

Hello, Steam Team:

Esther Shallcross Marshall (1885-1979): The “Weekly News” of May 15, 2006, told of my mother’s family in the Middletown-Odessa area of Delaware. I never knew what to give my mother on Mother’s Day; she gave me so much more than I could give back. When I was old enough to think I needed to know everyone’s age, she told me she was 28, and I thought that seemed about right. It wasn’t long, however, before my father told me she was 46 and he was the same age. It seemed right that he should be 46, but it was all wrong that my mother was that age. She must have been a young 46, as she lasted another 48 years.

In the summer of 1885 when my mother’s older sister Mary, age 9, was called to the second floor room at Belleview (the family farm) to see her baby sister for the first time, the baby’s golden curls impressed her, and on my mother’s 90th birthday in 1975, Aunt Mary, then 99, wrote in beautiful handwriting about baby Esther’s curls. Eventually my mother had 5 siblings and she was #4 of the total 6. The average age of the six was 92 at the time of their deaths. She attended a one-room school about 1-1/2 miles south of the Belleview Farm, and then Middletown High School, which ended with the 11th grade. About 1901 she was sent to a Quaker-oriented co-ed prep school at Swarthmore, PA, where she met Anna Marshall, my father’s sister, and they, along with three other girls, became life-long friends (the five “Jays” were described in the “News” of March 13, ’06).

From the time my mother was graduated from Swarthmore Prep about 1903 until the beginning of World War I in 1914, she lived with her parents. Her oldest brother James had married in 1900, and Mary married Bassett Ferguson on the lawn at Belleview in 1906. The other three were also at home with their parents. About 1909 the family moved from Belleview to a property on North Broad Street in Middletown called Flowerdale. My grandfather died there two years later, following a bout with pneumonia and a lung operation that was not successful. My mother assisted the surgeon from Philadelphia who operated at Flowerdale, and I always thought this was why she became interested in being a nurse.

In the summer of 1912, Esther invited my father and his brother Warren and Warren’s wife Bertha to join some of the Shallcrosses for an excursion to Rehoboth. I’m not sure whether Uncles Gene or Ned Shallcross owned an automobile, but I think Uncle Warren Marshall did. In any event my father had a brand new 1912 Model 74 Stanley, and the Marshalls arrived at Flowerdale in Middletown, where Esther’s mother had prepared lunch. My father took everyone’s picture on the front porch at Flowerdale, and there are several photos of the happy young people on the beach at Rehoboth. Later that summer, chaperoned of course, my father invited Esther to go on a LONG trip in the Model 74 from Delaware to the White Mountains of New Hampshire and return. They also went to Atlantic City at least once in the Model 74, as we have a photo taken on the ferry slip at Penns Grove on the return. The romance must have cooled, but it did not go away.

In 1914 she entered the nursing school at Union Memorial Hospital in Baltimore, from which she was graduated in 1918 as World War I ended and the influenza epidemic engrossed the country. When she came home to Middletown for a short vacation, the local doctors, overwhelmed by the numbers of sick and dying, prevailed on this new registered nurse to stay home and help them. This she did, but just before Christmas, 1918 (or possibly 1919), she contracted influenza herself, and lay helpless at Flowerdale for several months. She and my father were engaged at the time. When the Warren Marshall family came to Auburn Heights for Christmas dinner, Aunt Bertha noticed that my father was depressed and almost silent. He knew, but the others did not, of Esther’s illness. She recovered, however, and my parents were married in June, 1921. Almost immediately she became “the nurse” for all the Yorklyn Marshalls. Even though I had to swallow castor oil and eat turnip greens, Swiss chard, parsnips, kale and spinach, I, too, am very glad she recovered, or this story could not have been written.

This past week was another of accomplishment. Art Wallace cleaned up the locomotives from the May 6th runs, Art Sybell and Ron Turochy came one step closer to finishing the special gift shop closet (and it is in full use) and Art painted the tender on "Little Toot". Walter Higgins, Art Wallace and Art Sybell cleaned and refilled the hydraulic brake systems on several of the Stanleys, Steve Bryce and Kelly Williams did several minor repair jobs on the Models 71 and 76, and then they got another driving opportunity with the 71. Steve Jensen, Andy Zych, Richard Bernard, Anne Cleary and others changed out one of the R.R. passenger cars for lettering. Bill Schwoebel made some minor locomotive repairs, Rob Robison got closer to final completion of the wiring on the 735, Jim Personti and Jeff Fallows have just about completed the "pricker" project, Butch Cannard continued to print all kinds of FAHP material while researching give-away products for the Steam Car Tour, and Chuck Erikson continues to organize our shop. The Maute brothers continue sorting and organizing our library. I drove the Model 71 to Winterthur and back on Saturday, 5/12, and it, along with 7 other outstanding "special" cars (3 duPonts, a Minerva, a Jaguar, a Brewster, and a Rolls) were in a beautiful setting there and provided much interest for Winterthur's visitors on a perfect spring day. Bob Reilly answered questions and passed out FAHP literature for most of the day. The seven spring Saturdays on which outstanding cars are invited to attend there are planned and operated by Greg Landrey, a member of FAHP's Board of Directors and co-chair (along with Mike May) of our Collections Committee. Greg, a senior member of the Winterthur staff, has been very good to us at FAHP.

This week, we'll try to get the 735 on the road for test runs. The Model 71 can go back to John Benge's back yard in the museum, where it will look nice for Saturday's event.

The upcoming Ameriprise "charter" event at Auburn Heights is this Saturday, May 19. While they have a rain date of the 20th, the long range forecast indicates they shouldn't need to use it. Anne Cleary has scheduled volunteers for all the needed jobs to be covered. However, if you plan to come and help and have not signed up, please let Anne know, as Ameriprise will feed the volunteers, and we must let them know how many. We don't think it's fair to have a lot more volunteers on hand than we need. We'll be running just one train and the other usual "Steamin' Sunday" activities. About 80 guests are expected, with very few, if any, children, so the electric trains will probably not run except by special request.

On Sunday, May 20, the annual spring meet of the Historical Car Club of Pennsylvania takes place at Linvilla Orchards, and it's a nice 35-mile-RT run with the Stanleys or Packards if any want to go. Please let me know by Tuesday evening, May 15, if you have an interest. On the celebrated Memorial Day, Monday, May 28, the Kennett Square Parade is a nice one to attend with some of our cars.

This week is also Committee week. On Wednesday, May 16, at 7:00 P.M., the Collections Committee of the Board plans to meet here. On Thursday at 3:30, a joint meeting of the Development and Finance Committees is planned. The same evening, May 17, at 7:30, the quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors will meet in the front hall at Auburn Heights.

Registrations for the June Steam Car Tour are rolling in. We still expect 60 or more visiting "steamers". Except for meals and FAHP out-of-pocket items, active volunteers will be able to participate for all or part of the week at a very nominal cost. More details on this will be forthcoming shortly. Bob Reilly sent out reminder letters to 25 members who have not yet renewed for 2007. As of now, our membership stands at 169 members, individuals and families alike. Best wishes to all. Tom