

Ernie Pyle (1900-1945) and Jules Reiver (1916-2004): Most of those who remember Ernie Pyle have passed away. He was a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist for the Scripps-Howard newspapers, first championing ordinary people during the Depression and then ordinary servicemen during World War II. He was a battlefield journalist, and wherever these brave men went, Ernie went with them and sent back accurate stories of just what they were experiencing on the front lines.

Pyle was in North Africa and Europe with American doughboys on all the dangerous invasions. He was alongside everyday soldiers in the mud of the Italian campaign and was a part of the D-Day invasion of Normandy. Accompanying Allied troops as they broke through from the beachhead and eventually captured Paris, he was still on the front lines as Americans reached the German border. All this time, he was sending back detailed reports of the courage of common GIs in extremely dangerous situations. His columns appeared in over 300 American newspapers.

Julius “Jules” Reiver of Wilmington had joined the U.S. Army in 1942 and quickly became a captain in England, awaiting the invasion of the Continent. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, he commanded the first anti-aircraft battery to land on Omaha Beach. He was there for the liberation of Paris in August that year and found his battalion surrounded by the Nazis in the Battle of the Bulge. By an act of fate, the Germans thought *they* were surrounded and surrendered to Jules’s men.

Ernie Pyle had been with “Reiver’s Retrievers,” as he named them, and he devoted a chapter in his book *Brave Men* to Jules and his men. When Jules accompanied me in our Model 87 on two of the “Trans-Con” tours in the 1970s, we had time to talk about such things before retiring for the night. He made light of the incident in the Battle of the Bulge, saying it was pure luck that the Nazi confrontation turned out in his favor.

With the war in Europe winding down, Ernie Pyle came home to Albuquerque to be with his emotionally disturbed wife of 20 years. Early in 1945 the Pacific campaign was still in full swing, however, and he had to be involved. After the successful but very costly campaign for Iwo Jima in February and early March, American troops took on Okinawa, the closest island to mainland Japan. Again, the desperate Japanese were dug in, and the campaign raged from April to June, before Okinawa and some tiny islands surrounding it were secured by the Americans. Early in the campaign, Ernie Pyle found himself on Ie Jima, a tiny atoll just northwest of Okinawa, where U.S. Marines were besting their Japanese adversaries. On April 18, 1945, thinking the situation was under control, Pyle was riding in a jeep with a colonel from the unit to which he was attached. A bullet from a Japanese machine gun went through his temple and killed him instantly. In the last battle of a long war, Ernie Pyle gave his life doing the job he loved and at which he was so skilled. His wife died six months later. They had no children.

Jules came home to Wilmington to head Hyman Reiver & Company, a family floor-covering business. He acquired some fine classic cars, but his main hobby was in collecting coins, for which he was a national expert. He died at the age of 87 and left his wife Iona and four children. Iona has since passed on.

Work Report: During the past week, the A.V.R.R. crew has been busy. With Bob Koury in charge, John Bacino, Dave Leon, Mike Ciosek, and Mark Russell accomplished the following: The roof to the new train shed is 100% shingled. The siding is attached and most of the battens are cut and installed.

Parts had to be taken from the siding switch to make a temporary repair to the mainline switch at the tunnel. On the building, 90% of the siding has been painted, and 95% of the trim has been cut and installed. One door is almost finished, and the hardware is on hand to finish the job.

On Tuesday, October 24, 12 volunteers were on hand, as follows: Dave Leon (in charge), Stan Lakey, Ted Kamen, John Schubel, Bob Koury, Anne K. H. Cleary, Tom Marshall, Ken Hilbeck, Steve Bryce, Mark Bodenshtab, Bill Scheper, and Bob Stransky.

On the Lionel layout, one of the locomotives was repaired, and everything was prepped for use on October 29. On the '37 Packard, the car was cleaned and polished, and the oil in the rear was checked. On the Model 725, the burner was installed, and Fiberfrax was cut-to-size to wrap the circumference of the boiler.

On the Model 87, an attempt to test the feed water heater under pressure was not possible, as water simply "ran through." It was discovered that one of the water lines was hooked up incorrectly, and this was corrected but not hooked up completely. On the Auburn Valley Railroad, future plans were discussed.

On Wednesday, October 25, six volunteers showed up: Bill Schwoebel (in charge), Jerry Lucas, Tom Marshall, Bill Rule, and new volunteers Stan Lakey and Mike Todd.

On the Model 87, the water lines, now in their correct location, were "buttoned up," and a satisfactory hydrostatic test was applied to the feed water heater. On the Model 725, minor leaks in the boiler connections that showed up at 500# water pressure were addressed. One such connection had to be realigned slightly because of the burner's branch forks. (This was completed on Saturday, 10-28.)

On Thursday, October 26, eight volunteers attended, as follows: Larry Tennity (in charge), Geoff Fallows, Jim Personti, Steve Bryce, Ted Kamen, Lou Mandich, Tim Ward, and Tom Marshall.

The Mountain Wagon was prepped for its use on October 29 with the addition of kerosene and pilot fuel. Tire pressure was checked. A good measure of level and condition of the rear gear oil in the '37 Packard indicated proper level and clean oil. An accumulation of old grease and dirt was cleaned from the differential cover of this car. Our Model T Ford was prepped for its use on October 29.

Fiberfrax was pasted to the circumference of the boiler on the Model 725, and the next step will be installation of the bonnet. A larger vent hole (2" in diameter) was cut in the front of the flue on the Model 87. On the Model 607, the water tank was filled, all fittings re-connected and tightened, and the water pumps were bled. The Prestolite tank was installed on the running board. This car should be "ready to roll" again, with its new water tank liner.