

BY STEAM ACROSS THE CONTINENT

Everyone has his "cup of tea" or is supposed to have his "thing", and I guess this was mine. To me, it was the greatest trip I ever had, and we were so pleased to have completed it successfully.

For a quarter of a century there had been, in my mind, a desire to drive a Stanley car to the West Coast and return, and ~~before~~ I had almost come to believe it would never happen. I had it all planned, of course: how I would drive something over 100 miles per day for five days each week, spend one day resting or sightseeing without steam, and one day working on the car. Thus, it would take approximately 3 months to make the 7,000 miles involved in such an endeavor. It didn't work out quite that way.

In late March, 1972, the itinerary arrived via the VMCCA mailing list of the Trans-International Reliability Tour for cars built in 1914 or earlier. Being an unlikely prospect, I had not heard of the tour prior to that. It didn't suit to go in 1972, so I dismissed it. But the longer I studied the brochure, the closer I became to being "hooked". Before long I decided everything could go to pot, but if they would accept a Steamer on that Tour, I was going! It was then about a week before the April 8 deadline for signing up.

It didn't take long to decide which car from our collection would be chosen. It was the 1912 30-H.P. Model 87, 7-passenger

touring car. Other than our Mountain Wagons, it was the only one large enough to carry the many and varied items we considered necessary. Though urged to take along an accompanying vehicle for parts, tools, luggage, fuel, and water, I ruled this out as being too easy. We were going to rely entirely on the Steamer, win or lose. We had just two months to get ready.

The car had had an early restoration (1950) and had been used hard since that time. The paint and bright-work, mostly brass, was poor. The leather was already wearing through in the front seat. But it had a good engine, and the boiler was new in 1960 and had every indication of being as good as new. We would have to forego the beauty treatment and spend all our time on mechanical things and necessary modifications to make the trip.

We built up a new burner for the car, as the former grate was cracked. A piece of galvanized material was used for the new inside burner pan, which was the only mistake we made with this job, as we had to replace this at Disneyland, California, after the galvanized sheet burned through. We made a new vaporizer, but only for a spare to carry with us. We put four blow-down valves on the boiler instead of the usual two, and a cleanout pipe extending up through the bonnet so we could easily ream the feed water line from time to time. Both these modifications proved highly practical and saved us a lot of boiler grief, we firmly believe. We replaced the rollers in the engine crossheads with slides like the later Stanleys, and apparently corrected a former weak point. The pump drive was rebuilt with modern ball joints and bearings, and new wheel bearings were installed in the

rear to take advantage of modern oil seals.

The car was already equipped with truss rods to strengthen the old wooden frame. 134" is a long wheelbase for a 60-year-old wood frame, and these were a must for the great weight we would be carrying. We fitted a 63-gallon tank under the middle of the car, in front of the engine, and hooked our siphon line so we could either siphon from this tank to the upper one under the back seat, or from a stream if necessary. This gave us a total capacity of 108 gallons of water which weighs about 850 pounds plus the tanks. We removed the jump seats and added a 22-gallon tank immediately behind the front seat (in the tonneau) to hold extra kerosene, ^{which} ~~and~~ gave us a total of 42 gallons of fuel weighing about 275 pounds plus the tanks. We changed the headlamps to electric ones as required, added red reflectors on the rear of the body and applied 1930 vintage directional signals. We rebuilt the water pumps, replaced the brass balls with nylon ones, and highly recommend this modern innovation as being completely practical for coast-to-coast traveling.

In addition to the spare vaporizer already mentioned, the extra parts we carried included a superheater, a pilot assembly complete with one extra pilot vaporizer, a spare set of brake bands, a 3-tube water indicator (in which I have great faith, especially on a long trip like this), a throttle, two extra sets of burner nozzles for different elevations, boiler plugs, engine valves, an extra wheel bearing, copper tubing and flanging tools, and various plumbing fittings that might be required. Naturally, we had a full assortment of tools in-

cluding a wheel puller, tube expanders, clean-out wires, and the like. The car had 5 new tires and the demountable rims had all been balanced separately from the wheels. We acquired a special Delaware license tag with the letters "STEAM" in place of a number, and we thought we were ready to go!

Road maps had been studied in great detail, and almost all water and fuel stops had been calculated six weeks before we left home. The object of our 300-mile plus range on fuel was to be able to get kerosene only at our overnight stops, and not have to hunt "on the road". The hotels and motels therefore assisted us to locate good kerosene (which we used exclusively, except in the pilot). At approximately 75-mile intervals, we wrote to postmasters asking where the best water in the community could be obtained. About 75% answered, and all were most helpful, saving us a lot of time. Together with our letters for accommodations, we estimated we wrote about 400 letters in connection with the trip, probably another record. We carried two 5-gallon cans of pilot fuel with us most of the time, and one can of the same size with cylinder oil, and shipped additional cans of both to about seven points along the tour route. All these arrangements worked out without a hitch- we were never disappointed.

A surprise going-away party took place in our garage alongside our car at noon on June 13, as a heavy shower came down all around us, but we put the top up and Weldin Stumpf (who had done much of the preparatory work on the car), Jules Reiver, and I left in the rain and a cloud of vapor. Fortunately the rain had stopped within an hour, and our three-day trip to Montreal was almost routine.

With overnight stops at Stroudsburg, Pa., Albany, and Plattsburgh, N.Y., the only things of note were a huge tree which fell across Route 209 along the Delaware River just prior to our arrival on the scene, and a sudden twister which cut a swath just south of Plattsburgh as we passed through and almost took our top with it.

The weather in Montreal was just perfect as we enjoyed the last few hours before our GREAT TOUR was to begin, and got acquainted or renewed old acquaintances among the 20 other owners and their families who were to take part. We were so happy to be able to go along with such a great group of people, and so grateful that they would accept a steamer among their exclusive midst. The Steamer passed the safety check with no problems.

The Stanley never ran better as we headed west out of Montreal through beautiful country and beautiful weather, to Ottawa, our first night's stop, and then on to Callander of Dionne Quintuplet fame, where we spent the second night on a hill overlooking a beautiful bay of Lake Huron. One water pump carried the boiler nicely (the second was by-passing), and it was a temptation to keep up to some of the faster cars, but I kept telling myself, "hold it down, you still have a long way to go", so we tried not to exceed 40 m.p.h. The third day out of Montreal, we hit a cloudburst just east of Sudbury on a piece of highway construction, and got thoroughly drenched. The weather had turned for the worst, and the next several days were cold and cloudy. But we managed to practically close down the Sudbury Steam Laundry for an hour as we took on water. And at the little town of Spanish, Ont., the following day, there was keen competition

among the service stations to see who would be SELECTED to give the Steamer its drink. We were guests of the mayor and chamber of commerce in Thessalon for lunch, in appreciation of our water stop there, 54 miles east of Sault Ste. Marie. At the Soo Locks, we lectured to school children, the Shell Distributor gave us free kerosene, and we drove the Stanley right to the brink of the one Canadian Lock. The Canadians were so interested and appreciative, we hated to return to the United States. Two college girls even washed the Stanley for us, so they could have a ride!

Our first day back in the States was really a cold, wet one, and our mileage about 230 as we crossed Michigan's Upper Peninsula to Iron Mountain. During lunch at Naubinway, the pilot went out for the first time, and the down pipe to the nozzle was choked, but the problem was corrected in 10 minutes and we were again on our way. The next day was most pleasant as we landed in Laona, Wisconsin in the middle of a centennial celebration complete with church dinner, antique auto parade, and an excursion steam railroad, which of course was our water stop. The final day to Minneapolis was another good one, though a 3-hour delay to offer assistance to another member of our Tour (steam car men should never get involved with timing a Mag) made us hurry along to make our check point in time. Water stops this day were at a hospital in Ladysmith, Wisc., and a State Fish Hatchery at St. Croix Falls, a most scenic spot. The weather had again become perfect. And the steamer and its participants were appreciating it. The approximate 200 miles per day ^{were} ~~was~~ almost becoming routine.

The free day in Minneapolis gave everyone a chance to make minor repairs, change oil, etc. I hunted up the Culligan man to get a test kit and ask about proper water treatment for the alkali water expected in the Dakotas. We had been blowing down daily, but so far had not really been in any bad-water country. His advice was to continue the blow-down procedure, to get softened water where we could, but to add nothing. That evening, all of us drove our cars on the "lake tour" through Minneapolis' many city parks, ending up at an ice cream social near Minnehaha Falls hosted by the local AACA club.

We headed west on June 27 with renewed vigor. At Sidney Strong's home town of Atwater, 85 miles west of Minneapolis, a great celebration was held for us, and farmers and country people came from miles around to see all the cars, and the interest in the Stanley was unbelievable. The townspeople literally gave us the town. Even lunch and free kerosene. That afternoon we were delayed for two hours in another downpour at Murdock, Minn. But the car was working superbly, spent the night as scheduled at Milbank, S.D., and the next day proceeded to Aberdeen. Dick Hovey, the Tour's safety director, thought he heard a click in my right rear wheel as we backed in front of our motel room; I could not detect it from the driver's seat.

Aberdeen was, in a way, on the edge of civilization, as west of there the population becomes very sparse. It was 550 miles to Billings, our next check point, but we had three days to get there.

We had planned the longest run the first day, 313 miles to Baker, Montana. We left before 7 A.M., were hosted for a picnic lunch in a delightful town park at Mobridge on the Missouri River, and then hit the hazards of the Great Plains for sure with the late June sun boiling down and the wind blowing about 35 m.p.h. in our faces as is so common in this part of the country. We stopped again for water at McIntosh, and still again at Heffinger, N.D., about 3:30 where we decided to rest a couple of hours and relieve ourselves from the bright, hot sun. The evening drive of about 85 miles to Baker was begun at 5:30, and if we passed a dozen cars in this stretch, it was a lot. The evening was beautiful, and about 20 miles short of our goal we came upon a had-been railroad town called Marmarth which died with the steam locomotives. As we watered again from the old supply line for the engines of old, I believe every male member of the community was on hand to see the steamer. We had to break away in order to reach Baker just before dark about 9 P.M.

The 90 miles into Miles City the following day was marked by our first mountain range, but we crossed it without incident. The last day into Billings was an anxious one. About 100 miles east of our check point there, and in the heart of Lewis and Clark country, very close to the Little Big Horn where Custer had his last stand, I finally pulled a wheel to find the right rear wheel bearing completely shot. This was the noise Dick Hovey had heard 2½ days and 450 miles before; it still was only audible at very slow speeds and sounded like a loose wheel. Since we were in good time, we

~~We~~ limped into Billings at 20 m.p.h. and still made our check point in time.

It was 5:30 P.M. on Saturday evening of the long July 4th weekend. I had visions of being in Billings for 3 or 4 days while the tour went on to Yellowstone and beyond. But western people are great at times like this, and we worked most of that night in a talented man's machine and welding shop, where he built up and turned the axle shaft, we applied the new bearing we had with us, we reassembled the rear (no other damage was done, except one break lining was shot), and got to bed at 4:45 A.M. The job was a good one, as attested by the remaining 6,000 miles, which was covered without further bearing problems. And so it was a great thrill for us to pull into the Guest House at Livingston the next afternoon, behind most everyone else on the Tour at that point, but still 3 hours ahead of our deadline. We were to have no more anxious moments to match that one.

It was raining and 36⁰ when we arose at Livingston to head up into Yellowstone Park on July 3. They told us it would be snowing in the Park. But, fortunately, the weather improved instead and by the time the Park entrance was reached at Gardiner, the sun was shining brightly and the mountain air was indeed invigorating. The Park's maintenance force at Mammoth Hot Springs turned out en masse as we took water from their garage (30 gallons of distilled water had been manufactured just for us, so we used that plus regular mountain water to fill us up). We arrived at Old Faithful Inn for the July 4th celebration as scheduled, and Independence Day was the first day since

leaving home that the Stanley was not under steam. With no maintenance work apparently needed, we took the day for sightseeing in the Park.

On July 5, the Grand Tetons were spectacular. The upper Snake River with its several dams, is most scenic through this area and into Idaho. We had crossed the Continental Divide at an elevation of 8,400 feet shortly after leaving Old Faithful. We spent the night at Idaho Falls, and the next day crossed some most arid country to Sun Valley, sort of an oasis in the desert and between the mountains. Our stay at Sun Valley was too short, and after one night we headed straight south into really difficult-steamer country. After leaving Twin Falls, it appeared on the map that there was a 120-mile stretch to Wells, Nevada, with no towns or possible water stops of any kind. Other tour members had offered to each carry five gallon cans and drop them off at roadside midway along. This became unnecessary, however, as we heard of a new gambling spot called Jackpot that had sprung up on the Nevada State Line, and that had a service station with water. Although we did not strike it rich, Jackpot was a most welcome sight indeed.

For $2\frac{1}{2}$ days across Nevada to Reno we battled 40 m.p.h. head winds. While the sun was strong, the temperature was much cooler than normal for July in this area, with highs in the mid-80's instead of the 100 plus which is common. The water was terrible, even at laundromats and other places with water softeners. We would blow the boiler several times a day. The water that came out was just like slime and soap suds. Sometimes some solid material would come with it. But we did not permit this to build up, and we attribute our success to this frequent blow-down.

I had had several shifts in passengers, which had all been planned in advance. Weldin Stumpf had flown home from Montreal, to return with his wife and daughter, Joan, to Yellowstone Park. Jules Reiver had continued to Minneapolis, and then flown home. Jim Johnson from Illinois had joined me in Minneapolis and ridden the Stanley to Yellowstone. He liked the tour so well, he rode with other tour members after that, and finally left from Reno. In Reno, on our free day, Stumpf, being an old boiler man, decided he wanted to find out what was inside that boiler after so many miles, and all kinds of water. So he removed the bonnet and some of the top fittings and proceeded to wash it a la locomotive practice. He decided it was remarkably clean. So we "buttoned it up" again, and took the afternoon to go sightseeing to Lake Tahoe and Virginia City.

Tioga Pass had remained in my mind as the greatest challenge on the Tour, ever since I had read the original itinerary. The schedule of the trip from Reno to the end of the Tour was by far the most rigorous with no free days and the Sierras to navigate in between. In the first two days out of Reno, we were supposed to go from the Nevada city of 4,500 feet elevation, over a mountain range of about 8,000 feet, down to Lee Vining on the east side of Tioga (6,900 ft.), then over Tioga Pass (9,941 ft.), down into Yosemite Valley (3,900 ft.), up again to the Wawona area of Yosemite (8,000 ft.), and down into California's Central Valley at Fresno, which is less than 300 ft. above sea level. The total mileage was just over 300 for the two days, but this is hot country in the summer time, and the Stanley's brakes, with four passengers and everything else we were carrying, were the big concern.

I figured we had to make Yosemite Valley, 211 miles from Reno, the first night, or we would never make our Fresno check point on time. We left Reno at 5:00 A.M. Having crossed the first range, we were in Lee Vining, 150 miles to the south, by 11:20. Not knowing there were watering facilities at Tuolumne Meadows, just west of Tioga Pass, we thought we would have to make it over the Pass and all the way down to Yosemite Valley, some 60 miles beyond, so we loaded up at Lee Vining. There was not even time to get up speed before we hit the grade. ^{with} Cold ~~mountain~~ ^{and} water, [^] probably 6000 pounds of weight on the old Stanley, we tackled the problem with vigor. 10 to 12 m.p.h. Both pumps doing their full duty. 3,000 feet up in about 10 miles. Some had said we could not vaporize kerosene at this high an elevation. We had #65 nozzles in (#58 or even larger is usually standard for a 30-H.P. burner, though Stanley recommended #60) and 160 # fuel pressure. The steamer just kept working. About 2/3 the way up, we decided it was not worth taking a chance on low water, so we jacked a wheel and pumped for 10 minutes. Then we went on to the top. As we crossed the Pass and through the toll gate into Yosemite National Park, we were so relieved and elated that we forgot to take a picture to prove we had been there. We crossed the pass about 12:30 P.M. and it took us all afternoon to descend into Yosemite Valley, 60 miles and 6,000 feet below. The next day we made the run to Fresno without problems, stopping to cool the brakes occasionally, and finally having presence of mind enough to take a picture before we left the Park at the 6,000 foot post. In Fresno, the temperature was 106° when we arrived in mid-afternoon.

The Tour had only three days to go, and all 21 cars that had left Montreal were still there in Fresno. By this time, everyone was pulling for everyone else to make it and have 100% completion. So the news was most welcome when Millard Newman, Tour Chairman, announced that the route into Los Angeles would be optional, and would not have to include the additional climb back into Sequoia National Park (7,000 feet plus). We spent another hot day visiting at Porterville in the Great Valley, and on July 14 crossed the coastal range to greater Los Angeles. On the 15th, we broke one of our top bows coming out of the Century Plaza Garage (less clearance than on the way in), spent a most pleasant three hours at Disneyland, and arrived at Harbor Island, San Diego in good order. The 16th was our final day with the group, and it had been a GREAT MONTH. We had a police escort into Tijuana, Mexico, stayed about three hours there, and then back to our hotel at San Diego for the final banquet. Everyone had finished, and 13 had perfect scores. We were so pleased to be among this elite group. Our prize was a beautiful silver tray donated by the Crawford Museum in Cleveland.

The burner on the Stanley had been hard to light, and would occasionally backfire on the road. At first we had blamed this on the altitude, but when it did not improve after reaching sea level again, we realized some work had to be done before we started the trip east. We drove the 106 miles back to Disneyland on the 17th, and had planned to rest, visit, and be entertained at the Magic Kingdom. Weldin Stumpf tore the burner apart and found the inside pan burned through under the front of the mixing tubes. A new pan was installed, and we were as good as new again- this time we did not use galvanized material.

I flew home on July 21 and left the car in the capable hands of the Stumpfs, who were making their first trip west. We had been in contact with the owner of the Stanley Hotel at Estes Park, Colo., and he wanted us there on July 31 for a joint press conference- Stanley car and Stanley Hotel. I planned to return for that occasion, and the Stumpfs' itinerary eastward was planned with that in mind. The first night out of Disneyland they spent on the edge of the desert at Barstow, and early the next morning headed for Las Vegas. Here any type water was welcome, they could not be particular. But with frequent blowing down, no boiler problems occurred. The next day they were in southern Utah, and missed a right turn toward Grand Canyon which caused them not only extra mileage, but another range of over 9,900 feet elevation to cross, Cedar Mountain. On this day they not only navigated this precipitous highway but covered 270 miles in the bargain! The following day they visited the north rim of Grand Canyon, and then on the following one the spectacular Bryce Canyon. A phone call from Provo, Utah, only 44 miles below Salt Lake, told me they were right on schedule and everything was working fine. They saw the Mormon Tabernacle Choir rehearse in Salt Lake City, and headed east across southern Wyoming, with overnight stops at Rock Springs and Cheyenne just in time for the Annual Rodeo. Excessive heat from the brakes over such a long period of time had caused the rear wheel spokes to dry out some, and Stumpf pulled the wheels and tightened the spokes.

at 7:15,

On Monday morning, July 31, the Stanley appeared in front of the motel at Fort Collins, Colo., where I had spent the night. ~~at 7:15~~
~~at 7:15~~ We drove the 15 miles to Loveland, and prepared for the "Route

of the Mountain Wagons" up Big Thompson Canyon to Estes Park. We were thrilled to make this climb as part of our trans-Continental trip. For five miles out of Loveland, the road is relatively level, then the climb is 2500 feet in 25 miles. We averaged 25 to 30 m.p.h. for the climb, and it seemed nothing after some of the mountains we had been over. Our time from Loveland to the Park was one hour and five minutes for the 30 miles. The Stanley had never run better. At 10 A.M. we sat in the huge lobby with its plate glass picture windows overlooking the magnificent Rockies, and answered questions from the Press about our trip. The hotel's new owner also told of his plans for the Stanley Hotel. This is a beautiful old property, built by F. O. Stanley about 1906, but a tremendous challenge today to keep it going. A large oil painting of F.O. hung in the lobby, showing him making one of his violins. And a 1917 Stanley car, on loan from a man in Loveland, was also on display (and for sale) in the lobby. The hotel's brochure still carries a picture of a Mountain Wagon. It was surprising the number of people around who still remembered F.O. and told of his relationships with them. ^{Our} ~~The~~ Stanley was parked at the front steps of the Stanley Hotel for 24 hours.

¹⁸⁷²
We were ~~1872~~ miles from home and we made it in 9 days. We made many great acquaintances among people in the mid-West, and the car was greatly appreciated everywhere we stopped. Overnights were spent at Ogallala, Neb., Central City, Neb., and Omaha. It rained with a northeast wind across Nebraska- we just couldn't get away from headwinds no matter which direction we traveled. We did some patch work on our top and relined a set of brake bands before we reached Omaha.

The Stumpfs flew home on August 4 and I was joined by Don Tulloch. At Creston, Iowa, the whole town turned out to see the Stanley, and we made State-wide TV from Des Moines that night. We spent the night at Ottumwa, and the next day about noon crossed the Mississippi River at Keokuk. In Springfield, Illinois, I was disappointed that I could not get the Stanley in front of Lincoln's home for a picture, but the streets have been closed in that area and it is now just a walking mall. In trying to do a little throttle work at Springfield, I broke off a boiler fitting, and had to wait until Sunday morning to get a tap to make the repair. We left Springfield at 12:30 P.M. and made it to Indianapolis, 220 miles away, by dark. We stayed at Zanesville, Ohio, and Somerset, Pa., the last 2 nights. Don Tulloch had given way to Bob Reilly for the last two days.

Weldin Stumpf had invited the local press and radio to be on hand for our triumphant arrival home between 5 and 6 P.M. on August 9. At 3:50, we were 5 miles from home, and I called him. He said to stay where we were for an hour, because we didn't want to get home too soon. Following instructions, we drove in about 5:05, and found we were not nearly so important as we thought we were as no one showed up. But our many friends came in that evening, and we had a homecoming party, and the greatest trip of all time was over.

Honestly, I was sorry to see it end. I thought the Stanley ran just as well the last day as it had all along. To the question, often asked, "didn't you have any trouble?", the answer must be evasive. It

depends on one's point of view. To steam car people, I would say we had only two incidents of trouble, the wheel bearing, and the burner pan. Dividing this into the mileage, it was trouble every 2,800 miles. But to a novice in our hobby, I could say we had trouble every day. Certainly nothing we didn't expect. I believe we anticipated our problems well. I can't remember cleaning nozzles on the whole trip, though maybe we did once or twice. We didn't pull the vaporizer cable on the whole trip. We had no boiler trouble at all, but we did ream out the water-delivery pipe a few times, and had to clean the blow down valves a few times. A few times on the trip the cylinder oil pump gave us a little trouble, but it was usually a check valve stuck or the packing loose, and we were able to get it going quickly without problems. We had no carbon build-up anywhere, except the one day in Michigan, where we had to drill out the down-pipe to the pilot nozzle. We certainly got good kerosene everywhere, though it varied in price from 25¢ to \$1.20 per gallon (and three places they gave it to us). One place in Canada it was called stove oil, and another place in South Dakota it was #1 fuel oil, but it seemed to work O.K. We did not experiment with pilot fuel or cylinder oil; we used Arco Solvent 36 and Harris Superheat Steam Cylinder Oil respectively. We did change throttles about half way along, as the first one got to leaking enough so the boiler would not siphon full (we used the standard Stanley throttles with no stainless inserts or modern improvements). Our spare vaporizer and superheater were not needed. Stainless 304 has proven itself here, as these were both 22 years old before we started this trip. We packed the engine about once on the trip, but otherwise did no

engine work. We had no water automatic on the car, and relied completely on the Stanley 3-tube indicator. About twice on the trip, this indicator went on a rampage, and we discovered the boiler was foaming from so much alkali. Each time we stopped, gave the blow-offs a good blow, and proceeded on our way without further incident. Two tires went down over night, but fortunately we had no tire trouble on the road. Our new Universal^s Tires appear to be about 1/3 worn down after 8,328 miles. The leather is completely worn out in the front seat, and we rode on horse hair the last 2,000 miles. We used three sets of brake linings. Even the speedometer held out for the whole trip.

While I have always had great faith in Stanley cars, I think the performance of this one really passed my fondest expectations. A crude old thing on a wood frame, 60 years old, taking on such an adventure, and coming out the winner. And my favorite answer to an often-asked question: "How ~~did~~ you learn to drive it?", is, "I still don't know how, but after 30 years, I'm learning".