

# **Robert B. West**

January 21, 1923

April 29, 2015



## **His Stories**







## BOB'S STORY

I purchased my first truck in early summer in 1943, a 1935 Ford dump truck. The dump was not fastened to the frame, no power take off. I put it all together myself. I started hauling gravel from Leonard's sandbank and delivering it to customers at \$3.00 a load. The gravel cost me 10 cents a yard. I could shovel on the 2 yard load in 7 minutes.

When I started to work for the town of Tolland I got \$1.00 an hour, then it increased to \$1.50 per hour. I made \$50.00 a week. Gas was 17 cents a gallon. I hauled for a builder to pour foundations. After some time, I bought a conveyer which made it much easier. Then as time went on I bought another truck and a flat bottom truck. I started hauling hay and sawdust for the farmers in Tolland, Ellington and Somers.

Then next I bought a F12 farm tractor and did custom work doing all kinds of jobs for 7 years. In 1950 I bought a 1950 F8 Ford tractor and hauled household furniture for Grey Van Lines for two years. I didn't like that so I quit and returned home and started local work again.

I hauled freight for the next year or so. I ran back and forth to Chicago and St Louis for Riss and gypsied for Specter, Midstate and other carriers.

In 1952 I bought a 1947 International tractor from Donald Cummings. I then started to haul potatoes from Maine to Springfield, MA for Bill Wolpert

By this time I had 3 tractors and 2 dump trucks. I hauled potatoes for 12 years. I also hauled for Joe Bannish from Westfield, MA. to army bases in New England.

In the early days I hauled hay from Canada for Roger Pelizarri. There was no interstate highway. We ran route 5 to Bellows Falls, 103 to Rutland, VT and route 7 to the Canadian border. It took 6 – 7 hours to get to where we were going. LaPraire, Quebec, Canada is where we loaded most of the hay. I also hauled incubators for baby chicks to Canada for Pilch Chicken Farms. I remember coming home one night when it started to snow. We got down as far as St. Albans, VT. The roads were so bad we stayed for the night in a hotel. The next day we made it home.



**My First Truck**

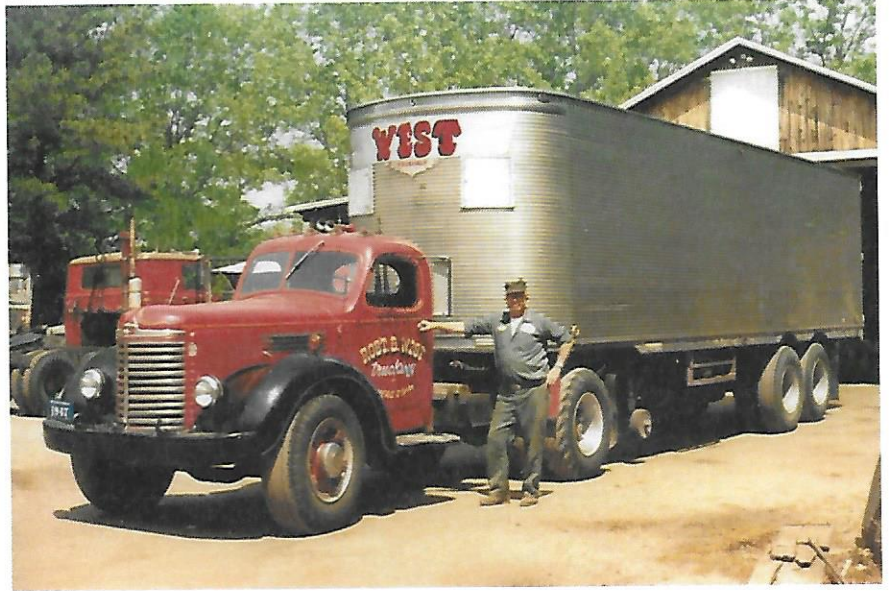


# 1947 KB11 International

Haul of Fame Museum  
Canterbury, CT



Home Base



4 -Town Fair Parade  
"Rain or Shine"



Heading Home





## 1947 International KB 11

I bought this truck in 1952. I had no idea of what it had for milage then and I don't know what it is now. I ran the truck for twenty years and I know I have driven it over 500,000 miles. It sat in my shed for over 40 years while I ran my B Model. It has taken over 2 years to restore it.

I hauled sawdust and shavings out of Vermont and hay out of Canada for farmers and horse stables in Massachusetts and Connecticut. For several years I hauled tripe from Victor, New York for a mink farm in Somers. I hauled one load of whale meat out of Montreal, Canada for Calo Dog Food in Boston. For seven years I hauled Christmas trees from Bucksport, Maine and Masardis, Maine to Beverly, Massachusetts. A real challenge was hauling live rabbits from an island off Bucksport, Maine in a closed trailer to clubs in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Pennsylvania.

To the Springfield, Massachusetts market I hauled onions from Oswego, New York and for twelve years I hauled potatoes from Aroostock County, Maine. I hauled freight from Springfield, Massachusetts to Dayton, Ohio. Locally I hauled gravel with a dump trailer and I used a low bed for hauling equipment.

This truck was a faithful performer for over twenty years. I don't think it had to be hauled home more than twice. I kept the truck all those years because I liked it. I liked the way it handled and the way it ran. It was a good truck.

For many years I dreamed of restoring this truck that had been so faithful. This would not have been possible without the help of many generous friends who gave freely of their time and, in some cases, parts that were needed to complete this project.

My sincere thanks to all of the following:

**Wayne Devoe**, Freeport Maine, Master Craftsman, whose skill, meticulous attention to every detail, and unfailing patience restored the truck and made my dream into a reality.

**Mike Andert**, Eastford, Connecticut, who restored the frame as a challenge to his ability to work with metal. Every spot on the frame showing any problem as well as all nuts and bolts were replaced. The result is a beautiful and perfect frame.

And some of the friends who helped in so many ways:

<b>Dan Avery</b>	<b>Somers, CT</b>	<b>Roland Henry</b>	<b>Somers, CT</b>
<b>Erv Bickford</b>	<b>Portland, ME</b>	<b>Robbie LaPlante</b>	<b>Stafford, CT</b>
<b>Furness Bros</b>	<b>Stafford, CT</b>	<b>Harvey Lower</b>	<b>Kulpsville, PA</b>
<b>Roger Gardner</b>	<b>Suffield, CT</b>	<b>Jay Soule</b>	<b>Yarmouth, ME</b>
<b>Lou Grimaldi</b>	<b>Somers, CT</b>		

A big thank you to everyone who helped to make a dream come true.



Original Condition



Restoration in Progress



On the Road



Four Town Fair





## MY 1936 FORD

I think about the mid 50's I was hauling furniture local with a 1936 Ford tractor and a 26 foot furniture trailer. I had picked up a small load in upstate RI and was in Worcester, MA on my way home. I met Roger Pease at the New Yorker diner in Auburn, MA. He had a K7 International tractor with trailer belonging to Nelson Freightway in Rockville, CT. I said I will race you to Rockville. He laughed and said OK. We left the diner with Roger first and me second. I got a chance and passed him but he passed me. I stayed behind him till we were on route 15 from Sturbridge, going toward Willington. I stayed back till I got a good chance to take him on a hill. I blew my horn and waved as I went by him. I didn't see him anymore. The 36 Ford had a Mercury 100 horse motor and would do between 50 and 60 going downhill. The truck also had a 2 speed rear end and it would go.

I drove that 36 Ford to Washington, DC with furniture. On the way back I stayed over in Baltimore. In the morning another truck, a White, couldn't start. I offered to pull him. He laughed but I did get him started. He could not believe what my Ford would do. I had to lift my hood to show him my little Ford engine.





## Cornwall, Connecticut



## Mystic Seaport Museum





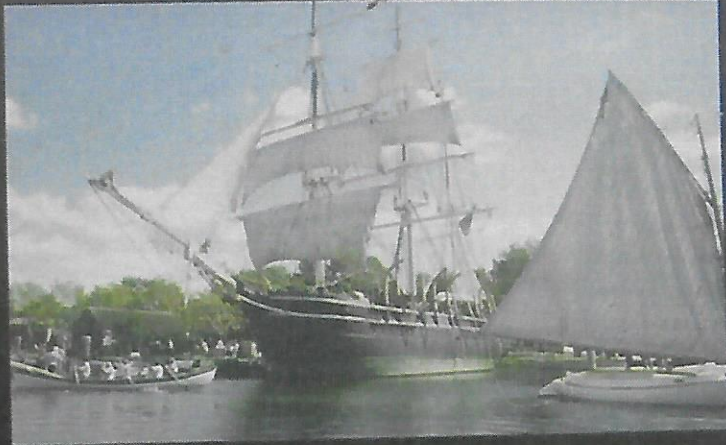
## NEW MASTS FOR THE CHARLES W. MORGAN

In 2007 I hauled 2 loads of logs from a forest in Cornwall, CT to the Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, CT. The trailer was 48 feet long and the logs were 70 feet long. I had to plan my route and file it for permits from the State Highway department. The permit limited the hours of hauling to 9 AM to 4 PM, no hauling in the rain and the permit was good for only 2 or 3 days. I had to put flashing lights on the tractor and the ends of the logs. The weather did not cooperate and I finally made the trip on the last day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> permit. The going on the road was easy but when I got to Mystic Seaport there was not enough room to easily get in the yard. The left front wheel of my tractor was on the top of the retaining wall. People watching thought I was going to drop into the ocean. I told them I knew where the wheels were at all times. It was a challenging trip and I enjoyed it very much.

*The logs were used as the new masts in the restoration of the Charles S. Morgan, the last wooden whaling ship.*

# CHARLES W. MORGAN

## Restoration Project



The CHARLES W. MORGAN, built in 1841 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966, is the only surviving wooden, square-rigged commercial vessel still remaining from the nation's great age of sail. She is a treasured symbol of Mystic Seaport, the cornerstone of the Museum's collections, and an icon of an industry that fueled the early American economy.

Restoration of the CHARLES W. MORGAN is being supported in part by a Save America's Treasure's grant administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

*Additional support has come from many private donors.*

MYSTIC SEAPORT

THE MUSEUM OF AMERICA AND THE SEA



# Norwich Bulletin

April 11, 2003



John Shishmanian/Norwich Bulletin

Jason Gancarz of Brooklyn, left, helps to guide a 40 foot-by-10 foot freight car onto its wheels off South Main Street in Putnam Thursday. The 1910 box car will be restored as a museum honoring Putnam native Gertrude Chandler Warner, who wrote the "Box Car Children" book series. Below, Fred Hedenberg, Aspinock Historical Society president and Putnam alderman watches as the wheels of a box car are brought to a site off South Main Street in Putnam Thursday.

## Boxcar arrives to become museum

By DOUGLAS  
P. GUARINO  
*Norwich Bulletin*

PUTNAM After years of

about Warner; but said he remembered her being a good teacher.

"She was a very nice lady," Zamangni said.

As a mail carrier in the

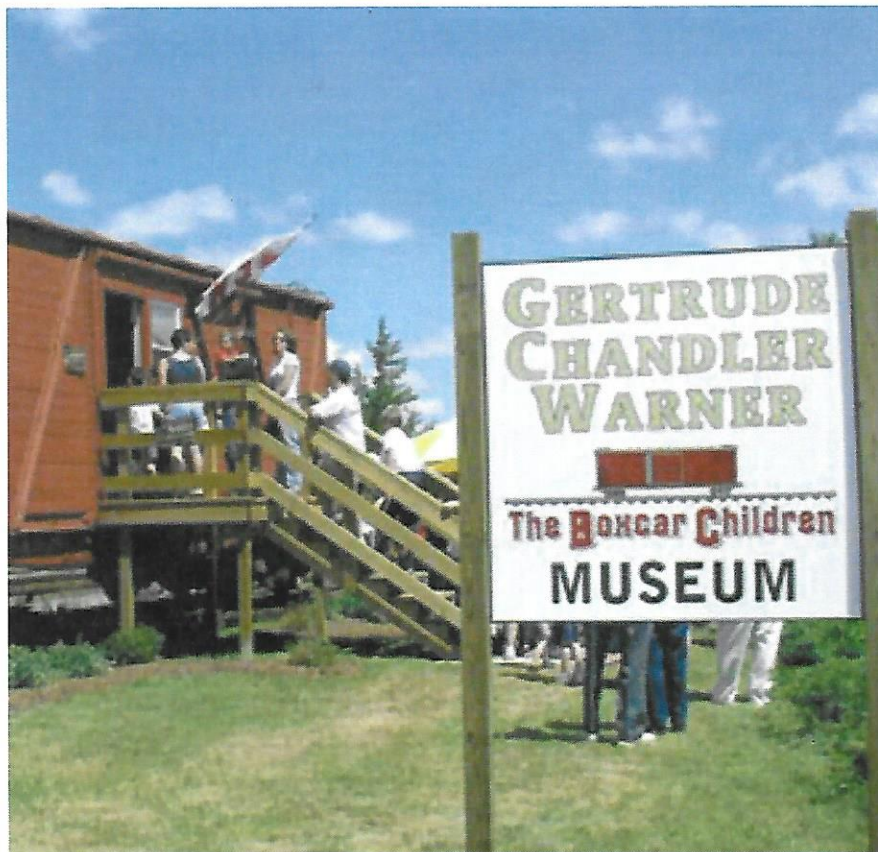


## A MUSEUM FOR AN AUTHOR

### (Moving a Railroad Car)

The trolley museum called me to see if I could move a boxcar from East Windsor to Putnam, CT. It was over width and too high. When we got it loaded, it was 15 feet high and 11 feet wide. I had to get a permit from the Department of Motor Vehicles. I put a pole in the corner of my pickup that measured 15 feet and I drove over the route to check that I could drive through without taking down wires. Everything was fine until I got almost there. There was a railroad under pass that I could not get under. I found a street that would take me around it. I had the box car on one trailer and the wheels on the second trailer. The box car is now a museum by the Rail Road Station. It is used to honor a teacher/author who wrote children's books about a family that lived in a boxcar.

*The author was Gertrude Chandler Warner. The series of stoies she wrote for children was called The Box Car Kids. There is a picture of Bob on the front page of the Norwich Bulletin newspaper in the Homefront section. We went to see the museum after it was completed and the Historical Society at that time had recreated her classroom in approximately half of the boxcar and her living room at home in the other half.*





# Edaville RR makes a last run in Mass.

By Betsy Q.M. Tong  
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

MILFORD - You could hear the rumbling of laden flatbed trucks long before any were seen, and then came car after car of the Edaville Railroad, bright yellow and green.

For nearly 50 years, the Edaville Railroad chugged happily along its 5-mile route in South Carver. But yesterday the train took its final journey in Massachusetts, strapped atop 44 antique trucks for a ride to its new home in Portland, Maine.

Inching along Interstate 495 north at speeds between 30 and 45 m.p.h., the convoy drew hundreds of curious and nostalgic onlookers who waved from rest stops and overpasses.

"It's kind of sad" to see the train go, said Patricia Foran, who never got to ride it.

But Massachusetts' loss is Maine's gain. The railroad will become part of a working exhibit of the soon-to-be-opened Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Co. and Museum, which purchased the Edaville line for about \$1.2 million.

Matt Sharp of North Yarmouth, Maine, who is a cofounder of the railroad museum, noted that in going to Maine, the Edaville line was returning home. The train system was begun in Maine after the Civil War, Sharp said, but in the 1940s, it was sold to a Massachusetts farmer who used the train in his cranberry harvest before realizing it would be more lucrative as a tourist attraction.

The two lead trucks in yesterday's convoy were the among the originals used to transport the trains from Maine to Massachusetts



GLOBE PHOTO / STEPHEN ROSE

The Edaville railroad, carried on flatbed trucks, begins the journey from South Carver to Maine.

in 1946, said Sharp.

For years, the Edaville - one of the last working 2-foot-gauge railroads - was a winter holiday tradition, taking passengers on a colorfully lit 5-mile track alongside the cranberry bogs.

During its heyday in the late 1970s and early '80s, as many as 200,000 people rode the Edaville, but the line went bankrupt in 1992, Sharp said.

Allan Nelson, 56, of Woburn who waited at a rest stop in Chelmsford for nearly four hours for a glimpse of the Edaville, remembered riding the train when he was a teenager.

"It was exciting to see the steam engines," Nelson said. "You don't see them anymore."

For Nelson and his wife, Nancy, patience paid off when several of

the antique trucks broke down, forcing them to turn off at the Chelmsford rest stop.

Joe Nelson of Westborough took his only train ride on the Edaville when he was 10. At a clam bake in Milford, the 47-year-old said he once dreamed of being a train conductor but grew up to be an auto mechanic.

"I read about it leaving in the

newspaper," Nelson said.

Like Nelson, Sharp said his love for trains started during childhood. His grandfather worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad and used to take Sharp for rides.

"It's way beyond exciting - it's the most fun I've had in 20 years," Sharp said. "We never figured [the railroad] would come back to Maine."



## MOVING THE EDVILLE RAILROAD TO THE MAINE NARROW GAUGE RAILROAD MUSEUM

I was in Maine and when I saw Irving Bickford, he asked me if I would like to be with the crew moving the Edaville narrow gauge railroad. He said no one is being paid and I thought it would be a fun time with everyone working together. I told him I would do it. I went to South Carver, MA with my 1977 F-Model Mack to load my truck. I left the trailer there and returned with my B61 because it was an antique. All trucks used for the move were antiques. Some were not even registered. We moved the railroad on a Sunday from South Carver, MA to Portland, ME. It took from 9:00 AM until dark to reach Portland. People were lined up on the overpasses to see the convoy on its way. There were 45 antique trucks. Arrangements had been made by the 3 governors to allow the trucks to go through the states without being stopped by the police. We did not have to pay at the toll booths and we stopped at a scale house where we were given sandwiches. We stayed overnight and unloaded the next day.

*Equipment and locomotives 3, 4 and 8 were carried to Portland on antique trucks.*





On Our Way



How's Your Family



What's Bob Got That's New



Let's Get Together for Dinner





## MY TRIP TO THE MEETING AT OWL'S HEAD, MAINE

Bob West

I left home at about 8:15 on Friday morning. It was a beautiful day and I knew my 1947 KB11 and golf cart were already safely at Owl' Head thanks to Robbie Coutu. So I didn't have a care in the world and I looked forward to a fun weekend.

I had lunch at Irv Bickford's restoration shop at "The Junction" in Yarmouth, Maine where Erv and Jimmy Hall have a picnic lunch for their many friends who are interested in the antique trucks. After lunch I left to meet Curtis Chase at the Trade Winds in Rockland where we had reserved a room. It was 100 degrees when we got there.

Friday evening we were invited to Bob Stackpole's house for dinner. There were 14 of us and what a meal we had - steak, chicken, veggies and real, homemade, Maine blueberry pie for dessert. A lot of good truck stories and good fellowship made for a perfect evening.

Saturday was a decent, comfortable day and I enjoyed seeing and visiting with friends. Saturday evening the Maine Chapter held its banquet but the usual lobster was not on the menu. I didn't care because I don't like lobster anyway. We went to bed early but were awakened at 1:00 AM by loud banging on our door. I looked out the window and saw the fire engines. The firemen were motioning people to leave the lobby. I tried to get dressed in a hurry but it's hard if you're in a strange room in the dark. Ever try it? We went out to the car and tried to sleep and about 5:30 AM we were told we could go back into the hotel. The fire was caused by an electrical problem and started in the back of the building. Luckily it was caught before it got into the partition. Since we were already dressed and there was no water in the hotel except for the toilets, we left for the show.

The Maine Chapter had a cookout at noon and after that I left for home. I arrived home at 6:15., very, very tired from lack of sleep. I just couldn't fall asleep after being awakened by the firemen. One good thing though, the hotel didn't charge us for Saturday night.



**Always A Good Time At Owl's Head**



On the Road



On A Tour



Farmer's Friend



4 Town Fair Parade





## **The 2009 Dash Plaque**

Bernice West

When Bob was asked to choose which of his antique trucks should be on the 2009 Brooklyn Show dash plaques, he answered without hesitation "the B61 Mack". I was surprised, expecting him to choose the 1935 Ford dump truck, which was the first truck he ever owned. Later, I asked him why he chose the B61 Mack, not the 1935 Ford. This is what he said:

"I had the 1935 Ford only seven years. I had and worked the B61 Mack for over thirty years. It's the truck I used to teach Bobby (our son) to drive. I used it to haul shavings from Maine, hay from New York state and Canada. Many times I had to drive on treacherous roads covered with ice or snow. It handled well. I hauled water for swimming pools and to soak down foundations. I've moved equipment for contractors and hauled show trucks to conventions. My helpers and I moved carnival rides for twenty years with it. One of the "fun" things was pulling floats in parades. With the dump trailer I hauled many, many loads of gravel and fill. It was my favorite truck at that time because I could depend on it - it seldom failed me."

So that is why the B61 is Bob's choice for the 2009 dash plaque truck.



**The 1960 B61 Mack**



## HIS LUNCHBOX

By Bernice S. West

This all started when I decided to clean the attic in the garage by the house. I had a pile of things that should go to the dump but, as I always do, I checked with Bob to be sure I was not throwing out some treasure. When he saw his lunchbox in the pile he was *horrified*. He told me the history of the lunchbox and ended by telling me that from now on, he wanted his Wednesday lunch at "The Haul of Fame Museum" to be in *that* lunchbox.

It was my turn to be *horrified*. That lunchbox was a battered and rusty thing covered with years of grime. It had a broken latch and a kind of mildew-looking greenish handle. I take great pride in having a nice, nutritious, tasty and clean lunch for him when he wants to take one. I did not want to put *this* lunch in *that* lunchbox.

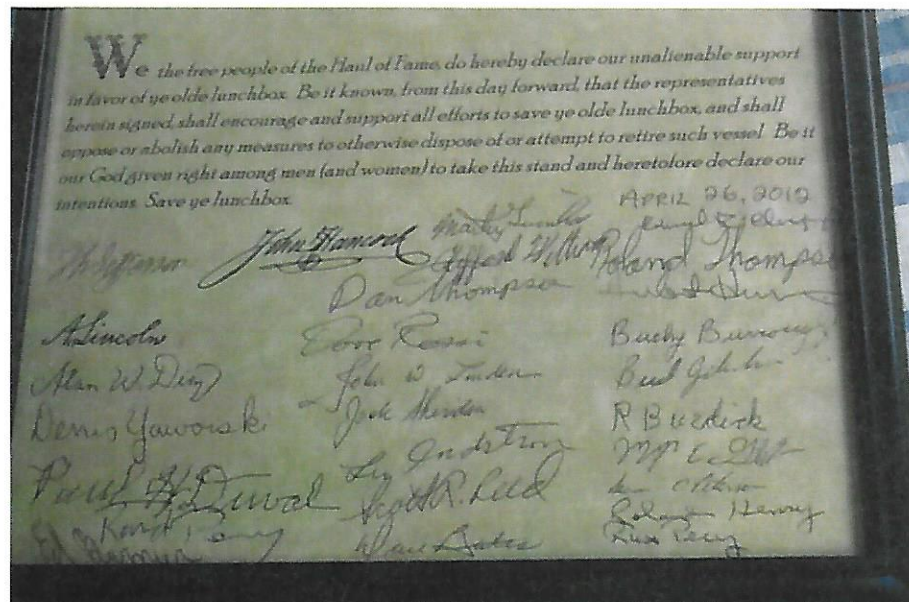
After many *discussions* I finally told him I would use *the* lunchbox. It was impossible to clean. I was afraid if I scrubbed it, it would fall apart and I would be accused of being careless. Finally, I gently wiped it as clean as I could with moist paper towels. I was afraid it would contaminate his lunch. Then I carefully lined the entire interior with napkins. As soon as he saw the napkins, he pulled them out and replaced his lunch in that potentially dangerous and disgusting lunchbox.

Later he came home with the **Declaration of Independence for Lunch Boxes.**

Apparently he had been telling the Yaworski gang about my unreasonable attitude toward his lunchbox and they rallied to the cause.

I took one good look at the document with so many prominent signatures and I knew it was a lost cause. After all, the American Revolution began when the king of England did not realize the force and determination behind that American Declaration of Independence. I would not make the same mistake.

LUNCHBOX FREEDOM IS DECLARED





## MY LUNCH BOX

By Bob West

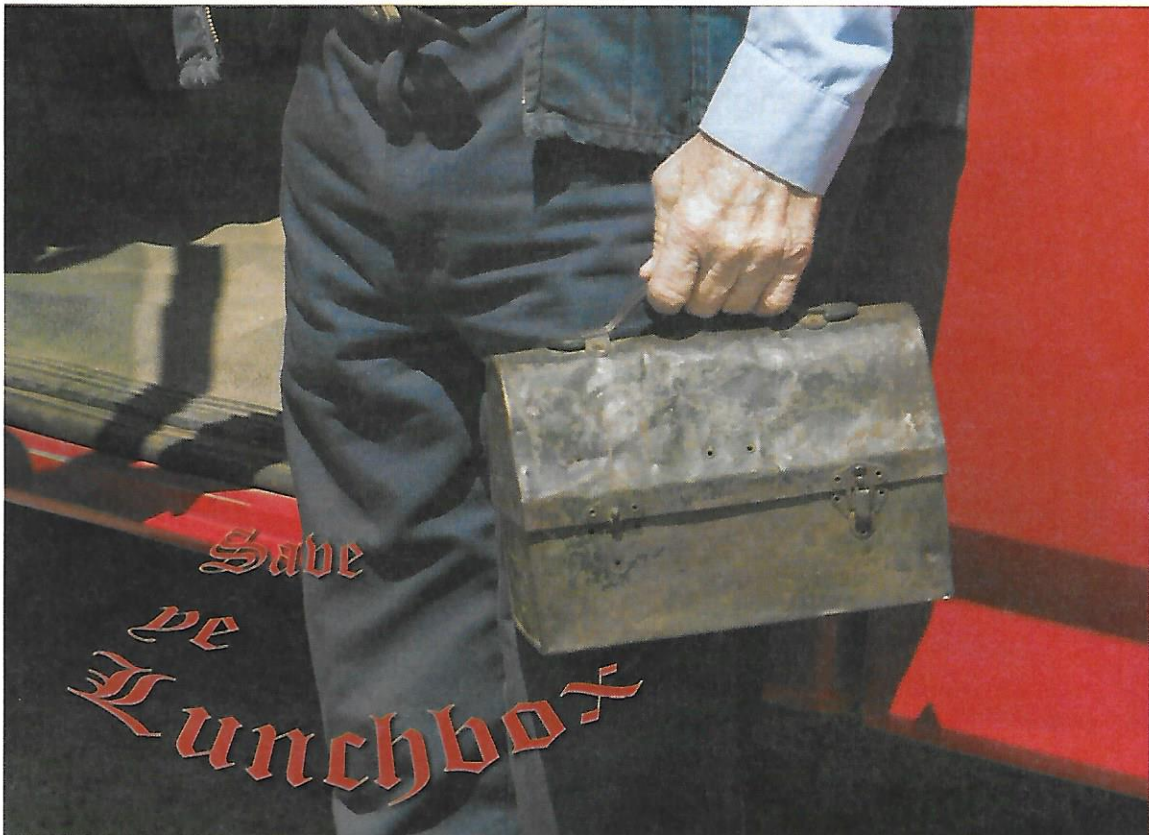
I was given this lunch box when I began first grade in Snipsic Lake School. I was six years old at the time. I put it on Miss Smith's desk because I didn't want anyone to damage it. Also, I could see it from where I sat.

The handle didn't last very long so my Grandfather Wilcox, who had a woodworking shop and grain business, made a new handle from a harness strap. It is still on it and in use today.

This lunch box has been around. I used it through grammar school and I carried it to work for many years. I did not use it when I hauled furniture or potatoes.

Now I use it once a week when my wife lets me. Every Wednesday a group of us meet at *The Haul of Fame Museum* to get together and swap stories.

My wife does not like this lunchbox so when I didn't take it for several weeks with my lunch, the guys made this ***Declaration of Lunch Box Freedom*** and signed it. I now use it every Wednesday.

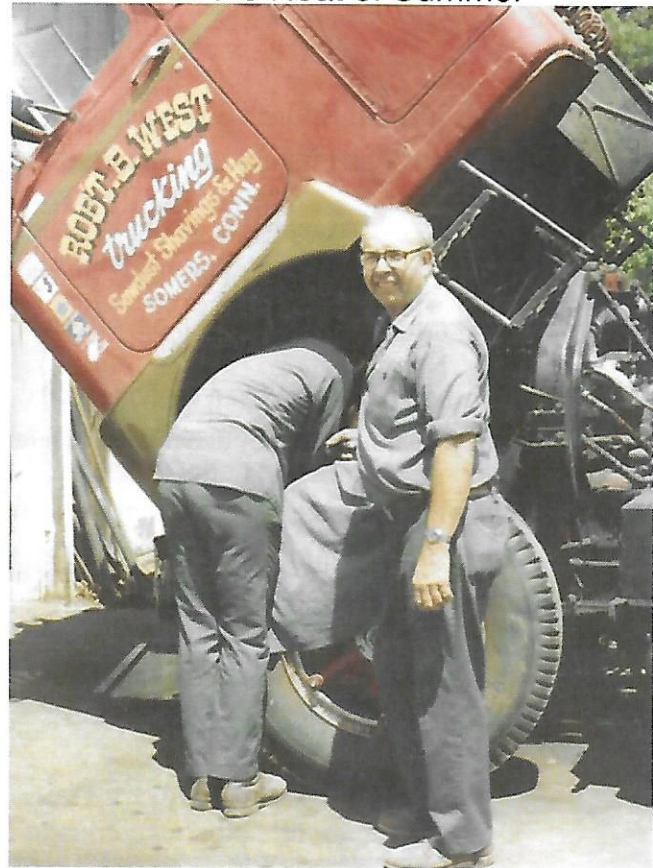




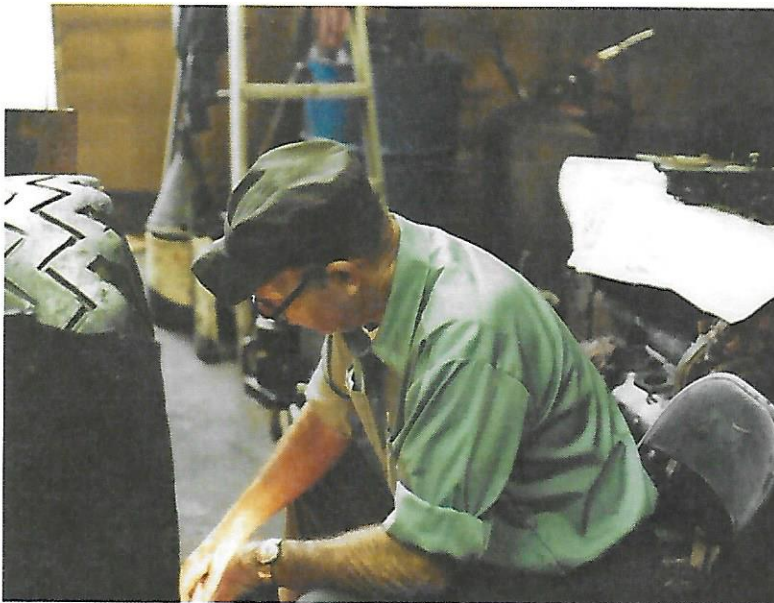
In the Cold of Winter



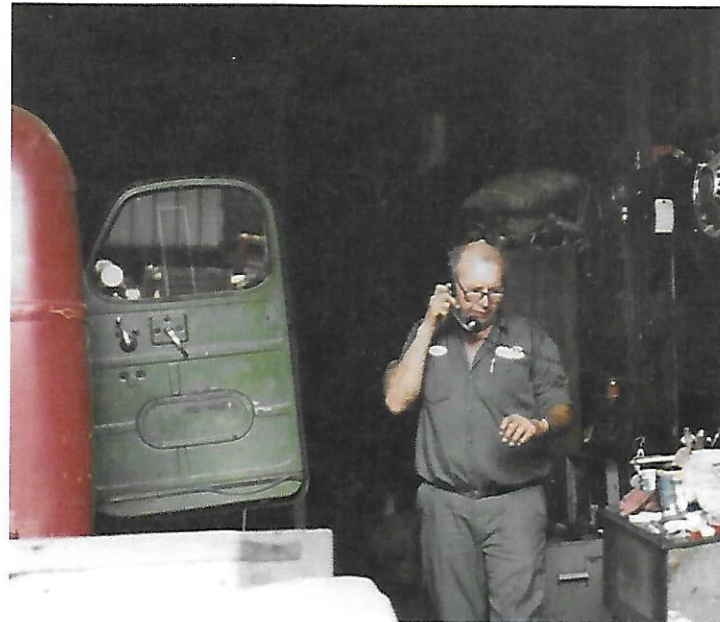
In the Heat of Summer



From Dawn to Midnight



The Work is Never Done





## OTHER THINGS THAT HAPPENED

I had a driver call me from out in NY state. The truck dropped a valve and cracked the engine. It was an International. I bolted two oak 2x4's together and put a piece of chain on each end. I went out to NY state with another tractor. I tied the broken truck on the back of the trailer he had and pulled it home. It was hard. The truck had no brakes and was cold. So we switched drivers every hour or so. It took 12 hours to come home but we made it, The driver was Earl Johnston.

January 1, 1957 Dana rolled the truck over in the Hainesville Woods on route 2A in Maine. He was on his 2nd or 3rd trip and fell asleep. It tore the rear end almost out of the truck. We later chained the rear end in and put the trailer axel on top and drove the tractor home in 15 hours. I left the trailer on the side of road and gave it to a junk yard in Lincoln, ME. They later unloaded it and moved the trailer.

In the middle and late 60's I went to Montreal to get a load of whale meat for a dog food company in Boston. I had a guy with me who got me the job. He said he could drive truck. He was a part time cop in Lowell, MA. I drove all the way up, got loaded and started back. I was tired after midnight and he started to drive coming down route 5 through St Johnsbury. He went too fast on a corner and broke the lugs on my right rear trailer wheel coming down Barnet Mountain and tires came off, sparks flew. I called him everything I could think of. This happened at 5 AM. We lost 1 tire. We worked all day on the trailer, borrowed a tire, got ready to go at 6:00PM, drove all night to get to Boston the next morning. I had to stop often to tighten lugs so the wheel would stay on. We got unloaded and got home late that night. I haven't seen the helper since that time.

One time I was hauling a tractor home on my 35 Ford dump truck. It fell off and went up on a lawn in front of a home. We had to stop, pull it back in road and tie it on again.

I hauled a load of potatoes from Lou Gowdy farm to Schenectady, NY with a 1947 Ford cabover tractor. Going up Jacob's Ladder which is route 20, when I shifted gears on the hills, the front wheels would come off the ground. I had 10 tons of potatoes on the trailer.

I hauled plumbing supplies from Boston to Maine for some time and hauled bales of shavings from C.B. Cummings in Norway back to Connecticut to Pilch Chicken Farms.

I moved carnivals for 25 years for Deluxe Shows and Spencer Amusement. I ran 2 or 3 tractors all night on Saturday nights.



Moving Carnivals



Water for  
Construction and Pools



Founders Award  
May 22, 1998, Phoenix, AZ  
ATHS National Convention



Ribbons and Trophies



## LOOKING BACK



I am now 90 years old and I am still driving and hauling paying loads. By my best estimate I have driven 4 million miles. The only accident I ever had was on a cold winter's night in Maine when a car cut in front of me to make a left turn. When I got out of my truck to see if he was OK, the driver asked me not to call the police. I helped him get his car on the road and left.

People have asked me about the earlier days and how things have changed. The biggest thing is the speed of the trucks. My 1936 Ford traveling at 50 or 60 miles an hour was *fast*. Earlier drivers were also mechanics and knew how to find the cause and how to fix most problems. The new trucks are computerized and have to be towed to a garage. Cell phones have pretty much replaced the CB's that provided information and entertainment. The drivers were pretty much *Knights of the Road*, looking out for each other and for everyone on the road. Today a driver would still help but would use his cell phone to call for assistance if he saw a problem. The changes really are bigger loads, more speed, more computerization, more technology, more rules and regulations and more taxes.

I continue to enjoy the shows and meetings and I attend whenever I possibly can. I was a founding member of the Nutmeg Chapter which will be celebrating its 31<sup>st</sup> year this fall. There were just 4 of us at that first meeting. I received the Founder's Award in May, 1998 at the convention in Phoenix, Arizona. I have a collection of ribbons and plaques from the many shows and parades I participated in

I used to say that I have hauled everything except a load of women. Now I can say I've hauled it all because in 2008, in celebration of the Bicentennial Anniversary of Vernon, CT, I hauled a float for the Rockville General Hospital Ladies Auxiliary.





The Photoshop Artistry  
Compliments of Carolyn Levesque

May 2016