

We had dragged and mangled the car for some distance and Christmas wrappings were strewn along the track in the back of our train. The three people in the car would never see another sunrise, it was a sad scene indeed. It was a very cold night, probably no more than fifteen above zero, but there was no snow on the ground. We were there about two hours until a "wrecker" could be found to pull what little remained of the "Model A" away from the engine's side rods.

Starting in January of 1945, I was back again on the "noon" run out of "Port", but instead of the round trip to "PW" we left for Oyster Bay at four forty five p.m. from Jamaica on train 548, returning on no, 555 out of the "Bay" at six twenty two. On this job you handled almost as many newspapers and mail bags as you as did passengers. On 548 I had the head vestibule piled high with bundles of "World Telegrams " and "Journal Americans " to throw off all the way out, plus collect the first coach and run up to the RPO at Mineola and Roslyn and unload parcel post from the baggage end.

This was a very busy train out of Mineola as we got all the people that worked in the Nassau County Offices and Long Island Lighting main headquarters, Most paid "cash" too.



**LIRR #1382 Combine MU Car
Mail/RPO, baggage, passenger
Jamaica 5/12/1940 Archive: Dave Keller**

Coming back on 555 I had to don overalls and jumper as I was "mail handler" in the RPO's baggage section. We're talking about an average of a hundred and fifty sacks every evening. Starting at Locust Valley, each stop except Glen Cove, (Nassau), would see a mail truck waiting for us with mail bags aplenty. Percy Smith, the RPO clerk, and I were good friends and once in awhile I helped him sort mail in the RPO from the "Bay" to Locust Valley.

All the first class pouches came thru my baggage door from the various trucks, and I had to haul them to the "cubby hole " door between my section and Percy's section, where he hurriedly grabbed them and poured out the contents on his sorting table. He had to be fast as stations on that branch are only three or four minutes apart !

Even though it was cold weather I had the big side door open most of the way, as there was little time between stops to close it. Glen St. had a whole "rack truck" for me every night and I would be still trying to "stack them" out of the way before hitting Roslyn with it's express platform of outbound parcel post cartons and heavy sacks.

You had to leave an aisle to give access to the hand brake. Many a night the sacks were up to the "clestory"! One February evening we had just had a four inch wet snowfall and as we came west it had stopped. For some reason I was caught up with the mail and was holding on to the handrail over the open big door as we came down the side of "Mackay's big hill" into Roslyn. The whole village was spread out below in the valley with all the roofs and trees covered with beautiful clean snow. To add to the beauty the streetlights had a "candlelight effect" over it all! Talk about a peaceful scene, that brief picture was worth a whole year of working train 555!



Roslyn Station -Trolley View SE
c.1910 - Archive: Dave Morrison

Some nights at Roslyn the westbound freight would still be switching there when we were due. The building boom that would engulf Nassau County in a few years was already at work along the track between Roslyn and Albertson. Levitt and Sons had put a new siding in off the Roslyn team track and had warehouses and a cement unloader already in operation.

The freight would be occupying the main or westbound track and as soon as we stopped at the depot, they opened the switch to the passing siding and gave our engineer a "highball". This enabled us to run around the freight and out the west end of the passing siding. I think this may have been a sort of "frowned on move" officially perhaps! About March I was back working "extra" again. Servicemen were beginning to return from WWII and as they had accumulated seniority all the time they were away, they were anxious to settle down on a steady run as most had wives and children to feed and house.

The 1945 Spring was especially pleasant weatherwise in the Northeast, very little rain and even in March we had a whole week of mid-eighties temperatures! This worked out well for me as I had all afternoon off to enjoy it, that is, if you did not mind arising at four thirty a.m.. To "top it all off" it was a "Port" run only two minutes away from our house!

Train no. 605 left at five eighteen a.m. except on Sunday, and those days before automatic gates became widespread, we had to "flag" our train over Coram Road in "Port" and Broadway in Greenlawn. After six a.m. and until ten thirty p.m. there were crossing watchman at these crossings. Going back to "Port" we left Jamaica about quarter to ten on train 610.

Going east on 610 one late winter morning we had a real "oddball" heavyweight bringing up the rear. Probably an ex Pullman Company sleeping car, the lettering over the windows read "New York State Conservation Department".



ADIRONDACK - NY State Conservation Fish Car 1945
New York State Archives

Most of the windows were covered with steel sheathing as the aisles were lined with fish tanks with live baby trout swimming around in them. This car was for the New York State Fish Hatchery down near the village of Cold Spring Harbor. The trout would be transferred by truck from the car to the hatchery and in a few weeks the trout would be big enough for the State to stock many ponds, lakes and the few rivers on Long Island with them.

At this time there was a short team track just up the line to the west of the sta. on the north side at County Line Road. It had a lighted switch stand and electric lock on it controlled by "Divide" tower. We just backed it in, applied the hand brake and went on to "Port", probably losing no more than ten minutes. There was an attendant on the car also. Never again did I ever see that car on the RR.

On this run Gary Wycorff was the hogger and Jack Hastings the conductor. I was in place or I.W., ("Ike"), Smith as head brake, while the rear brakeman or flagman was C.A. Smith. Sometimes the two "Smiths" were kidded along among the men as "The Smith Bros., Cough and Drop", (after the popular brand of coughdrops of that brand name at that time.)



MP54A1c MU Connections
Photo: William Mangahas

Since I was "junior man" on almost every job I "owned" or covered on the "extra board" I had the head end brakeman's job on this run as well. This meant coupling and uncoupling "steam heat hoses" three or four times a day or night on all steam-hauled trains. The season lasted from mid-October to mid May usually. The rubber hoses had just been all replaced the year I started with "metallic" hoses which were much more maneuverable as they were equipped with "ball and socket joints."

The RR issued small metal "steam" hammers that were about as effective as a "tack hammer", meaning they were practically useless putting the hoses together or breaking them apart! Most of the men bought "ball peen hammers" of a heavier type that were a one hundred percent improvement over the RR ones.

Many of the men shied away from "steam jobs" during heating season because they didn't want to tangle with those hoses and the leaking hot water from defective tender shut-off "wheels". If I wanted to work "out east" near home I had to learn to wrestle with those steam hoses as a sheer necessity!

Going out on 610 I was in charge of the baggage end of the RPO. Baggage consisted of a few trunks; company mail, usually including an "Official Guide" or two; the daily "Racing Form", and once in awhile, "remains" in wooden-boxes that enclosed the metal casket. These mostly went to Kings Park which meant "spotting" the baggage door at the freight house hard by Indian Head Road.

Station agent Bill Rawl would run out and jockey the "skid" into position between car and high platform. Then about five of us with the aid of a two wheel hand truck would eventually get the box on the platform, they were HEAVY!

One day going east in mid-spring Jack said, "Meet me at the Bunkhouse about four thirty this afternoon ". Seems it was Engineer Joe Pearsall's final day on the RR and he would be running train 642, coming into "Port" about five nine p.m..



Torpedo
Standard Railway Fusee Corp
Note: Pressure activated

Jack and I lined each running rail from "Spence's crossing to Coram road with torpedos about every hundred feet or so. We also lined both legs of the wye, skipping the station area, as flying metal from the clips holding the torpedo to the rail might hurt people close to the track. Mr. Pearsall on G5 no. 50 came into "Port" with an ear-shattering serenade of exploding torpedos!

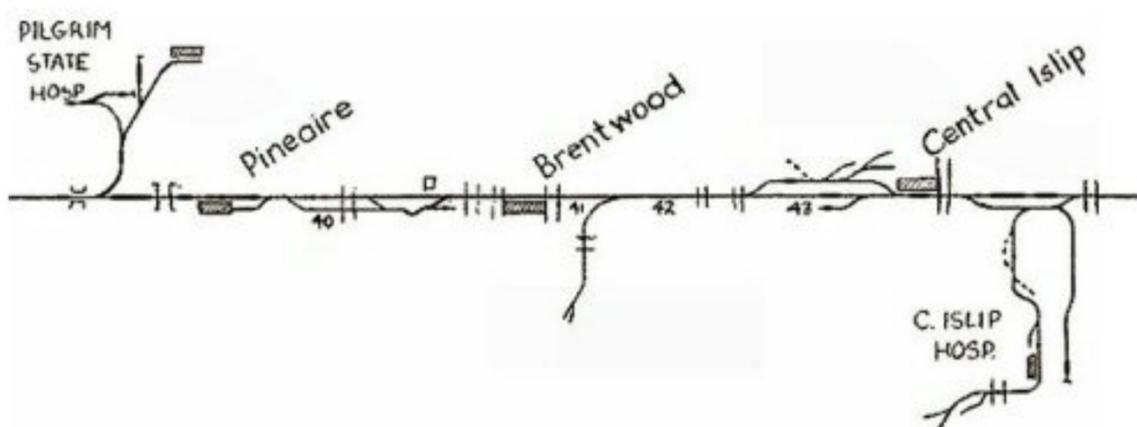
He probably expected as much, as it was done for years for retiring enginemen and conductors on their final run, but he forsee the wye being lined too. Joe Sr. was a fine man to ^{did not} work with as WAS his son Joe Jr., a trainman.

After "change of timetable" in June 1945, I wasn't getting many jobs near home, so noting run eleven out of the Jamaica storage yard was up for "bid", I threw a bid sheet in for it, never expecting to hold a "day" job. I must be getting a "little" seniority I thought when the bids were "posted", my name appeared as the new owner of run eleven!

There were two reasons why the "seniority boys" didn't want my new run : The three hour "swing" in Ronkonkoma with no place to eat on the first round trip. Second reason was the round trip to Babylon in the late afternoon. Not bothering to look up train 260 in the timetable, thinking it was a "heavy" rush hour job, (which it wasn't.)

"Run eleven " was the answer to a "Railian's Dream"! Living in "Port" it meant a fifteen hour away from home "deal" Monday to Friday inclusive., but there were some compensations! Such as riding in to Jamaica every morning behind a K4 on train 621. Engineer Roger Smith would really roll that train arter Syosset, whistling and roaring thru Mineola and New Hyde Park, he must have been traveling the speed limit and a "little more"! The rain of cinders from that stack would have been much worse were it not for the "cinder screens" on the "mainliner" coaches, wonder why none of the "pings" ever got them ?

Our first train of the day left Jamaica at ten fifty six as no 232, a local behind a G5. Teddy, ("Snow White"), Mc Donald was our hogger. This train had a good load on Wed. and Thurs. as they were



Pilgrim State to Central Islip Hospital sidings map c.1950
Map: Henry Raudenbush Info/Archive: Art Huneke

visitors days at Pilgrim State and Central Islip Hospitals respectively in that order. "Heavy" trains in Suffolk County those days meant a fully seated coach, with only a few, if any standees.

Later on arter the woods and fields turned into housing developments in Suffolk, along with the "two and three seating" that the RR was forced to turn to in the mid-fifties, "Heavy" trains became the "norm". The Pullman-Standard coaches held about a hundred thirty seated and many times seventy or more stood in the too narrow aisle. They were a pain to collect in, mainly because of the people standing. Many times the undercar diesel power unit would "conk out" leaving us all minus lighting and "AC" just to make it even more fun!

We arrived in Ronkonkoma at noon and put our train in the yard. Arter turning our engine on the wye and putting it back on the west end of our cars for train 233, I was "free" until three thirty, now to solve the "lunch problem"! Riding back to "CI" on no. 233 I found a great little place to eat down on Carlton Ave. "Frank's Steak and Chops" served up a good wholesome meal every day and I can still recall those juicy, meaty lamb chops, so tender they melted in your mouth!

Saturday afternoons a little after two o'clock you wanted to be "trackside" for the double-headed Montauk-Greenport train no. 12-206, (the former "Shinnecock/ Peconic Bay Express"). This event always brought out a few townspeople who liked trains, especially "fast" ones.



Central Islip Station 5/1954
Carlton Ave - View W
Archive: Jim Gillin

A tiny dot down toward Brentwood and much whistling would announce the "coming", and "Popeye", the crossing watchman had to stop Carlton Ave, traffic well in advance of the oncoming express in order to pull down the four heavy "telephone pole" crossing gates by ropes and lock them down across the street.

Since there was no orders or "K" cards to pick up, 12-206 would flash thru in seconds. The Greenport engine led, (no. 37, a G5 usually), while the second locomotive as I recall at least once was PRR E6 1381. The consist was about nine coaches.

The dust and scattered papers were a regular "hurricane" as she passed and most times you could count on at least one cinder in your eye!

"Popeye" was a swell guy and got along with everybody. He commuted to his job on a bicycle and he usually let me ride it after I had lunch. Two or three times I went all the way up Carlton Ave. to the old Motor Parkway. About three o'clock I boarded train 236, (238 Sat.), to ride back to Ronkonkoma. The nine "pings" would be our train coming west and since I had to turn all the seats, this saved me time in Ronk.

A fresh locomotive and engine crew would be waiting on the ash pit track, so my job was to walk up the wye and throw the "divider" switch. Most days we had either 1458 or 732, both Pennsy K2s and for one time only, K4 no. 5387. She had come in on a morning train from Greenport and had some kind of mechanical failure here so they took a G5 off the "pit" for her train, leaving the K4 for us, as the defect had been corrected by afternoon.

We left Ronk. at three fifty three as no. 239, with a form "19" train order to meet no. 240 at "WK", (Wyandanch), our timetable meeting place. As an "inferior" train we always went "in the clear". That summer, at least a half dozen times we were sidetracked to meet east bound "reefer drags" that were so long they would not fit in the passing sidings.

Some of those long freights could well of had Pennsy



PRR L1s #8283 stationary boiler
Wheelspur Yard - LI City c.1956
Archive: Dave Keller

class LI 2-8-2 Mikado type engines on the point, I should have taken more of a notice! Later that year I glimpsed my only "sighting" of a "LI" going over the Van Wyck Blvd. bridge on a "lite" engine move to Morris Park, it was the 3590.

"SG" siding, where we always met these long freights was lengthened to a one hundred car siding in 1948, a little too late for the "potato rush". No. 239 was by far the busiest train on the job, but not until we hit Republic, then Grumman. "War workers" in the airplane factories were going home a little earlier those days as the war was "winding down", and "V-J" Day was only a few weeks away.

After New Hyde Park we had them standing all thru the train, as the Sperry Gyroscope plant at nearby Lake Success workers got on there. That "ancient depot" that always appeared to be sinking into the asphalt platform should have been preserved, but in those days everything "old" had to be torn down and forgotten!

Arrival at Jamaica was at five seventeen p.m., ^{THEM} on to the "storage yard" and about a half hour's "swing" to eat and do one's



LIRR G5s #26 Dunton Tower c.1938
Archive: Dave Keller

cash report. Often we went thru the "engine underjump" to "Dunton" tower and thru the 130th St. tunnel to "The Dutchmans" restaurant on Atlantic Ave.. This was nearly across from the big Sheffield Farms milk bottling plant. "Henry", the counterman was a character in that no matter what type sandwich you wanted, he always asked you about three times,—"mustard"??? We kind of thought he had stock in a mustard factory somewhere!

The round trip to Babylon was "a day off", (the term RR men used in referring to an "easy" train.), and why the seniority boys ever let this little "gem" get away from them was and still is a mystery to me! Three P70 coaches, pulled by E3sd no. 2999 with Harry Staples as engineer, that was no. 260. The train was put on that summer as a "relier" to no. 266, which left at six twenty-eight, we left at six fifteen. On Fridays the three P70s found their way to Montauk and Greenport, and we had four "combines," not necessarily turned in the same direction.

We only stopped at Westbury, Hicksville, South Farmingdale and then Babylon, where about twenty got off. One evening we didn't move at South Farmingdale after the conductor gave two whistles on the cord, so we walked up to the 2999 to see what the trouble was.

Harry had to go over and borrow a wire coat hanger from a nearby washline. Seems as a cotter pin in part of the valve gear was about to fall out, so the coat hanger was inserted in it's place and away we went sprinting across the then unpopulated



South Farmingdale view W
from Staples St. crossing 11/27/1948
Archive: Jim Gillin

"pine barrens" on the Central Branch. That engine always seemed like a "race horse" and Harry really "let her out" along here. Once we reached Albin Ave. in West Babylon, the slowdown for the very sharp curve at the old wax factory coming into Belmont Jct. would be felt.

We headed around Babylon wye and then backed out the long east leg to Higbie Lane. We used the "main" back to the sta. and then "highballed" passenger-less to Jamaica via the Montauk Branch. Harry had that shrill whistle on the 2999 "tied-down" or so it seemed from Freeport to Merrick Road west of Rockville Center and all the then "low platform" stations were passed in a cloud of dust!

Harry always made Jamaica in time for me to catch train 664 home to "Port", leaving at eight twenty five. This was the most tedious part of the whole fifteen hours, that long ride in the dark. Even the fact that a "G5" was on the head end did'nt help!

Along about November I was to have the fastest ride I was ever to have on the LIRR! The train, no. 668, left Jamaica at eleven thirty five p.m., with four "pings" and a K4. Bob Gerrity was engineer and he had a reputation as a "fast runner". All week Bob had been really "wheeling them" with the light, (for a K4), consist, but this particular night we made it Northport to Kings Park, about four miles, in exactly five minutes start to stop!



Bread and Cheese Hollow Road
Kings Park - 1955
Photo: Norman E. Kohl

We "rlew" over Bread and Cheese Hollow trestle so fast it merely made a rumble under us for a half second. Bob "big-holed" the train right after Comac Road crossing and we came to a perfect stop at Kings Park sta.! We had slid nearly half a mile with the brakes on, and they had "pumped-off" and released in time for the depot. There was so much brake shoe smoke and roadbed dust when we came to a stop that it was like a "fog". Station and platform were barely visible in it!

Bob did'nt know it, but he was "clocked" by passenger Lloyd Ayers in the rear car. Ayers was a former CP Ry. train dispatcher until the depression when he moved to Long Island and worked for the I.R.T. subway as a dispatcher at one hundred thirty