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Lackawanna
Coalition

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...An independent organization
advocating for better transit

RAILGRAM

Jim Raleigh, Friend To Commuters, History, Dies At 79

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By **MIKE FRASSINELLI**

(Editor's Note: After Jim Raleigh, the Lackawanna Coalition's longtime legislative director, passed away in mid-September, reporter Mike Frassinelli published an appreciation in the Newark Star-Ledger. We have reprinted Frassinelli's article, with permission from the newspaper.)

With his spectacles, flowing gray hair and recall of history, he resembled Benjamin Franklin. And just like the Founding Father, Jim Raleigh — who died Sept. 18 at age 79 after a battle with cancer — wore many hats: Historian. Scientist. Transit advocate.

“As an advocate for better transit, Jim cared deeply about our mobility,” his friend, David Peter Alan, wrote in a tribute on the website of the Lackawanna Coalition rail advocacy group. “As a historian, he cared deeply about our heritage. As a scientist, he dedicated himself to the pursuit of truth.”

Raleigh, who was born in Minnesota and lived in Colts Neck for the last 41 years, was a familiar figure at NJ Transit meetings and transportation hearings in Trenton, joining Alan, Joe Clift, Phil Craig, Al Papp and Jack May as rail advocates who were quick to praise, but also quick to criticize NJ Transit when they felt it was warranted.

Raleigh was known alternately for his congeniality and his fervor in pushing for improved rail capacity at New York Penn Station and opposing a plan to run trains through the grounds of the Monmouth Battlefield. His obituary said he could be summed up with the phrase, “Having a quest for knowledge.”

“Jim was truly a rocket scientist,” Alan wrote. “He spent most of his career at Bell Labs, including a long tour at NASA, where he worked as a systems engineer assigned by headquarters to ensure smooth communications in the Apollo Program. After his retirement from Bell Labs, Jim focused his attention on his interest in history, particularly the American Revolution.”

Raleigh was president of the Friends of Monmouth Battlefield. His obituary highlighted his diverse interests, including his competing as a whitewater slalom canoeist in championships in Austria and Czechoslovakia.

The next NJ Transit meeting is scheduled for Nov. 13. The agenda hasn't been finished yet, but with Raleigh's absence, it's already a safe bet the meeting will be quieter and a lot less interesting.

Remembering Jim Raleigh (1934-2013)

By **DAVID PETER ALAN**

James T. Raleigh, Legislative Director of the Lackawanna Coalition, died on Sept. 18 in Freehold, after a brief illness. Jim was an active member of the Coalition until last spring, when his health began to fail. He left his mark on all three of his fields of interest: science, history and transit.

In an obituary in the Newark *Star-Ledger*, transportation reporter Mike Frassinelli likened Jim to Ben Franklin. The comparison is apt. Jim was truly a rocket scientist. He worked for Bell Labs and NASA. As a communications engineer for the Apollo missions, he helped take American astronauts to the moon and bring them back safely. In retirement, he applied his technical expertise to an effort to better understand the early history of this nation. He was Chair of the Friends of Monmouth Battlefield, upon which was fought the Battle of Monmouth, a pivotal moment in the American Revolution.

Jim was concerned that one of the proposals for running commuter service to parts of Ocean County inland from the Shore would run through the venerable battlefield, which he considered sacred. He became involved in the rail advocacy movement by pushing for an alternate routing through Matawan and Freehold. He became involved with the Lackawanna Coalition because he opposed the proposed dead-end deep-cavern terminal that would have brought rail passengers to a station 20 stories below Macy's store on 34th Street in Manhattan, instead of the existing Penn Station.

Through his brilliant campaigning against the proposal and in favor of continued access to Penn Station, along with an extension of service to Manhattan's East Side, Jim helped us make history. He taught us how to campaign in Trenton and in Washington, DC; how to deal effectively with elected officials and their staffs; and how to appear and make statements at hearings, and how to convince the media of the correctness of our position. Never in the history of our movement has a project enjoyed such wide support from the business, labor and political communities (both Democrats and Republicans), and been stopped, in part, by the effective advocacy of organizations like the Coalition and its allies. In effect, we kept the issue alive until the politics in Trenton changed.

(Article continues on reverse side)

HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Come to a Lackawanna Coalition meeting!

Fourth Monday of the month, 7:00 p.m., Millburn Town Hall. Next meetings: Nov. 25 and Dec. 23.

Remembering Jim Raleigh *(Continued from reverse side)*

Jim was relentless in the pursuit of truth and dogged in his persistence to obtain the results that he knew would be right. While some of us might spend a “day on the Hill” campaigning in the Nation’s Capitol concerning an issue, Jim would spend a week. He also did that in Trenton. In a more private setting, like a dinner gathering before a meeting, Jim would regale us with information about a politician, which that person would probably prefer not be repeated. When he was finished, Jim would flash a self-satisfied grin and say: “I’m sorry. I just had to say that.”

Along with Joe Clift, our Technical Director, Jim proposed a long-range plan to add new tunnels and tracks to Penn Station, including infrastructure improvements in New Jersey and eventual expansion of the Northeast Corridor Line (NEC) to the East Side of Midtown Manhattan. We support this plan, and we will continue to advocate for it. We now have an additional reason for doing so: in memory of Jim.

Jim Raleigh was a great man. He was brilliant and persistent, and he made a difference. We know that we can never replace him, and we are fortunate that he had joined our organization and touched our lives.

Report From The Chair

By **DAVID PETER ALAN, Chair**

Our organization has lost a great friend, who was also the best coach and adviser we ever had. I recruited Jim Raleigh for the Coalition when a mutual friend introduced him to me. He became active with us, and the rest is history. Now, we must continue without Jim, and we will do so.

We maintain our concern that New Jersey Transit is still not running the full schedule that ran before Hurricane Sandy struck, over a year ago. We are concerned about whether projects now being planned will benefit the riders who travel to, from and within New Jersey on our trains. We are also concerned that such projects be cost-effective, since money is scarce.

We know that Jim was unique, and that nobody could ever replace him. We will apply the knowledge he shared with us, to advocate effectively for improvements on our rail lines and connecting transit; improvements in capital projects as well as operations. We are also improving our own advocacy, and we invite you to check out the changes in our website, www.lackawannacoalition.org.

Most importantly, we invite YOU to join us. Through his efforts as a member of our organization, Jim Raleigh made a difference. You can, too.

Post-Sandy, Key Trains Still Missing

By **JOHN BOBSIN**

Almost all the trains that NJ Transit operated before Hurricane Sandy struck on Oct. 29, 2012 are back, with a number of lines having 100% of pre-Sandy schedules, and even a few new trains in some cases. But not all trains are back, and the ones that are missing are often very important to some riders, who remain inconvenienced by the schedule changes NJT has made over the past year.

The most important missing services involve the lines that the Lackawanna Coalition focuses on: the Morris & Essex Morristown and Gladstone lines. On weekdays, one round trip between Hoboken and Gladstone is still missing from the schedule. Westbound on weekdays, Train 425, which departed Hoboken at 3:52 p.m. for Gladstone, is gone; following train 427, which formerly left Hoboken at 4:43 p.m., has been moved up to 4:27, but there is still a gap of 107 minutes between Gladstone trains right at the start of the evening rush. (A new train to

Stirling only fills this gap for users up to that station.) Eastbound, Train 436, which used to leave Gladstone at 8:50 p.m. is gone, leaving a gap of 101 minutes for most users, and an astounding gap of nearly five hours for Gladstone boarders, since the only intervening train, #434, does not take passengers there for technical reasons.

On weekends, a round trip in the early morning between Hoboken and Dover has not returned. Westbound, this means the first services to Dover or Gladstone from New York or Hoboken don’t arrive until about 9 a.m.; pre-Sandy, those who need to be at work earlier could travel via Hoboken, arriving an hour earlier. Those who want to get to Hoboken early in the morning are similarly out of luck; they once could arrive at 5:50 a.m., but now not until 7:38.

Elsewhere on NJT, North Jersey Coast riders are still missing one round trip between Bay Head and Hoboken, and Main/Bergen riders will notice a few local trains have disappeared as schedules were “adjusted.”

John Bobsin is Vice-Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition. He lives in Basking Ridge, on the Gladstone Branch.

Hoboken Waiting Room Closed Again; NJ Transit Plans to Reopen It In December

By **DAVID PETER ALAN**

It is not only the train schedule that is still not back to normal in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. The super-storm knocked out service on the Morris & Essex Line for two weeks and on the Montclair Branch for slightly longer. Service did not return to the Gladstone Branch for five weeks. Another casualty of the storm was Hoboken Terminal. Because of the flooding caused by Sandy, the customer waiting room and other station facilities were contaminated with mold. Ticket sales, customer service and station management have been conducted from temporary facilities on the station concourse since Sandy struck last year.

The final cleanup is now underway, and New Jersey Transit hopes to reopen all facilities at the historic terminal by the end of this year. The waiting room had been open briefly last fall, but was closed again when inspectors found mold. The room itself had been open, but all facilities sealed off and only temporary benches available for rail customers.

The restrooms are in service again, although they are accessible only along narrow, barricaded passageways. The main waiting room was restored to its historic elegance in 2007, for the celebration of the facility’s centennial. The Lackawanna Coalition looks forward to full restoration of the station and its services, and we expect that many riders on all lines serving it do, too..

To keep informed between issues of the **Railgram**, visit the Coalition’s website at: www.lackawannacoalition.org. This issue reports events occurring through Friday, Nov. 1, 2013.

Railgram

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