

OCTOBER 26, 2009 F.A.H.P. NEWS

Stanleys Can Be Vulnerable: When I was a new Stanley owner in the late 1940's, I wanted to show off. My father had told me many stories about how Stanleys could out-run "gas" cars with almost unlimited power. I wanted to find out. The trouble was my car was only a 10-H.P. Model 607, the lightest and frailest of the Stanleys. My father helped me gear it higher, and it would easily cruise at 45 m.p.h. I had driven the car home from Randolph, MA, in December, 1946, with the original engine. In 1947 and 1948, it was used a lot, including participation in the '48 Glidden Tour in Pennsylvania. I was lucky and made out well, the only real trouble being with a back-firing burner. In early spring of 1949, I wanted to make the car look as nice as it ran, so it was partially dismantled in Bill Allaband's paint shop in Kennett Square and prepared by me for its new paint. It was first on the road again the day of the very first tour of the new Historical Car Club of Pennsylvania to Valley Forge Park. Despite working all night the night before putting on the finishing touches, I didn't get away from Kennett Square until early afternoon, and met the other cars on the tour coming out of the Park as I tried to enter. My father and Homer Kratz had a good day in my dad's newly-restored 1916 Model 725.

About a month after that first trip, I had been somewhere in Delaware County and returned home via Kennett where my father had his little 4-8-4 steam locomotive operating in place at a local hobby show in the basement of the American Legion Building. He was powering the locomotive with a steam line from the boiler of a Stanley just outside. With my car, I pulled in alongside the Stanley he was using as a power source. When it came time to leave, I had to back up an incline onto South Broad Street. This I did, but when I attempted to go forward slightly uphill toward the traffic light, something broke in the engine. An original wrist pin, crystalized from metal fatigue, had sheared off, and the piston on that side of the engine went through the cylinder block. Raymond Noznesky came around with his tow truck and moved the Stanley to his father's Royal Garage. Now I had a beautiful-looking Stanley that wouldn't run.

My father always had lots of spare parts, and he had another engine of exact design that we put in the car, and I was back in business. Still, it had not sunk in that my driving habits undoubtedly contributed to the engine failure. I enjoyed the Model 607 that summer and entered it on the Glidden Tour of 1949 that began in Gettysburg and ended in Wilmington, DE, just prior to the annual Fall Meet of AACA at the Devon Horse Show grounds. I was in charge of hotel reservations for the Glidden Tour and the tour committee took responsibility for making (and guaranteeing) participants' reservations. I entered my Stanley and my father took his Mountain Wagon. As we fired up at Auburn Heights prior to starting for Gettysburg, 100 miles away, the lead blew out of the fusible plug on my car, and I changed it with very hot water blowing under boiler pressure into the firebox on top of the burner grate. Finally it was replaced, I fired up again, and we were on our way. The car did not steam well going to Gettysburg and my passenger, Bill Carr, and I had headaches when we reached the starting point. That night we dropped the burner to find over half the tiny holes choked with asbestos (from the removal of the fusible plug). Poking out the holes solved the problem, and the car ran very well for the next 5 days or so.

Showing off again, I passed several of the tour cars while climbing over the Blue Ridge near the Skyline Drive. The little Stanley would easily do it. My foolish prank caught up with me about 2 days later. Moving along at 35-40 m.p.h. on level terrain in Tidewater Virginia, a loud banging noise in the engine told me something had broken. Inspection revealed another blown cylinder head, and I was out of business. The engine was blocked out of gear and the car towed to Tappahannock where I found a garage that would keep it for a few days. I went back in a week or so and towed it home on its own wheels with a self-steering tow bar. Wrist pin fracture had again caused this serious engine breakdown. A welder near Village Green, PA, repaired both fractured cylinder blocks, and one was re-installed, this time with new wrist pins fabricated by my father. While that problem was corrected, the welding had softened the valve seats and they scored after 300 miles. Still another cylinder block was fastened to the engine frame, and, with a lot more care from the operators, it lasted well until the engine was removed in 2008 for the car's complete restoration. I like it when people say to me: "You never have any trouble".

Lex duPont visited with us on October 20, and nearly 30 volunteers turned out to learn more about our 1901 Mobile steamer and its history. Driving lessons for three candidates were conducted (with the Model 76) on Friday last, but on Saturday our planned "Mini-Tour" was canceled because of heavy rainfall. Yesterday, two small groups visited the big house and the museum with Dan Citron and Richard Bernard as guides. One was the Class of '59 from Alexis I. duPont High School celebrating its 50th reunion (Richard was in that class), and a Questors group from the Concordville area. I gave them rides around the grounds on our Mountain Wagon. The engine work on the Model 76 was completed and the car runs very well again, as evidenced by the driving lessons on October 23.

This next Sunday, November 1, the first day of Standard Time, one of our "Steamin' Sundays" takes place at Auburn Heights. Richard Bernard is chair of this event, and has E-mailed us the job assignments. Jonathan Rickerman, our new publicity chairman, and Carol Bernard are promoting this event for us wherever they can. Matt Chesser, Chazz Salkin, and the Assistant Secretary of DNREC expect to be with Dan Citron at Auburn Heights on Thursday, October 29, about 2 P.M. On November 14 and 15, the Crafts Fair at CCArts in Yorklyn has requested that we open the museum as we did last year, and also have one Stanley at the Center on Saturday and Sunday. One or two volunteers each day will be needed to hand out literature and answer questions about FAHP. Please let Steve Bryce know if you can help. Many thanks.

For Saturday, November 7, Walter Higgins and Steve Bryce have laid out a mini Steam Car Tour of 43 miles in southwestern Chester County. As a token of our appreciation, we are inviting all active volunteers of FAHP and their immediate families to enjoy lunch ON US at the Saffron Restaurant near Kemblesville about 2:00. We'd like you to go along in a steamer, but if you want to join us for lunch only, we'd like that as well. Please let the office know by Saturday, October 31, if you can plan to be with us, so reservations can be made. More details will be provided next week. Phone (302) 239-2385, E-mail: admin@auburnheights.org. Tom

