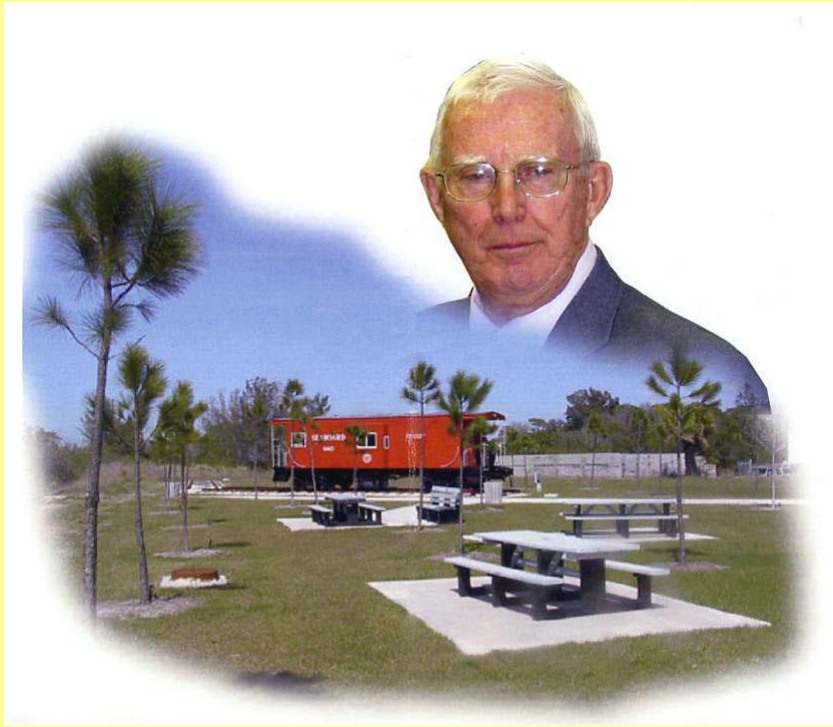


The Rollins W. Coakley Railroad Park



Many of our members remember **Rollins W. Coakley**, who retired in 1981 as Assistant Director of Commuter Services. Rollins and his wife June retired to Venice, Florida in 1982 where **Rollins**, with a life-long interest in railroad history, became involved in civic affairs including the preservation and restoration of the historic Venice Train Depot with its 3-1/4 acre depot site located directly to the north. In recognition of Rollins' 20-year effort and his many hours of work on the project, the depot site was named the **Rollins W. Coakley Railroad Park** by the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners and dedicated on March 22, 2005.

The park includes scenic walkways, picnic tables, benches, a restored caboose and a statue dedicated to circus great Gunther Gebel Williams, who is widely regarded as one of the greatest wild animal trainers of all time.

The Venice Train Depot was built in 1927 by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Sarasota County purchased the depot site in 1999. The depot restoration, a \$2.3 million project, was separately dedicated on October 24, 2003.

The Venice Area Historical Society conducts tours of both areas on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, Nov. 1 through May 1, starting every half hour from 10 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. For more information call 941-412-0151, or visit the Venice Area Historical Society Web site at www.venicehistory.com. Be sure and visit

the Park and the restored Railroad Depot when you are in the area.

The Coakley family's connection with the Chicago & North Western goes back to 1867 when **Rollins's** great-grandfather immigrated to Denison, Iowa from Ireland and landed a job as Section Foreman on the C&NW. Rollins passed away on May 2, 2007 at Provo, Utah.

Revised: 04/10/08