



The Westconn Manifest

The Monthly Newsletter of the
Western Connecticut Chapter of the
National Railway Historical Society

Since 1953



www.westctnrhs.org

July/August 2005

TOWER ALUMNI VISIT SS #44

By John Garofalo

During our third season at the SoNo Switch Tower Museum (SS #44), we have seen a marked increase in attendance. Among the many visitors are current and former railroaders. It is especially gratifying to see tower operators visit. Recently, two individuals who used to work at our tower paid us a visit.

On Father's Day June 19, 2005, John Rakos (a.k.a. The Rock) stopped by with his daughter. John hired out as a tower operator with Penn Central in 1972. He worked at our tower in the 1970's and 1980's. He currently works as an operator at Peck Drawbridge in Bridgeport. John gave our model board his stamp of approval. He was impressed with all the detail we included on the model board. He regaled us with many stories from when he worked the tower and spoke of the many colorful operators who passed through over the years.

Former tower operator George Papuga and his wife toured the tower on July 3, 2005. George started his railroad career on the New Haven in 1964 and retired two years ago from the Stationmaster's Office at Grand Central Terminal. He worked at our tower in the 1960's and 1970's.

George was quite impressed with the renovations made to SS #44. He wished the tower looked this good when he worked here. He loved our recently completed model board and said it looked better than the original. George recounted the days when Ed Wadhams, Bob Gambling and other railfans would visit him at SS #44.

George owns three trolley cars at Branford where he has lovingly restored them over the years. It was George who redecorated the interior of the tower in the 1960's with Connecticut Company yellow paint borrowed from one of his trolley projects.

Bob Gambling and I had a great time reminiscing with John and George. Both men are featured in photos on the tower's third floor. George wrote in our Guest Book "it was good to be home again". We certainly enjoyed having the George and The Rock at SS #44. We look forward to seeing other tower alumni in the future.



John Rakos (The Rock) and his daughter.



George Papuga

Photos by Robert Gambling

THE WESTCONN MANIFEST

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Articles which appear in

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Material from **THE WESTCONN MANIFEST** may be reprinted in other publications, provided the credit is given.

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The Western Connecticut Chapter of the NRHS is separately incorporated as a CT not-for-profit corporation.

The Chapter is involved in the preservation of American railroad history and artifacts.

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The Chapter meets monthly, usually on the 4th Monday, at the United Congregational Church 275 Richards Ave. in Norwalk, CT or at the SoNo Switch Tower Museum 77 Washington St. Norwalk, CT at 8 P.M.

Meeting dates for 2005:

1/24, 2/28, 3/28, 4/25, 5/23*, 6/27*, **7/25***, 8/22*, 9/26*, 10/24, 11/28 and 12/19.

*Chapter meeting to held at the SoNo Switch Tower in South Norwalk, CT

The SoNo Switch Tower Museum is maintained and operated by volunteers of the Western Connecticut Chapter.

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This Months Book Review by Robert Sposato

New Haven on Color Volume 3: Into the Abyss The Bankruptcy Years 1961-1968

By Geoffrey H. Doughty

This book deals with the final years of the New Haven (1961-1968). On January 1, 1969 it became part of the Penn-Central System.

My favorite Locomotive is the FL-9 and this book has a number of good action shots. My favorite include #2057 with the westbound 42nd Street at Glenbrook, a westbound duo led by #2010 at Rowayton with 8 cars, 2 views of an eastbound pair with the Senator crossing Hell Gate (near Hell Gate Bridge), a single FL-9 (2017) with a 6-car westbound at South Mount Vernon, and another duo led by #2059 (the last FL-9) passing Cedar Hill en route to Springfield. Also there is a picture of my favorite New Haven diesel the U25B. #2025 is seen with 2 Alco Century units at Hopewell Junction with a freight.

My favorite New Haven electric engine is the EF-4 Virginians. In late 1963, the New Haven got 12 electrics from the Virginian Railway: obviously their nickname. My favorite shots include 2 views of an eastbound duo crossing Hell Gate with a freight, a westbound pair (306 & 308) at New Rochelle, another combo at the Pelham Bay Drawbridge, another eastbound duo at Fremont (307 & 303), and lastly another pair (301 & 302) at Bartow near the Bronx (On the Hell Gate Route).

So in conclusion, I will sat that this book covers the bases of the New Haven's final years fairly well. I remember the FL-9's and the EF-4 Virginians when I was growing up in the 1960's.

I recommend this book not only for New Haven fans, but for modelers and rail Historians as well. The book was put together well.

Respectfully yours,
Robert Sposato

Merritt Parkway R.R. bridge at Trumbull

There is a series of soft covered books called "Images of America" with many locations covered. One on which is called "Traveling the Merritt Parkway". Therein are many photos of the construction and use of the Parkway in the 1930's and 1940's. Going from west to east all the bridges are shown. On page 103 shows the railroad bridge brand new with pavement not yet applied to the parkway. This bridge is in Trumbull and is between exits 49 and 50. It is the bridge with the steel span as opposed to the masonry spans of all the other bridges. Even though the rail line was out of service but not abandoned a bridge still had to be provided for. On the same page a photo was taken from the railroad bridge showing a local road crossing the parkway at grade. Can you imagine having an at grade road crossing of the Parkway today. Now if someone has a photo of the wreck train on that bridge we'd really have something. That was probably the only train that ever went on that bridge to pull up the rails just before World War II. Railfandom as we know it today did not exist in the 1930's.

Bob Gambling

REMEMBERING A FRIEND OF THE CHAPTER

By John Garofalo

Former West Conn Chapter member Edward Augur Russell died suddenly on July 5, 2005. He was only 57 years old. Although Ed had not been a member for many years, several current Chapter members were his friends so I wanted to jot down a few thoughts on his passing.

When Jerry Lepak and I joined the West Conn Chapter as unsuspecting teenagers in 1971, we met many colorful members including Ed Wadhams, Bob Gambling, Joe Lucas, Tom Donahue, Ed Blackman, and Lewis Merrill. We should have turned and headed for the exit! Another interesting character was Ed Russell who in 1969 hired out on the Penn Central as a tower operator. Over the years, Ed would become known for his muttonchop whiskers and distinctive laugh. To a small circle of friends, Ed was known as Scoop. He was proud of his fireless (0-4-0) steam locomotive which was parked in his parents' backyard.

Chapter members would visit Ed at Burr Road Tower (SS #55) in Bridgeport. We would talk railroads, photograph passing trains and throw the iron. Ed encouraged me to seek summer employment on the railroad. So in 1973, I ventured down to 466 Lexington Avenue in New York and applied for a tower operator's position on Penn Central. Surprisingly I was hired! During my railroad career, I had the pleasure of posting with Ed on the second trick at Devon Tower (SS #71).

Around 1974 Ed was promoted to Load Dispatcher (a rather curious title). He took up residence in the office that resembled a New Haven signal station just outside the Cos Cob Power Plant which on the railroad was known as Frankenstein's Castle. As the junior man, Ed first worked the third trick (11PM – 7AM). During this time, I was attending college at the University of Notre Dame. Leave it to Ed to discover a way to obtain an outside (free) local line in South Bend, IN using Penn Central's own telephone system. I remember several occasions answering my dorm room telephone in the middle of the night to hear Ed's unmistakable laugh and then the question "Did I wake you?" My standard reply was "No, I had to get up and answer the phone anyway!"

When Cos Cob was phased out, the Load Dispatchers were transferred to New York and they became Power Supervisors. Ed began working in the high tech office he dubbed *Starship Enterprise*. He would continue to work there until his death.

In recent years, Ed expanded his interest in steam engines from locomotives to boats. He purchased his own steam launch named the *Charlotte Ann*. Ed and his wife Charlotte traveled around the country racing his steam launch in various regattas.



T.J. Donahue photo

Ed Russell in 1973

Bob Gambling and I attended Ed's wake in West Haven. There were many current and former railroaders there as well. Whenever you manage to corral railroaders in the same room, there will be many stories told. A wake is no exception.

Ed always said he was going to visit the SoNo Switch Tower Museum. I regret he never made it. He would have liked it. I am sure Ed is up in the big Signal Station in the sky discussing "yesterday's moves" with Joe Lucas, Tom Donahue and other operators. I will miss Ed... I will always hear Scoop's laugh.

Report on the 2005 Annual Convention Tony White

All and all, this convention was a success! There was lots of grumbling about several issues leading up to the start of the convention with the loudest being getting a ticket on the steam trip. Portland had many difficulties trying to pull the trips off while dealing with policies of Amtrak and UP using special trains. Through the enormous efforts of the Chapter, Railfan press and the local rail historical groups including the “friends of the SP 4449 and the SP&S”, things were righted and these trips ran. There were 602 registrants and 800+ attendees. 550 people took the Steam trip to Wishram and 500 to the POTB trip.

Following the Membership meeting there was the usual reception and cash bar entitled “Meet the Officers.” Many people used that time to prepare themselves for the banquet. Those who attended this more than got their worth monetarily. The food was excellent and the two keynote speakers Doyle McCormack – Chief Mechanical Officer, Friends of SP 4449; President, Oregon Rail Heritage Foundation, and Steve Lee – Manager of Operating Practices, Union Pacific Railroad. Both gentlemen have years of experience and wonderful stories and a truly unique sense of humor. Even I was able to stay awake for their talks!

The Pacific Northwest Chapter should be given kudos for their efforts. Their members were warm and helpful throughout the convention. Even as their energy ran down during the final event, they managed to keep their spirits high.

On a down side, the NCC still doesn't inform convention committees that people need tripods for the night photo shoots (NPS) and again several people were in attendance at this NPS having spent big money to get wobbly pictures. Also, the NPS had double the number of attendants that were originally advertised for and this created an unequal and unsatisfactory experience for most in attendance because several people did not adhere to the 2 group plan and this caused overcrowding and many missed shots by the participants. One of the biggest offenders of cordial shooting was a person who definitely should have known better as he is in film media but he continued to move to the front of the photo lines at every run-by also.

The crowning point was the double header steam with the S&P 700 and the Daylight SP4449 running from Portland to Wishram. In Wishram, the engines took their turns for the photo line in the lead. The 700 ran on the point for the eastbound segment and the 4449 ran on the point for the return trip.

We had several Chapter members in attendance including Jim Mescher accompanied by Alice Trenholm, Suzanne and Ed Balckman, Roberta Ballard, Mia Mather, Elissa and Joe Williams and myself.

Photos by Tony White



Union Station - Portland, Oregon



Night photo line up

Westconn Schedule of Events

Monday - Aug. 22 - Chapter Meeting - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 8PM
Entertainment - Tony White

Monday - Sept. 26 - Chapter Meeting - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 8PM
Entertainment - Ed Blackman

Friday Sept. 30 - Sunday Oct. 2 - Western Connecticut Chapter Fall outing to North Conway, NH. Ride the dome railroad car to Crawford Notch on Saturday and ride the Cog on Sunday. Only \$315.00 per person (based on double occupancy). For information contact Jim Mescher at (201) 391-7362



The Western Connecticut Chapter, NRHS Inc. supports Operation Lifesaver

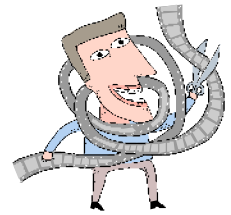
**Our Next Chapter meeting will be
Monday, August 22, 2005 at:
The SoNo Switch Tower Museum**

77 Washington Street
South Norwalk, CT

Entertainment will be provided by:

Anthony White

Bob Gambling will provide refreshments.



The SoNo (Railroad) Switch Tower Museum

is only open on Saturday's and Sunday's
April 30 thru October from noon until 5 PM.

Please help us show the Tower and how it operated to the public.

To volunteer, contact John Garofalo at:
(203) 246-6958

or sign up at the Tower.

Thank you, your help is greatly appreciated.

Tower Operator Volunteer Hours for June & July 2005

John Garofalo: June 39.5 hrs July 66 hrs	Bob Gambling: June 55.5 hrs July 66 hrs	Tony White: June 31 hrs July 6 hrs	Dick Carpenter: July 8 hrs
Roberta Ballard: June 31 hrs July 12 hrs	Anthony Gruerio: July 6 hrs	Robert Westerfield: June 9 hrs July 18 hrs	Dana Laird: July 6 hrs
Buck Neulinger: June 25 hrs July 27 hrs	Janet Neulinger: June 25.5 hrs July 30 hrs	Beth Siegelbaum: June 6 hrs	Ed Holowinko: June 7 hrs
Kevin Feeney: July 18 hrs	Roy Heget: June 6 hrs	Bavet Heget: June 6hrs.	Dana Hunt: July 5 hrs

Thank you Tower Operators for all your help.

Also, a special thanks to others who have volunteered their time for both the Tower and Chapter activities.
Your help is always appreciated.