

■ BELLAIRE

# Steam Whistle Expo To Be Held

## Festival planned Saturday, Sunday

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Staff Writer

For more than four decades, 87-year-old Marshall County resident Harold "Sid" Heckman worked as a railroad conductor with the B&O Railway, the first 12 of those years spent aboard steam engine trains that traveled throughout the Ohio Valley and deep into the coal fields of West Virginia.

Heckman, who has a wealth of knowledge about the steam trains, is looking forward to hearing some of the steam whistles he collected over the years — including the whistle that once sounded the shift changes at the old Imperial Glass factory in Bellaire — when he attends the Great Stone Viaduct Steam Whistle Expo in Bellaire this weekend. The Imperial factory whistle is one of many locally significant historic steam whistles that will be sounded with steam for the first time in many years during the expo. Heckman said several decades have now passed since he last heard his steam whistles.

Heckman said he got his start in the business in 1947. His father, John Heckman, also a prominent local train conductor who worked on the railway for 50 years, had the opportunity on three different occasions to serve as the conductor for three U.S. presidents traveling through this region of the country.

Initially hired as a "trainman," Heckman, who was promoted to a conductor in 1955, said he had the opportunity to make thousands of train runs through the Ohio Valley, many of those across the old stone viaduct bridge in Bellaire. He said many of those trips included hauling cars of coal from the Clarksburg and Grafton areas to Benwood.

The festival runs from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday and noon-3 p.m. Sunday.