December 4, 2006

Hello, Steam Team:

It's always good to have a Stanley car around. In the old days there were many uses, and it's true today. 100 years ago, most mechanical types were "steam men" who had learned their trades in mills and factories during the Industrial Revolution, or on the railroads. It was natural that they would be interested in steam automobiles, not only for transportation but for other uses, and for "just tinkering". While many of them could not afford new cars, rapid annual improvements caused fast depreciation and very reasonably-priced used cars.

In the "old days", cars six or eight years old with seemingly little value would have their boilers removed to power something else, or their engines removed for similar projects. Small pumps, mills, boats, and other things were frequently powered by Stanley or White components. In 1927, 3 years after the last Stanleys had been built (and even after the "SV" period), my father wrote to Stanley Steam Motors in Chicago asking if they could supply a new 30-H.P. boiler. They applied in the affirmative but so far as I know the deal was never consummated, and I have no idea why my father might have wanted it (it would be 13 more years before he acquired our Model 76, the first car in the collection).

While still using the Stanley system in an automobile, these "mechanical types" would make all sorts of modifications to their liking, always believing they could improve on a Stanley as it was built. My father always said they invariably made its performance worse, not better, and that doctors and professional people made better owner/operators, as they did not try to improve anything.

We, too, used Stanley cars for other purposes during the past 60 years. Since our buildings at Auburn Heights were heated by steam from the nearby mills, about twice each winter we would get a call from the company saying that they would be shut down for eight hours or so to make a repair or alteration. Usually we had at least 24 hours notice of an interruption to our steam supply. At least twice, my father said "let's heat the house from a Stanley", so we parked the Mountain Wagon alongside the house and ran a steam line from its boiler through a cellar window and into the heat pipes which circumvented the basement before delivering steam to the radiators on the floors above. We would jack a wheel so we could run the Stanley's engine to run the water pumps and the fuel pump while we were delivering steam. On one such day, the outside temperature was about 35 degrees, and we kept the big house at 72 degrees for eight hours, but we used a lot of water and 15 gallons of kerosene as the engine turned over slowly with a rear wheel jacked.

At several hobby shows before and after 1950, my father demonstrated his ¾”-scale 4-8-4 locomotive inside the building where the show was held by parking a Stanley just outside said building, and again running a steam line from its boiler into the tiny locomotive’s boiler, thereby turning the driving wheels on rollers under the locomotive. In the worst of winter, the down-pipes from our flat tin roofs over the sun porch and the kitchen at Auburn Heights have frozen, and the build-up from melting snow above has caused these roofs to leak. A steam line from a Stanley boiler will soon remedy the problem by melting the ice in the down-pipe and allowing the water to flow as it should. Finally, in recent years steam from a Stanley boiler just outside the Museum has run our model 2-cylinder stationary engine to rotate our “steam-powered Christmas tree”. It’s tough to get along without a Stanley around!

Good work sessions this past Tuesday and Thursday accomplished a number of necessary tasks. We were happy to have Art Wallace and Kelly Williams, new active members within the past month, with us again (Art has not missed since he started coming 3 or 4 weeks ago), and one brand new active member, Steve Bryce. of Yorklyn. The locomotives were cleaned after their two days of service Nov. 24-25, the popcorn machine was cleaned and moved back to the Museum, the water tank was removed from the 1905 Model CX for repair or replacement, and the Model 76 was brought back into the garage for a boiler change. Jim Personti and I have determined that it is time to give up on the old boiler now in the car. We have one ready to go in, so hopefully this will be a job to be accomplished in the next few weeks. Fuel was drained from the tanks of the gasoline-fired Stanleys, as this deteriorates much faster than kerosene when left in the tanks of these early cars. The 735 is back in the garage next to the shop. Batteries on the Rauch & Lang electric are being thoroughly checked and fast-charged with an external charger by our electric car experts in an effort to extend their useful life for a few more seasons.

As an experience for the newer members, I plan to fire up the 735 on Tuesday evening, jack up a wheel, and run the car in place while trouble-shooting a number of things. The steam automatic has been rebuilt, and it must be checked out and set for the proper steam pressure. There was a leak on the flare fitting between the superheater and the loop on the steam pipe ahead of the firewall, which I think is fixed. Unlike the rest of our Stanleys, this car has an experimental piston-valve cylinder block, which requires spring-loaded relief valves (normally called automatic cylinder cocks) on each end of each cylinder to relieve the cylinders of water and condensate. These

need to be adjusted, which can only be done under steam. There was a restriction in the line from the "firing-up" valve to the steam automatic, which has been cleared. While cylinder oil seemed to be feeding into the steam pipe as it should, the "winker" was not working and hopefully this has been improved. It's planned to check out all these things to see if they are in fact corrected. When we have completed this exercise and repaired or corrected the problems that show up, the car's electrical wiring needs to be replaced and the horn and lights hooked up. Then we can consider this project "finished", and the 1918 Model 735 will be ready for the road in 2007.

There has been a change in meeting schedules as mentioned in the special memo of December 1. This Thursday, December 7, a general volunteers' meeting will be held in the Museum at 7:30 P.M. The plan for working groups as attached to that special Dec.1 E-mail will be explained and discussed. Recent Board decisions, especially the adoption of our Collections Policy, should raise some questions and be of interest to all of you. I will tell you which 4 cars I plan to donate to F.A.H.P. before the end of December. You will have questions about what immediate work might be required on these cars and the spare parts for them that are on hand or are needed. In many cases, budgeting will be needed for proper maintenance and care.

Anne Cleary has re-scheduled the Events Committee meeting for Thursday, December 14, at 7:30 P.M.

Bob Reilly has been busy in the office. A contract is being signed between Tom Fairchild and FAHP for a charter group here on Saturday, May 19 (rain date May 20). Hotel and banquet arrangements are almost finalized for our hosting of the Eastern Steam Car Tour June 17-23. Our membership has passed 135 families, and the annual appeal is coming along well, with over $20,000 received to date. I have appointed Bill Enslen of greater Hockessin to be interim treasurer, replacing Emil Christofano, our acting treasurer who asked to be replaced. Bill will serve until our annual meeting in February, at which time he will need to stand for election by the Board if we want him to continue. We appreciate Emil's filling in since Joe Mosteller's resignation last winter. Bob Reilly will leave for Colorado on Dec. 12, and does not plan to return until early February, but, as in his past absences, he is as close as E-mail and the phone. We hope to see you this week, and at the Robison's holiday party on Saturday night! Best wishes to all. Tom