! More delays at "F" tower delayed us another hour before we could "platform" our eleven cars at Hunterspoint Ave sta, where about only a dozen commuters departed.

Some mornings we would get a "quick move" by the L.I. City yard crew when they pulled our train away from the engine, releasing it. Then it was a rapid trip east over the Montauk Br. with the light engine to Jamaica, where, if we were really lucky we could catch a ride to Ronkonkoma, ("KO"), on the train connection to the Greenport "scoot". Often as I walked to my car I would see Charlie Read leave on "Shorty" with the "980", a PNC rebuilt GP-9, otherwise known as a "Paducah Rebuild". With the "summer timetable", the "Flagship" became part of an all-night Jamaica run, so I chose a conductor's job out of Patchogue.

This would be my first, (and last), "push-pull" job to be on. Also, it was my first rides behind the new EMD "GP-38s" that were brand new on the LIRR this



**Newly arrived GP-38's  
Morris Park - 1/29/1976  
Photo/Archive: Tim Darnell**

year. All the Montauk Br. trains that summer now had the new EMD power, whether they had "push-pull" equipment or not. Leaving "PD" at six thirty nine a.m., we made every stop to Babylon, where we gave up our very crowded five car train load to an "M-1" connection that made Penn. Sta. the next stop.

At seven thirty we left for East Hampton on train 6 with about thirty people, tops. Much track work had been done between "Y", (End of double-iron), and Speonk,



**"Y" Interlocking (ex-Y Cabin)  
View E - 2/29/1976  
Photo/Archive: William Gilligan**

so we made excellent time up to there. While I did my "K-card" work on the phone a crew member went into the sta. luncheonette and got containers of coffee for us to enjoy on the slow ride east from here at thirty miles per hour.

One morning going east on train 6, we went in the "big hole", (train brakes going into "emergency"), on the first curve west of Center Moriches. Walking the train, I found that running over a "shopping cart" had knocked the bleed cock off one of our car's air reservoirs, resulting in all the air pressure in the train line pouring out. This made it impossible for the air brakes to release, as the engine could not overcome the rate of leakage with its air pump. Rather than cut the car's air brakes out, I found a short piece of wild cherry wood which I pounded into the hole where the bleed cock had been. It worked, the leak stopped, the train's brakes released and we were off again!

Three weeks later, we had the same car again and I decided to look and see if they had replaced the "temporary plug" I had put in, as I had reported it to the movement bureau the day it happened.-----"Sure enough", the plug was still there and doing fine, wonder if it's still there in "push-pull" car no. 2724? Coming back from East Hampton to Babylon on train nine we seemed to pick up quite a few people at the recently-opened Southampton College sta. at Tuckahoe Road, site of the former Golf Grounds sta..

As the summer wore on we became a very popular train for people who did not want to get up early to catch no.3, "The Cannonball". Actually, our schedule was almost, but not quite, on the time of no.27, the former "South Shore Express", which had'nt ran since a coal strike in 1949. We had a "meet" with train 8 at "WH", (Westhampton), and we always had to take the siding for it.

Arriving in Babylon around noon, we had a half hour before going back to Patchogue on the "scoot". That train was mainly for the "Fire Island Crowd" who mainly used Bay Shore and Sayville stas. They took cabs "down to the boat" from the RR. On Friday July thirtieth, the last day I made the trip to East Hampton trip, my niece got on at Westhampton for the ride and to take a few photos of me. Ron Ziel was out in his back yard at Water Mill with a banner he had made with my name and "1943-1976" on it as we passed going east. It was a nice thing to do I thought!

Saturdays we only made two round trips on the "scoot", still finishing at one p.m., as on weekdays. The Saturday of July thirty first, 1976, "it was all over", as I stepped off the train at Patchogue sta., and watched the train



**GP38-2 #274 - Push-Pull "Scoot" at PD Tower - View SW  
Photo/Archive: Tom Beckett**

pull down past "PD" and into the "schoolhouse" track for the last time. The following Monday I rode into Jamaica in the cab of a "FA", ( power car), to turn all my company issued items in such as uniforms, switch key, book of rules, etc.. They did let me keep the current employee timetable and annual pass.

I had thirty three years and a "little bit more" as an employee and sure enough on the way back to "Port" that afternoon, one of the guys asked me if "I had to do it over again, would I go on the RR?"-----After some thought, I replied, "If the RR was like it was then as to steam power and tuscan red cars, both "P54 and MP54," plus Long Island itself was like it was in 1943, the answer is an unqualified "YES"!