

them to restore the Main Station to its historic best.

In less than two years, a comprehensive renovation to the train station was complete. Handicap-accessible, newly renovated and back to its architectural best, it was again a source of pride in Yonkers and ready to vie for an Amtrak stop. Yet, one challenge remained — how to appeal to Amtrak?

Thanks to their long-time relationship, Senator D'Amato arranged for the mayor and me to meet with Amtrak President W. Graham Claytor and his senior staff in Washington, D.C. Although we had a strong case, history was against us.

On the morning of the meeting, I arrived at the mayor's home at 5:15 a.m. The house was dark. I waited a few minutes, then rang the doorbell. Eventually, the mayor opened the door, dressed in pajamas.

"What the hell are you doing here, Phil?" he asked. "It's five o'clock in morning. You're supposed to pick me up at 7:00 a.m."

"No Mayor, the flight is at 7:00 a.m.!" I replied, urgently. "We have to leave now!"

In short order, the mayor reappeared in a suit, and we were off to LaGuardia Airport. We arrived early in Washington. While waiting for a cab, the mayor spotted a shoeshine stand.

"I'll treat you to a shoeshine," he offered.

I declined. A few minutes later, the mayor's shoes shined to a perfect gloss.

As he paid the shoeshine man, he turned to me and said, "Well, we may not win an Amtrak stop, but the president of Amtrak won't be able to say the mayor of Yonkers doesn't have shined shoes."

His statement would prove far more interesting than either of us imagined.

At Amtrak's offices, Claytor welcomed us, wearing a three-piece, dark blue suit, crisp white shirt with monogrammed French cuffs and eye-popping cuff links. He was dressed to sartorial perfection, or so it seemed, until we glanced down at his shoes. His expensive black leather shoes were entirely covered in dirt. He had been inspecting railyards prior to our arrival. We could hardly contain the urge to laugh.

Claytor greeted us in his soft



Today, Yonkers train station has features also found in Grand Central Terminal, including triangular lamps over the ticket booths and a vaulted Guastavino tile ceiling.

southern accent, "Welcome Mr. Mayor... but I do not believe you will be successful in getting an Amtrak stop for your fair city."

He went on to say that as a young, married man, he and his wife had lived in southwest Yonkers, on Riverdale Avenue.

"How do you remember that street, Mr. Claytor?" asked the mayor.

"It was a prominent street, two lanes, a primary route, connecting the Bronx to Yonkers," answered the president of Amtrak.

"Well, Mr. Claytor, Riverdale Avenue is now a modern four-lane artery linking the entire upper west side of the Bronx and Manhattan directly to the Yonkers station," said the mayor.

Claytor clearly took note, then ushered us into a meeting room where Amtrak's senior staff had assembled.

"Best wishes, Mr. Mayor," he said, then left.

We began our pitch with the mayor relating his conversation with Claytor about access to Yonkers Main, then made these points:

- The public transportation system nexus and major arterials provided easy access for all of lower Westchester, the upper Bronx and Manhattan, nearly two million residents.
- Handicap-accessibility.
- Recently renovations had brought the station back to its historic and architectural best.
- Yonkers was the only major city in New York State bypassed by Amtrak at the time. Even Rome and Utica had their own stops.
- Yonkers had more than ample parking.
- And of key importance, Yonkers is positioned on an S-curve. All approaching trains already slowed

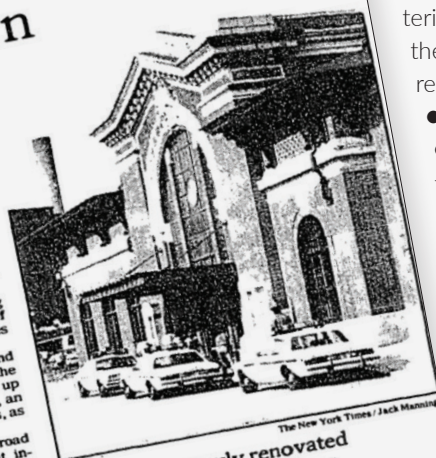
The 1930's Return To a Station

By FRANKLIN WHITEHOUSE

YONKERS
MAUD H. BONNELL, of Yonkers once commuted on the old New York Central Railroad, which was also her employer in Manhattan, and she remembers what the station at Larkin Plaza was like in the 1930's.

"It was clean and it was lovely and it was efficiently operated," Mrs. Bonnell said last week. In recent years, however, the 1911 Beaux-Arts building of brick and terracotta tile fell on hard times. The roof became worn and splintered. "Decrepit it was," Mrs. Bonnell said. "Rundown and leaked. Grime had invaded walls. Waiting-room benches uncaared for. You would never have recognized any of the brickwork and the ceilings, the artistic work that is up there. It didn't show at all. It was just, oh, a plain tan, an orangy tan color with no distinction to the white areas, as opposed to the brick areas."

Last December, the Metro-North Commuter Railroad Company began a \$265,000 renovation project that included installation of a new roof and the sandblasting and interior brick walls in what Peter E. Stangl, North, called "one of our key stations." The station daily, making it the station daily, after Croton-



Exterior of newly renovated railroad station in Yonkers