

## Memories from the Worthington Tower – Part II

Continuing with our visits to the Worthington tower and operator Glenn Zigler we see how resourceful railroad employees had to be sometimes and George Silcott learns Glenn wasn't always in good humor.

### Cliff Clements - Pulling Those Levers

As the railroads started their decline after the boom years following World War II, maintenance started to suffer. This was evident in the condition of the track and it also affected maintenance of the infrastructure. Armstrong towers required constant maintenance to keep all the moving parts clear of obstructions and well lubricated. If they weren't properly cared for the operator had a harder time doing his job.

If a lever was hard to pull the operator, and especially a young visitor, would put one foot on the lever next to the one being pulled for extra leverage. A two foot lever was really hard to move. To push a stiff lever required putting your whole body into the effort. You could also put your shoulder into the lever and grab the lever next to the one you wanted to move for additional leverage.

Cliff Clements remembers one visit when a lever would just not move far enough for the pin to drop. With the Ohio State Limited coming a little creative action was needed so Glenn left Cliff to work the lever while he went down to the track with a crow bar to pry on the stubborn switch. Railroaders were by necessity resourceful people.

### George Silcott Gets the Boot

One day Glenn arrived at work driving a shiny new red dump truck. He had decided it was time he had a second job driving his own dump truck. It turned out dump truck driving is tiring work and Glenn wasn't always his old welcoming self. He also took to taking short naps during quiet periods. There was a wide board covering the radiator which was perfect for a 20-minute nap. The tower was equipped with alarms on both the NYC and Pennsy tracks that would sound when a train approached normally giving the operator time to align the switches.

One Sunday Glenn must have been extra tired as he didn't awake until the NYC Explorer stopped at the tower's red signal and was blowing its horn for clearance. Unfortunately for George Silcott he picked that time to visit the tower. He asked Glenn, in his cheerful voice knowing full well that Glenn had been caught sleeping, "what happen did you piss in the signal box?"

Glenn told him to get out and to not ever comeback. Sometime after Glenn served his two weeks "out-of-service" they made up.

## **Dave Bunge - Sounds, Lights and an Errant Hopper Car**

The levers controlling the switches made a resounding clunk or clacking sound when they were thrown. Because they were a mechanical linkage to the switch or signal there was some resistance to their being moved. The operator would overcome this resistance by putting muscle into the effort resulting in this very loud sound as the lever reach the end of its travel and the locking pin dropped into its notch.

In the summer when the tower windows were open this could be heard as far away as route 161 and also across Bob Poste Lake in the homes that lined the lake. Once you heard that sound you knew a train would be coming along in about five minutes.

The Big Four track was straight as an arrow as far as you could see from the tower in either direction. At night the headlight on the southbound Big Four trains could be seen many miles away. The track had some dips that would obscure the light for a while until the locomotive came out of the dip. The experienced operator could pretty much tell where the train was as it traveled south toward the tower by watching that light. The PRR trains while on a parallel track to the Big Four had a slightly different look, more a glowing than the straight on light of the Big Four trains. The PRR light would disappear as the track moved away from the Big Four just south of Shrock Road reemerging when it approached route 161.

One day, after the steam locomotives were gone, a hopper car jumped the track at the diamond. It could have been a broken wheel or some other failure. The car lay between the PRR and Big Four track just south of the diamond for a time. The operator was fortunate the whole train didn't derail and take out the tower. That was always a danger at any tower because they sat so close to the track.

Harding Hospital sat on 40 acres just west of the railroad tracks. Harding's was a mental hospital that from time to time would have a patient try to run away. The tower operator had the hospital phone number and would call if they saw someone come from Harding's direction. It was as good as having a guard tower on the hospital property.

## **Alex Campbell - Delivering Coal to the Worthington Tower**

The tower was heated by a coal furnace located in a small building next to the tower. It was either a hot water or steam system. George Silcott's Worthington Coal and Supply Co. had the contract to supply coal usually in 5-8 ton loads. The tower was located on the east side of the tracks and the access road, the old CD&M right-of-way, was on the west side of the tracks.

To get the coal from the truck to that little building required building a temporary bridge across the tracks with 2X10's and cement blocks for cribbing. The coal was loaded into a wheel barrow and wheeled across the 2X10's, behind the tower building, dumped outside the small building and finally shoveled into the building. When George Blake the coal yard's full time driver and all around fix it man was told he had coal to

deliver to the Worthington tower he just rolled his eyes, knowing he was going to work very hard for his money that day. That's when I got recruited to help him and learned just how hard it can be to push a wheel barrow full of coal across a 2X10 plank without dumping the load on the track. When you are wheeling a loaded wheel barrow you want to spread your feet for stability which we couldn't do on the 2X10's.

Just about the time we would get in our groove with the bridge built and us wheeling that coal, along would come a train and we would have to take down the bridge and so the afternoon went.